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Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement

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Summary. — Despite the normative beliefs that underpin the concept of participation, its impact on improved democratic, and developmental outcomes has proven difficult to assess. Using a meta-case study analysis of a sample of 100 cases, we inductively create a typology of four democratic and developmental outcomes, including (a) the construction of citizenship, (b) the strengthening of practices of participation, (c) the strengthening of responsive and accountable states, and (d) the development of inclusive and cohesive societies. We find that citizen participation produces positive effects across these outcome types, though in each category there are also important types of negative outcomes as well.

Key words — participation, citizen engagement, development outcomes, democratic outcomes, meta-analysis, citizenship

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding what difference citizen participation and engagement make to development and to more accountable and responsive governance has become a key preoccupation in the development field. It has been over a decade since participation moved toward the mainstream in development debates (World Bank, 1994) and as a strategy for achieving good governance and human rights (UN, 2008). Despite this, a large gap still exists between normative positions promoting citizen engagement and the empirical evidence and understanding of what difference citizen engagement makes (or not) to achieving the stated goals. The pressures to bridge this gap are driven not only by the results focus of aid agencies, but also by academic debate and practitioner needs. After several decades of experience in promoting citizen engagement—in development projects and governance processes, through consultations, community associations, and social movements—it is important to ask the question "so what difference does it make?" and to be able to get some authoritative and informative answers.

In order to get insights into the question, this paper uses established methods of meta case study analysis to analyze 100 in depth qualitative case studies across 20 countries produced by the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation, and Accountability (henceforth, Citizenship DRC).[1] While these studies focused broadly on meanings and dynamics of citizen engagement, embedded throughout the repertoire of case studies are insights about what outcomes did or did not occur, in a range of sectors and contexts, and through a variety of channels of engagement. Gleaning these insights through an inductive, meta-case study analysis approach, we argue, brings an important and rare cross-country perspective to the thorny debates on what difference engagement makes.

In the next section we present a brief review of what the literature tells us about the state of knowledge on the outcomes of citizen engagement, and some of the challenges posed by researching the impact of participatory programs. In Section 3, we describe further the methodology used, through which we created a sample of 100 case studies from previously published case studies, and extracted from these over 800 examples of outcomes of citizen engagement. In Section 4, we present our categorization of these outcomes. Taking this inductive approach has given us a map of significant outcomes of citizen engagement in four broad areas: (a) the construction of citizenship; (b) the strengthening of practices of participation; (c) the strengthening of responsive and accountable states; and (d) the development of inclusive and cohesive societies. While we find the contribution of citizen engagement to these outcomes to be largely positive in our sample, we also elaborate a typology of negative outcomes, which show parallel risks of engagement (see Table 1).

After describing our findings related to each of these outcomes, we continue in Section 5 to analyze further how they vary according to contextual factors. Specifically, we look at the type or strategy of citizen engagement which produced the outcome, as well as the nature of the political regime in which it occurred. In Section 6 we summarize these core findings and point to implications for current debates on the contributions of citizen engagement to achieving development goals, as well as to building responsive and democratic states.

2. THE CONTRIBUTION OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT TO DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

The assertion that citizen engagement makes a difference to achieving both material and democratic goals has long existed

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☆ The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

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Table 1. *Outcomes of citizen engagement*

Positive	Negative
Construction of citizenship	
Increased civic and political knowledge	Reliance on knowledge intermediaries
Greater sense of empowerment and agency[1]	Disempowerment and reduced sense of agency
Practices of citizen participation	
Increased capacities for collective action	New capacities used for "negative" purposes
New forms of participation	Tokenistic or "captured" forms of participation
Deepening of networks and solidarities	Lack of accountability and representation in networks
Responsive and accountable states	
Greater access to state services and resources	Denial of state services and resources
Greater realization of rights	Social, economic, and political reprisals
Enhanced state responsiveness and accountability	Violent or coercive state response
Inclusive and cohesive societies	
Inclusion of new actors and issues in public spaces	Reinforcement of social hierarchies and exclusion
Greater social cohesion across groups	Increased horizontal conflict and violence

in development studies. Reviewing donor logic on the link between voice and accountability and development goals, for instance, Rocha Menocal and Sharma outline the core assumption that "increasing citizens' voice will make public institutions more responsive to citizens' needs and demands and therefore more accountable for their actions" (2008, p. ix). This combination of voice and accountability will in turn contribute directly to "(a) changes in terms of broader development outcomes, including meta-goals such as poverty reduction, human development, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) more generally; and (b) changes at a more intermediate level involving changes in policy, practice, behaviors, and power relations" (2008, p. 33). While the authors go on to critique these assumptions, and to show how local realities are often far more complex, they argue that this overall theory of change on the contribution of citizen engagement to development outcomes continues to guide donor interventions.

Somewhat similar assumptions are also made about how citizen engagement can contribute directly to governance, rights, and democratic outcomes. The UN Report *People Matter: Civic Engagement in Public Governance* argues that "engagement is regarded as an important governance norm that can strengthen the decision-making arrangements of the state and produce outcomes that favor the poor and the disadvantaged. In this light, engagement emerges as conducive, if not critical, to attaining the MDGs" (2008, p. 23). The report goes on to outline over a dozen areas in which UN resolutions and declarations have promoted the importance of civic engagement and participatory processes for achieving both "rights" and "development management". Numerous other studies also outline a range of democratic governance outcomes that may be expected from the process of civic engagement (e.g., Coelho & Favareto, 2008; Fung, 2003a; Manor, 2004; Robinson, 2004).

However, while the list of claims for what *might* occur is long, the number of studies which present systematic evidence of what outcomes *do* occur is relatively few. Where they do exist, they provide a contradictory view. For instance, despite the fact that the World Bank has now spent over US$7 billion on community-based and -driven development projects, Mansuri and Rao argue that "not a single study establishes a causal relationship between any outcome and participatory elements of a community-based development project" (2004, p. 1). In their evaluation of over 90 donor programs, Rocha Menocal and Sharma find that given various limitations in their sample and the data available, "it is not surprising that all country case studies have been unable to establish a direct causal link between citizen voice and accountability interventions and broader development outcomes" (2008, p. 34), though they can see contributions to some of the intermediate outcomes which were identified. In their review for USAID, Brinkerhoff and Azfar argue that "the multiple meanings of empowerment and the relative lack of systematic studies across a range of cases limit our ability to make precise conclusive statements regarding the relationship between community empowerment, decentralization and outcomes relating to democratic deepening and service delivery effectiveness" (2006, p. 29).

Debates within development about the contribution of citizen engagement reflect, in part, similar arguments within democratic theory. On the one hand, this is a conceptual debate, reflecting historic divisions between "democratic elitists" or "realists", who seek to limit citizen participation to choice of political elites, and those who hold a participatory view, arguing for a more expansive role of citizens engagement throughout the decision-making process.[2] Revisiting these debates in her 2011 Presidential Address to the American Political Science Association, Carole Pateman, author of the important book *Participation and Democratic Theory* (1970), argues that "in the 1960s defenders of a participatory conception of democracy, which had a politically active citizenry at its center, took up the cudgels against the proponents of a 'realistic' democracy theory"(2012, p. 7). Jane Mansbridge later wrote that this participatory movement declined in subsequent decades in part because of a measurement failure: "empirical political scientists could not demonstrate any positive effects on individual character of democratic participation" (1999, p. 292). She wrote further, "the subtle changes in character that come about, slowly, from active participation in democratic decisions cannot easily be measured with the blunt instruments of social science (1999, p. 291)." Others have also pointed to this failure of empirical social sciences studies to measure participation. Referring to Dahl's (1971) conceptualization of democracy as consisting "of two attributes—contestation or competition and participation or inclusion"—Munck and Verkuilen (2002) argue that many contemporary indices of democracy omit the participation variable. This "failure to include participation in its varied facets is a problem even for the study of democracy in recent times" (2008, p. 11).

In an attempt to find more definitive results, some have argued in the development literature for what they call a "gold

standard" form of external, quantitative evaluation, which would isolate the impacts of participation through randomized evaluation studies. However, even when large-scale, many such interventions are limited by their applicability to single-country settings and only small variations in treatment. Still, results produced by experimental methods result in conflicting findings regarding the potential impact of citizen participation (see, for example, Banerjee, Banerji, Duflo, Glennerster, & Khemani, 2010; Björkman & Svensson, 2009; Gibson & Woolcock, 2008; Olken, 2007).

While these quantitative randomized control studies in specific places may offer one way of looking at the outcomes of citizen engagement, they do not easily explain differences across contexts nor across multiple strategies of engagement, insights that perhaps could better be gained from qualitative and comparative case study approaches. While case study approaches often are limited due to their small sample size, increasingly rigorous systematic reviews and meta-analyses of qualitative data are being done in order to examine key findings and trends beyond a single intervention. When Mansbridge wrote her important piece "On the Idea That Participation Makes Better Citizens" (1999), she referred to the possibility of approaching the problem through such a method, following the example of an influential meta-analysis on the effects of psychotherapy (Smith, Glass, & Miller, 1980). At the same time, she concluded that the number and quality of studies on participation were insufficient for adapting this method.[3] However, as Pateman has recently observed, in last decade, there has been a resurgence of participatory practices in the development and democracy fields (2012), providing the opportunity to gather new empirical evidence on participation and its impacts. Many of these practices have been studied through the research program of the Citizenship DRC. We suggest therefore, that this Citizenship DRC data set offers the opportunity to remedy a long-standing gap, and to meta-analyze a large sample of case studies on participation, each of which is steeped in rich contextual analysis.

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The case study materials come from over 20 countries gathered by the 10-year research program conducted by the Citizenship DRC. Many of the cases have been published in the eight volume series, *Claiming Citizenship*.[4] Taken together, these volumes offer a rich set of empirical case studies, each of which is linked to questions of citizen engagement, participation, and mobilization for achieving development and governance outcomes. They examine a range of development sectors, contexts, issues and strategies, and form the basis of our sample.

The basic premise of any synthesis project is that new research questions can be brought to a body of already existing studies in order to integrate previous findings and contribute new insights to the literature (Cooper & Hedges, 1994). Although the meta-analysis of quantitative research has become commonplace in many fields, approaches to qualitative research synthesis are disparate and less codified methodologically (Schofield, 2002). Based in part on the growing emphasis on evidence-based policy and practice, however, the synthesis of qualitative research is increasingly being used to test empirical support for theories; to generate new models for theories; and to identify "significant domains or attributes" for highlighting prototypes or examples of best practice (Booth, 2001; Siau & Long, 2005; citing Estabrooks, Field, & Morse, 1994; Forte, 1998; Thorne & Paterson, 1998). Particularly for areas of social research where evidence bases are not well-established and which have strong implications for policy, qualitative research synthesis can explore grounded experiences of social phenomena and contribute to a balanced evidence base for policy and future research (McDermott & Graham, 2006).

The systematic review (also known as thematic synthesis), an approach to qualitative research synthesis developed by the United Kingdom-based Evidence for Policy and Practice Information Centre (EPPI-Centre), is now one of the best-known methods for comparative analysis of multiple case studies. The primary components of a systematic review include an explicitly articulated protocol for searching and selecting research studies to form the basis of a sample, which can then be analyzed in line with a new research question. An exhaustive, non-purposive search of the literature is required, as is a method for assigning weights to findings before "pooling their results [to draw conclusions] about the direction of the evidence as a whole" (EPPI-Centre, 2007, no page). This study draws explicitly though not entirely from this methodology.[5]

For better direction on the analytical stage of the synthesis, we also turned to the literature on multiple case study analysis. While most multiple case study analyses emphasize the need for tracking patterns across cases, the methods for doing so vary. The most common approach uses software to assist the researcher in coding, sorting, and retrieving relevant findings and themes. This allows researchers to step back from the data and look at patterns en masse, using the tabulation of frequencies and distributions across the sample (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). Once codes have been developed and refined, researchers can undertake the process of extracting the findings from isolated cases based on themes that emerge in the data (Noblit & Hare, 1988). This approach also encourages an iterative approach to the data, allowing returns to the sample to develop different series of codes based on emerging patterns (Campbell *et al*., 2003; Marston & King, 2006).

In the international development literature, very few studies have applied a meta-case analysis approach to the study of developmental gains and improved governance, with the exception of a few evaluations of specific donor programs and interventions in these areas (Kruse, Kyllönen, Ojanperä, Riddell, & Vielajus, 1997; O'Neill *et al*., 2007; Rocha Menocal & Sharma, 2008). Seeking to fill this gap in this paper, we argue that such a systematic analysis of case studies can make an important contribution to the debate by going beyond one-off, local-level experiments or evaluations of specific donor initiatives to look at the full spectrum of opportunities for citizen participation in a variety of contexts. It can also help to counter the absence of frameworks or typologies which help to link models and theories of change with deep understanding of local contexts (O'Neill *et al*., 2007, p. 44). While our approach will not necessarily offer findings that are generalizable across all settings (even if we thought such was possible or desirable),[6] it does, we suggest, present evidence on the outcomes of participation that are important for further study.

To select cases from the hundreds of outputs produced by the Citizenship DRC during 2003–10, we organized a database of all research studies and gray literature produced as part of the program. From this database, we selected case studies according to clear criteria[7]. This resulted in a final sample of 100 case studies that covered a wide range of contexts. In addition to the seven countries that were the Citizenship DRC's core research sites—Angola, Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Mexico, Nigeria, and South Africa—our sample includes affiliated research from an additional 13 countries, as well as a number of multi-site, cross-national cases. Most cases are

situated in low- and middle-income countries on varied democratic trajectories in the global South, although—as part of Citizenship DRC efforts to promote lesson-learning between South and North—a small number of studies from the global North are also included. [8]

Once our sample had been identified, the coding phase began. Each of the 100 cases was imported as a text document into QSR NVivo [9] before being read closely, taking note of emergent themes within and across cases. At first, "broad-brush" codes were developed pertaining to observations or results in which the effects of citizen engagement were captured. Gradually and inductively, these developed into a system of hierarchical categories of four broad outcome types, each with various sub-categories and with the possibility of being coded as a "positive" or "negative" outcome within each type. [10] Then, we tested the relationships between various types of outcomes and contextual variables by running cross-tabulations to understand how these coding streams interacted. [11]

4. OVERALL FINDINGS

Based on our coding and analysis, we identified almost 830 outcomes—both positive and negative—from citizen engagement in our sample of 100 cases. Then, as described above, we grouped the outcomes into four broad categories in which citizen engagement and participation have the potential to influence state-society relations in either a positive or a negative direction. These categories are outlined in Table 1, and positive and negative sub-indicators given for each.

Elsewhere we illustrate each of the categories with multiple examples drawn from the qualitative data base (Gaventa & Barrett, 2010). In this paper, however, we shall focus more on how these outcomes vary across strategy of engagement and political context. However, before moving to the broader discussion of findings, we further examine each of the four outcome areas in more detail.

(a) *Citizen engagement and the construction of citizenship*

Most theories of citizenship and democracy discuss the importance of an informed and aware citizenry who can participate in democratic life, hold the state to account, and exercise their rights and responsibilities effectively. For many democratic theorists, such as Mansbridge (1999) and Pateman (1970), one important function of citizen participation is that it helps to create "better citizens", increasing their political knowledge, confidence, and their sense of citizenship. [12] Yet in many societies, citizens may be unaware of their rights, lack the knowledge to engage, or not see themselves as citizens with the agency, and power to act. In such conditions, our work suggests that an important first-level impact of citizen engagement is the development of greater civic and political knowledge, and a greater sense of awareness of rights and empowered self-identity, which serve as a prerequisite to deepen action and participation (Merrifield, 2002).

For example, the work of the Bangladeshi NGO Nijera Kori (NK), which takes a rights-based approach to its work with poor communities, has demonstrated the importance of this first-level impact. In a comparative study of NK members and non-members affiliated with more narrowly focused microfinance NGOs from our sample, NK members were far more aware of their constitutional rights than non-members. As one member stated, "If we are to talk about the main strength of NK, I would say that in the past, we the poor did not realize many things... We thought that we would have to pass our days doing the same things that our forefathers did, that those with assets would stay rich and those without would stay poor. Through NK we came to know that we are not born poor, that the government holds wealth on behalf of the people, that our fundamental rights as citizens of Bangladesh are written into the constitution. Before when I needed help, I went to the *mattabar* [village elite]. Now I go to my organization" (Kabeer & Haq Kabir, 2009, pp. 49–50).

(b) *Citizen engagement and the practice of participation*

Having a sense of citizenship is one thing; translating that into effective and sustaining change is another. Participation and democratic theorists have also long argued that engagement has the potential for strengthening the *efficacy* of citizen action, both individually and collectively (Fung, 2003b; Nabatchi, 2010; Pateman, 1970). From our framework, several similar themes emerge, involving the degree to which engagement leads to increased capacities for action; to new forms of participation, on new issues or in other arenas; and to the deepening of networks and solidarities.

For instance, worker engagement in the garment factories in Bangladesh has led to greater negotiating skills, arising from their realization of the need to mobilize and organize, as well as their knowledge of international agreement, such as international labor conventions (Mahmud, 2010).

In the Philippines, campaigns for land reform contributed to a thickening of relationships and networks between state and civil society actors, illustrated when a network of peasant organizations and NGOs were able to initiate new forms of dialog with the government agency responsible for land reform, and to form a joint working committee to implement reforms (Borras & Franco, 2010).

(c) *Citizen engagement and building responsive states*

Even with evidence of how citizen engagement contributes to the construction of citizenship and the strengthening of more effective citizenship practices, the question still remains: what difference does this make to longer-term development and democracy outcomes? It is in these areas, as we have seen in the earlier review, that evidence is scant and often contradictory. However, in our sample we find numerous examples in which participation has contributed to (a) access to development resources, contributing to improvements in health, livelihoods and food, water, housing, and urban services and education, usually through gaining increased government attention and responsiveness to issues that might have been previously ignored; (b) the achievement of rights, through the increased capacity to claim existing social, economic, and political rights, as well as though helping to change legal or constitutional frameworks for the establishment of new rights; and (c) the strengthening of new forms of state accountability more generally, through the creation of greater transparency and right to information, new institutionalized mechanisms for engagement, or changing cultures, and attitudes of state-society engagement.

For instance, in India, activation of the social justice committees within the *panchayati raj* institutions has contributed to the redistribution of government-provided development services toward the specific needs of *dalit* communities, including the provision of water and electricity, land and housing, infrastructure, and welfare service for the poorest of the state's poor (Mohanty, 2010). In Brazil, a movement for the "Right to the City" helped to create a new legal framework for dealing with development issues affecting the urban poor

(Avritzer, 2010). Similarly, the right to information movement in India helped not only to contribute to strong legal reform, but through this process, citizens gained a new sense of their rights and ability to use the law, in turn affecting the broader culture of accountability (Baviskar, 2010).

(d) *Citizen engagement and inclusive and cohesive societies*

In the broader literature, there are also numerous arguments for the importance of citizen participation and engagement in terms of building inclusive and cohesive societies (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006; Young, 2000). In our work, a common theme is the importance not only of the realization of services, rights, and accountability, but with it, a sense of recognition, social identity, and dignity which are important for a sense of inclusion. We also find instances where citizen engagement can result in enhanced forms of social cohesion in communities with embedded inequalities and strained social relationships between various identity groups.

For instance, in Morocco and Turkey, recent influential campaigns for women's rights became important not only for changing legal provisions, but also for challenging social norms affecting women in the household and in broader society. Specifically in the Moroccan case, through the alterations to the Family Code, religious law was opened to scrutiny and re-interpretation based on more universal principles of equality and inclusion, a potential turning point for women as well as society at large (Pittman & Naciri, 2010).

While the coding of the data thus provides us with a framework to assess the outcomes of participation across four broad themes, the data also remind us that by no means are the outcomes always positive. Positive outcomes are often mirrored by parallel negative outcomes (see Table 1), for instance:

- Where engagement can contribute to construction of active citizenship, in other cases it leads to a sense of disempowerment and a reduced sense of agency, or to new knowledge hierarchies. For instance, in Gambia, researchers studying empowerment programs for local HIV/AIDS support groups funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, found that knowledge gained was often used for "performative" purposes, allowing participants to speak the language that funders and intermediary donors might expect, but in fact reflecting a position of powerlessness, rather than a sense of emerging empowerment (Cassidy & Leach, 2010).
- Where engagement in some instances can contribute to strengthened practices of participation, at other times it is perceived as meaningless, tokenistic, or manipulated. In other instances, it can contribute to new skills and alliances which are used for corrupt or non-positive ends, or are captured by elites, or to raise new issues of accountability and representation. For example, an environmental activist from Brazil spoke about the tokenistic quality of his participation in a global forum: "In fact, I did not say anything; there was no place on the agenda for me. Everything had been agreed beforehand. . .and I was called almost to legitimize" (Alonso, 2010, p. 219).
- Where sometimes engagement leads to building responsive states and institutions, at other times it faces bureaucratic "brick walls"; failures to implement or sustain policy gains; and in many cases, reprisals, including violence, from state and non-state actors, against those who challenge the status quo. Cases in our sample have captured violent attacks by police, often infringing civil and political rights, occurring as the result of labor mobilization in Bangladesh, environmental mobilization in India, and public-service protests in South Africa, among other examples (Mahmud, 2010; Mohanty, 2010; Thompson & Nleya, 2010).
- Where sometimes engagement can contribute to social inclusion and cohesion, in part by creating space for new voices and issues in the public sphere, at other times it can contribute to a greater sense of exclusion, as new spaces can reinforce old hierarchies based on gender, caste or race; and contribute to greater competition and conflict across groups who compete for the recognition and resources in new ways. For example, in the Niger Delta, where citizen groups have organized to hold public and private-sector actors to account for the lack of investment and environmental degradation in the region, some of these mobilizations have become sharply divided along ethnic lines, limiting opportunities for more cohesive citizen-led responses and exacerbating pre-existing intergroup tensions over resources (Osaghae, 2010).

Despite these dangers or negative effects of participation, overall, 75% of the total outcomes in our sample were considered positive, and the remaining 25% negative, with the "construction of citizenship" showing the highest percentage of positive outcomes (80%) and "inclusive and cohesive societies" the lowest (70%).

We sought to look within each of the positive and negative outcomes, to understand which types of outcome were produced most frequently, as shown in Table 2. In the sample of positive outcomes, the highest percentage (35%) related to the construction of citizenship, which included changes in participants' awareness, sense of citizenship, and dispositions and attitudes. The next most common outcome (31%) was the strengthening of responsive, accountable states, as the result of citizens gaining increased access to services, rights, and institutional accountability measures from states. The practices of citizenship—including the capacities and sustained commitment to participation—represented the third most common type of positive outcome, representing over one-quarter of total outcomes (26%). Less frequently observed and coded was the development of inclusive and cohesive societies.

In terms of negative outcomes, we see a slightly different pattern. Here, negative forms of state responsiveness were the predominant outcome type, representing 35% of all negative outcomes. This was often the result of states' failures to respond to citizens' rights claims or demands for services, but also included more repressive responses in the form of state-sponsored violence. Following this category, 28% of all negative outcomes occurred in the category practices of citizenship, which tended to include the negative effects that resulted in participatory spaces that were tokenistic, un-representative, or manipulated. In contrast with the positive outcomes, here we saw a noticeably lower clustering of outcomes for the construction of citizenship, which represented

Table 2. *Distribution of positive and negative outcomes by category*

Outcome categories	Outcomes	
	Positive ($n = 621$)	Negative ($n = 207$)
Construction of citizenship	35%	26%
Practices of citizen participation	26%	28%
Responsive and accountable states	31%	35%
Inclusive and cohesive societies	8%	11%
Total	100%	100%

just 26% of the negative outcomes. Finally, the development of inclusive, cohesive societies in the negative outcome category represents a small but slightly higher proportion of outcomes than in the positive category.

Overall, then, the data provide strong evidence for the contributions of citizen engagement to positive outcomes in a variety of important dimensions. However, although negative outcomes constitute only 25% of the sample, they raise an important set of reminders of the pitfalls and risks of citizen engagement. The further question then arises, what contributes to success and failure?

5. THE IMPACT OF STRATEGY AND CONTEXT

While we believe that the descriptive findings outlined above are useful in their own right, we wanted to explore the variation in outcomes according to a number of contextual factors. We focused in particular on whether these outcomes are affected by the strategies or forms of engagement used, and the national political context in which the engagement occurred.

(a) *How does engagement strategy affect the outcomes?*

Drawing from the categorization of Coehlo and von Lieres (2010), the case studies in our sample reflect four types of citizen engagement, distributed as follows: (a) participation in local associations (29%); (b) participation in social movements and campaigns (29%); (c) participation in formal participatory governance spaces (19%); and (d) multiple approaches, which employ several of these strategies (23%).

(i) *Local associations*

While the links between associationalism and democracy have long been highlighted in the case of Western democracies (de Tocqueville, 2002; Fung, 2003b; Warren, 2001), relatively little attention has been paid to the role of local associations for building democracy in the poorer countries of the South. [13] However, a number of the cases from the Citizenship DRC work (29% of the sample) focused on local associations, as seen for example in local membership groups in Bangladesh, rural associations in Angola, grassroots community organizations in Kenya, and neighborhood groups in Brazil (see for example the cases in Coelho & von Lieres, 2010). [14] Not all local associations studied were "virtuous", as case studies of gangs and militias in Nigeria, Jamaica, and Brazil revealed. In contrast to the cases of formal participatory governance, which were largely reflected in more stable Southern democracies, some 73% of the cases focusing on associations were found in the least democratic settings.

(ii) *Social movements*

Another set of studies focused largely on social movements, or orchestrated campaigns which sought to claim rights or challenge policies through mobilization beyond single communities, through a variety of forms of public action including protests, advocacy, and lobbying (see for example the cases in Gaventa & McGee, 2010; Gaventa & Tandon, 2010; Thompson & Tapscott, 2010). Constituting 29% of the cases, these include movements for the right to information and against displacement in India, around HIV/AIDS in South Africa, for land reform in the Philippines, on environmental issues in Brazil and on indigenous and ethnic rights in Nigeria and Brazil. As our findings show below, social movements can make very effective contributions to creating more responsive states and advancing democratic and developmental progress. Their contribution to increasing state accountability has tended to be underplayed in donor agendas on good governance and democracy promotion (Thompson & Tapscott, 2010).

(iii) *Participatory governance mechanisms*

In a program which focused largely on citizen–state relations, one might have expected more examples of formalized interactions through formal participatory governance spaces (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007), but this type of citizen engagement constitutes the smallest proportion of our cases. This is particularly surprising since many of the cases in our sample emerged from contexts in which reformed legal frameworks have facilitated new formal mechanisms for citizen–state interaction and participatory governance, such as participatory budgeting in Brazil and Argentina, municipal health councils in Brazil, *panchayati raj* institutions in India, and various participatory development programs in South Africa. These types of formal participatory governance spaces constituted 19% of our sample; more than two-thirds of these occurred in middle-income, Southern countries with emerging democracies. In addition, there were examples from established Northern democracies, such as new innovations in public deliberation in Canada, and government-supported schemes for community participation in the United Kingdom. There was also a small minority from very weak democratic contexts, such as health councils in Bangladesh.

(iv) *Multiple strategies*

Finally, a number of cases (23%) illustrate strategies of movements which cut across these forms of participation. Citizens may belong to local associations, participate in broader campaigns, and engage within formal participatory governance arenas, all as part of the same effort to exercise their voice. As shall be seen, multiple strategies can be particularly important for achieving more systemic level changes relating to state accountability and responsiveness.

What then do the data tell us about how outcomes might vary according to each of these strategies? First of all, they point in general to the importance of associational activity for the production of positive outcomes of citizen engagement. As we saw in Table 1, while 75% of almost 830 outcomes from our sample were positive, 25% were labeled negative. However, if we look at the differences in positive or negative outcomes by engagement strategy, shown in Table 3, we begin to see some important variations. For the outcomes linked to associations, 90% were positive and only 10% negative—a much higher positive–negative ratio than in the sample as a whole. On the other hand, roughly 45% of outcomes from engagement in formal participatory governance spaces were found to be negative; again, a much higher proportion than in the whole sample.

Viewed as a percentage of outcomes *within* each positive or negative category, rather than across type of engagement, the evidence for the important of associational membership activity is also strong. As Table 4 shows, while associations and social movements both accounted for the same proportion of the cases studied, associations account for a higher proportion of the positive outcomes (47%), while participatory governance spaces and social movements accounted for higher proportions of the negative outcomes (33% each). In general, associations were associated with positive outcomes across all categories, including a) construction of citizenship (49%), practices of participation (48%), responsive and accountable states (43%), and inclusive and cohesive societies (48%). This is despite the fact that they constituted only 29% of the cases.

Table 3. *Distribution of positive and negative outcomes across type of citizen engagement*

Outcome type	Outcomes sorted by type of citizen engagement ($n = 828$)			
	Local associations ($n = 324$)	Social movements and campaigns ($n = 233$)	Formal participatory governance spaces ($n = 153$)	Multiple ($n = 118$)
Positive	90%	71%	55%	68%
Negative	10%	29%	45%	32%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4. *Distribution of types of citizen engagement across positive and negative outcomes*

Type of citizen engagement	Positive ($n = 620$)	Negative ($n = 208$)
Local associations	47%	16%
Social movements and campaigns	27%	33%
Formal participatory governance spaces	13%	33%
Multiple	13%	18%
Total	100%	100%

The above analysis suggests that while people may engage with the state in a variety of ways, local associations are far more important vehicles for gaining development and democratic outcomes than perhaps has been previously understood. While social movements are also very important for creating positive outcomes of citizen engagement, they may also be contentious and face serious backlash and reprisals. Participation in formal governance spaces, especially where not backed by collective action, may be linked to a sense of tokenism, or relatively empty forms of participation. Used in isolation from other types of strategies, they may not contribute significantly to positive change. This is at odds with the recent focus in some donor circles on supporting institutionalized fora for participatory governance as the key path to citizen engagement with the state.

On the other hand, we find that of the cases that used multiple methods of engagement, 44% of the outcomes were concentrated in the accountable and responsive governance category, the highest percentage of the outcomes associated with "multiple strategy" cases, and a higher proportion than any of the outcomes associated with a single strategy as well. This finding resonates with qualitative insights from the cases, which suggest that it is not simply engagement in associations or participatory spaces which contribute to state responsiveness, but rather the relationships between those strategies and broader social mobilization. For instance, the findings from municipal health councils in Brazil demonstrate that health outcomes are strengthened when there is civil society mobilization outside the participatory governance space in addition to political will on the inside (Coelho, Ferraz, Fanti, & Ribeiro, 2010). Similarly, cases from a study on citizen action and national policy change show that successful change occurred through broad coalitions using an array of strategies, rather than through a single set of actors or actions alone (Gaventa & McGee, 2010).

At the same time, the data highlight the risks of engaging with the state through participation in both social movements and formal spaces. In fact, as mentioned earlier, the highest percentage of "negative" outcomes we recorded has to do not with citizen practices, but with the state response—just over one third of the negative outcomes were coded in this area. In many cases, these outcomes are experienced as simple state recalcitrance. Authorities may simply refuse to respond to citizen voices or demands. In other cases, they respond, but in a piecemeal or tokenistic fashion; a policy may be declared, but not implemented. In other cases, "responsiveness" took the form of backlash against those who spoke out. In some instances, those who challenged the status quo found themselves "uninvited" to invited spaces of participation, or labeled and ostracized as "troublemakers" rather than as representatives of genuine citizen concerns. In other cases, harsher political and economic tactics were used—those who spoke out found that the same jobs, welfare benefits, land or housing rights that could be given by authorities could also be taken away. In yet other cases, state response appeared in the form of heavy-handed security apparatuses employing repressive and violent measures against those who mobilize.

(b) *How does political context affect outcome?*

The issues of violence and state response highlight the need for further exploration of the question of how outcomes of citizen engagement and the strategies for obtaining them vary across political contexts. While most previous studies on the effectiveness of citizen participation have pointed to the importance of country context for outcomes, there tends to be little elaboration on the interaction between context, types of engagement, and outcomes (Rocha Menocal & Sharma, 2008). With the Citizenship DRC's focus on the nature and possibilities of citizen engagement, we might expect that contextual differences related to democratic openness would be critical to our results. For example, it would seem likely that the freedoms of association and opportunities for participation within the public sphere will affect how citizen action occurs. We might also expect that in weak democracies, with little experience of positive engagements between citizen and state and shorter histories of democratic participation, the most frequent outcomes might be related to the construction of citizenship and the practice of participation. On the other hand, settings with longer histories of democratic participation might be expected to be the context for systemic institutional gains related to accountability and responsiveness.

In order to explore these assumptions, we looked at a variety of existing approaches to categorizing the nature of the political regime for the 20 countries in our sample.[15] We reviewed three of the most frequently cited indices on political regime types, the Polity IV Project, the annual Freedom House survey and the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy. Each of these is concerned with the characteristics and democratic quality of political regimes, although their indicators and measurements differ.[16] Based on the way our case study countries clustered across these three indices, we classified them according to three tiers of democratic strength:

- Tier One: Canada, Chile, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and United States America.
- Tier Two: Argentina, Brazil, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Philippines, and South Africa.
- Tier Three: Angola, Bangladesh, the Gambia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Turkey, and Zimbabwe.

Of our sub-sample of 83 single-country case studies, 50 are set in Tier Two countries. These are mostly middle-income democracies in the South, and have generally had longer periods of democratic stability than Tier Three countries. Twenty-four of the cases in this sub-sample are in weaker, Tier Three democracies, some of which are considered fragile states on various international indices (Marshall, Jaggers, & Gurr, 2009; World Bank, 2010).[17] The remaining nine cases occur in Tier One countries, the majority of which are rich, Northern countries.

One question we sought to explore was whether countries classified as having stronger democratic institutions were more likely to be associated with positive outcomes of participation than those with weaker democratic institutions. Interestingly, the highest proportion of positive outcomes come from the most and least democratic settings—over 85% in Tiers One and Three, compared to the overall average of 75%. The lowest proportion of positive outcomes comes from the Tier Two countries, where more than 34% of the outcomes reported are negative, compared to the overall average of 25%.[18] Moreover, in other data, we find that the distribution of the types of outcomes do not vary a great deal according to the nature of the political regime. Though there are minor differences, each outcome of participation is found in each country type.

These findings begin to suggest that we cannot consider "success of participation" and "level of democratization" to be linked in a linear or progressive manner. Neither should we assume that citizen engagement will be more likely to increase state responsiveness and accountability in stronger democratic states than in less democratic states. Rather, based on these findings, engagement can make positive differences, even in the least democratic settings—a proposition that challenges the conventional wisdom of an institution- and state-oriented approach that relegates opportunities for building civil society participation to a more "mature" or "consolidated" democratic phase (Diamond, 1994).

But, while the distribution of outcomes across our four categories does not vary enormously by political context, the strategies used to attain these outcomes do. In Tier Three countries more than two-thirds of cases of citizen engagement took place through local associations, contrasting with an average of 29% for our overall sub-sample. Perhaps this is not a surprising finding, considering the potential barriers to generating social movements or engaging in formal participatory governance spaces in these weaker democratic states. If however we look even more closely at the distribution of positive outcomes by types of engagement for Tier Three countries (Table 5), between 78% and 92% of each outcome category arose from associational activity, compared to a range between 40% and 50% in the sample as a whole. For instance, in Angola, community associations first set up in the midst of displacement during the civil conflict provided vital opportunities for gaining knowledge and awareness, which gradually led to participants' increased engagement with local government and community development programs (Ferreira & Roque, 2010). This finding has important implications for donors and activists seeking to build citizenship and governance, who often assume that civil society associations in fragile settings are very weak or have little potential to be effective in building democracy, and focus rather on building the formal institutions of democracy. These data suggest that, consistent with studies in more developed democracies, associations themselves can play the role of "schools of democracy", perhaps especially in these least democratic settings.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The previous sections have reviewed and analyzed a sample of the extensive body of research produced by the Citizenship DRC in order to understand what types of outcomes result from citizen engagement. From our initial, inductive review, we developed four broad sets of outcomes, each with several sub-components. Of almost 830 outcomes in 100 cases studied, some 75% were positive, in that they contributed to the construction of citizenship, strengthened practices of participation, the building of responsive and accountable states, or more inclusive and cohesive societies. On the other hand, the 25% of negative outcomes also provided an important warning of the risks of engagement.

These findings are important and significant for a number of reasons. First, through meta-case study analysis, we have found strong evidence to support claims of the contributions of citizen engagement to both developmental and democracy-building outcomes. While qualitative in nature, the evidence is more than anecdotal. Rather it emerges from systematic review of 100 grounded, empirical case studies in 20 countries, offering a degree of generalizability that could not be achieved by the weight of a single research study.

Second, the inductive approach suggests a framework for understanding what types of outcome are important. While some approaches to the impact of citizen engagement attempt to draw a straight line from individual actions or behaviors (e.g. voice or participation) to policy or developmental outcomes, our evidence suggests that intermediate outcomes may be equally important. Engagement is itself a way of strengthening a sense of citizenship, and the knowledge and sense of awareness necessary to achieve it. It can also strengthen the practice and efficacy of participation, the transfer of skills across issues and arenas, and the thickening of alliances and networks. In turn, more aware citizenship, coupled with stronger citizenship practices, can help to contribute to building responsive states, which deliver services, protect and extend rights, and foster a culture of accountability. They can

Table 5. *Distribution of types of citizen engagement across positive outcome types, Tier Three countries*

Types of citizen engagement	Positive Outcomes in Tier Three countries ($n = 273$)			
	Construction of citizenship ($n = 96$)	Practices of citizen participation ($n = 66$)	Responsive and accountable states ($n = 83$)	Inclusive and cohesive societies ($n = 28$)
Local associations	89%	92%	83%	78%
Social movements and campaigns	0%	2%	2%	0%
Formal participatory governance spaces	6%	0%	4%	11%
Multiple	5%	6%	11%	11%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

also contribute to a broader sense of inclusion of previously marginalized groups within society and have the potential to increase social cohesion across groups.

This rich tapestry of the outcomes of engagement contrasts sharply with more instrumental views, which see citizen engagement only as part of a linear process of achieving developmental goals. It also speaks to those who wish to quantify or measure the state of democracy in different countries by looking primarily at institutional arrangements such as fair elections, the rule of law, and a free and open media—an approach found in various governance indices and democracy barometers (Munck & Verkuilen, 2002). Our findings point to a new and complementary standard, based on the degree to which a democracy fosters a sense of citizenship. An awareness of rights, knowledge of legal and institutional procedures, disposition toward action, organizing skills, and the thickness of civic networks are all indicators which help to measure the degree to which democratic citizenship is emerging, which in turn will make a difference in how democratic institutions deliver.[19]

Third, this review suggests important findings as to what types of citizen engagement are linked to which outcomes. Citizen engagement through local associations and social movements emerged as more important sources of change than formal participatory governance spaces, with associations showing the highest percentage of positive outcomes. In cases where multiple approaches to change were used, the outcomes linked to responsive and accountable states accounted for the highest percentage, a finding that is supported by qualitative evidence showing the importance of strategies that combine different forms of engagement.

When we look at outcomes across contexts, we also find some very interesting patterns and propositions emerging. Using a combination of existing indices of political regime, we were able to cluster our sample by country according to three tiers representing degrees of democratic openness and stability. Here to our surprise, assumptions which tend to link positive democratic and development outcomes to the level of democratization in a given country do not hold true.

These patterns are particularly striking when looking at the bottom end of the scale—at cases in our study which were ranked as the least democratic and stable. In these least democratic settings, we found a very strong presence of associations. While some have argued that in such settings, the primary role of associations is "resistance to illegitimate authority" (Fung, 2003b, p. 522), we find that they play very important roles in constructing citizenship, improving practices of participation, strengthening accountability, and contributing to social cohesion.[20]

While we need to be very careful about claiming statistical significance for these findings, they do begin to suggest that we cannot consider participation "success" and "level of democratization" to be linked in a linear or progressive manner, nor that citizen engagement will be more likely to lead to government response in more democratic than in less democratic states. Rather, they tell us that engagement can make positive differences, even in the least democratic settings. This challenges those who would argue for building states or institutions in these settings first, and leaving the support of citizen engagement until later (see for instance François & Sud, 2006).

There are of course a number of implications from these findings for activists and policy- makers as well as for donors and development agencies seeking to foster positive developmental and democratic outcomes through citizen engagement. Six of these are particularly important.

- Citizen engagement can be linked positively in a number of instances to achieving both development outcomes—linked to improved health, water, sanitation, and education—and democratic outcomes—linked to building accountable institutions and making real national and international human rights frameworks.
- However, active and effective citizens who can help deliver these development and democratic gains do not emerge automatically. As with the process of building states and institutions, other intermediary measures of change are also very important.
- While positive change can happen through citizen engagement, there are also risks of negative outcomes. Careful attention must be paid to the quality and direction of change, as well as to its incidence.
- Change happens through multiple types of citizen engagement: not only through formal governance processes, even participatory ones, but also through associations and social movements that are not created by the state. Strengthening these broader social change processes, and their interactions, can in turn create opportunities for state reformers to respond to demands, build external alliances, and contribute to state responsiveness.
- Citizen engagement—especially when citizens are challenging powerful interests in the status quo—gives rise to the risk of reprisals, which can range from state and political violence, to economic and social forms of recrimination against those who speak out. Donors and policy-makers alike can play an important role in protecting and strengthening spaces for citizens to exercise their voice, and can support the enabling conditions for citizen engagement to occur. In particular, they can promote the value of broad social movements for both democracy and development, support champions of engagement within the state, and monitor state reprisals against increased citizen voice.
- For those donors and development actors working in fragile and weak settings, the research points to the need to recognize early the role which local associations and other citizen activities can play in the strengthening of cultures of citizenship, which in turn can contribute to building responsive states. Citizen-based strategies can be as important in these settings as those found in stronger democracies.

Finally, on a more general note, this study has argued that outcomes matter, but they can be understood through a variety of research approaches. As we have illustrated, the meta-analysis of qualitative data from multiple cases and contexts offers one promising approach that can be used to suggest patterns and trends across contexts and strategies. But we also believe that it is time to move the debate to a new set of questions. After more than two decades of support in international development for greater citizen participation, the issue is not simply to ask "what difference does it make?" but to understand further the conditions under which it makes a positive difference. Rather than simply measure the contribution of engagement to development and democracy, we must focus also on the quality and direction of the differences which are made, and how they are attained.

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NOTES

1. Funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID), the Citizenship DRC was an 11 year research program (2000–11), based at the Institute of Development Studies with key institutional partners in seven countries. Further information may be found at www.drc-citizenship.org.

2. A full review of this debate within democratic theory is beyond the scope of this study. For a good discussion of the debate, especially as it relates to processes of democratization in development contexts, see Avritzer (2002).

3. Mansbrige points out that it took over fifty years to 'establish that psychotherapy had any postulated desirable effects' and that it was not until Smith et al. (1980) "published their massive 'meta-analysis' of earlier studies were the short-term benefits of therapy persuasively established" (1999, p. 317).

4. Kabeer, 2005; Leach, Scoones, & Wynne, 2005; Newell & Wheeler, 2006; Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Thompson & Tapscott, 2010; Gaventa & McGee, 2010; Gaventa & Tandon, 2010; Coelho & von Lieres, 2010

5. Though the systematic review approach did inform the organization and selection of our cases, we did not embrace it fully for several reasons. First, it assumes that researchers are starting 'from scratch' and need to expand their access to the entire universe of relevant studies in order to establish a sample; but our starting point was a large universe of existing studies. Because of their shared origins, our 100 studies present a relatively high degree of cross-case generalizability, sharing a broad (but not uniform) 'baseline' of shared research concepts and questions developed by Citizenship DRC working groups. This makes weighting the 'quality' of each study less critical to our synthesis, although we did use inclusion criteria such as content relevance and the presence of empirical work. And although the formula-driven nature of the systematic review is useful for articulating methods for case selection, its emphasis on quantifying both the quality of primary studies and the variables therein tends to be less useful for explaining emergent patterns and themes. As the findings from many of our studies are based on inductive, interpretive approaches, the identification and synthesis of findings requires a much more methodical approach to the analytical phase than we found in the systematic review.

6. Due to the nature of our data set and data program, we do not test for statistical significance. At the same time, if we see patterns and associations occurring across such a large data set, we do believe that we can suggest propositions and findings from our analysis, which can later be tested more statistically as appropriate.

7. Prior to case selection and subsequent analysis, we completed two literature reviews on the outcomes of citizen engagement, and methodologies for synthesis research. Then, we created a sample. To select cases from the hundreds of outputs produced by the Citizenship DRC during 2003–10, we organised a database of all research studies and gray literature produced as part of the program. From this database, we selected case studies if the following questions could be answered affirmatively: Is the case grounded in a setting in which citizen engagement and participation occur, regardless of the type of intervention or context? Does the case present empirical work? Is the case an original research product, rather than a condensed version like a policy briefing? Is the case English-language?

8. The case studies included in the sample (and their frequency) are drawn from Brazil (16), South Africa (16), Bangladesh (10), India (10), Mexico (5), Nigeria (4), Kenya (3), UK (3), USA (3), Angola (2), Gambia (2), Argentina (1), Canada (1), Chile (1), Jamaica (1), Morocco (1), New Zealand (1), Philippines (1), Turkey (1), Zimbabwe (1), and multiple countries (17).

9. QSR NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software in which users can import text for the purposes of coding and tracking frequencies and relationships between data.

10. We recognize that 'positive' and 'negative' are of course normative judgements. However, the authors of the studies in our sample take the citizen's, or participant's, perspective with reference to whether an outcome does or does not, respectively, contribute towards development and democracy building goals. The categorization of outcome type as either positive or negative reflects only a certain point in time.

11. Here, cross-tabulations show simple distributions or concurrences of frequencies using various combinations of our coding system, rather than being part of statistical significance testing.

12. By contrast, writes Mansbridge (1997, p. 424), 'less participant citizens have a reduced capacity to develop their faculties through joining with others in deliberating on and forging a common good, a process that can clarify their conception of their interests, enlarge those conceptions by encouraging them to make the good of others and the whole their own, generate greater feelings of political efficacy, and ultimately benefit the larger society by anchoring it in a citizenry clearer about its interests and responsive to the claims of justice and the common weal'.

13. Important exceptions are the work of Houtzager, Gurza Lavalle, and Acharya (2003) and Avritzer (2002) on associationalism in Brazil.

14. In some instances, especially for Bangladesh, the local associations may be linked to membership in national level organizations.

15. Cross-national case studies are not included in this discussion of country context. As a result, in the rest of this section our results refer to a sub-sample of 83 cases situated in single countries only.

16. This approach builds on that of Coelho and von Lieres (2010), which examines differences in strategies and outcomes across seven developing countries. Polity IV Project data measure the nature of political decision-making and regime transitions within countries; Freedom House survey measures the quality of political rights and civil liberties within countries; and the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy assesses quality of governance, political participation, and political culture.

17. Marshall et al. (2009) list Angola, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe as being in the two most fragile (of six) state categories in their 2008 state fragility data for Polity IV. The World Bank (2009) harmonized list of 'fragile situations' includes Angola, the Gambia and Zimbabwe. Others, such as Kenya, Bangladesh, and Nigeria, are sometimes categorized in this way.

18. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate fully, one possible explanation for this might be that while in these emerging

democracies there is more space for citizens to engage, in fact authoritarian and non-responsive institutions persist, leading to a lack of positive responses to such engagement.

19. In their in-depth review of ways of measuring democracy Munck and Verkuilen (2002:11) point to the 'significant omission' of measures related to democracy in most indices of democracy and argue that 'the exclusion of the attribute participation remains problematic.' Even their suggestions, however, focus on such indicators such as electoral participation and not those related to citizenship awareness and efficacy.

20. For further in-depth study of the role of associations in Bangladesh in achieving developmental and democratic outcomes see Kabeer, Mahmud, and Isaza Castro (2010). They make the point however that it is not only the density of associations, but also the nature of the association which is particularly important to achieve both sets of goals.

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