

Militants and Citizens

The Politics of Participatory Democracy

in Porto Alegre

Gianpaolo Baiocchi

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Preface

On the evening of January 24, 2003, the leader of Brazil's Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), or Workers' Party, the former metalworker Luis Ignácio da Silva, known as Lula, walked onstage at the World Social Forum's single largest event as the country's newly elected president. Like its first two incarnations, the Third World Social Forum (WSF), a worldwide gathering of social justice activists, was held in Porto Alegre, having grown to an event of over 100,000 participants from more than 150 countries. When Lula came onstage, Porto Alegre's citizens mingled with *piqueteros* from Argentina, queer activists from India, living-wage activists from the United States, trade unionists from South Africa, and activists from literally thousands of different social movements. The electrified audience, already in a festive spirit, was mesmerized by his speech, which lent the event a sense of world-historical significance.

Flanked by well-known PT leaders like Benedita da Silva (the ex-governor of Rio de Janeiro) and Tarso Genro (Porto Alegre's ex-mayor), Lula called for international solidarity in support of his mandate in the face of the tough times ahead it would no doubt face.¹ Lula then publicly defended his decision to attend the World Economic Forum in Davos as one of a series of pragmatic decisions that would foster dialogue to solve common problems. He likened his term as president to the role of a soccer coach at a match; although there would no doubt be difficulties, his record ought to be examined at the end of the term rather than at its start. He closed by promising he would not deviate "one comma" from his socialist ideals. The crowd went wild and started to chant holding up two hands to signify the number eight, already calling for his reelection barely three weeks into his term.

The World Social Forum has catapulted Porto Alegre and its style of governance onto the world stage. Activists and scholars alike have recognized the WSF as a completely novel “movement of movements” that transcends traditional narratives of social movements:² it is a North-South transnational gathering without a hierarchy, unified ideology, or leadership that contains elements of previous nationally based movements without being easily definable as any of them.³ The organizing committee chose Porto Alegre partially because of practical concerns; it had, after all, a sympathetic municipal government with the capacity to host such an event and the experience to carry it off, given its years of successful participatory meetings. But the choice was also symbolic on the part of organizers; the city’s style of participatory democracy stood in for the alternatives that global social justice activists sought to craft. In Porto Alegre, progressive administrators based their decisions on real participatory input from the city’s least privileged, and radical democracy and discussion from below had guided and transformed the Left’s redistributive mission.

But Lula’s victory in October 2002 also represents something quite novel as well. The story of the Workers’ Party, a party of political outsiders, which barely made an impact in elections in the early 1980s, is one of a rupture with traditional Brazilian electoral politics and the traditional narratives of left-wing political parties. It is difficult to capture in terms of the distinctions between “social democratic and socialist” (or “reformist and revolutionary”) usually used to describe leftist projects. In a sense, Lula and the PT officials who shared the podium with him faced their social movement mirror image in the multitude of global justice activists who stood before them. Lula had in the past been “one of them”; he was a social movement activist become president.

The history of the PT in the 1980s and 1990s is one of evolution of a vision and practice centered around citizenship, participatory democracy, and good governance. The party’s spectacular electoral growth was marked by neither clientelist mobilization of the masses nor traditional cadre organizing, but by translating civil society’s innovations and forging alliances with its various sectors through institutions of participatory democracy such as its participatory budget. The growing importance of the strategy of promoting citizenship through participatory institutions is apparent in documents from the PT’s subsequent national congresses and resolutions.

At the center of the story of the PT’s evolution is Porto Alegre’s ex-

periment in participatory democracy, which has been emulated in many places throughout the world. A large body of literature describes that experiment, but this book takes a different approach from many other accounts of it. The story I tell here is neither directly about the PT nor about governance itself, but rather about civic life and civic practices in a city where participatory democracy has become a way of life. What is the quality of democracy in participatory meetings? What sort of political culture has evolved in civil society in Porto Alegre?

Properly answered, these questions tell us something about the PT, I think, and shed some light both on Lula and his government and on the evolution of the Latin American left more broadly. For many, the fact that the national PT appears for the moment to have abandoned a redistributive platform has been a disappointing turn of events, but this has at least something to do with its strategies. In contrast to the Porto Alegre administration, the national government has not yet opened significantly empowered participatory avenues for popular decision making. Rather, it has sought parliamentary legitimacy in ever-broader coalitions and more conservative economic policies. It has had difficulty with organized sectors of society, some of which have played a limited consultative role in the new government. Prominent Porto Alegrenses in the administration have proposed broad participatory reforms in the manner of the city’s Participatory Budget, or *Orçamento Participativo*, but to little avail.

But the book was written in the belief that there is something else to be learned far beyond Brazil from the story of Porto Alegre’s neighborhood associations and movements. Taking this case seriously forces us to pay attention to facets of civic life and citizenship that are often obscured from view, exposing their “artificiality.”⁴ It also suggests that trying to understand the ways in which social movements’ claims and counterclaims can force the state into democratic innovations that in some cases shape the polity itself, in ways that blur distinctions between movement and state, may be more useful than the image of social movements as contenders “rattling at the gates of the state.”⁵ Movements, we are reminded, may change, but do not necessarily come to an end, when they engage the state. The implicit definition that often drives social movement studies, that movements are equal to protest activity, finds a limit case here—movements have declined protest activity, but have not demobilized; quite the contrary. But perhaps the most important innovation has to do with the explicit connection of

civic participation to redistribution and to social justice, which calls for a kind of democratic theory that does not seek to “bracket” the effects of power at the door of the deliberative meeting; rather, it sees power, conflict, and, ultimately, the political as constitutive of the public sphere itself. This book is an attempt to add to that theory in light of the significant renewal that this experience represents.

This book was also written in the belief that the best testament to the experience of Porto Alegrenses is neither to romanticize them nor exaggerate their accomplishments, but to be fair, as well as true to my own interpretation. This was not easy, especially as I have, in some instances, come to disagree with people I really came to like and respect. Their insights nonetheless came to be important. I have, for instance, highlighted the civic consequences of participatory budgeting rather than its “good governance” or human development outcomes or its instrumental role in PT electoral successes. It is my belief that while these other aspects are important, the OP’s significance lies with its contribution to the quality of democracy in a way that is more immediately visible than its impact on development indicators and that will probably outlast the PT in power. This book was also written on the assumption that its audience would not be made up only of Brazilianists or Porto Alegre experts, and I have therefore tried to avoid drowning readers in the alphabet soup of municipal agencies, the Brazilian tax structure, or Brazilian political parties. I have also attempted to resist the temptation of writing a “Porto Alegre compendium” and have spared readers some of the fine-grained institutional and historical detail that comes from seven years of research. As much as possible, I have relegated that to the endnotes, pointing readers to other sources, including the many policy reports and works that extensively document various features of participatory budgeting. The companion website to this book, www.participatorybudgeting.org, contains links to those reports, as well as to updated information on Porto Alegre.

In retrospect, authoring a book may be the best example of individual appropriation of collective production. This particular one would not have been possible without a number of people and organizations. The list is too long to give in full, but it includes scholars, friends, and co-survivors at the University of Wisconsin, as well as my family on both the Baiocchi and Chakravartty sides. Sociological co-conspirators Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Amanda Lewis, Tyrone Forman, Black Hawk Hancock, and Brian Finch have helped me navigate the professional

transitions since the Ph.D. I received funding from the U.S. National Science Foundation and the Inter-American Foundation at dissertation time; funding from the Latin American Studies and Global Studies Centers at the University of Pittsburgh allowed me to carry out follow-up research, while giving me teaching leave. I had a number of reliable and capable research assistants along the way, and I would like to single out the exceptional work of Alexandre Medeiros, Taeko Hiroi, Ashley Currier, Courtney Brown, and Catherine Wilson. The people of Porto Alegre who welcomed me and who appear in the book only under pseudonyms made this research possible, as did good friends at CIDADE, especially Regina Pozzobon, Sérgio Baierle, and Vera Amaro. My *gaúcho* family offered support and inspiration, and I am sorry that Laurinda did not get to see this book completed. My good friends Jane Pillar and Jorge Maciel were always generous and patient, and my fellow “gringo” researcher Ben Goldfrank was constant company in Porto Alegre; our daily research and ideas sessions propelled the research forward. At the *prefeitura*, I’ll be forever indebted to Marlene Steffan, Assis Brasil, Antônio Girard, Carlos Schwank, Itamar Espanhol, and, most of all, Helena Monumat and Luciano Brunnet, whose *gentileza* and insight continue to inspire me and other researchers. A special mention goes to my fellow *orçamentólogo* Marcelo Silva, whose friendship and mentoring in all things to do with civil society made this book possible in more ways than one.

I’ve been also fortunate to have had a number of patient interlocutors: at Wisconsin, Paul Lichterman, Gay Seidman, Francisco Scarano, Ann Orloff, Nina Eliasoph, Mitch Duneier, and Mustafa Emirbaiyer offered helpful and kind commentary along the way. I am especially indebted to my dissertation co-chair Jane Collins for keeping me in graduate school, making sure this dissertation happened, and serving as a role model for a scholar-teacher, while offering research advice. Erik Wright, my other co-chair, is someone to whom I owe an immense intellectual and professional debt, and whose boundless enthusiasm for real utopias and clarity (especially the former) continues to be an influence. I’ve also learned a lot from a number of others with whom I’ve had the opportunity to exchange ideas, in particular, Leonardo Avrtizer, Judith Tendler, Jane Mansbridge, Archon Fung, Marcus Melo, Zander Navarro, Evelina Dagnino, Patrick Heller, Shubham Chauduri, Jeff Alexander, Christopher Chase-Dunn, Kathy Blee, Barry Ames, Millie Thayer, and Joya Misra. I’ve had the benefit too of generously close

commentary on the whole manuscript by John D. French, Peter Evans, Rich Wood, and Kate Wahl at Stanford University Press. My friends and colleagues John Markoff, Dan Clawson, Robert Zussman, Neil Gross, Mark Brenner, Annette Hunt, and Josh Whitford offered key comments on the text at various stages as well.

Anyone who knows the exigencies of two academic careers understands that at times the logic of exchange and the metaphors of reciprocity break down and movement forward is only possible with great acts of generosity and selflessness by one of the parties. I've been fortunate to have a *companheira* who has lovingly endured more talk of participatory governance than anyone ought to have to, while taking time from her own work to help me find coherence among jumbled thoughts and odd sentences. Paula more than anyone else made sure this book happened. To our delight, one of our daughter Aisha's first long words was "politics." She reminds us every day why we have to believe that a better world must be possible, and we hope her upbringing does not turn her away from politics.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CIDADE	Centro de Assessoria e Estudos Urbanos (Center for Consultancy and Urban Studies)
CMDCA	Conselho Municipal dos Direitos da Criança e do Adolescente (Municipal Council on the Rights of Children and Adolescents)
COMATHAB	Conselho Municipal de Acesso à Terra e Habitação (Municipal Council of Access to Land and Housing)
COMPROMEL	Comissão Pró-Melhoria da Grande Santa Rosa (Committee for Improvements in the Greater Santa Rosa Neighborhood)
COP	Conselho do Orçamento Participativo (Participatory Budget Council)
CPP	Conselho Popular do Partenon (Popular Council of Partenon)
CPZN	Conselho Popular da Zona Norte (Popular Council of the Norte District)
CRC	Coordenação de Relações com a Comunidade (Office of Community Relations)
CROP(s)	<i>coordenador regional do Orçamento Participativo</i> (district facilitator of the participatory budget)
DEMHAB	Departamento Municipal de Habitação (Municipal Housing Department)
EPG	Empowered Participatory Governance

FASE	Fundação de Assistência Social Educativa (Foundation for Social and Educational Services)
FESC	Fundação de Educação Social e Comunitária (Social and Community Education Foundation)
FPB	Frente Brasil Popular (Brazilian Popular Front)
FRACAB	Federação Rio-Grandense das Associações Comunitárias e de Bairros (Federation of Community and Neighborhood Associations of Rio Grande do Sul)
FROP	Fórum Regional de Delegados do Orçamento Participativo (District Forum of Delegates of the Participatory Budget)
GAPLAN	Gabinete de Planejamento (planning department)
IBASE	Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas
IBGE	Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics)
ICMS	<i>imposto sobre circulação de mercadorias e serviços</i> (tax on the circulation of merchandise and services)
IPEA	Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada
IPTU	<i>imposto predial e territorial urbano</i> (tax on buildings and urban lands)
ISSQN	<i>imposto sobre serviços de qualquer natureza</i> (services tax)
MCG	Movimento Comunitário Gaúcho (Community Movement of Rio Grande do Sul)
MDB	Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (Brazilian Democratic Movement)
OP	Orçamento Participativo (participatory budget)
PC do B	Partido Comunista do Brasil (Communist Party of Brazil)
PCB	Partido Comunista Brasileiro (Brazilian Communist Party)
PDS	Partido Democrático Social (Democratic Social Party); became the PPR, Partido Progressista Reformador (Reformist Progressive Party), in 1993
PDT	Partido Democrático Trabalhista (Democratic Labor Party; formerly the PTB)
PFL	Partido da Frente Liberal (Liberal Front Party)

PI	<i>plano de investimento</i> (yearly investment plan)
PMDB	Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party)
PMPA	Prefeitura Municipal de Porto Alegre (Municipal Prefecture of Porto Alegre)
PROCEMPA	Companhia de Processamento de Dados do Município de Porto Alegre
PSB	Partido Socialista Brasileiro (Brazilian Socialist Party)
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party)
PTB	Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (Brazilian Labor Party; subsequently the PDT)
SIMPA	Sindicato dos Municipários de Porto Alegre (Union of Municipal Employees of Porto Alegre)
UAMPA	União das Associações de Moradores de Porto Alegre (Union of Neighborhood Associations of Porto Alegre)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WSF	World Social Forum

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in Porto Alegre*

At the citywide **Budget Council**, councilors chosen from among **delegates** make final decisions on the budget. At the municipal level, **UAMPA** is an independent organization that represents the interests of neighborhood associations.

In the districts, at weekly meetings of the **Budget Forum** of the **Orçamento Participativo**, delegates from the neighborhoods decide on local projects and priorities. **Institutional Councils** with delegates from neighborhoods advise the municipality on service provision in areas such as health. **Popular councils** are independent organizations that represent neighborhood associations and local movements.

In many of the city's working-class and poor neighborhoods there are **neighborhood associations** and **cooperatives**. These are independent and voluntary entities, and most participate in the **Budget Forum**.

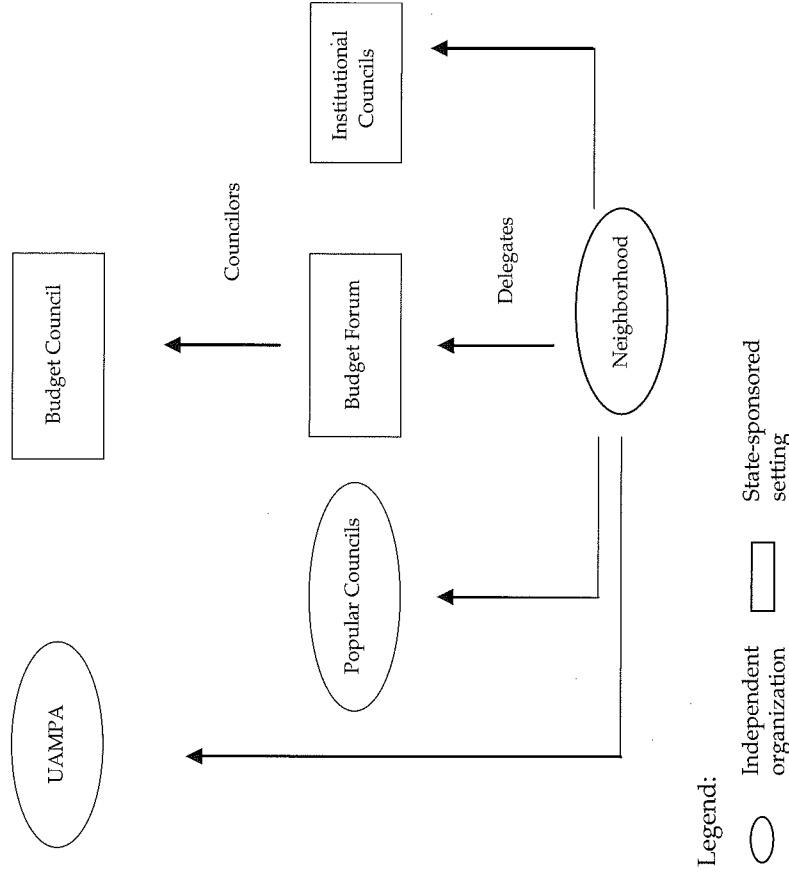


FIG. 1. Civil society organizations and participatory settings in Porto Alegre

“Attention, Companheiros!”

Every Monday night, at eight o'clock, in the back room of the São Judas Tadeu Church, across busy Ipanema road and in sight of the city's Catholic University, where students are just arriving for night courses around this time, a ritual takes place in the Partenon district of Porto Alegre.¹ A dozen or so older community activists, mostly retired men and women, convene at the front of the borrowed classroom to call to order a meeting of the Conselho Popular do Partenon (CPP), or Popular Council of Partenon. The principal activists, who include a retired policeman, a hotel manager, and a mechanic, speak in hushed tones for a few minutes, lining up the remaining items on the agenda. One of them writes the agenda on the blackboard, another goes to fetch people who are smoking a last cigarette outside. Someone else eyes the clock. A volunteer is found to take the minutes. The atmosphere is relaxed. This is clearly also a place to meet for friends who may not see one another during the week. They sit close together on school chairs, joking back and forth until the meeting starts, with someone at the front calling it to order with a loud “Attention, *Companheiros!*”

The meeting then proceeds with its series of small rituals, with *companheiros* calling on one another as they go through the weekly announcements, the meeting's agenda, and the decision-making process, until the firm deadline of ten o'clock, when the meeting disbands and people meander home. Although the participants call each other *companheiro* (“fellow [citizen]” or “brother” would be the best translation), and the CPP's bylaws list it as an “embryo of popular power,” much of the conversation at the meeting would be indistinguishable from that

heard at a PTA meeting in the United States, if not at one of the celebrated New England town meetings. The CPP's meetings are dedicated to a broad discussion of community affairs, and much of the agenda is usually filled with discussion of mundane items such as broken pipes, rude bus drivers, and problems at the public health clinic. Some of the agenda items are grander; once every few weeks, there is an invited guest, such as a professor from a local university speaking on Brazilian politics or the world economy.

Often, agenda items from the municipal system of participatory governance filter down to the CPP's agenda. This municipal participatory program, the *Orçamento Participativo* (OP), or Participatory Budget, revolves around decision making on municipal budget items. On the successive Wednesdays of most weeks in the Partenon district, some fifty residents from various parts of the district meet to discuss the relative merits of investment priorities for their district in semi-structured meetings facilitated by a representative of City Hall. In the OP, citizens at the local level, like those of Partenon, decide on needed projects for their area and prioritize them, based on their financial and technical feasibility. A budget council made up of representatives chosen from the city's districts makes final, binding decisions about the destination of municipal funds.

The OP has attracted a lot of international attention in recent years. The image of poor slum residents participating week in and week out to actually decide on urban improvements contrasts starkly with the dystopian images of an urban Brazil characterized by increasing violence, urban blight, and social segregation in the past few decades. Media images sensationalize the extent of the problems, but Brazil's big cities are today among the most violent, unequal, and problem-ridden in the world. They are home to both the country's richest and poorest people. While roughly one-fourth of urban residents live in makeshift slum housing, often without access to any urban services, Brazil's elite lives in closed high-security buildings, working and socializing in equally private environments. Against this backdrop, and at a time when scholars and activists throughout the world decry the state of representative democracy, the OP stands out as a system that has not only provided services and improvements for the urban poor but involved large numbers of them in active civic life.

Established by Porto Alegre's Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) municipal administration in the early 1990s, the OP has drawn tens of

thousands of participants each year to its meetings around the city to deliberate and decide on a variety of municipal matters. The majority of the participants have been from among Porto Alegre's poorer citizens who live in its working-class neighborhoods and poor slum areas. Many, having originally come to the OP to discuss a specific problem, have stayed on to take part in organizations like the CPP, if not in local neighborhood associations, which have come to thrive. In fact, the OP has become a central feature of community life in the city's sixteen districts, and many voluntary organizations like the CPP receive a powerful impetus from it.

The activities of CPP community activists and participants in the OP challenge a number of powerful assumptions about civic engagement in the academic literature. First, and most obviously, they challenge the assumption, on the part of social capital scholars and public sphere enthusiasts, that civic engagement takes place *fully outside* of the state realm, in an autonomous "lifeworld." While CPP meetings are voluntary and autonomous, they receive a powerful impetus from government sponsorship, and their activities are closely integrated with the city administration. The recent history of the CPP, and of the rest of civil society in Porto Alegre, reflects the impact of the establishment of municipal participatory programs. At a time when scholars are pointing to a crisis of the welfare state as a threat to industrial democracies, here we see an instance of an innovation by municipal government that has empowered local citizenry, fostered new activism in civil society, and created a novel form of coordination across the state-civil society divide.²

Second, the CPP's day-to-day practice offers a subtle commentary on the assumptions about the proper prerequisites to democracy, at a time when very many indicators of Brazilian democracy have pointed to stagnant, or declining, civic engagement after the country's transition from authoritarian rule to democracy (1984–88).³ Increasing distrust of and declining support for democracy have been noted.⁴ Brazil's democracy has often been described as fragile and unconsolidated. But Porto Alegre's civil society presents a different image. Not only are there active civic organizations of various kinds throughout the city, but many of the participants in these organizations are poor, not formally educated, and have lived through two decades of authoritarian rule, making them incomparably different from the participants of the salons and other settings of the bourgeois public sphere, not to mention at odds with time-hallowed models of civic engagement that point to the im-

portance of education and income in predicting civic participation.⁵ While the imagery of the "marginal urban poor" no longer holds sway, as it once did, the portrayal of the Latin American urban poor as entangled in social pathology and clientelism, and as unlikely candidates for democratic orientation, still has some influence.⁶

More subtly, the activities of the CPP call into question the often-unstated analytic separation between social movement activity and civic engagement, which Archon Fung has called the "mischievous" and "cooperative" faces of civil society.⁷ Social movements are disruptive, rowdy, and contestatory; civic engagement is virtuous, civil, and cooperative. CPP activists, many of whom participated in the prodemocracy movement, and most of whom would consider themselves "militants" on behalf of their communities, often describe their activities as part of "the movement" struggling for social justice in Brazil. But much of what they do also clearly falls under the rubric of civic engagement and virtue; they express concern about broad problems of the community and the city, encourage fellow residents to get involved in the activities of the OP, and invoke the importance of "average citizen" involvement in their community and local government. They use the language of citizenship to describe rights and responsibilities, and they describe themselves as citizens.

Community activists in Porto Alegre, such as those in the CPP, are both militants and citizens. They consider themselves part of a broad movement for social justice, engaged in what they believe is a process of social transformation. However, in order to achieve substantive change, they act in civic and cooperative ways. They are engaged in their communities and believe they must both monitor local government and bring more citizens to participate. While assuming both identities is not without contradictions, and there are settings where assuming one or the other role is considered more proper, practices within organizations like the CPP highlight the fact that the analytic distinction is artificial and born of an academic vision that evokes romantic images of virtuous citizens engaged in selfless discussion, which may not reflect the conflict inherent in such situations.⁸

Understanding these three puzzles about civic engagement in Porto Alegre—how and why municipal programs have fostered civic engagement, how it has been particularly successful at empowering the city's poorest participants, and how this has evolved into a political culture that straddles notions of citizenship and militancy—requires un-



FIG. 2. A meeting of the Conselho Popular do Partenon (CPP), 1999

derstanding the content of these civic practices in their "proper relational context," that is, exposing the web of enabling and constraining relationships that bear on civic life.⁹ Resolving these three puzzles constitutes the central theoretical question of this book: What is the impact of participatory governance on civic life?

The question is relevant not only to Porto Alegre or Brazil but also to debates about social movements, democratic theory, and public policy at large, not to mention to activists and reformers in other countries. In terms of social movements, it helps explain what happens when social movements' innovative practices are extended to broader publics. Much as social movements are contexts in which activists engage in the practices and relationships they would like to see extended to society at large, "prefiguring" them, in the democratic world such movements rarely extend beyond a small fraction of a population.¹⁰ In Brazil, reinventing and reclaiming "citizenship" was a dominant theme in social movements in the 1980s and 1990s.¹¹ In Porto Alegre, a prefigurative social movement innovation—norms of claims making and collective access to the public good—became institutionalized and extended to a whole city. Understanding the travails of such an innovation and its im-

impact on civic practices is an important issue for new and old democracies alike, addressing the neglected issue of coordination across "voluntary and empowered publics."¹² As local-level participatory reforms become more common throughout the developing world as a result of the decentralization of national states, this question assumes significant practical importance as well. Many scholars have discussed the benefits of participatory reforms, but fewer have addressed the impact of such reforms on civic life.¹³

The City of Porto Alegre

The city of Porto Alegre, today with a population of 1.314 million, lies at the center of a metropolitan area of almost three million.¹⁴ As the major industrial and financial center of Rio Grande do Sul, it is relatively well served by municipal services, and with high social indicators by Brazilian standards.¹⁵ Its current literacy rate of 96.5 percent is among the highest in the country for a large city, as are the average life expectancy (71.5 years) and gross primary school enrollment (92.2 percent) rates. In 2000, Porto Alegre ranked eleventh in human development indicators among Brazilian municipalities overall and second among state capitals.¹⁶

Since the 1950s, Brazil has rapidly urbanized; today, roughly 80 percent of Brazilians live in cities, whereas fifty years ago, less than a third of the population did. In most urban centers, the quality of life deteriorated steadily in the 1980s. With continued investment in large-scale agriculture, the rate of rural out-migration was much higher than could be absorbed by the urban labor market.¹⁷ Social problems in peripheral urban areas were also exacerbated because of rapid deindustrialization and the "informalization" of many jobs. Porto Alegre lost 30 percent of

TABLE 1
Irregular Settlements in Porto Alegre, 1965–1995

	1965	1975	1981	1987	1995	2000
Number of settlements	56	124	145	183	215	
Population	65,595	105,833	171,419	326,608	196,007	290,394
Percentage of city's population	8.1	9.5	15.2	24.7	15.5	22.1

SOURCE: Pozzobon 1998: 9; PMPA/SMP 1998; Marquetti 2001.

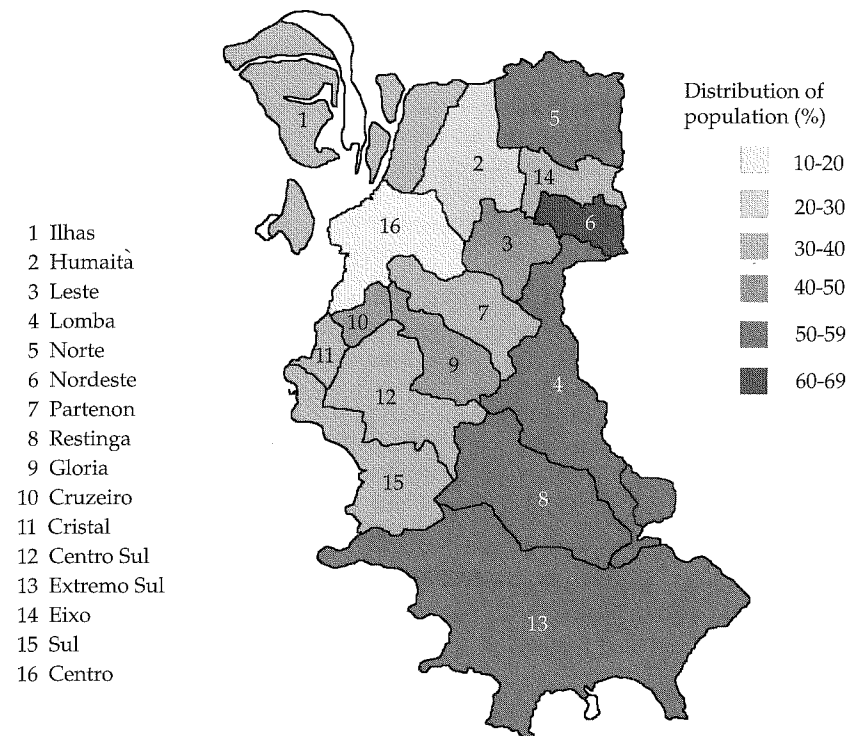


FIG. 3. Porto Alegre's districts and the distribution of poverty, 1996. Adapted with permission from PROCEMPA

net formal jobs between 1986 and 1995, most of them in industry.¹⁸ Like much of Brazil, the city also experienced an exacerbation of urban poverty and a relative decline in revenues during those years.¹⁹ Porto Alegre's slum areas, or "irregular housing settlements," have grown since the mid 1960s (table 1).

Almost a quarter of Porto Alegre's population today lives in "irregular housing," such as slums or invaded areas, which fan outward from the city center, with the poorest districts generally the farthest from downtown. Figure 3 shows the city's districts and the levels of poverty in each of them, based on 1996 figures.

The districts closer to downtown tend to have larger numbers of middle- and working-class residents, while the districts on the periphery form a belt of poverty, mostly inhabited by those outside of the for-

mal labor market. Illegal makeshift settlements are scattered throughout the city, but concentrated in peripheral districts, often as a result of forced removals.

Structural Transformations of the State

These social and economic changes have been accompanied by changes in the structure of the national state. After Brazil returned to formal democracy, large-scale municipal elections took place in 1985, and the "decentralization of government" was codified with the first post-dictatorship constitution, ratified in 1988. This signaled a broad shift from national to local state power, reversing the dictatorship-era pattern of centralization.²⁰ A coalition of actors, which included modernizers within government, progressive politicians, and grassroots activists, formed the coalition behind the change.²¹ Local governments were given more political autonomy from the federal state, and were free to develop "municipal organic laws," essentially municipal constitutions that could legislate on matters such as land-use policies. The new constitution also increased the taxes municipalities could raise, as well as the proportion of state and federal taxes passed directly to the city, such as vehicle, sales, and service taxes. The constitution decreed certain areas of service provision as "primarily" municipal domains, such as health, while establishing legal provisos for participatory mechanisms in municipal planning and in certain areas of service provision.²² Figure 4 summarizes the structure of Brazilian government and fiscal budgeting.

Over the course of the 1990s, municipalities became the principal providers of housing, education, cultural input, and health services.²³ So while the share of total social spending in Brazil by municipalities increased from 11 percent to 19 percent between 1987 and 1996, municipalities have had increasingly to raise local revenues in order to meet demands for services.²⁴ Some cities, like Porto Alegre, have been favored by rules that privilege the kinds of taxes that can be raised by large, rich cities, such as land-use taxes.²⁵ Although it exacerbated some inequalities and loaded new responsibilities onto municipalities, Brazil's decentralization created the institutional openings for actors with ties to civil society and social movements to carry out progressive experiments. By the late 1980s, many large city governments in Brazil began to establish decentralization programs alongside participatory pro-

Brazil is a federal republic with three levels of government, federal, state, and municipal. Each level of government raises revenues and spends funds, and states and municipalities also depend on transfers from higher levels. Constitutionally, there are "concurrent responsibilities" for government functions among the three levels of government, but since the late 1980s, the country's more than 5,500 municipalities have become the de facto source for social spending and public investment, having assumed responsibility for health, primary education, social service provision, and transportation.

Municipal governments have an executive, headed by a mayor, elected for a four-year term; and a municipal legislature, composed of city councilors, also elected for four-year terms. The mayor appoints the heads of various municipal departments, such as the Planning Department and the Housing Department. There are some restrictions on municipal budgets, such as spending caps on personnel and minimum health expenditures, but municipal governments have significant leeway in setting the budget. The municipal budget is, by law, submitted by the executive branch to the municipal legislature for approval toward the end of the year. The *Orçamento Participativo* in Porto Alegre is not an official government institution, and it is the mayor who "officially" turns in the yearly budget to the legislature.

FIG. 4. The structure of government and the budget in Brazil

grams. The capital cities of Curitiba, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, and Salvador had all developed participatory structures by 1985–88, with varying degrees of decision-making power.²⁶ There have also been local experiments in the areas of environmental action, health provision, poverty reduction, private-public partnerships, public transportation, and the use of computer resources at the municipal level.²⁷

Brazil's Democracy: The New Citizenship, the Workers' Party, and the Orçamento Participativo

The transition to democracy in Brazil has juxtaposed a largely unresponsive, corrupt political system, dominated by patronage, particularly at the local and state levels, and an emergent civil society, based on social movements that since the mid 1980s have taken new stances on citizenship and public policy. Resolving this dichotomy is the fundamental challenge faced by Brazil today.²⁸

Brazilian democracy's well-known ills have been labeled "social apartheid": many policies have carried over from the authoritarian period, and the majority of the country's citizens experience a disjuncture

between formal democracy and actual, lived democracy.²⁹ Notwithstanding the social mobilization to impeach the president in 1992, Brazilian political life remains marked by patronage, as well as by a weak and incoherent party system, defined by personalism, and an "excess of veto players" in a democratic system that is systematically biased toward pork-barrel politics.³⁰ Low civic engagement, a predatory political culture, and a minimal state that is not responsive to the majority of the population persist.³¹ Large numbers of blank or spoiled ballots are cast in every election, and in surveys, large percentages of Brazilians say that they would not vote if not required to do so.³² According to studies like the Latinobarómetro and World Values Surveys, Brazilians are dissatisfied with their democratic institutions, and support for democratic values has wavered in recent years.³³

The 1970s and 1980s were also characterized, however, by the appearance of new civic associations and new urban social movements making claims at the local level, often backed by ideologies of social transformation and a break with the past. The "new unionism" around São Paulo, the grassroots church activism (in the Ecclesiastic Base Communities), and the struggles for urban rights were all part of a diffuse democratic movement that has been well described in the literature.³⁴ These new movements politicized questions of access to services, coalescing around nationally organized movements for urban rights such as the Cost of Living Movement, the Housing Movement, and the Collective Transportation Movement, in the mid-to-late 1970s, which emphasized novel practices and values, including autonomy from manipulative government agencies and patronage schemes, proceduralism and democracy in decision making, and democratic access to urban services.³⁵

What some have described as a decline in social movement activity in the 1980s and 1990s in terms of contentious activity no doubt partially reflects the new practices of movements in the 1990s, some of which have sought out more permanent institutionalization in the form of NGOs and similar organizations.³⁶ With the transition to democracy, social movements shifted practices and discourses toward demanding a voice and participation in local governments and toward proposing specific policies.³⁷ In 1989, for instance, the national meeting of the National Forum for Urban Reform concluded with a statement of principles that called for participation in the running of city affairs to be regarded as a basic right of citizenship.³⁸ These new propositional

practices of social movements were grounded in the ideologies of movements of the 1970s and 1980s, and while demanding dialogue with the state, they simultaneously challenged the limits of representative democracy by calling for participatory reconfigurations of traditional rights.³⁹ Evelina Dagnino redefined citizenship as "participatory citizenship" that dominated Brazilian social movements in the 1980s and 1990s.⁴⁰ Its premise was "the right to have rights" and the invention of "new rights that emerge from specific concrete practices."⁴¹ In demanding the recognition of new forms of social relationships mediated as new relationships between civil society and the state.

The Workers' Party

The Workers' Party, or PT, emerged as one of the political parties of the post-authoritarian period as a political party with the ability to translate civil society demands into party platform. It was founded in 1980 as a party where "social movements could have an emphasis on internal democracy and openness, reject authoritarian centralism and vanguardist positions and aligning class interests with the struggle for participatory citizenship."⁴³ The spectrum of founding members included, in addition to industrial union workers and leftist agitators, progressive Christian activists, representatives from an array of social movements, and intellectuals.⁴⁴

Under strict rules, such as the absence of individual campaign funds, PT activists competed in the limited 1982 elections, but reaped only one victory, in São Paulo state.⁴⁵ The party built up support over the next several years and was a prominent player in the national movement for direct elections, winning two municipalities in the 1985 elections and some seats in congress in 1986, followed by a number of PT mayors in 1988, which brought roughly 10 percent of Brazilians under PT administrations. The party continued to grow in the 1990s, often experiencing electoral victories followed by setbacks, but nonetheless becoming a significant force in congress and senate.⁴⁶ And in 2002, the PT's candidate for president, Luís Ignácio da Silva, "Lula," was elected in a runoff contest with 61 percent of votes.

As the party grew in significance, it evolved ideologically. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the PT significantly broadened its discourse to a range of social issues, making broad alliances, and emphasizing democratic participation in government. At its Fifth National Meeting in

1987, the party renewed its positions on party liberty, civil liberties, and the right to association, criticizing the eastern European model of that era and calling for a "democratic popular" government, essentially a partly socialist state with democratic elections.⁴⁷ In 1991, at its First National Congress, the PT defined its program as democratic socialist, and in 1999, at its Second National Congress, it called for a two-stage "democratic revolution" anchored in broad and empowered popular participation. The rainbow of movements and social sectors represented within the PT also broadened, throughout the 1990s,⁴⁸ and the party started to win votes consistently in medium-sized and smaller cities throughout the country.⁴⁹

The PT's experience in government and, in particular, its successful experiments, such as the OP in Porto Alegre, has been one of the driving forces behind these changes in the party. In many cases, despite the implementation of innovative social programs, many early administrations had trouble with intense factional disputes over the meaning of a PT administration.⁵⁰ On one hand, privileging the party's bases could jeopardize its reelection by narrowing the spectrum of potential supporters; on the other, broadening the range of social demands too much risked disfiguring the party's redistributive platform and alienating its traditional bases of support. The inability of various PT governments to effectively negotiate different societal demands was the source of many administrations' difficulties with both internal struggles and external pressures.

The learning experiences of early city administrations showed that devising appropriate political solutions would be as important as, if not more important than, good policies and programs.⁵¹ Successful administrations were those that implemented participatory programs as a strategy for negotiation of demands and legitimization of platforms in ways that helped avert some of the conflicts. Broad-based participation provided political solutions: in terms of negotiating societal demands, it created settings where claimants were part of the negotiation of demands; in terms of governance, broad-based participation generated legitimacy for governance strategies, if not improving governance directly. Successful programs went beyond organized social movements, unions, and neighborhood associations to include unorganized sectors among the poor, working classes, and middle classes. By the mid 1990s, participatory programs had become standard in PT municipalities, and OP reforms were adopted in practically every PT local government

from that time onward, not to mention the large number of municipalities not under PT control that have "copied" the OP.⁵²

The Workers' Party in Porto Alegre

Porto Alegre figures centrally in the evolution of the OP. The OP became the model for so many other administrations; the city also became the model administration administered by the party. But the PT was not originally a strong party in Porto Alegre; it was then a stronghold of the Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (PTB), since renamed the Partido Democrático Trabalhista (PDT), or Democratic Labor Party, which has a history of neighborhood association movement and unions interests.⁵³ The populist PTB exerted enormous political influence in Porto Alegre until the military coup of 1964. Since the fall of the PDT, it has continued to exert significant influence in the city. After the reinstatement of democracy, only declining in the late 1990s. The PDT today reflects a contradictory mix of economic and social progressive platforms, "family and country" discourses, and support for a few notable politicians. At the time of the first PT administration in Porto Alegre, the PDT was still very strong in Porto Alegre.

Only having elected one city councilor to the legislature between 1982 and 1988, and one federal deputy, the PT registered barely over 10 percent of votes in the 1985 municipal elections in Porto Alegre. In the 1989 presidential elections, the PDT candidate captured almost 70 percent of the votes in Porto Alegre, which was ten times higher than the PT vote, while in the 1990 gubernatorial race, the PT got only 10 percent of the vote in the city.⁵⁴ The PT would only become a significant electoral voice in the course of subsequent administrations, as the PDT became less important.⁵⁵ The PDT had influence in local neighborhood associations, in the directorate of the Union of Neighborhood Associations, and in the directorate of the Municipal Employees' Union.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, largely as a result of the OP, the PT has established itself as the dominant political party in town. It managed reelection with increasing support in 1992, 1996, and 2000, and among the one-third of Porto Alegre's citizens who have a party preference, two-thirds declare the PT to be their party of choice. Nonetheless, the PT continues to be a minority in the legislature, holding from nine to twelve seats, out of thirty-three, in the 1990s.⁵⁷

The Orçamento Participativo

The OP was first introduced in 1989, and after trial and errors, succeeded by the mid 1990s in regularly drawing very large numbers of participants.⁵⁸ By 2000, upwards of 14,000 participants attended the first yearly OP assembly. Participation has been high, especially in the city's poorer districts, where, in practice, OP meetings are a key venue for meetings of community activists. The average participant in the OP today is poorer and less educated than the citywide average. In 2000, almost two-thirds of participants came from households with an income of four times the minimum wage (i.e., roughly U.S.\$280 a month) or less, and 60 percent had no more than an eighth-grade education, against citywide averages of 45 percent and 55 percent, respectively.⁵⁹ Every year, a substantial portion of participants are first-timers, without any prior participation in civil society.⁶⁰ Table 2 profiles OP participants in 2000 in terms of income, race, gender, and education. As it starkly shows, OP participants at all levels are poorer, less educated, and more likely to be black than the city averages.⁶¹

The OP has provided for significant improvements in the city's poorer areas.⁶² A significant portion of the yearly municipal budget (between 9 percent and 21 percent of a total budget that amounted to U.S.\$610 million in 2000)⁶³ is dedicated to OP investments, systematically favoring poorer districts over wealthier ones.⁶⁴ The OP has approved hundreds of projects, including street paving, urban improvements in precarious areas, sewage, municipal public education, and health, with a completion rate of nearly 100 percent.⁶⁵ These projects have contributed to an increase to almost full coverage in sewage and water,⁶⁶ a threefold increase in the number of children in municipal schools,⁶⁷ and significant increases in the number of new housing units provided to needy families.⁶⁸ Porto Alegre's expenditures in certain areas, such as health and housing, are much higher than the national average,⁶⁹ and the municipality has tended over the years to spend less and less in administrative costs.⁷⁰ From the perspectives of governance and quantitative indicators, the OP has succeeded in attracting broad-based participation from the poorer strata of Porto Alegre's citizenry and in effectively linking that participation to redistributive outcomes.

The very successes of the OP raise several important questions about its participatory aspects. The literature on Porto Alegre has by now become quite extensive, and insightful case studies by Rebecca Abers, Lu-

TABLE 2
Profile of *Orçamento Participativo* Participants, 2000

	Citywide Average	All Participants	Delegates	Councilors
Women	55.4%	56.4%	55%	27%
Low income ^a	11.4%	30.3%	23.7%	21.4%
Black ^b	15.4%	28.1%	21%	22%
Low education ^c	15.8%	60.3%	39%	36%

SOURCE: CIDADE 2001; IBGE 2001.

^aLow income here means household earnings below twice the minimum wage.

^bBlack here refers to the census categories *negro* (black) and *pardo* (brown).

^cLow education means education up to completed primary (grade 8).

ciano Fedozzi, and Sérgio Baierle carefully address the OP's origins, unfolding, and impacts.⁷¹ The city has also recently achieved "global status" for this participatory scheme, recognized by activists, international organizations, and policy makers from the North and South. It stands in contrast to the well-known electoral and institutional failures of leftist municipal administrations in Latin America and elsewhere.⁷² Scholars have generally pointed to the novel institutional forms involved in participatory governance and to its governmental performance.⁷³

The missing dimension of the research is a systematic examination of decision making and associative practices within and outside of the OP, and the relationships between them. While the participatory institutions in Porto Alegre have brought tens of thousands of participants to assemblies, discussion of the quality of democratic practice in those assemblies is still largely absent from academic discussion. High numbers of participants, which is often taken as *prima facie* evidence of democratic engagement in the OP, could mean that many of Porto Alegre's citizens engage in unfettered and reflexive discussions and contribute to the construction of a "collective will" (such as described for the Habermassian "public sphere"); but high numbers are also compatible with a system that simply generates legitimacy without actual input or discussion.⁷⁴ The difference between these two versions from the point of view of the democratic significance of the experiment is immense, but systematic qualitative evidence beyond selective interviews or the review of official figures is required. Advocates of Porto Alegre's experiment, such as its ex-mayor Tarso Genro, have described the OP as a "nonstate public sphere" but the question has not been empirically addressed.⁷⁵

The challenge for social movements in Brazil in the 1990s and be-



FIG. 5. A volunteer registers participants at an Orçamento Participativo meeting

yond has been precisely how to convert its innovations into meaningful state policies that promoted citizenship, rather than "re-clientilization" given the conflict between movement practices and "the logic of political society in Brazil," according to Leonardo Avritzer. In reviewing the results of a 2000 national study on the topic, Dagnino finds that the results of civil society participation in such public spaces is mixed. But if the OP's inception indeed contributes to the formation of a genuine Brazilian "public space," or, as I advance here, to an innovative "state-civil society regime," then understanding these processes in their day-to-day intricacies in and around this system becomes crucial to theories of direct democracy and civil society far beyond Porto Alegre and Brazil.⁷⁶

Toward a Relational Theory of Civil Society

The Porto Alegre story is the story of the mutual impact of participatory institutions and civil society on each other. The interest in the issue is not new. Earlier thinkers from Alexis de Tocqueville to Rosa Luxemburg and John Dewey concerned themselves with the conditions under which participation in governmental decision making could enhance public life, engage civil society, and contribute to the construction of genuinely democratic practices.⁷⁷ But when we turn to the current discussion, neither of the two main relevant traditions in sociology, the society-centered theory of democracy and the social movements approach, has a language for exposing relationships *across* society and the state, for which we have to turn to a relational approach.

The so-called social capital theories, in which the work of Robert Putnam and his collaborators is central, are the current focus of much of the society-centered discussion of democracy. In this approach, "networks of trust" in civil society, where norms of reciprocity and collaboration are taught and reinforced, are viewed as crucial to the health of democracy.⁷⁸ Bowling leagues, environmental groups, and all manner of civic associations contribute to the functioning of democracy and help keep the democratic state in check by fostering trust and discouraging clientelism and rent-seeking. This literature has sparked a vigorous debate about the origins of and preconditions for democracy, but what is of concern here is its underlying assumption, that civil society is by definition *autonomous and separate from the state*. This creates two problems for the discussion at hand; first, it obscures spaces *between* the state and civil society (such as the OP) as settings for civic action. Second, and more fundamentally, it does permit us to analyze the dynamic processes of interaction *across* state and civil society that constrain and enable both state and civil society. Neo-Tocquevillians like Putnam emphasize how a vibrant associational life contributes to honest and responsive political institutions. But they do not ask, conversely, how democratized political institutions influence associational life.

Social movement scholarship, particularly in its political opportunities (or "political process") guise, has offered much insight into the responsiveness of social movements to changes in the polity. While in recent times the literature has moved away from a purely state-centered orientation, the now classic formulation that has guided inquiries emphasizes that *political opportunities*, or signals from the state or from in-

stitutional actors, both encourage and discourage collective action from below.⁷⁹ As with society-centered theories of the democracy, the usefulness and assumptions of these social movements theories have been the subject of a lively debate.⁸⁰ From the point of view of the Porto Alegre story, however, this literature lacks an accounting of the processes by which social movements themselves can come to *change* the state, having little to say about the fact that the OP has its origins in social movement demands. This literature has too seldom asked what happens when social movements "win," which can affect "the rules of the game" in democratic polities.⁸¹

In contrast, a relational political sociology does provide a basis for thinking through the impact of participatory governance on civil society and vice versa. A central insight of relational sociologies in general is that traditional sociological categories like "class" or "social movements" ought to be disaggregated and understood as clusters of "people, power, and organizations," enabling us to see society as "patterned . . . relationships among cultural, economic, social, and political practices."⁸² Relational political sociologists do not see civil society as a unitary entity separate from the state or the economy; rather, they reframe civil society as crisscrossing groups of people engaged in voluntary activities,⁸³ or as I propose here, the *institutions, practices, and networks of voluntary life*. Such an approach calls for the unpacking of the sometimes contradictory relationships between the state and voluntary associations and the way in which these shifting relationships both reflect societal social power and shape the functioning of the state and civil society.⁸⁴ The three central concepts here are state-civil society regimes, civic configurations, and civic practices.

Institutions: State-Civil Society Regimes

State-civil society regimes are the stable pattern of state-civil society interactions, whose defining feature is the way that societal demands are recognized. A regime includes all of the ways in which citizens interact with the state, as well as all of the ways in which the state might limit or enable the activities in civil society, and it is defined by the way these interactions constitute a pattern of recognition of societal demands. A relational sociology notes the way that distinctive, stable, regimes create specific logics for civic engagement that encourage or discourage particular kinds of practices in civil society, and pays attention to how the structured "turns" of state-society interactions at each

round reflect the balance of power and legacies of previous turns, limiting some possibilities but also opening up other ones.⁸⁵ A regime also establishes a political logic that becomes the accepted way of resolving conflict between actors in society.⁸⁶

In trying to understand the OP and its impact on civil society, a relational approach looks for how the OP is part of an overall pattern of recognition of societal demands by the state, and on *all* of the ways in which various segments in civil society (individuals, pressure groups, movements, civic organizations) interact with the state (formal, informal settings, meetings, protests, etc.), attempting to understand how it is that these interactions impinge on the functioning both of the state and of civil society.⁸⁷ Regimes vary from very open regimes to starkly authoritarian ones, and formal distinctions are possible along three possible axes: (1) the state's overall openness to societal demands; (2) the constraints the state places on civil society; and (3) the dominant institutional form of state-society interactions over societal demands. The broad family of regimes in which the state does not place significant constraints on civil society and is open to societal demands is composed of affirmative democratic regimes. Within that category, a division is possible between representative regimes and *empowered participatory regimes*. The OP is part of an empowered participatory regime marked by a high degree of openness to societal demands, few constraints on civil society, and bottom-up empowered participation as a way to process societal demands. Representative regimes rely instead on institutions like parliaments as the mechanism for input and processing of demands.⁸⁸

TABLE 3
Comparison of Tutelage and Democratic Affirmative Regimes

	State-Civil Society Regime		
	Tutelage	Democratic Affirmative Regimes	
		Representative	Empowered participatory
Openness to societal demands	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constraints on civil society	High	Low	Low
Input and filtering of societal demands	Direct dialogue, state as ultimate arbiter	Representative institutions	Bottom-up participation

A regime of *tutelage*, in contrast, has as its principal characteristic the fact that the state places significant constraints on civil society in terms of demanding political allegiance in exchange for the recognition of societal demands. Tutelage regimes do not rely on democratic representative institutions so much as on direct dialogue between civil society claimants and the state,⁸⁹ but the state may impose constraints by selectively recognizing certain actors according to political allegiance.⁹⁰ The difference between tutelage and empowered participatory regimes is not whether there is or is not participation (and in fact, there may be significant participation as part of tutelage), but whether the participation on the part of civil society is politically constrained. In a tutelage regime, participation is always constrained, and the state retains final authority in decision making. Earlier periods of Porto Alegre's history characterized by tutelage regimes were followed by the installation of an empowered participatory regime, and in addition to a political logic, each type of regime established a logic of civic engagement.⁹¹

Civic Configurations and Practices

Within a particular regime, where there is a stable set of state-society interactions around societal demands that promote certain kinds of civic action, there may be local variation in the configuration of actors, organizations, and networks within civil society that position themselves vis-à-vis the regime. These *civic configurations* are shorthand for the local variation in the "interconnected, interdependent, and complementary set of actors" in civil society.⁹² There can be variation in the levels of organization, as well as in the cohesiveness within these configurations. Attention to civic configurations also means paying attention to conflict and contestation within them, as well as attention to how different sites and organizations are connected together (how *brokerage* is performed), and how new actors are accepted as legitimate within a civic configuration (how *certification* is performed). In this book, I study three districts that have distinct configurations during the period of the empowered participatory regime—a highly organized and cohesive district, a highly organized and divided district, and a cohesive but weakly organized district. My argument is that each of these configurations sets the stage differently for civic practices within the overall empowered participatory regime.

Civic practices can be defined as a patterned set of day-to-day behaviors oriented toward associational life. When people engage in associa-

tional activity, they improvise, but they do so based on available scripts and in specific contexts that subtly constrain and enable action; moreover, they are bound by unspoken rules and assumptions.⁹³ In her study of meetings of volunteers, for example, Jane Mansbridge suggests that certain unspoken rules about appropriateness constrain behavior, thus promoting the avoidance of open conflict.⁹⁴ Attention to informal rules also means attention to the subtle ways in which actors present themselves in these settings and what may be at stake in doing so,⁹⁵ such as maintaining reputation and honor, particularly for those who have some standing in the community.⁹⁶

The Study

This book is an "extended case study" that seeks to isolate the features of participatory reforms and the way they have impinged on civil society as a basis for a reconstruction of theories of civil society. Although it does not rely exclusively on participant observation, it was conceived very much in the spirit of the extended case method of Michael Burawoy and his students.⁹⁷ And in line with an earlier generation of classic urban case studies, such as Robert Dahl's 1961 study of New Haven, I have attempted to use the specifics of this case study to make larger theoretical arguments about civil society, politics, and participation.⁹⁸ More in line with classic studies such as Robert and Helen Lynd's *Middletown* (1929) and St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's *Black Metropolis* (1945) than with contemporary political sociology, however, I develop my account by relying on both evidence about change over time and ethnographic evidence, as well as aggregate indicators. The ethnography is based on two years of investigation in three districts of the city of Porto Alegre between 1997 and 1999 and in the municipal Conselho do Orçamento Participativo (COP), or Participatory Budget Council, as well as over 150 interviews, lasting from one to eight hours.

Relying on a variety of indicators, based on direct and indirect evidence gathered from interviews and archives, I analyze citywide changes, systematically compare different districts of the city, with different "starting points," and examine different associative outcomes in each of those districts. In line with the methodological belief implicit in relational arguments that the "quantitative-qualitative divide" is artificial, the aggregate evidence from the surveys is interspersed throughout the text, and the particulars of the research strategy and its guiding

logic are both described in the Appendix, as are the potential sources of bias in this kind of research.

Although the city of Porto Alegre is treated as the "case" in this study, I focused my ethnographic investigation on district-level events rather than on city-based events, because it is at the level of the district that the most immediate interactions between civil society and municipal government take place. Treating districts separately also allows me to follow a "most variance strategy" in the case study,⁹⁹ because they make up highly differentiated social contexts and variation in terms of civic configurations.

I chose one very poor district without a significant associative tradition prior to the OP, and two largely working-class districts with divergent histories. The small (population 25,000) Nordeste district is one of the poorest and most remote districts of the city, with low rates of education and a median monthly household income for 1998 that was about half the city's average. This district was also chosen because of its lack of well-defined networks of citizens or of clear activist neighborhood traditions prior to the OP. Both the Partenon and Norte districts are larger (populations 114,000 and 86,000) and have a long history of neighborhood organizing, and both have significant working-class and lower-middle-class neighborhoods, in addition to slum areas. The Partenon district has a "militant" associative tradition tied to pro-democracy movements and the progressive church, and it has cohered around the OP. The Norte district has a history of conflict between neighborhood associations with connections to politicians of the PTB/PDT and insurgent activists with ties to progressive social movements, and these fissures have only been exacerbated during the establishment of the OP.

The Organization of the Book

The story I tell in this book includes the PT, innovative municipal administrative institutions, social movements, cadres of local administration officials, and church activists in Porto Alegre. But it is not a story primarily about any of these groups or institutions so much as a story of common citizens becoming involved with the day-to-day affairs of the community, developing ties, and becoming involved in pragmatic problem solving. The book traces these changing civic practices and

networks in Porto Alegre in response to democratic innovations in the city's management, although not only through a historical narrative. The first part of the book provides the context and history of the experiment and its impact on civic practices in Chapter 2, starting with the neighborhood associations of the 1950s in Porto Alegre, before focusing on changes in the current period (1991–2000), while in Chapter 3, I tell the story of the OP's routinization from the bottom up in the three very different districts of the city I chose to study. The subsequent, ethnographic chapters discuss day-to-day practices in and around the district-level Budget Forum meetings. Chapter 4 discusses the "deliberativeness" of OP meetings, addressing how activists construct solutions to participatory dilemmas, while Chapter 5 describes the way activists make use of Budget Council meetings to conduct a variety of community activities beyond strictly budgeting matters, and create public-sphere-like interactions. Chapter 6 describes the day-to-day functioning of civil society in Porto Alegre and discusses sources of authority within it, and Chapter 7 offers some conclusions about the implications of this remarkable story.