

Núcleo de Pesquisa em Políticas Públicas da Universidade de São Paulo

Civil Society and Participation: A Literature Review

J. Ricardo Tranjan (March, 2012)

This literature review is divided into six sections. The first section briefly describes the theoretical and empirical background of debates about civil society and participation: the democratization process of the 1980s. The second section examines the first and second generation of studies of the best-known participatory mechanism in Brazil – participatory budgeting (PB). Next, this review turns attention toward research on policy councils, which fueled more theoretical advances than studies of PB. A short section presents the few available studies about participation in the Northeast region of Brazil – a still largely uncharted territory in the literature. The fifth section discusses normative debates about the meaning and purpose of participation. Although the debate is not as contentious as it was in the early-2000s, two distinct views about participation still mark this literature. The last and longest section analyzes studies that treat citizen participation as a constitutive part of the representative system, which can help to improve government accountability and increase the quality of democracy.

The Background: Democratization and Participation

In contemporary social sciences, two 1970s books marked the reemergence of theoretical debates about citizen participation. Pateman (1970) discredited Schumpeter's (1987/1943) straw man argument against participatory democracy: advocates of citizen participation do not uphold unrealistic ideals based on romanticized interpretations of Greek history. She discussed how, for example, increased participation at the workplace was a significant step in the reinvigoration of democracy. Macpherson (1977) argued that democracy should not be limited to elections, and that bottom-up participatory structures should be erected in parallel to the representative system. Although provocative for the time, these were moderate proposals that advocated the creation of complementary channels for citizen participation. This moderate tone did not resonate in Latin America, where the increasingly bold discontent with authoritarian government called for more radical forms of participation. In Brazil, the late-1970s and early 1980s witnessed the emergence of a combative union movement, several urban social movements, the Workers' Party (Partido

dos Trabalhadores, PT) and the Landless Workers Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra, MST). The first attempts to include popular participation in municipal government also date back to this period; Lages (Alves, 1980), Boa Esperança (Souza, 1982), and Piracicaba (DeLPicchia, 1982) were the best known of many experiments. How the new democratic system was to include these social movements and participatory ideals was the subject of intense debate in Brazilian social science (e.g., Singer & Brant, 1980; Boschi, 1982; Moisés et al., 1982; Sorj & Almedia, 1983; Doimo, 1984).

From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the “third wave of democratization” and the end of real socialism led left-leaning militants and scholars to seek new political paradigms. In Brazil, the opening of the political system, the constituent assembly, and the impeachment of the first democratically elected president continued to fuel debates about the desired features of the new democratic system, the role of civil society groups, the potential of the Workers’ Party, and the country’s political culture (e.g., Krischke & Mainwaring, 1986; Sader, 1988; Gadotti & Pereira, 1989; Keck, 1992; Weffort, 1992; Ortiz, 1994; Avritzer, 1995; Moisés, 1995; Dagnino, 1996). In this same decade, numerous participatory mechanisms in public administration were created in response to the demand of social movements, on the initiative of the PT, as an outcome of the 1988 Constitution, or as a combination of the three factors. The large majority of these initiatives were short-lived or only partially successful. The first participatory municipal administrations of the PT, for example, faced various challenges in trying to reconcile a social movements’ pressure to participate in government and the day-to-day challenges of public administration (Pinto, 1992; Simões, 1992; Kowarick & Singer, 1993; Couto, 1995). Two participatory mechanisms created in this period became established institutional practices that gained the attention of Brazilian and international scholars, namely, the local health council and participatory budgeting.

The 1988 Constitution established municipal health councils as bodies responsible for overseeing the management of public health services; councils brought together civil society groups, health care providers and administrators. Popular participation in the health system was already practiced in certain parts of the country (Jacobi, 1993), but once made a legal requirement, local health councils rapidly became the most common participatory mechanism in the country. In 2001, 97.6 percent of the country’s 5,560 municipalities had a health council (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2003, p. 59). The participatory budgeting (PB)

created in Porto Alegre in the early-1990s was also replicated in the numerous municipal governments in Brazil and the rest of the world. The PB model began to attract international attention in 1996, after being recognized as a best practice in urban management at the Second United Nations Human Settlement Conference in Istanbul. Thereafter, the model spread rapidly. Estimates suggested that in 2004 there were 170 PB initiatives in Brazil (Avritzer, 2009, p. 85); by 2006, 1,200 out of 16,000 Latin American municipalities had tried some form of PB (Cabannes, 2006, p. 128); by 2007, the initiative had spread to 40 countries (Wampler, 2007, p. 6); by 2008, close to 100 European cities had implemented similar programs (Sintomer, Herzberg, & Röcke, 2008, p. 164). In 2011, PB began to be implemented in the American cities of Chicago and New York (Lerner, 2011; DiChristopher, 2012).

In Brazil, the PB model spread from the South to the North, from more developed to less developed cities, and from PT administrations to the administrations of other parties. Between 1989 and 1992, of the 13 PB initiatives in the country, 12 were in PT administrations, and 1 in a centrist administration. Between 2000 and 2004, of the 170 PB initiatives in the country, 47% were managed by the PT, 57% by left-leaning parties (including the PT), 35% by centrist parties, and 8% by conservative parties. Between 1989 and 1992, in cities with more than 100 thousand inhabitants, the mean Human Development Index of cities with PB was .788, whereas in cities without PB, the mean was .719. By 2004, this .69 difference had dropped to .12. Whereas PB was predominantly located in Southern and Southeastern cities, in the 2000-2004 mandate 31% of PB initiatives were in states outside these two regions (Wampler & Avritzer, 2005).

This vast number of participatory programs was examined in numerous scholarly articles, chapters, and books, and countless dissertations and theses. This literature was divided between studies of PB and research on health councils and other public management councils. The two bodies of literature developed in distinct manners. The first generation of PB studies was biased towards successful cases and only recently took a critical turn, whereas studies of health councils have been wearier of the challenges of implementing effective participatory channels. PB has gained more international prominence, and the research agenda has been strongly influenced by international scholars. In the case of management councils, the international influence is less visible, and occurs mostly through the collaboration between Brazilian-based scholars and international research centers. Finally, early PB literature focused largely on questions of collective action and civil society organization, whereas the second wave of literature paid

slightly more attention to questions of representativeness and the effects of participation. In the recent years scholars began to examine participation as a tool to increase government accountability and transparency, and increase the quality of democracy. This move has faced some resistance and it is still early to gauge the reach of this new research agenda. The next section reviews the first and second generations of PB studies. The subsequent section examines studies of management councils and critical studies of participation. The final section looks at the new accountability and transparency approach.

The First and Second Generation of Studies of Participatory Budgeting

Nylen (2011) has identified two generations of studies of participatory budgeting (PB). The first generation (from 1990s to mid-2000s) focused on successful cases in Brazil, mainly Porto Alegre, and celebrated the Participatory Promise that “resurrects the hope that human agency – democratic human agency – can and does matter even in the face of daunting historical, structural, and institutional rigidities” (p.481). First generation studies found that “PB tends to uphold the Participatory Promise that participatory innovations and reforms can be efficacious” (p.481). The second generation of studies of PB has a broader empirical focus that includes less successful cases of PB, and other participatory innovation, in Brazil as well as other countries. Whereas the first generation relied heavily on single case studies, recent works use comparative methods to examine the variables that contribute to the emergence and success of participatory initiatives. The second generation is also more wary of the enormous challenges and limitations of participatory initiatives. “Most agree, for example, that PB and other participatory innovations are not instances of participatory, direct, radical, or delegative democracy, but constitute instead ‘a new lawyer of representation’” (p.482). There is a consensus that PB needs to be examined as a practice embedded in the democratic representative system and not as an alternative model of democracy. In recent studies, Porto Alegre is treated as the exception not the rule (Nylen, 2011).

Arguments in favor of PB fall in one of the following three categories. First, PB is a tool to “democratize democracy” (Fedozzi, 1999; Nylen, 2003; Santos & Avritzer, 2002). In this view, the participatory mechanism helps to break with traditional undemocratic forms of political mediation and serves as a remedy for political apathy. A second perspective highlights the citizenship learning that takes places in PB processes. Abers (2000, p. 180) has argued that the Porto Alegre PB contributed the development of “enlarged thinking – a sense of common

interests and a respect for others' voice." In a similar argument, Baiocchi (2005, pp. 94-95) used the term "emerging public spheres" that he defined as "open-ended debate about issues of collective concern and community solving." The third set of arguments focus on PB's ability to distribute public expenditure more justly (Fedozzi, 2007; Marquetti, 2008; World Bank, 2008a).

The widely recognized limitations of PB include its inability to mobilize the poorest segments of society and the low proportion of the budget controlled by these initiatives. In Porto Alegre, the average income of the PB participants at the ward level is below the city's average, but above that of the city's poorest; participants at the Council level have higher income and education than ward-level participants. Women were underrepresented at the higher levels of participation in the first years of the program, but eventually caught up with male councilors (Fedozzi, 2007). In the PB model, only a relatively small portion of the budget designated for new investments is open for discussion. In Porto Alegre, between 2000 and 2008 this percentage ranged from 5.2 to 8.8 % of the total municipal budget (CIDADE 2008b). This is certainly not a large part of the budget, but Wampler (2007, p. 106) estimates that in Porto Alegre between 1996 and 2003 close to US\$ 400 million were channeled through participatory budgeting. The amount spent varies according to a city's wealth and financial obligations. In 2001-2002, Porto Alegre's investment spending per capita was US\$29, while in small and wealthy Ipatinga it was US\$58, and in wealthy but indebted Belo Horizonte it was US\$14 (Wampler 2007, pp. 109, 150, 219).

A more disconcerting issue in the Porto Alegre PB regards the emergence of a group of militants who managed to gain control of the process. The first comprehensive study of the initiative already called attention to the fact that a group of overzealous participants felt responsible for directing the development of the PB, which became known as the "pioneer syndrome" (Fedozzi, 1999). A more recent study talked about "specialists militants" and the corruption of the democratic ideal that inspired the initiatives (Beras, 2008, p. 241). A close observer and enthusiastic proponent of the initiative admitted that "little by little, the '*cacique*' (boss/gatekeeper) culture of the presidents of neighborhood associations, which was supposed to have been buried, returned" (Baierle, 2010, p. 57).

The second generation PB studies moved the focus away from the analysis of successful initiatives towards comparative studies of initiatives in less ideal scenarios. This generation tends to focus on "grey cases" that can help to "shift the focus on institution innovation from poster-child examples to those cases that might appear less appealing, where the conditions for success

are less evident, and the outcome of the innovations are less immediately clear” (Peruzzotti & Selee, 2011, p. 7). The most obvious advantage of concentrating on this type of case is that they are more illustrative of commonly found challenges than rare ideal situations; these cases also offer interesting examples of how difficulties were overcome and innovations implemented in unlikely scenarios. This literature includes numerous case study of “grey cases” (Cornwall, Romano, & Shankland, 2008; J. P. Bispo Júnior & Sampaio, 2008; Mesquita, 2007; Pereira, 2007; Sell & Wöhlke, 2007); an insightful comparative study of Porto Alegre and Montevideo initiatives (Gugliano, 2007); a useful typology that classifies the various types of PB in Brazil (Marquetti, 2007); an interesting proposal for methodological innovation in the field (Silva, 2007); and works that discuss participation from the lenses of civil society theory (Medeiros, 2007; Tatagiba, 2006). A growing body of literature also examines the emergence of PB in North America (Lerner, 2011; Pinnington, Lerner, & Schugurensky, 2009; Rabouin, 2005) and Europe (Sear, 2011; Sintomer, Herzberg, & Röcke, 2008).

Finally, three recently proposed theoretical frameworks try to explain the emergence of successful participatory institutions. Whereas some studies in the first generation offered useful frameworks for understanding implementation challenges (Abers, 2000), these three theories focus on social and political enabling conditions for the emergence of successful participatory institutions. The main goal is to address the fact that, “we continue to lack a coherent theoretical explanation to account for where and when...participatory experiences are likely to be successful” (Wampler, 2008, p. 64).

In *Participatory Institutions in Democratic Brazil* (2009), Avritzer argues that two necessary conditions must exist for the successful emergence of participatory institutions. The first condition is a *dense associative network* of groups demanding access to public goods. Density is measured quantitatively based on the author’s longitudinal research of associativism in Brazil. The second condition is *political will* to open channels for public participation. Avritzer attributes this *political will* exclusively to the PT. According to the author, the PT has always supported participatory democracy, but the strength of this ideology varies depending on the internal composition of local chapters of the party; in some cases there is a consensus about the importance of opening channels for public participation, in other cases less consideration is given to the matter. Thus, in Avritzer’s framework, the second variable is a PT administration wherein pro-participation groups form a majority within the party. The author then describes

three types of institutional designs: bottom-up, power-sharing, and ratification. The first is the most radically democratic, but requires the ideal combination of necessary conditions to succeed. In less favorable scenarios, Avritzer argues, the other two designs are more sensible policy options.

Wampler's *Participatory Budgeting in Brazil* (2007) puts forward a similar but in some ways more useful framework. Instead of *political will*, Wampler adopts the notion of *mayoral support*, which he describes as a mayor's rational calculation of incentives for delegating authority to civil society. In this framework, the density of civil society is a relevant but secondary factor; the focus is on the "ability of [civil society organizations] to simultaneously engage in cooperative and contentious politics" (p.88). There is always a risk of co-optation in bringing civil society activists to work closely with public officials. The success of a participatory mechanism depends on the civil society groups' ability to take the opportunity to participate in government without losing their ability to confront politicians when needed. In terms of institutional design, Wampler examines whether the rules of PB guarantee participants' autonomy vis-à-vis the government. At the core of this framework is the balance between a mayor's willingness to delegate authority and civil societies' ability to take advantage of the opportunity without losing autonomy. Wampler's framework has a higher degree of generalizability than Avritzer's; the latter's exaggerated emphasis on the role of the PT and focus on the growth of civil society organizations in urban parts of Brazil makes his framework very specific to the Brazilian context.

A third effort to theorize the institutionalization of participation is found in *Orçamento Participativo* (2007), a collective volume organized by Borba and Lüchmann. This book contains eight case studies in the state of Santa Catarina structured as to allow comparisons across three variables: *government commitment*, *local associative tradition*, and *institutional design*. The first variable is measured in terms of the centrality accorded to the participatory program in the administrative structure. Both ideological and strategic concerns can influence this variable. The formation of party coalitions or the inability to try reelection, for example, tends to weaken the ideological consensus in favor of citizen participation. The second variable, *local associative tradition* considers the density of civil society as well as the dominant types of organizations within the participatory structure. For example, associations used to clientelist practices tend to reject rule-based PB, while associations with a confrontational attitude welcome this format of

participation.¹ In terms of institutional design, authors examine the political weight of popular councils, the frequency of assemblies, and the criteria used in the distribution of the available budget. The authors also resonates Wampler's concern about PB increasing the chances of co-optation of civil society representatives.

Regarding the future directions of this literature, there seems to be a growing consensus that little is known about the efficacy of PB. Few economic and sociological quantitative studies in the literature examine the traits of participants and the material outcome of PB (Fedozzi, 2007; Marquetti, Campos, & Pires, 2008; Vaz, 2011; World Bank, 2008a). Qualitative assessments find difficult to desegregate the impact of PB from the impact of leftist parties. Until the early-2000s, most PB were implemented by left-leaning administrations that tend to perform better in social areas than right-leaning governments, which makes it hard to draw conclusions about the isolated impact of the participatory mechanism. At least one prominent scholar in the field, Wampler, is now focusing his research agenda on this issue. Another visible tendency in this literature is the growing focus of Northern-based researchers on PB initiatives in their respective regions, and less interest in drawing lessons from Brazil and other Latin American countries. Although in Brazil the debate about PB is losing momentum, new experiments with the initiative in North American and Europe are likely to fuel another wave of studies on the subject.

Notably, in March of 2012, Carole Pateman published an article titled *Participatory Democracy Revisited*, in which the world-renowned democratic theorist uses the Porto Alegre PB as the “yardstick” of truly participatory innovations. “Most of the examples being called participatory budgeting fit very easily within authority structures, and citizens are not participating, as a matter of right, in decisions about their city's or town's regular budget. Most of the innovations fall far short of participatory democracy” (Pateman, 2012, p. 14). Pateman still holds the view that participatory democracy is a distinct model of government, and citizen direct participation ought to affect change on current state institutions. Her article is likely to boost normative arguments that distinguish between different types of participation (more below), but it goes counter current theory-building efforts that examines how participation complements representation and improves rather than changes current democratic institutions (more below).

¹ For more on this specific argument see studies of Porto Alegre (Baiocchi, 2005) and Montevideo (Canel, 2011).

Policy Councils and Theoretical Studies of Participation

The literature on participation in health councils and other social policy management councils was weary of the limitations of participatory mechanisms from the beginning. As early as 1987, Cohn challenged the assumption that decentralization alone would spur participation and lead to the strengthening of citizenship (Cohn, 1987; see also, Cohn, 1992). Throughout the 1990s, numerous studies on management councils were published, mostly empirical works that depicted mixed results of successes and failures. In this area of research, initiatives seem to have always fallen in the “grey case” category. A number of these studies are found in the journals *Cadernos Cedec*, *Boletim Participação e Saúde*, *Saúde e Sociedade*, *Sáude em Debate*, and *São Paulo em Perspectiva*, among others.

This vast amount of empirical research allowed for the formulation of the first theoretical postulates in the field. In 2004, a prolific scholar on the subject summarized theoretical advances as follows: “The literature has attributed the success or failure of participatory mechanisms either to the degree of civil society involvement or to the level of commitment to such mechanisms on the part of the political authorities” (Coelho, 2004, p. 33). In the same article, Coelho argued these to be necessary but not sufficient conditions for effective social policy councils: attention needed to be paid to institutional aspects. The rules and processes used for selecting representatives of civil society organizations was not clearly stated in the design of these councils, and neither were the specific procedures for discussion and decision-making. In São Paulo, for example, the selection process for health council representatives greatly varied from district to district; in some districts officials were committed to trying to include historically marginalized groups, whereas in others, those in charge of the process simply contacted the most active groups, who most often selected well-connected militants (Coelho & Veríssimo, 2004). Thus, during this period the literature started to turn focus to the who and how of participation.

Since the mid-2000s, critical assessments of the representativeness and adeptness of participation have been put forward by researchers associated with the Centro Brasileiro de Análises e Planejamento (CEBRAP) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). In 2004, an IDS paper argued that the assumption that individual citizens have ready access to channels of participation was largely unfounded; instead, participation is better understood as “a contingent outcome, produced as collective actors...negotiate relations in a pre-existing institutional terrain that constrains and facilitates particular types of action” (Acharya, Lavalley, & Houtzager, 2004,

p. 41). The latter approach, called the “polity perspective,” gives emphasis to understanding how institutional contexts encourage or hinder the participation of specific civil society groups.

In 2005, the same authors pushed the argument further by suggesting that the assumption that civil society organizations autonomous from political parties and state agencies better served the interests of the poor groups they represent was misplaced. Research in São Paulo showed the opposite: civil organizations with close ties to political and state actors (especially the PT) had better information about participatory processes and more ability to influence outcomes, and as a result were also more motivated to partake in such initiatives. Most of these organizations did not have a formal membership, which made their relationship with purported beneficiaries unclear, raising concerns about the legitimacy of representation in participatory councils (Lavalle, Acharya, & Houtzager, 2005). This group of scholars also challenged the widely accepted idea that participation in civil associations foster more democratic relations between citizens and government institutions. In a study with São Paulo’s and Mexico City’s actively engaged militants, “what we find is that individual citizens do not, as a result of their associational participation, develop relations with government that come closer to the ideal under the democratic rule of law than citizens who have no associational participation” (Houtzager, Acharya, & Lavalle, 2007, p. 12). In sum, this group of scholars has challenged the normative assumptions that endow citizen participation in government with an aura of legitimacy that not always stands empirical testing.

More recently, these authors delved further into the question of the democratic legitimacy of civil society organizations. “Organized civil society is laying claim to political representation in contemporary democracies, destabilizing long-standing ideas about democratic legitimacy” (Houtzager & Lavalle, 2010, p. 1). In a survey of 229 civil associations in São Paulo, Houtzager and Lavalle found that organizations do not have formal mechanisms for their constituencies to openly demonstrate their approval for the organizations’ work. What exists therefore is an “assumed representation” (*representação presumtiva*) from the part of the civil associations. Leaders of associations offered six fairly well defined and consistent justifications for their representative status, and only one of these relied on election by the membership. The most common justification is the “mediation argument” which is based on the idea that state institutions are inaccessible to certain sectors of the population; the organization accesses these institutions in the name of excluded groups. The claim of legitimacy is not grounded on the

relations between the organizations and its membership, but on the latter's access to the state. In most cases, the membership has no way of verifying how the organization makes use of this privileged access. This type of "assumed representation" differs from the formal and more traditional forms of democratic representation in political parties and unions. The standing question is whether civil society associations will succeed in dislocating the meaning of democratic representation (Houtzager & Lavallo, 2010).

Participation in the Northeast of Brazil: A Largely Uncharted Territory

The debates above rely almost entirely on empirical research in São Paulo. CEBRAP and IDS scholars recognize this limitation. Overall, scholarship on Brazilian social movements, civil society, and participatory channels has paid considerable more attention to phenomena in the South and Southeast regions. In recent years there have been three collective efforts to address this gap in the literature. Moreover, the literature on participatory water governance has as its empirical focus initiatives in the northeast of Brazil. Thus far, it is unclear how participation in this part of the country fits theories developed largely unaware of it.

The book *A Participação Social no Nordeste* (Avritzer, 2007) presents many interesting findings about citizen participation in the northeastern states of Bahia, Ceará, and Pernambuco. The first section of the book discusses the diversity in the socio-economic and political history of these three states, showing that the Northeast is not a homogenous region. The second section presents findings from research on health and education councils and participatory budgetings in 22 cities in these states; more and less successes stories are found and challenges to increase participation and improve the quality of deliberation vary according to local contexts. The main argument of the book is more directly discussed in the chapters of the third section: it is inaccurate to think of a "participatory region" (South/Southeast) and a "non-participatory region" (Northeast). The challenges found in these three states are found in other parts in the country, in Curitiba, for example, as chapter by Mario Funks shows. For those interested in gender and political exclusion, a chapter by Cecília McDowell Santos proposes a theoretical and methodological approach for including gender analysis in the studies of participatory channels.

A second effort to broaden the empirical basis of studies of participation is found in a IDS discussion paper titled "Brazilian Experiences of Participation and Citizenship: A Critical Look" (Cornwall, et al., 2008). The paper examines four cases of participation in Médio Mearim

(Maranhão), the Rio Negro Region (Amazonia), Recife and Cabo de Santo Agostinho (Pernambuco). The authors insert the movements for participation within the political-culture context of each region as a way of responding to the fact that “today’s governance policies are void of the dynamism of politics and the complexities of culture” (p.50). By highlighting political-cultural aspects in these four cases in the North and Northeast of Brazil, the article succeeds in calling attention to background conditions of cases in the South and Southeast that often are overlooked. This piece is part of Cornwall’s attempt to bring back politics into debates about participation (more below).

Cases studies of participatory programs in the North and Northeast regions are also found in a volume organized by Dagnino and Pinto (2007). Although not solely focused on the subject of participation, the volume has three chapters on participatory initiatives in Palmas (Tocantins), Campina Grande (Paraíba), and Teresina (Piauí). The chapter on Campina Grande is particularly interesting; aside from discussing local challenges in a rarely examined state, it also presents a case study of a PB implemented by a right-wing party (PMDB) (Pereira, 2007). It is known that PB expanded beyond PT administrations, but there are still relatively few case studies of PB in non-PT administrations. Pereira’s findings corroborate the thesis that political commitment with participation is a necessary condition for the success of participatory mechanisms.

Finally, a growing literature on water governance has fueled research in this part of the country. The absence of established international systems governing water has made the subject particularly relevant to the field of international/global governance. Participatory water basin councils in the Northeast of Brazil attracted the attention of local researchers as well as international scholars (Abers & Keck, 2006, 2009a, 2009b; Lemos & Oliveira, 2004, 2005). This is not the place to review specific findings on this topic. However, it is interesting to note that the dominant perspective seems to be one that examines the interaction of formal state institutions and participatory spaces, and not one that sees them as distinct spheres. Abers and Keck (2009a), for example, showed the crucial role state governments played in creating deliberative spaces; in the studied cases, these efforts were not an attempt to offload state responsibility but to improve governance, the authors argued.

In sum, there is no conclusion of whether participation in the North and Northeast of Brazil constitutes a distinct political phenomenon that deserves separate attention, or if variances in local context in these regions have the same impact than variances elsewhere. The generalized

consensus seems to be that participation in these regions face the same problems than in cities in the south, but sometimes barriers are intensified by unfavorable socio-economic and cultural histories. This remains largely an untested assumption. The increasing interest in the region may help to further the still limited knowledge on hitherto largely overlooked subject.

Normative Debates: Emancipatory Participation and Neo-liberalism

Thus far this review has focused mainly on empirical studies that deal with the challenges of implementation and effective institutionalization of participatory mechanisms. Since the late-1990s, there has also been a normative debate about the *purpose* of participation. As seen in the background section, from the late-1970s to the mid-1990s participation was part of a broad and active movement for democratization with links to grassroots movements (though the strength of these links is often overstated). In the 1990s, the World Bank and other international agencies also turned to participation as a way to legitimize and increase the efficacy of policies that had become incredibly unpopular.² As a result, civil society participation became espoused by groups with incongruent political projects (Dagnino, 2007) that drew on different theoretical traditions (Howell & Pearce, 2001).

On the one hand, some scholars focus on the emancipatory aspect of citizen participation, which is assumed to have the potential to radically transform state/society relations. In the 2000s, volumes organized by Dagnino and colleagues were the main proponents of this view in Latin America (Dagnino, 2002; Dagnino, Olvera, & Panfichi, 2006; Dagnino & Tatagiba, 2007).³ Santos (2002) also edited a widely read compilation titled *Democratizar a Democracia*, which brings together case studies from different parts of the Global South. The clear goal of the volume is to present participatory democracy as an alternative to (un)representative democracy and what the editor calls neoliberal democracy. In North America, volumes organized by Roussopoulos and Benello (2003) and Fung and Wright (2003) offered case studies and critical

² This is the explanation most commonly found in the literature. For more sophisticated discussions that examine the evolution of economic concepts in mainstream development thinking in the 1990s, see Fine, B. (1999). The Developmental State is Dead-Long Live Social Capital? *Development and Change*, 30, 1-19; and Stiglitz, J. (2004). The Post Washington Consensus Consensus. *The Initiative for Policy Dialogue*, Columbia University. Available at: http://policydialogue.org/files/events/Stiglitz_Post_Washington_Consensus_Paper.pdf

³ For short overviews of this perspective, see Dagnino, E. (2003). Citizenship in Latin America: An Introduction. *Latin American Perspectives*, 30 (2), 3-17; Dagnino, E. (2007). Citizenship: A Perverse Confluence. *Development in Practice*, 17(4 & 5), 549-556.

analyses that furthered this perspective. The latter proposed the framework of “Empowered Participatory Governance” that set clear conditions and institutional designs for participatory mechanisms aimed at truly altering power relations.⁴

On the other hand, mainstream development agencies embraced what is often referred to as the neo-Tocquevillean perspective. In the 1990s, Putnam (1993, 1995) revived the term social capital,⁵ which became “the missing link” of development (Fine, 1999). In response to empirical evidence supporting market imperfections, some mainstream economists recognized that social capital was an essential aspect of the functioning of markets, and that “low stocks” of it helped to explain the inability of markets to spur development in determined contexts. In the 1990s, the World Bank also adopted a “good governance” language that allowed it to become involved in political aspects of governing previously avoided by the bank. In the Bank’s new emphasis on government efficiency and accountability, civil society plays a double role of helping to control government excesses and taking on some responsibilities previously ascribed to states (Leftwich, 1993). In 2000, a World Bank fittingly titled “Mainstreaming Participation” clearly stated the agency’s position on the subject.

We define [participation] as a process through which primary stakeholders influence and share control of their development initiatives, decisions, and resources. Mainstreaming participation means adopting the ‘institutional reforms and innovations necessary to enable full and systematic incorporation of participatory methodologies into the work of the institution so that meaningful primary stakeholder participation becomes a regular part of a project and policy development, implementation and evaluation’ (World Bank, 2000, p. 1).

Many of the works mentioned in the previous paragraph were a direct response to this approach, seen by critical scholars as an attempt to distort the real meaning of active citizenship in order to make it fit the neoliberal agenda. The economic and instrumental terms used by development agencies helped to widen the gap between this perspective and studies carried out by sociologists and cultural studies scholars.

⁴ This framework is laid out in the first chapter of the book; it is also found in, Fung, A., & Wright, E. O. (2001). Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance. *Politics & Society*, 29(1), 5-41. Available at <http://www.archonfung.com/papers/FungDeepDemocPS.pdf>

⁵ Although the book *Making Democracy Work* (1993) is Putnam’s best known and most cited piece, the first time he thoroughly discusses the term “social capital” is in “Bowling Alone”, a short article published in 1995. Available at <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/assoc/bowling.html>

As of 2012, the wearing of the neoliberal project and certain conceptual developments (discussed below) weakened this normative debate. The literature still offers two distinct views of the purpose of participation, however. On the critical side, Pearce's (2010) most recent edited volume brought together studies that continue to plea to the emancipatory power of participation. In the introductory chapter, Pearce distinguishes between "participatory governance" and "participatory democracy." The former, "encourages the formation of a category of 'participant citizen.' However, rather than autonomous and self-driven, it is subject to a new neoliberal governance regime" (p.14-15). According to Pearce, participatory governance only decentralizes to local communities activities that were previously a state responsibility, while decision-making power is recentralized. Participatory democracy, on the other hand, "is based on principles of popular sovereignty and direct involvement of all citizens, including and especially the poorest, in decision making" (p.15). The case studies in the book present stories of Latin American and British communities neglected by or unsatisfied with the first model and that pursue emancipation through meaningful participation.

Two case studies focus on the Brazilian experience, but the empirical focus is again on the city of Porto Alegre. In a chapter titled "Porto Alegre: Popular Sovereignty or Dependent Citizenship?" a known supporter of the PB model discusses recent development in the city; the title alludes to the participatory budgeting and the local solidary governance (Baierle, 2010). The latter was implemented in 2005 by a PPS/PMDB coalition and has as its main aim the promotion of public-private partnerships with community participation. According to the author, the solidary governance initiative promotes contractual relationships and a market-based logic detrimental to the functioning of PB and to a truly radical democratization process. The author also acknowledged other factors that contribute the current crisis of the Porto Alegre PB. A recent study argues the two initiatives are not as incongruent as Baierle suggests (Tranjan, 2011). The second chapter on Porto Alegre used a methodology that offers a fresh insight on an over-examined case. Navarro (2010) traces the trajectory of the rubbish recycler unit, showing how internal and external, political, and cultural factors contributed to mobilization and later de-mobilization of community members. Research on participatory initiatives tends to focus on the core space for participation; with few exceptions (Feltran, 2006; Krischke, 2008), less attention has been paid to the history of the individuals and movements that participate in these spaces. Research on this front could contribute to our limited understanding of de-mobilization cycles.

In works published in the last two years, Dagnino continues to warn readers about what she sees as muffled forms of citizen participation. “Under neo-liberalism, participation is defined instrumentally, in relation to the needs derived from the ‘structural adjustment’ of the economy and the transfer of the state’s social responsibilities to civil society and the private sector.” Regarding the Brazilian case, the author is skeptical of the reforms advanced in the Cardoso administration. “The reform of the state that was implemented in Brazil in 1998 under the influence of Minister Bresser Pereira (who introduced the principles of the ‘New Public Management’) is very clear in relation to the different roles of the “strategic nucleus of the State” and of social organizations. The former retains a clear monopoly over decision-making (Dagnino, 2010, p. 33).⁶ Thus, in line with Pearce, Dagnino continues to hold that there is, more or less, a democratic type of participatory channel.

In an article published in the *Revue internationale de politique compare*, Dagnino and Tatagiba (2010) raise some extremely interesting questions about developments within what they refer to as participatory democratic movements. The authors recognize that social movements with an anti-state attitude emerged in a specific political context that has already passed. Most of these movements are now involved with government agencies or political parties. Echoing arguments by IDS and CEBRAP scholars, they note that in this new configuration a movement’s relationship with formal political actors becomes, at times, more important than its connection to the groups it defends. There is a trade-off between political efficacy and autonomy, which movements need to learn to negotiate. However, autonomy is not simply the absence of contact with state agents, but the ability to negotiate with these agencies while maintaining a “critical distance” that allows movements to be aware of the relationship. The authors then question the usefulness of the concept of autonomy and cooptation. “*Jusqu’à quel point les concepts d’autonomie et d’indépendance ou ceux de cooptation et d’instrumentalisation sont-ils encore adéquats pour comprendre la nature et les significations de ces nouvelles interactions entre État et société civile?*” (p.175). The authors note that in the Brazilian case this relationship became even more complicated in PT administrations because of the proximity of social movements and political leaders, and the former’s willingness to sacrifice short-term goals in order to preserve the image of the party. In some cases, social movements may even incorporate the electoral logic

⁶ This chapter is available at <http://www.csduppsala.uu.se/devnet/CivilSociety/Power%20to%20the%20People.pdf>

of party, which is contradictory to its primary goals. The Suplicy administration in São Paulo is mentioned as an example. The important questions, therefore, are how movements negotiate their relationship with parties and state agencies, and whether they manage to preserve their core democratic values despite the strategies adopted to reach the desired material goals.

In the same article, Dagnino and Tatagiba also challenge the dichotomy of traditional versus democratic political culture. They state that a more useful method is to consider the co-existence of distinct cultural matrices in the collective imaginary which influence the action repertoires of social movements in varied ways. It is necessary to move beyond the idea that clientelism or the logic of the representative system permeates and corrupts participatory spaces, and focus instead on the negotiation of existent tension between dominant and weaker political cultures matrices. In the Brazilian case, it is necessary to recognize that political practice of exchange of favor is the dominant matrix and always present. *“Ici, de nouveau, les questions à approfondir renvoient à la dynamique de ces tensions et aux processus de négociation qui en émergent”* (p.182). Thus, the authors propose the replacement of existing categories of autonomy, co-optation, clientelist, and democratic for relational concepts capable of taking into account a social movements’ continual negotiation values and political strategies.

This sort of elaborated normative argument discussing the intricate aspects of social movements that partake in institutional channels of participation is also found in the work of British scholars. Examining participation in the health sector in Bangladesh, Brazil, South Africa, and the U.K., Cornwall and Leach (2011) identified overlapping issues in four areas: spaces, tactics, representation, and framing. Although the literature tends to focus on how social movements participate in specific institutional spaces, movements often carry on actions in numerous spaces depending on the issue at hand and local histories of activism. “The very women who appear to sit passively through committee meetings may be the first to take to the streets” (p.19). Research on citizen engagement should try to understand the various forms of participation in the repertoire of social movements. Likewise, movements use various creative tactics for engagement, and their participation in institutional frameworks must not read simply as a sign of the disciplining of the state. Cornwall and Leach also argue that the question of representation regards the design of institutional channels as well as personal and community histories; improving the representativeness of health councils requires understanding individuals’ motivation in them. Finally, the examined cases showed there is constant dispute in the framing

of health issues that is directly related to the use of scientific knowledge and the validation of certain concerns to the detriment of others. As its title suggests, this study “bring politics back to public engagement” by showing there is a continuum between “invited participation” and mobilization, whereas the literature tends to focus on one or the other.

In the mainstream side of normative debates there has not been much development, but more of the same economic and instrumental support for participation. In 2007, the World Bank published an edited volume titled *Participatory Budgeting* (Shah, 2007).⁷ The piece brings empirical cases from various parts of the developing world, which is a valuable contribution to a literature with a disproportionate focus on the Brazilian case. The introduction makes clear the perspective from which these cases are examined.

Done right, [participatory budgeting] has the potential to make governments more responsive to citizens’ needs and preferences and more accountable to them for performance in resource allocation and service delivery (p.1).

The term “empowerment” is used in parts of the volume in the Bank’s habitual rhetorical style, without any conceptual clarification of the term’s meaning.

In 2008, the Bank published the most comprehensive quantitative analysis to date of the Brazilian PB. This study compared 48 cities with participatory budgets with a control group of cities without the program. Researchers managed to isolate the impact of PT administrations, which are known for having progressive pro-poor policies and are the most likely to implement PB. The percentage of votes for the PT was included as a permanent control variable, which helped to isolate long-run political processes from the impact of the PB. The study concluded that, “participatory budgeting as a mechanism for improving pro-poor capital investments has contributed to ameliorating the living conditions of the poor in the municipalities where it has been adopted” (World Bank, 2008a, p. 91) The impact on income poverty was found only in cities where the PB was in place for at least ten years; but “it is worth noting that this poverty impact occurred despite a reduction in GDP per capita in these municipalities, suggesting that [PB] can contribute to a redistributive impact in the long run” (p.15). References to this study are found in almost every study that examines participation in public funding decision-making.⁸

⁷ Available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PSGLP/Resources/ParticipatoryBudgeting.pdf>

⁸ The Volume II (Annexes) of the study presents a survey with 1,000 Porto Alegre citizens, see World Bank (2008b)

As the next section shows, recent years have witnessed a convergence towards the use of concepts associated with accountability, transparency, and quality of democracy, which has blurred the lines of this normative debate. Although critical scholars continue to emphasize the existence of two distinct types of participation, it is now possible to find theorists of the caliber of Peruzzotti, Coelho, and Lavallo in volumes organized by the World Bank.

Participation in the Representative System: Increasing the Quality of Democracy

The political background of democratization presented in the first section of this review had dramatically changed by the end of the century and democratic theory accompanied the new developments. The “transition paradigm” that guided numerous studies in the field of democratic studies in the 1980s was abandoned in the 1990s; its excessive focus on “relevant actors,” exclusive attention to political liberalization, and teleological assumptions made it inadequate to understand the increasing number of electoral democracies lacking substantial aspects of a democracy system (Moisés, 1995; Carothers, 2002). A consensus therefore emerged that after political liberation, new democracies were confronted with numerous challenges, including, the lingering power of elites from the previous regimes, weak institutional apparatuses, unrelenting high level economic inequality, and persistent undemocratic social relations. Collections were then organized around the topic of the consolidation of democracy (Diniz, Boschi, & Lessa, 1989; Moisés & Albuquerque, 1989; Kingstone & Power, 2000).

More recently, scholars of democracy in Latin America turned attention toward the quality of democracies in the continent, which are more stable and seemingly more durable than ever before, but still lack broad-based legitimacy. A quality democracy has been defined as “one that provides its citizens a high degree of freedom, political equality, and popular control over public policies and policy makers through the legitimate and lawful functioning of stable institutions” (Diamond & Morlino, 2005, p. xi). Democracies vary in quality on eight dimensions: the rule of law, participation, accountability, competition, vertical and horizontal accountability, respect for civil and political freedoms, and the progressive implementation of political equality. Given the focus of the present review, it is worth briefly examining the meanings of participation and accountability in this framework.

With regard to the dimension of participation, democratic quality is high when citizens participate in the political process not only by voting, but by joining political parties and civil

society organizations, partaking in the discussion of public-policy issues, communicating with and demanding accountability from elected representatives, monitoring the conduct of public office-holders, and engaging in public issues at the local community level (Diamond & Morlino, 2005, p. xvi).

Demanding accountability from elected representatives, i.e., vertical accountability, is most commonly done by punishing or rewarding elected officials in times of election. In a quality democracy, however, it also involves “the efforts of civil associations, NGOs, social movements, think tanks, and mass media to hold government accountable in between elections” (p.xix). Horizontal accountability concerns checks and balances within government institutions and does not involve civil society as directly as vertical accountability. Nevertheless, civil society groups can pressure government bodies to confront their political equals; the most recent example in the Brazilian case being the Ficha Limpa project.

As a research agenda, the democratic quality approach emphasizes the workings of the institutions and mechanisms of representative democracy. As a result, examining participation from this perspective entails shifting away from the empirical, theoretical, and normative focuses of the studies reviewed above. Scholars have most often treated participatory mechanisms as privileged spaces for direct citizen participation, wherein the permeation of party politics or the logic of the representative system is perceived as a threat. This is especially the case in studies of PB. In the literature on policy councils, insights and concepts from studies of representation are used in order to examine civil society participation. IDS and CEBRAP scholars have examined the proximity of civil society actors and political actors, and Dagnino and Tatagiba and Cornwall have called attention to the tensions this approximation creates. Nevertheless, scant attention has been paid to how citizens and civil society participation may contribute or hinder the working of representative institutions, which would focus on studies of participation from the perspective of democratic quality. Empirically this means that studies would pay particular attention to the interaction between civil society and state institutions. Theoretically, the shift would turn from the autonomy and strengthen of social movements and civil society groups to how they support the deepening of democracy. The latter implies taking a normative position that places priority on the functioning of the entire representative democratic system. The remainder of this section examines the work of scholars that approach participation from this perspective. Not all

examined studies explicitly use the democratic quality framework, but their insights and conceptual tools can be used in the evaluation of the quality of democracy in Brazil.

The volume *Accountability through Public Opinion* (Odugbemi & Lee, 2011)⁹ brings a number of valuable contributions that fit the democratic quality approach. Four of the 28 chapters are particularly relevant to this review. Peruzotti (2011) posits that,

the central question addressed by the concept of accountability is precisely how to regulate and reduce the gap between representatives and the represented while simultaneously preserving the distance between political authorities and the citizenry that characterizes the relations of representation (p.54)

The author uses the term “social accountability” to refer to the vertical mechanisms that involved civil society participation mentioned in Diamond and Morlino (2005). These mechanisms function in two ways. The first way is by “adding new voices and concerns to the political sphere” either through the pressure exerted by social movements or the more institutionalized participation in the channels, such as policy councils and participatory budgeting. The second manner in what Peruzotti calls the “politics of social accountability”, which involves civil efforts with the three following goals,

(1) to monitor the behavior of public officials and agencies to make sure they abide by the law, (2) to expose cases of governmental wrongdoing, and (3) to activate, in many instances, the operation of horizontal agencies, such as the judiciary or legislative commissions, that otherwise would not be initiated or would be initiated in a biased way. (p.55).

The author suggests there are four variables worth observing when analyzing the contextual conditions for social accountability under representative democracy. The first variable is culture and concerns the emergence of a “culture of democratic accountability”. In Latin America, the most significant aspect of the new wave of democratization is the shift from authoritarian and populist political cultures that bestows a “blank check” to executive leaders to a “healthy concerns for the workings of horizontal mechanisms of ‘institutionalized distrust’”(p.57). The second variable is the existence or absence of a network of social actors that share information and develop proposals for institutional reforms. The third variable is “the quality of public

⁹ Available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGOVACC/Resources/Accountabilitybookweb.pdf>

sphere”, which refers to the respect for civil liberties essential to the free dissemination of information. Finally, there are five types of institutional variables worth considering: access to information, entry points within horizontal organizations, an agency’s ability to effectively pressure other agencies (horizontally), a state’s actions aimed at increasing the number of accountability channels, and international regimes to which domestic groups can resort in order to pressure their own government. By calling attention to these institutional features, Peruzotti emphasizes that bottom-up pressure from social movements and civil society groups must be met with political will and legislative reforms.

Fung’s (2011) chapter discusses the concept of minipublics. This is not a new concept but one that has been gaining prominence in the literature and is likely to be used as a framework of future studies. In the author’s characteristic style, the chapter provides a long list of institutional features that constitute ideal types of institutional designs for different policy goals. The general goal of a minipublics is “to contribute to the democratic project of reinvigorating the broader public sphere not only by modeling the ideal, but also by improving the quality of participation and deliberation in a significant area of public life”(p.184). A minipublics may function as an educative forum, a participatory advisory panel, a participatory problem-solving collaboration, or a form of participatory democratic governance. The first three do exactly what their names suggest, while the fourth allows direct participation into the determination of policy agendas.

The designing of minipublics involve determining who participates, what is discussed, how deliberation is structured, how often it takes place, what is at stake, and how it is monitored. “A healthy minipublics contributes to the quality of governance in several ways” (p.188): it increases civic engagement quantitatively; it may be purportedly biased so as to encourage the participation of disadvantaged groups; it can uphold rules that improve the quality of deliberation; it contributes to inform public officials and increase the effectiveness of their policies; it also increases the knowledge of citizens; it allows for citizens to practice their democratic skills; finally, it can make governments more accountable, and polices more just and effective. Fung offers three examples of minipublics: a deliberative poll, a health council (in the U.S.), and the participatory budgeting of Porto Alegre. The interesting aspect of Fung’s minipublics is the fact that they are seen largely as provisional participatory spaces that in numerous direct and indirect ways contribute to the democracy at large: they are exercises in ‘reformist tinkering’ rather than ‘revolutionary reforms” (p.183). Although Fung’s work does

bring theoretical insights, the clarity and simplicity of his models has previously had a notable influence in policy circles.

The case studies section of this volume brings chapters by Coelho and Lavalley. Coelho (2011) draws on CEBRAP research on policy councils (reviewed above) in order to propose a model for evaluating whether and how participatory governance does in fact better governments, as it is widely accepted. This model includes three variables that help to “unpack participation”: inclusion, participation, and connections. The first variable regards who is included. The author suggests that three aspects of participants should be taken into account when measuring the ability of participatory channels to reach a broad and heterogeneous population: socioeconomic and demographic profile, associationist profile, and political affiliations. Participation regards the institutional format of participatory channels and the procedures for meetings, and whether they provide different groups equal chance of meaningful engagement. Connections regard how a participatory forum is connected with other branches of governments and other agencies involved in the policy process; it involves both legal structures connecting the forums to the state apparatus and more informal connections with politicians and policy makers. Finally, Coelho explains that in order to employ this model it is necessary to first establish an empirical base line for each of these three variables, which allows for comparisons and evaluations. While the first two variables had already been discussed in the literature and concern mostly the participatory channel itself, the third variable is an innovation that permits to place participation into a broader framework of the democratic system.

Lavalley’s (2011) chapter addresses the following question: “how do the new roles played by civil organizations interact with the institutions of representative government and policy institutions, and how does this interaction affect policy decision making” (p.390). The author tried to answer this question using statistical analysis. In a sample of 229 civil society organizations in São Paulo, 166 defined themselves as “representatives of the public with (or for) which they work” (p.394). Lavalley then measured whether these organizations de facto exercised activities of political representation, such as, engagement with the executive branches, direct mediation of demands made to specific public agencies, political advocacy through electoral channels, and political advocacy through the municipal legislature. Results showed that assumed representation is correlated with these types of activities: “52 percent of those [organizations] that define themselves as representatives carry out three or four of those activities” (p.394). Next,

the author ran a regression to identify which activity was the best predictor of assumed representation: the result was support for political candidates, followed by mobilization in order to make demands to government institutions, and ‘being registered with a public utility title’ (p.395). In other words, the closer an organization is to traditional political structures, the more likely it is of claiming assumed representation. These findings corroborate Lavallo’s (and colleagues’) arguments that civil society organizations constitute a layer of political representation that is not yet fully understood, and that it is not useful to use draw rigid divisor lines between civil society, state, autonomous civil society, and traditional politics. In the author’s view, what we witness is the emergence of a new configuration of representation in which civil society may play the role of reconnecting citizens and politicians.

In 2011, *Lua Nova* organized an issue devoted to the relationship between participation and representation, titled *Após Participação*. With an introduction by Lavallo, the volume follows the argumentative line of CEBRAP and IDS. The two articles by Tatagiba and Blikstad, and Carlos contribute to further empirical knowledge about representation within policy councils. The two pieces by Romão and Souza discuss the involvement of party politics in PB. The conceptual piece by Lüchamnn is the most pertinent to this section of the review.

Lüchamnn (2011) calls the new layer of representation discussed by Lavallo and colleagues *representação conselhistas*. She argues that this form of political engagement is part of the repertoire of actions of civic associations, and is combined, sometimes in an uneasy manner, with other political strategies. There are two analytical gains in thinking of these practices as forms of political representation. First, it allows us to examine whether these alternative channels of representation are used to advance demands and interests that have been barred from the electoral representation process, in which case they would be contributing to the betterment of the democratic system; or if these channels are used by already represented groups, in which case we would be witnessing a case of overrepresentation. Second, treating these forms of civic participation as political representation permits us to explore how they contribute to the strengthening of a pluralist representative system. Lüchamnn proposes a typology of four types of alternative representation: informal-individual, informal-collective, formal-individual, and formal-collective. The Citizens’ Assembly of British Columbia, Canada, was an example of formally chosen individuals, whereas policy councils in Brazil are an example formally chosen

collectives. In most cases, NGOs and social movements are informal-collective forms of representation, whereas U2 vocalist Bono is an example of informal-individual representative.

Once different kinds of representation are recognized, it is then possible to discuss what is expected of representatives, what associations are qualified to play these representative roles, and what accountability would entail in this context. Moreover, taking into account the diversity of civic organizations, and the fact that they compete for resources and social recognition, it is possible to raise questions about unequal access to representative spaces, and consider whether the state should play a more incisive role in regulating representation through associations. From the perspective of the organizations, the central question is whether they are capable of assuming this representative role while carrying other important activities. In sum, bringing forms of participation previously seen as direct democracy to the realm of representative politics opens up a myriad of new ways of conceptualizing and empirically examining the relationship between citizens, intermediary organizations, and state agencies (Lüchmann, 2011).

Recent case studies already support and help to further these conceptual debates about participation, representation, and accountability. In South Africa, mechanisms to increase accountability in water management faced challenges related to the strength of horizontal channels and the entry points for citizen advocacy (Smith, 2011). The governance of water and sewage services has been one of the contentious political issues in South Africa since the end of the apartheid. In the mid-1990s, the federal government decentralized governance in order to democratize and improve access to water and sewage services. In 2006, a pilot participatory program called “Citizens Voice” was implemented in four townships in Cape Town. In an initial phase, a mutually beneficial relationship developed between community-based organizations and the city’s water agencies. However, bureaucrats and technicians did not manage to involve their political counterparts; the mayor and some ward councilors refused to expand the initiative to other parts of the city. More professionally organized civil society organizations were called to participation, but this only aggravated the situation. These organizations did not accept to engage government institutions simply as “user”, as the community-based organizations had, and demanded more space in the policy debates. The project was replicated in the city of eThekweni, where politicians and civil society organizations were targeted from the beginning and met at a citywide forum. Political will existed in eThekweni, but officials expected civil society to present a unanimous voice, which at city-level was not the case. Moreover, umbrella civil society

organizations had broader demands for accountability that went beyond official willingness to engage water-users in specific service-related issues. This South African experience, therefore, illustrates how the designs of participatory channels as well as institutional features of horizontal accountability help to determine the success and scope of this type of initiative.

The book *Participatory Innovation and Representative Democracy in Latin America* (Peruzzotti & Selee, 2011) presents valuable examples of recent innovations in the continent. “The basic assumption of this volume is that any politics of the institutional betterment of representative democracy must address the question of how to productively combine participation and representation” (p.3). Case studies discuss interactions between representation and participation in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Mexico. In Bolivia, the decentralization reforms implemented between 1994 and 2004 boosted direct participation in municipal politics, improved the well-being of average citizens, and increased voter turnout in federal elections. However, local-level participation spurred a politicization that the country’s weak representative institutions could not absorb; disputes at local government level fueled regional tension and intra-party tensions that triggered a political crisis that eventually forced the resignation of the President Carlos Mesa and opened the way for the election of Evo Morales (Laserna, 2011). One can argue that Morales is a much better president than Mesa, and thus the shift was overall positive. From the institutional perspective, however, it is important to note how increased participation in weak democracies may destabilize the entire political system, leading to shifts that may or may not be desirable. Another noteworthy point that Laserna briefly touches upon regards the feasibility of creating channels of accountability in extremely corrupted political systems: there is a high risk of discrediting the entire political system. It seems that comparative analysis between Brazil during 1945-1964 and Bolivia in the 1990s could yield interesting theoretical insights.

In the chapter on Brazil, Melo (2011) calls attention to overlooked shortcomings of the PB model and argues that the exaggerated focus on channels of direct participation have played down the transformative potential of formal institutions such as the Court of Account (Tribunal de Contas, TC). The PB model allows the mayor to bypass the legislative chamber, and in some cases it is implemented exactly with this objective. As a consequence, the mayor increases his authority vis-à-vis the chambers, and weakens the relationship between councilors and citizens. The former are partially replaced by community delegates. In contrast, “TCs are constitutionally

defined as ancillary bodies of the legislative branch, with the purpose of examining the accounts of the three branches of government” (p.32). These bodies process a considerable amount of data concerning the functioning compliance with principles of public administration and the use of public funds. TCs produce periodic audit reports as well as special investigatory reports initiated promoted by suspicions of corruption or requested by third parties. Melo found that in the state of Pernambuco between 1994 and 2004, the number of irregularities committed has negative and statistically significantly relationship with electoral results, i.e., mayors caught by the TC receive less votes. “A mayor’s chances for reelection are reduced by 20 percent if the TC detects irregularities in the municipalities” (p.34). Moreover, drawing on previous research across states, Melo posited that the more competitive politics are in a state, the more likely TCs are able to impose sanctions on misbehavior. Melo concluded that more attention should be paid to channels of vertical and horizontal accountability that regulate the use of public funds, as oppose to direct channels of participation that may weaken institutional arrangements.

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