



**Chronic Poverty**  
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## Government through time: participation and poverty reduction in Tanzania

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### What is Chronic Poverty?

The distinguishing feature of chronic poverty is extended duration in absolute poverty.

Therefore, chronically poor people always, or usually, live below a poverty line, which is normally defined in terms of a money indicator (e.g. consumption, income, etc.), but could also be defined in terms of wider or subjective aspects of deprivation.

This is different from the transitorily poor, who move in and out of poverty, or only occasionally fall below the poverty line.

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## The Government of Poverty: from the politics of exclusion to the politics of citizenship?

The papers in this series have been undertaken as part of the 'Government of Chronic Poverty' project within the 'Adverse Incorporation and Social Exclusion' theme within the Chronic Poverty Research Centre. Amongst other things, this theme is concerned with the politics of efforts to tackle structural forms of chronic poverty.<sup>1</sup> Although each of the papers in this series engages with a different country context and policy issue, they all frame contemporary efforts to reduce chronic poverty as essentially *political* efforts to (re)govern the relationships between the trustees of development and poor citizens caught within processes of adverse incorporation and social exclusion. From this perspective they ask whether contemporary development interventions and actors, within what critics have termed the era of 'inclusive liberalism', necessarily depoliticise the task of reducing structural forms of poverty, or whether they are capable of empowering chronically poor people as rights-bearing citizens. While each paper makes clear that the answers to this question are highly contextualised, the synthesis paper seeks to draw out the comparative and broader implications of these studies for efforts to understand and challenge chronic poverty.

### Abstract

This paper examines the relation between government and poverty in Tanzania through the medium of participation. Participatory approaches are institutionalised as the way in which communities are brought into relations with the state and with national policies such as the reduction of poverty. Participatory approaches are not necessarily effective as a means of planning for development outcomes at local level, nor as a means through which communities can be made responsible for development in practice. Institutions through which participation is organised are popular with rural dwellers because they provide a space for the performance of village citizenship. They perform important work representationally in constituting the local as an object of development and local persons as afflicted by and responsible for poverty.

**Keywords:** participation, poverty reduction, local government, Tanzania

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<sup>1</sup> See Hickey and du Toit (2007), 'Adverse incorporation, social exclusion and chronic poverty', CPRC working paper 81. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.



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## 1 Introduction

The government of Tanzania has recently introduced participatory planning into the local government system through its ongoing programme of local government reform. Opportunities and Obstacles to Development (O and OD) is used for the production of village plans in the district planning cycle. The institutional forms through which participation occurs are oriented towards the production of a range of knowledge products legitimated through the performance of consensus. Products include reports of community situations, action plans and assessments, which set out checklists of priority problems and interventions within a simplified matrix of cause and effect. These enable the pursuit of a certain kind of rational government in which what is counted as participatory knowledge becomes a key driver of political direction, at the same time as what are categorised as participatory institutions constitute both community and citizen-participant as core organisational categories of the 'built moral environment' (Bowker and Star, 1999: 326) of government in action. New modalities for popular participation in the preparation of development plans in rural communities are significant not because they enable the involvement of more people in democratic processes, nor for the extent to which they actualise the 'responsibilisation' of communities for development, hence conforming to the expectations of the analytic of neo-liberal governmentality (Amin, 2005: 619; Rose, 1996: 57; 1999, 172; 2000: 1400). The extent of participation is less significant than the ways in which institutions claimed as participatory and the knowledge practices they promote establish apparently governable relations between poverty and development.

Participatory planning institutions and practices do not simply facilitate the production of local knowledge, or the engagement of communities in what is naturalistically assumed to be the development process. They establish an apparently governable relation between development and poverty through the manipulation of time. By locating development in the future to be actualised through required inputs specified in the plans submitted to local government, they defer responsibility for development and situate rural communities, by extension the poor, at a tangent to time. This situation in which time has yet to operate as a factor in the development process is analogous to representations of chronic poverty in which individuals, households and communities are perceived as trapped in poverty for extensive periods, even generations. It is also evoked in representations of 'traditional' society resistant to modernity and in which contemporary practice is legitimated with reference to the past (Fabian, 1983; Green, 2008; Massey, 2005; Pigg, 1997). Such representational elisions associating poverty with the 'unmodern' converge with popular discourses of being 'left behind' and the 'not yet' nature of development experienced by people in communities so peripheralised whose prime experience of development is of exclusion from it (Chakrabarty, 2000; Pigg, 1992). In the bureaucratic culture of government officials in Tanzania who persistently see themselves as vanguards of modernisation, rural



dwellers continue to be associated with resistance to progress, whereas villagers themselves speak of 'going backwards' (*-rudi nyuma*) as the benefits of development escape them (Green, 2000; Schneider, 2007).

## 2 Towards an anthropology of government

Local government reform is an internationally funded programme of decentralisation by devolution (D by D) which is intended to contribute the reduction of poverty.<sup>2</sup> Similar in content and approach to the wave of ongoing governance reforms in countries categorised as developing (Ndegwa and Grandvoinnet, nd), the Tanzania programme features core elements of the neo-liberal policy agenda (Harrison, 2008; Kelsall, 2003; Lange, 2008). Decentralisation, citizen empowerment and enhanced accountability as objectives of the reform process are the instruments through which the assumed link between services and poverty will be addressed. In prioritising accountability and audit as the basis of reformed governance, such programmes fit well within the analytical frame of sociological approaches to understanding the rationalities and technologies of neo-liberal government (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1996; 1999; Miller and Rose, 1990). These approaches, deriving from the work of Michel Foucault on governmentality (2000) and elaborated by Nikolas Rose and others, highlight the importance of a distinct set of institutional practices for effecting this particular kind of governance. Government from this perspective is not a property solely of the state or of formal government institutions, but refers to a set of 'more or less rationalized schemes, programmes, techniques and devices which seek to shape conduct so as to achieve certain ends' (Rose, 1999: 3).

Strategies of liberal government seek to disperse governing through a range of responsible institutions. Audit, budgetary control and evaluation are core practices of neo-liberal governing because they permit institutions to organise themselves in conformity with higher-level objectives. Participation, citizen engagement and community are core concepts of neo-liberal governmentality because they enable the distribution of governance responsibilities onto different agents (Rose, 1999). Reforms in local governance effect this distribution through devolution and decentralisation, and through the promotion of citizen and community responsibility. Technologies of 'invited participation' (Cornwall, 2006) and community-based planning are central to this endeavour. Institutions such as O and OD do not merely enable the formal inclusion of community perspectives into processes of government. They enact both community and governing within the system of local governance, in the process providing a forum for the engaged performance of community and citizenship. Moreover, in

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<sup>2</sup> For the core principles of the reform programme see the 1998 Policy Paper on Local Government Reform (MORALG, 1998).

establishing a chain of cause and effect relations as the basis of simplified community development plans, participatory processes posit a particular set of relationships between poverty and development, between rural communities and central government and between present and future.

An exploration of participatory institutions in the Tanzanian local government system could be interpreted within the normative terms of the good governance agenda, as a positive intervention which will enable people to participate in development planning at district and sub-district level with subsequent improvements in the quality and relevance of locally delivered services. Alternatively, participatory institutions could be explored from within a governmentality analytic as a technology of neo-liberal government. The problem with either of these interpretations is that they assume the place of participatory institutions in relation to other practices and to systems of government. Participation is linked to citizenship or empowerment or accountability, and more or less participation is assumed to be the fundamental aspect of institutions classified as 'participatory' (Robins, *et al.*, 2008). Assumptions about the effects of participatory institutions on citizenship, empowerment and the relevance and effectiveness of interventions have been critically interrogated by an expanding development studies literature.<sup>3</sup> As institutions enmeshed in structures of power and through which power is utilised to reallocate resources, often inequitably, particularly in the context of development projects, participatory institutions are paradigmatic instruments of government, whether inside or outside formal government institutions.

Approaches to participatory institutions within development disciplines have tended to focus either on their relation to government as a system of as power or on issues of governance, that is, on the problematic of participation in relation to citizen representation and decision making. More and better participation is presented as the key to development effectiveness and the reduction of poverty (e.g. Brett, 2003; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hickey and Mohan, 2005). This analysis is certainly valid where participatory structures and the engagement of those categorised as citizens leads to increased control by and accountability to the poor of services and entitlements. However, participatory approaches to implementation are far less common in practice than the more usual frontloading of participation to problem identification and the design of interventions. Confined to specialised institutions that occupy a transient place in the life of a location or intervention, participation here has very different political consequences than when citizens have oversight of the actual deployment of resources. In these situations, participation in the sense of the extent and scope of citizen engagement may be of less significance than other effects of participatory institutions. These effects are occluded in current approaches which, whether influenced by either governance approaches

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<sup>3</sup> Of these, the best known are perhaps Cooke and Kothari (2001) and Hickey and Mohan (2005). For a critical appraisal of this literature see Kesby (2005).



or theories of governmentality, consider participatory institutions in terms of either citizen engagement or accountability.

Adopting an anthropological approach that focuses on the practices through which social worlds are actively constituted and reconstituted rather than on the functioning or otherwise of assumed systems within a governance paradigm, I examine the place of participatory planning in framing the relation between government and development in Tanzania, and hence between popular action and the reduction of poverty. A focus on participatory institutions in relation to an underplayed dimension of government, that of establishing relations between institutions and objects of intervention (Foucault, 2000), brings a different set of issues into view. In establishing relations between problems and solutions, and between different levels of government, participatory institutions for planning at lower local government in Tanzania consolidate poverty as a characteristic of the very communities that are expected to participate in reformed planning processes. This occurs through an emphasis on standardised knowledge production processes which establish development as a projected outcome of local strategies in relation to external inputs provided by central government or donors over time. The absence of external inputs legitimates local claims to undevelopment, based on the relation of local communities not only to time but also to international assistance and to central government.

Systems and practices of government, and of governments, depend on complex cultural repertoires of convention and meaning. Foucault's concept of governmentality was intended to convey the specific rationalities that not only are associated with particular modes of government, but also make them possible (Foucault, 2000: 201-22; Lemke, 2001; Rose, 1996; 1999; Rose *et al.*, 2006). Governing for Foucault is a problem of order. Order is not a state that can be apprehended as static, but an outcome of the process and practices through which things are ordered and reordered according to particular systems of meaning (Law, 1994). Government as 'the right disposition' of people and things is therefore a matter of ordering. The concern of government is not with things themselves, but with the relations between them, which must be managed optimally so as to achieve calculated objectives (Foucault, 2000:208-09). Governing as the practice of enacting government implies conceptualising these relations. Consequently, government as a practice of order and relations becomes a privileged site for anthropological investigation.





### 3 Government and governance

An anthropological approach to the practice of government confronts the political constitution of the categories through which government is effected through a focus on practices and relations. This contrasts with approaches to government from those disciplines, notably political science and sociology, which have had a greater influence on development studies. An expansive body of work within the social sciences now explores the systemic nature of relations between core categories of liberal government. Miller and Rose (1990), among others (Lemke, 2001; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Swyngedouw, 2005) have highlighted the centrality of market models in governing the social and in the management of government. Technologies of representation, calculation and comparison enable certain practices, making possible the distribution of control and hence the extension of governable space through the capacity to effect domination 'at a distance' (Latour, 1990: 56). This kind of governing through surveillance and regulation is not a simple matter of the imposition of systems of power on subjects of government. Governability demands the constitution of associated subjectivities. In the view of Rose and others, technologies of subjectivity in advanced liberalism enable persons as individuals to govern themselves through freedom (Cruikshank, 1996; Dean, 1999; Rose 1996; 1999). Technologies of governance within neo-liberal rationalities of government, as encompassed by the enterprise analogy, are intended to facilitate the increased responsibilities of the subjects of government. Notions of citizenship, responsibility, community, partnership, choice and empowerment operate within these representations to establish the proper relations between governing and governed as consensual, democratic and distributed despite their verticality (Amin, 2005; Craig and Porter, 2006; Rose, 2000; Swyngedouw, 2005).

The analytic of governmentality is useful in highlighting some features of extant systems of government yet despite claims to critical objectivity is in a double bind. Its interrogation of systems of government remains firmly located within the categorical frame established as constituting the system itself. Such approaches offer a normative description of components of systems of government. They have difficulty in stepping beyond them. Both government lens and its object are contained within a single discursive frame (Riles, 2001). While this yields insights into the ways in which institutions and practices can be seen to work together to form systems of government, it tends to homogenise government across time and space (Peck, 2004; Watts, 2003). Institutions which seem to recur in different places and at different times are seen to achieve the same effects because they are part of a system of government, either in relation to other aspects of the government system or in terms of their assumed effects on subjects of government (Kipnis, 2008).<sup>4</sup> Inconsistencies in operation on the ground

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<sup>4</sup> For critiques about the assumed functioning of neo-liberal governmentalities and the totalisation of neo-liberal modes of government, see Peck (2004), Peck and Tickell (2002) and Watts (2003).



are interpreted as either a problematic of governance systems, hence the emphasis by policymakers on audit and accountability as the means to improve government's functioning, or as emergent moments in a transition towards a more integrated system through the expansion of neo-liberal hegemony, the process of what the geographer Jamie Peck has termed 'neo-liberalisation' (2004; Peck and Tickell, 2002).<sup>5</sup>

Development disciplines in particular have adopted these positions, taking categories of government not only as categories of analysis but, within the governance discourse, as the normative end points of future government strategies. Concepts of participation, citizenship and equity become the lens through which social practice is analysed and normative targets for future practice, largely irrespective of the extent to which such categories have salience for those who are the subjects of the development endeavour (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hickey and Mohan, 2005). That this is the case is not surprising. Development and cognate disciplines are implicated in the broader project of government as a future-oriented strategy for improving the situation of populations. Governmentalities, governance systems and the practices of actual governments come to be representationally aligned in this developmental vision and the institution building it supports.<sup>6</sup> Of course, politics in 'most of the world' does not conform to the expectations of normative governance ordering (Chatterjee, 2004). Neither those constituted as citizens nor their subjectivities simply adapt themselves to the modalities of neo-liberal governing. They may not do so in the global North either. The seeming appearance of congruence comes about because there is simply greater overlap between people's own organisational models and the macro-level models marshalled in efforts to order and explain their behaviour (Callon and Latour, 1981). Sometimes, achieving this overlap is sought as a matter of strategy by those seeking to access emerging opportunities created by new government frameworks. For example, concepts of citizenship and participation provide new models for being governed in India which provide entry points for the previously excluded (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005). Activists assuming a new political status and personal identity as 'gay' in transitional South Africa strove to exploit the institutional spaces created through globalising human rights discourses to permit new ways of embodying gendered sexuality (Donham, 1998).

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<sup>5</sup> In fact, Peck and Tickell (2002: 395) point out that there is no end point in neo-liberalisation, no point at which a more or less pure form of neo-liberal government is created. Neo-liberalisation is always a process, throwing up 'emergent forms of statecraft and governmentality'. The emergent characteristics of neo-liberal governmentality owe much, as Rose has argued, to the preoccupation with improvement and evaluation associated with the technical and programmatic aspects of government (1996; 1999).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example the UN Development Program's 2006 Governance for the Future or the UK 2007 White Paper on International Development, Making Governance Work for the Poor and Tanzania's own (1999) National Framework on Good Governance.

Despite the claims to universality conveyed by the liberal conception of citizenship as an attribute of rights-bearing individuals who can actively claim such rights from political authorities, the concept operates in political zones that are highly restricted (Chatterjee, 2004; Robins, *et al.*, 2008). Where related categories such as civil society and community come into being through recognition within reforming political systems in some countries, other institutions continue their simultaneous evolution as players in relations not only with government but also with a range of other actors. Effectiveness as a political actor, or indeed as a social actor more generally (see Callon, 1986), is not determined by conformity to the categories of discourses of governance or of government, but depends on capacity to achieve political effects. Different kinds of agents can act politically depending on the constellations of institutions and power that provide or curtail political opportunity. What constitutes a political act depends on whether certain acts of ordering and separation come to impose or confront existing orders of relations. If, as Law and Mol (2008) propose, sorting out the kinds of food waste that could become pig feed after the restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of foot and mouth disease in the UK is best perceived as an act of politics rather than the implementation of policy because, in categorising suitability for feed on the basis of country of origin, it reiterates separations between national economies and industries, it follows that political acts and political actors are not confined within the boundaries of political institutions. Social actors are multiply engaged across diverse communities of practice (Wenger, 1988) and through different models of organising (Mol, 2003) which are not intrinsically systemic. Boundaries and formalisation have to be endlessly imposed onto practices and categorisations to create the appearance of systems (Bowker and Star, 1999).

## 4 Systematising relations

Government practices of the kind described by Miller and Rose are concerned primarily with the creation of systems through which relations are realised and hence become objects of intervention amenable to the practices of government (Rose, 1999; Miller, 1990; Miller and Rose, 1990). Governing relations – between people and people, people and things, people and territory – permits relations to be specified in terms of outcomes over time. Cause and effect, planning and budgeting and a specific construction of time become key modalities for improving outcomes and hence for rendering development the project of government. Government through the ‘will to improve’ is institutionally predisposed towards development (Li, 2007a). Government is not only concerned with managing what it has now. It is essentially forward looking, looking towards the optimisation of the human, natural and economic resources within its boundaries. The aspiration of modern forms of government to make ‘reality programmable’ (Miller and Rose, 1990: 4) requires a degree of fixity and formalisation in concepts and institutions, a level of institutional predictability (Guyer, 2004). The current focus on governance reforms is largely about the formalisation of systems and institutions which can be brought into the ambit of government, not merely within the sphere



of government action but in the sense of making possible the relations of instrumentality without which programming is impossible. In the current drive to transform the states of countries and populations in Africa under the development banner, formalisation logically becomes 'the modern state's counterpart to conversion' (ibid: 155).

Developmental government makes use of conceptual models and management representations which are premised in various ways on dealing with the problems of temporality. While studies in the governmentality tradition have highlighted the salience of calculation, strategies and audit to contemporary governance, they have underplayed the significance of representations of time.<sup>7</sup> In the kind of governmentality Rose and others describe, time matters as a future point where targets can be achieved. Current practices are structured through the need to meet targets in future, so management concerns itself with an end point from which what has been done will be retrospectively evaluated. Evaluations provide the starting point for new targets and strategies within identical linear trajectories. A particular notion of time is foundational to the transformative trajectories of progressive government. Growth and investment operate through management in time. Economic management relies on incremental time not as 'a model of but as a model for ... it purports to fix conditions for the future' (Guyer, 2004:159). Time imaged in increments permits convertibility into other units of value, enabling returns to be calculated. Calculative management technologies and strategies entail time-bound end and beginning points. Measures of efficiency and effectiveness depend on time-bound targets and indicators of achievement, of which the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a paradigmatic example (Hulme, 2007).

The time against which targets are to be achieved is a backdrop against which strategies come to fruition, an axis in an economic equation (Guyer, 2004) which makes growth possible. Institutional formalisation is necessary for such models to have traction (ibid). Time and space are conjoined in these representations. The places requiring development and those residing in them are situated outside developmental time (Massey, 2005). To make time work and to bring them into development, these places and the people who live there need to be brought into project time. Incorporation into plans is incorporation into development and into project time as economic time for the fruition of strategies and plans. This is achieved through the surveys and assessments that are the baseline for programmatic improvement and the techniques of inclusion within development programming

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<sup>7</sup> There is one exception to this general statement, namely, the understanding of risk. Governmentality studies have viewed risk and insurance and technologies for addressing the future and managing it (Ewald, 1991; O'Malley, 1996). Surprisingly they have paid less attention to economics. Recent sociological studies of economics are largely in the domain of science and technology studies, e.g. Callon's (1998) *The Laws of the Markets*, Knorr Cetina and Preda's (2006) *The Sociology of Financial Markets*, and the recent *Do Economists Make Markets* (Mackenzie *et al.*, 2007).



that bring people practically into the development project as social organisations (Craig and Porter, 1997). Time in these representations is the ‘empty homogenous time’ imagined by the philosopher Walter Benjamin, time imagined as a blank sheet awaiting the future’s inscription. It is this representation of time that enables the historicism that underlies development and government (Chakrabarty, 2000; Chatterjee, 2004). Linear, progressive and manageable time is what planning work seeks to establish so that it can be placed into an instrumental relationship with the missing link, the input that will be the catalyst for development. Participatory planning practices in the Tanzanian local government system, as in development settings elsewhere, prioritise the identification of development catalysts – the instrumental effects of which will in time produce poverty-reducing outcomes.

## 5 Local government reform in Tanzania

In a situation where resource constraints limit what local government can do, and where local populations are reluctant to invest in government-managed public goods, governing is not so much concerned with the programmatic management of finance against outputs through time in the neo-liberal model, and hence with budget, audit and evaluation (Harrison, 2001; 2008; Kelsall, 2003), as with as with planning as speculation on future programmes. And, as when the national government faced similar constraints in the early post-colonial period and during socialism, planning practices assume disproportionate cultural significance, as an activity through which national futures are imagined and structural differentiations between planners and the planned for can be articulated (Schneider, 2007). Decentralisation in practice often entails increased responsibility without an increase in resources, a greater proportion of which have to be generated locally (Harrison, 2008; Pallotti, 2008; Taylor, 2007). Decentralisation in Tanzania puts increasing pressure on local governments at the same time as the system itself is expanding, involving greater numbers of people as members of the proliferating committee structures that supplement village councils.<sup>8</sup> In this situation, planning becomes increasingly important, not merely as the means through which different levels of government are integrated into the state, but also as the modality through which responsible citizenship is enacted.<sup>9</sup>

A spatialised state organised through vertical tiers (Gupta and Ferguson, 2002), from hamlet through village, ward, division, district and region, Tanzania has formally shifted from a centralised polity in which power was directed downwards, to one in which power is

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<sup>8</sup> The number of districts has also proliferated during the reform process, resulting in a large number of small local authorities, many of which have populations of under 1 million.

<sup>9</sup> Planning has long been associated with the project of nation building and participation with citizenship in Tanzania, since the first years of Nyerere’s presidency in the 1960s (Jennings, 2007). Whereas previously participation was an act of citizenship, largely through self-help initiatives, participatory planning comes to assume an equivalent place in the repertoire of citizen performance.

decentralised through a decade-long programme of local government reform.<sup>10</sup> D by D is an ambitious project which aims to transform the lines of power in the country through the devolution of responsibility, finance and functions to the lowest possible level (MORALG, 1998; URT, 1996). This has entailed devolution of financial responsibility to districts and an increasing shift towards greater powers for villages and wards, the institutions that comprise lower local government (Harrison, 2008). The programme has also invested heavily in institutional practices around accountability, financial management and audit (Green, 2003; Harrison, 2001; 2008). Operating in conjunction with major sector programmes across core public services, evaluations of the reform programme suggest that it is contributing to substantial improvement in the functioning of local authorities and service delivery (PMORALG, 2007).

As an archetypical local government reform programme conceived in the 1990s, decentralisation in Tanzania comprises many elements associated with neo-liberalised governance systems – public-private partnerships and an emphasis on efficiency, accountability and community participation (Craig and Porter, 2006; Lange, 2008). Reforms in this programme, as in analogous reform programmes elsewhere, do not entail wholesale redesign of the local government system. Existing elements of the system are simply reorganised in terms of their relation with each other (Falk Moore, 2001). The basic structure of local government established in 1972 remains in place. Moreover, both devolution and participation in various forms have characterised successive local government modifications in Tanzania since before the end of the colonial period (Falk Moore, 1977; Jennings, 2003; 2007; Marsland, 2006).

Limited institutional innovations affecting the way that lower local government links to higher tiers have been introduced through the reform programme. These centre on the functioning of ward development committees, the remit of ward executive officers and the role and contribution of district councillors. Lower tiers of government, districts and villages, have substantially greater financial responsibility than previously (Lund, 2007), while higher tiers are correspondingly disempowered. Despite the increasing effectiveness of district councillors as elected representatives of the several villages in their wards, the influence of district technical staff and the loyalties of councillors to their own villages remain strong. The longstanding verticality of the lower local government financing process is preserved through the reformed system in which plans and budgets are submitted upwards (Harrison, 2008; Jennings, 2003). Ward development committees continue to play a key role in determining which locally planned-for priorities get passed upwards for inclusion in district plans.

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<sup>10</sup> The formal programme ended in 2008 but the objectives of decentralisation by devolution (D by D) are ongoing as a mainstreamed set of activities within the Ministry of Regional Administration and Local Government (MORALG).

Inclusion in plans is no guarantee of funding. As district staff are keen to remind those who ask why, there is such an evident disjuncture between what villages plan and what villages get: planning is different to budgeting and budgeting is different to implementation.

While planning through vertical committee structures has long been part of the performative structure of the nation state, in which local plans are formally incorporated into the processes of district and regional plan making (Falk Moore, 1977; Jennings, 2003; 2007; Rigby, 1977; Schneider, 2007), the reform programme has not only accentuated the importance of planning as a government technology. It has also, as a programme financed through donor money and associated with the ways of doing characteristic of development projects, formally introduced participatory planning into the local government system.<sup>11</sup> Claimed as a home-grown system of participatory planning and democratic inclusion, O and OD is based on a standard portfolio of techniques and organisational structures derived from established styles of participatory development practice of which the best known are PLA and PRA, participatory rural appraisal and participatory learning and action (Green, 2000).<sup>12</sup> Despite ideologically motivated claims to differentiation by practitioners on the basis of the extent of genuine involvement by communities, PRA, PLA and participatory action research are closely related in terms of practices and organisation. They centre on the organisation of knowing as a collaborative project between facilitators and participants, so that participants can assume responsibility for designing or implementing solutions to problems that emerge through the cumulative process of collective knowledge production.

Initially designed by social activists as an iterative and discursive process for a collaborative endeavour based on mutual learning for transformation, participatory approaches have become increasingly formalised as a standardised way of organising development, intended to create consensus around the allocations of roles in projects involving external agencies, local governments or donors and populations occupying the beneficiary position (Hart, 2001). In the example of O and OD, as in the approaches on which it is based, what is presented as a participatory *method* (*mbinu shirikishi*) for the production of community knowledge as the basis of community action is more usefully apprehended as particular kind of government institution (Green, nd). In establishing what can be represented as evident relations between cause and effect, and hence an analysis of what requires intervention, it delineates the very relations of governability. In the Tanzanian context, this has consequences for other kinds of relations between different tiers of government.

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<sup>11</sup> A national framework on participatory planning and budgeting was initially published in 2002 (PORALG, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> For descriptions of participatory methodologies and approaches see Campbell (2001; 2002) and Cornwall and Jewkes (1995).

## 6 Problematising participation in Tanzania

The formal adoption of participatory planning within the Tanzanian local government system may initially appear somewhat radical. First, participatory methodologies are explicitly populist and are historically associated with activism and community empowerment, not only in Tanzania, which are potentially at odds with the orientations of neo-liberalising interpretations (Swyngedouw, 2005). Second, while participatory planning aligns in principle with the objectives of governance reforms in terms of citizen engagement, the model adopted works against other core reform intentions of efficiency and cost effectiveness. Finally, in a post-socialist setting where political liberalisation is relatively new, the adoption of O and OD is radical because it replicates populist methodologies widely associated with civil society organisations (CSOs), notably international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In practice O and OD is far less radical than it first appears. As characterises neo-liberal technologies of government extant in the global policy marketplace more generally, this too is a hybrid comprised of strands of continuity and innovation (Peck, 2004). O and OD as a method for community planning is very similar to other participatory institutions and technologies in use throughout Tanzania, and internationally (Green, 2000; Lange, 2008; Marsland, 2006). Participatory methods were frequently integrated into the various district development programmes that preceded local government reform.<sup>13</sup> They are standard practice across the civil society sector. Innovation here lies in the formal incorporation of participatory practice into the local government system, not as an occasional practice which may or may not be invoked as part of donor-supported reforms, but ideally as a routine institution of government by government. This routinisation enables the integration of participatory methods used in some national programmes, including the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) and the new agriculture sector development programme (Lange, 2008) into the local government system.<sup>14</sup> Given the verticality of governance structures here, this kind of approach, which seeks to actively create community through practice, coalesces with the broader neo-liberalisation vision (Amin, 2005; Craig and Porter, 2006; Rose, 2000).

The formal incorporation of O and OD within the system of local governance builds on the increasing routinisation of participatory techniques in Tanzania, in parallel with their mainstreaming within international development organisations (Brett, 2003; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Hickey and Mohan, 2005). It also perpetuates a policy commitment in Tanzania to participation, not so much as a means of including the public in policymaking as an end in itself. Participation through village councils, committee

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<sup>13</sup> District development programmes funded by Irish Aid and the Dutch government used participatory planning through PRA in their village-level work. For an account of this process in Ulanga district see Green (2000).

<sup>14</sup> And by extension these programmes within the ambit of local government in line with the Local Government Reform agenda, which situates local government as the lead in the implementation and coordination of national development initiatives.



structures and village government is a hallmark of lower local government because of its place within the ideological constitution of the village citizen as the prime agent of national development.<sup>15</sup> Participation was a policy priority for government well before the current governance reforms as a quality associated with what were categorised as specifically participatory institutional forms. Participatory forms included village meetings and structures of village government and ward development committees, in addition to the 'self-help' community contributions (*michango*) to development programmes that village residents were and are required to provide in the form of cash, materials or labour (Jennings, 2007; Marsland, 2006). O and OD is not necessarily more or less participatory than these other local governance institutions in Tanzania. What is new about participatory practice within the reform process is the emphasis on knowledge production via participatory processes as the performance of 'the local' as a unit of government, and the constitution of a form of a novel participatory space as a distinct but intermittent (*cf* Kesby, 2005) political institution within local government.

## 7 Participation as an instructive process

O and OD is a knowledge-producing technology of governance derived from methods routinely used in development to enrol rural people in projects as a community. This involves practical mobilisation, whereby communities are brought into being as political entities, and representational incorporation, whereby the community as beneficiaries and implementers are brought within a project frame, the two processes often occurring simultaneously through the alignment of documentation and organisation within participatory project management (Green, 2003). O and OD, like other participatory approaches, is designed to organise people as participants in a community project through the delineation of community and hence of what constitutes knowledge that is of relevance to it. A set of standardised techniques are called into play for this purpose, which aim to produce a statement of what can be counted as consensual knowledge through the public performance of discourses of causality. These techniques involve the use of performative strategies through which knowledge can be presented as publicly generated, including diagramming and mapping, group discussions, reporting back findings and so on (Campbell, 2000; 2001; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). Some of these techniques, for example timeline mapping, explicitly feature representations of time in relation to place. Generating participatory knowledge in this way through specialised techniques is not self-evident but demands directive facilitation – what Alice Welbourn has termed 'facipulation' (in Kesby, 2005: 2058). Specially trained teams of

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<sup>15</sup> A recent paper from the Tanzanian think tank Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA) exploring participation under local government reform reiterates these ideas, arguing that citizen participation creates a sense of ownership of development projects and community responsibility. Consequently, 'citizen participation is ... critical for democracy and sustainable development and the improvement in the quality of life of society' (Chaligha, 2008:5).

local government staff undertake the core work of organising, of people and techniques, together with community members, who undertake some of the information gathering, working towards the production of community knowledge about problems and solutions which can become the basis for reports of findings. The end point of a participatory process is not the production of information about a community based on local knowledge, which is a stage in the process. It is the production of a plan for future action that can be set into a timeframe, costed and monitored, that is, a framework for project management for the reduction of poverty.

While participatory methods work to produce a representation of knowledge as a community product and thus community as an object of government, these are not the aspects emphasised by those who have engaged as participants. Nor did participants focus on the iterative learning dimensions of participatory approaches, which are emphasised by proponents of transformative participation. The constitution of new subjectivities through critical reflection was not what this kind of participation offered. What it was viewed as was a suitable space for the performance of citizenship as a mode of engaging in the practice of government. Involvement in participatory processes, including O and OD, was seen by villagers as the performance of village citizenship, analogous to participation in village government or a services committee. As such, participation was formal and official, highly structured and hierarchical. Like involvement in other participatory institutions, participant status could legitimately imply recognition in the form of a small allowance, *posho*, as acknowledgement of engagement (Green, 2003). It is therefore not unusual for participatory processes in Tanzania to replicate organisational motifs of village governance. Participatory approaches to village planning may entail the formation of committee structures and hierarchies in the organisation of facilitation and informant teams. They are also likely to be extremely formal, adopting the styles of political discourse associated with official meetings. The official status of participation as an institution of government and participation as a kind of office is reiterated through the ways in which participation is publicly performed in Tanzanian villages. Participatory events may be opened with large formal meetings, with speeches by officials and leaders (see Marsland, 2006).

People who had been involved in participatory processes in villages do liken it to a form of learning, but this experience is different to the conscientisation anticipated within the empowerment discourse of PLA. Participatory sessions frequently take place in village classrooms. Facilitators address groups in styles similar to teaching – directing, in front of the group, asking questions, writing on the board and giving instructions (Marsland, 2006). Participants likened the experience of participation to attending a training session, to being educated (*elimishwa*). As a trainer explained to me in relation to an analogous participatory process carried out in villages through civil society facilitation teams, ‘you start with telling them about the concept of development step by step. Understanding leads to planning and they are happy.’



Participants learn how to participate in a participatory process, that is, how to perform the specialised tasks associated with the exercise – from pair-wise ranking to transect walks. The purpose of these exercises is not to generate new learning and hence produce the unanticipated, but to formalise a kind of knowledge in relation to community as a political category. Community knowledge produced through participatory processes is not new knowledge but a representation of what everybody knows. Reproducing knowledge in a setting associated with learning through the hierarchical enactment of a classroom situation confirms the status of common knowledge as legitimate knowledge, the kind of knowledge that can become officialised as the basis for action through incorporation into official plans. Useful knowledge here is not cumulative in the sense of layered understanding and greater complexity as this develops. Rather it is knowledge pared down to its core components, as each stage of the process renders what is agreed to be categorised as the known less and less contentious (Campbell, 2002; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Li, 2007b; Pain and Francis, 2003).

Perhaps because participatory processes formalises common knowledge rather than produces new knowledge, villagers who have been involved in several successive participatory exercises can find it hard to differentiate between them. ‘Facipulators’ and government officials seek to use participation to produce outputs in the form of plans and budgets. Participants emphasise the process, not so much of moving towards outputs but of participating in the series of events, such as focus groups and meetings, which make participation not so much a process as a series of offices and events and persons. Producing participatory knowledge takes time not because it is complex but because of the necessity of simplification. This works through a process of formalisation as initially fuzzy knowledge is fixed and framed, a shift from open-ended debate to closure, from uncertainty to common knowledge, from contested possibilities to community priorities.<sup>16</sup> Processes which are worked through facilitated consensus and cumulative simplification progressively edit out complexity. Ambiguity is not tolerated by techniques which seek to eliminate ‘blank spaces’ (Campbell, 2002: 25). These findings and priorities are reflected in the written reports that form the basis of village plans and budgets submitted upwards to the next level of the government system. The end points are simple things which can be related to other things, cause and effect, programming possibilities, inputs and outcomes.

Findings from local-level participatory process are designed to situate the local as a locus for development. The process seeks to establish constraints and opportunities for development, determining the possibilities for local inputs to address community deficits and outlining

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<sup>16</sup> This can be seen as analogous to the transition from structure to anti-structure and re-formalisation characteristic of anthropological accounts of publicly legitimated, often highly ritualised knowledge processes (Douglas, 1966; Turner, 1969).



where lacks require investments of a different order. Participatory processes focus on a spatial understanding of local as territorially located, not as situated within broader nexus of influences that impact of livelihoods and choices (e.g. Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Green, 2000; Hart, 2001). Reports produced through these processes present very simple problem analyses based on vertical causal chains, a pollarded problem tree which presents problems and solutions as unilinearly related. Low income in one village is an outcome of poor education, linked in turn to the absence of a village secondary school. In another, poverty is associated with lack of available domestic water and the drain this causes to the potential agricultural productivity of women. In these reports and analyses, public goods are equated with public services – health with dispensaries, education with school buildings, transport with roads within a location. Issues of value, pricing, access, the ways in which residents use facilities across locations and how actual economies work are not brought into the frame. The simple lines of cause and effect in these analyses are partly a consequence of participatory tools which seek to convert problems into solutions, and hence into outputs for project management. They are accentuated by the need to have easy-to-administer techniques that will produce the same effects in village after village within a specified time. Finally, certain effects require certain causes because government policy is poised to recognise them through sector programmes. The policy integration of O and OD in which the goal and purpose of the village plans are derived from the Tanzania Development Vision 2020 ensures that village priorities are subsets of national priorities, which village government contributes to the reduction of national poverty.

## 8 Situating participation

Like other participatory approaches, in actuality particular kinds of social institutions, O and OD locates participatory qualities within a restricted set of institutional forms. These range from structures that facilitate the formal involvement of a selected group of stakeholders in the design and delivery of programmes (the stakeholder workshop, participatory logframe analysis and so on (Green, 2003)), to the institutional architectures intended to organise the relations between researchers and research subjects which characterise participatory research methodologies (Cornwall, 2006; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). Much of the literature on these forms has remained within the governance paradigm and hence focused on the problematic of participation. Studies of ‘participatory’ institutions therefore consider the extent to which such forms facilitate more or less participation, who participates and its political effects (e. g Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hickey and Mohan, 2005; Mosse, 1994). The possibilities for agency claimed for participatory approaches are not inherent in the institutions, but depend on the relation of participatory institutions to the power systems in which they are embedded (Cleaver, 2007; Corbridge *et al.*, 2005; Green, 2000).

Some recent work from outside the government framework moves away from critically assessing the limitations on participation to exploring other effects of these kinds of

institutional forms. By looking at what discursive possibilities are created through the institutional forms associated with varieties of participation where dialogue and open-endedness are emphasised, the geographers Mike Kesby (2005) and Caitlin Cahill (2007) highlight important issues around the nature and content of participation. Where participatory institutions create a temporary space for dialogue tangential to usual power structures, discursive possibilities may open up for participants which may or may not feed through into more routines structures of power, depending on how these are related and on whether the participants are players across both systems. The fact that such spaces are disconnected from power does not, they argue, negate the potentialities of such institutions. Those who take part may find themselves able to discuss issues that could not otherwise be spoken about, with benefits for some participants.

The extent to which such transformative possibilities occur depends on the kinds of issues debated within participatory spaces and the willingness of participants to engage in such discussion. What is of relevance for thinking about participatory institutions in Tanzania is the insight that participation is not at all self-evident, either in relation to wider institutional links or in terms of what is implied by participating, and the importance of open-endedness to people's experience of participatory processes. This presents an interesting contrast with the ways in which participatory approaches are implemented in Tanzania where, although certain stages of the process are open to dialogue and participants' inputs, the orientation is towards fixity and formalisation. This is accentuated by the adherence to a restricted template of tools and forms, and a uniformity of structure, which is directed towards checklists of priorities as the basis for plans. Focus groups, meetings and discussions provide opportunities for ongoing debate, which are brought to a conclusion through managed techniques for prioritisation. The emphasis in such processes is on conclusions and consensus, on the tangible 'take aways' that can be included in documentation (Campbell, 2001; 2002; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995) and materialised in budgeted plans.

O and OD is more than an institution posing as a method. It is a process in time (Kesby, 2005). Time is key to the sequence of getting participatory outputs. This occurs through the duration of the process itself, minimally over several days and often, for PAR and so on, over a couple of weeks.<sup>17</sup> Time is structured differently throughout the participatory process between formalised often public start and end points, in between which groups are reconfigured and different activities take place within a sequence aimed at building cumulative, and hence more convincing, knowledge. The participatory process combines fixity with open-endedness, group dialogues with formal presentations of findings.

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<sup>17</sup> Lange (2008) remarks that a standard TASAF PRA involved between four and five facilitators and took up to five days. O and OD in some districts has taken as many as x days, although this has been reduced in some districts, for example Mbulu, by adapting the methodology and basing the work in fewer villages.

Participation here assumes characteristics of formal instruction and informal dialogue between groups of people who would otherwise not occupy the same discursive space. Participatory process is made to work to a timetable within a more encompassing timeframe, that of the broader project of which it is part. In the example of Tanzanian local governance reform, village-level O and OD is conceptualised as project planning for local development which in turn is nested within district development plans within national development strategies. O and OD takes as its starting point for village work the priority sectoral goals of Tanzania 2020 Development Vision, situating localities within the nation and by extension on the national trajectory of development as a strategy through time. With the right combination of inputs, villages can potentially participate in modernising time. Participation here remains potential as government lacks the resources to meet shortfalls of inputs, and lacks identified through participatory processes, even if they could be addressed, are often not the cause of the underdevelopment of certain villages and locations. Beyond government-established priorities for which funding is already secured, such as the primary school rehabilitation programme, village plans remain largely aspirational. Development remains a project for the future and the village situated temporally and spatially as remote and backwards, or at the very least, not moving forwards, despite the role of villages as drivers of national development. In participating in planning processes, villagers enact their responsible status as citizens who perform the activities of government but reject responsibility for development.

## 9 Why participate?

The use of participatory methods in Tanzania has not been associated with increased development effectiveness, nor with greater relevance in local-level programming. National policy priorities continue to dominate village and district budgets through sector programmes and the recent drive to expand the ward secondary school initiative. Participatory governance is time consuming often to the point of tediousness. Numbers involved frequently tail off over the duration of the process, especially where large group meetings are involved (IDC, 2006). Debates falter. Modes of organisation are contested. There are conflicts over the allowances paid to facilitation staff from districts, key informants and regular villagers. Some are unhappy to be excluded. Others are cynical about the process itself and bemoan the lack of outcomes. Yet, despite these difficulties, not only do participatory institutions have a broad legitimacy in rural Tanzania as an accepted way of doing development and government, they do not lack adequate participants. Even where allowances are low or absent, participation is seriously engaged in as an important activity, despite the lack of tangible outcomes and the imposition of standard templates on village development strategies. In participatory institutions, what seems to matter for participants is the act of taking part, of being involved in the different group activities, often for several days at a time.

Participation as a national obligation of citizenship has been central to the conceptualisation of the village resident since the inception of Nyerere's government, with antecedents in the

colonial discourse of modernisation through self-help and community development. The state in a poor country cannot be expected to provide goods and services for citizens at this stage in its development. Citizens must be responsible for national development, which in turn will lead to new possibilities for citizenship. Participation in development is not restricted to participatory institutions of government. Rural citizens retain a long-standing obligation to participate in development through making contributions (*michango*) of cash, materials and labour to local infrastructure (Jennings, 2007; Marsland, 2006). Contributing to development in this way remains the backbone of contemporary development strategies. These include local infrastructure projects, such as those financed through the social action fund, TASAF, and the Local Government Capital Development Grant which, in working through local communities, demand proportional contributions through participatory involvement in terms of planning, inputs and administration.

Willingness to engage in participatory institutions does not extend to the other form of participation with which it is equated in the discourse of national development, the expectation that communities make a material contribution to their own development. Extracting *michango* even where matched funding is promised remains difficult, and legal sanctions through bylaws are commonly invoked to ensure adequate participation of the right sort (Lange, 2008). Refusal to contribute *michango* amounts to a refusal of responsabilisation by communities for the project of development, just as village plans and wish lists locate responsibility elsewhere. Reluctance to contribute *michango* and enthusiasm for participation in certain forms is more than a matter of resistance to government impositions. Despite common categorisation as 'participation' in Tanzanian development discourse, participatory mobilisation and contributions to development projects are perceived as very different institutions.

Contributing to public goods is common practice outside government structures, through such institutions as burial societies, dance and cultural events and investments in kinship. Social networking which transcends location is an attribute of consumption practice in Tanzania, as in some other African countries, amounting to a kind of privatisation of public investment in an informal infrastructure, which provides an uncertain safety net for individuals and their families, as well as the basis of what are also viewed as investments in individualised development (Berry, 1993; Green, 2000). These prioritise personal and kinship investments, which contribute to economic security and potentially to income growth, unlike government-managed public investments, which have not performed well in the past, are associated with substantial leakage and are not viewed as necessarily benefiting those who have provided money for them. Importantly, personal private networks are flexible and accommodating (Berry, 1993). Their open-endedness is not only a matter of extensiveness. It encompasses the possibilities of new networks. Private-public networks of this sort are not only actively sought but also maintained through resistance to closure. Relations of obligation and mutuality are ongoing, rather than terminated with prompt countermeasure (Guyer, 2004). The open-endedness of these networks contrasts with the rigid formalisation of duties



and obligations associated with public responsibility for development, enforced by bylaws and associated with the financing of top-down initiatives.

## 10 Refusing government through performing citizenship

Contrasting attitudes towards personal contributions to kin and social networks compared with attitudes towards formal contributions to development are revealing of the extent to which these two practices can be compared with each other rather than interpreted in terms of a very different institution. Participation in development through *michango* is not equated by villagers with the extent to which people participate in participatory institutions. Participation as an institution seems to be most popular with participants at the points prior to the production of plans, where participation is emphasised as engagement in the public knowledge producing events and the performance of citizenship. Producing reports and plans is viewed as an end for government, indeed as complying with the reform expectations, but not necessarily seen as leading to their implementation. Implementation is viewed as the responsibility of government, not poor villagers. Years of exposure to development planning in Tanzania have created a high level of scepticism about the likelihood of plans being implemented. Plans are not viewed by villagers as 'binding documents' (Schneider, 2007: 11) but as artefacts of performative governance.

In taking part in participatory institutions, villagers are performing citizenship but deflecting responsibility. Although participation is highly organised and structured, this has a degree of informality to it in not only in terms of the range of people participating, including representatives of various social categories and government facilitators,<sup>18</sup> but also in the open-endedness of the process, before knowledge is closed down and fixed. This kind of engagement in participation has much in common with the kind of informality described by Guyer (2004) and Berry (1993) with the emphasis on dialogue, palaver, resistance to closure and so on that characterise social institutions in much of Africa. In resisting closure, it remains open to possibilities, it refuses to commit. In so doing, it provides a space in which people can act as responsible citizens, that is, as people who participate in dialogue about governing and perform responsibility the obligations of office. Responsibility for what the state defines as development is deflected through fixing in plans which are passed upward to higher levels, which in turn claim the obligation rests with citizens who choose to invest in their own diverse social networks of private public goods. The result is a parallel structure in which a formal system of government and planning, in which governing is about planning and the performance of participation, comes to coexist with an informal system through which resources and entitlements are allocated.

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<sup>18</sup> For a similar account of participatory institutions as bringing people together who would have otherwise had little contact, see Cahill for the US (2007) and Biaocchi for Brazil (2003).



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