

# BOOK REVIEW

**Erin Accampo Hern. *Developing States, Shaping Citizenship: Service Delivery and Political Participation in Zambia*.** Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019. xi + 238 pp. List of Tables. List of Figures. Appendix. Index. \$24.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-0472054145.

How do citizen experiences with public policies and services affect their participation in politics? Erin Accampo Hern's finely crafted study, *Developing States, Shaping Citizenship: Service Delivery and Political Participation in Zambia*, asks this question, focused on the experiences of citizens in Zambia. Her book represents important reading for those concerned with unfolding patterns of participation in Africa. As she reveals, we need to take service delivery seriously, as it affects political participation and the development of citizenship on many levels.

At the theoretical foundation of the study is a policy feedback approach, which suggests that social policy, particularly the extension of benefits and services to citizens, can affect political behavior. Accampo Hern tailors this to the setting of low-capacity democracies, arguing that citizens in such systems will assess how sincerely their governments attempt to extend services to them. This, in turn, affects how they view the utility of participation. As Accampo Hern emphasizes, policies can have an impact on citizens via both material and interpretive pathways. The latter, one of the core factors of interest, involve how citizens subjectively assess their experiences with state policies.

Accampo Hern generates a typology of citizens' experiences with state services that attempts to capture these key subjective assessments. Four different types of experiences are highlighted: "empowering," whereby citizens articulate that government usually tries to help; "marginalizing," where citizens indicate that government might try to help but fails to understand their needs; "neglectful," which indicates that citizens feel as though the state ignores them; and "burdensome," where citizens feel government makes things harder on them. Accampo Hern then generates specific hypotheses about how such policy experiences affect different forms of political behavior. The research relies on a substantial survey conducted in three of Zambia's provinces, as well as in-depth interviews and evaluations of survey locations for the extent of services available to citizens.

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The core analyses examine the relationships between policy experiences and four different kinds of behavior (collective action, political engagement, formal participation, and alternative and subversive action). Accampo Hern convincingly demonstrates that citizens' experiences with state services at the grassroots level do indeed have implications for their participation. Moreover, while citizens' objective experiences with policies shape some aspects of their behavior, their subjective interpretations are more important. Thus, for example, citizens who have empowering *and* marginalizing policy experiences (both of which imply that they are at least visible to government) are more likely to be politically engaged and to formally participate in politics. As her in-depth interviews reveal, moreover, this reflects different pathways through which experiences shape behavior. Empowered citizens view the state as responsive to citizen input and act accordingly; marginalized citizens see participation as a means to induce change. Those neglected are less inclined to participate and also express a sense of hopelessness regarding the utility of their engagement.

There is much to applaud here. First and foremost, Accampo Hern's book offers critical insight for observers of contemporary politics; service delivery has a potentially far-reaching impact on citizen behavior, and it does so substantially because of its impact on citizens' subjective attitudes about the state. While much work has been undertaken separately on citizen behavior and service provision in Africa, few studies have explored and effectively illuminated the important links between the two. Accampo Hern also offers a model of conscientious and thorough research. While her large survey provides the core findings, Accampo Hern also effectively uses material from her open-ended interviews to offer deeper insight into relationships. She also conducts a historical analysis of government distribution of resources and services, which refutes the argument that state services reflect participation rather than influence it. Finally, Accampo Hern's work is exceptionally creative. She asks a novel question, creates the unique typology of policy experiences, and effectively adapts the policy feedback framework to the Zambian context. All of this reveals that she is not only an exceptionally skilled researcher, but an imaginative one as well.

The only small critique concerns the relatively dense and technical nature of some of the material regarding the methodological and statistical techniques. Undergraduates, in particular, might need a bit of hand-holding through this. Nevertheless, the book is exceptionally suitable for graduate students, especially insofar as it provides a template for an exceptionally well-executed research project. More generally, scholars and students of African politics are strongly advised to read this work for its important insights regarding the impact that service delivery has on political behavior and citizenship-in-the-making in contemporary Africa.

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**For additional reading on this subject, the ASR recommends:**

- Kokkonen, Pellervo. 1993. "Religious and Colonial Realities: Cartography of the Finnish Mission in Ovamboland, Namibia." *History in Africa* 20: 155–71. doi: [10.2307/3171970](https://doi.org/10.2307/3171970).
- Mbatia, Paul N., and York W. Bradshaw. 2003. "Responding to Crisis: Patterns of Health Care Utilization in Central Kenya Amid Economic Decline." *African Studies Review* 46 (1): 69–92. doi:[10.2307/1514981](https://doi.org/10.2307/1514981).