Social Exclusion and Participation in Community Development Projects: Evidence from Senegal

Claire Dorsner

Abstract

This article seeks to provide a new insight into the debate about participation through a comprehensive analysis of the mechanisms at play behind community participation. The combined use of the concepts of social exclusion and of game theory is explored as a dynamic and innovative analytical tool to understand participatory processes in community development projects. The framework is tested against the analysis of participation in an NGO-led community project in Senegal. Policy implications point to a need to unravel the complexity of participation to design more effective and sustainable community development projects.

Keywords

Social exclusion; Participation; Community development; Game theory; Senegal

Introduction

Participation is a highly fashionable term in current development practice and is now practically *sine qua non* for project funding. Until the 1990s, development discourse emphasized the role of the state and of international agencies in delivering development to people. This blueprint approach was progressively challenged because of its failure to effectively address the underlying causes of poverty. In this context, community participation emerged as the new paradigm of the development process. The rationale behind participation is multifold: increased participation is supposed to promote greater efficiency, more accountability and transparency, enhanced ownership and empowerment. Ultimately, participation is supposed to be the key to genuine and sustainable poverty alleviation by shifting power to those who are "local and poor" (Chambers, in Nelson and Wright 1995).

Although a very laudable reorientation of development practice, participation has shown its limitations, especially in terms of its ability to avoid the shortcomings of development projects it was supposed to address. Many

Address for correspondence: *Claire Dorsner, 34 ter rue de la Muette, 78600 Maisons-Laffitte, France. Email: cdorsner@hotmail.com*

participatory projects ended up replicating the same errors as top–down projects. In particular, the basic problem of not being able to arouse popular participation plagues most community initiatives. Understanding participation and its different mechanisms is essential to analyse the pitfalls of participatory projects, and to improve their design.

Behind the buzzword of participation lies a wide range of processes and mechanisms, all of which are context-specific and have a different impact on the overall performance of participation. These mechanisms, inherent to the participatory process, remain under-researched areas in development literature. This article attempts to make a contribution to filling this gap by examining the exclusionary processes at play in participatory projects.

In this exercise, two analytical tools are used simultaneously. A few studies have attempted to draw a link between social exclusion and participation (Haan *et al.* 1998). In addition, this article uses game theory to illustrate social exclusion processes within community development projects. The advantage of using both these tools is that it provides a comprehensive, visual and dynamic picture of participatory processes. The concept of social exclusion helps to locate exclusionary processes and possible leverage points for policy intervention while game theory explains the rational push and pull factors of social exclusion at the community level. Through its simple representation, game theory also offers a participation matrix on which to locate and evaluate projects according to their participatory achievements.

This new approach to participation will be tested against the case of a community development project in Senegal.

What Do We Know So Far?

The ambiguities of participation

Participation has proven to be "a most difficult and elusive goal to attain" (Eicher and Staatz 1998). In the early 1990s, the debate was mostly concentrated on the objectives of participation—whether it was sought as an end in itself or as a means to an end (Michener 1998). It was found that many community projects emphasized participatory processes not for the sake of participation and its related empowerment objectives, but more as a marketing tool to attract funding or to promote a specific agenda.

More recently, the critical issue of power within participatory processes became prominent in the debate, in particular "the exclusionary as well as the inclusionary nature of participation" (Cleaver, in Cooke and Kothari 2001). The ambiguities of participation are not only exogenous (a misuse of the concept), but very much endogenous: participatory processes in themselves are problematic.

Already in 1993, the Human Development Report (UNDP 1993) suggested a checklist of variables that must be accounted for to ensure full and effective participation: health, knowledge and skills, and human rights among others. Several barriers that may hamper participation are considered: social norms and values, the legal system, administrative rules and procedures, and income distribution. Similarly, in her study of municipalities and community

participation, Plummer (2000) identifies several factors affecting participation: skills and knowledge, employment, education and literacy, cultural beliefs and practices, gender, social and political marginalization are all factors that can impact on the level of participation in the activities of municipalities.

Furthermore, Kapoor (2002) argues that participatory techniques are parachuted on communities with little investigation of their internal divisions or patterns of domination and exclusion. Yet participation in community development projects does occur in very complex contexts, where social, economic, cultural, religious and other features of social life shape the way people respond to external interventions. Avoiding the analysis of the tensions created by politics, power, legitimization, empowerment and panopticism (i.e. behaviours induced by mutual surveillance and discipline within the community) is not only unrealistic but greatly limits participation as an empowering tool.

The fact that participation depends on many variables at the community level and that its practice is intimately linked with exclusion and power confirms the need for an analysis "on whether and how the structures of participatory projects include/protect/secure the interests of poor people" (Cleaver, in Cooke and Kothari 2001). In fact, a comprehensive analysis of participation acknowledges and investigates the dynamics of conflict, consensus-building and decision-making that create patterns of inclusion and exclusion within communities.

Communities and livelihood strategies are heterogeneous

Unlimited faith in participation as an empowering tool is very often driven by a misunderstanding of the nature of communities and a neglect of livelihood strategies at the community level.[1] The assumption that communities are homogeneous entities, and hence that community participation is un-equivocal, is fairly common among development practitioners. Contrasted livelihood strategies at the community level are rarely explored, and this obscures the debate over participation. In fact, experience shows that communities are often little more than a mere juxtaposition of individuals with divergent interests, or households with unrelated—if not confrontational—livelihood strategies. "More realistically, we may see the community as the site of both solidarity and conflict, shifting alliances, power and social structures." (Cleaver, in Cooke and Kothari 2001).

A few authors acknowledge the link between community participation and livelihood strategies. Indeed, within a relatively small community, diversity prevails and while some individuals or households will find it beneficial to take part in a development project, others may perceive participation ill-adapted or even detrimental to their livelihood strategies. "A diversity perspective would recognise that some groups might be unable to, or unwilling to participate themselves, and to work through representative structures, while others may choose to be different or to spurn mainstream development trajectories altogether" (Beall 1997). In his study on community development, Holcroft (in Eicher and Staatz 1998) acknowledges that rural people will participate only if they feel that the benefits of the project will accrue to

them, and that "non-participation and non-compliance may be both a 'rational' strategy and an unconscious practice embedded in routine, social norms and the acceptance of the status quo" (Cleaver, in Cooke and Kothari 2001).

In this diversity perspective, the task is not to impose participation on unwilling community members but to identify the factors that exclude people when they actively seek to participate.

Social exclusion as a multifaceted process

If participation is understood as inclusion at different stages in the development process, then exclusion relates to the mechanisms through which participation is hampered. As seen earlier, participation and, reciprocally, non-participation operate through the multiple identities borne by community members as economic but also political, cultural or social agents with varying capital and capabilities. Over time, livelihood strategies also determine the costs and benefits of non-participation, and whether people will be able or willing to participate. Hence, non-participation can only be analysed through a flexible tool that integrates all these multiple dimensions. The emphasis is on the different variables that may hamper participation and on the dynamic processes that lead to exclusion from participation.

Social exclusion refers to the state of multiple deprivation or "lack of participation in key aspects of society" (Hills *et al.* 2002), but also to the processes leading to it. The concept encompasses the multidimensional aspects of poverty, from cash income to a wide range of indicators of deprivation or inability to participate in contemporary society (Hills *et al.* 2002). The focus suggested by social exclusion is on the processes that generate exclusion or inclusion and on the social factors that combine and interact to produce social exclusion (Cartaya *et al.* 1997).

Game Theory and Social Exclusion as an Integrated Tool to Analyse Participation

Game theory offers a dynamic tool . . .

A major criticism of social exclusion as a concept is that it is all-encompassing and therefore difficult to operationalize. Most frameworks of analysis for social exclusion remain either descriptive or too confusing to be applicable on the ground. The issue is to incorporate the concept of social exclusion into a more dynamic and systematic framework that remains simple in its representation. In the search for a tool that would capture the rational aspect of (non-)participation, game theory appears to be enlightening.

Game theory highlights the rational mechanisms underpinning individual decision-making in a collective action contributing to the common good. In this case, the game can help to understand how participation in, or exclusion from a community project occurs. The options (voluntary or involuntary) for the members of a community in which a development project is introduced are either to be excluded (not to participate), or to be included (to participate).

Figure 1

Game theory and social exclusion in participatory projects

Group 1 is Group 2 is	Included		Excluded	
Included	Gain X	Gain X	Gain Z	Gain 0
Excluded	Gain 0	Gain Z	Gain Y	Gain Y

Group 1 = right-hand figures inside each cell.
Group 2 = left-hand figures inside each cell.

It seems that this complements the concepts of participation and social exclusion as it allows the articulation of the push and pull factors of participation or exclusion, determined by "the changing social position of individuals over life courses, . . . the variable costs and benefits of differently placed people, [the] contending and complementary concerns with production and reproduction . . . [that] shape people's willingness and ability to participate" (Cleaver, in Cooke and Kothari 2001).

The attraction of game theory lies in its simple representation of a variety of situations in a single table (see figure 1). "The actions of the first player form the rows, and the actions of the second player the columns, of a matrix. The entries in the matrix are two numbers representing the utility or payoff to the first and second player respectively" (Levine 2003).

A second feature of game theory is that it shows how decision-making at the individual level is supported by a rational calculus of personal gains (or capabilities) against the pursuit of the common good. This rational calculus depends on the different characteristics of the community and its members. We will explore this in the next section.

. . . While social exclusion variables provide a wide range of explanations for participatory processes

Game theory can be adapted to the analysis of any process, provided that relevant variables feed into it. In our case, social exclusion variables give shape to game theory and ensure a more comprehensive analysis of participation. The methodology proposed is to locate participatory patterns through game theory (whether groups are included or excluded), and then use the social exclusion variables to understand the reasons behind these processes.

Table 1 articulates the different variables that impact upon participation at the levels of the community and of the individual. It can be used as a social exclusion filter to identify "areas of exclusion/integration" (CESIS 1997). The variables listed in the table all have some relevance and potential to explain inclusionary or exclusionary processes. The checklist offered has the advantage of being flexible in the adoption or rejection of variables according

Table 1

A social exclusion filter for community development projects

Variables	Exclusion/integration areas at community and individual levels	
	Community level	Individual level
Economic	Level of economic development	Income/consumption
	Level of inequalities	Assets (land, capital)
	Employment patterns and distribution	Level of poverty
	Living standards	Employment status and related time availability
Social	Social norms and networks	Position in society and social role
	Societal fragmentation (ethnicity, gender, disabled people, etc.)	Personal rivalries
		Ethnicity
	Traditional system of decision-making	Isolation "outcast"
	Community organization and hierarchy	Gender
		Membership of CBOs[1] or other networks
Political	Level of politicization and risk of political hijacking	Political stance/belief
	Political fragmentation	Level of political power
	Influence and power of interest groups	Civic engagement and role
Religious	Religious fragmentation	Religion
	Influence of religious leaders	Religious objection to the project
	Degree of intervention of religious leaders in community decision-making	Degree of trust in religious leaders
Psychological	Level of mutual trust	Degree of self-esteem
	General psychological mood determined by national and global environments	Trust and self-confidence
		Relative apathy
Physical	Physical infrastructures and accessibility	Geographical location
		Time constraints
	Transport system and cost	Access to services (cost and distance)
	Electricity, telecommunications, IT	
Human	General HDI[2] of the community	Educational level, management and leadership skills
	Skills and knowledge	Type of skills available
	Capacities and intellectual resources	Health status
	Health services	Age
	Age distribution	
Environmental	Presence and impact of external bodies (NGOs, expatriates, etc.)	Relationship with NGO staff
	Institutional and vulnerability context	Past experiences with similar projects
	Informational flow	Access to information

[1] Community-based organization.
[2] Human Development Index.
Source: Adapted from Lipton (in Haan *et al.* 1998).

to the project under scrutiny. The aim is to provide a comprehensive but by no means exhaustive list of variables that can explain patterns of participation or of social exclusion.

This social exclusion filter is meant to be used for the analysis of participation in community projects, in order to increase awareness about all the potential barriers to participation. The most relevant variables can be identified on a case-by-case basis and worked upon to minimize social exclusion.

Social Exclusion and Participation: Evidence from Senegal

Background

Many development NGOs, including ENDA Graf Sahel in Senegal, endeavour to promote and ensure community participation in all their activities. One of ENDA Graf Sahel's projects in the region of Thies (situated 75 km away from the capital Dakar) will serve as the example for this study. ENDA Graf Sahel works according to community participation principles, involving local communities from the conception of the projects right up to their implementation. The planning procedure is reversed: local communities come up to the NGO with their problems, and the NGO allocates them a social worker who facilitates the finding of appropriate solutions from within the community. "This shift occurred at the same time as we realised that the population was composed of actors . . . More recently, we reversed our conceptualisation: participation is perceived as our participation to actions undertaken by the 'popular actors' [*acteurs populaires*], which leads us to associate to the concept [of participation] notions such as initiative, facilitation or communication" (ENDA Graf Sahel 2001).

The participatory project under scrutiny is the setting up of a microfinance institution in a rural community of Senegal. The local NGO ENDA Graf Sahel, through its affiliate GRAIM, had received a £1,000 grant for agricultural producers. After consulting the municipal authorities and members of the community, it was decided that opening the first rural credit and savings bank in the municipality (Caisse Populaire d'Epargne et de Crédit) was the best use of this grant. The service provided was intended to benefit a total of 36 villages in the district (50 km away from Dakar). ENDA Graf Sahel was the technical adviser, but—apart from the initial £1,000 grant for credit allocation—did not have a separate budget for the setting-up of the microfinance institution; that was to be supported by the community. The municipality was supporting the initiative politically and technically. A first steering committee was created with local leaders chosen by ENDA Graf Sahel with advice from the municipal authorities.

The assumption was that the creation of the microfinance institution was responding to a need expressed by the community. At the time of fieldwork, the microfinance institution project had been officially launched a few months before, and savings books were being sold. However, the preceding six months had been characterized by slow progress, little dedication from the steering committee, and low participation and awareness from the community at large. These were attributed *a priori* to a lack of staff in the NGO to lead the

Figure 2

Inclusion/exclusion processes in a "bad" project situation

Group 1 is Group 2 is	Included		Excluded	
Included	1	1	0	10
Excluded	10	0	5	5

Note: The figures associated with the payoff of each alternative are random and simply indicate the benefit differential between the various options.
Group 1 = right-hand figures inside each cell.
Group 2 = left-hand figures inside each cell.

project, a steering committee composed of politically marked members, and a lack of general trust in the management of the project, rather than in its intended objectives that were unanimously perceived beneficial for the common good.

A careful analysis of the community revealed widely different explanations for the slow progress of the project. These revolved around the many internal divisions and multiple exclusionary features at the community and individual levels hampering participation and progress of the project.

Social exclusion patterns in the first phase of the project

For our purpose, the first phase of the project, characterized by slow progress and low participation, will be considered as a "bad" project situation. At this stage, the project was perceived as ill-adapted to the needs of the community with costs outweighing benefits, or simply ill-designed. Figure 2 illustrates the inclusion and exclusion processes and their related gains in a "bad" project situation. Now that the different participatory patterns are illustrated through game theory, social exclusion variables can help to understand participatory patterns in the Senegalese project.

Participation can occur for the "wrong" reasons. *In the dark shaded cell*, everybody decides to be / is included in the project despite its apparent weaknesses and inadequacy to the felt needs of the community. In this case, there is minimal but equal benefit for all (1). The community participates because of power relations with the project team, expected monetary rewards, clientelism, "pleasing the foreigners" type of behaviours, preserving the status of the community in the development agenda, etc.

This situation could be associated with the participatory pattern prevailing right at the start of the project, when the Parti Socialiste (PS) members massively joined the first steering committee. At the level of this subgroup,

there was total participation despite the very uncertain development gains expected from the project. Participation at this early stage of the project was motivated by political interests rather than by the common good. Clientelist arrangements possibly induced this pattern.

Non-participation can indicate the weakness of a project. In the light shaded cell, the project is perceived as weak and ill-adapted to local needs and therefore no one takes part in it. This is a rational choice with a higher gain (5) because not participating in the project means not wasting time at meetings, not being asked for financial or material contribution and being free to carry out individual activities.

This situation can be illustrated by the participatory pattern exhibited by the Christian subgroup of the community. The first impression of this subgroup was that although the objectives of the project were laudable, its management was biased by political hijacking, as the political elite was almost exclusively Muslim. Hence, almost no Christian people took part in the project. The only Christians to take part from the beginning were a couple, the husband being a politician and the wife the president of a community-based organization. In this case, the exclusionary potential of the religious variable was offset by the political and social characteristics of the individuals. This situation shows that at this stage the project was weakly designed since it had not taken into account the exclusionary power of political hijacking.

Non-participation can even be beneficial! In the remaining two blank cells, a group of people chooses to participate (either through conscious choice or because of political pressure and clientelism). They will not directly benefit from the project since it is ill-adapted to their needs, and they will suffer through loss of time and energy, and use of financial and material resources, etc. The payoff is therefore 0, i.e. inferior to the two other patterns. Gains could be higher if clientelist participation occurs; i.e. participation is a rational calculus made by community members against cash or kind compensations. The other group members who choose to be / are excluded have a comparative advantage because they do not suffer from the burdens of participation and can carry out their activities as usual. Their gain (10) is higher than in the previous pattern (5), because they can maximize their opportunities at the expense of the included group.

At the level of the community, this was displayed clearly. Since the political elite's participation was triggered only by political interests with no commitment to the project itself, their gains were only measurable in terms of political power. They lost a lot of time and energy attending meetings and committing themselves to the steering committee. By comparison, the people who did not participate or who acted as free-riders, did not lose anything and actually saved a lot of time and energy by excluding themselves from a project which clearly needed fine-tuning at this stage. Ironically, the people who might have liked to be included in the project but who could not because of involuntary social exclusion factors were better off than those who were included. In this case, involuntary social exclusion can result in actual gains.

Figure 3

Inclusion/exclusion processes in a "good" project situation

Group 1 is Group 2 is	Included		Excluded	
Included	5	5	10	0
Excluded	0	10	1	1

Note: The figures associated with the payoff of each alternative are random and simply indicate the differential between the various options.
Group 1 = right-hand figures inside each cell.
Group 2 = left-hand figures inside each cell.

Social exclusion patterns in the second phase of the project

The second phase of the project, resulting from a number of new measures and active involvement of the NGO to increase awareness and enhance facilitation will be considered as a "good" project situation. It is understood that a "good" project, as perceived by the community, is not necessarily successful in avoiding the traditional pitfalls of participation, as the present example will illustrate. Ultimately, a project is good only when it has succeeded in removing all the barriers to genuine participation and acts on all the potential social exclusion variables. Figure 3 maps the inclusionary and exclusionary processes under a "good" project situation.

For social planners, the task is to move from a situation of social exclusion to a situation of optimal participation. These two extreme situations are briefly described here:

In the two blank cells, a group within the community is included in the project while another group is excluded either through activity by the former or through deliberate choice. The push factors to exclude a group of the community from participation are: expected greater benefit for the group that excludes the other, social and economic reasons, gender or ethnic discrimination, etc. The push factors to exclude oneself (voluntary exclusion) can range from disagreement, social, political or religious opposition with the other members of the community, lack of self-esteem, or "free-rider" strategy. In this situation, the group included in the project reaps the benefits (10) while the excluded group does not gain or lose anything (0). However, the latter loses out compared with the previous pattern (1) because of increased inequality between the two groups.

In the dark shaded cell, every member of the community is included in the project. There is equal benefit for all (5). Such a situation may arise for different reasons: the community is small and homogeneous, incentives for being included are high (financial, political, social or cultural), participation

of all the members of the community is obtained through active intervention or coercion from the state or from the institution responsible for the project implementation. In particular, a social exclusion-aware project design may succeed in achieving total participation if it has devised instruments to avoid social exclusion pushes.

The Senegalese story: how to move from social exclusion to optimal participation. *Concerning the political variable*: As discussed earlier, it was clear that the village community was divided along political lines between the two most influential political parties, the PDS (Parti Démocratique Sénégalais, in power) and the opposition party PS (Parti Socialiste). As a result, project implementation proved difficult in a context of shifting political support to and hijacking of the project. At first, the project was allegedly hijacked by the PS: most members of the steering committee were active PS members, and the president of the steering committee was the highly controversial ex-mayor of the municipality (Président de la Communauté Rurale). This triggered the self-exclusion of many potentially interested community members who did not want to participate in what they called a "PS project".

Once the political situation was identified as a major exclusion factor, a sensitization campaign was launched by ENDA Graf Sahel to "depoliticize" the project and to promote the inclusion of PDS members, and apolitical citizens. This was crucial to restore trust in the project at the community and individual levels. As a matter of fact, the new steering committee now exhibits a large panel of political affiliations and many non-politically marked members.

Concerning the religious variable: Although Senegal is an example of religious tolerance and of smooth cohabitation between Islam (95 per cent of the population) and Catholicism (5 per cent), the village has the specific characteristic of hosting a monastery and consequently a rather large Catholic community compared with national proportions. This feature had an impact on the acceptance of the project and on the inclusion or exclusion of certain people. The influence of the local religious leaders in particular can be traced in the participatory pattern exhibited by the Christian community. At first, not a single Christian took part in the project and there was an obvious uninterest in the project from Christian leaders.

The active intervention of ENDA Graf Sahel was needed to improve the communication of the project to Christian leaders. Once their trust was gained through a targeted campaign about the project's benefits, many Christians got involved and took responsibilities in the management structures of the savings bank.

Concerning the social variable: In addition to political and religious identities, a number of influential people emerged from the rest of the villagers through their social position within the community. The most prominent characters of the community represented vested interests groups, in particular local entrepreneurs and presidents of cooperatives or community-based organizations. For instance, the president of the association of taxi drivers, a successful local entrepreneur, was very active in the management and communication of the project to the rest of the community, and especially his employees.

This shows that economically and socially influential individuals are more likely to have the experience or confidence to see themselves in the participatory role and to capture participatory channels (Plummer 2000).

It is interesting to note here that social capital can overcome other traditionally excluding features such as age, gender or education. Indeed, the president of the women processing unit, an illiterate old woman, held the position of treasury officer in the steering committee, and still holds an important position in the new management structure. Moreover, the few isolated or outcast people who did take part in the project relied on other assets such as their connections with the NGO staff members to find the necessary psychological support to participate in the project. The poorest of the poor—isolated, old and disabled people—were, as is very often the case, not included in the project.

Concerning the "environmental" context: The NGO itself can have an exclusionary impact through its influence on decision-making and on the choice of the members of the management structures. NGOs are not without their own agenda and they must acknowledge their exclusionary as well as inclusionary potentials. The natural authority granted to NGO staff members may be a barrier to equitable participation unless the organization is itself trained to avoid such pitfalls. It seems that the philosophy of ENDA Graf Sahel did minimize such risks in the project studied.

The evidence from the project in Senegal shows that the NGO and its staff members can enhance participation. Some isolated people living in remote villages or traditionally outcast people such as the Peul were included in the project thanks to the NGO staff members who disseminated the information to them and morally and psychologically encouraged their participation.

Social exclusion is persistent and calls for long-term measures.   In its second phase, the project was revised to minimize some exclusionary pushes that were easily identifiable. However, the project team probably did not perceive all the potential exclusionary factors which could have been acted upon to increase participation. In some cases, a project team does not have the scope to remove all the barriers to participation, especially when these are structural or institutional. The action of the government is then needed to contribute to an active fight against social exclusion at the community level.

In figure 3 we can locate these patterns of persistent social exclusion in *the light shaded cell*: no one participates in the project even though it is perceived as good and answering a felt need of the community. The reasons for such a pattern can range from bad dissemination of information, to a lack of the necessary physical or human capital to implement the project. In this case there is a very minimal and equal benefit to all (1): the hope generated by the interest of foreigners in the community, expectations for future realization or even a nascent mobilization of the community. Minimal gains are also made from not engaging in a time-consuming project with unpredictable results.

Strengthening people's self-esteem and dignity: A major and persistent barrier to participation in the Senegalese project was of a psychological order. Self-confident people with high level of self-esteem always exhibit more enthusiasm towards innovation and are able to commit themselves to long-term projects.

This was typically the case of the president of the association of taxi drivers. Conversely, many people in the community lacked the basic confidence and self-esteem to consider themselves "worthy" or capable of taking part in the project.

Of course, the psychological features of individuals are highly dependent on economic or social assets. Strengthening people's self-esteem requires long-term processes and actions at the societal level, such as education and poverty eradication, discussed below.

Promoting basic education: Even after some adjustment measures, especially after a sensitization campaign to depoliticize the project, some exclusionary variables remained present in the community. A feature of the community which impacted upon the participation of villagers was the generally low educational level and thereby the low management, organizational and leadership skills available in the community to take part in the project at a decisional level. Education is a key factor of inclusion although it can sometimes be overcome by other assets such as social capital.

The lengthy search for an appropriately educated bank clerk highlighted the difficulty in implementing projects with mostly illiterate people. The appointed bank clerk, although one of the most educated women available in the village, found it quite challenging to deal with some of the tasks associated with the smooth running of the savings bank. At the heart of the problem was not so much the generally low literacy levels, but the unavailability of the few educated members of the community. A young, highly educated architect was very interested in the project, but proved to be highly unreliable as he himself had other business commitments.

Fighting against chronic poverty: The crucial and crosscutting issue of material poverty did determine the extent to which people were able or willing to participate, or were excluded from participation because of economic reasons. As a whole, participants in the project were sufficiently endowed to afford sparing some time for the project. On the other hand, the economic gains to be made from the project were probably not high enough to attract some qualified people, such as the young architect.

The general level of participation and its quality was heavily influenced by the economic situation of the community: poor infrastructures, little available resources at the municipality level, and not being able to afford basic necessities for the smooth running of the project certainly hampered the progress of the project. In particular, lack of access to transportation (in terms of cost and not actual availability) did deter the participation of isolated villagers.

Table 2 recapitulates the above discussion through an identification of the excluded and included groups or individuals in the context of the community project in Senegal. The social exclusion variables determine the ability and willingness of individuals or subgroups within the community to participate in the project as well as the extent and quality of participation. The variables help to locate policy intervention or project activities that have been or could have been implemented to enhance participation in the community. Ultimately, the aim is to move on the participatory matrix from a pattern of social exclusion to a pattern of inclusion. Once more, inclusion does not necessarily mean integration of all community members, but of all who wish to participate according to their specific livelihood strategies.

Table 2

Exclusionary/inclusionary patterns in rural Senegal

Social exclusion variables at community and individual levels	Example of excluded	Example of included
Income/consumption	Poor households	Comparatively richer households
Assets (land, capital)	Landless labourers	Landlords
Level of poverty	Indebted households	Household receiving remittances
Employment status and related time availability	Young businessmen (no time availability)	Unemployed people (more time availability)
Position in society and social role	Immigrants	Political leaders
Personal rivalries	Outcast	President of the association of taxi drivers
Ethnicity	"Peul"	"Wolof"
Gender	Old women	President of the women processing unit
Political stance/belief	At first, PDS partisans	At first, PS partisans especially leaders
Level of political power	Non political citizens	
Civic engagement and role	Free-riders	Political elite
Religious objection to the project, degree of trust in religious leaders	At first Christians	Muslims, then also Christians
Degree of self esteem, trust and self-confidence, apathy	Remote village dwellers, poorest of the poor, middle-aged women, illiterate	Local leaders, socially connected people
Geographical location	Remote village dwellers	Neighbours to the project location
Time constraints	People without access to transportation	
Access to services		People with easy access to transportation
Educational level, management and leadership skills	Illiterate, especially women	Students or literate people, political leaders, charismatic characters
Type of skills available	Land labourers	
Health status	Handicapped or ill people	
Age	Old secluded people	Old chiefs
Relationship with NGO staff	People suspicious of the NGO or not connected to it	Friends, acquaintances of NGO staff
Access to information		

Source: Adapted from Haan *et al.* (1998).

Results and Implications for Social Policy-makers and Development Practitioners

On our understanding of participation in community development projects . . .

This article has uncovered some of the complex mechanisms at play within communities that shape the extent to which participation is genuinely achieved. The example from Senegal shows that the combined use of game theory and the concept of social exclusion can enlighten the analysis of participatory processes as it articulates all the different patterns of exclusion or inclusion possible and makes for a contextual interpretation of these patterns.

First, game theory shows that in the case of a "good" project, gains are made by being included. Conversely, in the case of a "bad" project, gains are made by being excluded (gain 5). These are fairly expected results. However, game theory also shows that opposing/conflicting behaviours (being included while excluding others and vice versa) are more beneficial to one party in each scenario (gain 10) since comparative advantage derives from the unequal situation. There are therefore rational push factors that encourage exclusionary processes.

Secondly, through its comprehensive illustration of all the possible participatory patterns, game theory helps to locate individuals or groups in the participatory matrix. The combination of game theory with the concept of social exclusion gives scope for a contextual interpretation of participation and social exclusion alongside a wide range of possible variables. Among others, the analysis acknowledges the possibility of people excluding themselves from participation through a conscious calculus. This possibility is often neglected in traditional analyses of participation which emphasize the integration of all as an ultimate goal. The framework here captures the diversity of options in participatory processes. This is in line with a diversity and people-centred approach to development and community participation.

The fact that rational livelihood strategies may result in voluntary social exclusion should not distract attention from the exclusionary processes that hamper participation on inequitable grounds. Blatant gender or ethnic discriminations are obvious examples of processes that need to be checked through active policy intervention. Institutional processes, internal politics, access to infrastructures and other dimensions that seem to be more remote to participatory processes also need to be investigated and acted upon to achieve genuine, equitable and free participation. In this context, Sen's capability approach (Sen and Nussbaum 1993) is useful in making the distinction between giving people the opportunity to participate and yet not coercing participation. Enhancing capabilities to promote individual agency should be the focus of community development projects and the strategy to promote genuine, people-centred participation.

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For that purpose, analysing the "subjective" and contextual factors of participation is the key to finding leverage points to minimize exclusionary pushes.

In this sense, it is essential to contextualize game theory through social exclusion and livelihood characteristics. Devising an appropriate filter of social exclusion that integrates as many variables as possible can help to locate policy interventions or project activities that will enhance inclusion rather than exclusion. Indeed, the rational push and pull factors of participation unravelled by game theory can be either mitigated or reinforced by cultural norms and social capital, social or economic considerations, political pressure, etc., and it is the task of social planners to "play" with all these variables to increase community participation.

Such a tool of analysis is attractive for social planners who wish to optimize participation as a development tool, while being aware of its limitations. Since social exclusion emphasizes the multiplicity of agents and processes leading to exclusion, it allows a much more precise understanding of participatory processes and of the "culprits" of social exclusion in community development projects. While traditional analyses may blame the poor for their apathy and consequent non-participation, the concept of social exclusion offers a much wider range of possible structural, institutional, cultural, economic and other barriers to participation. In turn, this leads to a much broader set of policies available to counteract or at least attenuate the dynamics of social exclusion. "Our chances of developing effective policies will be greater if we can improve our understanding of such processes" (Hills *et al.* 2002). The framework presented in this article provides a checklist by which constraints on participation can be prioritized for action to remove them, and the links between them identified.

Notwithstanding this, the number of explanatory variables included in the social exclusion filter and in the example from Senegal appears to be large. This is an inherent difficulty with the use of an all-encompassing concept such as social exclusion that is flexible enough to capture multiple variables of varying significance. Thus, the next step should be to identify the variables that make a significant impact on participation, and to order them according to their weight in explaining specific participatory patterns. This would allow measuring the degree of "exclusionary power" of the different variables and to prioritize project activities or policy interventions accordingly. Social planners must try and identify the key barriers to participation without flooding the debate with exhaustive lists of potential exclusionary factors.

The partial success of the project in Senegal lies in the careful monitoring of some social exclusion variables in the second phase of the project. A better—and earlier—insight into the mechanisms at play behind participation and the different exclusionary pushes could have contributed to enhance participation even further or to anticipate social exclusion processes. What the present study proposes is a simple tool to map exclusionary processes and to find possible leverage points to minimize them. Above anything else, it is about shaping a mindset which is characterized by a clear awareness and understanding of the ambiguities and barriers to genuine participation.

Note

1. A livelihood "comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base" (Farrington *et al.* 1999).

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