How can International NGOs Navigate Power Dynamics in Order to Facilitate Genuine

Participation?

Niamh O'Connor McCabe

Global Responsibility and Leadership, University of Groningen

Dr. Maeve McKeown

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Abstract

This thesis explores the challenges faced by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in promoting genuine participation within participatory development processes. Drawing on critiques of deliberative democracy, the study examines how power dynamics can hinder participatory methods. The research highlights the importance of inclusive approaches and equal respect in deliberative processes and applies this to participatory development. Two sets of power imbalances are explored. Firstly, power imbalances between INGOs and benefactors are discussed, with an emphasis on epistemic injustice, inclusionary control effects of expectations. Secondly, power imbalances between benefactors and how these imbalances inhibit participation are explored by discussing the challenges of representing disadvantaged groups and ensuring these groups' input is respected. Thirdly, recommendations are given, with an emphasis on the need to prioritise marginalised groups, avoiding epistemic objectification and viewing participation as an end in itself. Recommendations include flexible participation methods, gender mainstreaming and moderation. By analysing power dynamics and providing practical recommendations, this thesis contributes to the discourse on participatory development and facilitates the efforts of INGOs to foster genuine, transformative participation for sustainable development interventions.

Keywords: participatory development, deliberative democracy, international NGOs, power dynamics, inclusive approaches.

Table of Contents

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Inclusive, sustainable, cooperative, participatory… all of these terms have been used to describe the same general form of development in which local-communities are involved in decision-making processes. Development buzzwords such as these are used often and without oversight as to whether or not their underlying processes are being implemented effectively, particularly in the realm of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) who have little oversight or accountability measures for monitoring their activity. Participatory development is the most recent in the trend of attempts to make development interventions a more inclusive, respectful process with the added aim of creating more sustainable results (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). In the context of this paper, sustainability refers to the long-term viability and endurance of interventions, ensuring that the benefits and positive changes continue to persist beyond the immediate project period. Participatory development refers to an approach that involves engaging local communities, stakeholders and beneficiaries in the decision-making process and implementation of development initiatives.

Participatory development's popularity is not without reason. By bringing benefactors into the realm of decision-making, the results of interventions are often improved by utilising local knowledge to create results which are more sustainable.It's been argued that when executed appropriately, participation holds inherent value as it can play a transformative role in empowering beneficiaries (Kyamusugulwa, 2013). Participation has a strong link to well-being due to its emphasis on agency and autonomy in one's own development (Clark, Biggeri, & Frediani, 2019) which according to Amartya Sen is key to building capabilities and well-being (Sen, 2005).

However, participatory methods can and do fail. They can be performative, only being done in order to portray inclusiveness, strengthening the power discrepancies between INGO workers and the people they claim to help (Macdonald, 1995). They can only target the people within a population who have privilege and not marginalised members of a community, perpetuating power inequalities within the community and worsening them (Cornwall, 2003). This problem has been especially evident with women in participatory development (Idib.). A paradox of power and participation is at play where ineffective use of participatory methods in order to address power imbalances worsens them, an issue some refer to as "the new tyranny" of development practices (Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

Seemingly, the biggest advantage of participation is also its downfall. This is mirrored with debates surrounding deliberative democracies. Deliberative democracy is a political philosophy and model of decision-making that emphasises the importance of public deliberation and informed discussion in the political decision-making process (Bächtiger et al., 2018). Deliberation is considered by some to be the solution to different amounts of social power in a community by allowing those who are normally excluded from decision-making to have their voice heard (Landemore, 2013; Anderson, 2011). Critiques of deliberative democracies would argue that there are a variety of factors which encourage the opposite to happen, that power imbalances will cause the deliberation process to favour the social groups in a community who already have power (eg. those who are educated, high class and/or male) (Young, 1996; Sanders, 1997).

Critiques against deliberative democracy, particularly those from feminist theorists, can be said to mirror those made against participatory methods. These two forms of decision-making are both developed in anthesis to exclusionary practices with the aim of being more inclusive and have been criticised for upholding power dynamics rather than dismantling them (see Cooke &

Kothari, 2001, for critiques against participation and Sanders, 1997, for ones against deliberation).

In this thesis, I draw on critiques of deliberative democracy to show how participatory development methods could be amended to facilitate genuine participation. The first chapter gives background information by first defining participatory development and deliberative democracy, as well as discussing the role INGOs play in international development. The second chapter will explore the use of participatory methods in reducing power dynamics which exist between INGO practitioners and benefactors by analysing the issues of epistemic injustice, implicit control and participant expectations. The following section chapter the power dynamics between benefactors and is split into two sections. The first section regards the inclusion of marginalised groups in participatory processes and the second focuses on ensuring effective participation for those groups. The final chapter will propose solutions to some of the covered critiques which international NGOs can use in order to mitigate the power imbalances which inhibit effective participation in development programs.

Background

Participatory Development

Participatory development refers to a development model wherein the people being targeted by a development intervention are included in the formulation, execution and/or evaluation of the project (Kyamusugulwa, 2013). Participatory methods can include focus groups to monitor and evaluate development programs (Clark, Biggeri, & Frediani, 2019), participatory rural appraisals (Hickey & Kothari, 2008), consulting benefactors and implementing indigenous knowledge into interventions (Campbell & Vainio-Mattila, 2003), and participatory poverty assessments

(Duraiappah, Roddy, & Parry, 2005). Participatory development is discussed as a model developed in opposition to traditional top-down development discourse on the basis of being more inclusive, transparent and transformative (Hickey & Kothari, 2008), which I will show to be mirrored by the deliberative democrats. Participatory development aims for community empowerment while also encouraging sustainable development.

Deliberative Democracy

Deliberation can be defined as the process of mutual communication in matters of common concern involving the weighing and reflecting on preferences, values and interests (Bächtiger et al., 2018). The *mutual* communication refers to a context in which there are equal levels of respect and reciprocity between participants and is highly important to the concept of deliberation. Because deliberation is a process which ideally works in an aggregate fashion to build up, share and create knowledge (Estlund & Landemore, 2018), there is an assumption that all participants have something valuable to contribute (Young, 2002; Biesta, 2009). The concept of deliberative democracy emerged from the foundations of Rawlsian justice theory, specifically regarding the concept of public reason. Rawls argued for the importance of public reason as a basis for democratic decision-making, advocating for a shared framework of publicly justifiable reasons that can be acceptable to all citizens, regardless of their personal beliefs (Rawls, 1997). This emphasis on public reason aligns with the principles of deliberation, as it encourages participants to engage in rational and inclusive discussions, aiming to reach mutually acceptable decisions.

Deliberative democracy is a model which is often contrasted with other forms of decision-making, such as majoritarian representative democracy, which prioritise isolated voting in favour of self-interest (Young, 1996). This is because deliberative democracies require

structuring problems in a way which allows citizens to come together to to identify, discuss and maximise the common good, instead of individuals competing for their private benefits. In self-interest models, individuals base decisions only on their own desires and experiences, whereas deliberation prioritises identifying the common good through discussion. The implication of the deliberative model is that citizens communicate their preferences with the aim of reaching a shared understanding of what their communities need or want. Therefore, it can be said that the goal of a deliberative democracy is to be more inclusive, transparent and responsive to citizens than the self-interest models.

Gutmann and Thompson (2009) argue for deliberation being beneficial in building agreement amongst groups by allowing for people to come to a consensus through discussion over the common good. By creating an environment which allows people to exchange ideas and experiences, they can broaden their perspectives and take a step away from their own self-interest. In conditions of scarcity, where one might intuitively think that people would be protective of their own interests or even competitive, deliberation may be particularly useful in building agreement and consensus (Gutmann and Thompson, 2009).

International NGOs and Development

In 2010, it was estimated that there were up to 40,000 INGOs in operation, a number which has only grown since (Ben-Ari, 2013). These organisations take on various goals, from environmental to advocacy, but all have a common aim of increased well-being for people and areas where there is a void of services or rights (Teegen, Doh, & Vachani, 2004; Fisher, 1997). INGOs are able to mobilise funds which otherwise would not be used for developmental interventions, allowing them being considered valued development actors (Jayawickrama & McCullagh, 2009). However, these organisations have also received strong criticism for being a

dominating force of paternalism and inhibitors of genuine social change (Barnett, 2016; Petras, 1999).

I will be focusing on INGOs in this paper because of the unique power relationships that exist between these organisations and the people they aim to help. INGOs often possess significant resources, expertise, and decision-making authority, which can create imbalances of power between them and their benefactors. This imbalance is further amplified by the fact that INGOs frequently operate in contexts where local communities may have limited access to resources, information, and agency. By assuming responsibility for services that were once provided by the state, INGOs exert considerable control and influence over the lives of the communities they serve (Pogge, 2008). They have the authority to set agendas, allocate resources, and make decisions that directly impact the well-being and development of communities. Furthermore, INGOs often operate with limited oversight or accountability mechanisms, allowing them to operate with relatively little scrutiny (Petras, 1999).

Power Imbalances Between INGOs and Benefactors

In this chapter, I will explore the use of participatory methods in reducing power dynamics between INGO practitioners and benefactors. I will first identify the sources and implications of the power imbalances between actors, focusing on the exclusionary implications of the top-down approach to development interventions. Then, arguments both for and against the use of participatory methods to encourage inclusive development interventions will be presented before exploring how participants' previous experiences with INGOs create expectations which impact the quality of participation. Comparisons to critiques of deliberative democracies will be made in order to further illustrate the implications of power dynamics on participation.

In order to adequately discuss the use of participatory methods in mitigating power imbalances between INGOs and their benefactors, it is important to first understand the sources and implications of these power imbalances. As briefly mentioned in the background section, international NGOs are often highly regarded within the field of development for their ability to mobilise funds, perceived expertise, independence, accountability, and ability to influence and hold governments accountable (Jayawickrama & McCullagh, 2009). However, many of these characteristics contribute to an inherent power discrepancy between INGOs and benefactors, as the actions of these organisations can have life changing impacts on the benefactors. These power imbalances most notably include imbalances between financial resources and decision-making power. It's been argued that a tension between pleasing both the INGO funders and benefactors result in the NGOs being more accountable to the funders, as the NGO prioritises preserving its financial resources (Petras, 1999). The high degree of financial power and perceived expertise (either self perceived or by the international community) has led these organisations to receive strong criticism for being a dominating force of paternalism and inhibitors of genuine social change (Barnett, 2016; Petras, 1999). Power imbalances create the potential for NGOs to dominate decision-making processes, prioritise their own agendas over the needs and priorities of local communities, and reinforce existing inequalities. Development interventions which do ignore this imbalance can result in the marginalisation of local perspectives and knowledge and have ineffective or unsustainable results.

Epistemic Injustice

Power imbalances between INGOs and benefactors have notably contributed to what is referred to as the "top-down approach", a form of development critiqued for its infringement on the capabilities of communities to know their own needs, as well as creating ineffective results. This approach is characterised by "developed" nations deciding what is best for the "developing"

world, perpetuating the power imbalances and unequal distribution of resources between the Global North and South. Decisions are made at the top of the social hierarchy with those at the bottom having no input into formulation, execution or monitoring of these decisions. This approach also occurs on community and intrapersonal levels when INGOs create agendas for the development of people who are perfectly capable of articulating for themselves what their needs and desires are. This gives rise to concerns of epistemic injustice. Epistemic injustice refers to unjust treatment that specifically revolves around matters of knowledge, comprehension, and engagement within communicative practices (Fricker, 2007).

The top-down development approach would constitute a form of epistemic injustice because people are denied their own knowledge by being told their needs and wants without the opportunity to voice them themselves. While some interventions may not be guilty of outright silencing the people they aim to help, failed development interventions tend to have the commonality that the failure could have been mitigated if the target population had been consulted more throughout the process (Gizelis & Kosek, 2005). This constitutes a form of epistemic injustice known as testimonial injustice wherein prejudices deny credibility to knowers on their own experiences and needs (Fricker, 2007).

Participatory approaches allow INGOs to consult with local communities, honouring their knowledge while creating more effective and sustainable interventions. Giving a community the opportunity to deliberate on a development agenda may also hold an inherent epistemic value, as deliberative democracy theory shows us how giving participants the opportunity to share and reason with one another about their needs leads to the generation of more accurate and reliable knowledge, which in turn may enhance the decision-making process on the development agenda (Estlund & Landemore, 2018).

So far, I have been discussing whether participatory approaches can be a form of epistemic justice and drew on the deliberative democracy ideal of formal inclusion. However, when discussing the idea of deliberative democracy having ideals of epistemic inclusion, it is important to also note the criticism made against the model on the basis of epistemic injustice from philosophers such as Seyla Benhabib (2021), Nancy Fraser (2009) and Jane Mansbridge (2018). They argue that inclusion alone is not enough and deliberative spaces must be altered in order to effectively accommodate and empower marginalised voices (Fraser, 2009). Fraser's (2009) recommendations for moving past surface level inclusion to genuine participation in deliberative processes highlight the need for a more equitable distribution of power and resources within deliberative spaces. Participatory development practitioners should learn from deliberative democrats that including and accommodating are two different things. They should bear in mind that simply including marginalised voices is not enough to remedy epistemic injustice, that active participation requires active accommodation, and voices need to be heard and respected.

When appreciating the epistemic value of participation, it is important to avoid what Fricker refers to as the "epistemic objectification" of participants. Epistemic objectification refers to a form of epistemic injustice where a person is reduced to purely a source of information rather than a knowledgeable individual (Fricker, 2007). This may occur when participants are used in an extractive manner, merely to assess the most effective way to use resources in order to create an intervention which will please the funders the most, rather than create the most desired change by the participants. This is mostly an issue rooted in the motivations behind the use of participation and whether it is used as a means for development or a feature of development in itself. There is ongoing debate as to whether participation should be considered as having inherent value for playing a transformative role for participants (Jones & Kardan, 2013).

Implicit Control

So far I have shown how participation can allow for the inclusion of benefactors into decision making processes in development. However, Kothari argues that the very act of including people normally left out of decision-making processes in development interventions is in itself an act of power and control as a form of "adverse inclusion" or "inclusionary control" (Kothari, 2008, pp 142-143), he further says:

> *"people who have the greatest reason to challenge and confront power relations and structures are brought, or even bought, through the promise of development assistance, into the development process in ways that disempower them to challenge the prevailing hierarchies and inequalities in society, hence inclusionary control and the inducement of conformity"*

Inclusionary control can take place when an organisation uses participation in a tokenistic manner or in a very narrow sense of the term which does not allow participants to contribute in the ways they want to.

Kothari's critique is an important one to discuss because it begs the question as to how strict a definition of participation should be used: does it mean conducting participatory research in order to inform the decisions made by the INGO, or is it transferring decision-making power to the participants entirely? Kothari's idea of inclusive control may be applicable to cases in which communities are given very restrictive opportunities to participate, but I argue that this is only true of a weak definition of participation. By this, I mean that if INGOs are saying they are performing participatory development, but not offering empowering opportunities for their participants, then they are not aligned with the true definition or goals of participatory development.

Furthermore, although it is true that making the decision to include a group of people in any decision-making process is an exercise of power in a technical sense, I would put forth that arguing for a conception of inclusion which avoids power dynamics entirely is not possible, particularly in the field of development. The beginning of this chapter outlined how power dynamics between INGOs and beneficiaries are unavoidable. Instead of seeking for processes which would eliminate these dynamics (which are yet to be determined) I argue that by being conscious of power dynamics, organisations can use participation in a way which highlights the discrepancies in order to allow for them to be mitigated. When development practitioners have the ability to dictate the forms and degrees of participation, then indeed this is reducing control for the participants, but this can be remedied, as I will argue in the recommendations section. Additionally, there are ways in which participants can experience implicit control from development practitioners from participants' own expectations and experiences with previous interventions, which will be explored next.

Previous Experiences and Expectations

There are two ways in which previous experiences with INGOs can impact the participatory process which I will be covering. The first way regards negative experiences with INGOs, specifically their exclusive, neo-colonial tendencies, which affects whether or not potential benefactors would actually choose to participate in a program. The second way impacts the quality of participation by creating certain expectations in the participants about the nature of the INGO and what they can offer.

Because INGOs are generally coming from countries in the Global North to the Global South, it is understandable that some groups in postcolonial settings may have a deep seated mistrust in organisations coming to their community to "develop" it. This is in part due to INGOs being

argued to be a legacy of the missionary precursors which only sought to retain control during

decolonisation (Cooper, Packard, & Packard, 1997). A further mistrust in organisations

advertising participation as a means of mitigating power imbalances can be found due to a

history of organisations using the participatory claim to maintain the power imbalances rather

than address them, causing "participation" to be viewed as a meaningless term (Cleaver, 2021).

Situations where potential benefactors are distrustful of an INGO because of previous

experiences with tokenistic uses of participation are difficult to manage, as they can result in a

cycle of mistrust and ineffective participation (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007). This manifests as

participants communicating their expectations from a development agenda informed by previous

encounters with INGOs rather than their own needs, if they choose to associate with the

organisations at all.

Often, beneficiaries of development interventions have a preconceived notion of what the

development practitioners are willing to do and this impacts the participation process (Cornwall

& Coelho, 2007). Critiques against deliberative democracy can be used in order to understand

how and why participants choose not to voice their experiences and desires, even in situations

where it may appear as though they have the forum to do so. Past experience with INGOs'

exclusionary processes and the expectations held by participants regarding an INGOs capability

based on previous experiences may cause participants to self-silence and not contribute

effectively. Deliberative democracy theorists have noted self-silencing as a process where

people choose not to share an opinion out of concern for social sanctions or the fear of being

incorrect (Sunstein & Hastie, 2008). According to Sunstein and Hastie (2008) self-silencing can

arise from two sources: social, wherein participants chose not to share information out of fear of

social sanction, and informational which is when participants self-silence due to their information

contradicting previously shared information and not wanting to go against the majority. Previous

experience with INGOs can be a source of informational self-silencing. Negative experiences

with INGOs will impact the levels of trust which potential benefactors have in the organisation which in turn will affect the degree and quality of participation, anticipated results, and the expectations of the resources and aims of the INGO. When this mistrust is in place, it is difficult for INGOs to facilitate genuine participation and benefactors may self-silence in order to conform to what they believe is expected of them (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007). In deliberative processes, it is recommended to mitigate self-silencing by breaking the status-quo the silencing upholds through taking advantage of cognitively diverse participants. This can be done by assembling deliberative groups in a way which promotes diversity of opinion or by using moderation techniques which seek to elevate diverse opinions.

This section outlined two ways in which previous experiences with INGOs impacts participation: negative experiences discouraging involvement and past expectations shaping participants' views of INGO capabilities. Mistrust in INGOs, rooted in their neo-colonial tendencies and tokenistic participation, hinders genuine engagement and leads to self-silencing. Participants may conform to perceived expectations and communicate prior expectations instead of their own needs. Trust levels affect the degree and quality of participation, anticipated outcomes, and resource expectations. Therefore, expectations and experiences are avenues by which power imbalances between INGOs and benefactors can reduce the quality of participation in development interventions. Other manifestations of power imbalances between INGOs and benefactors which have been explored in this chapter are epistemic injustice and implicit control. Next, I will explore how power imbalances between participants can inhibit genuine participation.

Power Imbalances Between Participants

So far, I have given background information on participatory development, deliberative democracy and the role of INGOs in development programs. I then went on to explore three manifestations of power imbalances between INGOs and benefactors which can inhibit genuine participation in development programs. In this chapter, I will focus on power imbalances between the participants who might engage in participatory development projects. It will be explored whether INGOs can effectively include the individuals within the group of benefactors who have the least amount of power. This is an important topic for discussion as participatory methods are argued by some to reinforce the power dynamics within communities, resulting in greater inequality for the benefactors (Ferilli, Sacco, & Blessi, 2016). Similar critiques have been made against deliberative democracy, particularly by feminist theorists such as Sanders (1997), who points out that even with full representation, deliberation can mask and perpetuate inequalities between stakeholders due to existing power discrepancies and different degrees of respect. There are two ways in which participatory methods can fall victim to this process: by not adequately representing disadvantaged community members or by not combatting power imbalances between community members during participatory processes. I will be referring to these issues as the "getting everyone to the table" and "allowing everyone to be heard" challenges. I will explore how participatory methods can worsen power dynamics between members of a community in order to favour those who already have power by not getting everyone to the table and allowing those who are there not to be heard, especially those who need it the most. Drawing from feminist critiques of deliberative democracy, I will examine how these challenges can worsen power dynamics within communities and perpetuate inequalities.

The sources and implications of social power must first be understood in order to discuss how it should be mitigated, as this power plays a fundamental role in shaping community dynamics

and the processes of bringing about change (Christens, 2019). In a society where social groups have different amounts of power, the groups with less power are less likely to be able to participate in practices that will have an impact on them (Beauvais, 2018). The sources of power can vary, but typically power is derived from economic, social or political resources. Those who control these resources may hold an elite position within a community and can wield significant decision-making power, by both giving them more opportunities to be present at the decision-making table and allowing their voices to be given more authority than others. For example, people with more financial resources will be able to take the time to participate in discussions about what a community would benefit from whereas those with less financial power may not have this time to spare, contributing to the challenge of getting everyone to the table. Additionally, the opinions of people with greater financial influence over a community may be regarded with higher value than those with less financial influence. This issue of equal representation will be explored in the first section of this chapter. The other manifestation of power imbalances within a community which will be discussed in the following section is the processes which cause the testimony of people with more social power to be prioritised over those with less.

Getting Everyone to the Table

The "getting everyone to the table" challenge is an issue of representation, one which is also present in deliberative democracies. I will show here how the issue of representation in deliberation can be related to social factors, focusing on women and people with disabilities. I will compare this to the similar challenge faced in participatory development of representing marginalised social groups. I will outline how these groups face unique barriers which must be overcome in order for them to be represented in participatory interventions while emphasising the importance of inclusion.

Participation in deliberative processes has a gendered aspect which is highly important for participatory development practitioners to consider in order to design interventions that do not let women down. To give an example, in Ireland's Convention on the Constitution (2012–2014), randomly selected citizens were invited to participate in deliberative mini-publics of which there were 9 different groups with predetermined topics. Only one of these groups had more women agree to participate than men, which focused on "Role of women in the home and women's participation in politics" (51% representation of women) whereas all the other groups had more men than women (minimum 54% representation of men and maximum 60%) (Harris et al., 2021). Even though invitations to participate in the groups were equally split between men and women, the only group in which women outnumbered men was the one which focused on the role of women and even then, they only had a slight majority, whereas in the other groups the men held a wide majority. The challenge of adequately representing women in deliberative forums is not a local issue and has been documented in India (Parthasarathy, Rao, & Palaniswamy, 2019) and South Africa (Walsh, 2006). This is an important point to consider, due to how women are reported to participate less in development programs than men, similar to the issue of representation in deliberative forums.

Not only is representation of women in deliberative democracy important in its own right, but also because there is a link between the number of women present and the likelihood a woman has of speaking up and her voice being heard (Karpowitz, Mandelberg & Shaker, 2012). Participatory development practitioners would do well to be aware of the gendered aspect of deliberate representation because the deliberation and participation forums can be very similar in their settings and requirements. This means that the tendency of underrepresenting women is also present in participatory interventions, especially when gender inequality has not been

considered in the design and implementation of a development project (Cornwall, 2003; Mayoux, 1997; Guijt & Shah, 1998).

The reasons for women being underrepresented in deliberative processes and participatory development interventions are multifaceted. They can be attributed to various social, cultural, and structural factors. Societal norms and traditional gender roles often assign women domestic responsibilities, limiting their time and availability for engagement in public forums (Das, 2014). For example, a mother may not be able to participate in processes she cannot bring her children with her to. Additionally, barriers such as limited access to education and financial resources further compound the challenges faced by women in seeking meaningful participation (OECD, 2019). These factors contribute to a persistent gender gap in representation and pose a significant obstacle to achieving gender equity and inclusive participation in both deliberative democracy and participatory development.

Women are not the only social group who face barriers to participation, many other marginalised groups face similar barriers. The example I will explore to illustrate how other marginalised groups struggle to be represented in participatory development programs is that of people with disabilities. I will briefly illustrate the importance of including people living with disabilities in development interventions and then outline barriers persons with disabilities face when trying to participate in development interventions.

Empirical research has found that disabled people are consistently and overwhelmingly neglected by development interventions, particularly by NGOs because they are not bound by state regulations regarding distribution of foreign aid (Niewohner, Pierson, & Meyers, 2020; Cramm & Finkenflügel, 2008; Munsaka, 2015). While not all disability can be related to poverty, there is a strong link between the two concepts, with people living in poverty more likely to

experience disability (Braithwaite & Mont, 2009). People living with disability are also more likely to live in poverty for extended periods (Lwanga-Ntale, 2003). These reasons should mean that persons with disabilities receive greater attention in development initiatives, but the opposite is the case.

There are both physical and attitudinal barriers which can limit people's participation who have a disability. Disabled people experience social exclusion world over (Kim et al., 2016; Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2018; Islam, 2015), contributing to the attitudinal barriers which may limit participation. Attitudinal barriers encompass negative attitudes, stereotypes, and prejudices held by society towards people with disabilities, which can lead to discrimination and exclusion. These attitudinal barriers contribute to the creation of a social environment that perpetuates marginalisation and restricts the full participation of individuals with disabilities in development processes. Such barriers can manifest as underestimating the abilities and contributions of people with disabilities, assuming their needs and preferences without consultation, or dismissing their voices and perspectives (Titchkosky, 2003). Addressing these attitudinal barriers is crucial for promoting inclusive and participatory development, as it requires challenging and transforming societal attitudes towards disability and promoting the recognition and valuing of the capabilities and perspectives of individuals with disabilities.

For persons living with physical disabilities, they must also deal with physical barriers in addition to the social ones. Physical barriers refer to the tangible obstacles and environmental factors that hinders access and full participation in development interventions. These barriers can take various forms, such as inaccessible buildings, lack of ramps or elevators, inadequate transportation systems, and absence of assistive devices or technologies (United Nations, 2006; World Health Organization, 2011). These physical barriers restrict the mobility and independence of individuals with physical disabilities, limiting their ability to navigate public

spaces, attend meetings or gatherings, and engage in various activities related to development initiatives. Inaccessible physical environments not only create practical challenges but also send a symbolic message of exclusion, reinforcing the notion that individuals with physical disabilities are not valued or welcomed in society (United Nations, 2006). Removing physical barriers requires the provision of accessible infrastructure, transportation, and assistive devices, as well as the incorporation of universal design principles to ensure inclusive environments that accommodate the diverse needs of persons with physical disabilities.

This physical and social exclusion not only denies the voices and perspectives of people living with disabilities but also overlooks the valuable insights and experiences they can contribute to shaping development initiatives. Furthermore, because of disability's intersection with poverty, it is counterproductive to exclude people from development interventions who live with disability. Recognizing and addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by persons with disabilities is crucial for ensuring inclusive and representative participation in participatory development interventions.

Finally, I briefly want to mention that there are many other ways in which social or physical barriers can infringe on people's ability to participate in development programs, causing an issue of representation for certain groups. Other groups which can be left behind if not accommodated for in participatory approaches include the elderly (Austin et al., 2015), the poorest members of a community (Botes & Van Rensburg, 2000), refugees (Rempel, 2009), and ethnic and racial minorities (Mompati & Prinsen, 2000). Additionally, membership with any of these groups intersect with one another, creating unique, complex barriers to participation. For example, disability affects more women than men and creates unique barriers for women, but development literature which focuses on disability rarely discusses how women specifically are affected by disability (Munsaka, 2015).

Now that I have discussed some of the ways in which it is difficult to represent marginalised groups in both deliberative democracies and participatory interventions, I will next explore the further challenges of how to ensure equality between participants once representation is achieved.

Allowing Everyone to be Heard

The challenge of allowing everyone to be heard is important because even if the "getting everyone to the table" challenge is addressed, it is not guaranteed that all testimonies are being respected and regarded as equally valuable. This must be considered when designing participatory development interventions in order to avoid perpetuating and upholding power dynamics between participants. In this section I will begin by outlining the sources and implications of social power and the role social power plays in deliberative democracies in order to justify the use of critiques of deliberation in my discussion of social power in participation. I will then go on to outline how social power can affect one's internalised right to speak as well as impact whether people respect each other's speech.

Social power can allow individuals to influence others and shape social dynamics and may come from social status, reputation or membership with a particular social group (can be dictated by gender, race, age, religion, occupation etc.). Social power impacts the quality of participation by dictating whose testimony is regarded as being valuable over others, as well as having an effect on a participant's valuation of their own testimony. One of the main sources of social power is gender, specifically being a cis-gendered male. Because of the global nature of patriarchal power dynamics and participatory methods' weakness against power imbalances, it is not surprising that participation is often criticised for letting women down (Cornwall, 2003).

Similarly, feminist literature criticises deliberative democracies for masking and perpetrating power imbalances between men and women (Sanders, 1997; Young, 1996).

Feminist critiques of deliberative democracy have two clear themes: respect and power. In order to achieve "effective" deliberation, the importance of mutual respect cannot be overstated. Effective deliberation (or true deliberation) requires participants to regard all person's testimony equally (particularly with regard to social class) and with respect, this allows the group to come to a decision which, if not at least held by a consensus, is recognised as just and consented to by all. Because we do not live in a society of mutual respect for all persons (particularly on the basis of gender, education, race, class, and ability), there are exclusionary implications of the model of deliberation. This is applicable to participatory development interventions because even when an INGO manages to get everyone to the table, if mutual respect between the participants is not present or there are harmful power imbalances, then those who are experiencing marginalisation in a population may be either less likely to participate, or not have their participation valued as much as other members. Similar to deliberative democracy critiques, many critiques against participatory methods argue that the process perpetrates and upholds power dynamics between participants (Dodman & Mitlin, 2013; Platteau & Abraham, 2002; Guijt & Shah, 1998).

Earlier, we discussed how women are often underrepresented in deliberative democracies, but now we will see how even when women are represented in full, there is still a gender gap in deliberation. It has been noted that in deliberative democracies, discrepancies in social power impact one's internalised right to speak (Young, 1996). This process is particularly present in women in deliberating processes where an experimental study found there is a significant gender gap in voice and authority (Karpowitz, Mendelberg, & Shaker, 2012). Similarly in participatory development interventions, women have reported that they do not speak up much

in meetings and when they do, their opinion carries little weight (Agarwal, 2001). An important finding from the study on deliberating women found that women's participation increased when under female leadership and recommends altering institutional procedures to the social context. This suggests that while power dynamics do impact the quality of participation, this does not mean that participatory processes should be disregarded.

Deliberative democracies have been criticised due to the tendency for marginalised groups to be excluded on the basis of their speaking style (Young, 1996). This is especially important for INGOs to consider for their participatory methods for two reasons: a great portion of their work involves working with marginalised groups and due to the international aspect, it is a safe assumption that speaking styles will differ significantly between the INGO and the participants. Even without these considerations, not being aware of how speech is valued differently between participants could lead to perpetrating power imbalances within a community. Speaking styles which are considered general rather than formal can be disregarded, or dispassionate speech is favoured over passionate speech (Young, 1996). We can consider a form of speech privilege when different values are attributed to different forms of speech. Importantly, Young describes how differences in speech privilege correlate with differences of social privilege, allowing for one to conclude that deliberation can perpetuate inequalities by favouring the speech of the privileged. The forms of speech which are valued more in deliberation are typically male and the ones with less value are typically female. I would interpret this critique as using a definition of deliberation which also falls guilty to this speech valuation, as deliberation does not need to be so strongly defined by western rationality. Young even proposes that instead of deliberative democracy, we use the term communicative democracy in order to include alternative forms of speech such as storytelling. However, I would be critical of this suggestion, as Young's reasoning as to why these communicative means cannot occur within deliberation stem from a strict adherence to Rawlsian principles of reason, which I do not think necessary. Why not allow

these communicative means to occur within deliberation? While Young was working within the Rawlsian paradigm which used a strict definition of deliberation which required "public reason", there is a much broader meaning of deliberation beyond the narrow confines of Western political philosophy. Deliberative processes have been identified in different societies throughout the world and in various forms, although it is still conceptualised as a western ideology which promotes western speaking styles (Hébert, 2018; Young, 1996). I think that by implying that it is not possible to include storytelling in deliberative processes, Young is falling guilty to the ethnocentric conception of deliberation.

The underlying processes of speech valuation are important to discuss because speech valuation should be considered as a failure in deliberation for infringing on the requirement that all participants' testimony should be regarded equally. There may be no conscious or explicit biases at play when adding value to various forms of speech, but rather an implicit bias in the form of cognitive shortcuts which reproduce patterns participants are most familiar with (Bächtiger, Dryzek, Mansbridge, & Warren, 2018). If one assumes that participants in a deliberative process wish to reduce speech privilege from affecting their exchanges (as they should in order to achieve true deliberation), being susceptible to speech privilege can be viewed as a cognitive limitation. Cognitive limitations can be dangerous when gone unaddressed, but being aware of the limitations means that they can be mitigated. It has been argued that the limited cognitive capacities which cause biases can be taken into account in order to design institutions and mechanisms which operate to counteract these biases, an example of this would the use of facilitators or moderators during deliberation to monitor and bring attention to participant's statements being disregarded on the basis of lacking speech privilege (Bächtiger et al., 2018). This recommendation, as well as ones which address other critiques against participation and deliberation, will be assessed in the next section.

This chapter has discussed the power imbalances between participants which can lead to ineffective participation in deliberative democracies and participatory development interventions. Two main challenges were explored, the "getting everyone to the table" challenge, in which there are social and physical barriers which inhibit representation of marginalised groups, and the "allowing everyone to be heard" challenge, which explored the ways in which people who appear to be participating have their contributions marginalised by other participants.

Recommendations for Mitigating Power Imbalances

In this dissertation so far, I have summarised participatory development, deliberative democracy and INGOs' role in international development. I then highlighted imbalances of power between INGOs and benefactors (epistemic injustice, implicit control, experiences and expectations), and between participants (the problems of getting everyone to the table and allowing everyone to be heard). Throughout I have suggested how the deliberative democracy literature can shed light on these problems. In this section, I will draw on resolutions to the critiques against deliberative democracy in order to resolve those against participatory development and formulate my own suggestions as to how INGOs can alter their use of participatory methods to facilitate genuine facilitation.

Rethinking Participation

Gaventa and Pettit (2010) emphasise the importance of having a clear meaning of participation as a concept and describe it as "a value-laden and contested political concept, not simply a method or technique" and highlight how its expressions change in different contexts (Gaventa & Pettit, 2010). In this section, I will argue that part of this meaning must include conceptualising participation as an end rather than a means in development interventions, making it a goal

rather than just a tool. I argue in favour of participation as an end rather than a means in order to avoid the epistemic objectification of participants. I will then go on to argue that thinking of participation as the goal of interventions requires multiple forms of participation, which should mitigate the inclusionary control critique made by Kothari.

In order to avoid the epistemic objectification of participants, I argue in favour of viewing participation as an end rather than a means, meaning participation should be viewed as the goal of a development intervention rather than just a tool. I put forth that participation being used as a means for development interventions can easily result in the epistemic objectification of participants by consulting with them only in order to inform the interventions. When participation is thought of as the goal of an intervention rather than just as a tool, then beneficiaries are not reduced to being mere sources of data, but acknowledged as vital contributors to informed decision-making and meaningful change. By reframing participation in this way, organisations can refer to the expertise participants have in their own experiences without objectifying them.

Thinking of participation as a goal requires multiple, flexible opportunities for participation in order for that goal to be realistic. Having various forms of participation opportunities can help mitigate Kothari's idea of "inclusionary control" in which participants are only included in decision-making in a coercive manner. This is because when development practitioners have the ability to dictate strict forms and degrees of participation, then indeed this is reducing control for the participants. However, is it true participation if participants do not have autonomy in how they participate? Is it not contradictory to value participation for valuing autonomy and self-determination while also having strict forms of participation which participants are expected to adhere to? I propose flexible forms of participation which can allow for people of different abilities and resources to contribute in whatever way they wish. By this, I mean that

communities should be able to contribute to the decision-making process of an INGO at multiple stages and levels in the design, implementation and evaluation of development interventions.

While it is true that offering multiple, flexible forms of participation may present certain challenges and require additional resources, it is an essential step toward achieving genuine participation development interventions and avoiding implicit control from INGOs. By providing various avenues for engagement at multiple stages in the development and execution of an intervention, INGOs can ensure that people are participating on their own terms and not the organisations'. This may involve investing additional resources such as time, funding and capacity building, but the benefits of inclusive, genuine participation far outweigh these additional costs. I would even argue that these should not be conceptualised as "additional costs", because ultimately, the investment in multiple channels of participation is a necessary commitment in mitigating power imbalances and promoting authentic and transformative development outcomes.

How to Get Everyone to the Table

The issue of representation, which I identified earlier as being present in both deliberative processes and participatory development, is incredibly important to resolve. Jane Mansbridge (2018) has argued that in deliberative democracies fraught with power dynamics and oppression, descriptive representation of a community should be prioritised, even at the expense of efficiency. I argue that this should also be true for participatory development, we should prioritise the representation of groups in a community who are marginalised and have less social power.

Representation of women or other groups which are normally under-represented can be increased through targeted recruitment, but there are important considerations which must be made which may impact the quality of participation. For example, self-selection aligns with the participatory ideal of self-determination, but often results in favouring those in a community with social power, while random sample allocation would allow for the targeted recruitment of women and other groups with less social power. It is possible to blend these recruitment strategies, by targeting certain social groups with information about participation opportunities in order to encourage them to join more than the groups who already hold social power (Fung, 2003). We should take arguments in favour of affirmative action to include women in participatory development intervention seriously (such as from Mayoux, 1995) and apply this thinking to other disadvantaged social groups. The assumption should be that accommodations will have to be made in order to achieve representation of marginalised groups. Similar to my recommendation of having multiple, flexible forms of participation, this should not be viewed as an "additional cost", but as an intrinsic part of any development intervention. Interventions aim to increase well being and disadvantaged social groups should therefore be at the forefront of the design and not an afterthought that turns into an "additional cost"

It is also important to note that recruitment should not just be limited to inviting these groups to participate at a higher rate than the groups who are more likely to participate. As I have shown, there are obstacles which inhibit some groups' capacity for participation which extend beyond given the opportunity to participate. I argue in favour of accommodation, not just representation, when inviting groups facing obstacles to participate. INGOs can try to account for these obstacles, such as by allowing children to join in order to allow their mothers to participate, by providing transportation to and from the site where participation takes place or by physically taking the opportunity for participation to the people who struggle to access it.

Moderation

The challenge of allowing everyone to be heard in deliberative democracies is generally argued to be mitigated through moderation (Pierce, Neeley, & Budziak, 2008; Siu, 2009; Smith, 2009; Bächtiger et al., 2018). In this section, I will outline why moderation is used in deliberative democracies and discuss whether and how this principle can be applied to participatory development.

In deliberative processes, creating structured, facilitated discussions has been argued to mitigate many of the critiques about people being excluded on the basis of their speaking styles, powerful actors dominating the deliberation process and self-silencing. Moderators are able to identify which participants in a deliberative process are not speaking or being heard and facilitate the discussion in such a way which amplifies these voices. In a deliberative democracy, it intuitively makes sense to have a moderator because deliberative processes are conversations in a group setting, but in participatory development it's a far more practical process. Participatory development is more than just discussing agendas, there are a variety of realms in which organisations can include benefactors as participants in the design, implementation and evaluation of a project. It is tempting to recommend moderation as a way to allow everyone to be heard in participatory interventions, but what would moderating participation even look like when it is not just people sitting around discussing something, but various forms and opportunities for including people in decision-making processes? If the purpose of moderation is to prevent domination by higher educated participants, encourage those who are less likely to voice their opinions to speak up and to be inclusive as possible (Mansbridge, 2010) then we need to take the principles of avoiding domination, encouragement and inclusion and apply them to moderating participatory development.

So far, I have argued in favour of moderating participation, however, the use of moderation and facilitation should be approached carefully by INGOs because an important question must first be answered: who moderates? If the moderator role is taken on by INGO workers, it would be difficult for this moderator to be viewed as impartial by participants or not to fall victim to speech valuation themselves. Alternatively, moderators can be trained within the community to facilitate the participation processes. Moderation happening from within the community could pose an additional benefit because when moderators are members of marginalised groups, those groups' participation quality increases (for example, female moderation in deliberative democracies increases the likelihood of women participating fully) (Harris et. al., 2021). This should also be approached carefully, as there is a high possibility that the members of a community who would volunteer for such a position would be the ones who the participation process already favours: powerful individuals. Ideally, moderators would be representative of marginalised groups as this contributes to effective moderation and mitigates self-silencing (Karpowitz, Mandelberg & Shaker, 2012). This brings me to an additional recommendation for organisations researching communities in order to identify power dynamics within a community.

I propose that organisations researching communities before launching development interventions can mitigate many of the power processes that inhibit genuine participation. Organisations can learn about the socio-political landscape and can inform the existence of power dynamics which exist between participants. By doing so, organisations can make extra efforts to include members of the community with less social power who typically would have been left out of participatory development interventions. Moderators being aware of the members of the community who have less social power can account for this while facilitating processes in order to ensure that further marginalisation is not taking place. Additionally, organisations taking time to research a community, their previous experiences, needs and expectations before starting any type of development intervention can help address the critique

of expectations stemming from previous experiences participants have with INGOs. However, an important part of my recommendation for research is that participatory research methods in which community members are asked directly may not be suitable. This is because INGOs asking people directly about their levels of trust toward them is unlikely to be an effective method of learning about the communities attitudes toward INGOs and development in general. I recommend that where possible, INGOs connect with local organisations, academics and community leaders in order to learn about the county's previous experiences with development interventions as well as the social processes in place.

Gender Mainstreaming

I have shown throughout this paper that gender interacts with participation and deliberation in various ways, such as in lacking representation of women or female testimony being unheard. Gender also has been shown to intersect with other marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities. Because of gender's impact on deliberation and participation, I recommend that a gender mainstreaming approach is taken when designing participatory interventions. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for theory development, promoting equality by highlighting the gendered differences in the nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes (Walby, 2005). Taking a gender mainstreaming approach to philosophical or political debate requires taking considerations for how gender interacts with various processes at every stage of argumentation and development. All decisions made under a gender mainstreaming approach should be done so while understanding the various ways in which the construct of gender interacts with social, political and cultural processes to affect the contexts in which people carry out these decisions. While interventions which specifically and solely focus on women's experiences and health are indeed necessary and valuable, an affirmative approach in which women's inclusion is made an inherent priority in all development would be a necessary addition to the field. Because

feminism aims to benefit everyone and not just women, a feminist approach is not only suitable, but necessary throughout all development interventions, rather than only in ones which focus on women's wellbeing.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the intersection of participatory development and deliberative democracy, drawing on critiques of deliberative democracy to identify ways in which participatory methods can be improved to facilitate genuine participation. Through an exploration of the power dynamics between international NGOs and their benefactors, it was identified that epistemic objectification, implicit control and expectations were potential pitfalls of participatory methods. In the chapter regarding power dynamics between participants, issues of representation and speech valuation were identified as obstacles in facilitating genuine participation. Addressing power imbalances, particularly ones affecting marginalised groups, has been shown to be of the utmost importance when designing and implementing inclusive and equitable participation.

The recommendations made in this paper emphasise the need to prioritise the voices of disadvantaged groups while also promoting flexibility in participatory processes to avoid the pitfalls of inclusionary control. Furthermore, I have argued in favour of recognising participation as an end in itself rather than a means to inform interventions, in order to further avoid inclusionary control as well as the epistemic objectification of participants. To overcome power dynamics between participants, moderation has been identified as a key strategy, but ways this can be applied to participatory development should be researched further. In general however, the ideals of a moderator promoting dialogue and creating space for equitable discussion can be used to mitigate power imbalances which may otherwise reduce the quality of participation

and moderators can also enhance inclusivity. It was also recommended that INGOs research communities before commencing their interventions in order to familiarise themselves with their history working with other INGOs and development actors, social dynamics and needs. Finally, I emphasised the importance of gender mainstreaming in order to ensure that women are considered and involved at every stage of development interventions.

In conclusion, this paper has highlighted the need for a nuanced understanding of power dynamics, inclusive practices, and a shift in perspectives to foster genuine and transformative participation in development programs. By adopting the recommendations outlined here, international NGOs and other actors can work towards creating more inclusive, equitable, and impactful development initiatives.

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