Capabilities and demand for participation in the Three-legged stool of participatory stability: Institutional Supply, public demand, and citizen capabilities. 

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The problem with participation

• Widely prescribed solution to development policy problems
• But it frequently doesn’t work
• Most literature emphasizes failures of institutional design
The 3-legged participatory stool

1. Institutions that allow or facilitate participation
2. Demand for participatory opportunities
3. Capability to participate
The problems with institutional supply: Participatory Forestry in India

• Participation dominated by Govt. agencies
  • “fake” participation
• People are unaware of how to participate
• People are not interested in opportunity (JFM)
• People don’t know how to participate effectively
Limits to participation

• Studies of western democracies show:
  • Few people participate actively
    • Around 10% engage in political activity other than voting
  • Those that do are wealthier & more educated than average
  • Participation is dominated by business interests

• 3 reasons people don’t participate (Brady, Schlozman, Verba 1995)
  • “They can’t”
  • “They don’t want to”
  • “nobody asked”
How Demand helps

• A small subset of Indian villages are well organized around forestry issues
  • Usually have substantial forest resources, often have strong connections to other actors
• When communities demand a role, can force govt. agencies to yield power
How capabilities help

• In Calakmul, Mexico, early very problematic participatory programs were designed to teach people how to participate
  • In this remote rural area, people lacked basic political skills
How capabilities help

• People who leaned how to participate early on became leaders & got access to resources

• Others were jealous of the new power sources, giving them incentives to learn how to participate

• Over a period of 25 years, a vibrant local political life emerged as a response
  • Its still imperfect, but its better than what was
Conclusion

• 3 legs necessary:
  • Supply of participatory institutions
  • Demand to participate
  • Capability to participate

• These interact and reinforce each other

• Even imperfect programs can help reinforce these legs

• May involve more contentious politics, as opposed to technical interventions