

1. Yotaro Natani

The Baiocchi/Ganuza article indicates that Porto Alegre's Workers' Party was defeated in 2004, and was replaced by a conservative party that continued participatory budgeting only in a superficial way. It also argues that most cases of participatory budgeting across the world only succeed in implementing the communicative dimension, with very few of them having a robust emancipatory dimension. These facts raise important questions about the viability and achievability of participatory budgeting as a real-utopian institution. The Porto Alegre case under the Workers' Party (which was both communicative and emancipatory) lasted under two decades. We know, then, that this institution is achievable under certain conditions (like having a left-wing party in power). But do we have sure knowledge of its viability? Can we call an institution that lasted only temporarily under favorable political conditions viable? Baiocchi does speak of the legitimacy-enhancing qualities of participatory budgeting as it delivers results, but this argument seems debatable given the Workers' Party's defeat. Furthermore, if truly authentic participatory budgeting – one that is communicative and emancipatory – is so rare or difficult to implement, can we really claim that it is achievable? This raises the much broader issue of how/when do we know that we have enough knowledge to claim something is viable/achievable.

[EOW: You raise important issues about the idea of “viability”. This is obviously a multidimensional problem. Viability must always be specified in terms of conditions and contexts. So, perhaps it is the case that the condition for viability within capitalism of the more emancipatory side of PB is the presence of a committed leftwing party. One question, then, would be whether it is better to have no PB at all than to have a PB that only had the communicative elements (in Baiocchi's terms)? Is the partial PB a better context for pushing, under other circumstances, for a more radicalized version, or does a partial implementation actually impede more progressive alternatives?]

2. Emanuel Ubert

In his 2003 book chapter, Baiocchi shows that “high numbers of participants from several strata of Porto Alegre's society have come together to share in a governance structure that has been efficient and highly redistributive.” The success of the Porto Alegre experiment allegedly came from its legitimacy-enhancing aspects as well as from its material impact rather than from “exceptional features” of the city's history. He argues that as per 2001 “the PB appears to have become fully consolidated” and even had been extended to state-level government and to hundreds of other PT-controlled cities in Brazil.

Yet, only three years later the PB experiment in Porto Alegre was effectively shut down. “After the defeat of the Workers' Party in late 2004, a politically conservative coalition maintained the surface features of PB while returning the actual functioning of the administration to more traditional modes of favor-trading and the favoring of local elites” (Baiocchi&Ganuza, forthcoming, p.5).

Why and how exactly was the Porto Alegre experiment allowed to shut down despite its material success, widespread legitimacy, and deep entwinement with civil society? In the book chapter, Baiocchi argued that “the experiment would have failed as a participatory institution if it had not produced tangible material improvements,” but argued that it had succeeded precisely because it did indeed deliver on such improvements. What other causal factors were in play in 2004?

What does this tell us about the resilience of this real utopian model when faced with a mobilization of organized and resourceful political opposition (under relatively stable material conditions)?

Change is often seen to be most likely in periods of ruptures of dominant structures. Is it realistic to expect even a previously “democratically educated” populace to revert to democratically deliberative (rather than hierarchical) decision making processes in times of fundamental uncertainty/ crisis in light of above? Why or why not?

[EOW: You raise issues very much like Yotaro's. I don't know the story of the shut-down well enough to know how it happened, how much resistance there might have been, how permanent this is likely to be. The Workers Party defeat in Porto Alegre had more to do with national politics than with specific local failures, but still it does show the vulnerability of the local accomplishments. They were not sufficiently deeply institutionalized to survive that kind of attack. I suppose this raises the issue of whether radical democratic reforms can ever be institutionalized in ways that make the invulnerable to attack or erosion.]

3. Madeleine Pape

The life of participatory budgeting (PB) is in the midst of an interesting and critical phase. As it continues to spread from its homeland of Brazil to developed and developing contexts around the world, the concept of PB is evolving in response to new circumstances and new agendas. How critical should we be of the spread of participatory budgeting when it is its communicative dimensions and not its emancipatory elements that characterize many new projects? Is this a case of the perfect defeating the good, in that even the spread of just the communicative aspects of PB is a positive step forward? Many participants in Chicago, Vallejo and NYC would certainly believe that the contribution that they are making to their community is significant and important. Or, does the spread of the communicative dimension of PB represent the co-optation of the original concept for political ends, diminishing or preventing the emancipatory potential of PB projects?

There is the opportunity here to return to and interpret the work of Levitas (2013). Consider the point raised by Baiocchi and Ganuza (forthcoming) that the Porto Alegre case of PB revolved around capital works budgets and urban infrastructure, which *in that context* were major issues that resonated with participants. As PB has been ‘transplanted’ to developed contexts, the emphasis on capital works budgets has been carried with it. However, perhaps the commitment to a ‘blueprint’ is a limiting factor. In the context of the US, PB has been limited to discretionary budgets of relatively small size, and subject to relatively stringent conditions such that the PB process does not transform the overall dynamics of city government. To what extent, then, does a ‘blueprint’ approach hinder the spread of PB as a

real utopia? Should a 'blueprint' emphasize only the emancipatory dimensions of an idea like PB, and leave the specific details to be determined locally?

[EOW: The idea of "blueprint" as a metaphor for social innovations probably needs some clarification. In the engineering context it means really fine-grained specification of design details so that you can implement them directly from the blueprint with only minimal tinkering. Is this what we are talking about in the social context? Or is it more like a design sketch? In the case of PB, Baiocchi and Ganuza argue for these two dimensions – communicative and emancipatory – but they don't exactly suggest that there is a single design formula which would embody these. Their concern is that the outward form of PB might disguise a severe deficit in real democratic deepening, but create the illusion that more has been accomplished. On the other hand, perhaps, having the communicative aspect firmly in place might make it easier to challenge the state on the more robust democratic dimension?]

4. Michael Blix

In chapter two of *Deepening Democracy*, Baiocchi describes in some depth the process of the participatory budgeting experiment in Porto Alegre, Brazil. As a measure of participatory budgeting's potential for empowerment, he cites the real differences the effort has made in citizens' lives: paved roads in the city's periphery, running water throughout 98% of the city, and 98% sewage coverage. Assuming there were not any other political forces that brought about these improved conditions, it appears that PB can be highly empowering. However, in his forthcoming chapter, *Participatory Budgeting as if Emancipation Mattered*, he unpacks PB into its "communicative" and "empowerment" forms. He argues that PB has lost its ability to empower across various contexts, instead becoming only a means for citizens to voice their concerns without any meaningful influence in the political sphere. But in his argument, Baiocchi essentially abandons the contextual impetuses that make PB an empowering tool.

My question: First, how can we develop a "more precise set of analytic tools to discern different aspects" of Real Utopian ideas like PB without thoroughly considering their contextual limits? After all, since Porto Alegre's political climate was such that the Workers' Party could gain power to begin with, isn't it likely that there were also some contextual elements that could have been especially conducive to PB as an empowering project? Second, I'm not sure that I understand how exactly PB can not be an empowering project in some way, as this was not discussed in much detail. Doesn't direct engagement with a political body bring about some level of empowerment by definition? What level of empowerment is needed for a project to become adequately utopian to be included in the Real Utopian discourse?

[EOW: I like your point that empowerment is not all or nothing, that there may be degrees of empowerment or forms of empowerment. In these terms I think it would be good to try to give more precision to this dimension of the PB process/design. Is the issue what % of the total budget is under the command of the PB mechanism? What kinds of projects can be adopted? How much the more technocratic aspects of the local state function as servants on the PB?]

5. Laura Hanson Schlachter

How does the mode of expansion of participatory budgeting (PB) shape its transformative potential?

Wright and Fung argue that the EPG model has the potential to expand “both horizontally – into other policy areas and other regions – and vertically – into higher and lower levels of institutional life” (2003, 15). PB is a rich case of EPG expansion because the Porto Alegre framework has been adapted to many different policy contexts, areas, and levels of government (Baiocchi 2003, 50). Baiocchi and Ganuza’s analysis of these successive iterations suggests that the communicative dimensions of PB have been widely disseminated. Few experiments around the world, however, include the empowerment dimensions that undergird emancipation (13).

The global travel of PB fascinates me, and I wonder how the mode of expansion shapes the transformative potential of real utopian ideas. Are horizontal and vertical expansions of PB associated with distinct sets of opportunities and challenges? Who plants the seeds for new experiments? What are their motivations and resources? How do they form alliances? Baiocchi and Ganuza are agnostic about the forces that bring about PB because the political context is tangential to their analytical framework. I agree we must avoid “ontological complicity” (5). Nevertheless, it seems important to bring the government and civil society actors who so profoundly shape the empowerment dimensions of PB into the foreground. If we see PB as a strategy of symbiotic transformation, we must not only study assembly participants, but also examine the ways in which elites come to believe that empowerment will serve their interests (Wright 2010, 337). Learning more about dedicated PB networks seems like a good place to start. To what extent do these organizations embody a commitment to transformation, and what tradeoffs must they make in the real world in order to foster new PB experimentation?

[EOW: It is always difficult to say very much in general about the willingness of elites to embrace forms of popular empowerment. Serious forms of democracy – as opposed to thin forms of democratic representation – are always in pretty steep tension with the interests of elites. Indeed, this is the guts of the classical Marxist critique of the democratic form of the capitalist state: it is doomed to be thin democracy, because only thin democracy is compatible with capitalism. If this reasoning is right, then the empowerment dimension of PB will be chronically vulnerable. What I don’t know is whether this claim also implies that the empowerment dimension can never be effectively institutionalized.]

6. Tatiana Alfonso

The Empowered Participatory Government (EPG) model is supposed to guarantee fairness and efficiency within the deliberative framework. However, one of the features of deliberation is the emphasis on the process and procedure rather than on outcomes. The EPG model seems to leave intact one of the traditional critique of models of deliberative democracy: how to guarantee the outcomes. The institutional design proposed by Fung and Wright aims to create the conditions for fair and efficient outcomes; Baiocchi analyzes the challenges that inequality, uneven society development, and politics pose to such goal. However, he still seems to anchor

his analysis in the idea that the procedure will lead to a certain type of outcomes. The remaining question then, is how to make compatible the EPG model as an exercise of deliberative democracy with substantive ideas for example of justice and equality? Moreover, how to justify the need of adjustment of those outcomes once the procedure has been satisfied? Let's suppose that –as Baiocchi shows for the case of Portoalegre- the deliberation is not privileging elites or marginalizing less empowered social actors and the actual deliberation occurs in symmetrical terms, and all the actors learn to participate effectively. Even if that is the case we cannot be sure that the substantive outcome is going to be fair, especially when people deal with practical and technical issues; we cannot assume that the procedure will come with precise knowledge about what to do with a particular aspect of their social life just because they experience it. For example, what about it the actors involved in the dialogue reach a regressive policy in terms of redistribution of goods and services; how do we deal with such an outcome when the procedure was adjusted to the model and people do embrace both the procedure and the outcome?

The Empowered Participatory Government (EPG) model seems to lean toward a stateless model of action; however, Fung and Wright do list as one of the design properties, a State-Centered, not voluntaristic feature. How can we reconcile the initial distance that the “civil society” needs to take from the State and its bureaucratic institutions with the need of going back to the State while keeping the mobilization alive? Isn't this the kind of challenge that social movements face when they enter into institutional spaces? Is the maintenance of deliberative spaces in state institutions the same model, or is it a different one?

[EOW. First a comment on the issue of fairness of outcomes: It is certainly possible that unfair outcomes could come from a deeply democratic, participatory process animated by principles of deliberative democracy. I don't see how there can be any guarantees. But how can one directly design an institution in order to insure “fair outcomes”? Isn't the best we can do is try to neutralize the power advantages some groups have by creating institutions in which decisions are as much as possible the result of the participation and deliberation of ordinary citizens? I am not sure what would be an alternative.

On the second issue: I don't think EPG is implicitly a stateless model; it is a model about how to subordinate the state to popular power – i.e. how to truly democratize the state. There are, of course, inherent tensions in the project of deepening democracy. There is hardly any point in democratically subordinating the state unless the state has the power to do things, but if the state has the power to do things, then potentially it has the power to act autonomously from its democratic subordination.]

7. Dmytro Khutkyy

As long as PB in modern political systems is predominantly introduced through transformative, rather than revolutionary way, a number of applied issues arise. The key question is *what rationale can persuade authorities to accept the new institution of participatory budgeting?*

Baiocchi and Ganuza quote an intriguing statement from British experience of introduction of participatory budgeting: “greens and progressives might find resonance in PB's local empowerment, but centrists and conservatives do so as well: as it should be framed as a

“sensible step in decentralising and localising responsibility.” For conservatives, PB is to be promoted as fostering “community cohesion,” “innovation,” “social entrepreneurship” and “restoring trust” in government” (cited in Baiocchi & Ganuza).

First of all, politicians need legitimacy. They experience pressure from experts and the public to become more open, transparent, and inclusive. Allowing citizens to take part in decision-making concerning community projects and expenses they might raise it substantially. In an evaluation research in Ukraine it was found that joint community projects where people were partners with authorities increased trust towards local authorities and satisfaction with their work (Khutkyy, 2011). The irony is that politicians can merely proclaim the new arrangements creating obstacles to actual consideration of grassroots initiatives and priorities. In this respect it is extremely important to establish and follow rational procedures, which will protect bottom-up demands from voluntarism or ignorance (Baiocchi & Ganuza).

Second, authorities cannot handle the challenges of social problems like unemployment, economic underdevelopment, marginalization, and crime by themselves. So they try to translate this responsibility to citizens themselves, bringing the discourse of “social entrepreneurship”, “social cohesion”, and the like. The key message here is to shift responsibility from authorities to citizens. And though it might sound risky, this is the chance for people to take the power – if authorities no longer can handle it.

References

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[EOW: The suggestion in your first sentence is that somehow if PB were introduced in a revolutionary way it would not face the same problems – i.e. these problems come from the reformist manner of its introduction. I am not sure that this is the case. Revolutionary leaders face at least as serious a problem of legitimacy as ordinary politicians and they are just as likely to adopt strategies that create the illusions of participation instead of real empowerment. Invoking “revolution” does not in any way suggest that popular empowerment is more likely to be the real result of institutions like PB.]

In terms of the general issue of legitimation, it is certainly true that politicians sometimes see citizen “participation” as a way of legitimating policies. But this is different from real citizen empowerment in which citizens are directly involved in making decisions and allocating resources. That is potentially more destabilizing. It might produce more legitimacy, but it also poses the possibility of less power for the politicians themselves. Much depends on the real substance of “partnership”.]

8. Taylor Laemmli

If the didactic function of forum facilitators solves, to an extent, the problem of inequality in the Participatory Budgeting model, defined by Baiocchi as not being “that persons are unequal, but that differences between them may hinder fair deliberation” (2003:46), how does one deal with the inequality of participation that results from the time commitment necessary to attend PB-related forums/meetings? Particularly, the problem that women’s participation may be constrained by domestic duties/responsibilities, which fall more heavily upon their shoulders than those of men. (For example, “the availability of time and women’s “second and third shifts” of household responsibilities account for many, if not all, of these differences [in election figures], particularly with respect to gender,” (55)). These time constraints are perhaps particularly problematic given that “years of participation in the process are a powerful predictor of whether persons will speak,” (55)—suggesting that for women who have less time to devote to participation, there may be a longer period of time between initial participation (through physical attendance of forums) and vocal participation (actually becoming involved personally in deliberation.) Is it necessary to solve problems of inequality outside of the institutional framework of PB in order to fully realize equality of participation? Or are there institutional aspects of or changes to the model that would allow for full equality of participation within the model, independent of outside contexts?

[EOW: At least in some PBs childcare is provided at all meetings, so that can certainly help. Time-constraints probably interfere even more with professionals and other people with long work-obligations. In the US in the 1950s women were especially important participants in various kinds of civic activism because of more time availability (because they didn’t work as much in the labor force as men). Probably in general PB will favor a bit young adults without children and retired people.]

9. Alisa Pykett

I am interested in examining further the impact of participatory budgeting (PB) on civil society when different dimensions of PB are enacted. Fung and Wright (p. 35) indicate that one area of criticism of Empowered Participatory Governance is the potential of deliberation processes to discourage radicalism of secondary associations. In the case of PB, the time commitment required to participate effectively can also distract activists and associations from other aspects of their work. These negative unintended consequences can occur even when both the communicative and empowerment dimensions posited by Baiocchi and Ganuza are enacted, and perhaps are exacerbated in instances of “toolkit implementation” when the participatory processes are not linked to government action. On the other hand, participation of ordinary citizens in PB can result in increased political engagement, deepening of associational life, development of democratic skills and dispositions that spread into other aspects of life, and solidarity.

How does being politicized *specifically in the PB process* shape ordinary people's horizons of what is possible and their understanding of possible strategies for gaining more control over the policies/structures that impact their lives and their access to human flourishing? What differences in formation may occur depending on whether the PB process includes both communicative and empowerment dimensions or, in the toolkit version, only the communicative dimensions?

Baiocchi found through his interviews that PB provides political education for most new activists in Porto Alegre. How does a shared foundational formation in PB (or another form of EPG) impact the landscape of activism in a community over time?

[EOW: John Dewey famously talks about the importance of democratic institutions constituting “schools of democracy” rather than simply mechanisms of representation: people need to be formed as democratic citizens through the forms of the participation. The question then is whether an institutional structure like PB does this in a way that strengthens progressive/radical/egalitarian political commitments or simply socializes people into being good participants. I wonder if there really is an answer – a general answer – to such a question, or whether it depends mostly on the interaction between the institutional design and the surrounding context?]

10. Elsa Noterman

Question1: In Fung and Wright's articulation of Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG), one institutional design feature they identify is “centralized supervision and coordination,” where local groups rely on communication and accountability links to superordinate bodies (21). In this formulation, “coordinated decentralization” is compared to “autonomous decentralization,” where a main difference is the capacity to spread ideas and resources. However, many ideas are successfully spread (and subsequently tested) among decentralized groups through the use of social and political networks (especially when facilitated through the internet). Is sharing knowledge directly through autonomous decentralized groups a more effective – if not a more democratic – way of knowledge-exchange than if mediated through a centralized group? For example, the idea of Participatory Budgeting (PB) was spread throughout Brazil and Latin America through Workers' Party networks and shared in Africa and Asia by the World Bank and UN agencies (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2). However, it was also widely shared through decentralized international social movement networks – such as through the World Social Forum.

[EOW: I agree that networks can facilitate the spread of information across decentralized sites, and in some situations perhaps can do this as effectively as through a more centralized mechanism. But network-dissemination will not provide the monitoring and supervision function, which can be important in preventing the PB process from being hijacked by local power brokers, for example. Also on the knowledge dissemination, it can be useful to have a mechanism that reviews and vets information to some extent – especially if it is itself accountable to the decentralized units – since networks can easily spread bad information as good information. The medical information sites on the internet that are most valuable are ones that do not simply transmit information from anyone, but which subject the information to some kind of review.]

Question 2: Fung and Wright argue that in their formulation of EPG, another design feature is that it is “state-centric, not voluntaristic” (22). If EPG depends on a collaborative relationship with a state, how does it account for the real possibilities of cooption and/or politicization? For example, the participatory budgeting system was implemented by the Workers’ Party (PT) in Brazil and disassociated from the social movements that initially advocated for it. Subsequently, as Baiocchi and Ganuza point out, when PT lost power in Porto Alegre in 2004, the conservative coalition that took over simply "maintained the surface features of PB while returning the actual functioning of the administration to more traditional modes of favor-trading and the favoring of local elites" (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 5). Did the connection to a political party prevent the ultimate sustainability of institutionalized PB? Is the argument for state-centric EPG simply just another debate over the best way to make change – from inside the system versus outside the system?

[EOW: It is certainly possible to make changes completely outside of the state (although this need not imply outside of “the system” since the system is more than just the state). This is one of the arguments Anarchists put forward: that any effort at empowerment through the state is doomed to fail because it is always vulnerable to counterattack. But changes completely unconnected to the state are also likely to become isolated and particularistic – the state has a universalizing capacity.]

11. Kerem Morgul

Both Erik O. Wright and Gianpaolo Baiocchi consider deliberation to be one of the key principles underlying Participatory Budgeting (PB) as an example of the broader ideal of Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG). In deliberative decision-making, Wright argues, participants do not aim at advancing their own self-interests but at making reasonable decisions that best serve collective interests. The difference between deliberation on the one hand and aggregative voting and strategic bargaining on the other, he goes on, is that in the former participants consider the reasonableness, fairness, and acceptability of their positions to others whereas the latter are characterized by a clash of given interests, differential power, use of threat, misrepresentation, and strategic talk. PB, like the bourgeois public sphere analyzed by Habermas, constitutes a communicative domain of free individuals, marked by critical/rational debate and the aim of promoting the common good. In this egalitarian domain, power differences based on wealth, education, and status are disregarded; rational argument is the sole arbiter.

I believe that human beings can be self-reflexive, that they can critically examine the positions they have adopted and the interests they have identified themselves with. I also believe that unless they involve some degree of critical/rational thinking and deliberation, political contentions cannot be productive. However, I am not convinced of the possibility of a predominantly deliberative political field which excludes power and domination. This seems to me utopianism in the bad sense, i.e., a merely wishful thinking. After all, social life is characterized by power, domination, and conflict. If we do not endorse participation simply for

participation's sake but intend to realize values such as social justice, then we should take the question of power more seriously.

Both Wright and Baiocchi are aware of this criticism. However, they provide different answers. Baiocchi holds that the didactic features of PB help overcome the problem of power and inequality. This is a very optimistic view about the plasticity of pre-given identities and interests of the actors who take part in PB. Wright, with reason, rejects this unrealistic assumption. He argues for the necessity of "organized countervailing power" to reduce the power advantages of dominant groups in society. For him, PB or any other example of EPG depends on popular mobilization to work.

Now, this is a very crucial argument. It makes it clear that even the possibility of deliberation itself hinges on power struggles and the resulting balance of power between contending social forces. Power, then, is not a residual category in deliberative decision-making processes. Rather, it is constructive of these processes. Baiocchi comes close to acknowledging this in his second piece. But this amounts to admitting that EPG is characterized by power and exclusion as much as inclusion and deliberation. Power must be exerted to level the playing field. Certain inegalitarian positions and private interests have to be excluded from the communicative domain to make sure it serves the common good and social justice, to make sure deliberation rather than pursuit of pre-given narrow interests dominate discussions, and to make sure rational argument is the main arbiter.

My question, then, is this: Is there a trade-off between inclusion and deliberation in the models of EPG? To what extent can a deliberative communicative field tolerate differences in power, interests, and ideologies?

[EOW: These are important and difficult issues. Can deliberation ever play a meaningful role within contexts in which actors have unequal power? More broadly: do inequalities in the broader society mean that political decisions must always be organized through bargaining and mobilization of self-interested coalitions to win majorities rather than reasoned argument? I think you are right to point out the intensity of this problem. My invocation of "countervailing power" is one way of dealing with it. While I agree that it is utopian – not real utopian, but just plain utopian – to imagine pure deliberation in practical political settings in an unequal world, I don't think this means that deliberation can only exist on the fringes. In particular, while political matters which directly threaten the interests of the most powerful actors may not be amendable to deliberation, there may be a domain of problems which really matter in the lives of people for which deliberation can play a significant role. Part of the idea of symbiotic transformations – and PB as a way of advancing that idea – is to discover those kinds of problems which can be subjected to popular deliberation and power]

12. Jiaqi Lu

My question for this week is very practical. It appeals to me that EPGs can avoid some problems associated with representative government by deepening democracy, but it still can't solve some fundamental dilemma embed in democracy itself.

In democracy that follow basic pairwise majority rule voting to produce ranking alternatives, Kenneth Arrow suggests that any fair rule for choice will not guarantee a transitive social ordering of policy. For example, in a simple voting round in participatory budgeting case, citizens in Proto Alegre have three policy alternatives: high spending (on road construction, for instance), medium spending, and low spending. And people's preferences are transitive (group 1 prefer M than H than L).

Group	First preference	Second preference	Third preference
Group 1 45%	M	H	L
Group 2 35%	L	M	H
Group 3 20%	H	L	M

The voting result would be different base on agenda setting.

Agenda A (result Medium)

Round1: High vs. Low High wins 65% to 35%

Round 2: Medium vs. High Medium wins 80% to 20%

Agenda B (result: High)

R1: M vs. L Low wins 55% to 45%

R2: L vs. H High wins 65% to 35%

Agenda C (result Low)

R1: H vs. M Medium wins 80% to 20%

R2: M vs. L Low wins 55% to 45%

Thus, each agenda results in a different social choice, but in effect, people in general prefer Medium spending (45% support). In agenda B & C, the most-popular policy is being weed out. In this example, the administrative or politician or whoever have monopoly power on agenda

setting can effect voting outcome deliberately, and therefore pose potential problems about inequity.

How does EPGs avoid agenda monopoly? Or more broadly speaking, what's the utopian idea about solving the biases of democracy, and making democracy more perfect (well, deepening democracy itself is making it more perfect)?

[EOW: Arrow's pairwise voting paradox is, of course, a classical problem. It assumes that the actors have fixed preferences and that all they do is vote – they don't recognize the problem, talk to each other, discuss trade-offs and compromises, etc. The logic of deliberation asks of people to think about the initial preferences they have, and where there are these kinds of dilemmas, to think about ways of breaking down choices, forming new options, extending time horizons so that different choices can be made in the future, etc. The basic principle, then, is that the more dialogic and transparent is the process, the more likely it is that there will be resolutions possible that are good enough. Now, of course it is always possible that a monopoly of the agenda can subvert even a deliberation process – rather than just a simple voting process. Capture and monopoly are always dangers. Again, transparency and participation are probably the best remedies]

13. Jake Carlson

What theoretical distinctions do we set between participatory budgeting and a citizen-generated ballot initiative? In California, citizens can come up with an idea for a ballot initiative, get enough signatures, and place it up for votes by the citizens. The idea being voted on is generated by the citizenry, and its eventual passing is dependent on the vote of the people. Similarly, in Participatory Budgeting, the set of budget items is developed by the participants, and then voted on by them. While participatory budgeting is by definition restricted to budgetary issues, ballot initiatives in California have ranged from issues around drug policy, to election practices, to education, in addition to budgeting. But the history of California Ballot Initiatives has been less than emancipatory – an exemplar being the passing of Proposition 8. Therefore, what criteria do we set on a particular practice for it to pass a threshold for real utopic decision-making?

[EOW: PB is a variety of direct democracy, as is the California ballot initiative process. In the US variants of PB, the projects that are developed through the PB are also decided via rank-ordered voting on a specific day, but in other PB processes the ranking of projects is done through assemblies in which people present and debate alternative projects – more on the model of a New England town meeting. In any case, the key issue is the extent to which powerful actors with resources can manipulate and distort the process, just as they do in ordinary elections. I suppose the main reason why PB processes are not so subjected to that kind of distortion is that they are smaller scale and don't trigger the energies of powerful elites.]