Exercising Citizenship

Invited and Negotiated Spaces in Grievance Redressal Systems in Hubli–Dharwad

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Abstract

Different groups of citizens exercise their citizenship through various channels in Indian cities to realize their social rights. In classic urban management systems dominated by government, citizens' rights are allocated by governments. New forms of network governance see governments as enabling actors for private sector provision, relegating citizen rights to 'consumer rights'. New e-based grievance redressal systems in many Indian cities are part of this new perspective, designed to make government–citizen relations more transparent and effective. This article is based on a case study of a north Karnataka city, where e-based grievance systems have been introduced.

This article describes how various social groups (low income and middle class) exercise their citizenship differentially, making use respectively of political and e-based grievance redressal systems. We argue that government entitlements are of limited value for low-income groups when governments do not deliver, forcing these groups to utilize 'political society' channels and strategically negotiate with government for realizing rights. In contrast, middle-class citizens who are provided basic services, utilize alternative forms of mobile-based grievance systems to obtain better quality of serivices. Internet-based systems are not yet used by anyone.

The implications are that new forms of grievance redressal systems result in an e-based divide between those who utilize newer forms of grievance redressal for quality improvements in service provision and adverse incorporation of those who still work through 'negotiated spaces' to realize a basic level of service provision. Such systems currently do not provide more effective channels for low-income groups to exercise their citizenship, nor reduce differences in governmental accountability towards various social groups.

Keywords

E-grievances, urban governance, citizenship, negotiated spaces

Introduction

The notion of citizenship and (social) rights has been a long-standing one, which in the last decade, has given much more attention to the issue of how citizens can 'exercise' their rights (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001; Luckham et al., 2000). This reflects the interest in what strategies can effectively reduce the

inequalities between groups of citizens who perhaps nominally have equal rights but, in practice, experience high levels of inequalities in realizing such rights (Baud and de Wit, 2008; Chatterjee 2004; Fernandes, 2006; Gaventa, 2006). Whereas in the beginning of the 2000s, the concept of how citizens produced social capital and concomitant civic organizations dominated the discussion as a necessary condition for more deliberative forms of governance (Gurza Lavalle et al., 2005; Harriss, 2001), more recently, the discussion has ranged towards relations between government institutions, existing social inequalities and the extent to which institutions can include citizens in deliberative processes in conditions of extreme inequalities (Beaumont and Nicholls, 2008; Joppke, 2008). What 'spaces' for deliberation and feedback are created and who accesses them is an important issue (Baud and Nainan, 2008; Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001).

The expansion of information and communication technology (ICT) systems has provided a new platform for strategies geared towards creating spaces for more deliberative processes and social exchanges, empowering citizens and social networks (through mobile phone systems, Web2.0 information) as well as increasing deliberative processes between governments and citizens (through information provision, exchanges and feedback from citizens), providing the potential for greater inclusion and legitimacy (Baud et al., 2011; Georgiadou, 2008; Puri and Sahay, 2007). The potential of such platforms has been praised highly by their proponents, based on the technical capabilities of the systems and critiqued by others (for example, Avgerou, 2008).

In this article, we take up the issue of how different groups of citizens can exercise their rights, through what 'spaces' they do so and the potential of new e-based strategies being implemented in numerous Indian cities to enable citizens to exercise their rights to basic services in a more effective manner. In India, e-based strategies are being promoted as more transparent, efficient and effective strategies to link government to citizens, including in grievance and redressal processes (ref. to policy paper). We raise the question of how the new systems function in the context of existing urban inequalities in order to analyze their potential contributions to reducing inequalities in access and use of basic services across socially unequal groups.

The choice for examining such issues in India is related to the international importance given to increasing government accountability to citizens, especially in the area of basic service provision (Paul, 1992; World Bank, 2004). Concern for accountability and the possibility of exercising citizenship can seem somewhat ambivalent, given the neoliberal initiatives in privatizing public goods services which have preceded the discussion on accountability, and the extent to which this has undermined ambitions for universal coverage (Batley, 1996). However, previously existing inequalities in service provision in practice in most developing countries makes the question of whether new strategies allow for more deliberative inputs from citizens still a relevant one.

India is also relevant as choice because it is a very large and long-standing democracy in terms of political electoral processes, with further decentralization and representation being implemented in the early 1990s in local governance (cited for urban areas, see de Wit et al., 2008). There also exist very large inequalities in terms of social divides because of the caste system and fairly strong social networks and civic organizations based on cultural/caste identities, regional background and social class (Harriss, 2006). Therefore, the potential for exercising citizenship exists, and the question of whether new strategies based on ICT systems make it possible for citizens to exercise their rights a relevant one (cited from Heitzman, 2004).

Exercising Citizenship: Inequalities and 'Spaces'

Ideas on what constitutes citizenship have evolved. Currently, citizenship is defined as consisting of rights, status and identity; here the issue of rights is the dimension under consideration (cited from Joppke, 2008). Marshall's classic framework of citizenship rights encompasses civil, political and social rights (Marshall, 1950). Civil rights guarantee citizens a degree of individual freedom, such as property rights and freedom of speech. Political rights allow citizens 'to participate in political life' (Heywood, 2004, p. 157). Social rights guarantee a citizen's right to an income sufficient to share to the full in the social heritage and life of a civilized being, whether or not his/her value for the labour market is considered (Marshall, quoted in Turner, 2009, p. 68). By giving citizens social rights, the state gives citizens access to minimum of essential goods and services, or an income which allows them to provide these for themselves.

However, the state usually does not consider all citizens to be equal. Gaventa has described several deficits on which inequalities in citizenship are based. Locally, the most important deficits include:

1. hollow citizenship, in which citizens are not given equal entitlements;
2. lack of vertical accountability, in which citizens are not able to hold their government and political elite accountable for the ways they use their power; and
3. weak horizontal accountability, in which bureaucracies/implementors manipulate existing checks and balances through patronage, corruption and by stifling dissent (Gaventa, 2006).

Such existing inequalities make it necessary for citizens to actively work in realizing their rights and entitlements through the claims they make on the state. Several issues need to be taken into account: the formal and informal 'spaces' through which citizens can route their claims; the extent to which the state recognizes such claims; and the differences in such systems related to existing inequalities between groups of citizens.

Claims can be made through different channels depending on the spaces available to citizens to make and shape the services they want (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001). Spaces are defined as 'opportunities, moments and channels where citizens can act to potentially influence policies, discourses, decisions and relationship which affect their lives and interests' (Gaventa, 2005, p. 11). In closed spaces, citizens are not allowed a say in decisions taken. In invited spaces, the government offers citizens the possibility of participation in influencing decision-making processes, ranging from consultations to full participation in designing policies. Claimed spaces are those in which citizens come together without the participation of government, to create their own opportunities to influence government (Gaventa, 2005). Baud and Nainan (2008) distinguish negotiating spaces, in which citizens negotiate with actors, institutions or organizations, directly or through mediators, in trying to influence government.

The question here is what effects social inequalities have on the opportunities of citizens to make claims and participate in the different types of spaces in which governments can be influenced.

Modernizing Government: Accountability through Grievance Redressal Systems

When social rights of citizens are introduced, the state commits itself to ensuring a basic quality of life for its citizens. In the 1980s, the role and quality of government was considered to be a problem; in the

prevailing neoliberal climate, it became a dominant thought that the state should become more like the (idealized view of the) private sector. The new public management paradigm was based on the notion that transferring private sector ideas, and private sector providers, would make service delivery more efficient, lower unit costs and more effective (cited from Dunning, 2005; Helmsing, 2002; Manning, 2001). However, critiques of the neoliberal approach have suggested that the exit possibilities of citizens often do not exist (especially when monopoly infrastructural networks prevent competition), and citizens' voice is also not heard when they lack the power to demand changes in government policy and practices (Dunleavy et al., 2005, p. 476; Haque, 2005, p. 71).

In order to make governments more responsive to citizens, customer relation management (CRM) approaches of the private sector have been introduced into the public sector, called the Citizen Relationship Management (CiRM) (Schellong, 2005). These are characterized by one-stop shops, where citizens can take care of a variety of administrative requirements at one counter or website (King, 2007, p. 53; Schellong, 2005, p. 3). The use of ICT (e-government) is part of enhancing internal efficiency within government as well as the interface with citizens to empower them (Saxena, 2005). Further empowerment is promoted through citizens' charters, setting out standards for government service provision and through grievance redressal systems. These allow citizens to lodge complaints about service quality with governments, and demand redressal of the lack (or bad quality of) services (Ranganathan, 2008, p. 2). Such grievance redressal systems use various types of platforms: mobile telephone systems and Internet platforms are preferred current options (Wallack and Nadhamuni, 2007). They allow citizens to monitor closely service quality and reduce reaction times of government in redressing problems in service delivery.

Critiques of the extent to which grievance redressal systems empower citizens have to do with the fact that the focus is on existing service delivery and not changes in delivery systems, and that citizens still cannot force the government to actually redress complaints. Such systems do shorten the 'accountability' route by the direct access to government, instead of via political representatives (Goetz and Jenkins, 2002, p. 5). Accountability, however, has two dimensions, answerability and enforceability; as long as grievance redressal systems do not provide citizens with enforceable sanctions vis-à-vis the government, their voice and power remains limited. Therefore, the question needs to be addressed which groups of citizens can define and utilize spaces with such power that they can enforce accountability from government.

Enforcing Accountability: Citizenship, Spaces and Power to Complain

Who are citizens? Classically, the state defines who are citizens and their rights, and the extent to which others are excluded. Kabeer adds that social rights are often co-determined by groups in society prioritizing particular values and groups (Kabeer, 2005). The concept of citizenship also implies exclusion of groups not counted as eligible for citizenship; or a form of adverse incorporation, in which those groups have to pay, do or risk more for less, that is, in which different rules of entitlement apply (Hickey and du Toit, 2006; van Dijk, 2009, p. 11). Groups not considered citizens with rights—for example, poor households—have to work through clientelism rather than rights-based approaches to receive benefits from government (Hickey and du Toit, 2006, p. 13). Clientelist relations are often seen as less high risk and providing more immediate material benefits than social movements aiming for citizenship rights

(Wood, in Hickey, 2010). In contrast, citizens are able to develop social movements around building up further rights, or activating existing rights in practice.

In the Indian context, a similar distinction is made between citizens and 'populations'; the latter are groups of people who inhabit particular territory illegally, and whom the state condones and provides for partially, but who are not allowed social rights (Chatterjee, 2004). The state still provides for them to some extent because the negative effects of not doing so outweigh the costs. When such groups are unable to become citizens, they have to negotiate strategically with government, mobilizing intermediaries such as politicians for their cause and applying political pressure to ensure service provision. However, the main effect is that provision is never a 'right', but always a granted 'favour'. Such populations include poor migrants, squatters, 'non-locals' with a differing cultural or language background, informal sector workers and those with a low-caste background.

The spaces allocated to citizens and populations in India differ. Governments provide 'invited' spaces for citizens through which they can provide feedback to government through grievance redressal systems; excluded 'populations' in principle can complain, but have no rights to the services they would demand (Haque 2005). This reflects the fact that even when governments create spaces, their way of working follows existing unequal power relations (Gaventa, 2005). The Indian government has introduced benchmarks for urban governance in specific areas of service provision, and is planning to expand those to others (GOI, no date).[1] Grievance redressal is a strategic area included.

The question is whether groups with differing levels of social rights can actively utilize grievance redressal systems in the same way in order to make government more accountable, and whether their strategies will have similar impacts (see Figure 1). This applies *a fortiori* when government accountability is limited, and mobilization and/or negotiation strategies are necessary to force governments to deliver on existing entitlements. The outcomes of such processes finally remain to be seen in terms of improving service provision.[2] The new e-based mechanisms for accountability are individualized, which may imply that social groups using their social networks or clientelist strategies may experience fewer advantages from these new types of systems than citizens whose entitlements are not in question and can utilize individual channels to government.

The Case of Hubli–Dharwad

The questions just raised are examined by looking at the case of Hubli–Dharwad, a city in north Karnataka, where local government introduced more decentralized interfaces with citizens early on in an attempt to improve the accountability of local government; these included zonal offices, citizens committees and grievance redresssal systems through mobile phone and e-based platforms, as will be described next. The length of time grievance redressal systems had been in place, its relatively small city size (1.2 million in 2001) and its inclusion in a larger research programme on knowledge management in urban governance of the University of Amsterdam made its choice strategic.[3]

In order to find out what use was made of these systems, research was carried out over a period of three months, focusing on a comparison of the ways different groups of citizens made use of this 'invited space'. The focus was on both providers of services and receivers. Receivers were classified as 'ordinary citizens', that is, those with recognized legitimate claims on the local government. In Indian cities, this excludes residents of non-identified slum areas; when slum areas become recognized, the procedure begins for building up collective rights. Two groups of citizens were distinguished: those with lower

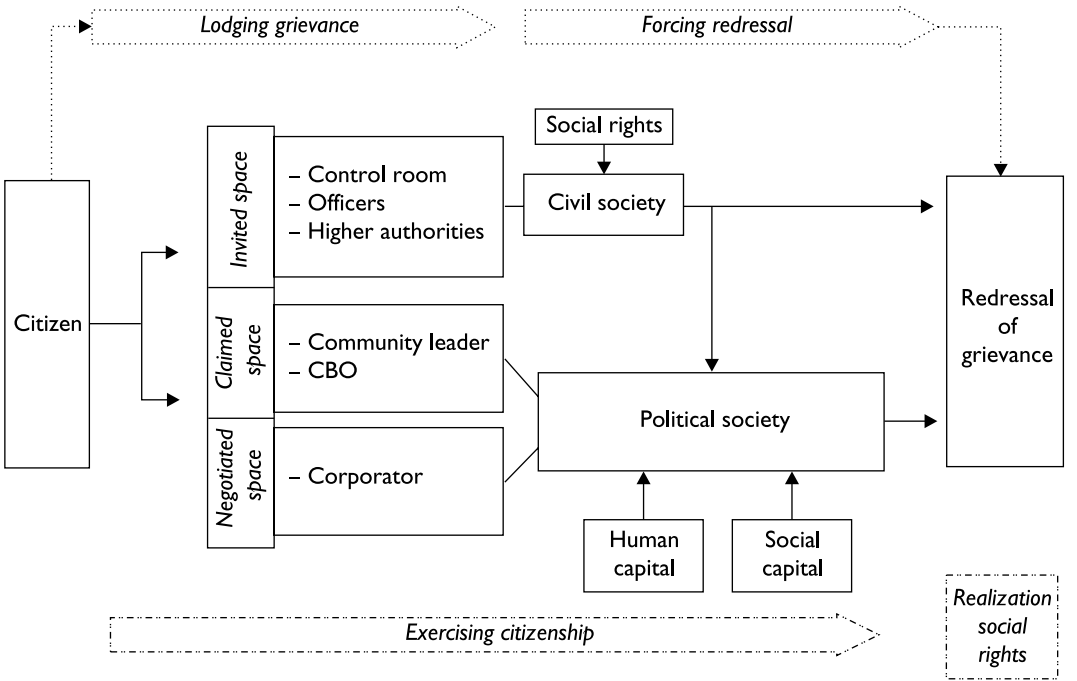

Figure 1. Accountability Processes by Types of 'Space' Framework

socio-economic status identified by blue-collar jobs and no education past secondary levels living in substandard areas of the city; and the middle-class, identified by higher levels of education, living in standardized areas.[4] Basic information on inequalities within the city had been calculated on the basis of the multiple deprivation index derived from census data (2001) at the level of electoral wards (cf. Baud, Sridharan and Pfeffer, 2008). A selection of middle-class and working-class neighbourhoods was made across the range of wards within each ward, a geographical spread of households was combined with a snowballing method to complete a set of exploratory interviews with middle-class and lower socio-economic status citizens.[5] These were complemented by transect walks and non-formal conversations with neighbourhood residents. The providers were interviewed and represented by *Hubli–Dharwad Municipal Corporation* (HDMC) officials at various levels. The researcher also spent time in the HDMC offices and control room of the grievance redressal system. Conversations with other relevant actors included councillors (local political representative at ward level), other politicians, journalists, academics from the local university and non-governmental organization (NGO) members.

Research Context

The cities of Hubli and Dharwad are located in northern Karnataka. Karnataka has experienced rapid economic growth over the last 10 years, and its information technology (IT) sector is burgeoning.

Northern Karnataka (and Dharwad district) is a relatively undeveloped area compared to the rest of the state. Dharwad district ranks 10th out of 27 districts on the Human Development Index, and has almost the lowest score on health (Government of Karnataka, 2006, p. 16). A recent survey carried out for the National Urban Sanitation Policy places it at 192nd among 423 Indian cities on health-related issues, such as provision of sewerage, drainage and sanitation services (*Sunday Times of India*, 2010). The municipal corporation has the mandate to tackle these social problems within their boundaries.

Because of the relative proximity of the two cities, a single municipal administration governs the 'twin cities', the HDMC. The municipal corporation oversees a population of some 1.2 million, of which 20 per cent live in slums (HDMC, 2010). The two cities are growing rapidly, with a 30 per cent population increase in the last 10 years. The municipal corporation struggles to manage the increase in services necessary for its fast-growing population (municipalities characteristically have financing for operation and maintenance, but not for investment). Both cities, but in particular Hubli, are playing increasingly important economic roles, expanding their formal service sectors. Hubli constitutes an important railway hub in the state, and is a major stop on the Mumbai–Bangalore route.

Unequal Service Provision in Hubli–Dharwad; Citizens and Populations

In Hubli–Dharwad, services are not provided equally to all citizens. The HDMC distinguishes four kinds of citizens: those living in non-identified slums, identified slums, declared slums and regular layouts. The former two do not pay taxes, and therefore have no right to services or grievance redressal from the HDMC, although they may acquire some basic services through their local political representative or community organization.[6] Residents in declared slums and regular layouts are entitled to services by the HDMC as (property) taxpayers. Declared slums are slums recognized by the HDMC and become part of the development plan of the Slum Clearance Board. Still an area in development, they usually lack certain services, such as paved roads or frequent garbage collection. Government officials acknowledge that shortcomings in service provision are exacerbated by the fact that these areas are generally densely built up areas, and lament that the population lacks knowledge of how to use provided civic amenities properly.

The HDMC lacks the financial resources to provide each citizen equal services, and provision is concentrated in the standardized wealthier areas. Although citizens in poorer declared neigbourhoods have the same rights as those living in wealthier standardized areas, they do not receive the same level of services. Figure 2 shows an example of the unequal distribution of services in Hubli–Dharwad in 2009. Poorer areas (those areas with high concentrations of poverty and Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe population) bear the brunt of the lack of services and the collective basic provision of services only. This is reflected in differences in type of service: in standardized areas, individual taps per households are provided inside the house, whereas poorer areas have only hand pumps outside the houses. When slums obtain the 'declared' status, they usually are already relatively large and densely populated areas with high concentrations of deprivation. The 'declared' status makes it possible for the Urban Development Authority to upgrade these areas to regularized layouts, by putting in services, and then handing over to the HDMC to manage the provided facilities.

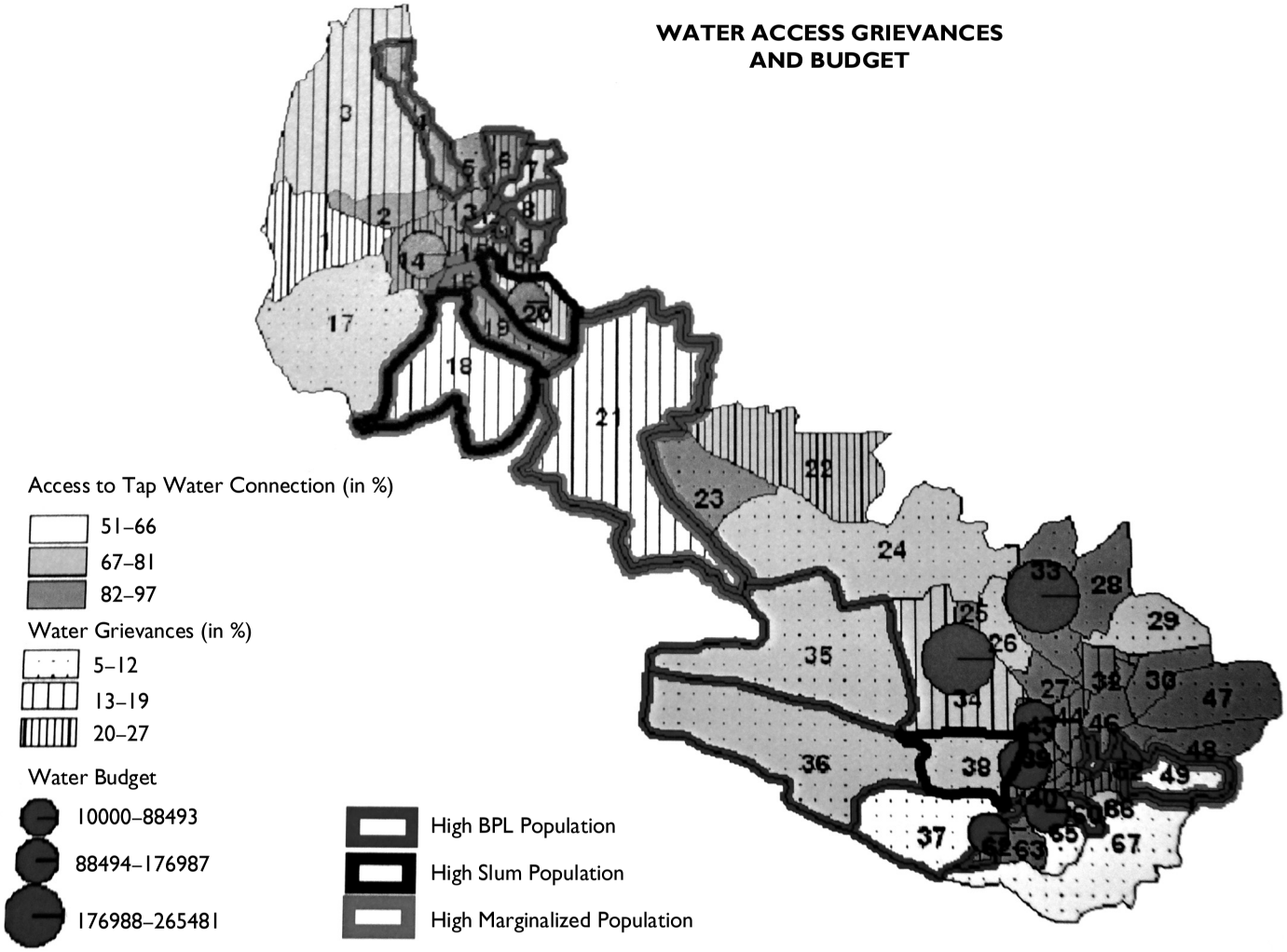

Figure 2. Provision of Water Connections among Hubli–Dharwad Households

Source: Sridharan (2009).

Modernization of the HDMC—Accountability Mechanisms

The HDMC has implemented a number of innovations to improve its service provision in the last decade, based on the discussions of the new public management ideas throughout India. The citizen was to become central to the HDMC's administration, and customer satisfaction was the goal. Under existing systems, citizens were obliged to stand in line at the corporation's main office for hours, and go from office to office to take care of their municipal affairs. Earlier, citizens would have to make complaints in writing or by directly contacting an official. An innovative commissioner was the driving force behind these changes, and they were put in place during that period (2004–07).

The main goal for the changes described next was to enhance the HDMC's customer friendliness and create a more accessible interface. The improvements were based on several combined initiatives—a citizen's charter, decentralized zonal offices and a new grievance redressal system. The introduction of a citizen's charter consisted of the service standards, grievance redressal periods and costs and standards of services to be provided. It acquired ISO 9001:2008 status as a result of its efforts towards professionalization and modernization.[7] The World Bank's Cities Alliance programme later set out a City Development Strategy and a funding plan for the city to further develop the course set out by the concerned commissioner. However, this project was not carried out when the next commissioner took over in 2007.

The second initiative consisted of decentralizing the municipal corporation's administration through zonal offices. Each zonal office covers three to six wards, with each ward generally covering 10,000–15,000 people. In the zonal office, citizens can take care of a number of municipal affairs, such as property tax or the registration of births and deaths. The use of internet-based interfaces links the zonal offices to the corporation's central office. The HDMC also attempted to improve citizen participation in the corporation's affairs to close the perceived gap between the general public and the work of the HDMC, by installing so-called citizen committees, who were to bring matters to the attention of the HDMC. The HDMC also began to organize 'open house meetings', where citizens and municipal officers would come together to discuss grievances.

The third initiative concerned the new 'grievance redressal system' as a means for citizens to achieve the services to which they are entitled. An accessible ICT-based interface was installed, which would allow citizens to lodge complaints and have them redressed within specified periods of time. Officers were to be held accountable through monitoring systems within the corporation, so that all complaints would be handled on time. The latter was one of the most revolutionary innovations introduced by the HDMC—the use of e-government tools.[8] In addition to the corporation website, a comprehensive grievance redressal system, consisting of both a telephone hotline (Control Room) as well as an online platform, was set up.

The next section discusses the extent to which this grievance redressal system has become the 'invited space' it was designed to be, which citizens are able to utilize such 'invited space' and which social groups have to utilize alternative 'negotiated' or 'claimed spaces' to obtain redressal for grievances.

Invited Spaces: The Control Room

The grievance redressal system is based on the telephone hotline with a Control Room at the headquarters of the HDMC, a small office staffed by several telephone attendants. Citizens can call the Control Room

and lodge any complaint regarding provision of services. They are then provided with a complaint number to use in keeping track of the complaint's progress.[9] The HDMC registers all complaints in a software programme, according to degrees of gravity. Type A grievances are minor complaints, to be redressed within a day. Type B and C complaints are more major grievances, to be redressed within respectively seven and 30 days

Registering complaints enables citizens to hold their government to account for effective grievance redressal by giving them proof of their grievance registration. Conversely, it allows the corporation to create a database providing an internal knowledge base for monitoring service provision and an evaluation system for sanctioning employees not complying with proper operation and maintenance. The HDMC can now keep track of the type, location and frequency of complaints, which can be used to map citizens' needs, as well as monitor its own performance.

In terms of internal monitoring, HDMC has set standards by which to sanction those who do not redress grievances on time. In zones where non-redressal exceeds 60 per cent, zonal officers should receive a fine. However, in practice, this process has proven difficult after the initial force provided by the previous commissioner, and HDMC does not fine its officers consistently; officers with equally dismal redressal rates are given different (or no) fines. It was difficult to obtain clarity as to how and when the HDMC fines its officers, and evidence of it doing so. The corporation also uses the registration of grievances to monitor the companies to whom it outsources service provision (such as HESCOM,[10] responsible for the provision of electricity), which it fines in cases of non-redressal. However, whereas the HDMC finds difficulties in fining its own employees, fining the outside electricity provider is done more forcefully.

Many citizens interviewed felt that during the initiating commissioner's term, complaints were taken much more seriously and redressed more efficiently. His involvement with the city and its quality of provision is illustrated by the fact that citizens could send him SMS messages with complaints which would be taken up personally. Since his departure, there has been a lapse in the level of commitment and participation of HDMC officials in the new practices, such as the open house meetings and citizen committees, which were abandoned soon after the commissioner's departure. The importance of a strong executive will driving the implementation of new initiatives for accountability is indicated by the downturn in sanctioning and monitoring procedures after the departure of the commissioner instigating them. Incentivizing local government officials remains difficult and only happens when committed leaders can motivate staff and officials to improve their performance. When this fell away in Hubli–Dharwad, so did the potential for progress.

Using the Control Room: Grievances and their Redressal

The Control Room potentially changes the relation between citizens and their local government, allowing citizens with rights to contact the corporation, lodge complaints and hold the HDMC accountable for timely redressal. This is a great improvement over the previous situation in which time-consuming, impenetrable procedures made it difficult for citizens to effectively reach those responsible for ensuring services and holding them accountable. The new grievance redressal system is potentially a time-saving, accessible and efficient system, one which gives citizens 'a kind of power' (respondent in Hubli–Dharwad) over the HDMC, a means to hold officials to account. However, a crucial shortcoming in the Control Room is that citizens still have no means to hold the HDMC to account when grievances are not redressed.

After the strong supervision on officers and sanctions through the corporation itself lapsed, achieving redressal of complaints has come to rest on the ability of the individual citizens to force the HDMC to redress their complaint. In practice therefore, the Control Room complaint is now used as one of a series of instruments to apply pressure on the HDMC. Entitlement to redressal is often insufficient to achieve redressal, and citizens must go through a process of negotiating strategically with the HDMC in order to realize redressal of their grievances.

When citizens have petty complaints (Type A), they can often successfully have them redressed by utilizing the telephone hotline to the Control Room. These complaints concern 'routine works', for which corporation employees have a mandate and need not refer to their superiors for permission. Redressal is often more problematic with grievances that require additional deployment of resources in the form of manpower and budget. These are 'major' grievances, which the corporation labels as Type B and Type C complaints. These require the permission of senior staff, and extra resources, to be carried out. To be able to have these redressed, citizens will sometimes have to call repeatedly or threaten with going 'up the ladder'. To enforce redressal of major complaints, citizens also have to negotiate through additional spaces. When they face relatively major issues in services, citizens go higher up the hierarchy, for instance, approaching their zonal officer or political representative. Speaking directly to those with the required authority allows citizens to convey to them the urgency of their complaint and convince them of the need to redress it. The perception among citizens that the Control Room is an instrument for the redressal of petty grievances is reflected in the complaints most frequently received by the Control Room.[11]

Disparity in Grievance Redressal Strategies: Negotiated and Claimed Spaces

Gaventa (2005) argues that power relations crucially affect the way citizens can make use of a 'space' in interacting with government. This is an important consideration when analyzing the Control Room as invited space. The key problem with the citizen-as-customer orientation that the Control Room prescribes is that it assumes all citizens to be able to act as entitled customers. This ignores the inequalities between urban citizens, which means that not all will be able to do so to the same extent. Differences exist between the middle-class citizens and citizens with a lower socio-economic status, in terms of the complaints they have, and in terms of the strategies and spaces they utilize in pursuing redressal of their complaints.

Negotiated Spaces

Several factors influence disparities in grievance redressal behaviour between poorer and middle-class citizens. First, the complaints poorer and middle-class citizens have differ. For poorer citizens, 'petty' grievances about operation and maintenance of services are a part of their daily life. The lower living standards in their neighbourhoods translate into acceptance of lower standards on public provisions. These citizens are faced with much larger shortcomings, such as lack of investment in facilities and a lower standard of provision generally. Minor operation and maintenance problems have less priority and are not considered worth negotiating with the HDMC.

In addition, poorer citizens also find it difficult to achieve redressal of their complaints. As noted in previous research,[12] existing levels of social and political engagement of citizens are important in determining whether they will approach government with a problem. Poorer citizens showed themselves to

be distrustful of the HDMC, and generally felt that the corporation did not care for them or their problems. As a consequence, they felt that approaching the HDMC with individual grievances would be unsuccessful. They were often also not aware of the Control Room's existence, or exactly how it could be used.

Many poorer citizens aware of its existence distrusted it without having tried it. Those who had utilized this channel had had negative experiences, confirming their perception of both the Control Room as well as the HDMC. Poorer citizens found it difficult to use the Control Room in negotiating with government, and were less able/inclined to strategically convince the Control Room staff to take up action on their behalf, in contrast to middle-class citizens, who were much less hesitant to threaten to go to higher authorities. Poorer and less educated citizens relied on social capital (rather than individual human capital) to effectively make use of the invited spaces to achieve their ends. They used their ties with neighbourhood networks as well as political representatives. A major channel was the local councillor.[13]

In Hubli–Dharwad, the 'corporator' is the local political representative elected at the ward[14] level. While their primary duty is to represent their constituency in the municipal council, in day-to-day city life, they act as ground-level problem solvers. Generally well connected and with the support of a political party, those linked to the party in power are influential figures. Such councillors are mediators between poorer citizens and the HDMC. For many poorer citizens, the councillor is the first point of call when faced with a problem regarding the corporation. One citizen put it as follows: 'he is nearby, why should I go to the HDMC?'

Many middle-class citizens perceive councillors as politicians mainly concerned with furthering their own interests. Most poorer citizens held similar attitudes towards the councillor, but still approached him/her when they had a grievance. Citizens establish a clientelist relationship with their councillor, who helps them in exchange for votes. In their more densely populated and tightly knit communities, where services are often provided collectively, poorer citizens face shared problems. Broken water pumps or blocked drainages affect several households simultaneously. In pursuing redressal of these complaints, citizens readily join forces to convince the councillor that they need help. Although councillors present barriers to providing effective assistance, such as opposing party affiliations or corruption, for poorer citizens, the councillor remains a crucial link between the citizen and the corporation in opening up spaces for negotiation.

Claimed Spaces

Citizens also call on community ties in pursuing redressal of grievances. They call on the mutual solidarity of their community members and mobilize them as spokesperson in relation to their councillor or HDMC officials. Such 'local leaders' or 'social workers' can be valuable in aiding them in achieving redressal of their complaint. Citizens who are more educated and actively involved in the community and with the HDMC than others take on such roles. They know which avenues to pursue in achieving redressal of a particular grievance, and how to do so effectively. Poorer citizens feel that such leaders are more effective in achieving redressal through invited and negotiated spaces than they are themselves. Community leaders also take on a crucial role in organizing group action against the HDMC or the councillor. They may write letters on the behalf of the group, organize meetings and act as the group's spokesperson.

For the most part, it is poorer citizens that rely on their social capital in this way. Wealthier and educated citizens feel they can achieve redressal of complaints individually, as they have sufficient educational capital and social power to deal with the corporation. Middle-class citizens do use community

organizations such as Residents Welfare Associations for the redressal of major grievances. With these grievances, it is more difficult to convince the HDMC to give in to their demands as an individual, as such problems require substantial budget allocation. That requires claims from a group of citizens to be accepted.

Discussion and Conclusion

The case of Hubli–Dharwad presents a differentiated picture of the effects on citizenship in introducing new public management strategies. Table 1 shows an overview of the existing inequalities in service provision between middle-class and poorer citizens' neighbourhoods, and the different pathways they follow in interacting with the local government to address problems with such provision. This is discussed next.

Table 1. 'Spaces' for Participation and How They are Used in Grievance Redressal

	Invited Space	Negotiated Space	Claimed Space
Deciding factor in successful use	Human capital and political capabilities	Social capital	Social capital
Citizen uses space on basis of	Rights	Patronage	Community ties
Pitfalls	• Awareness • Capacity to use effectively • Lack of accountability	• Clientelism • Lack of accountability	• Clientelism • Lack of power
Use middle class	Space used most by middle-class citizens	Not used by middle-class citizens	Only used by middle-class citizens in exceptional cases
Use LSES	Rarely used by LSES citizens	Corporator is crucial actor for LSES citizens	CBOs and local leaders are crucial actors for LSES citizens

Note: LSES (lower socio-economic status).

Modernizing Government, Local Citizenship Deficits and Enforcing Accountability

When new public management procedures are introduced in local government, they are based on the assumptions of equality among the citizens they serve and the capacity of citizens to function as active consumers, protecting their own rights. In some situations, these assumptions are not realistic, that is, citizens who do not have the full set of rights usually given by local government (democratic deficit) are not able to exert their full capacity to activate those rights (Table 1). There is an existing situation of unequal services, unequal granting of rights to services, depending on the degree of 'administrative acceptance' of neighbourhoods. This undermines the potential of the new public management instruments and strategies. This corresponds to Gaventa's democratic deficits, particularly the idea of 'hollow citizenship' pervasive in the Indian context (based on caste and social hierarchies) (Gaventa 2006).

A second factor is the existing lack of vertical accountability within government, which the new mechanisms of e-based grievance redressal are supposed to address. These can work well when strong leadership within government reinforces the greater interaction and participation of citizens in procedures to provide government with more information. In such situations, vertical accountability can be much higher than before. However, the case of Hubli–Dharwad makes it clear that such strong leadership is an essential prerequisite that needs to be maintained. If it weakens, the lack of sanctions that citizens have reduces the force behind their participation, and increases the burden of activating citizenship through individual or collective advocacy. Strong leadership is also actively undermined by local interest groups interested in maintaining their own power, and ensuring that strong administrators are quickly shifted away.

The implications of the way the 'invited space' is organized means that citizens have the opportunity to achieve better accountability, but that it remains very limited in scope. It is related to the effective implementation of services, and not to more strategic forms of participative governance. Citizens also have to be proactive in enforcing accountability still; either collectively (lower socio-economic status groups) or individually (middle class). This requires inputs of time and money, which many can ill afford. There are also distinctions between the two groups in prioritization of goals to be reached when complaining. Lower socio-economic groups complain about type and quality of service delivery (which requires more investment), whereas the middle class complains about operation and maintenance of existing services (which are more easily solved).

This leads to the third factor—the weak horizontal accountability also found (Gaventa, 2006). This applies particularly to citizens with lower incomes and less education, whose existing perceptions of their power deficits and strong 'gatekeeping' by local leaders leads them to go through councillors or local leaders to gain access to better services and better grievance redressal by local government. The new strategy has not led to noticeable empowerment of this group of citizens, as they still remain dependent on councillors for negotiating.

The new strategy in contrast has empowered to some extent middle-class citizens, who are able to obtain greater accountability from local government for operation and maintenance complaints. This implies that empowerment in terms of their power as consumer has been strengthened. This does not apply however, when strategic changes in services provision requiring investments need to be made. Neither middle-class citizens nor poorer citizens are able to enforce accountability in these areas on their own, but have to work with advocacy processes and intermediaries over a longer period of time. Therefore, if new public management approaches want to improve the effectiveness of government for all citizens existing, inequalities and dependencies have to be taken into account.

Notes

1. Current services include property tax, birth and death registration, grievances, health and licenses in citizen-centric processes, and e-procurement, solid waste management, accounting and personnel information for the government internally (GOI, no date; 09).
2. One could also enquire about the empowerment aspect of such strategies, but the recent introduction of e-based grievance redressal systems makes it almost impossible to answer this question now.
3. This programme is an Integrated Programme, funded by the Netherlands National Science Foundation—NWO-WOTRO—with partners University of Amsterdam, Governance and Inclusive Development Programme, ITC Enschede, the Urban Management Department, the School of Planning and Architecture Delhi, Department of Regional Planning and the Tata institute of Social Studies (TISS), Mumbai.

4. Standardized areas are those which conform to existing building codes. Substandard areas in this case refer to previously slum areas, which are in some stage of being regularized.
5. The results remain exploratory; the boundaries of the electoral wards had changed since the 2001 census data was collected, and snowballing remains necessary in the Indian context to obtain sufficient trust for people to respond well in conversations with outsiders. The role of the local assistant was crucial to obtaining access to such confidence from respondents.
6. Councillors have a fund from which they can pay for local small-scale infrastructure, such as street lights and footpaths.
7. ISO status can be achieved after complying with a number of standards for quality management and customer satisfaction (ISO, 2010).
8. E-government tools include complaints systems, report card systems, interactive administrative systems for citizens, and administrative databases for registering citizen and property data.
9. Complaints can also be registered through an Internet interface, the so-called e-grievance system. This system is barely used by citizens, the Control Room receiving 10–15 online complaints each month. Even ICT professionals professed to not using the system. Citizens are not aware of its existence or have more faith in calling the Control Room in having their grievances redressed.
10. Hubli Electricity Supply Company.
11. However, minor grievances are naturally also the grievances that will occur most often.
12. For example, Thomas and Melkers (1999).
13. In India, the councillor is called the corporator.
14. Constituencies of around 10,000–15,000 citizens.

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