Development and Participation

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An Introductory Overview

Development has precipitated a participation crisis. The fundamental question is age-old: how can individuals meaningfully participate in systems of ever-increasing size and scale? Conversely, how can systems of large size respond to each and every individual? With increasing size and complexity, the individual becomes submerged in numbers and confusion. Reducing the scale of the system by creating small autonomous local political units reduces the issues of participation to triviality.

To remedy the paradoxical implications of scale and participation, a variety of institutional changes have been proposed: creating city-states; institutionalising technological methods of individual–system interaction; extending participation to previously non-participatory institutions such as factories; expanding the scope of participatory issues by making institutions responsible for more activities touching the individual (decentralisation). There are also recommendations to prepare people for more effective participation under the general rubric of education.

The fact remains — and will become more apparent — that as systems increase in scale, that is, develop, the institutional linkages of individuals to the system will become more tenuous; in the extreme case, as Dahl notes, being reduced to casting a ballot.[76] At the other extreme, meaningful participation in small units will pale in comparison to the benefits of large-scale complexity.

The thesis of this paper is that development determines the modes of participation — the structures of the system and the way in which individuals relate to them. From a macro-historical perspective, the relationship between development and institutional structures is the source of a participation crisis, and no amount of wise restructuring of those institutions will transform each individual into an effective legislator for a complex system. Indeed, at a certain point the scale of a system will be so great that the individual–institutional–system linkages will break and recede into ritual remnants. These changes will be accompanied by more and more direct individual participation in the system. Just as the emergence of indirect, representative participatory institutions required a certain scale and complexity, and as systems became more complex greater institutional differentiation became possible, so development

[76] Dahl, R. A. (1967). The city in the future of democracy. *The American Political Science Review*, *61*(4), 955.

will destroy those institutions, making possible a new mode of participation. Indeed, no amount of creative institutional innovations, short of stopping development, will be able to avoid this developmental change.

Because this developmental process is already underway, it is possible to predict and observe it with contemporary data and, in part, to confirm whether, where, and under what conditions changes in participation are taking place. Further, the specific shape of these changes — derived from a partially constructed developmental theory — can be clearly expressed, modified, and explicated with research. With such knowledge, mankind ought to be able to control the directions of these changes, minimise some of the inevitable costs of change, and make it possible for people to deal with these changes rather than, as has almost always been the case, to be victimised by them.

A Macro-Developmental Perspective on Participation

A macro-developmental conception of participation involves the following: (1) a component–system relationship, which in this case will be the individual and the system; (2) a long historical perspective in which changes in participation can be interpreted in the context of developmental dynamics; and (3) an explication of development and its processes.

The first of these defines participation in its broadest possible sense: any behaviour that is linked to a system, and thus to other components of the system. In this sense, any element of human behaviour — any basic movement of the individual — can be participation if it either changes the system or averts other changes. Participation thus becomes the linkage between the individual and the system: the interdependence between individual and system behaviour.

The historical dimension requires viewing participation in a context of system change, or absence of it. These changes, both because they tend to be slower and are often not easily perceptible, must be assessed in the long run — centuries rather than decades. Specifically, participation results in changes, among them developmental changes, and these changes in turn produce changes in the nature of participation. To observe this process, it is necessary to take a long-term view.

Development provides the context that defines participation. Comparative research on participation has shown the importance of knowing the specific institutional context of the "participatory act" — which in the contemporary world means the national political system. Without such knowledge, it is impossible, for example, to know the meaning of the vote. A developmental view, however, puts these national political and other institutions into a more general framework; it explains why these institutions rather than others. In this sense development provides a comprehensive perspective on participation.

This approach to participation can be contrasted with existing discussion and research. Much of the research takes the individual as the point of

departure and sees participation as an individual choice in a given situation, rather than asking why the individual is in such a situation and why there are choices.[77] At the macro-level, participation is either taken as a critical component of political development — linking the individual to broader social and political systems — or as an independent and sometimes detrimental factor in development.

The theoretical premises of this paper include the fact that in small-scale systems the concept of participation is hardly applicable. The key organisational principle is that of membership in the social system, based on similarity. With increases in the scale of the system, the principle of similarity no longer suffices for participation. There are too many differences. These differences create a historical crisis, resulting in either strong central authority to keep the differences from threatening the collectivity with anarchy, or the growth of representative institutions for participation that recognise differences in class, religion, and other interests. Over time, these differences are responded to either by suppression or by creating differentiated institutions to absorb increasing diversity.

This second historical phase — dominated by what will be called institutional participation — is over for highly developed systems, just as differentiated, representative institutions are being established in developing countries. Diversity is too great to reduce and contain in particular institutions. For developed countries, popular institutional participation has perhaps never been as inclusive or as "participatory" as it is today, but clearly the institutions are inadequate in the eyes of most participants.

The Theoretical Framework

The concept of a system

A social system is the unit of which development is a characteristic. A system is a logical idea referring to: (1) at least two elements, which may be defined; (2) at least one rule of interdependence, such that a change in one element leads to a change in another; and (3) at least two points in time.[78]

Development

Development refers to the scale of social systems. Scale refers to the interdependence and complexity of the system's components. Two synonymous definitions of scale are "organised complexity" and "integrated diversity."[79] By definition, the level of development of a system is its scale at any point in time;

[77] This has been the basis of some criticisms of studies of voting using survey analysis.

[78] This is only one use of a system paradigm. There are others, such as a logic for simulation or a "structure" for a theory.

[79] These terms are, of course, not original, although the latter is not popular. For such a view of political systems, see Brunner, R. D., & Brewer, G. D. (1971). *Organized complexity: Empirical theories of political development*. Free Press.

and developmental change is any increase in a system's scale over two or more points in time.

These two components — integration and diversity — are equally weighted in any assessment of a system's development. It is possible to have systems of high integration and low complexity, or high complexity and low integration. The degree to which any social system is integrated is based on three specific dimensions: (1) the strength of interdependence — the probability that a change in one component leads to a change in the state of the system or other components; (2) the extensiveness — how many domains of the components' characteristics are interdependent; and (3) the inclusiveness — the extent to which each component has an equal probability of being changed as a result of a change in another component.[80]

A basic law of developmental dynamics is that any increase in the number of properties of any component increases the probability of that component having a property similar to that of other components, and simultaneously increases the probability of that component as a whole being different from every other component. The first probability increases arithmetically, the second exponentially. The scale of a system thus decisively depends on the number of properties of its components.

There are two ways in which one component can affect or change another. The first is interaction, in which one component directly affects another (in some cases in a one-way direction). In social systems, interaction is often defined in terms of face-to-face relationships. A second kind of interdependence is indirect, in which the behaviour of a component contributes to changing the state of the system as a whole, and thus indirectly other components. The first of these is personal, often unequal, and sometimes coercive or authoritative. The second is impersonal, indirect, and general.

Whereas the size of any unit may increase arithmetically, the scale of the system will always, after a certain point, increase exponentially. This fact renders per capita measures — which express size rather than scale — more and more meaningless as development proceeds. If size is not distinguished from scale, then any individual's participatory contribution is diminished as a function of the size of the system; if scale is considered, then the importance of participation increases more rapidly than size.

Participation

Participation refers to a broad class of systemic phenomena: the behaviour of the components of a social system that results in changes in other components, the state of the system, or both. Thus participation is system-specific. The

[80] For elaboration in the context of political systems, see Teune, H. (1971). *The integration of political systems* [Paper presentation]. International Studies Association, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

general thesis of this paper is that development determines the nature of participation. There are three qualitatively different structures of participation, which emerge as development (a quantitatively defined concept) increases: symbolic, institutional, and systemic participation. These modes of participation are present in all social systems, but one or another is the dominant mode.

Three Modes of Participation

Participation under conditions of low development: symbolic participation
As the scale of the system is low, there is little diversity and low interdependence. The primary principle of the social system is similarity. Participation is the repetitive reaffirmation of those few similarities that exist. Individual differentiation is limited, by definition — low diversity — and the idea of autonomous individual impact on the system is meaningless. There is little system change, which again renders participation in terms of change meaningless. Decisions can be expressed in terms of a spokesman because there is little difference; when decisions are made collectively, the emphasis will be on unanimity.

Participation under conditions of some development: institutional participation
With differentiation, symbolic participation gives way to the growth of a few institutions that reflect dominant patterns of diversity. The individual is partially linked to institutions, and the institutions in turn affect the system. As individual differentiation is limited, those differences that exist can be grouped into classes, parties, and other such segments.[81] The function of the institutions is to represent the existing diversity; their legitimacy is determined by how well they reflect the existing diversity. Participation is indirect; the relationship among individuals is often one-way rather than reciprocal or equal.

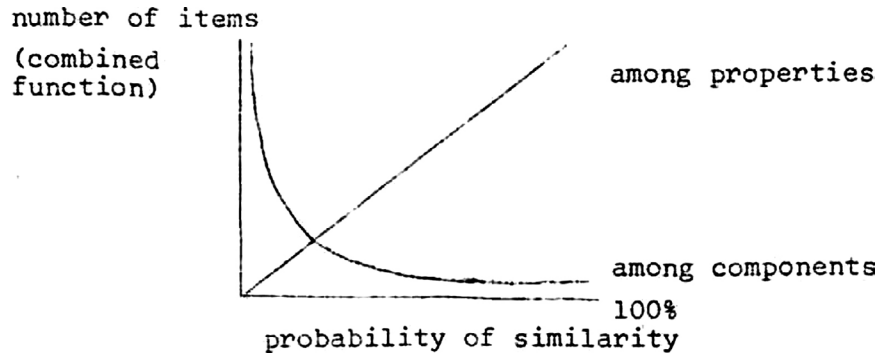
Participation under conditions of high development: systemic participation
Systemic participation is the direct linkage of the individual to the system. The participatory act is based on autonomous individuals who act consciously to change the state of the system directly rather than through others. Diversity and interdependence make it likely that every act of the individual will have system-level consequences. Rather than segmented, free-time, specialised activities, every act and every type of behaviour becomes relevant for the system — and thus politicised, from purchasing consumer goods to performing a job. There is no distinct set of participatory behaviour reduced in its diversity and channelled through institutions. The individual under conditions of maximal development becomes directly enmeshed with the system. There is no behaviour which is non-systemic — non-participation.

[81] Literature on political development speaks of the development of differentiated political institutions. See Almond, G., & Powell, G. (1966). *Comparative politics: A developmental approach*. Little, Brown.

The Dynamics of Developmental Change and Shifts in the Modes of Participation

Developmental change has been defined as increases in the diversity and the integration of the components of a system. The core component of developmental change that affects the structure of systemic participation more than any other is structural change.

Structural change is of two related general types. The first refers to changes in the nature and properties of the structure of interdependence — such as whether there are feedback loops and how inclusive those feedback loops are. The second refers to properties of the components, compared to the properties of other components. The former involves the behaviour of components and of the system; the latter, the structural potential for linking components to the system.



The key to the relationship between development and shifts in the structure of participation has been partially presented in the discussion on the relationship between complexity and integration. The general proposition is that the greater both the similarity and diversity among the components of the system, the greater their interdependence (other things being held constant). For individuals, the greater their similarities and differences, the greater their integration into the system, and thus their participation in the system.[82]

What must be demonstrated to explain and predict the shifts in the modes of participation that emanate from development are: (1) that as the total number and variety of a system's properties increase, they will be distributed more and more equally among individuals; and (2) that as the number and variety of individual properties increase, individuals will shift to or be absorbed by levels in the system of greater and greater complexity, to a point where the individual will be directly involved with the system as a whole.

[82] Education, depending on some contextual factors, is one of the best indicators of an individual's variety.

The need to reallocate properties either to individuals within the system or to others outside can be interpreted as the inclusion process. Individuals with education, housing, and so on become producers; when they become producers, they take part — participate — in other system structures with increasing frequency. This inclusion enhances both the complexity of the system, taking advantage of the combinatorial possibilities, and the level of system integration, which in turn accelerates the rate of increase in variety and thus the level of participation.

The second major consequence of development for participation is a shift of the individual's activity from systems of less complexity to systems of greater complexity. From symbolic participation to institutional participation, there is a shift from the level of the system as a whole to institutions of greater diversity and specificity. From institutional participation to systemic participation, the individual shifts away from those institutions that do not express or incorporate his increased complexity to systems that do — to higher and higher levels of system aggregation, each with greater variety.

The law of variety states that any sub-system has less variety than the system of which it is a part. For systems with a number of levels — institutions, local political units, and so on — with the development of the system and the consequent increase in the variety and complexity of individuals, there will be a slow, but sometimes rapid, shift of individual activity to units of greater complexity. This explains, at least in part, why some local "elites" circulate at the national level, and why national elites become international elites — a process that is one contributing factor to the integration of political systems.[83]

Consciousness and Participation

In symbolic participation, there is little consciousness of any participatory act. In institutional participation, consciousness of participation is limited to a few acts. Indeed, participation is segregated into specific spheres of activity. In systemic participation, however, the individual must be conscious of the outcome of his activity on the system as a whole; he can act to make the state of the system conform to his preferences or morality.

Whereas in institutional participation there is a clear distinction between political and non-political behaviour, in systemic participation there is no such distinction. Every act of the individual, because it takes place in a context of high interdependence, becomes politicised. The importance of individual acts for the system follows from the sensitivity of the system to small shifts — a consequence of development.

Consciousness will be based on a relatively high level of knowledge about the system and how it operates. Not only will immediate consequences be considered but also long-term consequences. The distinction between public and

[83] Ashby, W. R. (1956) is credited with this in his *Introduction to cybernetics*. Wiley.

private will disappear. If every act is politicised, if every choice is considered in terms of its implications, and if the individual in his complexity will be dealing more and more with complex rather than simple sub-systems, then little, if anything, will be private.

In systemic participation, the system becomes more and more self-regulating — regulated by direct, conscious acts of individuals rather than by power, sanctions, and authority. For a variety of reasons, governments as a separate set of governing and controlling institutions will recede in importance as they cannot cope with the size and scale of the system. And because when they do act, they detract from the value of variety in favour of similarity and uniformity.

The nature of conflicts will change with development. In symbolic participation, conflicts cannot be tolerated: they are few in number but intense when they occur. In institutional participation, conflicts are frequent but become progressively less intense. In systemic participation, there are always alternatives for the individual. There is enough complexity to satisfy any individual somewhere in the system. In any conflict, the individual always has the option of withdrawal; thus the intensity of any conflict is mitigated.

An Empirical Interpretation of the Theory in the Context of Local Political Units

The theory of development could be applied to almost any set of specific social institutions or systems. One fruitful area of application is local political units. They are more or less firmly fixed in systems of greater complexity, they are more or less universal for national political systems, they are for most countries a focal point of participation, and they vary both within and across systems in their level and rate of developmental change.

Macro-system developmental changes. At low levels of development, there are no or few differentiated levels of systems within the system. With some development there is more and more differentiation among levels. As institutional participation peaks, giving way to systemic participation, there is a continual upward shift to levels of greater complexity. What will remain local will be geographical points distributing the population in such a way that physical space and system linkages are facilitated. People will remain "local"; social, political, and economic behaviour will be absorbed into other systems.

One implication of this general prediction is that the most appropriate systems for the study of behaviour in a local context are developing systems — systems moving to the maturity of institutional participation — rather than systems of either low or high development.

Micro-implications. With increases in development at the local level there is increased variety. This variety increases the combinatorial possibilities for diversity. With increased diversity, there are more alternatives for the individual

to choose from. When there are more alternatives and a greater probability of satisfying any preference, the incentives to participate increase.

With increases in alternatives and thus individual freedom of choice, the intensity of particular conflicts will diminish. An individual's freedom of choice — a function of his variety — improves his mobility: physically, socially, and psychologically. As the weight of probable negative consequences of participation are reduced, individuals are more willing to "risk" participation. Thus greater alternatives, individual choice, and mobility lead to greater and greater inclusion of individuals in the institutions within the local unit.

Further, with increases in individual variety and the prospects for mobility, those with the most variety will tend to gravitate to systems of greater complexity. With the development of the local unit, individuals with relatively greater variety will leave (or want to leave), and their participation will be increasingly oriented to systems of greater complexity (cosmopolitanisation).

With a shift from institutional participation to systemic participation, local units will gradually become points of physical aggregation of individuals for the delivery and dispersion of goods and services generated by the macro-system. Local problems will be seen as those of efficiency of delivery. Political leaders will become symbolic residuals of a previously prevailing order of development and participation.

Appendix: An Illustration of a Comparative Research Design for Testing a Theory at the Local Level

The fragments of a theory presented above are at least an illustration of a social research foundation to structure a broad range of evidence from a variety of contexts, to test, modify, and elaborate the theory.

The first requirement is the translation of a theory into: (1) general predictions that should be true if the theory is true — for example, with development, the number of conflicts increases and the intensity of conflicts decreases; (2) an interpretation of the general propositions in terms of local political units — in the US, this general proposition would be interpreted as: the number of organised group protests should increase but compromise among the groups would be increasingly easy; (3) a statement of the measurement operations required and used in the specific contexts — in Yugoslavia, conflicts are measured by (along with some evaluation of measurement results); and (4) a presentation of the evidence in the research context in which it was gathered — in Slovenian communes, 1961–1964.

The evidence would be of several kinds. First, co-variance evidence, stating that units that are higher on X are higher on Y. Secondly, over-time or cross-time data, demonstrating for example that those units that developed most rapidly from T_0, T_1,… T_n also showed the highest increase in certain participatory indicators. The data would be further distinguished according to whether it was taken at a single level or at several levels.

An illustration of the process by which this theory might be broken down into empirical contexts is as follows:

1. *General Proposition:* Development reduces the influence of formal leadership (emergence of institutional participation prior to a major shift to systemic participation).
2. *Justification from Theory:* Formal local leadership is diffused, expressing similarities; with development, these similarities break down and give way to associational participation that is reflective of greater diversity.
3. *A Co-variance Formulation:* The higher the level of development of a system (at a specified point in time), the less influence of formal leadership, and the higher individual activity in associations and institutions of greater diversity.
4. *A Cross-time Formulation:* The greater the rate of developmental change, the greater the reduction in formal leadership influence.
5. *A Cross-level Formulation:* The higher the level of development of a subsystem, the greater the probability that associational participation will be focused on a system of aggregation (variety) greater than that sub-system.
6. *An Interpretation in the Local Political Context:* The higher the level of development of Yugoslav communes, the less the formal participatory activity and the less the activity of local political leadership, and the higher the associational membership.

In the Values study, the correlation between attendance at voters' meetings and development was negative. In the same study, development showed a positive relationship to membership in the Socialist Alliance. In a Slovenian study over time (62 communes), participation in adult educational institutions increased more rapidly with relatively larger changes in development. In a cross-level study, regions in Slovenia showed greater predictive strength (size of correlations) among developmental indicators than did the communes.

This chapter is based on:
Teune, H., & Mlinar, Z. (1974). Development and participation.
In F. C. Bruhns, F. Cazzola, & J. Wiatr (Eds.), *Local politics, development, and participation* (pp. 136–159). University Center for International Studies.