

PART TWO

Service and Development

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Dr Leila Patel is Professor and Chair of Social Development Studies at the Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg, South Africa. She served as Vice-principal and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of the Witwatersrand (1998–2002) and as Director General, Department of Welfare in the South African government (1996–1998). She has facilitated university-community partnerships, developed service-learning programmes at the University of the Witwatersrand, and authored numerous scholarly articles, conference proceedings, research reports, occasional papers and books, including *Restructuring of Social Welfare – the Options for South Africa* (1992).

Theoretical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Civic Service

LEILA PATEL

SUMMARY

Civic service is increasingly being recognised as a significant social institution and an emerging social phenomenon in a context of global social, cultural, economic and political change. The concept 'civic service' refers broadly to voluntary service and citizen action to promote the public good, and extends beyond the family to local communities as well as national and cross-national arenas. Service operates under both governmental and non-governmental auspices and in different social, economic and political sectors of society.

The central argument in this chapter is that civic service is not a politically neutral activity, but rather draws on wider ideological, social, economic and political ideas. These ideas are part of a rich and complex political economy, which frames thinking and action about service, and what kind of

civic service is being promoted. The different traditions and orientations have implications for choices about service policy and the design, implementation and evaluation of service programmes.

The chapter explores questions about civic service in a new global context. Is there agreement about the vision and purposes of service, its principles and values, types of service, who serves and how the beneficiaries of service are perceived? The relations between the state, the voluntary sector and the market also shape the way in which civic service is institutionally organised.

The chapter concludes that there is no shared or common vision and purpose of civic service. It is more than likely that there are different and competing visions of civic service, depending on the beliefs, assumptions and interests of those who promote service. The choice about 'what kind of service?' is essentially a political one. Global debate and exchange of knowledge about civic service should take account of these choices and possible controversies.

Introduction

Civic service is increasingly recognised as a significant social institution and an emerging social phenomenon in a context of global social, cultural, economic and political change.

The idea of giving of oneself for the benefit of others is not a new phenomenon; it can be traced to different epochs and has been expressed in different forms over the ages. It has, however, entered the 'age of globalisation' in that many programmes are of an international nature.

The number of people willing to contribute their time and resources to service appears to be increasing in a changing global landscape. The international Red Cross/Red Crescent movement worldwide has 100 million people volunteering (Anheier and Salamon 1999). A recent study of civic service programmes in 52 countries cautiously estimated the number of servers to be in the region of 40 million and found that service operates under both governmental and non-governmental auspices and in different social, economic and political sectors of society (Global Service Institute 2002).

The concept of civic service refers broadly to voluntary service and citizen action to promote the public good, and extends beyond the family to local communities as well as national and cross-national arenas (Global Service Institute 2002). It is shaped by the history and service traditions of a society, its level of development, the way in which it governs itself, organises its economy and views the role of its citizens and its social institutions in meeting human needs and in promoting democracy.

The central argument in this chapter is that civic service is not a politically neutral activity, but rather draws on wider ideological, social, economic and political ideas. These ideas are part of a rich and complex political economy, which frames thinking and action about service, and what kind of civic service is being promoted. These different traditions and orientations have implications for choices about service policy and the design, implementation and evaluation of service programmes.

The chapter provides a brief overview of civic service in a new global context. Theoretical approaches to civic service are identified and discussed as these powerfully shape the kind of civic service that is promoted or offered. Is there agreement about the vision and purposes of service, its principles and values, types of service, who serves and how the beneficiaries of service are perceived? The relations between the state, the voluntary sector and the market also shape the way in which civic service is institutionally organised.

The chapter concludes that there is no shared or common vision and purpose of civic service. It is more than likely that there are different and competing visions of civic service. Various permutations of civic service are also possible, depending

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on the context. The different beliefs, assumptions and interests of those who promote service also influence the kind of service that is pursued. There is agreement with Westheimer and Kahne's view (2002) that the choice about what kind of service is carried out, is essentially a political one. Global debate, dialogue, and the exchange of knowledge and practice about civic service, should take account of these choices and possible controversies.

Civic service in a global context

A decline in traditional forms of civic participation through trade unions and political parties has been recorded in the present global context. This situation has given rise to the search for new forms of engagement with public issues. An explosion of civil society organisations in both the North and South continues to play a significant role in providing humanitarian support and in advocating human development, peace and the better representation of people in democratic institutions. Many countries have also emerged from authoritarian rule in which mass social movements played a leading role in bringing about social change. In these instances, civil society organisations are attempting to harness this spirit of participation to promote the collective good. Civic engagement through non-governmental organisations, civic service and volunteering is becoming more prominent as people search for new forms of participation, representation, collective action and self-expression. Civic service has also taken on a global form as non-governmental organisation (NGO) networks continue to mushroom and create opportunities for people to participate in international and transnational initiatives (UNDP 1999).

The character of civic service programmes has been shaped by particular country and regional contexts and varies in programme type, in rationale and purpose, institutional arrangements, resources and impacts. A recent global study (Global Service Institute 2002) on the prevalence of civic service, found that servers tended to be mainly youth, although large numbers of adults are also active in international service. Age was an important eligibility criterion, with language proficiency and skill profile featuring particularly prominently. Little was known about the beneficiaries of service and their perspectives on the impact of service on their social situations. Reasons that were cited for serving related to the personal growth and development of the server; for many, however, dual benefits to the individual and society were important reasons to serve.

Service is provided in a range of areas and service sectors such as human and social services, education, health, community development, employment/economic development, cultural integration, environmental protection, peace and human rights. Service also makes a contribution in other areas such as meeting basic needs, the personal growth of the servers, human and social capital development, citizenship, and the building of democracy.

Service programmes take many different forms, such as volunteerism, national youth service programmes, social and disaster relief, emergency services, advocacy, and community service initiatives, which are localised and provided by community-based organisations and village associations in developing contexts. Community service, particularly in the health sector, has been introduced in some countries as a requirement for professional registration (Global Service Institute 2002).

Service-learning is also emerging in educational settings, and is a form of experiential learning where service and learning goals are of equal weight. Depending on the orientation of the service-learning programmes, it could be considered to be an innovative instructional strategy, a character-building exercise or a means of promoting civic participation and responsibility. Some advocates of service-learning stress educational transformation and renewal of the social purpose of education in promoting democracy and social justice (Westheimer and Kahne 2002).

A distinguishing feature of civic service is its diversity across national, political, economic and cultural contexts, which has shaped the conceptualisation and character of service. The level of economic and social development of a country or region and its relationship to the global economy has a bearing on the approach to civic service. Formal civic service programmes are more prevalent and institutionalised in the industrialised North and tend to be positively associated with the status of the voluntary sector in these countries. The converse appears to be the case in developing contexts and emerging markets and democracies except in some developing countries such as Nigeria. The Nigerian National Youth Service is one of the oldest government-led national youth service programmes in Africa and has survived decades of military rule (Patel and Wilson 2002, Enemuo 2001).

The focus in developing countries tends to be on basic needs, humanitarian development issues, peace and human rights, participation and human development (in areas such as poverty and inequality), effecting improvements in health and education and responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Some of the development programmes incorporate citizen participation as a principle, and a means to promote institutional development and a democratic culture.

The political space created by democratic systems of governance tends to favour the growth and sustainability of civic service efforts. In societies where there is a large and burgeoning voluntary sector, civil society tends to be the main driver of service. National service programmes, which are government sponsored, tend to be more concerned with promoting national unity, patriotism and in addressing the shortage of human resource capacity in developing contexts. The latter types of programme are more vulnerable to political manipulation and patronage by political elites, and are more likely to be uncritical of the status quo (Patel and Wilson 2002). A case study of civic

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service in Nepal shows that where civic service activities became more oriented to social change and a vehicle for the expression of discontent, the service was closed (Yadama and Messerschmidt 2002).

International service is becoming more prevalent with a majority of servers coming from the North and performing service in the developing world (GSI 2002), while foreign aid often funds service programmes in developing countries. Approximately US\$7 billion in aid flowed to developing countries through international NGOs leading to the expansion of NGO activities in the South (UNDP 2002). What is the impact of this unequal relationship on service in developing countries? What are the dynamics of the relations between the servers and the beneficiaries? How do servers and beneficiaries in developing contexts view international service?

This brief overview provides a backdrop to civic service as a social phenomenon in a context where political, economic, social and cultural relations have taken on a global dimension which has significant consequences for individuals' local experiences and everyday lives.

Theoretical approaches to civic service

Political, ideological, economic, social and cultural beliefs have a direct bearing on how civic service is conceptualised

The central thrust of this chapter is that political, ideological, economic, social and cultural beliefs have a direct bearing on how civic service is conceptualised. The dominant theoretical approaches to social policy are philanthropy and institutionalism, and conservative, critical and social development perspectives (Midgley et al 2000, Midgley 1995). In the following section, these different approaches to social policy are discussed with reference to their implications for the kind of civic service envisaged.

Social philanthropy

Through the ages private citizens have met human needs through encouraging the provision of private goods and services to the needy. Philanthropy is often prescribed by religious beliefs.

The social philanthropy approach became firmly established in Europe and North America in the 19th century, which involved alms-giving to the poor, social relief, and taking care of the needy. During the colonial era, Christian philanthropy, furthered by missionary activities, formed part of organised philanthropy in countries that were under colonial rule. This approach to social provision was implemented in the colonies, and whilst these were of humanitarian value, they also undermined indigenous and traditional systems of giving and caring.

In contemporary times, voluntary philanthropic organisations constitute a substantial sector in the overall system of meeting needs and have become more secular in their approach. The goals of philanthropy are to meet human and social

needs and to promote the growth and development of the server. Philanthropic values such as charitable giving to the poor and humanitarianism are also emphasised. Civic service programs delivered by philanthropic organisations are likely to be remedial, providing social relief and humanitarian aid, and may view the beneficiaries of service as passive receivers of goods and services. Eligibility is often based on selective access to services and benefits, based on religious affiliation or the notion of the 'worthy' poor.

Social philanthropy exists in different development contexts and in different ideological systems, which may either encourage or inhibit its development. Philanthropic organisations rely largely on private donations and support from governments. Some organisations operate transnationally and are active in international philanthropy. Whilst the social philanthropy approach is traditionally associated with piecemeal and ameliorative interventions, social reformers operating within this framework have played a significant role in promoting social wellbeing.

Institutional approaches

Progressive liberalism and social democratic ideology have inspired institutional approaches to social policy. Institutionalists are of the view that government agencies are the best deliverers of social policies and that access to social provision and social rights should be institutionalised through legislation, fiscal measures, statutory regulations and comprehensive services which provide for universal coverage and access to services and benefits.

Welfare states are perceived to mediate the negative effects of market failure in capitalist societies. As a result of the institutionalisation of services and benefits, social democratic regimes are able to retain their commitment to social goals. For institutional theorists, social rights are as important as civil and political rights. Values of altruism, social solidarity and collectivism underpin institutional thinking.

Social democratic regimes are characterised by extensive state spending and a weak non-profit sector which has been displaced by the strong service delivery role of the state. In spite of this, non-profit organisations do remain active, but within a state-dominated mixed economy of social welfare.

Civic service programs in these types of political and social systems would tend to be more institutionalised in the form of public policy and the regulation of such activities. For example, tax incentives and credits may exist to encourage civic service as an expression of altruism, a moral imperative of society and a public benefit. Programmes are also likely to be government driven, working in collaboration with non-governmental organisations. Voluntary service activities may be encouraged as an expression of collectivism, personal growth of the server, and as a way of promoting social cohesion and stability. Social democratic

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governments have supported international assistance in the form of humanitarian aid and in furthering human rights and peace initiatives. These programmes are also supported to promote social democratic ideas as solutions to society's ills.

Institutional approaches have been the subject of much contestation in the late twentieth century, resulting in the restructuring and curtailment of some civic service programs. The impact of institutional approaches on civic service in the developing world appears to be limited due to the weakness of the state and democratic institutions, civil conflict, fiscal constraints caused by the debt trap, and the increasing marginalisation of poor countries and some regions in the global economy. Foreign donor aid is a significant contributor to human development and service activities in less industrial contexts and emerging democracies.

Conservative approaches

Conservative or neo-liberal approaches to social policy have their origins in the laissez-faire economics of Adam Smith in the 18th century and Milton Freedman in the 20th century. In the post-World War II years, institutionalist ideas held sway but were later ideologically challenged by neo-liberal approaches advocated by Reaganism and Thatcherism in the 1980s.

The resurgence of free market ideas and less government involvement in social welfare is strongly associated with conservative or neo-liberal ideas in the global era which is characterised by international economic integration. Conservatives hold the view that governments should leave economies alone, as this is the best way of creating wealth and development. To address social problems, they also argue for limited government intervention in human affairs, free markets, economic liberalisation and privatisation, individual responsibility for wellbeing, and the creation of mediating structures between those in need and governments.

Conservative supporters of civic service may be opposed to government involvement in service as it is considered to be "an extension of big government into realms previously reserved for private non-profit." (Perry 2002) Service activities from this point of view tend to support local, community-based and community-run programmes as the best vehicles for addressing social problems. Mediating institutions also help to cushion the pressure on governments from grassroots groups. Civic service programmes from a conservative perspective tend to emphasise strong moral or religious principles, promote loyalty to the dominant ideology and target the 'worthy poor', providing short-term crisis-based assistance delivered by non-governmental organisations. The ethos of the programmes is oriented more to individual change than social change.

Critical approaches

Critical approaches are associated with new left, feminist, neo-Marxist and anti-discriminatory perspectives on social policy. They emerged from a critique of positivism and denote an analysis of capitalist change and how its dominant

institutions serve the interests of profit and an oppressive class. Critical analysts attempt to uncover the contradictions between capitalist notions of equality and race, class, gender and other forms of social discrimination. Understanding power relations in order to create more egalitarian societies through the promotion of social and economic justice, is central to critical ideas. Public policy discourse tends to focus on social reformist community perspectives on social change, civil and human rights, the oppressive elements of the state and its bureaucracies, and the power of professionals and experts in representing their interests.

Beneficiaries are not considered to be passive receivers of service but are viewed as active participants in their own emancipation

Civic service programmes operating within a social justice paradigm are likely to be advocacy and issue oriented, campaigning for social change, and forming local, national and global coalitions to effect change. Participation in social movements for empowerment, emancipation and liberation could also be considered to be forms of civic service. Beneficiaries are not considered to be passive receivers of service but are viewed as active participants in their own emancipation. In some countries undergoing fundamental transformation, civic service programme goals have also had a strong emphasis on sectoral transformation, such as renewal of educational, health care and human services.

Civic service policies and programmes from a social development perspective would set goals which are likely to lead to tangible improvements in people's lives and contribute to social and economic development. The principles informing the programmes would be geared to promoting participation in development efforts, empowerment of the poor through productive employment, building the assets of the poor and strengthening local institutions. Programmes would also be of a cross-cutting nature focusing on effecting improvements in community and preventative health care, basic education, local economic and infrastructure development among others. It is essentially a pluralist approach focusing on strong government action and partnership between individuals, groups, communities, civil society and the private sector. Servers and beneficiaries are considered to be partners and development change agents working at local, national and international levels.

Social development

The social development approach to social policy was first introduced by the United Nations to address human development needs in the world's poorest nations following independence from colonial rule in the 1960s. In the late 20th century, the social development approach re-emerged as a response to unequal and distorted development, and was endorsed by the United Nations World Summit for Social Development in 1995 (United Nations 1995).

The proponents of social development argue that investments in social programmes that enhance people's welfare through their participation in the productive economy are the most effective ways of enhancing people's welfare and

achieving economic development. Social development is essentially a pluralist approach, focusing on strong government action and partnership between individuals, groups, communities, civil society and the private sector. Government action also includes protective and regulatory functions, including the removal of barriers to the achievement of equity and social advancement of individuals and groups. It is essentially a people-centred approach to development, promoting citizen participation and strengthening the voice of poor people in decision-making, and in the building of democratic and accountable institutions. Democratic participation is considered integral to the achievement of human development and is an end in itself.

Table summarises the basic tenets of the approaches and the character of the different kinds of civic service programmes.

TABLE 1 What kind of civic service?

Approaches to civic service					
Character of civic service	Philanthropy	Institutional	Conservative/ neo-liberal	Social justice	Social development
Vision	Civic service is rendered by private citizens based on religious prescriptions, cultural traditions, secular philosophy.	Civic service is part of a comprehensive system of social services; market failure is considered to be the cause of declining social conditions; government-dominant model.	Free-market in solutions advocated to overcome government failure needs; limited government intervention; low levels of spending on civic service; voluntary sector is a mediating structure between state and people.	Critical analysis of class inequality and social divisions associated with social stratification and social exclusion.	Pro-poor change; challenges unequal and distorted economic, social and political development nationally, regionally and globally; proactive involvement of governments in developmentally-oriented civic service.
Goals	Personal growth of server; meeting social needs.	Personal growth of server; social goals.	Individual change	Social and economic justice; democratisation, and transformation of systems and institutions.	Promote social and economic development; participation of socially excluded in development efforts; achieve tangible improvements in the quality of life of the people.
Principles	Support for the needy.	Citizen rights, social solidarity, altruism, social justice, societal cohesion.	Religious, moral values, state loyalty, individual responsibility for meeting needs.	Social justice, social and human rights; empowerment, equality, distributive and liberation values.	Social and economic justice; empowerment; collective action to promote public benefit, distributive and liberatory values.

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Approaches to civic service					
Character of civic service	Philanthropy	Institutional	Conservative/neo-liberal	Social justice	Social development
Programme type	Predominantly remedial, some focus on social reform; addresses diverse humanitarian needs.	Meeting basic needs; social reform; national and international volunteerism, international humanitarian aid.	Remedial; short-term crisis and emergency actions; localised community-based activities.	Social and community action to challenge social discrimination and marginalisation; support for social movements to promote access, equality, empowerment of the excluded from political processes; liberatory civic service.	Activities connected with human, social, economic and community development; building assets of the poor; local economic development; promote productive employment of the socially excluded; strengthen social capital formation; institutional development and promotion of good governance.
Access	Selective access to services.	Universal access to enhance quality of life.	Selective and targeted programmes at deserving poor.	Universal access to service benefits is advocated, but with a special focus on the poor and socially excluded.	Targeted interventions at socially excluded groups.
Auspices	Service is informal or formally organised by philanthropic organisations; mainly independent or part of plurality of service actors.	Weak civil society, space exists for different service actors, e.g. NGOs, philanthropy; service is formal and institutionalised through legislation, fiscal and taxation measures; significant state spending on service.	Civic service is part of voluntary sector dominant model.	Independent of state; active in organisations outside the state; associated with alternative institutions.	Service is part of a pluralist system - public, private and civil associated with society government facilitates and supports civic service.

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Approaches to civic service					
Character of civic service	Philanthropy	Institutional	Conservative/ neo-liberal	Social justice	Social development
View of servers and beneficiaries	Paternalist view of beneficiaries, but may be participatory if programmes are oriented to social reform.	Humanitarian view; may perceive beneficiaries as passive receivers of aid.	Service builds the character of the servers; paternalist view of beneficiaries.	Both are change agents.	Servers are active participants in development; change agents.
Local and global activities	Local, national, international, transnational focus.	Whilst a local focus exists, there is significant international action.	Local action geared to promote individual responsibility; international and transnational focus could be humanitarian; could also be oriented to strengthen the influence of conservative advocates of service.	Local, national, international, transnational in focus.	Local, national, regional and global focus on human and social development; active involvement of international agencies.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that the basic theoretical, political and ideological conceptions of dominant social policy shape the character of civic service. Different approaches to civic service have been identified: philanthropic, institutional,

Civic service policies and programmes vary in how servers and beneficiaries are perceived, and what the relations between civic service programmes, the state and the voluntary sector are likely to be

conservative/neo-liberal, social justice and social development. These orientations to civic service frame the character of civic service as a social phenomenon and an emerging societal institution in the global era.

Civic service policies and programmes vary in their visions, principles, goals, and service types. There are also differences in how servers and beneficiaries are perceived, and what the relations between civic service programmes, the state and the voluntary sector are likely to be. Whilst approaches are likely to overlap, different permutations of civic service are possible in different societal contexts and under different regime types (Salamon and Anheier

1998). The distinctions, however, are made for analytical purposes.

The vision of civic service in a country is integrally tied to the political and ideological ideas, the assumptions and beliefs about how a society should meet human needs and the politics and interests of different groups who promote service. Whilst there may be a dominant vision, it is also likely that there are different subordinate visions. On-going contestation of ideas is envisaged between different actors about principles and purposes, and about relations between the state, the market and the voluntary sector.

For instance, some proponents of civic service may approach it from a conservative/neo-liberal perspective. Service is considered to be remedial, oriented to individual change, is likely to be narrowly constructed and conservative in its political outlook. For them, globalisation has many benefits in terms of increasing wealth and prosperity through the spread of free markets and liberal democracy, the exchange of knowledge and the promotion of a shared global culture, and through peaceful exchange and stability. Civic service programmes are likely to be part of non-governmental organisations contracted by government to deliver decentralised services with a strong emphasis on localism.

However, proponents of a social justice approach are likely to be more critical of the risks of global capitalism for the poor and marginalised, and see rising tensions as threatening political and social stability. Social justice advocates would also point to the power of the rich and powerful nations evidenced in their control of global governance, financial institutions, trade and investment policies, and foreign aid, and point to how these threaten human security. From this perspective, civic service actors may align themselves with global social movements for change. They may participate actively in online campaigns conducted by NGOs around the world through email and media networks, supporting associations and struggles across borders, of people unknown to them.

The decision as to what kind of service is offered is a profoundly political and ideological one. It is a question that cannot be ignored by the advocates of civic service globally.

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