

Spaces for Change?



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The challenge of building democratic polities where all can realize their rights and claim substantive citizenship is one of the greatest of our age. In recent years, innovations in governance have created a plethora of new democratic spaces in many countries. Yet there remains a gap between the legal and technical apparatus that has been created to institutionalise participation and the reality of the effective exclusion of poorer and more marginalised citizens. It is with this gap, and the challenges of inclusion, representation and voice that it raises, that this book is concerned. Through case studies of a diversity of institutions - hospital facility boards in South Africa, a national-level deliberative process in Canada, sectoral management councils and community groups in Brazil, India, Mexico and Bangladesh, budgeting processes in Argentina, NGO-created fora in Angola and Bangladesh, community fora in the UK, and new intermediary spaces created by social movements in South Africa - contributors examine what the expansion of the participatory sphere has to offer processes of democratization and equitable development. They explore how the democratic potential of these new spaces might be enhanced. And they reflect on what it might take for those who have often been excluded from participation to gain opportunities to influence the decisions and institutions that affect their lives.

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