



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Robert W. Kutter

Will defend his dissertation

Demystifying Beneficiary Participation and Its Effects in International Development

Abstract

Beneficiary participation has become popular in international development generally, and it is an essential feature of sustainable development, in particular. But there are diverse definitions of and motivations for using beneficiary participation, and empirical literature on its effects is underdeveloped. This dissertation aims to clarify what beneficiary participation is and whether there is empirical support for claims about its benefits.

I develop a new typology of beneficiary participation based on a literature review of how scholars define beneficiary participation. This new typology can help researchers and development practitioners more clearly describe the types of beneficiary participation they study, employ, and advocate for. To contribute to empirical literature about beneficiary participation, I conducted a case study of two urban development projects in Bhopal, India. Data were collected through a structured survey of project beneficiaries and semi-structured interviews with each project's organizers. The results indicate that the benefits of both projects, at least with respect to toilets, were distributed equitably, even though beneficiaries did not control the allocation of toilets.

In general, more empirical research about beneficiary participation is needed. There is relatively strong empirical support for the claim that beneficiary participation improves project outcomes, but empirical support for most other claims (i.e., that it helps sustain project benefits, distribute benefits equitably, and makes projects more efficient) is weak. And empirical research suggests that one claimed benefit, empowerment, rarely materializes.

Tuesday, May 13, 2014

1pm

Wrigley Hall, Room 481

Faculty, students, and the general public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Rimjhim Aggarwal, Chair
Dr. Aaron Golub, Member
Dr. Arnim Wiek, Member