Democracy, Participatory Politics and Development: Some Comparative Lessons from Brazil, India and South Africa

Patrick Heller
Brown University

This article argues that in thinking about the challenges of inclusive democratic development in the global south we need to refocus attention on effective citizenship, *that is, the actual capacity of citizens to make use of formal political and civic rights. Empirically this calls for closer analytic attention to the participatory dimensions of democracy and specifically to an examination of the political and institutional conditions under which decentralized participatory governance can be promoted. The essay reviews research findings from ambitious reform projects in participatory governance in Brazil, India (Kerala) and South Africa and draws out some comparative lessons that highlight the complex interplay of political parties and civil society.* Polity (2012) **44,** 643–665. doi:10.1057/pol.2012.19; published online
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In thinking about the relationship between democracy, economic security and social justice, one is necessarily drawn to the comparative literature on the European welfare state. As is now well established in the literature, the post-WWII trajectories of European welfare states, and most notably the social democratic variants, enjoyed a virtuous cycle of democracy and socio-economic justice. This finding has been built on the strength of comparative research that supports a relatively parsimonious causal claim: the organizational coherence and encompassingness of working class mobilization is directly correlated with the size and depth of the welfare state, which is in turn directly correlated with more egalitarian economic and social outcomes.[1] It is moreover notable that these

1. Evelyne Huber and John D. Stephens, *Development and Crisis of the Welfare State: Parties and Policies in Global Markets* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

social gains have not come at the expense of economic dynamism, and indeed, that social democratic states have been especially proficient at successfully adapting to the competitive challenges of globalization.

When the causal argument is broken down, it becomes clear that the relationship between working class mobilization and positive distributive outcomes is highly contingent. Working class politics, as Przeworski[2] has so emphatically argued, were the *effects* of struggles. Such struggles were first and foremost struggles for recognition and representation, and any account of the rise of the welfare state is ultimately an account of democratization. Reviewing the literature, it becomes clear that the capacity of subordinate classes to secure their material interests through electoral politics ultimately depended on their success in surmounting significant obstacles to collective action. Rueschemeyer *et al.*[3] have famously argued that the existence of a strong civil society enjoying relative autonomy from the repressive capacities of the state was critical to working class political formation. In sum, the robust comparative lesson of the history of the European welfare state is that redistributive policies and social protection are most likely to be expanded when subordinate groups can build collective power and effectively reshape democratic institutions.

How well does this analytic frame extend to explaining the possibilities for just and inclusive development in the global south? At first glance the answer has to be *not very well*. First, and most obviously, the protagonist of the European social democratic trajectory—the working class—is simply missing in action. This is true both in a structural and political sense. The conditions of capitalist development in the global south have never been favorable to the classic patterns of working class formation. In the global periphery the process of industrialization has often been either highly capital intensive, producing a small and geographically concentrated working class as in many Latin American countries, or highly dependent on informal arrangements for securing labor power that present nearly insurmountable obstacles to working class formation. And even when structural conditions have been more favorable to working class formation, the timing and sequencing of working class politics has often favored state-dominated strategies of incorporation, such as in Latin American corporatism, that have fragmented working class politics through highly graduated and selective provisioning of social benefits. If a straight extension of the *working class power* argument to late developing societies does not make sense, we should not, however, be too hasty in dispensing with the broader insight that there is a link between subordinate class politics and redistributive outcomes in the global south.

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2. Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

3. Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

On the one hand, the wave of transitions away from authoritarian rule to representative democratic systems in the developing world marks a significant juncture. Whatever their limitations may be, these new, and in cases such as India not so new, electoral democracies have dramatically expanded the spaces for subordinate politics. The increased mobilization of lower castes in India of the past two decades and the dramatic rise of indigenous political power in the Andean nations are only two examples. Yet on the other hand there are good reasons for skepticism. It *may* indeed be the case, as Schmitter has dryly observed, that "democratization and the consolidation of democracy have been so successful because democracy has been so much less consequential than its proponents wished and than its opponents feared."[4] As will become clear in this paper, Schmitter's assessment does not hold uniformly, but the fact remains that the democratic deficit in the global south remains severe.

Thus, despite the consolidation of formal representative institutions as well as significant gains in associational freedoms, pervasive inequalities between citizens along class and other lines and severe problems in preserving the chain of sovereignty between citizen and state have limited the effective representativeness of democratic institutions. These fundamental deficits of representative democracy in the global south have hampered subordinate group collective action and severely restricted the possibilities for building effective welfare states. The key point here is that the missing link between representation and substantive outcomes is the unequal nature of participation. To understand that if any virtuous linkage might exist or emerge between subordinate class politics and economically and socially just outcomes, we need to focus more specifically on the conditions and possibilities for the effective practice of democratic politics. As argued earlier, this means focusing on the formation of citizens rather than the formation of classes. This point calls for some elaboration.

The core democratic deficit in developing democracies is what I refer to simply as "effective citizenship." Classical and contemporary theories of democracy all take for granted the decision-making autonomy of individuals as the foundation of democratic life. All citizens are presumed to have the basic rights and the *capacity* to exercise free will, associate as they choose and vote for whom they prefer. This capacity of rights-bearing citizens to associate, deliberate, and form preferences in turn underwrites the legitimacy of democratic political authority. It is in this sense that Kaldor notes that for all its varied usages "the term 'civil society' has always been associated with the formation of a particular type of political authority."[5] Yet even if this normative view of democracy has almost a consensual status in the literature,

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4. Philippe C. Schmitter, "Defects and Deficits in the Quality of Neo-Democracy," in *Democratic Deficits: Addressing Challenges to Sustainability and Consolidation Around the World*, ed. Gary Bland and Cynthia J. Arnson (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2009), 19–37.

5. Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 16.

problems emerge when we make the move to empirical understandings of how citizenship, and hence democracy, actually works. As Somers[6] has argued, much of the literature on democracy tends to conflate the *status* of citizenship (a bundle of rights) with the *practice* of citizenship. Given the highly uneven rates of political participation and influence across social categories that persist in advanced democracies (and especially the United States), the notion of citizenship should always be viewed as contested. But in the context of developing democracies, where inequalities remain high and access to rights is often circumscribed by social position or compromised by institutional weaknesses, the problem of associational autonomy is so acute that it brings the very notion of citizenship into question.[7] A high degree of consolidated representative democracy as we find in democracies of the global south, such as Brazil, India, and South Africa, should as such not be confused with a high degree of effective citizenship. Closing this gap between formal legal rights in the civil and political arena, and the actual capability to meaningfully practice those rights is what I mean by effective citizenship. To make sense of how democracy actually works in the global south we need to move beyond the traditional preoccupation with electoral institutions and turn our attention to civil society.

The thorny problems of defining civil society aside, there is general agreement that a necessary prerequisite of citizenship is associational capabilities and that civil society represents the terrain in which such capabilities are fashioned. To make sense of the extent to which civil society is actually constitutive of citizens and is differentiated from the political society and the market, we have to examine it along a horizontal and vertical dimension. The horizontal dimension refers to the Tocquevillian view of democracy which focuses on the internal qualities of associational life. Tocqueville argued that democracies function well when citizens make use of their associational capacities and recognize each other as rights-bearing citizens. More recently, Dahl has made political equality— which he defines in terms of equality of capacities to participate in political life— the centerpiece of his theory of democracy.[8] This then leads us to the sociological question of the extent to which pervasive inequalities within society in effect distort the associational playing field and produce a wide range of de facto exclusions from political life.[9]

6. Margaret R. Somers, "Citizenship and the Place of the Public Sphere: Law, Community, and Political Culture in the Transition to Democracy," *American Sociological Review* 58 (October 1993): 587–620.

7. Jonathan Fox, "The Difficult Transition from Clientelism to Citizenship," *World Politics* 46 (1994):151–84; Gurpreet Mahajan, "Civil Society and Its Avatars: What Happened to Freedom and Democracy," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34 (1999): 1188–96; Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

8. Robert A. Dahl, *On Political Equality* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

9. For one of the best empirical explorations of this point see Paromita Sanyal, "From Credit to Collective Action: The Role of Microfinance in Promoting Women's Social Capital and Normative Influence," *American Sociological Review* 74(2009): 529–50.

The vertical dimension is essentially a Weberian problem: many new democracies suffer from poor institutionalization and in particular weak forms of integration between states and citizens. The problem is two-fold. On the one hand, there is the problem of *how* citizens engage the state. State-society relations in the developing democracies tend to be dominated by patronage and populism, with citizens having either no effective means of holding government accountable (other than periodic elections) or being reduced to dependent clients. In the absence of clear and rule-bound procedures of engagement, citizens cannot engage the national, or just as importantly the local, state *qua* citizens, that is as autonomous bearers of civic and political rights. On the other hand, there is the problem of *where* citizens engage the state, that is, the problem of the relatively narrow institutional surface area of the state. Given that local government is often absent or just extraordinarily weak in much of the developing world, there are in fact very few points of contact with the state for ordinary citizens. Taken together, the vertical problem of state-society relations and the horizontal problem of perverse social inequalities undermine the associational autonomy of citizens, the *sine qua non* of any effective democracy. Just because citizens can vote does not mean that they can participate consequentially.

Identifying effective citizenship as the central problematic of democratization then focuses our attention squarely on questions of participation. How do formally endowed citizens in the consolidated democracies of the global south actually put their rights to use, and in particular develop their collective power to influence the state? In the past two decades the literature on participatory democracy, which initially took shape in the context of first world democracies,[10] has taken on a new life in the debates on democracy and development. Much of this debate has focused on efforts by NGOs and multilaterals to promote "community participation" in specific projects. Critics have denounced these forms of "invited" participation as having explicitly de-politicizing effects, as once-off exercises desig-ned to demobilize communities while providing development agents and projects with much needed legitimacy.[11] My focus in this paper is not the development apparatus or the International NGO community, but rather pressures for participation that arise from what are essentially efforts to contest elite-dominated forms of democracy.[12] These instances differ dramatically from the development apparatus embrace of participation because they are explicitly political projects, emerging out

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10. Carol Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

11. Andre Cornwall and Vera Schattan Coelho, "Spaces for Change? The Politics of Citizen Participation in New Democratic Arenas." in *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Citizen Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, ed. Andre Cornwall and Vera Schattan Coelho (London: Zed Books, 2007), 1–29.

12. Leonardo Avritzer, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

of local political conflicts and geared to achieving political ends. These participatory efforts, or more accurately instances of *participatory politics,* have included a wide range of movements and initiatives to transform the nature of state institutions by making them more responsive and more open to direct citizen involvement. Participatory politics, I will argue, has been explicitly about *making citizens* and as such is integrally linked to ongoing struggles to deepen democracy.

Here I examine three cases of participatory politics that have similar origins but different outcomes. The first is the national effort in South Africa to promote direct civic involvement in local government through decentralization and constitutionally mandated citizen participation in the formulation of local plans and budgets (Integrated Development Plans—IDPs). The second is the "people's campaign of decentralized planning" (hereafter the Campaign) launched in the Indian state of Kerala in the wake of the national passage of constitutional amendments in 1993 that mandated more democracy and more development for local governments. The third is participatory budgeting (PB) in Brazil, which first emerged in the now fabled case of Porto Alegre but has since spread to over 400 cities (and indeed has diffused to highly diverse settings such as Peru and Spain). All three of these cases are instances of concerted efforts—led in different combinations by states, parties and civil society actors—to create and nurture *decentralized participatory governance*, or DPG.[13] In this paper I first develop a framework for comparing these three cases. I then provide a brief summary of research findings on the effects of these projects. Finally, I draw out some general lessons for both the conditions under which participatory politics can take hold, and some broader lessons about participatory politics.

The Institutions and Politics of DPG

The debate on how to strengthen the democratic accountability of local governments has generally been divided between those who emphasize the importance of building "good institutions" and those who emphasize the intrinsic value of participation. Those who place their faith in institutional design (let's call them the *institutionalists*) believe that with the right incentives, properly delineated lines of authority, careful rule-based procedures and targeted application of expert knowledge, local bureaucracies can become effective instruments of development. Engagement with the public offers important sources of information, but is limited to consultation. The institutionalists worry that too much participation can overwhelm new and fragile

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13. This borrows from Fung and Wright's model of empowered participatory governance (EPG) but with the crucial difference that the cases I examine are all reform efforts to build democratic practices in spaces that were previously authoritarian. Archon Fung and Erik O. Wright, eds., *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance* (London: Verso, 2003).

democratic institutions.[14] Those who champion participation (let's call them the *participatistas*) believe that more binding forms of citizen engagement are intrinsically good, but also mobilize important societal resources that are good for development. The participatistas are acutely concerned with the limits of representative democracy and worry that an overemphasis on getting the institutions right crowds out civil society.[15] These two zero-sum views are echoed in the academic literature, both along disciplinary and ideological fault lines. Economists, and increasingly political scientists, are more preoccupied with getting the incentives right to resolve principle-agent problems, whereas sociologists and anthropologists are more concerned with getting the process right by leveling power asymmetries. Ideologically the fault line is between those who put their faith in formal institutions—high modernists of both the left and the right—and those who put their faith in civil society, which can mean either an emphasis on the virtues of "communities" or on the virtues of the public sphere. It is worth noting that this policy world debate very much reflects the division in the debate on democracy between theories of formal democracy that emphasize the aggregative function of electoral institutions and normative theories of democracy that emphasize the intrinsic value of participation and deliberation.

Both the institutionalist and participatista views ultimately fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of the local democratic state. The institutionalists fail because they assume that if built correctly the institution will work irrespective of the power equations in society. While this view may hold some water in contexts characterized by robust and evenly distributed associational capacities, in most young democracies associational capacities are circumscribed by a range of extra-institutional constraints and the actual capacity to "work the institution" will vary dramatically across social categories. Under these conditions, institutions are likely to be captured by elites or governed by modes of engagement such as clientelism that have perverse effects on citizenship. The participatistas fail because they invariably presume that communities or disadvantaged groups have some innate associational capacity—be it social capital or mobilizational resources— that simply needs to be harnessed. But even if we accept that collective capacities and learning are central to both the normative and instrumental case for participation, there are still two fundamental problems this view leaves unresolved. The first is that associational life is in many ways an artifact of institutional design,

14. The classic version of this argument is Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968).

15. The good governance literature falls squarely into the institutionalist camp. The social capital and social movement literatures fall into the participatista camp. The more recent literature on participation often falls somewhere in the middle. In developing their model of EPG, Fung and Wright try to marry both perspectives. They want to empower community groups and see real gains from participation, but also emphasize that these gains depend on making governance more answerable to civil society inputs. Fung and Wright, *Deepening Democracy.*

and that promoting participation requires building new kinds of institutions.[16] The second is the chain of sovereignty problem, that is, the issue of how participatory inputs actually get translated into actual outputs. Both problems require serious attention to institutional design, including complex issues that are generally the purview of the technocrats and often shunned by the champions of civil society and social movements.

I emphasize these divisions because this tension between institutionalist and participatista views—which in real-world terms translates into the balance of power between state actors (politicians and bureaucrats) and civil society— animates much of the debate and marks a key line of tension in the three cases I examine. Specifically, the public debate around decentralization reforms in Brazil, India, and South Africa generally takes the form of stark oppositions between delivery and participation, top-down versus bottom-up planning, "hard" versus "soft" development, and in political terms, as we shall see, between the organizational imperatives of political parties and the demands of social movements. But while these fault lines are very real—if in no other sense than that they have become the loci of political contention—they provide an overly stylized picture of the problem that elides much of the political and institutional complexity of building DPG. From the perspective of developing a transformative politics, what is most problematic about these stylized narratives is that they present state and society as locked in a battle of irreconcilable logics, leaving little room for positive-sum configurations and workable strategies to achieve the double desiderata of DPG. Indeed, as we shall see, DPG has been most successful precisely where and when state and political actors have been able to mold institutional designs to participatory dynamics. With these qualifications in mind, the tensions between these two logics provide a useful framework for comparing DPG in South Africa, Brazil, and Kerala.

Given the institutional complexities of building DPG, some degree of state capacity appears as a necessary prerequisite. With respect to established institutional capacities, South Africa had a clear and distinct advantage, having inherited—at least in major metropolitan centers—what were highly decentralized and high capacity local states. Under apartheid, municipal authorities enjoyed fiscal autonomy and had accumulated significant developmental capacities, not least of which were the extraordinary powers of control and surveillance required to manage the exclusions of the apartheid city. Indeed, a slogan of the democratic transition was "from planning for segregation, to planning for emancipation." In contrast, the Brazilian state is notorious for its degree of penetration by political interests (some "islands of efficiency"

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16. Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, "Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance," *Politics and Society* 20 (1992): 393–472.

notwithstanding), and municipalities have long been ruled by oligarchical interests who have transformed budgeting and planning into little more than an exercise in organized rent-seeking. The Indian state, with the "steel frame" of the Indian Administrative Service inherited from the British, has been characterized as semi-Weberian,[17] but at the sub-national and local level the bureaucracy has been deeply penetrated by patronage politics. Even in Kerala, where the provincial state has been widely celebrated for its ability to deliver basic services,[18] organized rent-seeking is endemic, amounting by some internal estimates to over 50 percent of public expenditures.[19] In institutional terms, moreover, the local state (that is municipalities and rural governments) had few developmental functions before the reforms of the 1990s.

But if inherited state capacity favored DPG in South Africa, the political configuration has proven to be less propitious for participatory politics. As I have argued elsewhere,[20] what most distinguishes South Africa from Kerala and Brazil is its dominant party system. In Brazil and Kerala, a highly competitive electoral arena has pushed left parties to work closely with civil society and social movements. Thus both the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in Kerala and the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), or Workers' Party, in Brazil have favored participatory reforms as part of an overall political strategy of strengthening the associational capacities of subordinate groups. This has not by any means resolved the tension between institutional and participatory logics, but has nonetheless allowed for co-production between the local state and civil society. In contrast, in the absence of a viable threat to its electoral hegemony, the African National Congress (ANC) has had little incentive to work with civil society, and has instead emphasized the political objective of consolidating its control over public institutions.

These two fundamental differences in political configurations and inherited state capacity have produced dramatically different trajectories of building DPG that, when compared, bring into sharp relief the tensions and the complexities of the institutional and participatory views of DPG. In the following section I summarize findings from three research projects[21] to make the case that while in

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17. Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

18. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Vol. 1 (New York: Knopf, 1999).

19. Patrick Heller, K.N. Harilal, and Shubham Chaudhuri, "Building Local Democracy: Evaluating the Impact of Decentralization in Kerala, India," *World Development* 35 (2007): 626–48.

20. Patrick Heller, "Moving the State: The Politics of Democratic Decentralization in Kerala, South Africa, and Porto Alegre," *Politics & Society* 29 (2001): 131–63.

21. For details see Gianpaolo Baiocchi, Patrick Heller, and Marcelo K. Silva, *Bootstrapping Democracy: Transforming Local Governance and Civil Society in Brazil* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Patrick Heller, K.N. Harilal and Shubham Chaudhuri, "Building Local Democracy: Evaluating the Impact of Decentralization in Kerala, India," *World Development* 35 (2007): 626–48; Patrick Heller, "Reclaiming Democratic Spaces: Civics and Politics in Posttransition Johannesburg," in *Emerging*

comparative terms the institutional side of the equation is highly developed in South Africa, the participation side of the equation remains poorly developed, and has in fact suffered from many of the conventional zero-sum assumptions that pervade the literature on decentralization. In contrast, the institutional form of local developmental government remains highly problematic in both Kerala and Brazil, but the participatory interfaces that have been built are quite effective and have directly addressed many of the obstacles to participation that are often singled out in South Africa as intractable. Most notably, participatory reforms in Kerala and Brazil have had a direct impact on building civil society capacities and providing subordinate groups with meaningful and consequential opportunities for shaping local development.[22] In contrast, the ANC has more or less successfully contained civil society as part of its hegemonic project and the resulting absence of participation has weakened citizen formation.

The Political Origins of DPG

In Brazil, Kerala, and South Africa the impetus for democratizing local government in the 1990s had distinct roots in participatory politics and in all three cases generated institutional designs for participatory governance that were remarkably similar. Yet as we shall see the impact on effective citizenship has diverged significantly.

The transition to democracy in South Africa was accompanied by powerful calls for institutionalizing participation. The anti-apartheid movement was spearheaded by a broad coalition of civil society organizations, but the mass element of the movement was dominated by what in South Africa were known as *civics*. These neighborhood associations initially emerged as community-based efforts at self-provisioning in black townships, but in the 1980s became powerful vehicles of organized resistance to the apartheid state, leading a series of boycotts and protests that were critical to bringing the apartheid government to the negotiating table. The organizational forms pioneered by the civics—street and area committees that answered to popular assemblies—embodied "a distinctive notion of

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participatory democracy [and] an assertion that the democracy of the ballot box constituted a truncated and deformed form of citizen power."[23]

At the time of its democratic transition, South Africa's foundational development document, the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), explicitly identified participatory democracy as a key objective and argued that all local development had to be based on the mobilization of civil society. Subsequent legislation moreover mandated a series of participatory processes in local governance. Most notably, all municipalities in South Africa must formulate an annual IDP through a process that calls for wide-based community participation. And in the early years of post-apartheid South Africa, Community Development Forums (CDFs) were a ubiquitous presence in townships, serving as popular assemblies in which local development plans and interventions were debated.

The Indian state of Kerala (population 31 million) has long been recognized for its achievements in promoting social development.[24] But despite the strength of mass movements (most notably organized labor) and a high literacy rate, Kerala, as is true of all Indian states, has been governed in a highly top-down fashion. Vertically organized state bureaucracies have exercised a virtual monopoly in service delivery and development, and local government—that is. municipalities and rural governments—have enjoyed very limited powers, and virtually no resources to promote development. Until recently, the first level at which Indian citizens encountered a democratically constituted form of the state was at the provincial level, with the average Indian state having a population of 30 million in 2001. This began to change in 1993 with the passage of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments that gave new powers to local governments and mandated citizen participation in the form of gram sabhas (village assemblies). The amendments, however, left the details of implementation to states. States did institute regular local government elections, but for the most part failed to devolve significant responsibilities and resources downwards. This was largely because parties that rule at the state level depend on local powerbrokers that are directly threatened by democratic decentralization. But in Kerala, a coalition of left parties led by the Communist Party of India–Marxist (CPI(M))—returned to power in 1996 and immediately launched the "People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning" (the Campaign hereafter). Inspired and informed by a statewide community organization—the KSSP (Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, or the Kerala People's Science Movement), a 50,000-member organization with a long history of promoting local experiments in participatory planning and development—the CPI(M)-led government implemented what is in scope and scale

23. Glenn Adler and Jonny Steinberg, *From Comrades to Citizens: The South African Civics Movement and the Transition to Democracy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

24. Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen, *Hunger and Public Action* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1989).

undoubtedly one of the most ambitious participatory reforms ever undertaken. All 1,214 local governments in Kerala—municipalities and the three rural tiers of district, block and gram Panchayats (rural local governments)—were given new functions and powers of decision making, and were granted discretionary budgeting authority over 35–40 percent of the state's developmental expenditures. In addition to devolving resources, state officials sought to directly promote participatory democracy by mandating structures and processes designed to maximize the direct involvement of citizens in planning and budgeting.

In Brazil, the return to democracy in 1989 marked not only a significant political transition, but also the ascendancy of civil society organizations. The new constitution introduced a wide range of participatory mechanisms, including popular councils in health and education, and new powers and responsibilities for local government. But local politics in Brazil are dominated by traditional elites, and the take-up of these new participatory opportunities was limited. The exception was PB, first introduced in the city of Porto Alegre in 1983 by a PT government. Initially, the PB was little more than a set of practices promoted by civil society organizations that allowed citizens to play a role in shaping the annual capital budget. Each year, under the impetus of what is by all accounts one of the most sophisticated local civil societies in Brazil, the institutional infrastructure and design of PB evolved, expanding the scope and reach of participation and fine-tuning the procedures to ensure that participatory inputs were translated into budgetary outputs. Because of the success of PB in Porto Alegre and other cities, the PT gained a reputation as a party of good governance (which has since been seriously tarnished at the national level). Over the past two decades, PB has been embraced by a wide range of local parties and has been expanded to over 400 cities, including large metropoles such as Belo Horizonte and São Paulo.

In all three countries, concerted efforts to strengthen the developmental role of local government and to do so through the introduction of participatory structures were driven by a very similar configuration of historical forces: strong, left-of-center programmatic parties, and broad-based and vibrant civil society organizations with a long track record of promoting participation. In the wake of constitutional changes mandating stronger and more participatory local governments, new forms of citizen participation were introduced: IDPs in South Africa, PB (as well as sectoral councils) in Brazil, and local planning and budgeting in Kerala.

Yet despite shared historical circumstances and isomorphic institutional designs, the fate of participatory governance has varied dramatically across these three cases. As we shall see below, experiments with participatory governance have had lasting effects in Kerala and Brazil and have permanently transformed the democratic political field. This has clearly not been the case in South Africa. The experiment with participatory democracy in South Africa was short-lived. Just two years after the transition, the ANC government abandoned the

redistributive thrust of the RDP and embraced a much more market-driven vision of development. Increasingly, the center came to see the local state more as an instrument of delivery than a forum for participation. As many commentators have noted, over the past decade local government has become increasingly insulated and centralized.[25] In the name of efficiency and more rapid delivery, the ANC has managerialized decision-making processes and reduced the quality and scope of participatory processes created under the RDP. A wide range of participatory institutions including the CDFs have been dismantled or hollowed-out, and municipal governance has been centralized into "Unicity" structures that have entrenched a bureaucratic and corporatist vision of urban governance.[26] The privatization or out-sourcing of many government functions, including the preparation of IDPs, and increased reliance on consultants has virtually crowded out community structures. In sum, the local spaces in which citizens can practice democracy and exert some influence over South Africa's very ambitious project of local government transformation (i.e. de-racializing the apartheid city and closing the service gap between whites and Africans) have been hollowed out.

The Impact of DPG

In this section I focus on the cases of Brazil and Kerala to explore the impact of DPG and in particular to examine the link between institutional design and actual forms of participation.

Participatory budgeting (PB) in Brazil has been the object of a rich and diverse body of research.[27] The most successful and carefully researched case of PB in Brazil has been Porto Alegre, which has become a model administration and a point of reference for other PB initiatives. The current format of citizen participation in Porto Alegre has evolved significantly from the original model and even more so as it has been diffused to other municipalities. But studies of a wide range of PB adopters show that while varied in the details, the general structure of the process is similar, involving a nested design of popular assemblies and elected delegates that directly shape the capital portion of the municipal budget.[28]

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25. Mirjam van Donk, Edgar Pieterse, Mark Swilling, and Susan Parnell, eds., *Consolidating Developmental Local Government: Lessons from the South African Experience* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2008).

26. Jo Beall, Owen Crankshaw, and Susan Parnell, *Uniting a Divided City: Governance and Social Exclusion in Johannesburg* (London: Earthscan, 2002).

27. Rebecca Abers, *Inventing Local Democracy: Grassroots Politics in Brazil* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000); Leonardo Avritzer, *Participatory Institutions in Democratic Brazil* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009); Gianpaolo Baiocchi, *Militants and Citizens*; Brian Wampler, *Participatory Budgeting in Brazil: Contestation, Cooperation, and Accountability* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2007).

28. Avritzer, *Participatory Institutions*; Baiocchi *et al.*, *Bootstrapping Democracy*; Wampler, *Participatory Budgeting in Brazil*.

In-depth case studies and broader surveys leave little doubt that in most cases the introduction of PB has democratized local governance and invigorated associational life. These findings hold even when pre-existing conditions are controlled for. In *Bootstrapping Democracy* we paired four randomly sampled cities that adopted PB with cities of the same size, region and political configuration (as measured by PT support) that did not introduce PB in 1997. The findings are telling. Tracking the budgetary process between 1997 and 2000, the paired analysis showed that measurable increases in the associational activity of civil society organizations and of their capacity to effectively engage government took place in all four of the PB cities, but remained constant (that is, dominated by clientelistic ties) in the four non-PB cities. Introduction of PB made it possible for existing civil society organizations (CSOs) to abandon either clientelistic or "combative" strategies in favor of direct rule-bound engagement through the PB process.[29] The resulting forms of participatory governance ranged from *consultative participation* in which citizens were able to express their demands in an open and organized manner but only indirectly influenced decision making, to cases of *binding participation* where citizens were directly involved in shaping the municipal budget. Even the least successful of our four cases, one in which activists complained that the PB forum was little more than a "listening council," had the baseline effect of increasing the flow of information about municipal governance and subjecting to public scrutiny what were once highly insulated and discretionary processes of decision making.

The Campaign structure in Kerala bears a clear resemblance to PB in Brazil. The process begins at the local level, where each of the states' 990 rural Panchayats is granted "untied" funds (between 29 percent and 35 percent of total plan expenditures) and mandated to produce a local plan and to design and budget for specific projects across the full range of development sectors. Panchayats are required to develop their plans through a series of nested participatory exercises in which citizens are given a direct role in shaping policies and projects. This includes open general forums (Gram Sabhas) as well as elected Task Forces charged with developing projects. The final plan that emerges from this process then goes to the Panchayat council (the local representative body) for final approval.

There is now a solid body of research on the impact of the Campaign.[30] There has been significant variation in the degree to which local participatory

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29. Wampler and Avritizer's study of Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte, as well as Wampler's survey of delegates in PB cities also found that the introduction of PB weakened traditional practices of bargaining for public goods through clientelistic ties in favor of group-based negotiations. Brian Wampler and Leonardo Avritzer. "Participatory Publics: Civil Society and New Institutions in Democratic Brazil," *Comparative Politics* 36 (2004): 291–312; Wampler, *Participatory Budgeting in Brazil*.

30. T.M. Thomas Isaac and Richard W. Franke, *Local Democracy and Development: The Kerala People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Heller *et al.*, "Building Local Democracy."

governance structures have taken root in a state marked by enormous cultural and social heterogeneity. But there is little doubt that overall the Campaign has promoted more participatory forms of democracy. First, the Campaign has enabled a very significant devolution of authoritative decision-making powers. Survey research has found that in almost all Panchayats, gram sabhas were held on a regular basis, task forces were constituted, development plans were created and beneficiaries committees were set up. The quality of local plans varied significantly, and the process of integrating Panchayat plans into higher level plans was *ad hoc* at best.[31] But given that local development has long been the preserve of top-down line-department bureaucracies implementing schemes hatched in Trivandrum (the state capital) or even New Delhi, the very fact that budgets and plans are now being formulated at the village level marks a dramatic departure from the past.

Second, citizens and civil society organizations have actively participated, and at rates higher than in any other Indian state. The social composition of participation, moreover, points to a leveling of associational capabilities. Dalits (ex-untouchables) have been especially active, and the proportion of women's participation (40 percent) has been remarkably high.[32]

Third, the Campaign's elaborate set of nested institutions have secured the chain of command and made citizen participation meaningful. In most Panchayats, participation has been binding, with the priorities established in Gram Sabhas effectively translated into budgeted projects by elected Task Forces and then approved by the Panchayat. Fourth, the Campaign has quite literally expanded political society and incentivized civic organization. Over 100,000 volunteers participated in the original launch of the Campaign and over 14,000 local elected officials, who before were limited to largely ceremonial roles, were given meaningful functions. Local civil society organizations that had no local state to engage with found a new partner in Panchayats. A number of local studies have explicitly tied the rapid rise in "self-help groups" (generally formed by lower caste women) to the matching funds made available by the campaign.[33] There have been complaints, including some aired by KSSP leaders, that once the early and highly mobilized stage of the Campaign ended, the process became overly bureaucratic. On the other hand, the marked increase in civil society activity, especially among women's groups, suggests that the Campaign has created new spaces for civil society.

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31. Heller *et al.*, "Building Local Democracy."

32. Shubham Chaudhuri and Patrick Heller, "The Plasticity of Participation: Evidence from a Participatory Governance Experiment," Columbia University ISERP Working Paper, 2003.

33. Jos Chathukulam and M.S. John, "Five Years of Participatory Planning in Kerala: Rhetoric and Reality," *Economic and Political Weekly* 37 (2002): 4917–26.

The Politics of DPG

Given that all three countries adopted similar decentralizing reforms and that in all three cases the reforms were driven by participatory politics (much more so in Kerala than in India as a whole), how does one explain that DPG took root in Brazil and Kerala, but largely failed to have an impact in South Africa?

When examined in the light of the Kerala and Brazilian experiences, the demise of participatory democracy in South Africa can only be explained in terms of the balance between political and civil society. In institutional terms, post-apartheid South Africa was well equipped to nurture participatory democracy. The constitution and relevant legislation provided legal support for participation, and by the comparative standards of developing-world democracies, including Brazil and India, local governments, and especially the larger municipalities, enjoyed significant resources and administrative capacities. Civil society organizations initially appeared well placed to support participatory structures. The terms of the transition, however, had produced a ruling party that not only enjoyed overwhelming electoral support (roughly 2/3 of the vote in every national election) but also saw itself as the incarnation of transformative politics and as the sole legitimate heir of what the ANC calls the "National Democratic Revolution." So even as South Africa's foundational policies reserved an important role for civil society in the transformative project of redressing the deep inequities of apartheid, the ANC viewed civil society's role as largely complementary to its own transformative agenda.

As a truly hegemonic force, the ANC could in effect subsume civil society. This political logic, born of the broad and encompassing mandate that the transition conferred on the ANC and to the quite extraordinary state capacities inherited from the apartheid regime, explains why structures and processes that were originally presented as providing autonomous spaces for civil society participation in local government (such as CDFs and IDPs) were quickly either brought under the control of party structures or substituted with more technocratic forms of decision making. With little room to effectively exert voice, township populations have increasingly resorted to contentious action, including widespread "services protests" that have become South Africa's most challenging political problem. Most tragically, in 2008 a wave of xenophobic violence swept through townships and informal settlements, and many commentators pointed directly to the absence of genuine processes of democratic engagement as the underlying cause.[34]

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34. J.P. Misao, T. Monson, T. Polzer and L. Landau, "May 2008 Violence against Foreign Nationals in South Africa: Understanding Causes and Evaluating Responses" (Johannesburg: Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP), University of the Witwatersrand, 2010).

In contrast, the political circumstances under which participatory democracy took root in Brazil and Kerala came against the backdrop of a crisis of political party systems and the Left's loss of faith in the traditional top-down, command-and-control transformative state. Viewed against the case of South Africa, this equation proved much more favorable to bringing civil society in. In Brazil PB was publicly presented as an alternative to the traditional local clientelistic state and as a means for dislodging oligarchical party control. In Kerala, the challenge was less public (supported as it was by a party-in-power) but the architects of the Campaign and its civil society progenitor, the KSSP, were determined to challenge the power of patronage politicians, and especially what is locally referred to as the "bureaucrat-politician nexus of corruption." In PB the challenge to politicians was frontal: the PB process was designed to operate in parallel to the official budgeting process and to circumvent elected councilors. In Kerala, the Campaign was designed to integrate locally elected Panchayat officials, but to do so while carefully containing their discretionary powers through participatory structures.

Another point of contrast with South Africa's vision of participation (at least as shaped by the ANC) is that the PB and the Campaign both viewed institutional reform first and foremost as a means to providing new avenues of mobilization. The emphasis was less on promoting development and extending service delivery and more on nurturing new forms of state-citizen engagement and specifically on changing the way in which choices about local development are made. PB has been closely tied to the new discourses of active citizenship that grew directly out of the democracy movement. In the first wave of PB reformers led by Porto Alegre, the goal was explicitly to use government as a vehicle for social movements, but in second generation PB experiments, including the four cases examined by Baiocchi *et al.*,[35] municipalities were more concerned with "the challenge of being government" and focused more on bringing civil society into governance.

In Kerala, the political logic of the Campaign was succinctly summarized by a key Planning Board official: "Politicians and bureaucrats want to hold onto power and the only way to dislodge them is through a social movement."[36] The link between mobilization and development was, moreover, made very clear. Making his case for democratic decentralization, especially with respect to Kerala's economic problems, the architect of the Campaign, T.M. Thomas Isaac, writes that "Defending the public infrastructure in education, health and other sectors is no longer possible without improving the quality of their services. All these necessitate a reorientation of the mass movements towards direct intervention in

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35. Baiocchi *et al.* "Bootstrapping democracy".

36. Patrick Heller, "Reinventing Public Power in the Age of Globalization: The Transformation of Movement Politics in Kerala," in *Social Movements in India: Poverty, Power and Politics*, ed. Raka Ray and Mary Katzenstein (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2005).

the development process in order to improve productivity or improve the quality of services."[37] A permanently mobilized civil society thus emerges as the primary goal of the Campaign and PB, and in stark contrast to the technocratic view embraced by the ANC, planning becomes "an instrument of social mobilization" and specifically a means of re-engaging citizens in the process of public decision making.

Even as we recognize that participation has been possible and consequential in some Brazilian Municípios, Kerala, and other well-documented cases such as Ecuador,[38] and that it has in large part emerged from civil society and social movements, we must not slip into the voluntarism of the a-political treatment of civil society. To make full sense of successful cases, one has to acknowledge the historical and political configuration that made them possible and specifically that created a balance of power that was amenable to reform from below. Three key elements of a favorable ecology of actors for participatory democracy can be identified: reformist elements within the state that recognize the limits of traditional elite-driven developmentalism, civil societies that enjoy sufficient organizational capacity and operational autonomy to align with, but not be co-opted, by the local state, and a programmatic left-of-center political party that can orchestrate the necessary political conditions for reform.[39] Of course, such fortuitous alignments are not easy to come by. It is particularly important to bear in mind the power equations that often pit technocrats against activists, bureaucrats and politicians against civil society, and institutional logics against mobilizational logics, all of which come into sharp focus in cases like South Africa. But we must also recognize that local government is often an arena where alliances across the state-society boundary can develop and produce synergistic outcomes.[40] Many of the government officials interviewed in Kerala and Brazil supported participatory reforms as a way to develop ties to partners in civil society. These observations fit neatly with Chalmers *et al*'s argument that the decline of corporatism and populism in Latin America has opened up room for "associative networks" that cut across traditional state-society boundaries.[41] In contrast to the assumption in much of the democracy literature (as well as institutionalist views of governance) that participation and representation do not sit well together, instituted participatory

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37. Thomas Isaac and Richard Franke, *Local Democracy and Development*, 45.

38. See, for example, Donna Van Cott, *Radical Democracy in the Andes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

39. Both Van Cott and Williams emphasize the role of political parties in promoting participatory democracy. Van Cott, *Radical Democracy*; Michelle Williams, *The Roots of Participatory Democracy: Democratic Communists in South Africa and Kerala, India,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

40. Peter Evans, ed., *Livable Cities? Urban Struggles for Livelihood and Sustainability* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

41. Doug Chalmers, Scott Martin and Kerianne Piester, "Associative Networks: New Structures of Representation for the Popular Sectors?" in *The New Politics of Inequality in Latin America,* ed. Chalmers, Carlos M, Vilas, Katherine Hite, Martin Piester, and Monique Segarra (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 543–82.

democracy can produce cooperative arrangements between officials and civil society actors that strengthen both governance and democracy.

The case of South Africa is a sober reminder that even when civil society is highly mobilized and highly motivated, it nonetheless remains dependent on the institutional and political environment for finding effective modes of engagement with the state. Brazil and Kerala do however point towards some qualified claims about the conditions for successful participation. There has been enormous variation within each case. In Kerala, the Campaign had a much greater impact in rural areas than in municipalities, in part because political efforts were focused on Panchayats. Even across Kerala's 990 Panchayats, the level of participation varies enormously and in statistical tests does not correlate with regional factors (which might act as a proxy for social capital) or any of a large number of stock variables (such as population, population density, economic measures, etc.).[42] There is, however, a strong correlation between proxy measures of rural union organization, suggesting a link with existing mobilizational capacity. A similar picture emerges in Brazil. In *Bootstrapping Democracy*, the pre-existing strength of civil society in our eight paired cities had a direct bearing on the degree to which PB reforms deepened democracy. The Município in which civil society was strongest to begin with was the one in which the reforms had the greatest impact. Nonetheless in three of our four cases, PB was successfully implemented in a context of relatively weak civil societies. When this is coupled with the finding from Kerala that rates of participation of subordinate groups increased rapidly after the first year of the Campaign, it becomes clear that participation is highly plastic and is very much an artifact of politics, both in the sense of formal political opportunities that result from institutional changes (which in turn can follow from changes in ruling party) and social movement politics that can strengthen civil society capacities.[43]

The Possibilities of Participatory Governance

One of most common policy-world objections to decentralized participation is that poor communities do not have the capacity to engage directly in decision making and that too much participation can be disruptive, time-consuming and even lead to conflict. This *institutionalist* view flows from the same logic that informs the Schumpeterian argument for representative democracy in complex societies. Governance problems are far too complex for ordinary citizens, hence the need to delegate decision making to representatives, or in the high modernist

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42. Chaudhuri and Heller, *The Plasticity of Participation*.
43. The concept of the plasticity of participation is more fully developed in Chaudhuri and Heller, Ibid.

version of this argument exemplified by the ANC, to technocrats and experts.[44] The normative premise of participatory democracy directly rejects this view on the simple grounds that democracy is fundamentally about preference formation, and that claims about lack of capacity are often little more than polite ways of legitimizing the transfer of decision-making powers from citizens to elites. Of course, it is critical not to confuse (as the *participatistas* often do) a normative ideal with a practical set of processes. But the cases we have examined leave little doubt that even citizens with little more capacity than their own commitment to democratic engagement can effectively participate in local government.

Before PB was introduced in Brazil, local citizens had few if any channels through which to influence public action and no prior experience of planning or local development. When some form of PB has been introduced, ordinary citizens have proven more than capable of forming their preferences, making city budgets and negotiating with local officials. Kerala does enjoy high literacy rates and a history of social mobilization. But Keralites had virtually no experience with local government and had never been afforded an opportunity to shape local development. Opposition to the Campaign centered almost exclusively on claims that local actors did not have the required expertise to formulate plans. Yet when offered the opportunity, that is precisely what local citizens did. And participatory reforms have also taken hold among communities that have long suffered from the effects of social exclusion, most notably in the case of Ecuador, or have long been subordinated to highly authoritarian forms of control as in the case of Indonesia.[45] In all these cases, the creation of institutional spaces for deliberation unleashed new forms of claim-making.

Having said this, creating spaces for local preference formation does pose enormous challenges. Preference formation without a secure chain of sovereignty will inevitably lead to dashed expectations and de-legitimation. There is arguably nothing more dangerous to the prospects of participatory democracy than participatory processes that are hollow. Local preference formation can unleash parochialism, elevating local demands over broader demands, and can also make coordination of multiple inputs difficult, if not impossible. But this is precisely what the challenge of institution building is all about. In *Boostrapping Democracy* one of our most interesting findings was the degree to which PB architects were preoccupied with addressing these challenges. In all the cases where a local version of PB was

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44. In recent efforts to re-centralize, South African officials have blamed the dramatic rise of so-called service delivery protests that have swept across urban South Africa on a surfeit of participation, a claim that is completely disingenuous given just how hollow formal participatory structures and practices have become (Interview with South African deputy minister, March 24, 2011).

45. Van Cott, *Radical Democracy*; Christopher Gibson and Michael Woolcock, "Empowerment, Deliberative Development, and Local-Level Politics in Indonesia: Participatory Projects as a Source of Countervailing Power," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 43 (2008): 151–80.

adopted, activists and administrators spent a tremendous amount of time and energy fine-tuning the process in order to preserve the chain of sovereignty. Bootstrapping democracy also called for devising a range of innovative institutions, such as city-wide thematic and sectoral councils and delegates' caravans, to specifically address problems of coordination. Much the same was the case in Kerala. The KSSP not only developed thousands of pages of campaign materials to assist facilitators and participants in local planning exercises, including materials specifically targeted to women and adivasis (tribals), but the state government also changed over 100 pieces of legislation to bring new participatory structures into conformity with existing legislation.

The failure of the one-size-fits all approach of the Washington consensus, failed efforts to build democracy through external interventions, and the increasing recognition that there is no single model of democracy, has made ideas of bootstrapping and context sensitivity intellectually appealing. Yet as argued in *Bootstrapping Democracy*, when it comes to thinking about participatory democracy we need both bootstraps and blueprints.

The idea of participatory democracy is one that has a long and illustrious lineage, and one that has traveled well. When one examines real-world experiments in participatory democracy, what is striking is just how isomorphic they are in terms of their basic normative orientations and core design features. In all the well-documented cases, the discursive frames have presented a critique of representative democracy as perverted by power and social exclusion, emphasized generative projects predicated on notions of expanding citizenship in which political and civil rights are explicitly tied to the social and economic rights, and emphasized the value of deliberation over bargaining. Common design features have included increasing direct involvement by citizens and CSOs in governance; the centrality of inclusive assemblies and various forums; mechanisms for linking forums to decision-making bodies; a range of direct accountability measures such as limiting the powers of delegates; procedures for increasing access to information and a range of incentives and facilitations that increase the probability of participation by subordinate groups.

Yet for participatory democracy to take hold, a certain amount of bootstrapping is necessary. In Kerala, democratic decentralization was made possible by openings from above, but was born of experiments that were developed and elaborated through a continuous process of learning-by-doing. When the PT first came to power in Porto Alegre, it had only vague notions about how to govern in a participatory way, and turned to social movements for ideas about how to "reverse the priorities." Similarly, the architects of PB in all of our cases drew directly from Porto Alegre and other experiments in PB, but also jerry-rigged local practices and institutions to fit local contexts. The parallel with Kerala here is quite striking. It was the CPI(M)'s electoral victory that opened a space for

democratic decentralization. But it was a close alliance between the reformist faction of the party and civil society actors that made it possible to push through the reforms as part of a larger project of mobilizing participation. Indeed, if the Planning Board (the lead agency of the reforms) had not been able to tap into the mobilizational capacity, local experience, and creativity of civil society organizations, and especially the KSSP, the Campaign would never have taken off. In the first two years of the Campaign, the interaction of the Planning Board and KSSP activists resulted in an almost constant process of institutional fine-tuning, which most notably included new strategies for increasing subordinate group participation, on-the-fly responses to coordination problems, and a constant preoccupation with protecting the participatory cycle from political interference.

These observations from Brazil and Kerala are further reinforced by Van Cott's detailed comparison of decentralization reforms in Bolivia and Ecuador.[46] In Bolivia, decentralization was politically initiated from above with no input from civil society, and the reforms were implemented with relative uniformity across the country. While this did secure a considerable degree of fiscal devolution, it also limited the capacity of local actors to improvise local processes. Van Cott argues that this in turn undermined the participatory potential of the reforms. In contrast, decentralization in Ecuador was more piecemeal and less prescriptive, leaving local actors more room and incentive to innovate. In her case studies, Van Cott finds that where local mayors were highly committed and had strong ties to civil society organizations, institutional reforms were far more likely to emphasize participatory and deliberative processes. Finally, the case of South Africa emphatically drives home the dangers of promoting blueprints from above. Because it views itself as the only legitimate heir of the anti-apartheid movement, the ANC has for all intents and purposes become hostile to the idea of an independent civil society. This in turn has opened the path to a very high modernist and top-down vision of transformation, one that has shifted power from non-state actors to technocrats, patronage politicians, and consultants. The power that flows from electoral dominance has, in other words, come directly at the expense of participatory democracy.

Conclusion: Bringing Civil Society In

If the key to reconciling capitalism with social justice in the context of Europe was bringing the working class in, in the global south the key might well be bringing civil society in. Representative democracy in the global periphery has proven to be a weak instrument for directly securing redistributive gains. If formal democracy has been secured, substantive democracy remains an elusive goal.

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46. Van Cott, *Radical Democracy.*

But formal democracy has in some cases opened up spaces for civil society organization. Where civil societies have self-organized and gained access to the political sphere, this has strengthened citizen formation and increased effective pressure for redistributive policies. In the cases reviewed here, this process of deepening democracy has specifically taken the form of instituting DPG.

DPG is a highly ambitious reform project, but one that has had surprising resonance across varied settings in the global south. On the one hand, it consists of devolving significant resources downwards, a process that by definition constitutes a significant re-scaling of the organization of public power. On the other hand, it requires intricate institutional designs that can ward off local elite capture and provide genuine and effective modes of engagement for subordinate groups. Despite these challenges, both Brazil and Kerala have made significant progress in instituting DPG. Even if the redistributive effects of these reforms are limited, simply opening up new possibilities of citizen engagement represents an important step in closing the gap between formal representation and substantive outcomes. The case of South Africa reminds us, however, that getting the institutions right is not enough. The success of DPG depends in the final instance on getting the politics right, and specifically having a proper balance between political power and civil society.

Patrick Heller *is a professor of sociology and international studies at Brown University. His main area of research is the comparative study of democratic deepening. He is the author of* The Labor of Development: Workers in the Transformation of Capitalism in Kerala, India *(Cornell University Press, 1999) and co-author of* Social Democracy in the Global Periphery *(Cambridge University Press, 2006). His most recent book*—Bootstrapping Democracy *(Stanford University Press) with Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Marcelo Silva—explores politics and institutional reform in Brazilian municipalities.*