

# Between Liberal and Participatory Democracy: Tensions and Dilemmas of Leftist Politics in Brazil\*

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*Abstract.* Brazil's left, especially the Workers' Party (PT), largely views civil society participation as a means of correcting the shortcomings of liberal democracy, and to break clientelistic politics. This article questions the underlying assumptions that civil society is inherently a pro-democratic force and that participatory arrangements enjoy sufficient autonomy from local power dynamics to democratise state action. Effective participation requires a positive interplay between government commitment, civic virtues, and supportive institutional design. Participatory democracy presupposes a well-functioning representative democracy rather than curing its ills. The article compares four municipal health councils in towns with varying combinations of government commitment and civiness, which highlights a complex interaction of political, civic, and institutional factors that shaped deliberative participation.

Brazil has witnessed considerable dissatisfaction with the perceived shortfalls of liberal democracy in delivering the social and political transformations desired by many citizens in the aftermath of the military dictatorship. The return to the political institutions of liberal democracy is perceived to have done little to overcome the country's abysmal levels of social inequity. Longstanding particularistic and undemocratic practices of clientelism, patronage and corruption have not disappeared. And unaccountable political elites, especially at the local level, may even have been strengthened as a result of decentralisation. Disenchantment with liberal democracy has led Brazil's Left, especially the Workers' Party (PT), to advance a conception of deepening democracy from the bottom up through popular participation in local public spheres. These are seen as alternative ways of promoting

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democratic consolidation by breaking entrenched patterns of ‘institutional hybridism’ between formal liberal democracy and informal particularism. Institutional arrangements like Participatory Budgeting (PB) and deliberative sector councils are supposed to transform traditional patterns of public management and policy-making, to enhance transparency and accountability, and to promote citizenship. The experiment of Porto Alegre has been widely praised as an example of a new local politics of democratisation that fits well within the dominant development discourse of good governance, decentralisation, participation, civil society and social capital.

However, there are reasons to doubt that an emphasis on local participatory democracy either amounts to an alternative account of democratisation or produces the kind of long term social and political transformations sought by its protagonists. Approaches that emphasise local participation are based on several assumptions. First, that civil society actors are an inherently pro-democratic force, willing and capable of exerting ‘social control’ over state action. Secondly, that participatory arrangements are autonomous from – rather than embedded in – civic and political dynamics; hence that they function as a source rather than a consequence of political transformation. And, thirdly, that citizens and their organisations will transform their preferences within a discursive process that generates public spirit, transcending parochialism and allowing for polity-wide decision-making beyond power politics. This article examines whether these are realistic assumptions, and it analyses the roles of participatory and liberal democratic institutions in efforts at deepening democracy. How do these institutions interact with each other? How do they affect the various actors of civil and political society? What are the tensions and dilemmas that arise and what kind of democracy should left-of-centre governments focus on so as to promote democratic consolidation?

The article is based on a comparative study of deliberative health councils and local democracy in four municipalities. These councils are functional bodies of joint decision-making between civil society and local governments.<sup>1</sup> Federal legislation has explicitly endowed them with competence to formulate local health policy and allocate resources; their decisions are binding for local governments. The councils are ‘deliberative’ forums in which societal and state actors are supposed to reach joint decisions through a discursive process of argumentation aimed at persuasion and consensus. Although councils have been created for many policy sectors, I have focused on municipal health councils (*conselho municipal de saúde* – CMS) because

<sup>1</sup> The councils include representatives of the local government, health providers, health workers, and user organisations like trade unions, neighbourhood associations, patient organisations, etc. The user organisations enjoy ‘parity’ in relation to all other groups, i.e. at least 50 per cent of the seats.

it is health where decentralisation coupled with civil society participation was first implemented; as a result, the outcomes are more clearly visible. As public health care is of enormous importance to the majority of the population, and involves large amounts of resources, it is a politically sensitive sector. This is likely to demonstrate more clearly the patterns of decision-making and participatory performance.

The municipalities were selected by crossing two variables: the political commitment of local governments to participation and power sharing, and the 'civicness' of the local community.<sup>2</sup> I chose two middle-sized towns in Northeast Brazil (Camaragibe, Camaçari), and two in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul. The latter are Italian (Caxias) and German (Santa Cruz) immigrant communities with high levels of associational activity, while both north-eastern cases show relatively low levels of civic organising.<sup>3</sup> In both regions I selected one municipality run by PT and another governed by centre-right parties.<sup>4</sup> Analysing deliberative participation across cases with varying government commitment and political dynamics allows us better to

<sup>2</sup> By 'civicness' I mean the characteristics of civic organising and the attitudes and practices of civil society actors towards the polity. Drawing on Putnam, I took membership in associations as a proxy for civicness.

<sup>3</sup> There are few empirical data on the patterns of 'civicness' across Brazilian states and municipalities. Yet, two data sets from Brazil's statistics agency IBGE demonstrate variations in associational life, one across six states, and the other across metropolitan regions. (1) *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios (PNAD) – Suplemento Político-Social* (Brasília, 1988) and (2) *Pesquisa Mensal de Emprego – Abril 1996: Associativismo, Representação de Interesses e Intermediação Política* (Rio de Janeiro, 1996). They confirm that the south is most and the north-east least 'civic'. In 1988 Rio Grande do Sul had an average membership rate of 15.27 per cent of the adult population, more than three times the rates of Bahia and Pernambuco. The 1996 study on six metropolitan regions confirmed these contrasts. Porto Alegre had significantly higher rates of membership in unions and 'community organs' than the other five metropolitan regions, including Recife and Salvador. The 1996 data include Camaragibe and Camaçari, but they do not cover municipalities in the hinterland, such as my southern cases. Yet, in Rio Grande do Sul we can assume that the northern parts of the state are no less civic than Porto Alegre since the data for the metropolitan region show no difference between the capital and peripheral municipalities. All other metropolitan regions had higher membership rates in the capital than in the surrounding municipalities. Moreover, a study on 'regional development, political culture and social capital' in Rio Grande do Sul confirms this assumption: Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, *Desenvolvimento regional, cultura política e capital social: pesquisa empírica como subsídio à atividade parlamentar no Rio Grande do Sul* (Porto Alegre, 2001). In general, regions characterised by historical European settler communities had the highest rates of membership in associations, even higher than the region including Porto Alegre. The two 'civic' cases of my selection are situated in the state's micro-regions with the strongest associational life.

<sup>4</sup> The case selection aimed at theoretical insight rather than being representative of Brazil's over 5,500 municipalities. While seeking variations in government commitment and civicness, I sought to keep other variables as constant as possible: comparable size; a government that was re-elected in 2000; and the highest degree of decentralisation of health care ('full local management').

understand its distinctive contribution to deepening democracy. I focused on the councils rather than PB, because this latter is not legally mandated but voluntarily introduced by committed governments. Thus a cross-case study of PB cannot separate the working of deliberative participation from the possibly independent variable of government commitment.<sup>5</sup>

The article is divided into four sections. It opens by discussing, from a theoretical point of view, the potential of participatory arrangements for deepening democracy, and highlights the dilemmas such approaches are likely to face. The second part examines the determinants of the participatory performance of the deliberative health councils based on a comparative analysis of the four case studies. The third section places these participatory experiences in the wider context of state-society relations in which they are embedded. On this basis, the fourth part discusses the institutional interaction of informal particularism, liberal democracy, and participatory institutions, arguing that a primary or exclusive focus on participatory democracy is inappropriate if it is to consolidate both democratic governance and the longer-term prospects of left-of-centre politics in Brazil.

*The ‘deadlock’ of liberal democracy and the dilemmas of participatory alternatives*

The persistence of ‘old politics’ and institutional hybridism may be explained from three perspectives that are not mutually exclusive, as Panizza has argued.<sup>6</sup> First, these political practices could be traditional remnants that would tend to disappear as economic modernisation translates into modern politics. Second, cultural explanations argue that the Iberian institutional heritage and hierarchical political tradition have created enduring obstacles to the full implementation of a rights-based modern pluralist democracy. Third, the ‘neo-dualist hypothesis’ posits that Brazil’s state-led import-substituting industrialisation has failed to absorb the entire population into the modern economy. This has led to the permanent co-existence of a formal modern sector and a huge (largely urban) informal sector that – exposed to abject poverty and inequality – has been the breeding ground for the old personalistic politics. The masses of the non-modern sector have been incorporated into the political process through particularistic bonds with political elites who ‘offer minimal benefits and protection in exchange for obedience and political support’.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In both PT-governed cases PB schemes had been implemented. Although they were not the focus of the study, they did enter the analysis as part of the contextual factors that shaped the overall patterns of state–civil society interaction.

<sup>6</sup> Francisco Panizza, ‘Beyond “Delegative Democracy”’: “Old Politics” and “New Economics” in Latin America,’ *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 32 (2000), pp. 737–63.

<sup>7</sup> Kurt Weyland, *Democracy without Equity: Failures of Reform in Brazil* (Pittsburgh, 1996), p. 5.

Most students of Brazilian politics lay part of the blame on the formal institutions of liberal democracy for having contributed to preserving 'old politics'. The electoral institutions introduced after 1985, it is argued, have led to a weak and fragmented party system that fails to aggregate broad interests. Open-list proportional representation contributes to weak programmatic profiles of most parties. Intra-party competition in single-space electoral districts weakens party discipline and loyalty. The presidential system combined with 'centrifugal' federalism is also perceived to fuel particularism, and so forth. In sum, Ames argues, 'the nation's political institutions generate incentives that encourage politicians to maximise their own personal gain and to concentrate on delivering pork-barrel programs to narrow groups of constituents or political benefactors'.<sup>8</sup> The hybridisation between autonomy and dependency, universality and exceptionalism, equality and privilege, says Avritzer, subverts the operation of democratic political institutions and makes it impossible to dissociate politics from particularism and clientelism.<sup>9</sup> In his view, electoral competition and representation alone cannot overcome this problem.

Can participatory democracy do the trick? Avritzer attempts to ground deliberative participation into democratisation theory. His concept of 'deliberative public spaces' links 'the public' (civil society) and political society; they constitute bridges between a societal sphere of cultural innovation and a polity populated by traditional political actors with ambiguous stances toward democracy and continued undemocratic practices. Public spaces are supposed to transfer new democratic practices from the societal level to political society. Building on Habermas' concept of the 'public sphere', Avritzer seeks a third path between democratic elitism and participatory democracy. He criticises Habermas's failure 'to connect reason and will formation' and attempts to link both by advocating institutionalised forums of face-to-face deliberation where contentious issues can be politically addressed and alternative practices brought into the political realm. These forums and the administration need to be connected through mechanisms of accountability, preserving the space for administrative complexity, but challenging the exclusive access of experts to decision-making.<sup>10</sup> The underlying assumption is that there is a fundamental difference in political attitudes and practices between civil society and political society, the former being seen as the source of democratic renewal and the latter as the source of authoritarianism and clientelistic domination.

Avritzer underestimates the likelihood of congruent values and practices. As Putnam argues, elite and mass attitudes may in fact be 'two sides of a single

<sup>8</sup> Barry Ames, *The Deadlock of Democracy in Brazil* (Ann Arbor, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Leonardo Avritzer, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America* (Princeton, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

coin, bound together in a mutually reinforcing equilibrium ... A situation of authoritarian elites and assertive masses cannot be a stable equilibrium'.<sup>11</sup> Avritzer recognises that incongruent attitudes are a source of instability and tension that 'may endanger democracy itself'.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, he advocates deliberative spaces as transmission belts between society and the polity to transform elite practices. Putnam's assumption of congruent attitudes leads to the determinism of path-dependent vicious or virtuous equilibria, and the inability to explain how these come into being.<sup>13</sup> Avritzer's assumption of incongruent attitudes requires an understanding that elite and mass attitudes remain unaffected by existing channels of interaction (e.g. elections, clientelistic exchange), which prevents their eventual convergence into a stable equilibrium. Both assumptions are problematic. Bottom-up democratisation via deliberative public spaces may not materialise due to congruent attitudes and practices. Pressures for democratic renewal can also flow in the opposite direction. Political society rather than the public sphere may act as the driving force in attempts at changing prevailing political practices. In fact, Avritzer's 'institutionalised public spaces' are likely to require 'democratic engineers' among political society. Finally, even with incongruent attitudes in the sense of a democratic public sphere and authoritarian elites, the mechanism of public deliberation may not deliver the hoped-for transformations.

Deliberation is a discursive process in which free and equal participants arrive at collective choices through public reasoning, argumentation, and persuasion. For liberal democrats democracy is about aggregating given, unchangeable preferences prior to the political process, while deliberative democrats believe in the transformation of preferences through political interaction. Arrow's impossibility theorem has shown the arbitrariness and instability of voting mechanisms.<sup>14</sup> Thus liberal democrats call for 'minimal democracy' limited to the selection of rulers rather than policies, while deliberative democrats advocate non-voting mechanisms of democratic will-formation aimed at consensus. Yet deliberation is also subject to the social choice critique. Processes of argumentation and reflection are prone to strategic calculations, deception and manipulation; and deliberative arrangements rely also on voting if consensus is not achievable.

These problems may partly be overcome by appropriate institutional design. The dilemma is, as Dryzek points out, that 'one must postulate either a benign *deus ex machina* to design the institution in question, or have the

<sup>11</sup> Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, 1993), p. 104.

<sup>12</sup> Leonardo Avritzer, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America* (Princeton, 2002), p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> See C. Boix and D. Posner, 'Social Capital: Explaining its Origins and Effects on Government Performance,' *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 28, no. 4, (1998), p. 687.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth J. Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values*, 2nd edition (New York, 1963).

process of choice about structure subject to all the instability and arbitrariness that social choice theory has identified'.<sup>15</sup> Restrictions of preferences and options may provide another shield against Arrowian problems. Some think that deliberation itself imposes such restrictions. As actors need to argue in terms of public interest, they become subject to the 'civilising force of hypocrisy'<sup>16</sup> or genuinely acquire 'public spirit'.<sup>17</sup> Others advocate exogenous restrictions. According to Gutmann and Thompson, participants must subscribe in advance to the principles of reciprocity, publicity and accountability, as well as to values and norms such as mutual respect, co-operation, 'civic integrity', and 'civic magnanimity' (acknowledging the moral status of opposed positions).<sup>18</sup> An established need for exogenous restrictions implies that the viability of public deliberation depends on the presence of these values and norms in the respective polity or, at least, among the deliberative public. Even if deliberation does create these virtues where they do not exist *ex ante*, some sort of political agency would have to establish deliberative institutions and to persuade actors to participate in the first place.

The biggest threat to effective deliberation is inequality. Deliberative arrangements need to meet standards of *procedural* equality, like equal access to agenda setting and decision-making, equal treatment in a fair 'contest of reason' and *substantive* equality. As Knight and Johnson point out, the latter implies 'equal opportunity of political influence', which entails a passive aspect, namely free and un-coerced participation in decision-making, and an active side of 'equal opportunity to influence others'.<sup>19</sup> Bohman suggests 'the social capacity to initiate public deliberation' about one's concerns as the 'floor' of deliberative equality, and the ability of powerful actors to abandon, or remove issues from, deliberation as its 'ceiling'.<sup>20</sup>

Deliberation requires representatives to justify their actions not only to their constituency but also to the rest of the deliberative assembly and the general public. This tension is difficult to solve. Gutmann and Thompson stress that 'in a deliberative forum each is accountable to all. Citizens and officials try to justify their decisions to all those who are bound by them and some of those who are affected by them'.<sup>21</sup> Deliberation widens the scope of

<sup>15</sup> John Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (Oxford, 2000), p. 44. <sup>16</sup> Jon Elster (ed.), *Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge and New York, 1998), p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> John Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*, p. 47.

<sup>18</sup> Amy Gutmann and D. Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, MA, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> See J. Knight and J. Johnson, 'What Sort of Political Equality Does Deliberative Democracy Require?', in J. Bohman and W. Rehg (eds.), *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), pp. 292ff.

<sup>20</sup> J. Bohman, 'Deliberative Democracy and Effective Social Freedom: Capabilities, Resources, and Opportunities,' in J. Bohman and W. Rehg (eds.), *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics* (Cambridge, MA, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> Gutmann and Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*, p. 128.

accountability to a broader ‘moral constituency’<sup>22</sup> transcending geographical boundaries, classes and interest groups. If representatives are accountable only to their own group they leave others (perhaps the majority) without representation, limit their legitimacy as collective decision-makers, and may undermine deliberation itself. If they are accountable to the wider public, constituencies may resent the ‘inattention’ of their representatives to their specific needs and interests.

The councils combine elements of deliberation *and* representation. This adds another dimension to the problem of inequality. ‘Associative democracy’ – a form of governance in which secondary associations assume a joint regulatory role for solving functionally specific problems<sup>23</sup> – demands the representation of all stakeholder interests and the integration of marginalised groups into policy-making. As the poorest are likely to be less organised or unorganised they may remain excluded from deliberation among collectively organised interests. In such cases Cohen calls for ‘public powers’ to encourage the ‘organised representation of presently excluded interests’.<sup>24</sup> However, this may lead to aligned or dependent organisations with little autonomy, and exacerbate the societal fragmentation and parochialism by ‘balkanising’ citizens into many distinct groups.<sup>25</sup>

The extent to which the inclusion of disadvantaged groups into deliberative arenas has a democratising impact remains disputed. Arguably, it can have adverse effects. Deliberation may absorb the time and resources of civil society leaders away from ‘adversarial’ activities such as mobilisation, protesting, campaigning etc. It also may neutralise the comparative political advantage of the poor (their numbers) while exposing them to deliberative inequality. Dryzek distinguishes four state approaches to civil society: active exclusion, passive exclusion, active inclusion, and passive inclusion. He suggests that, paradoxically, passive *exclusive* states may be more conducive to democratisation because some degree of exclusion fosters an oppositional civil society, which is the key to democratisation.<sup>26</sup> Thus, he argues, state-sponsored deliberative bodies may *hinder* rather than promote democratisation.

However, passive exclusion may not be a sufficient condition for stimulating a flourishing oppositional civil society. Reformist governments often feel the need to encourage the transformation of a civil society still caught in clientelism. Active inclusion in state-sponsored deliberative forums may play a vital part in such a strategy. Yet, in this sense they aim at ‘democratising’ civil society rather than the state by crafting alternative state-civil society

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>23</sup> See J. Cohen, ‘Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy,’ in J. Bohman and W. Rehg (eds.), *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics* (Cambridge, MA, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 426. <sup>25</sup> Gutmann and Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*, p. 154.

<sup>26</sup> Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*, p. 104.



regimes. This is what many PT governments in uncivic settings have attempted, contradicting both Avritzer's deliberative bottom-up approach and Dryzek's notion of democratising exclusion. The dilemma is that this demands political leadership resisting the temptation to politically exploit or co-opt newly included groups while having to fend off attempts of political adversaries to subvert deliberative arrangements that threaten their power rooted in clientelism.

Participatory democracy requires power sharing between the executive and civil society or citizens. Why would governments wish to give up power? First, they may expect electoral gains or the longer-term consolidation of their power. However, as Grindle points out, there may be less costly ways to ensure short-term electoral pay-offs, while participatory power sharing does not generally ensure future power gains. It disperses political decision-making and may allow other parties or interests to gain influence. Participatory institutions also 'do not lock in a set of policy preferences but rather increase the potential for widely varying policy choices and outcomes'.<sup>27</sup> Politicians may also respond to pressures from 'historically situated groups that seek to enhance their access to power through institutional change' or they may 'seek solutions to deep or sustained institutional crises'.<sup>28</sup> In sum, participatory governance can either result from bottom-up *political* mobilisation or from committed *political* leadership that is relatively unconstrained by 'institutional hybridism'. However, in uncivic elite-dominated contexts this is not only hard to obtain politically, but also difficult to explain theoretically.

### *Determinants of deliberative participation*

Participatory councils may operate as spaces for the argumentative definition of collective preferences, as arenas of struggle for the power to enforce aggregated preferences, or they may combine both to varying degrees. In practice the councils move along a continuum between two paradigms: hegemony and deliberation. Gramsci most frequently uses the concept of hegemony 'to denote a form of social and political "control" which combines physical force or *coercion* with intellectual, moral and cultural persuasion or *consent*'.<sup>29</sup> Hegemony implies 'domination' in relation to antagonistic groups, and 'intellectual and moral leadership' exercised over a 'cohesive and purposeful alliance ... of social groups and their aspirations'. A hegemonic 'bloc' needs to transcend 'the particular self-interests of its component parts'.<sup>30</sup> Both coercion and persuasion can be used not only towards opposed groups but also to establish and maintain cohesion *within* hegemonic groups.

<sup>27</sup> Merilee S. Grindle, *Andacious Reforms: Institutional Invention and Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore, 2000), pp. 24–5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> P. Ransome, *Antonio Gramsci: A New Introduction* (London, 1992), p. 135.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

Power is the key factor determining a council's position on the continuum. If powerful actors do not renounce their power over others as a means for shaping collective decisions, deliberation can hardly be sustained. Both the force of the better argument and the possibility of reasoned agreement succumb to the logic of power and imposition. Antagonistic groups are likely to resort to aggregation and majority building, engaging in strategic rather than communicative action. The exercise of power is, of course, determined to a great extent by underlying social inequalities. A move towards hegemony is likely to indicate that deliberative inequality within the council has surpassed Bohman's 'ceiling'. 'Hegemonic' councils are characterised by instrumental action and strategies by groups that aim at maximising their own influence upon decision-making while minimising that of opponent groups. They are likely to be internally polarised and deliberation may occur within opposed subgroups. 'Deliberative' councils tend to be de-polarised, and deliberation is more likely to take place at council level.

'Hegemonic' and 'deliberative' councils also tend to differ in the ways civil society actors are politically included into the participatory forum. Drawing on Mouzelis, I distinguish 'integration' and 'incorporation'.<sup>31</sup> Integration means political inclusion based on relatively autonomous movements, networks, and associations capable of acting spontaneously and in collective or concerted ways. Incorporation refers to political elites actively encouraging the inclusion of less well-organised popular organisations and/or individuals into participatory forums. If we apply this dichotomy to our continuum, we get four cells with distinctive patterns of political inclusion and participation. With *hegemony cum integration* we probably see well-organised collective actors bound together by political ideologies and structures of organisation and integration under the leadership of parties or unions, i.e. political society. With *hegemony cum incorporation* we expect state actors to dominate and control the inclusion of non-state actors by means of clientelism and other forms of 'power over'. Again, political society is in the driving seat. With *deliberation cum integration* we probably find deliberative forums populated by well-organised collective actors that act autonomously though capable of spontaneous concerted action. Party politics and ideologies are likely to recede into the background. With *deliberation cum incorporation* we expect the state to actively encourage the inclusion of relatively weak popular organisations as part of a project of civic education and emancipation. Party politics and ideology tend to recede and the government grants relative autonomy to civil society actors.

<sup>31</sup> N. P. Mouzelis, *Politics in the Semi-Periphery: Early Parliamentarism and Late Industrialisation in the Balkans and Latin America* (London, 1986).

Table 1. *CMS by pattern of political inclusion and tendency on the hegemony-deliberation continuum*

	Hegemony	Deliberation
Integration	Santa Cruz (civic/uncommitted government) User-led hegemony based on consent and threats	Caxias (civic/committed government) Relative autonomy, concerted agency
Incorporation	Camaçari (uncivic/uncommitted govt.) Government hegemony based on leverage and coercion	Camaragibe (uncivic/committed government) State-granted autonomy and emancipation

The comparative study of our four municipalities with varying combinations of political commitment and strength of civic organising has highlighted four distinct patterns of interaction and outcomes that fit surprisingly well into the cells described above. Table 1 shows that in towns with uncommitted governments the CMS tended to operate in the hegemonic paradigm: the uncivic/uncommitted case (Camaçari) under government hegemony cum elite incorporation, the civic/uncommitted case (Santa Cruz) under a user-led hegemony cum integration. The PT-governed cases showed no clear hegemonic patterns and tended towards deliberation, but differed in terms of bottom-up integration (Caxias) vs. top-down emancipatory incorporation (Camaragibe).

The pattern found in Camaçari can be labelled ‘authoritarian clientelism’. Although the council was created (in a previous institutional format) under a leftist government as early as in 1986, its routine was by and large to approve what the executive proposed. The centre-right government elected in 1996 was reluctant to engage in power sharing and deliberation on the CMS. In order to maintain control over decision-making, the government sought to minimise participation, removing issues that did not require formal council approval and whose discussion on the CMS was not in the government’s interest. Camaçari was the only case where ordinary CMS meetings were scheduled only once a month, but they still often lacked quorum. The composition of the council was based on a rigid list of participant organisations in the Statute that advantaged the government/provider group. Moreover, the government used its power resources to incorporate non-governmental actors into an alliance aimed at ensuring a majority. It removed or punished ‘opposition’ councillors, controlled the agenda, bypassed the council, and used access to information strategically. The pursuit of domination led to resistance from a minority group of trade unionists, church activists, and neighbourhood representatives who did not depend on the town hall in terms of direct authority, contracts, jobs or favours. Polarisation and power struggles resulted in the aggregation rather than

transformation of preferences, majority imposition rather than persuasion, and strategic rather than communicative action. ‘Opposition’ arguments had little chance of being seriously considered, let alone of convincing the hegemonic group. Political society (state actors) rather than civil society dominated the council, and aimed at minimising the influence of opponent groups whose ability to initiate deliberation on issues of their concern was limited indeed. The ‘opposition’ felt powerless and unable to forge a cohesive counter-hegemonic bloc because of horizontal distrust caused by several users’ vertical bonds to government and politicians, and the failure of the union federation CUT (Central Unica dos Trabalhadores) to exert the required leadership.

In Santa Cruz participation on the CMS was historically characterised by the hegemony of rightist local governments seeking to exclude politically opposed user organisations such as the unions of CUT. Until 1997 the health secretary presided over the CMS and maintained tight control over the council’s agenda. Non-governmental participation was limited to ratifying decisions taken by the executive. The government resorted to coercion and co-optation in order to get its way. The CMS was largely seen as an ‘appendix’ of the health secretariat, and the issues it discussed needed the backing of the health secretary. The unions linked to CUT were determined to change this; first they disputed policy issues from outside, and after they were elected to the council, in 1994, they embarked on constructing a counter-hegemonic alliance through intense confrontation and mobilisation. After the election of a centre-right government, in 1996, the CUT unions achieved an amendment of the council’s Statute. Moreover, their mobilisation of the neighbourhood associations had given them control over the election of user representatives; this enabled them to eliminate business organisations from the user bench, and to establish a user-led majority. Despite different party-political orientations the union camp and neighbourhood associations acted jointly under the leadership of CUT, held together both by ‘consent’ (a joint project and trust) and ‘coercion’ (the threat of exclusion). The strategy of building a cohesive user bloc aimed at removing restrictions to access as well as procedural inequalities (e.g. agenda control) that favoured the government. Yet, in order to force the government to share power, they had to establish their own hegemony by means that certainly violated ‘freedom from coercion’ – a core requirement of deliberative equality. Only thus were they able to ‘initiate deliberation on issues of their concern’, when they managed to design and implement an occupational health programme, in 2001, despite a reluctant government – a rare example of proactive user intervention. Thus aggregation rather than deliberation was the dominant game; and polarisation led to intra-group deliberation within the hegemonic bloc rather than the whole council. The relationship between the antagonistic groups was based on

strategic rather than communicative action. Yet, despite the users' majority, it was power sharing and negotiation rather than imposition that characterised their interaction with the government, which by its very nature was too powerful to be dominated by the user-led CMS.

In Camaragibe the history of the CMS began in 1989 when the then health secretary (and later mayor) started to discuss with community leaders and the 'popular movement' the objective of creating a health council. But, due to differences within the government, the first councillors took office only in 1992. The centre-left government elected in 1992 endorsed popular participation, but it was the PT administration elected in 1996 that saw participation as key to its strategy of political transformation from above that sought to include the poor and their organisations into the political process in ways that broke with clientelism. This 'emancipatory populism' mobilised 'the people' directly in order to bypass/disrupt the longstanding collusion between community leaders and clientelistic politicians. It incorporated citizens and leaders into participatory forums without co-opting them. Between 1994 and 1999 there emerged a local institutional framework for the CMS that sought to ensure deliberative equality. Key features were the election and rotation of the chair, reduced government control over agenda setting, the election of non-governmental councillors in specific assemblies, and the ineligibility of user representatives with links (especially of employment) to the town hall or the legislature. The statute also banned party-political activity within and in the name of the council. Political inclusion on the CMS was 'emancipatory' as it drew a small group of citizens and community leaders in a process of civic education. According to the mayor, this aimed at 'giving the majority the opportunity to experience a different format' (than patronage and clientelism). The government sought to make participation credible through transparency, sharing responsibility, and negotiating rather than imposing. The council's tendency towards the deliberative paradigm was associated with depolarisation, the retreat of party politics, the salience of civil society rather than political society, but also a predominance of fragmented and parochial interests. In general, participation was based on communicative rather than strategic interaction, although neighbourhood representatives occasionally resorted to community mobilisation to push special interests. Decision-making tended to rely on negotiated agreements rather than consensus.

In Caxias participation in health policy began in 1987. From the beginning, there was an intense political and ideological dispute between two antagonistic groups: on the one hand an alliance of private health providers, doctors, local government and some of the health workers, and on the other a group of leftist user organisations such as labour unions and neighbourhood associations committed to the ideas of the health reform movement. The

institutionalisation of the CMS, by municipal law, occurred in 1992 only after considerable political mobilisation and conflict between the user organisations, with strong links to PT, and the incumbent centre-right government. User representation on the CMS was divided between two strong movements: the unions of CUT and the neighbourhood federation UAB. As in Camaragibe, the institutionalisation of the CMS must be understood in the context of a wider political struggle in which deliberative participation was instrumental for political transformation. However, in Caxias it resulted much more from bottom-up pressure than political leadership. A civil society politically mobilised by the left staged significant collective action and pressed for both municipalisation and more favourable terms of participation. This mobilisation finally resulted in the election in 1996 of the PT-led 'Popular Front', a government ideologically committed to participation. Both bottom-up pressure and government action after 1996 helped to enhance 'equal opportunity of influence' between the 'popular movement' and previously dominant groups like doctors and private providers. Yet, although the council's tendency shifted from (government) hegemony to deliberation after PT came to power in 1997, the establishment of autonomous concerted agency proved difficult, due to a 'parent-child' relation between government and council, deriving from the previous counter-hegemonic alliance that bound together users, professionals and leftist activists now in government. The government did not attempt to dominate the council, and there was little or no polarisation, alliance building, or intra-group deliberation. Communicative rather than strategic interaction characterised the process of participation. Nevertheless, many councillors felt that their participation was formal and they did not effectively share in the joint formulation of policies. However, this 'paradox' had less to do with government reluctance than with a certain relaxation of user participation due to political loyalties to their allies in the government and relative satisfaction with the performance of health provision.

The four patterns are reflected in the councillors' perception, in 2001–2, of the autonomy of the CMS vis-à-vis the local government, as well as the council's influence upon the formulation of local health policy. Table 2 shows that both the councillors of the cases tending towards deliberation (Caxias, Camaragibe) and those in Santa Cruz (tending towards user-led hegemony) strongly *disagreed* with the view that the CMS had little autonomy, while a majority in Camaçari *agreed* with this statement. If we look at the user segment alone, nine of ten user representatives in Camaçari agreed to have little autonomy. In Caxias and Santa Cruz the perception of the users was almost identical with that of the council as a whole, while in Camaragibe a slightly smaller share of users (five of eight or 62.5 per cent) disagreed to have little autonomy. Table 3 shows a similar pattern. The councillors indicated

Table 2. *Councillors' perception of CMS autonomy*

			The CMS has little autonomy. It mostly does what the executive wants.			
			don't know	agree	disagree	Total
municipality	Camaçari	Count		10	9	19
		% within municipality		52.6%	47.4%	100.0%
	Caxias	Count	2	10	19	31
		% within municipality	6.5%	32.3%	61.3%	100.0%
	Santa Cruz	Count		4	18	22
		% within municipality		18.2%	81.8%	100.0%
	Camaragibe	Count	3	3	15	21
		% within municipality	14.3%	14.3%	71.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	5	27	61	93
		% within municipality	5.4%	29.0%	65.6%	100.0%

Table 3. *Councillors' perception of CMS influence on municipal health policy*

			To what extent has the CMS influenced the current municipal health policy?				
			entirely	significantly	a little	not at all	Total
municipality	Camaçari	Count	1	8	8	2	19
		% within municipality	5.3%	42.1%	42.1%	10.5%	100.0%
	Caxias	Count	6	14	10	1	31
		% within municipality	19.4%	45.2%	32.3%	3.2%	100.0%
	Santa Cruz	Count	2	17	3	1	23
		% within municipality	8.7%	73.9%	13.0%	4.3%	100.0%
	Camaragibe	Count	10	11	1		22
		% within municipality	45.5%	50.0%	4.5%		100.0%
Total		Count	19	50	22	4	95
		% within municipality	20.0%	52.6%	23.2%	4.2%	100.0%

the strongest influence of the CMS upon local health policy in Camaragibe, followed by Santa Cruz and Caxias, and the lowest influence in Camaçari. The users alone had a strongly more negative view in Camaçari (out of ten users, seven indicated ‘a little’ and two ‘not at all’), while their colleagues in

the other towns hold similar or slightly more positive views than the councils as a whole.

Thus civil society's influence on decision making in the CMS did vary considerably across municipalities. However, this variation did not simply reflect differences in the patterns of civic organising across the southern and the north-eastern cases. Civil society influence was unexpectedly high in (uncivic) Camaragibe, but surprisingly low in (civic) Caxias. The variations in participatory performance did not simply mirror the patterns of political commitment to participation either. In Santa Cruz, a municipality with low political commitment, the councillors exerted stronger influence on decision-making than their peers in Caxias, a town run by a politically committed government. Differences in institutional design did affect civil society's ability to influence decision-making, but variations in the 'rules of the game' were themselves largely a function of political and civic determinants.

What explains these unexpected patterns of participatory performance of the CMS? In general, civil society influence tends to be stronger in 'deliberative' rather than 'hegemonic' councils since the former imply voluntary power sharing, which equalises the 'opportunities of political influence'. Yet, due to inequalities in expert knowledge and the capacity to propose, civil society's influence tended to be based on political clout rather than arguments. In Camaragibe the government granted civil society a degree of influence that did not reflect the strength of political mobilisation (which was weak) or the force of arguments. But giving the councillors real influence on policy decisions was fundamental for the government's strategy of 'emancipatory populism'. In Santa Cruz civil society influence rested on political mobilisation and the establishment of 'counter-hegemonic' majority. Even so, its influence upon overall health policy was limited to a pragmatic settlement of 'divide-and-rule'. In Caxias civil society's political clout vis-à-vis the government was relatively weaker because its most important components were part of an overall political alliance that met fierce political competition from the centre-right. And in Camaçari the political clout of civil society was nearly nil due to patterns of clientelistic incorporation that tied actors to the government and repressed others.

### *The civics and politics of participatory governance*

In order to understand the functioning of deliberative participation in a complex causal interaction between political, civic, and institutional factors, let us now look at the broader and longer-term picture of state-society relations in which these participatory institutions may be embedded. This possible 'embeddedness' may appear a pretty obvious point, but it is important to make it because claims concerning the democratising potential of deliberative



participation implicitly assume a considerable degree of autonomy of micro-level participation from the macro dimension of state-society relations which public deliberation is supposed to transform. In the following section I explore the societal and political sides of the coin, examining how these have created favourable or adverse conditions for deliberative participation. The underlying questions are to what extent local ‘public spheres’ are sources of democratic renewal and whether deliberative public spaces are indeed channels of bottom-up transformation or whether they just mirror the prevailing dynamics of state-society relations.

Santa Cruz is likely to be among the most ‘civic’ municipalities in Brazil. A flourishing associational life historically aimed at maintaining German cultural identity and substituting for lacking state services. Yet vibrant community life has co-existed with ‘hierarchical authority patterns’ on the part of political society; political engagement and participation have not matched the vibrancy of civil society. Until 1996 politics was in effect an elite affair and (even since then) the patterns of civic engagement in politics have hardly followed the neo-Tocquevillean script. The local (German) elite, politically organised in PPB (the political heir of the military regime’s ARENA), ruled the town for 20 years before 1997. These administrations were quite distant from the population and difficult to access for individuals and organisations. They embodied insulated elitist technocracy rather than participatory politics. Because voting is compulsory we are unable to use voter turnout for measuring political participation; but in terms of membership in political parties Santa Cruz does not stand out. According to Schmidt, only 7.7 per cent<sup>32</sup> of the electorate were party members.<sup>33</sup> Most citizens ‘distrust political agents, parties and institutions; have median interest in politics, prefer democracy to dictatorship, and exhibit relatively low levels of political information. They participate very little in activities of the municipal executive and legislature, and vote according to the personal qualities of candidates rather than those of their parties or ideologies’.<sup>34</sup>

Santa Cruz has not been a stronghold of clientelism but a rather self-reliant society with a ‘do-it-yourself’ approach to the public domain. Due to relative economic prosperity fewer people than elsewhere depend upon government favours. But the exchange of favours for votes has existed nonetheless; and the programmatic profiles of most parties in Santa Cruz have not differed much from those in less civic areas. In sum, we largely find Brazilian ‘normality’ despite outstanding levels of civic activism. The

<sup>32</sup> These figures are based on the state electoral authority (TRE).

<sup>33</sup> This is much less than the average of the surrounding Rio Pardo valley (12.3 per cent) and only slightly more than the national average (around 5 per cent).

<sup>34</sup> João Pedro Schmidt, *Cultura política e comportamento eleitoral em Santa Cruz do Sul* (Santa Cruz do Sul, 2003), p. 50.

patterns of traditional politics changed when Moraes, the first non-German mayor since 1955, was elected in 1996. He appealed directly to 'the people', neglecting institutionalised, rule-governed, and collective forms of mediation between citizens and the executive. In most cases civil society was unable to seize institutionalised 'public spaces'. In 2002 there existed 15 municipal councils. Yet, most of them were weak, dominated by, and dependent upon, the town hall. They lacked credibility and were largely seen as an extension of the administration. The user hegemony on the CMS did not reflect a general pattern of an assertive, politically engaged civil society. Rather, it reflected the determination of a small group of unionists who learned to trust each other, built a cohesive alliance, and skilfully used political opportunities and legal loopholes in order to advance their project.

In the uncivic cases the nature and roles of emerging civic life depended crucially on the government policies towards civil society. Both Camaragibe and Camaçari were communities characterised by traditional vertical bonds and hierarchical social structures. During the early 1980s leftist militants and Catholic Church activists helped organise these poor communities in neighbourhood associations, self-help groups, mothers' clubs, etc. Leftist unionists also managed to 'conquer' the labour unions in Camaçari hitherto considered '*pelegos*' (elite co-opted). These religious and political value suppliers sought to instil horizontal co-operation and solidarity in a social fabric thoroughly pervaded by clientelism. Partly as a result of these efforts, both municipalities elected leftist mayors in 1986 and 1988, respectively, but state-society relations would evolve in very different trajectories.

In Camaçari the communist militant Caetano was elected mayor in 1986 after he had helped organise about 100 neighbourhood, women's and youth associations. What Caetano had built from the bottom-up he destroyed from the top-down: an autonomous civil society. Once in power he 'aligned' and instrumentalised civil society. Today he admits that the 'popular movement' was 'already born with the philosophy of a dependent movement'. The following rightist administrations (interrupted by another hapless centre-left term) under Tude, a follower of Bahia's 'strongman' Antonio Carlos Magalhães, continued the politics of tutelage and alignment, transforming civil society into a political battleground. He undermined 'oppositional' associations by encouraging 'aligned' rivals with easier access to public resources. Tude's government was a mixture of modern technocracy and patronage. Many associations were seen to 'belong' to certain city-councillors. Pervasive vertical bonds to clientelistic politicians fragmented civil society and hampered horizontal collective action. The choice between being a friend of the powerful or facing the consequences left little room for autonomous participation. Community spirit broke down and citizens returned to seeking individual rather than collective solutions to their

problems. This coincided with a weakening of the union movement in the mid 1990s due to economic liberalisation, increased unemployment and industrial restructuring. The unions' capacity to mobilise the workers fell dramatically. The crisis led to a 'corporatist' tendency among established unions that did not integrate the interests of out-contracted or informal sector workers. It also contributed to a certain disintegration of the 'popular movement'. The performance of the CMS mirrored the patterns of state-society relations and state action, and the 'deliberative public spaces' could do little to transform them.

Camaragibe saw the rise of leftwing politicians due to a local power vacuum after the town's independence from its neighbouring municipality in 1982. These politicians embarked on a gradual process of leadership-driven political transformation. The Guerra government from 1989–92 established some dialogue with civil society; in weekly meetings with community leaders the mayor received demands and suggestions. Yet, decisions to act upon them were based on political convenience and electoral considerations, favouring politically aligned organisations and ignoring others. It was only under Guerra's centre-left successor Lemos that the government started to discuss 'public spaces of participation' as a deliberate strategy of ending clientelism and paternalism. Lemos considered power sharing, transparency, and dialogue to be key elements of such a political project. His government created several participatory sector councils, but only after Santana (PT) was elected mayor in 1996 was a version of PB introduced in Camaragibe. PB enabled citizens and communities to achieve improvements through collective action and mobilisation rather than particularistic ties to politicians. This undermined clientelistic city-councillors and traditional community leaders 'addicted' to favours and privileges. The executive encouraged new leaders by insisting on the direct election of delegates for PB. Clientelism came under pressure, but the process suffered several setbacks due to the weakness of civic virtues and the predominance of particularism. Discussing wider needs of districts and the town as a whole proved difficult. The process increasingly focused on selecting priorities by micro regions. About half of the first batch of delegates quit as it became clear that PB was not a means to reap personal benefits or influence. The administration had to change the rules repeatedly to avoid the subversion of deliberative forums by particularistic interests. People still looked up and down social hierarchies rather than to their fellow citizens for solving problems. The difference was that they saw a government that encouraged collective rather than particularistic solutions, and created institutional channels for it. Yet, committed political leadership remained crucial for a long-term process of civic education.

In Caxias civil society was historically organised around the church, also with the purpose of maintaining (Italian) cultural identity, and promoting

co-operation and sociability. Yet, the drive to political engagement and interest representation emerged earlier and more strongly than in Santa Cruz. In the 1960s the communist party had become an expressive political force, organised mainly in the union movement. To overcome the division of workers' representation by professional categories, they organised neighbourhood associations as means of demand-making and creating consciousness for the transformation of society. They set up 27 associations and a federation, but their efforts were repressed by the military after 1964. The dictatorship led to a certain alliance between the left and the Catholic Church that provided religious and political education for community leaders. This helped build the political-ideological identity of the 'popular movement' based on the resistance against the dictatorship, on democratic values, pro-poor organisation, and the idea of political and social rights.<sup>35</sup> This 'infusion' of values favoured the emergence of a politicised oppositional civil society from the bottom-up and its consolidation over four decades. On these foundations a significant part of civil society resisted attempts of local governments and politicians to co-opt them. Prior to PB the poorest neighbourhoods, in particular, did maintain 'clientelistic' ties to city councillors who inter-mediated access to public works and services in exchange for votes, but most associations did not degenerate into dependent tools of clientelistic exchange between their leaders and politicians. Political transformation started in the late 1980s when the communist PC do B 'conquered' the labour unions and both PT and PC do B mobilised the neighbourhood associations, establishing (together with PDT) a leftist political hegemony in the 'community' movement. UAB became an important civic actor and a political force, aggregating some 55,000 people organised in 172 associations. The unions became weakened during the 1990s as a result of liberalisation and industrial restructuring, but by 2002 CUT still aggregated some 10,000 workers. Both movements became firmly integrated into a leftist political alliance that brought the 'Popular Front' to power in 1997.

The new government put strong emphasis on participation; it raised the number of sector-policy councils to 24 and carefully designed a PB scheme so as not to harm the neighbourhood associations by eliminating their intermediary role in favour of citizens' direct participation. In effect PB strengthened the associations, and it gradually changed the way in which citizens related to the state. People realised that neither the mayor nor the city councillors would decide to pave their street, but a mobilised community. Both PB and the councils curbed the particularistic tendencies of city councillors, and clientelism largely disappeared. However, the way in which

<sup>35</sup> C. H. Serra, J. I. Pires Lucas, R. Mincato, V. M. Guimarães and M. C. Mocellin, 'Formação política e movimentos sociais em Caxias do Sul: 1964–1985,' Relatório Final de Pesquisa, Universidade de Caxias do Sul, Centro de Ciências Humanas e da Comunicação (Caxias do Sul, 2002).

PB was implemented served both the interests of the ‘community movement’ and the political project of the Popular Front. This created a symbiotic and inter-dependent relationship between them that sometimes blurred the subtle difference between ‘alliance’ and ‘alignment’. Signs of this appeared occasionally. For instance, in a public seminar UAB’s president accused the government of ‘appropriating’ many councils in order to legitimise itself. And the opposition criticised that UAB had stopped protesting, and softened its demands vis-à-vis the government. Some unionists felt that PB did little to support them; it would de-link the town hall from the wider political struggle and cause fragmentation.

The cases of Camaçari and Santa Cruz show that the government’s exercise of ‘power over’ and the patterns of political inclusion were important factors for explaining government-led or user-led hegemony on the CMS. Both were characterised by government ‘tutelage’ over civil society, although the kind of constraints imposed on civil society varied considerably. In Camaçari these constraints were more authoritarian; in Santa Cruz their nature was co-optation and populism in relation to neighbourhood associations. In both cases deliberation councils contradicted the logic of the prevailing state-society regime; hence the government sought to minimise power sharing. Camaragibe and Caxias were both ruled by PT, for which deliberative participation was a crucial part of its political strategy, but the civic context varied. In Camaragibe the political inclusion of civil society actors relied on incorporation through ‘emancipatory populism’, while in Caxias it was based on integration and bottom-up political transformation. In both cases deliberative institutions had a key *political* function in the government’s attempt to weaken clientelistic networks, to legitimise itself, and to deal with demand overload by directing distributional conflict away from the government and into participatory arenas (endowed with real decision-making power).

Participatory performance is not only a function of government strategy; it must also be understood within the context (and limitations) of local civil societies. A politically unassertive but otherwise vibrant civil society, as in Santa Cruz, may allow governments to ‘tutor’ or marginalise deliberative councils. On the other hand, the government’s participatory strategy in Camaragibe met serious ‘civic’ limitations in its functioning. And the impact of participatory regimes upon civil society in Caxias and Camaragibe varied significantly, due to variations in institutional design and the previous patterns of civic life. In Caxias it legitimised and strengthened the neighbourhood associations by giving them a key role in community mobilisation, internal deliberation of priorities, and building strategic alliances with other neighbourhoods. It generally ended the clientelistic inter-mediation of demands, and instilled a sense of rights and citizenship. In Camaragibe, participatory governance weakened many organisations by undermining

traditional clientelistic leaders and practices; it encouraged the emergence of new leaders; yet many of them were prone to the same old practices. Participatory arrangements failed to bring about a ‘reinvention’ of civil society, whose incorporation into participatory forums did not provide it with a new horizontal identity but one that was defined through its relation to the polity, from which it was not clearly distinct. As the neighbourhood federation had practically ceased to exist, there was no forum left to assemble civil society without government involvement.

Incongruent attitudes between civil society and political society may not be as frequent as Avritzer suggests. The only clear case of elite-society dissociation was Camaragibe where democratic transformation has been a difficult top-down process. Only in Santa Cruz could we see a clear deviation of the participatory patterns on the CMS from the macro dynamics of state-society relations. Thus the CMS had a transformative character both in Camaragibe and Santa Cruz but hardly so in Camaçari and Caxias (which were cases of congruence and conformity). In Santa Cruz the CMS was an arena for bottom-up transformation against the odds of an otherwise little assertive or politically engaged civil society. In Camaragibe it was one of several instruments of a government-induced transformation of attitudes and practices at societal level. Thus the arrow of democratic renewal did not always point in the direction expected by Avritzer.

*Institutional interaction: informal particularism, formal liberal democracy  
and participatory institutions*

The democratic potential of deliberative participation depends not only on attitudes and practices at the levels of society and polity but also on their interaction with the overall institutional template. As Dryzek points out, ‘introducing additional stability-promoting institutional rules is not cumulative; the interaction of different rules that induce stability in isolation may together induce greater instability’. It is therefore difficult to ‘predict the effects of any combination of institutional innovations’.<sup>36</sup> The introduction of new institutions, or the redesign of prevailing ones, is bound to destabilise existing settlements.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, deliberative arrangements are supposed to do exactly that. Yet, to what extent and under what conditions are they able to overcome institutional hybridism rather than adding another dimension to it? Clientelism, liberal democracy and participatory institutions interact in several ways. Informal clientelism subverts liberal democracy. This is the starting point of Avritzer’s argument and a major rationale for deliberative

<sup>36</sup> Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*, p. 44.

<sup>37</sup> See Jack Knight, *Institutions and Social Conflict* (Cambridge, 1992).

arrangements. Particularistic vertical bonds aimed at exchanging favours for political allegiance conflict with horizontal class-based interest representation and leads to fragmentation rather than aggregation. Trading privileges rather than general problem-solving is at the heart of clientelistic politics. Yet, as in the Brazilian case, dysfunctional institutions of liberal democracy can also fuel clientelism by encouraging a fragmented party system, non-programmatic electoral competition, and the use of clientelism and pork-barrel as a political strategy.

Deliberative arrangements potentially undermine clientelism but also disempower representative institutions. Both in Caxias and Camaragibe PB diminished the legislators' influence over the budgeting process and reduced their role as inter-mediators of particularistic demands.<sup>38</sup> Yet what are the implications of such weakening of the legislature? It risks marginalising legislative representation rather than reforming it. This ultimately empowers the executive and increases even more the dependency of deliberative arrangements on the government and its political commitment. Moreover, it may cause clientelistic city councillors to resort to compensation strategies. As deliberative arenas bring distributional conflict directly to the societal level, old and new mediators like city councillors, neighbourhood presidents, and PB delegates may exploit these issues for particularistic purposes trying to subvert deliberative forums. This happened repeatedly with PB in Camaragibe.

Deliberation may also undermine deliberation. There is an unresolved tension between the main two types of deliberative arrangements, the councils and PB. The councils deal with municipal sector policies, while PB is concerned with public investments in any sector within a specific geographic area. This may result in contradictory decisions. Both in Caxias and Camaragibe, such conflicts led to government-backed renegotiations between the CMS and the respective community. A further problem is the question of policy co-ordination and articulation between deliberative councils. There is a danger of geographically and/or sectorally fragmented and parochial decision-making. The challenge is how this can be made compatible with integrated, long-term, and polity-wide planning.

This brings us to what Törnquist calls the 'political deficit'<sup>39</sup> associated with the view of a localised, civil society-centred and participatory politics of

<sup>38</sup> The legislatures found it difficult to question budgets drawn up by the executive with broad-based participation. When they eventually rejected budget bills because the government had vetoed their amendments, they had to back down after a political stand-off with the executive because PB carried stronger legitimacy.

<sup>39</sup> Olle Törnquist, 'The Political Deficit of Substantial Democratisation,' in J. Harriss, K. Stokke and O. Törnquist (eds.), *Politicising Democracy*.

democratisation that has become dominant among the Brazilian Left and, indeed, in mainstream development discourse. The ‘radically polycentric’ view that the ‘uncoordinated and highly decentralised actions of civil society entities, market actors, and local government agents are engaged in a mutually reinforcing movement to produce all good things for all people’<sup>40</sup> is in many ways problematic. The ‘polycentric’ actions of civil society need not only be linked to local governments through institutionalised participatory channels, but also rooted in ‘conventional’ politics and representative democracy. Although local civil society participation may be able to advance new claims and demands, it can hardly aggregate, integrate and unify the diversity of individual, group, and class interests, let alone politicise polity-wide concerns. This is likely to require programmatic political parties and movements that create cohesion around political ideas and values. Otherwise the generation of political cohesion is largely left to elites who may resort to authoritarianism or respond to societal fragmentation through a politics of clientelism and tutelage. What distinguishes Santa Cruz and Caxias is that in the latter case programmatic leftist parties managed to stimulate or penetrate grassroots associations connecting them to party politics. The unifying appeal of their ideology helped create an effective electoral alliance between the working and lower middle classes, and the balance of power began to shift.

What does the importance of civic-political synergy and institutionalisation mean for participatory regimes in contexts of a fragile civil society and weak parties? In Camaragibe it was *not* a strong programmatic party that integrated civil society into a broad reformist alliance. Instead, leadership-driven political transformation from above sought to compensate for the weakness of civic and political organising by engineering institutions of deliberative participation. Such ‘regimes’ reduce confrontation between civil society and the state, and disrupt the direct mediation between state officials and neighbourhood leaders.<sup>41</sup> Yet the risk is that deliberative arrangements may exacerbate the fragmentation of demands and interests. Both in Camaragibe and Porto Alegre PB contributed to the demise of the neighbourhood federation, although in the latter case it encouraged new associations.<sup>42</sup> To the extent that ‘participatory regimes’ lack or undermine ‘aggregative’ civic and political organisations and institutions they are likely to remain vulnerable to an authoritarian or clientelistic backlash.

The causal interaction between civil society, state action, and political institutions (including participatory arrangements) is more complex than

<sup>40</sup> Peter Houtzager, ‘Introduction: From Polycentrism to the Polity,’ in P. Houtzager and M. Moore (eds.), *Changing Paths: International Development and the New Politics of Inclusion* (Ann Arbor, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> Gianpaolo Baiocchi (ed.), *Radicals in Power: The Workers’ Party (PT) and Experiences of Urban Democracy in Brazil* (London and New York, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*



neo-Tocquevilleans would have it. The one-sided focus on civil society neglects the fact that both civic and state actors are constituted in a dynamic, bi-directional and inherently political interaction mediated by political institutions, which shapes the conditions under which political engagement and democratic governance can emerge or not. Several authors have therefore attempted to integrate the societal and the political sides of the equation.<sup>43</sup> Houtzager (drawing on Skocpol) develops a ‘polity approach’ viewing societal and state action as ‘constructed in iterative cycles (or episodes) of interaction’.<sup>44</sup> Put in a simplified way, a politics of inclusion depends on the ability of societal and state actors to engineer ‘fit’ with ‘historically changing points of access and leverage’<sup>45</sup> which are provided by political institutions that, in their turn, constrain actors’ ability to produce fit. Political institutions influence the formation of collective actors, their form of organisation and types of alliances. Institutional arrangements provide ‘structural linkages’ between state and society, around which subordinate groups crystallise as collective actors, as these linkages create new collective interests and the bases for alternative collective identities. According to Houtzager, the endogenous source of change is the ‘iterative nature of state-society interactions, i.e. sequenced episodes of mutual adjustment through conflict and negotiation’.<sup>46</sup>

There are various implications for the prospects of deliberative arrangements. Civil society actors, whose ‘constitution’ was based on a fit with informal clientelism or a ‘tutelage’ regime may not only constrain the emergence of new participatory institutions through their ‘iterative interaction’ with political actors. They would also have to reinvent or reconstitute themselves in order to achieve fit with these new institutions. This may not predestine them to acting as protagonists of institutional change. Yet, deliberative arrangements introduced merely as a result of external inducement will tend to remain on the margin of a political process governed by the dominant non-deliberative institutions and their fit with societal and state actors. If deliberative institutions become themselves dominant (as a result of iterative interaction or exogenous factors) they may over time cause a re-fit with civil society actors. If the game shifts from aggregation to argumentation, collective action and alliance building are discouraged. This may make these actors ‘unfit’ if the next cycle of interaction shifts back to non-deliberative institutions as a result of political change.

<sup>43</sup> See, for instance, T. Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, 1992); P. Evans, ‘Government Action, social capital and development: reviewing the evidence on synergy,’ *World Development*, vol. 24, no. 6 (1996), pp. 1119–32; M. Woolcock, ‘Social Capital and Economic Development: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis and Policy Framework,’ *Theory and Society*, vol. 27, no. 2 (1998), pp. 151–208.

<sup>44</sup> Houtzager, ‘Introduction: From Polycentrism to the Polity’.

<sup>45</sup> T. Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, p. 41.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Houtzager, ‘Introduction: From Polycentrism to the Polity,’ pp. 13–17.

The case of Caxias highlights the dilemma of deliberation in contexts where effective popular participation results from bottom-up political transformation; its very success may contain the seeds of the demise of deliberation. Bottom-up transformation usually requires the political mobilisation of representative popular organisations and an alliance (or mutual pervasion) of popular segments of civil society with parts of political society. This is decisive for electoral success and gaining access to participatory spaces under fair rules. However, the asset of cohesive alliance building in times of counter-hegemonic contestation may partly turn into a liability once the alliance is elected into government, and its component parts have to relate to each other under entirely different premises in deliberative forums. Both government and civil society actors must in a sense ‘reinvent’ themselves shifting from confrontation to collaboration (or autonomous ‘concerted agency’), from aggregation to argumentation, and from political to technical debate.

A political alliance between major segments of participants may turn into *aligned* agency under which actors balance their preferences and interests with political considerations that are not strictly related to the object of deliberation. Deliberation requires a certain amount of trust between actors that are unequal in terms of power and capabilities. Yet, too much of it may cause some participants to relax their participation. Deliberation, in its ideal conceptualisation, requires the absence of any bonds between participants that induce them to interact in ways other than by reasoning and argumentation about their own preferences and interests, though from a public-spirited point of view. The vision of deliberative democracy implies a society-centred perspective of free and atomised, though civic-minded citizens who transform their polity without, or even in contradiction to, ‘conventional’ politics. The problem is that deliberative democracy comes only into being through ‘conventional’ politics. And where it is a result of bottom-up integration, it is hard to forget political loyalties and ‘disaggregate’ a victorious alliance, only to expose themselves to a strictly argumentative dispute, partly with those same actors who previously had denied them the very possibility of participation.

This brings us back to the benefits or drawbacks of including civil society into state-sponsored deliberative forums. Caxias and Camaragibe partly support Dryzek’s proposition that civil society’s ‘entry into the state’ may reduce confrontation and ‘deplete the discursive vitality’ of societal actors.<sup>47</sup> While passive exclusion is not always enough to stimulate democratic impulses, active inclusion indeed bears a risk of reducing the vigour of civic activism. Our cases confirm, therefore, Woolcock’s emphasis on the need for a balance between ‘embeddedness’ and ‘autonomy’. However, the

<sup>47</sup> Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*, pp. 81–111.

‘iterative interaction’ and the mutual adaptation of ‘fit’ are subject to their own political dynamic. Fung and Wright argue that, where ‘countervailing power is already well organised in adversarial forms’ (as in Caxias), ‘these organisations are likely to oppose institutional movements from adversarial to collaborative forms of governance. Their capacities and approaches are well adapted to adversarialism, and the shift to collaboration may be seen as too risky, costly, and demobilising’.<sup>48</sup> In Caxias neither the government nor civil society actors opposed ‘collaborative governance’, but their difficulty to genuinely move from the ‘hegemonic’ to ‘deliberative’ paradigm had to do with problems of adaptation and re-engineering ‘fit’.

Deliberative participation is embedded in an ‘iterative’ political interaction, and may have consequences for the very constitution of both societal and state actors (e.g. the legislature). It is therefore troubling that many ‘deliberative democrats’ share the social capitalists’ neglect of politics. Thus they overlook the point that deliberation depends upon a peculiar power constellation that remains fragile, especially if not bolstered by aggregative forms of civic and political organising. Challenged by Cohen and Rogers,<sup>49</sup> Fung and Wright recognise that ‘empowered participatory governance’ requires ‘significant countervailing power’ (i.e. mechanisms that reduce or neutralise power imbalances) in order to yield the claimed benefits for democratic governance.<sup>50</sup> They note that ‘countervailing power’ is at odds with the very idea of deliberative problem solving, and that ‘adversarial’ countervailing (or counter-hegemonic) power is not easily re-deployed for collaborative (deliberative) purposes. Nevertheless, they speculate that ‘collaborative countervailing power’ is likely to derive from ‘locally organised adversarial entities’, from committed political leaders or parties that might ‘create venues for popular voice and problem-solving’, or from the ‘slow transformation of traditional adversarial organizations’.<sup>51</sup>

Although Fung and Wright make the crucial distinction between ‘adversarial’ and ‘collaborative’ governance, their notion of ‘collaborative countervailing power’ blurs this distinction again. They fail to recognise that ‘adversarial’ (aggregative) and ‘collaborative’ (deliberative) politics are opposite poles on a continuum. Nevertheless, their *sources* of ‘collaborative countervailing power’ implicitly support my proposition that there is a ‘hierarchical’ order between ‘aggregative’ representative and deliberative democracy. A countervailing power balance can only be constructed through

<sup>48</sup> Archon Fung and Erik O. Wright, *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Deliberative Democracy* (London, New York, 2003), p. 263.

<sup>49</sup> J. Cohen and J. Rogers, ‘Power and Reason,’ in A. Fung and E. O. Wright (eds.), *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance* (London and New York, 2003).

<sup>50</sup> Fung and Wright, *Deepening Democracy*, p. 260.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 282–5.

aggregative politics, either by electing committed governments or by forging strong counter-hegemonic alliances. Both in Caxias and Camaragibe the election of PT-led governments was a precondition for effective participation. Sustained democratic innovation and genuinely ‘deliberative’ interaction are likely to flourish only in situations of (pro-democratic) power-political conformity between micro-level participation and the macro level of the polity. As Cohen and Rogers point out, the empirical observation that effective deliberative participation requires a ‘rough background balance of power ... does not importantly lessen the attraction of the deliberative ideal; it simply states a condition of its reasonable pursuit’.<sup>52</sup>

### *Conclusions*

Deliberation presupposes conditions most likely to be found in already more democratic polities. Therefore ‘conventional’ means of political action, mobilisation, and representation are prior and superior. Only once power-political obstacles have been removed in the ‘adversarial’ political arena, may public deliberation contribute to deepening democracy. Therefore, the hard work of ‘aggregative’ politics and the reform of representative democratic institutions rather than the proliferation of deliberative arrangements in polities where these conditions are missing deserve the primary attention of institutional engineers concerned with democratic consolidation. Brazil’s prevailing constitutional rules are a source of continued clientelism. A reform could do much to discourage clientelistic politics, improve the functioning of deliberative arrangements, and reduce the burden on them of having to transform political society against the workings of a powerful adverse incentive structure. Lipset’s claim that a strong civil society is ‘more important than electoral rules in encouraging a stable system’<sup>53</sup> is problematic because it fails to account for the fact that political institutions and civic and political organising interact in complex ways. Civil society may not suffice for democratic consolidation as long as the party system and political institutions have not been reformed, and deliberative participation may not live up to its promise as long as representative democracy has not been reinvigorated.

The key point raised here is not that deliberative arrangements work best under committed governments and participatory regimes. It is not even the puzzle as to why governments would give up power and draw civil society into exercises of civic education rather than relying on established particularistic ways of doing politics. Nor is it the extent to which such ‘regimes’

<sup>52</sup> Cohen and Rogers, ‘Power and Reason,’ p. 249.

<sup>53</sup> S. M. Lipset, ‘The Social Requisites for Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address,’ *American Sociological Review*, vol. 59 (1994), p. 12.

have been able to actually disrupt clientelism through participatory governance. The key question is why and how committed governments can come to power in the first place in conditions of entrenched clientelism where, according to Avritzer, liberal democratic institutions are insufficient for consolidating democracy and overcoming institutional hybridism. What makes the emergence of ‘path-transforming’ political agency via elections possible, and what sort of reforms of electoral and representative institutions can encourage and sustain such pro-democratic political leadership on a more general basis? Democratic consolidation can hardly be achieved by prescribing ever more deliberative ‘add-ons’ to the prevailing institutional matrix without removing the matrix’ institutional incentives that fuel and reward the use of political strategies based on particularism and ‘pork and patronage’.

There is certainly a case for strengthening the legal-institutional foundations of deliberative forums, for instance, by legislating – at the federal level – designs with the capacity to correct for deliberative inequality. Competencies could be clarified, training schemes expanded, and enforcement mechanisms strengthened. The composition and selection of councillors could be subjected to judicial organisation and supervision, and so forth. But, as Daron Acemoglu points out<sup>54</sup>, when the problem is institutional, related to political institutions and the distribution of political power, it is necessary to tackle the source of the problem. Due to a ‘seesaw effect’ a partial reform may have limited benefits or backfire, as powerful actors may use a variety of other instruments to compensate for power losses, thus worsening the rest of the institutions. ‘Pressing on one side will raise the other’. Therefore, any serious attempt to overcome the ‘deadlock of democracy in Brazil’<sup>55</sup> must address the malfunctions of the country’s core political institutions of representative democracy. And it must preserve and strengthen citizens’ capacity to politicise their concerns through political and not just civic organising.

<sup>54</sup> In his Lionel Robbins Memorial Lecture on ‘Understanding Institutions’ held at the LSE on 23–25 February 2004.

<sup>55</sup> Ames, *The Deadlock of Democracy in Brazil*.