

Claiming Citizenship
Rights, Participation and Accountability
Series editor • **John Gaventa**

Around the world, a growing crisis of legitimacy characterizes the relationship between citizens and the institutions that affect their lives. In both North and South, citizens speak of mounting disillusionment with government, based on concerns about corruption, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor and the absence of a sense of connection with elected representatives and bureaucrats. Conventional forms of expertise and representation are being questioned. The rights and responsibilities of corporations and other global actors are being challenged, as global inequalities persist and deepen.

In response, this series argues, increased attention must be paid to re-examining contemporary understandings of rights and citizenship in different contexts, and their implications for related issues of participation and accountability. Challenging liberal understandings, in which citizenship is understood as a set of rights and responsibilities bestowed by the state, the series looks at how citizenship is claimed and rights are realized through the agency and actions of people themselves.

Growing out of the work of an international network of researchers and practitioners from both South and North, the volumes in this series explore a variety of themes, including locally rooted struggles for more inclusive forms of citizenship, the links between citizenship, science and globalization, the politics and dynamics of participation in new democratic arenas, and the relationships between claiming rights and ensuring accountability. Drawing on concrete case studies which focus on how people understand their citizenship and claim their rights, the volumes contribute new, empirically grounded perspectives to current debates related to deepening democracy, realizing rights-based development, and making institutions more responsive to the needs and voices of poor people.

Titles in preparation

Volume I: *Inclusive Citizenship: Meanings and Expressions*
EDITED BY Naila Kabeer

Volume 2: *Science and Citizens: Globalization and the Challenge of Engagement*
EDITED BY Melissa Leach, Ian Scoones and Brian Wynne

Volume 3: *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Citizen Participation in
New Democratic Arenas*
EDITED BY Andrea Cornwall and Vera Schatten Coelho

Volume 4: *Rights and Resources: The Politics of Accountability*
EDITED BY Peter Newell and Joanna Wheeler

Volume 5: *Claiming Citizenship: Rethinking Democratic Participation*
John Gaventa

Claiming Citizenship SERIES
Rights, Participation and
Accountability

Series editor
John Gaventa

Volume 1
Inclusive Citizenship
Meanings and Expressions

Edited by
Naila Kabeer

Foreword by
John Gaventa



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Acronyms

AAA	American Anthropological Association
ACFOD	Asian Cultural Forum on Development
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
BOTT	Build Operate Train and Transfer
CAP	community action plan
CBO	community-based organization
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DFID	Department for International Development
DM	district municipality
DWAF	Department for Water Affairs and Forestry
ESRAZ	Escuela Secundaria Rebelde Autónoma Zapatista
FBW	Free Basic Water
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IFI	international finance institution
LM	local municipality
MDS	Muktidhara Sansthan
MST	landless movement
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	non-governmental organization
NK	Nijera Kori
PLA	participatory learning and action
SDM	sub-divisional magistrate
TFD	theatre for development
TNO	trans-national organization
TRIPS	Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property
UN	United Nations
UNDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	US Agency for International Development

Notes on Contributors

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Foreword

John Gaventa

This book is about how poor people understand and claim citizenship, and the rights they associate with it. Edited by Naila Kabeer, a scholar long committed to exploring issues of empowerment, collective action and social movements, the volume contributes new insights, rooted in local realities, to global debates about concepts of rights and citizenship.

Citizenship, as the essays in this volume remind us, is a highly contested term, with differing meanings ascribed by different cultures, interests and ideologies. Despite the differences, looking across the case studies in this volume Kabeer argues that aspirations for citizenship often entail common core values, including an impulse for social justice and self-determination – both of groups and individuals – and a sense of horizontal solidarity with others. Taking a comparative and historical approach to struggles for greater inclusion, citizenship is understood as an emergent concept, whose realization will vary across contexts and historical moments. Challenging liberal understandings – in which citizenship is understood as a set of rights and responsibilities bestowed by the state – the case studies in this volume, grounded in everyday experience, give a more robust understanding of citizenship as a multi-dimensional concept, which includes the agency, identities and actions of people themselves.

To be meaningful, any concept of citizenship carries with it a conception of rights. In recent years, the ‘rights-based approach’ has emerged in the development context as a ‘new’ approach, which has the potential to strengthen the status of citizens from that of beneficiaries of development to its rightful and legitimate claimants. As the essays in this volume articulate, the rights approach goes beyond a ‘human rights approach’, which often focuses on debates about global legal covenants, to focus on rights in practice. As Nyamu-Musembi points out, such ‘actor-oriented perspectives are based on the recognition that rights are shaped through actual struggles informed by peoples’ own understandings of what they are justly entitled to’.

While scores of donor and policy documents have been written in recent years about the rights-based approach, few studies have attempted

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to go beyond the conceptual debates to examine the meanings of expressions of rights and citizenship ‘from below’, and how these meanings are acted upon through political and social mobilization. Through contributing new, concrete and empirical case studies from countries spanning North and South – including Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, the UK and the United States – this volume seeks to remedy that gap.

The approaches found in these cases are far-ranging, including, for instance, the use of popular theatre to explore the links between ethnicity and citizenship in Nigeria, in-depth interviews to understand perceptions of the rights of women in Chiapas or the *favelas* of Brazil, action research with nomads in Rajasthan, or focus groups with young people in the UK. The contributors to the volume are highly diverse as well, with disciplines ranging from sociology and anthropology to theatre, political philosophy, planning and law, and including both academics and practitioners who are deeply engaged in the cases about which they are writing. This diversity of methods and voices – which spans North and South, academic and activist, and a range of disciplinary approaches – gives a richly textured and robust view to struggles for inclusive citizenship in different contexts around the globe.

All the researchers in this volume have been associated in some way with the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability, an international research partnership based at the Institute of Development Studies in the UK (www.drc-citizenship.org). Founded in 2000, the Citizenship DRC is funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), with additional funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, which enabled participation of some of the northern contributors to this project.

Most of the researchers were involved in one of the Centre’s first thematic working groups, which focused on meanings and understandings of citizenship. This group worked together over two years to gather, discuss and refine the studies presented in this volume. It met first for a workshop in Bangladesh in early 2002, where members shared preliminary ideas about the formal architectures and structures of citizenship in their countries, about the tensions between these formal constructions and the realities of everyday life, and about how citizenship could be understood as a dynamic and multi-dimensional concept, rooted in different historical contexts, while simultaneously in the process of being constructed through social action and social movements. The group’s members – who were largely from the South – felt that the universal, and often Western, concepts of rights and citizenship risked having little meaning in the daily lives of people in their

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countries, or were used as a basis to exclude, rather than include, poor and powerless groups.

At the meeting in Bangladesh, the group decided to pursue a series of case studies on these themes, following a broad set of common questions. In June 2003 the working group met again, this time in a writing retreat outside Cape Town, South Africa, to share and critique drafts of their work. At this meeting, following concern that the work of the group should recognize that struggles for more inclusive rights and citizenship cut across both North and South, we were joined by other researchers who worked more in northern contexts, and who could share, for instance, the historical struggles in which rights have been shaped in the UK, or the ongoing struggles of immigrant workers for inclusive forms of citizenship and recognition in the USA.

Through its focus on locally grounded meanings and expressions of rights and citizenship, this book appropriately forms Volume 1 of this Zed Books series on *Claiming Citizenship: Rights, Participation and Accountability*. Other volumes will explore related issues of knowledge and citizen engagement in the context of science and globalization; the politics and dynamics of institutionalized participation in new democratic arenas; and the relationships between claiming rights and ensuring accountability. Also drawing from concrete case studies from around the globe, the volumes will contribute fresh perspectives from both South and North on current debates related to deepening democracy, realizing rights-based development, and making institutions more responsive to the needs and voices of poor people.

As series editor and as director of the DRC, I would like to thank the editor of this volume, Naila Kabeer, as well as each of the authors, for their contribution to the *Claiming Citizenship* series. The inclusive process of creating this book has been reflective of its thematic content. The collaboration and commitment to mutual learning and partnership across disciplinary, geographic and professional boundaries that have characterized the group's work have created a product that we hope will enrich others as well. In addition to the authors and editors, special thanks should also be given to those who have helped in the production of the manuscript and given support to the working group, including Alexandra Hughes, Lucila Lahitou, Kathryn Perry, Alexander Shankland, Joanna Wheeler, and of course our colleagues and editors at Zed Books, whose support for this series is deeply appreciated.

John Gaventa, series editor
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