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GIANPAOLO BAIOCCHI

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Participation, Activism, and Politics: The Porto Alegre Experiment and Deliberative Democratic Theory

GIANPAOLO BAIOCCHI

The experiment in participatory governance in Porto Alegre, Brazil, stands apart from many other similar attempts to institute some version of civic governance in Brazil and Latin America. Because of its breadth and scope, it differs from a variety of other experiments (past and present) that simply do not involve as many persons, or more commonly, do not devolve as much decision-making power to popular mandate. As a system that devolves substantial power to participants, it stands apart from vague “participatory reforms” so common in Latin America. Its central institutional feature of interfacing civil society through neighborhood-based deliberation regardless of local levels of organization also sets it apart from participatory governance schemes that rely on organized civil society, often through sectoral interfaces (calling upon teachers to consult on education policy, for instance). It is also unusual because it has served the Worker’s Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT) well, permitting three uninterrupted terms at municipal government, and recently, largely as a result of the successes in Porto Alegre, a term at state-level government. Its record on good governance is equally

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impressive. It stands against the backdrop of many well-known electoral and institutional failures of leftist municipal administrations, as in São Paulo, Fortaleza, and Florianópolis in Brazil, or Caracas in Venezuela as well as a number of much more limited participatory experiments as in Montevideo, Uruguay, and Córdoba, Argentina.¹

Despite the recent attention to Porto Alegre and some of its innovative institutions as well as a general interest in “participatory governance,”² little work exists that explicitly addresses the theory of deliberative democracy—a body of theory that straddles normative and practical concerns of democracy-enhancing experiments such as this one.³ Deliberative democratic accounts vary in the attention they give to institutional arrangements, and here I will focus on the account of Empowered Deliberative Democracy (EDD) of Wright and Fung because it develops a model of institutions and their features that would guarantee fairness and efficiency within a deliberative framework.⁴ Deliberative democratic theory refers to a body of political theory that seeks to develop a substantive version of democracy based on public justification through deliberation. More than “discussion-based” democracy, it calls for the deliberation of citizens as reasonable equals in the legitimate exercise of authority and as a way of transforming the preferences and intentions of citizens. In this way, theorists of deliberative democracy address some of the problems that face complex societies such as the plurality of values, which would in principle render the construction of a “common good” as well as the establishment of common democratic practices difficult.⁵

The EDD proposal can be considered an extension, and further iteration, of these accounts. Of course, what distinguishes this kind of intervention from many others is its concern with institutional arrangements. A central feature of “Real Utopian thinking” is that it places affirmative responsibility on institutional design to bring real-world institutions ever closer to normative “utopian” ideals.⁶ The EDD proposal is an ideal-typical institutional design proposal for deliberative decision making and pragmatic problem solving among participants over a specific common good, and is in principle applicable to a wide range of situations. It is understood to center on reforms that devolve decision making to local units that are supported, but not directed, by a central body. These units are in turn truly empowered to enact their decisions. This model aims to foster redistributive and efficient decision making that is deliberative and democratic and superior to command-and-control structures on a number of counts.

A number of empirical questions arise in light of existing experiments that more or less meet the model’s criteria, such as whether deliberative democracy can ever be fair or whether it will be dominated by the more powerful. While answers to these questions will not doom or “prove” the model, they raise issues about institutional features—which ones work, which ones bring us close to normative ideals, and which ones do not—that together with comparative and theoretical work can help us advance the theoretical and practical agenda of demo-

cratic reform. In light of the Porto Alegre experiment, I wish to raise three broad, central problems in the theoretical model, which I term as the problem of inequality, the problem of uneven development of civil society, and the problem of politics. Based on a number of indicators about the Porto Alegre experiment collected between 1997 and 1999, I examine the implications of these problems and their solutions in this case, and offer extensions to the EDD model.

Each of the “problems” to the model is in reality an extension of the “real-world” question inspired by the call to utopian thinking: what would be the difficulties posed to this design in complicated empirical settings? The problem of inequality is not that persons are unequal but that it may hinder fair deliberation. Are participatory meetings dominated by certain citizens, for example? The “civil society problem” concerns the impact of empowered deliberation upon autonomous civil society and how participatory institutions should “interface” with secondary associations given the unequal development of these associations. Do functioning EDD fora empty out civil society or privilege areas rich with secondary associations? And the “politics” problem is the question of what political context is necessary to carry out such an experiment in the real world. Would EDD proposals call forth opposition from the powerful? What institutional features might account for their durability in uncertain contexts?

In this spirit, then, I offer three critical reinterpretations in the following sections of this article. After a very brief discussion of the institutions of the participatory governance in Porto Alegre, I argue in the next section that the experiment offers a particularly successful resolution to the problems of deliberation among unequals through its didactic functions. In the following section on interfaces with civil society, I argue that the experiment also offers a hopeful example of how this relationship might work in a way that fosters new organization in unorganized areas of civil society. Finally, the very success of the participatory experiment necessarily begs the question of the context under which it has thrived. Here I argue we should not forget its legitimacy-enhancing features that, in a democratic context, foster its reproduction. These three types of concerns should occupy a more central place within the EDD proposal, as they are likely to be important across a number of cases.

BACKGROUND: INSTITUTIONS OF PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

When the Popular Front (an electoral alliance headed by the PT but including other leftist parties as well) achieved electoral victory in Porto Alegre in 1989, there was little agreement as to what, exactly, the “PT way” of governing⁷ would look like, beyond a broad agreement on democratizing and decentralizing the administration, reversing municipal priorities toward those who needed it most, and increasing popular participation in decision making. Attending to a long-standing demand of The Union of Neighborhood Associations of Porto Alegre (UAMPA), which already in its 1985 congress called for a *participatory structure*

involving the municipal budget, PT administrators developed a set of institutions of popular control over municipal budgeting priorities.

Developing participatory institutions while managing a city of the size of Porto Alegre posed a number of difficulties for administrators. The city of Porto Alegre, the capital of the industrialized and relatively wealthy state of Rio Grande do Sul, stands at the center of a metropolitan area of almost 3 million persons. And although the city of 1.3 million enjoys high social and economic indicators, with its life expectancy (72.6) and literacy rates (90 percent) well above national average, it is also highly economically segregated city.⁸ Almost one-third of its population lives in irregular housing: as slums or invaded areas. These slums fan outward from the city center, with the poorest districts generally the farthest from downtown, making for very geographically distinct economic and social profiles throughout the city. This sociogeographic configuration posed many obstacles to drawing participants from areas without associative traditions, and then actually delivering on their demands.

The *Orçamento Participativo*—the “Participatory Budget”—has evolved over the years into a two-tiered structure of fora where citizens participate as individuals and as representatives of various groups of civil society (neighborhood associations, cultural groups, special interest groups) throughout a yearly cycle. They deliberate and decide on projects for specific districts and on municipal investment priorities, and then to monitor the outcome of these projects. The process begins in March of each year, with regional assemblies in each of the city’s sixteen districts. These large meetings, with occasional participation of upward of one thousand persons, accomplish two tasks: delegates are elected to represent specific neighborhoods review the previous year’s projects and budget. The Mayor and staff attend these meetings to reply to the concerns of citizens about projects in the district. The number of total delegates is based on a diminishing proportion to the number of attendees, and the proportion of persons from a specific neighborhood to that total.⁹ Neighborhood associations or groups are responsible for electing their own delegates.

In the subsequent months, these delegates meet in each of the districts on a weekly or bimonthly basis to acquaint themselves with the technical criteria involved in demanding a project as well as to deliberate about the district’s needs. The number of participants varies, but forty to sixty persons attend regularly in most districts. Similarly, in each of the thematic fora, delegates also debate and deliberate on projects of concern to more than a district within each specific theme. At these meetings, representatives from each of the municipal government’s departments attend and present on the department’s specific competencies. These smaller *Intermediary Meetings* come to a close when, at a second *Regional Plenary*, a vote among regional delegates serves to prioritize the district’s demands and priorities and elect councilors to serve on the Municipal Council of the Budget.

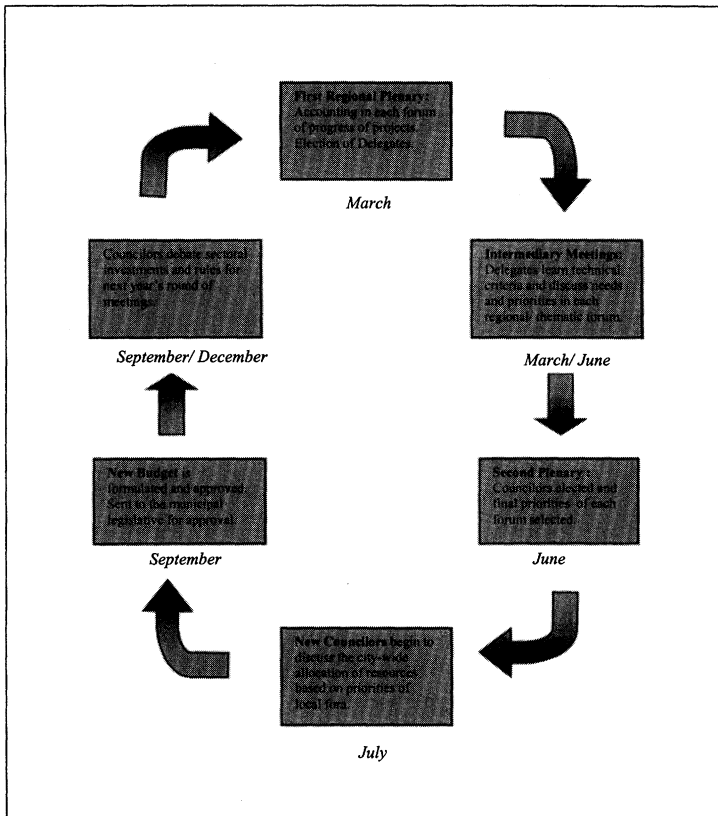


Figure 1. Yearly cycle of meetings.

This Municipal Council of the Budget is a smaller forum of representatives of each of the districts and thematic meetings that meets with representatives of the administration. Its main function is to reconcile the demands from each district with available resources and propose and approve a municipal budget in conjunction with members of the administration. Its 42 members meet biweekly with representatives of municipal government for several months. Councilors—two per district and per each of the five thematic areas—maintain links with their districts at this time and will, by the end of their one-year term, propose and approve changes to the rules of the whole process. For instance, in recent years, some of the changes have included increasing the scope of areas covered by the Participatory Budget, broadening the powers of the Municipal Council of the Budget to cover personnel expenditures of the administration, and changing the criteria for assessing how resources are to be allocated to each of the districts.¹⁰ The yearly process is shown in Figure 1.¹¹

The Porto Alegre experiment meets the criteria of the EDD proposal in a number of interesting ways. First, the process creates direct deliberation between citizens at the local level and devolves substantial amount of decision-making power

to these local settings. These citizens are involved in pragmatic problem solving, and monitoring and implementing solutions achieved. These are continuously deliberative processes over the years, meaning that there are chances for participants to learn from mistakes. These local units, although vested with substantial decision-making power, do not function completely autonomously from other units or from central monitoring units. Rather, central agencies offer supervision and support of local units but respect their decision-making power; that has been referred to as recombination.¹² In this case, the support comes from the administration in the form of regional agents who act as nonvoting facilitators.¹³

The Porto Alegre experiment also shows how the complex management of a whole city can occur through combinations of direct and representative democratic forms. The higher tier of the participatory structures, the Municipal Council of the Budget, brings together representatives of each of the districts as well as the thematic meetings. They deliberate on the rules of the process as a whole as well as on broad investment priorities; they also act as intermediaries between municipal government and regional activists, bringing the demands of the district to the government, and justifying government actions to regional activists.¹⁴ Participatory governance has expanded beyond Participatory Budgeting meetings to new fora that now include settings on social service and health provisions, local school policy, and human rights, among others. And the Participatory Budget itself has grown to include deliberation on investments in education, culture, health, social services, and sports.

As part of a joint strategy of urban improvements in the lowest income areas while "cleaning up" public finances, the Participatory Budget has served well the purpose of good governance. Impressive figures exist about the percentage of the public budget available for investment—close to 20 percent in 1994, up from 2 percent in 1989. The increased legitimacy of public decisions of Participatory Budget has also made possible additional reforms to clean up public finances, such as the increase in property taxes, and has created additional scrutiny over municipal funds.¹⁵ The proportion of municipal expenses in service provision to expenses in administration has also improved.¹⁶ Of the hundreds of projects approved, investment in the poorer residential districts of the city has exceeded investment in wealthier areas as a result of these public policies. Each year, the majority of the 20 to 25 kilometers of new pavement has gone to the city's poorer peripheries. Today, 98 percent of all residences in the city have running water, up from 75 percent in 1988; sewage coverage has risen to 98 percent from 46 percent;¹⁷ in the years between 1992-95, the housing department (DEMHAB) offered housing assistance to 28,862 families, against 1,714 for the comparable period of 1986-88; and the number of functioning public municipal schools today is 86, against 29 in 1988.¹⁸

The Participatory Budget has enjoyed increasing levels of participation over the years, and especially among the poor. Despite potential barriers posed by their technical and time-consuming discussions, large numbers of participants

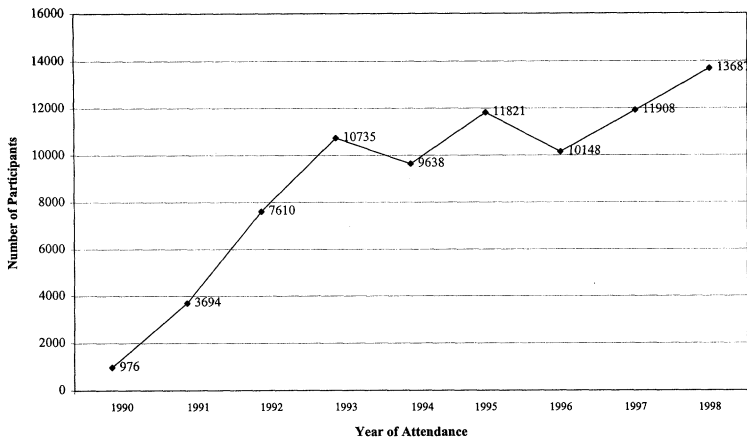


Figure 2. Participants 1990-98.

representing broad segments of the population have attended. Estimated yearly attendances at the Participatory Budget, generated by a measure of participants in first- and second-round plenaries, are shown in Figure 2. An analysis of participation per district, not reported here, shows that while for the first year presence of associative networks was a predictor of participation, for every year after that, district-level poverty, and not a strong civil society, predicts participation.¹⁹

A survey fielded by myself in conjunction with CIDADE, a local nongovernmental organization, revealed that the profile of the average participant at the first meeting of the year in 1998 was below the city's average in terms of education and income. More than half of participants have household earnings of four minimum wages or below, and more than half have up to an eighth-grade education.²⁰ On the other end of the scale, better-off citizens are underrepresented, as roughly one-third come from household earnings of five minimum wages or more, against the 55 percent of the city's residents who do so.²¹

The Porto Alegre Participatory Budget offers a real-world success of an experiment in EDD; as a set of institutions it has achieved efficient and redistributive decision making within a deliberative framework that has succeeded in attracting broad-based participation from poorer strata of Porto Alegre's citizenry. Nonetheless, its very success raises three important issues for the model: inequality within meetings, the issue of civil society interfaces and civic impact, and that of the political context of the experiment.

Deliberation and the Problem of Inequality

One of the main concerns of the critics of deliberative democracy is that its fora are likely to reproduce the inequalities in society at large. Since this project addresses local priorities and needs in service provision and investments in

urban infrastructure, it is not surprising that there should be a significant presence of poor persons, but it needs to be ascertained if the poor participate *as much* as other groups and if their participation yields similar results. Deliberative settings in which citizens meet to debate formally as equals could be dominated by the more powerful. We could extend criticisms of the “public sphere” to deliberative democracy-type proposals to anticipate a particularly poignant criticism that deliberative democracy may create the fiction of rational deliberation that in fact justifies an elitist kind of citizenship. More sinisterly, exercises of justification could lend legitimacy to certain inequalities, or to the political party in control of the project. Despite significant inequalities among citizens, the didactic features of the experiment have succeeded in large part in offsetting these potentials for domination. This confirms the expectations of democratic theorists who, while assuming that persons may come to deliberative settings with certain inequalities, expect that over time participation will offset them.

For someone like Bourdieu, deliberation and participatory democracy reproduces hierarchies. On one hand, it reproduces class hierarchies; on another, it reproduces hierarchies of political competence of “experts” against nonexperts within the field of politics (a hierarchy that is likely to align along, roughly, class lines, but need not be coterminous with it). Bourdieu denounces fictions of “linguistic communism”—that the ability to speak is equally distributed to all.²² As language is a *medium* (as to opposed to only an instrument) of power, utterances between speakers are always expressions of *relations of power between them*. The competence to speak embodies difference and inequality. A privileged class habitus imparts the technical ability to speak and the standing to make certain statements. This competence is a *statutory ability*, meaning that “not all linguistic utterances are equally acceptable and not all locutors equal.”²³ Linguistic competence is not a simple technical ability, but certain interlocutors are not allowed certain speech acts. Bourdieu gives the example of the farmer who did not run for mayor of his township: “But I don’t know how to speak!”²⁴

There is also the theoretical expectation that the relatively technical discussions involved and the types of time pressures on a poorer person would act together as disincentives to participation. As Jane Mansbridge writes of her town-hall participants,

These patterns imply that the psychic costs of participation are greater and the benefits fewer for lower status citizens. In contacting town officials, for instance, they feel more defensive beforehand and less likely to get results afterward. In speaking at meetings they feel more subject to ridicule and are less likely to convince anyone. Each act of participation not only costs them more but also usually produces less.²⁵

While ethnographic and life-history evidence would be crucial to account for the way persons bring inequalities to these meetings, it is possible here to deploy survey and participation evidence to consider these effects. The survey, discussed

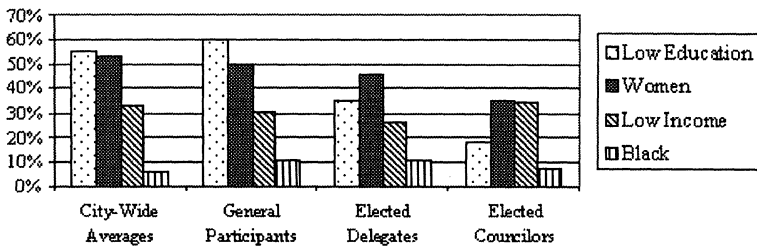


Figure 3. Proportion of low education, women, low income, and black participants at various tiers of the Participatory Budget, 1998.

above, was administered at meetings in all districts of the city.²⁶ Figure 3 shows the results of a comparison of the proportion of participants by gender, low income, and low education against citywide proportions at each tier of the process.

A number of observations are possible. It appears that there is some stratification at the higher tiers of the process, with women and persons of low education being elected less, while low income does not seem to affect election. Women are just higher than 50 percent of general participants, although making up only 35 percent of councilors.²⁷ Low-educated persons²⁸ are just higher than 60 percent of general participants, but only making up 18 percent of councilors. Persons of low income²⁹ make up 33 percent of general participants, and 34 percent of councilors. The best estimate of race³⁰ of participants also suggests that there is no evidence of racial disparity.³¹ Education appears to have the most pronounced effect, and particularly so at the highest tier.

There is no evidence, however, that lack of education or gender pose insurmountable barriers to effective participation, or that this stratification results from masculinist prejudice or prejudice against less educated speech. Ethnographic evidence from district-level meetings did not show any pattern of women or the less educated speaking less often or of conceding authority to educated men.³² Interviews among participants also revealed that they did not perceive the process this way. Common perceptions among activists were like the ones offered by an old-time community activist, who was asked if low education among the poor was a problem for the Participatory Budget:

No. I think it helps the Participatory Budget (OP), because it begins from below. It is not the suits³³ who come here and tell us what to do. It is us. I am a humble person. I have participated since the beginning. And like me, there are many more poor people like me who are there with me, debating or helping in whatever way possible. And so I think the OP is enriching in this way, because it makes people talk, even the poorest one. It has not let the suits take over.

A survey question about how often a person spoke at meetings painted a similar picture. The results to the question "Do you speak at meetings?" (always, almost

always, sometimes, never) showed that there was parity between the poor and the nonpoor, and between the less educated and the rest. It also found, however, that women reported speaking less. A formal statistical statement predicting whether someone will speak at a meeting based solely on gender expresses that the odds of a woman being an active participant at about 28 percent less.³⁴ However, the number years of participation in the Participatory Budget also turns out to offset this pattern significantly, and years of participation in the process is a powerful predictor of whether persons will speak. Once we consider only persons with a certain number of years of experience, we also find that there is no significant difference between men and women reporting participation, or between persons with or without formal schooling.³⁵ Keeping in mind the difficulties in assessing participation through indirect means as these, this strongly suggests that experience tends to offset gender inequality in meetings.

Statistical analysis of election figures shows a similar pattern. When we consider several significant intervening variables (as years of experience, number of ties in civil society, being on the board of directors of a neighborhood association, and being retired or self-employed), gender and education effects lowered significantly.³⁶ Each additional year of experience increased chances by 25 percent, and each additional tie in civil society increased the odds by 55 percent. Being retired increases the odds by more than 200 percent, and being self-employed by more than 80 percent.³⁷ These results together suggest that experience offsets some of the education and gender disadvantages, and that education effects have to do with a person's likelihood of being elected to a position in civil society and do not directly result from what counts within Participatory Budget meetings.³⁸ This evidence also strongly suggests that the availability of time, and women's "second and third shifts" of household responsibilities accounts for much, if not all, of these differences, particularly with respect to gender. Opinions such as these are typical:

Men are always flying about. To be a councilor you have to be able to go to many meetings, in the evenings, and in many different places. So even if you don't have a job outside, you still have to take care of the house. So I'd say this is more difficult for women.³⁹

It's difficult, but we always find time somehow, because I work, get home and then I feed the children, then I go to meetings. Sometimes my sister gives me a hand, sometimes the neighbor helps, but it's difficult.⁴⁰

There are a number of insights we could draw from inequality within Participatory Budgeting. For one, it is evident that it is not highly educated speech that counts within these settings. Bourdieu's farmer, who did not "know how to speak" might have found in the institutions of participatory governance in Porto Alegre a place where his type of speech might have been valued. Certainly there are other standards for valued speech, but these do not correlate with class or education. It is also clear that *outcomes* of participatory decision making also do not reflect domi-

nation. This domination would be evident if outcomes were systematically distorted in the direction of the distribution of investments toward more powerful citizens. If the more powerful had indeed been able to manipulate outcomes, there would not be rules that privileged “regional need” over number of participants, for instance.⁴¹ It is also clear that the heterogeneity of persons has not been a source of deliberative inefficiency.⁴²

This experience highlights the importance of the didactic component of Participatory Budget meetings. From the perspective of individuals, the institutional design includes many meetings devoted to learning procedures and rules as well as more specific technical criteria for municipal projects. Persons acquire specific competencies related to budgeting, but also acquire skills in debating and mobilizing resources for collective goals. And the evidence suggests there is relatively open room for advancement within the process for newcomers.⁴³ One participant with only a few years of schooling elected as councilor early on in the process discussed what it was like in the beginning as a less educated person:

I had to learn about the process as the meetings took place. The first time I participated I was unsure, because there were persons there with college degrees, and we don't have it, so we had to wait for the others to suggest an idea first, and then enter the discussion. And there were things from city hall in the technical areas, we used to “float.” But with time we started to learn.⁴⁴

An explicit part of the design of the Participatory Budget is a didactic component inspired by the “popular education” methodologies of Paulo Freire and the Ecclesiastic Base Communities. As is clear from early materials of the administration, the ideas of popular educators of urban social movements were an important source of inspiration in how to run meetings and how to develop norms of dialogue that were respectful of different types of speech.⁴⁵ Meeting facilitators are always aware of their function as partially didactic. One of these facilitators discussed her functions:

Another task . . . is to preserve and help diffuse certain values. The Participatory Budget demands the construction of cooperation and solidarity, otherwise the logic of competition and “taking advantage” becomes established, creating processes of exclusion. Therefore, negotiations inspired in a solidaristic practice must be a constant in the pedagogical actions of facilitators.⁴⁶

This didactic component is one of the salient features of the Participatory Budget and alerts us to the fact that while persons may “naturally” learn from attending deliberative meetings, features of the setting of these meetings may make the learning more or less available to all. The evidence here both confirms the best expectations of deliberative democratic theory—that vast segments of participants are able to learn to participate effectively—and points to the importance of a self-conscious strategy to impart that learning. That this does not fully offset

inequalities suggests that more institutional intervention is needed, although perhaps in novel ways that change time commitments necessary for effective participation. On the whole, however, the profile of the highest tier of participants in Budget meetings shows that this type of institution is a tremendous advance over traditional democratic institutions in Brazil.⁴⁷

Interfaces with Civil Society

Interviews showed that as persons became deeply involved in negotiations and became acquainted with other persons in the district involved in similar problems, they established lasting bonds with activists of other parts of their district and developed a sense of solidarity for these other persons. This collective learning is at the root of the transformations in civil society in Porto Alegre, as many more associations in civil society have started to function since the inception of the Participatory Budget. In this section, I develop a second extension to the EDD proposal around the issue of interfaces with civil society.

One of the vexing issues for the model of EDD is the relationship between deliberative democratic fora and civil society. Autonomous institutions of civil society are generally positively valued as being the repositories of democratic practices and impulses in society; organizations in civil society might also have the best information and access to certain problems that the participatory scheme is designed to address. Relying on organized civil society in an institutional design might, for example, inadvertently favor citizens who are represented by formal and established organizations against citizens who do not have such representation. It might also inadvertently reproduce and harden “movement oligarchies” by giving leaders of such organizations—that may not always meet our normative standards of democratic functioning—additional legitimacy and political capital. There are also a number of negative expectations about the impact of participatory forums on civil society. If participatory forums are parallel to—that is, they coexist with—civil society, it is not unreasonable to expect they may in certain settings empty out forums of civil society, as they may provide more efficient (and state-backed) ways of addressing certain problems. If participatory forums interface directly with civil society, might they co-opt movements? Or might local decision-making fora “balkanize” political life?⁴⁸ Cohen briefly addresses another possibility altogether that deliberative democratic institutions might help foster new forms of solidarity and help *construct* civil society:

Notice, however that both the inclusion of nontraditional stakeholders and the development of deliberative arenas suggests a new possibility that of constructing new bases of solidarity through a process of defining and addressing common concerns. . . . In short, these efforts—which could have very wide scope—have the potential to create new deliberative arenas outside formal politics that might work as schools of “deliberative democracy” in a special way.⁴⁹

Table 1
The Development of Civil Society in Porto Alegre, 1986-98

Year	Neighborhood Associations ^a	Cooperatives ^b	Regional Popular Councils ^c
1986	180		
1988	240		2
1990	380		4
1994	450	11	8
1996	500	32	11
1998	540	51	11

a. Functioning neighborhood associations, estimated from unpublished documents from UAMPA, the Union of Neighborhood Associations of Porto Alegre; from CRC, the Center for Community Relations of the Municipality of Porto Alegre; and Baierle, *A Explosao*.

b. Estimated number of housing cooperatives from interviews.

c. Popular Councils are district-level voluntary entities that coordinate neighborhood associations.

The Porto Alegre experiment has functioned much more like a “school of deliberative democracy” than as a vehicle of the co-optation or vacuum that hollows out of civil society. Participatory governance in Porto Alegre has, in fact, fostered new and more intermeshed institutions in civil society. It has renewed leadership in civil society and “scaled up” activism from neighborhoods to municipal and district levels. Here I briefly explore the institutional features of Participatory Budgeting that account for these changes.

One of the most obvious transformations of civil society has been the rapid rise of new associations throughout the city. Although precise figures are difficult to establish for a number of reasons, estimates for the number of neighborhood associations are shown in Table 1.⁵⁰ The table gives very general estimates of the trends in the transformation of civil society in Porto Alegre.

The rise in the number of associations is dramatic, and follows the increasing success of the Participatory Budget throughout the years. By my conservative method⁵¹ of estimating this number, associational density has almost doubled. Neighborhood associations are not the only type of organization in civil society. A number of other types of entities, such as Samba schools, religious and cultural groups, soccer clubs, mothers’ clubs, social movements, professional organizations, and unions are part of civil society. In regional settings, many of these other entities revolve or center around the neighborhood association. There is also a limit to the number of neighborhood associations, which can help prevent an inflation in the measure due to credentialing. My survey of associational life in three of the city’s districts found that 80 percent of associations held meetings at least once a month, and that more than half had meetings more than once a month, which lends credibility to the fact that these are indeed functioning and real associations.

Popular Councils offer a measure of the interconnectedness of associational life. The creation of functioning Popular Councils was an innovation in civil society during this period. From the Table 1, we see that the number of regional Popu-

lar Councils today is much greater than before, and almost all function with greater regularity. Popular Councils are autonomous institutions that hold regular regional meetings on a weekly or bimonthly basis for representatives of neighborhood associations as well as independent citizens wishing to discuss the district's problems. The founding statutes of one of these councils, in the Partenon district, states that its purposes are as follows:

1. to obtain and share information about the municipal administration;
2. to monitor public institutions;
3. to decide upon questions referent to our district, to the city, the state, and the country;
4. to create proposals to the public administration;
5. to define proper policies in the areas of transportation, social service delivery;
6. to participate in the planning of the city, state, and country; and
7. to foster and support popular organizations.⁵²

While Popular Councils do not have any power over neighborhood associations, or over the Participatory Budget, they often coordinate activities between neighborhood associations (to make sure a fund-raiser will not overlap with a cultural event in a nearby neighborhood), settle disputes among them, and more important, deploy collective resources for the solving of regional problems. Often Popular Councils act as intermediaries between a single association and municipal government, approaching the government with the moral mandate of forty or fifty active associations. Very clearly, the founding statutes above show that Popular Councils as this one have goals of sharing governance and scrutinizing public administration.

This picture contrasts from the situation in 1988. While much of the city had little associative activity, five or six of the sixteen districts into which the city is today divided had significant activity in terms of neighborhood associations and oppositional social movements. There was a functioning umbrella group for neighborhood associations, UAMPA, which according to a 1988 count, had approximately 150 associations registered. Today, associational life has become denser throughout the city. The segregated geography of a Brazilian city like Porto Alegre means that these changes have occurred most dramatically in the city's peripheries, areas with the least prior organization. Figures 4 and 5 offer a graphic representation of the associational density per district of the city for the two years in question. The poorest districts of the city have felt the greatest impact.

An activist in the poorest district of the city, Nordeste, who has followed the process closely, accounted for these changes:

New leaders appear with new ideas every year and they are hard workers and full of good intentions. Our district has benefited a lot. Many of the new *vilas* now have developed asso-

Active Neighborhood
Associations
per district
Porto Alegre, 1987

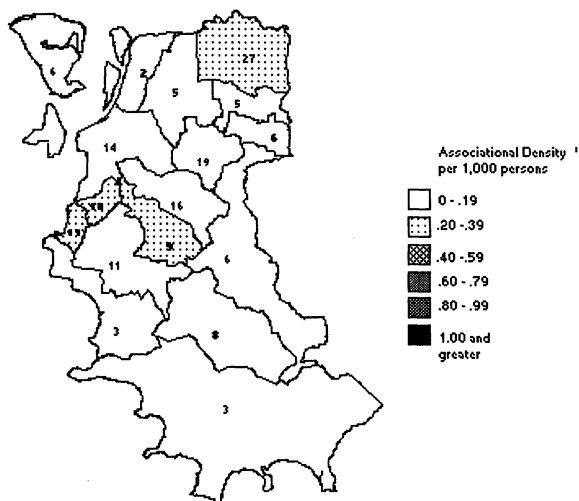


Figure 4. Associational density, 1987.

ciations to fight through the Participatory Budget, and old ones are reopening to go demand in the Participatory Budget. Every year two or three new associations appear.⁵³

Activists describe a common pattern of neighborhood association development that begins with collective mobilization around common demands. Sometimes there already is a registered, but inactive, association for the area. Nonetheless, one or more concerned persons will begin to attend Participatory Budget meetings and eventually mobilize a number of concerned neighbors who then attend as an ad hoc group that later becomes a more permanent association:

We began by attending the Participatory Budget meeting. There used to be an association here, but it was more social and less interested in the problems of our side of the vila. So we went with a different name, and today we are registered as an association. We were able to get part of the street paved but we are still going to go back because there is a lot we still need still.⁵⁴

A smaller survey I conducted among “key activists” ($n = 104$)—regular participants in a regional forum—in three districts of the city shows that most activists participate in a number of different forums. On average, activists participate in two to three meetings a week, and are regular attendees in three to four different forums. There were regional differences, but 44 percent of activists participated regularly in a forum with a regional or municipal focus other than the Participatory Budget or Regional Popular Council. Almost all activists reported participating regularly in their local neighborhood association—which suggests that there are significant ties and between local, regional, and municipal settings.

A number of respondents echoed that this indeed was an important process for development of more permanent networks of activists. For example, one woman

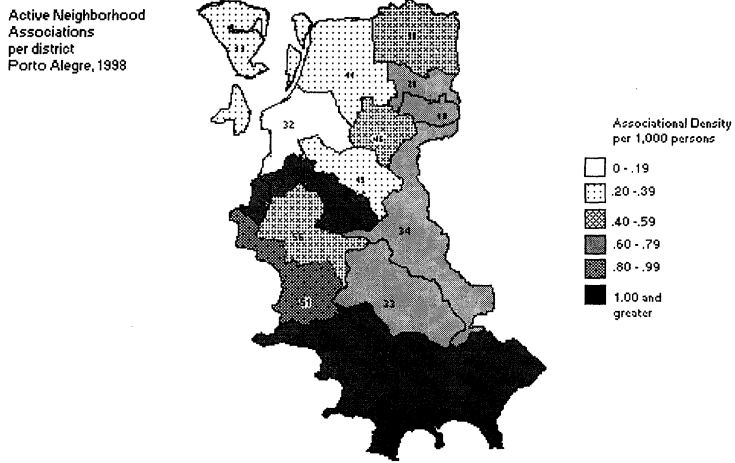


Figure 5. Associational density, 1998.

described her trajectory from becoming involved in the Forum of Cooperatives to then becoming an elected delegate and Councilor, and the way the Participatory Budget has helped foster more or less permanent bonds:

After starting to participate in the Forum of Cooperatives, I started to become involved with community leaders and wound up being elected as a Delegate of the Participatory Budget. At first, I did not understand much, but with time I started to get it. I got a group together from our cooperative to come on a regular basis. I then was elected to the Council. There it was where I really learned what is a movement, what a community leader does. It was an incredible learning experience in becoming a community leader.⁵⁵

And a number of municipal mobilizations have resulted. The hunger campaigns in 1991 and the Human Rights municipal conference of 1997 drew activists from all districts as regular participants. Some of these municipal initiatives are sponsored by city hall, as the human rights conference, but they have been people and organized by community leaders emerging from participatory fora. Participants of the process often recounted that civil society has changed in these directions—toward municipal and regional focus—and they usually recounted that the process had an effect on them, personally, in recasting their horizons as activists of a collective:

As delegate and councilor you learn about the district, meet new persons, become a person who has to respond not only to your association, but also to the district as a whole and the city as a whole. I participated in the two congresses to decide the *Plano Diretor* (municipal planning priorities) and since I have worried about the city as a whole. After a year, I learned not to look only at the district, but that you have to look at the city as a whole.⁵⁶

It is worth considering institutional features (and their alternatives) of participatory governance in Porto Alegre that account for these changes. One of the most salient features is its manner of recognizing participants and collectives. In the late 1980s, leftists in Brazil debated how leftist governments should interact with civil society. In São Paulo, for example, after the PT victory in 1989, some held that Popular Councils should be consultative and others argued that they should be deliberative. If Popular Councils were consultative, they would be part of the government's organizational structure, and if they were deliberative they would remain as autonomous associations inserted into municipal government.⁵⁷ In Porto Alegre, an early vision of interaction with organized civil society—presidents of neighborhood associations, for instance—gave way to a “laissez-faire” relationship to civil society.

A hallmark of the Participatory Budget is that anyone can in principle be part of deliberations. At meetings of the Participatory Budget where organizations are counted, participants are asked which organization they represent in order to tally votes, but the deliberative processes do not discriminate between “actually existing” neighborhood associations and a momentary association of persons who decide to call themselves a “street commission.” Some leaders of the neighborhood movement felt “slighted,” but the practice reduces the advantage of prior organization. It has created a system that actually fosters the creation of new associations as well as the creation of parallel organizations to unresponsive ones.

But participatory institutions here address issues that were already central to existing concerns of civil society. For instance, in Porto Alegre, essential issues addressed by neighborhood associations in 1989 revolved around urban infrastructure and services. But another issue municipal government could have opened up for deliberation at the time could have been environmental issues or the cultural policy of city government, which have both become part of participatory governance. Both would have no doubt attracted activists, but would not have attracted the attention of civil society as the Participatory Budget did, and would not have reshaped it. Because a significant proportion of the activities of neighborhood associations went to securing urban services and the Participatory Budget offered a completely novel way of achieving those goals, civil society developed even as it transformed its relations with municipal government. As an interviewee reiterated,

Before you had to go to the *vereador's* (councilperson) office when you had to get something done, you had to go and sit in his waiting area, sometimes for more than a whole day. When you saw him you told him why you needed this street or materials for the (neighborhood) association building. It was always an exchange. Or you would bring a petition with lots of signatures to DEMHAB to show you had respect in the community. Today it is different. This brought big changes to the associations, because it was what we mostly used to do.⁵⁸

Importantly, the Participatory Budget has also made some of the principal tasks of neighborhood associations much easier. As another interviewee states,

Before the Participatory Budget, the associations used to work by themselves. Each one would write up its demands and go to the government. Today, 90 percent of the business of associations is through the Participatory Budget. All our main demands are through the Participatory Budget. And even complaints are through the Participatory Budget, because of the Councilors. Councilors can speak directly with the government. Sometimes a president will take a month to get an audition from the government and a Councilor will get it in a week.⁵⁹

There is not a direct incentive to create an association, as mentioned earlier, since formal existence is not a requisite to participation. But, the calculus for forming an association has become different. One example from the survey—where participants were asked if they used to participate more or less in civil society before coming to the Participatory Budget—found that while 10.2 percent indeed participate less, 26.7 percent participate the same (in addition to now participating in the OP), and 26.7 percent participate *more*.⁶⁰

While not part of the stated goals of the Participatory Budget, its institutions provide a number of indirect “subsidies” for civil society. As mentioned earlier, the Participatory Budget has individual didactic effects. But it is also true that the Participatory Budget accounts for the induction of activists into associations of civil society, and the political learning of most new activists today. In my smaller survey of the 104 activists, approximately one-half had their start in associative life through the Participatory Budget. Of activists with less than five years’ experience, the vast majority had their start in the Participatory Budget. Another “subsidy” is that it provides a regional forum for activists to meet other activists, to share information and learning, and this facilitates mobilization across districts. Observers of the process, as Gildo Lima, one of the architects of the participatory structures in the first administration, argues that civil society has indeed become less locally focused as a result of the Participatory Budget, and that a new form of mobilization has emerged:

This type of mass mobilization campaign has become rapid, dynamic, and has established a frequent “network of conversations.” While I don’t speak to my neighbor who lives in front of my apartment . . . in this network the guy who lives here speaks with the guy who lives on the other side, and the one who lives really far away, every week because of this process. Many people do not realize that that we have created the capacity for dialogue every week as a result of the Participatory Budget.⁶¹

In the case of the Participatory Budget, unlike the Associative Democracy proposal of Cohen and Rogers,⁶² there are no institutional checks on associations for standards of democracy. And while this design has succeeded in fostering new

associations, there is no assurance of the “internal quality” of these organizations. While architects and managers of the Participatory Budget in Porto Alegre are well aware that certain neighborhood associations may leave something to be desired in terms of certain procedural standards, nevertheless, city hall has maintained the position not to interfere in popular organization. The experience of political repression, or of state-controlled labor unions and neighborhood associations in Brazil is recent past accounts for this position. But an additional feature functions as a potential check: just as the Participatory Budget will recognize any association, the door is always open for parallel groups to lay a claim as an association as well. The Participatory Budget allows for persons to informally associate and to represent a district or a neighborhood, whether it is officially in existence. If a recognized association is not responsive to enough persons in a community, persons may “secede” through the Participatory Budget and eventually become the dominant association in a community having earned respect through achieving goals through the Participatory Budget.

The Context of Participatory Reforms

A final issue for the model of EDD is the enabling context of participatory reforms. Many of the other Workers' Party administrations that were elected in 1988 and 1992, such as that of São Paulo (1989-92), resulted in failure and the discredit of the municipal branch of the party. Other municipal administrations experimenting with comprehensive participatory reforms, like the Florianópolis administration (1992-96) in the state of Santa Catarina, under the Popular Socialist Party (PPS) did not achieve reelection. While it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss in detail what background conditions perhaps made Porto Alegre different from some of these other cities, here I discuss “what went right” and suggest that the EDD model ought to more fully consider governance outcomes as a condition for the reproduction of deliberative institutions in competitive democratic arenas. More specifically, I suggest the issues of institutional capacity to deliver results for participation enable deliberative democracy to enhance the legitimacy of governance and sometimes extend that capacity.

For all of these positive civic outcomes, it is crucial that the reforms actually deliver goods in a timely fashion to overcome cynicism and to convince persons who have a limited amount of time that participation is worthwhile. The experiment would fail to provide such a robust defense of deliberative institutions were it not for these relatively timely results.⁶³ Students of urban politics in Latin America have pointed to “bounded rationality” problems of the poor in terms of democratic participation.⁶⁴ Participation may not make much sense for poor persons save for an assurance of timely returns. In highly fragmented social contexts, or where persons are not accustomed to civic engagement, the equation may be even more stark. In addition, there is reason to assume that deliberation over a public

good is likely to meet opposition because the closer that participatory decision making comes to a “true” deliberative democracy, the greater its redistributive consequences and the greater the likelihood it will meet opposition from more powerful persons and groups invested in the previous distributive scheme.

Part of the explanation for the success is that “good governance” has always been central to PT. This has made significant resources available to the Participatory Budget. With the decentralization reforms codified in Brazil’s 1988 constitution, cities gained new ways of raising revenue through vehicle, sales, and services taxes. Porto Alegre has been a relative winner by virtue of being a capital city in a wealthy state, and has had the ability to raise enough revenues to keep up with the increased fiscal burdens placed by the devolution of social services while carrying out new investments throughout the period in question. The Porto Alegre administration, with yearly revenues today well over U.S.\$150 per person, has the capacity to offer many more returns than some of the municipal governments around Porto Alegre, like those of the commuter cities of Viamão and Alvorada that have elected PT mayors but, with per capita revenues at a fraction of Porto Alegre levels, have not succeeded in drawing sustained attendance to participatory meetings.⁶⁵

But much of the success has had to do with the way in which participatory governance in Porto Alegre enhances the legitimacy of government decisions; this has in turn extended the capacities of municipal government. After the first year’s budget was drawn up through the Participatory Budget in Porto Alegre, the next legal step was to have it approved by the municipal legislative. While a majority of city council was hostile to the Participatory Budget and the Workers’ Party, the budget submitted was approved without alterations. Popular pressure protected the autonomy of the process, as participants from meetings personally went to the office of councilpersons to exert pressure, and despite a negative media campaign, succeeded in guaranteeing the approval.⁶⁶ The element of public justification from deliberations over the budget makes it becomes difficult for politicians in the context of a democracy to oppose something that is result of the “public will.” Today, although the PT has not achieved a majority in the municipal legislative, the budget has been approved every year without major alterations.

There are other ways in which the legitimacy of the municipal government has extended its capacities. Genro writes of the public support for the raising of land-use taxes as direct result of the Participatory Budget; this increased taxation was largely responsible for much of the revenues available for investment.⁶⁷ And as has been pointed out, the increased *compliance* with taxation has also increased revenues; although it is difficult to establish the degree to which this results from the Participatory Budget, the increased legitimacy of the administration’s policies no doubt help account for it. The continued ability of the municipal government to secure financing for projects also comes from well-known public scrutiny of several thousand citizens over public funds.⁶⁸

In fact, the success of the Porto Alegre experiment comes from its legitimacy enhancing aspects rather than from “exceptional features” of the city’s history. While Porto Alegre has a unique history of left-populism dating back to the 1930s, the Workers’ Party came to play a part in municipal politics in *opposition* to the left-populist party, the Partido Democrático Trabalhista (PDT), winning the 1988 municipal election in large part as a protest against the PDT’s failures of governance.⁶⁹ Other cities in Brazil, like São Paulo, where the PT did not manage to reelect its administration had as strong, if not stronger, sympathetic community movements and the backing of PT unions. One of the key problems with many of the early PT administrations was an inability to find a way to give voice to organized social movements within the administration without succumbing to the charge of privileging “special interests” and without becoming embroiled in interaction disputes between social movements within the party.⁷⁰ The PT administration in São Paulo, for instance, came under attack for giving “special privilege” to social movements sympathetic to the Party without considering “the whole city’s interests.” Without a broad-based participatory system that drew participants from outside organized movement sectors, the municipal government was open to the charge of “left patronage.”⁷¹ And without a clear system of rules for negotiating competing interests, the administration in time also came under attack from segments of the Party that accused the administration of “class treason” for attending to the interests of business in certain decisions.⁷²

Enhancing the legitimacy of government may not, by itself, always ensure the reproduction of EDD institutions. But in the case of Participatory Budgeting, both of these types of problems—charges of patronage and attacks from segments of the base of support of the party for not giving enough resources—are averted in an open, and transparent, participatory system like Porto Alegre’s that draws participation from broad sectors of the population. In fact, PT administrations have become more successful in gaining reelection as the open style of participatory reform of the Participatory Budget has become the standard for municipal governance. PT municipal governments with Porto Alegre-style Participatory Budgeting systems were reelected more often in 1996 than in 1992, and the PT has continued to gain municipal administrations on the basis of the well-known successes of the Participatory Budgeting in delivering effective governance.

CONCLUSION: ON THE FERTILE GROUNDS FOR UTOPIAS

The model of EDD offers us a set of institutional designs that is supposed to solve many of the problems of both command-and-control institutions and inefficient New Left proposals. Deliberative decision making that is empowered, and sufficiently empowered in the correct way, holds promise for efficient, redistributive, and fair decision making. The Porto Alegre experiment I have described seems to both fit the model and confirm its best expectations: high numbers of par-

ticipants from several strata of Porto Alegre's society have come together to share in a governance structure that has proven efficient and highly redistributive. I raised three issues that I believe are important across the range of EDD cases by extending the "real-world question" to a range of situations that *ought* to be difficulties for the Participatory Budget.

I raised the issue of inequalities within meetings and have suggested that despite the strong inequalities of urban Brazil, participation of the poor and uneducated is present and without evidence of domination by the more educated or wealthy. The institutional feature of relevance is the didactic component that appears to offset these tendencies. The lesson, I believe, is that participatory settings should include mechanisms to deal with inequalities specific to its setting, and that we should reframe "the problem of inequality" as a problem of settings and not as a problem of persons. The difficulty with lack of education or of the poverty of participants is not that these are in themselves barriers to deliberating or collective problem solving. Persons across all walks of life are effective problem solvers and discussants in their own affairs. The difficulty involves establishing a setting in which certain types of speech are not more valued than others, and in which learning is broadly available. The lack of parity on gender suggests that the issue of parity is not fully resolved; the data suggests, however, that this may have more to do with the availability of time and schedules of meetings than deliberative competence per se. It is also clear that the participation of women at the higher tiers of the Participatory Budget represents a significant advance over traditional democratic institutions. The proportion of women in city council in Porto Alegre has never been higher than 10 percent, compared with more than one-third of the Council of the Budget.

I also discussed the impact of institutions on civil society. The remarkably positive impact of the reforms here stems from the type of interface with civil society and the incentive structures to participation. The Participatory Budget supports civil society in a number of indirect ways, creating a "network of conversation," training activists, and making the task of neighborhood associations easier. This impact is not trivial; an organized and intermeshed civil society can help sustain a participatory experiment as this one by sharing in its responsibilities in ways that individual citizens cannot. A survey question about how persons came to find out about Budget meetings showed that among poorer persons, face-to-face interactions, through neighborhood associations and Popular Councils, was the main way. A survey of the sixteen regions showed that Popular Councils supported Budget meetings directly and indirectly by advertising them, bringing new participants, and helping run meetings. The impact on civil society may be more appropriately thought of in terms of "synergies" than simply as a one-way support.

I also explored the enabling context for these reforms, the "politics" that make it possible and pointed to legitimacy-enhancing features of participatory reforms that may extend the capacities of government to carry them out. The ability to sat-

isfy participants' expectations is, in the context of strong need and a competitive electoral democracy, crucial to the survival and reproduction of the institution.

There is another sense in which its "politics" are important, however, and it is related to the origins of this utopian experiment. The question left for further research and reflection on EDD experiments is the importance of the driving political vision behind the project. In this case, the state held a radical democratic vision of popular control of city government and of inversion of government priorities away from downtown and toward its peripheries. For many PT administrators, participatory reforms are part of a broader transformative project. An early debate in terms of progressive administrations was whether municipal governments should function with the goal of most efficient and democratic delivery of services, or play a role in a larger culturally transformative project. One prominent PT intellectual, Jorge Bittar, writes in an official publication:

The inversion of priorities and popular participation are necessary components, but although not sufficient for a transformative project. An alternative project of local power must consider actions in two levels: at the municipal political power and in local society . . . the clash with the values that sustain local hegemony at the local level becomes a conflict must be part of all of our actions.⁷³

Writings from the early days of the process document lofty objectives for a popular administration, as when the PT candidate for Mayor Olivio Dutra wrote that Popular Councils would "restore the historical legacy of the working classes in giving form and content to democracy."⁷⁴ Early activists within these reforms were guided by visions of radical democracy borne of the Ecclesiastical Base Communities, of labor and urban movements, and of activism within socialist parties. These "true believers" were very important for the establishment of the process in the various districts.⁷⁵ One of the more experienced activists in one of the districts I studied described his concern for new persons in terms that tell of an activist calling:

The most important thing is that more and more persons come. Those who come for the first time are welcome, we have a lot of patience for them, there is no problem, we let them make demands during technical meetings, they can speak their mind and their anxieties. We have patience for it because we were like that once. And if he has an issue, we set up a meeting for him, and create a commission to accompany him. You have the responsibility of not abandoning him, of staying with him. That is the most important thing.⁷⁶

As Cohen writes, deliberative democracy is at its best a process whereby participants reconsider and reconstruct their preferences.⁷⁷ The question we can ask is if it makes a difference whether deliberation takes place not just under the aegis of rationality and problem solving and with the goal of reforming government but also of empowerment of the poor and social justice, and with a goal of social

transformation and rupture, visions borne of social movement activism and oppositional politics.

Appendix 1: Statistics

I analyze a representative sample of OP participants drawn from first plenary meetings in March and April of 1998. Respondents were randomly selected from participants at each regional and thematic meeting and were asked to answer to a questionnaire. If the person had difficulty in answering the questionnaire in written format, an interviewer would apply the questionnaire. The sample of participants was roughly 10 percent of the total number of participants. The survey was designed and applied by myself, members of a nongovernmental organization, CIDADE, in Porto Alegre, and municipal government employees. For this analysis, the models were restricted to variables of interest. Independent variables of interest included Female, an indicator variable that assumed 1 for female; Poor, an indicator variable for income up to two minimum wages; Low-Ed, an indicator variable for education up to the eighth grade. Important intervening variables were the indicator variables Retired and Self-Employed based on self-reporting; Experience was a count of years of participation in the OP; ties was the number of ties in civil society; and Directorate was an indicator variable of whether the person had been elected to a directory position.

Logistic Coefficients Predicting the Likelihood of Election to Delegate Position in the OP, 1998

Independent Variables	Model 1		Model 2	
Female	0.53	(0.20)**	-0.38	(0.26)
Poor (1)	0.004	(0.23)	0.10	(0.28)
Low-Ed (1)	-0.50	(0.21)*	-0.21	(0.26)
Years			0.23	(0.04)***
Ties			0.44	(0.09)***
Directorate			0.82	(0.26)**
Retired			1.18	(0.31)***
Autonomous			0.59	(0.28)*
Constant	-1.64	(0.11)***	-2.11	(0.27)***
Chi-square	13.95**		141.91***	

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate standard error.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Appendix 2: Weights and Criteria for Allocating Resources

Once municipal priorities for the year's budget are established by the Municipal Council of the Budget, specific investments are divided among the city's districts according to three criteria:⁷⁸

A. Lack of the specific public service

Up to 25 percent of district's population: 1

26 to 50 percent: 2

51 to 75 percent: 3

76 to 100 percent: 4

- B. Total population of the district in thousands
 Up to 49,999: 1
 50,000 to 99,999: 2
 100,000 to 199,999: 3
 More than 200,000: 4
- C. How the district prioritized the specific service
 Fourth or lower: 1
 Third: 2
 Second: 3
 First: 4
-

Appendix 3: Development of Participatory Structures

The Development of Participatory Institutions Porto Alegre, 1983-98

1983	Citywide organization of neighborhood associations founded
1986-89	Failed attempts at city hall participatory structures
1987	First Popular Councils developed throughout the city
1988	First Health Councils developed
1989	Worker's Party (<i>Partido dos Trabalhadores</i>) victory, Participatory Budget announced
1990	First rounds of Participatory Budget meetings, in five regions
1991	Direct voting for Tutelary Council introduced
1991	Number of regional meetings increased to sixteen
1992	Number of participants in Participatory Budget takes off
1992-95	Participatory structures widened to include municipal councils on housing, social assistance, child and family services, and technology
1993	Citywide congress to debate directives
1993	Municipal Health Council
1994	Direct voting for Municipal School directors introduced
1994	Theme-oriented meetings introduced
1997	Citywide Forum of Child and Adolescent Services
1996	Municipal Councils on human rights, environment
1997	Citywide Forum of Cooperatives
1998	Second citywide congress, Health Congress
1996	Human Rights Council instituted
1997	Participatory planning of schools
1998	Human Rights Conference

NOTES

1. A number of works exist that examine participatory governance in Latin America. For similar experiments in Brazil, see Leonardo Avritzer (2000), *Public Deliberation at the Local Level: Participatory Budgeting in Brazil*, Real Utopias Conference. Madison, Wisconsin, January 2000. William Nylen, "Popular Participation in Brazil's Worker's Party: Democratizing Democracy in Municipal Politics," *The Political Chronicle* 8, no. 2 (1998): 1-9; Ivo Lesbaupin, *Prefeituras do Povo e para o Povo* (São Paulo, Brazil: Edições Loyola, 1996); Silvio Caccia Bava, "Dilemas da Gestao Municipal Democratica," in Licia Valladares and Magda Prates Coelho, eds., *Governabilidade e Pobreza no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Civilizacao Brasileira, 1995); Lucio Kowarick and Andre Singer, "The Workers' Party in São Paulo," in Lucio Kowarick, ed., *Social Struggles and the City* (New

York: Monthly Review Press, 1994); Sonia Alvarez, "Deepening Democracy: Popular Movement Networks, Constitutional Reform, and Radical Urban Regimes in Contemporary Brazil," in Robert Fisher and Joseph Kling, eds., *Mobilizing the Community* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993); José Arlindo Soares and Salvador Soler Lostão, *Poder Local e Participação Popular* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Rio Fundo Editora, 1992). For other examples from Latin America, see Gerd Schonwalder, "Local Politics and the Peruvian Left," *Latin American Perspectives* 33, no. 2 (1998); Ladislav Dowbor, "Decentralization and Governance," *Latin American Perspectives* 98, no. 2 (1998): 28-44; Jordi Borja and Manuel Castells, *Local & Global: Management of Cities in the Information Age* (London: Earthscan Publishers, 1997); George E. Peterson, *Decentralization in Latin America* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 1997); Patricia McCarney, "New Considerations on the Notion of Governance," in Patricia McCarney, ed., *Cities and Governance: New Directions in Latin America, Asia, and Africa* (Toronto: Centre for Urban & Community Studies, University of Toronto, 1996); Andrew Nickson, *Local Governments in Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995); Charles Reilly, *New Paths to Democratic Development in Latin America: The Rise of NGO-Municipal Collaboration* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995); Alvaro Portillo, "Montevideo: La Primera Experiencia del Frente Amplio," in Alicia Ziccardi, ed., *Ciudades y Gobiernos Locales en la America Latina de los Noventa* (Mexico City: Grupo Editorial M.A. Porrúa, 1991); Marta Harnecker, *Frente Amplio: Los Desafíos de un Izquierda Legal. Segunda Parte: Los Hitos Mas Importantes de su Historia* (Montevideo, Uruguay: Ediciones La Republica, 1991).

2. "Participation in government" has witnessed an explosion of interest from various quarters and perspectives, particularly in the context of the decentralization of government. For some representative positions see Benjamin Barber, "Three Challenges to Reinventing Democracy," in Paul Hirst and Sunil Khilnani, eds., *Reinventing Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1998); John Keane, "The Philadelphia Model," in Takasi Inoguchi, Edward Newman, and John Keane, eds., *The Changing Nature of Democracy* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1998); Peter Evans, "Government Action, Social Capital, and Development: Reviewing the Evidence on Synergy," *World Development* 24, no. 6 (1996); Jeffrey Berry, Kent E. Portney, and Ken Thompson, *Rebirth of Urban Democracy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1993).

3. For the city of Porto Alegre, see Rebecca Abers, *Inventing Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, forthcoming); Luciano Fedozzi, *Orcamento Participativo: Reflexoes sobre a Experiencia de Porto Alegre* (Porto Alegre: Tomo Editorial, 1997); José Utzig, "Notas sobre o Governo do PT em Porto Alegre," *Novos Estudos Cebrap* 45 (1996): 209-22; Sergio Baierle, "A Explosao da Experiencia; A Emergencia de um novo Principio Etico-Politico em Porto Alegre" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, UNICAMP, 1991).

4. Wright and Fung's proposal, stands alongside Cohen and Rogers's proposal of associational democracy as the most institutional accounts of deliberative democracy. Other theorists, as Jon Elster, Amy Gutman, and Jane Mansbridge certainly pay attention to institutional conditions and arrangements, but do not engage in the thorough analysis of institutional design characteristic of the Empowered Deliberative Democracy (EDD) proposal. See Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, *Associations and Democracy* (London: Verso, 1992); Jon Elster, "Introduction," in Jon Elster, ed., *Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Amy Gutman and Dennis Thomson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Jane Mansbridge, "Democracy and Common Interests," *Social Alternatives* 8, no. 4 (1990): 20-25.

5. Joshua Cohen, "Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference; Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Guttman and Thomson, *Democracy*. Mansbridge, "Democracy."

6. Wright describes this in Erik O. Wright, "Real Utopias: Introduction," in Erik O. Wright, ed., *Real Utopias I* (London: Verso, 1995).

7. The phrase "o modo petista de governar" has since become part of the lexicon of political discussions about governance. See Jorge Bittar, *O Modo Petista de Governar* (São Paulo, Brazil: Teoria & Debate, 1992).

8. See Tanya Barcellos, *Segregacao Urbana e Mortalidade Infantil em Porto Alegre* (Porto Alegre: F.E.E., 1986); *Prefeitura Municipal de Porto Alegre* (São Paulo, SP: Teoria & Debate, 1999); *Regioes do Orcamento Participativo de Porto Alegre—Alguns Indicadores Sociais* (Porto Alegre: Fundacao de Educacao Social e Comunitaria, 1999).

9. The number of delegates for a district is determined as follows: for the first 100 persons, one delegate for every 10 persons for the next 150 persons, one for 20 for the next 150, one for 30 for each additional forty persons after that, one delegate. To cite an example, a district that had 520 persons in attendance would have 26 delegates. An association with 47 members in attendance would have two delegates (9 percent of the delegates). See Avritzer, "Public Deliberation."

10. Resources are allocated to each district based on a system of weights that considers the district's population, its need for the service, and its chosen priorities. I describe this system of weights in Appendix 2.

11. Adapted from CIDADE, "Ciclo do Orcamento Participativo," in *De Olho no Orcamento* (Porto Alegre: CIDADE, 1995).

12. This distinguishes EDD proposals from "New Left" models.

13. In practice, these fora also function as a space for community demands and problems in general to be aired, for information to be divulged about the functioning of government, and as a regular meeting place for activists of a district. My own research showed that meetings were often "taken over" by activists who make use of this regular forum to discuss issues beyond budgeting matters.

14. As has been noted, councilors fulfill functions that in other cities would be associated with the official municipal legislative, although councilors are subject to immediate recall and have term limits of two years.

15. Tarso Genro and Ubiratan de Souza, *Orcamento Participativo: A Experiencia de Porto Alegre* (Porto Alegre: Fundacao Perseu Abramo, 1997) discusses the increase in the property tax in the first tenure of the Worker's Party *Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT administration. This is also discussed by Utzig, who describes the reforms undertaken by the administration to modernize fiscal procedures; José Utzig, "Notas," 215-20.

16. This is a measure of the overall efficiency of the administrative apparatus. Although national-level changes, as making municipal governments responsible for the provision of health services, complicates this comparison, all evidence points to increased efficiency.

17. Prefeitura Municipal de Porto Alegre, *Anuario Estatistico* (Porto Alegre: GAPLAN, 1997).

18. Regina Pozzobon, *Porto Alegre: Os Desafios da Gestao Democratica* (São Paulo: Instituto Polis, 1998).

19. This figure, based on published numbers of municipal government, is the best available estimate of the actual number of participants from a figure of attendees at first- and second-round meetings. On one hand, persons at these first-round meetings are not the actual participants throughout the year. But, on the other hand, much higher estimates of participation exist based on extrapolations of informal meetings that go on throughout the year, but there is no way to precisely assess its magnitude.

20. A “minimum wage” is a convenient unit to measure income in Brazil with currency fluctuations. As of November 1999, it is set at U.S.\$62 per month, and “poverty” is often informally set at a household income of two minimum wages.

21. Pozzbon, *Os Desafios*, 3-9.

22. Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991).

23. *Ibid.*, 146.

24. *Ibid.*, 147.

25. Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 103.

26. Survey results are published in CIDADE, “Orçamento Participativo—Quem e a populacao que participa e que pensa do processo” (Porto Alegre: Centro de Assessoria e Estudos Urbanos, 1999). See the statistical appendix of this essay for details.

27. 1998 survey data. Women are 53 percent of the city’s residents, and persons with low education are 55 percent of the city’s residents.

28. The count of persons with education up to the eighth-grade.

29. Persons with a household income of up to two minimum wages per month, which comes to approximately \$124 (November 1999).

30. It was not possible to include the question of race on the 1998 survey. Nonetheless, using other estimators for the race of participants strongly suggests that “race” by itself does not prevent participation or the achievement of elected positions, although the question certainly merits further inquiry. The general participant data comes from an existing earlier survey (1996), but does not permit any tests as result of the numerically small sample. The data on councilors and delegates comes from my own count of councilors and a sample of delegates. Here I considered specifically the category “black” (*Negro*), which as per the conventions of the Brazilian census, is based on self-identification. “Blacks” make up approximately 5 percent of the city’s population, and persons of mixed descent (*pardos*—“browns”) make up approximately 10 percent. For a discussion of race in this part of Brazil, see Ilka Boaventura Leite, *Negros no Sul do Brasil* (Ilha de Santa Catarina, SC: Letras Contemporaneas, 1996).

31. These apparently surprising results are consonant with the available literature on race relations and urban poverty in Brazil. This process draws persons from the city’s urban periphery, which is where non-whites tend to live, but which is also relatively integrated. Observers of the community-based “neighborhood movement” have pointed to the fact that its leadership is also relatively integrated. Ney dos Santos Oliveira, “Favelas and Ghettos; Race and Class in Rio de Janeiro and New York City,” *Latin American Perspectives* 23, no. 4 (1996): 71-89; Peggy Lovell, “Race, Gender, and Development in Brazil,” *Latin American Research Review* 29, no. 3 (1994); Edward Telles, “Residential Segregation and Skin Color in Brazil,” *American Journal of Sociology* 57, (1992).

32. This was based on a year and a half of attendance of meetings between 1997 and 1999 in three of the city’s districts. What did emerge was that there was an informal gendered division of labor among activists around types of issues for which women and men were suited. This does not mean, however, that women were prevented from effective participation.

33. *Colarinho-branco*, literally, the “white-collars.”

34. The logistic coefficient predicting participation (model not reported here) based solely on gender gives the odds at 28.33 percent lower, with a standard error of .09 and chi-square of 13.75, statistically significant at $p < .001$.

35. Once we consider years of experience gender ceases to be a significant predictor.

36. It should be noted, for example, that analyses, not shown here, that considered education as number of years, or income in terms of tiers, found that the highest levels of education and income negatively affected chances of election.

37. See the logistic models reported in Appendix 1.

38. Being elected to a directorate of a neighborhood association, for instance, is associated with education. Another result that suggests that this interpretation is correct is that conditional logistic regressions (not reported here) that estimate chances of election to councilor from the pool of delegates do not show any factor other than experience to be significant. Static data cannot be any more conclusive, however, since we cannot control for factors that may cause persons to be long-term participants.

39. Adriana, interview. Note that participants' names here are pseudonyms.

40. Marina, interview.

41. The system of weights has changed over the years. Originally "popular mobilization" used to be a criterion that was changed in favor a system that considers "needs" in the system of weights. These criteria are always in debate and revision by councilors. The current system, which considers need, followed by the district's priorities and population, clearly advantages a few of the city's districts in distribution of resources every year. The poorest district, *Nordeste*, for example, always takes resources regardless of the results of deliberation. For a discussion of the emergence and transformation of these principles, see Genro and Souza, *Orçamento*, chap. 1.

42. Although no standards exist against which to judge these outcomes, through the Participatory Budget citizens have been able to decide upon more projects and on the allocation of more resources each year, deciding upon more than several hundred projects over the past few years.

43. The income level of 2 minimum wages against which I have tested for parity is less than a third of the city's median household income of 6.4 minimum wages, and the education level of eighth grade is well below the city's average. See Pozzbon, *Os Desafios*, 3-9.

44. Gilberto, interview, 1997

45. See, for instance, the discussion in Sergio Baierle, *A Explosao da Experiencia*.

46. Euníce de Andrade Araújo, cited in Genro and Souza, *Orçamento*, 30.

47. If we compared the profile of city councilpersons with the councilors of the Budget meetings, we find that there are much greater proportions of women, poorer persons, the less educated, and blacks involved in Budget meetings. For instance, the average percentage of women in city council since democratization has been less than 10 percent, and the percentage of poor persons or persons without formal education has been close to zero.

48. Fung and Wright, "Introduction," 43.

49. Cohen, "Procedure," 112-13.

50. One of the main reasons it is difficult to establish how many active associations existed at any one point in time is that there are many more groups "in law" than in practice. Because of Brazilian law, and certain traditions of community politics, there exist many phantom registered organizations for individuals to receive charity. In the 1980s, for example, there were "milk ticket" programs that gave registered community groups weekly coupons for milk, and this caused for many "neighborhood associations" to be "founded" by registering with the courts. For this reason, listings of officially registered organizations, which I do not use here, do not help assess activity in civil society.

51. There are at least twice as many associations officially registered with city hall. I counted associations that either paid dues to the union of neighborhood associations or appeared listed with participants in the Participatory Budget meetings.

52. Conselho Popular do Partenon, *Regimento Interno* (Porto Alegre: 1992), 1.

53. Fernando, interview, 1998.

54. Marilia, interview, 1997.
55. Maria, interview, 1999.
56. Antonio, interview, 1997.
57. In São Paulo, the deliberative vision of Mayor Erundina won. Popular power was "instituted" as a fourth branch of government, after the legislative, executive, and judiciary. See Kowarick and Singer, "The Workers' Party."
58. Nelsa, interview, 1988.
59. Antonio, interview, 1997.
60. Survey data, 1998. These results are also reported in CIDADE, *Orçamento*.
61. Gildo Lima, interview, 1999.
62. Cohen and Rogers, *Associations*.
63. A survey question, "Do you think the population really decides on the results of the Participatory Budget?" showed significant association with "Has your district or thematic area received benefits?" Positive answers to the perceived popular control and positive answers to having received benefits were very clearly linked. Cross tabs of "Population really decides" and "received benefits" (Spearman correlation = .247; chi-square = 47.161 [$p < .001$]; degrees of freedom = 1). An analysis of district-level participation for the first few years over time also shows that it was responsive to investment.
64. Henry Dietz, *Urban Poverty, Political Participation and the State* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998).
65. Marcelo Kunrath, in personal conversation, May 1999. On the other hand, there are PT administrations that have reported success in developing participatory schemas based on the Porto Alegre model in small towns with similar revenues as those of Viamão; this suggests that a combination of factors may offset the revenue constraint. See Nylen, "Participation."
66. Gildo Lima, interview. See also Abers, *Inventing Democracy*.
67. Genro and Souza, *Orçamento*, 26. See also the discussion in Guilherme Cassel and Joao Verle, "A política tributária e de saneamento financeiro da Administração Popular," in Carlos Henrique Horn, ed., *Porto Alegre: O Desafio da Mudança* (Porto Alegre: Ortiz, 1994), 45.
68. Luciano Brunnet, in personal conversation.
69. Baierle, *A Explosão*.
70. Some of these difficulties, which led to in some cases splits in the Party, are discussed in Margaret Keck, *The Worker's Party and Democratization in Brazil* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).
71. Kowarick and Singer, "The Workers' Party," 240-47.
72. Ibid., 249.
73. Jorge Bittar, *O Modo*, 8.
74. Arno Agostin Filho, "A Experiência do Orçamento Participativo na Administração Popular da Prefeitura Municipal de Porto Alegre," in Carlos Henrique Horn, ed., *Porto Alegre: O Desafio da Mudança* (Porto Alegre: Editora Ortiz, 1994), 50.
75. Based upon interview accounts of the development of the Participatory Budget in various districts of the city.
76. Nino, interview, 1999.
77. Cohen, "Procedure."
78. Genro and Souza, *Orçamento*, 95.