

Dominican Republic, Cuba, or Haiti. On the other hand, if we are to examine the existence (or not) of a new era in the development of social protection systems in the region, it would be good to complement the case of Temer's government in Brazil with other current governments, such as Piñera's in Chile or Maduro's in Venezuela. This would allow us to see from a comparative point of view how some of the political determinants have behaved in change and reform processes in recent times. Finally, the consistency and validity of the analyses and results presented in this compilation are bound to be qualified by the crossroads situation in which the region finds itself today (spring 2021), in the midst of a social, health, and economic crisis caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic.

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Brian Wampler, Natasha Borges Sugiyama, and Michael Touchton, *Democracy at Work: Pathways to Well-Being in Brazil*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Figures, tables, abbreviations, appendix, bibliography, index, 370 pp.; hardcover \$99.99, ebook \$80.

The expansion of noncontributory social policies constitutes one of the most notable shifts in Latin American governments' welfare strategies in the last decades. Scholars have studied extensively the political origins and implications of social policy reforms in the region, where welfare regimes tend to be structurally fragmented. Extant evidence suggests that electoral competition has been an important driving force behind several governments' decisions to reach previously excluded sectors. At the same time, recent works have also highlighted that, in some contexts, civil society participation has played a key role in fostering more inclusive reforms (Garay 2016). This variation opens relevant questions about the specific processes leading to different social policy implementation paths, their connection with democratic institutions, and their long-term effects in reducing entrenched inequalities and fostering human development.

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In *Democracy at Work: Pathways to Well-Being in Brazil*, Brian Wampler, Natasha Borges Sugiyama, and Michael Touchton provide crucial insights that help disentangle these very dynamics and explain why some polities have followed more equitable directions. Their main argument is that democratic practices are at the center of the processes leading to better human development outcomes. The authors contend that there are three democratic pathways conducive to increased well-being: participatory institutions, rights-based social programs, and inclusive state capacity. Drawing on a rich combination of information sources and a mixed-methods approach, the book shows how these three pathways have a joint impact on well-being, creating virtuous cycles that foster democratic participation, government responsiveness, and human development.

The book is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1 presents the theoretical framework of the project. Among their many contributions, the authors' argument brings together various strands of the political science literature. Specifically, the book's theoretical framework bridges studies of development, participatory institutions, and social policies. Wampler and colleagues also theorize about the role of sub-national governance units in explaining differences in well-being, thereby incorporating the complexity of public policy provision in multitiered systems. When linking democratic dimensions to human development outcomes, the authors advocate for going beyond a minimalist conception of democracy based solely on electoral competition and instead considering "thicker" variants of democratic practices, such as participatory mechanisms. Their logic is that focusing exclusively on electoral dynamics ignores many citizen-government interactions happening in nonelectoral policy cycles, which are essential to understanding the level of state responsiveness to citizens' needs.

Participatory institutions constitute the first pathway to well-being, as they allow citizens to intervene in policy decisionmaking. When functioning adequately, these institutions enable citizens and state actors to develop a shared knowledge base about the community's priorities. They also provide citizens with information about how to use "an expanded set of political rights to advocate for their social and civil rights" (43), thus incentivizing government accountability.

The authors consider rights-based social programs as the second pathway to well-being. Social policies that "ensure universal access to improved public goods" (45) promote agency and inclusion among the population, thus favoring citizens' participation in demanding better policy provision. Beneficiaries of rights-based social policies are more likely to develop a notion of entitlement to public programs and services and to advocate for their interests and needs. Finally, a capable state with an inclusive apparatus constitutes the third pathway to improved human development outcomes. The authors argue that when state capacity is embedded in a robust democratic system, government actions are more likely to be aligned with communities' priorities (51). The government's ability to meet such demands is related to state capacity: sufficient staffing and resources, administrative continuity, and meritocratic hiring are essential factors to increase the quality of public programs and services. Notably, the authors expect these three pathways to have an interactive, amplifying effect on well-being.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the evolution of democratic institutions and social programs in Brazil over the last decades, ultimately leading to more inclusionary governments in some localities. The chapter is organized into four sections, covering critical periods from the democratic transition (1974–85) to the Workers' Party and Lula era (2003–13). The authors discuss the emergence and evolution of democratic institutions across periods and show how civil society activists influenced elected officials and bureaucrats through gradual processes that established and strengthened formal participatory mechanisms (e.g., participatory budgeting programs and public policy management councils). They also document the long quest toward inclusive social policies (most notably the Unified Health System, SUS, *Sistema Único de Saúde*, and *Bolsa Família*) that incorporated a rights-based approach and reinforced state capacity and intergovernmental coordination, especially in the 2000s.

In chapter 3, the authors lay out the methodology for their empirical chapters (4–8). Their empirical strategy is twofold. First, they analyze human development patterns, leveraging a fine-grained dataset at the municipal level containing indicators on state capacity, social policies, democratic institutions, and well-being outcomes from 2006 to 2013. Second, they explore the causal mechanisms underlying their argument via a qualitative study based on interviews with government officials, civil society leaders, and members of policy councils. This mixed-methods approach, combined with the authors' country expertise, allows for a robust analysis of how democratic practices, inclusive social policies, and state capacity work together to improve citizens' well-being.

Chapters 4 through 8 delve into the three pathways' connections with increased human development outcomes in specific policy areas. The authors carefully conduct a series of statistical tests to estimate each pathway's effect on well-being outcomes across Brazilian municipalities. Chapter 4 analyzes the determinants of poverty reduction; chapter 5 explores health outcomes, focusing on infant mortality; chapter 6 turns to the dimension of women's empowerment, considering maternal mortality, women's income, and the proportion of women running for office; and chapter 7 concentrates on educational performance.

Taken together, these chapters reveal a systematic effect of democratic practices on citizens' well-being. Crucially, the authors show that the level of public spending in the municipalities is not enough to account for the variation in human development outcomes. Instead, what matters is how local governments deploy and spend these resources, which is related to participatory institutions (135).

Chapter 8 presents case studies in three localities that vary across the key independent variables. The chapter takes a closer look at the mechanisms driving the general results from the large-*N* analyses in the previous chapters. The authors trace the processes leading to divergent well-being outcomes in Camaragibe, Jaboatão dos Guararapes, and Garanhuns, showing the centrality of the three pathways in explaining the differences in their trajectories.

Wampler and colleagues' meticulous study provides a compelling explanation of the variation in human development outcomes in Brazil. Their work uncovers

how citizen participation is crucial to ensure policy responsiveness and improved outcomes and how these mechanisms are contingent on state capacity. The lessons we learn from this outstanding book are relevant for several strands of the comparative literature. For one, its theoretical contribution and results demonstrate the importance of analyzing welfare regimes' social anchoring. Scholars will need to pay greater attention to the dynamics of the citizen coalitions that shape and support specific policies, thereby enabling their continuity and success. As recent contributions already show (Niedzwiecki and Anria 2019), studies will benefit from incorporating the role of participatory institutions and state capacity when assessing the potential impact of human development interventions.

Democracy at Work also opens important questions for future research. The book advances a theory based on complex interactions between citizens and the state, which depend heavily on institutional legacies. One might wonder about the conditions under which other countries (or subnational units) could build similar pathways by establishing and strengthening formal participatory institutions. Also, scholars may ask about the resilience and sustainability of these democratic pathways as political conditions change. Brazil's political landscape has transformed in the years following the study's period of analysis. Amid increasing political polarization, citizens have displayed a growing disenchantment with the democratic system, which reached a turning point with the election of Jair Bolsonaro (Olmeda 2019). Increasing disinformation and political polarization in the past few years pose a threat to the stability of democratic institutions. As the authors anticipate at the end of the book, a lingering question is whether robust participatory institutions and increased citizen well-being in certain localities will sustain the identified virtuous circles and reinforce public support for democratic practices.

Given its theoretical and empirical breadth, *Democracy at Work* will become necessary reading for scholars in many fields. Its argument and findings will undoubtedly inform the next generation of studies focusing on the political conditions that lead to better and more equal social outcomes. The book is an enduring contribution to our understanding of the intricate connection between democratic participation, social policies, and well-being.

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