



Civil Society and Poverty Reduction: Why Participation is not the answer

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Outline

- The discourse of donors in the PRSP
- Why participation will not make a difference - killing assumptions
 - On the side of recipient governments (LIC)
 - For civil society in LICs
 - Constraints social tissue of the poor
- Where does that leave the poor?
- Conclusion

Discourse donors PRSP

	↗ ownership	↘
Civil society participation	→ pro-poor effectiveness	→ poverty reduction
	↘ accountability	↗
	↘democracy ↗	

- Participation: micro → macro: policy debate, formulation, implementation, M&E
- Angelical perspective on civil society (PRSP-sourcebook)

Why participation will not make a difference: the killing assumptions recipient side

- Ownership/commitment and institutional quality is a huge problem:
 - Limited GBS: less than 20 countries out of 60 PRSP countries receive GBS for more than 2% of their GDP in 2004/2005 → donors distrust genuine commitment/quality
 - Of the 55 countries reviewed by the World Bank: 5 with operational development strategies of sufficient quality
 - Updated baseline information on poverty is lacking in 42% of LICs
- Room for associational life –willingness to take bottom-up inputs into account in policy-making
 - Only 7 out of 30 African PRSPcountries are rated as free
 - 11 African PRSPcountries are LICUS/fragile states
 - The thin line between ownership and capture

Participation is rendered useless under these conditions – selectivity & sequencing of actions might be considered

Why participation will not make a difference: the killing assumptions civil society

- Relation with the poor?
 - Participation captured by NGOs: donordriven, donorbred & fed
 - Participation = pro-poor contributions into the PRSP?
 - Link with the poor mainly through service delivery?
- Missing middle

Why participation will not make a difference: social tissue of the poor

What we know from literature

- Poor people/low education... tend not to participate in formal associational life
- Social capital literature:
 - poor people have bonding social capital: getting around
 - but not bridging / linking social capital: getting ahead

Illustration

- Nicaragua: 2 rural villages, peasants, poorest region of the country (1999)
- Research on:
 - Formal associational life
 - Access to resources through informal networks
 - To land, oxen, labour force during harvest time
 - small loans in times of emergency, food in times of emergency
 - Access strategies
 - inflexible (cash regulated, payment in services or labour force)
 - flexible (unspecified, mutual help)
 - Who is in, who is out?

Associational involvement = about getting ahead because it entails access to scarce resources

- Both villages: competition/conflict over membership and benefits – local leaders act as brokers – multiple memberships = multiple benefits (members or beneficiaries?)
- Local leaders (all sandinist): very diversified networks (NGOs, interest organisations, political parties...) and access to very diversified resources (tangible, intangible)
- Who's in, who's out?
 - Village 1: Poor are out => socio-economic cleavage
 - Village 2: Sandinists are in – Liberals are out => political cleavage

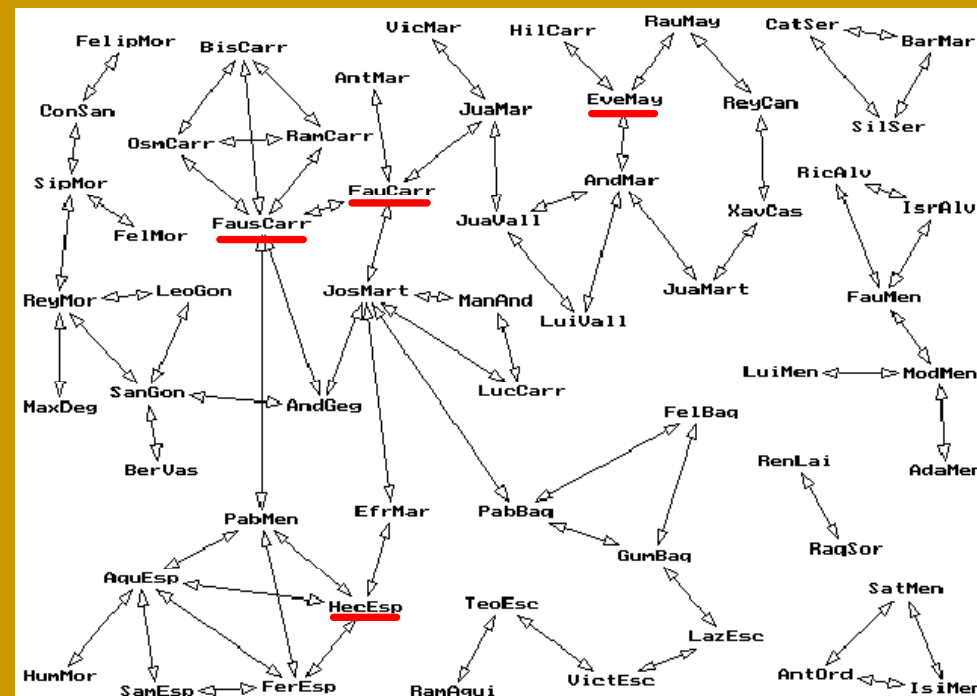
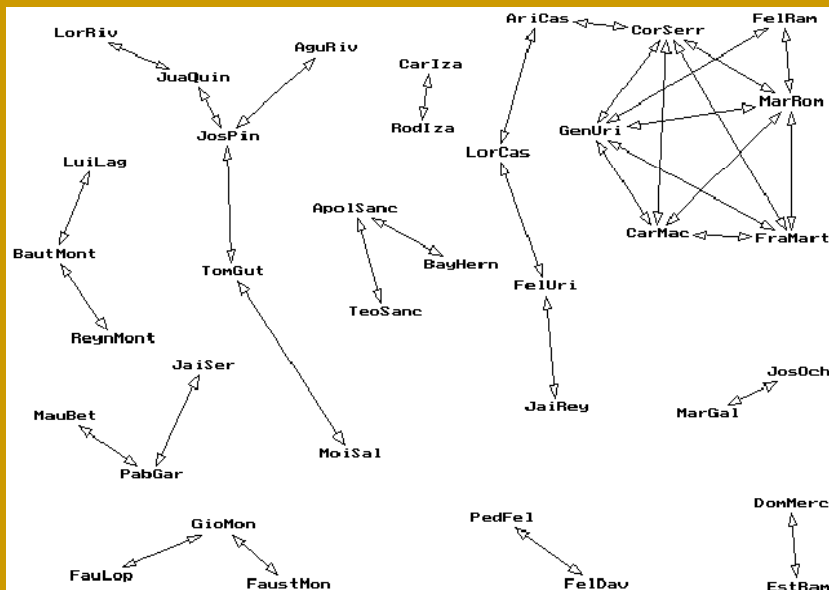
Getting ahead: access to other scarce resources: land & oxen

- In both villages:
 - Access is personalized/arbitrary
 - Access givers are richer, most of the local leaders are involved in giving access (different actors involved)
 - bridging or simply vertical?
- However,
 - Actors involved also share several attributes: associational status, political preference, religion, neighbourhood residence
 - bonding? horizontal?
- In both villages:
 - Access mainly involves inflexible strategies, but...
 - In village 1: mainly cash strategy → huge problem for the poor
 - In village 2: mainly payment in services → lesser problem for the poor

**Getting around:
access to resources that are not so scarce:
labour force (mutual help during harvest time)**

- In both villages: these networks exist: the relation is mutual trust, accountability, equal dependence/power: mainly bonding & horizontal
 - Village 1: 45% of the poorest families involved in these networks
 - Village 2: 35% of the poorest families
- But, in
 - Village 1: no local leaders involved
 - Village 2: all the leaders are involved across ses, neighbourhood, religion... but not political preference
 - => can bonding relations be vertical/inequal? Or vice versa?

Visually displayed: mutual help during harvest time (local leaders underlined)



So... Civil society...

- Membership is a scarce resource (like other scarce resources) – access is regulated by local leaders – personalized/arbitrary
- Local membership profiles might be a good indication for informal cleavages and patterns of in/exclusion (rather than a cure) → introduce in poverty diagnostics?
- Poor/excluded people do not have the means to challenge → this cannot be solved locally
- Better bring institutions back in...

Options for the poor?

		Institutional context: Getting access to resources	
		Inequality	Equality
Relations	Bonding	Hierarchy – dependency - solidarity	Egalitarianism – voluntarism (dense networks are needed)
	Bridging/linking	Hierarchy – dependency - fatalism	Contracts - negotiation (third party enforcement is needed)

- In most third world contexts poor getting access to scarce resources = per definition about inequality/personalized access
 - Poorest have no 'valuable assets' to offer (except cheap labour force) → weak bargaining position
 - Third party enforcement is absent/lacking/expensive → potential victims of 'powergames'
- Associational life seems to reinforce this

So what is there to do ?

- Do not leave the dirty work up to civil society ! Too ambitious, too naïve
- Never take the 'angelical perspective' of civil society for granted.
- Creation of trust ? Institutionalize distrust !
- Think micro, but act macro
 - Think micro: social capital analyzing to understand the local dynamics of poverty reproduction → feed into poverty diagnostics
 - Act macro: push for updated poverty diagnostics, social capital policy relevance lies in linking insights back to institutional level: creation of an enabling environment