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# Social Inclusion through Participation: the Case of the Participatory Budget in São Paulo

ESTHER HERNÁNDEZ-MEDINA

## Abstract

*One of the largest urban centers in the world, the Brazilian city of São Paulo is characterized by high levels of socio-economic inequality and political polarization, significantly complicating issues of urban governance. Despite being designed to partially address these problems, São Paulo's participatory budget (PB) was bounded by its urban context, institutional design and the relative strength of the political actors involved. The article analyzes a mechanism created within the PB to incorporate historically disadvantaged groups, or 'socially vulnerable segments', during the Workers' Party administration of 2001–04. The segments methodology constitutes an intriguing example of how affirmative action can be used to improve decision-making processes and address social exclusion in urban contexts. In particular, the segments served as a 'counterpublic' within the PB, helping activists representing the segments to develop strategies influencing the city's urban and social policy.*

## Introduction

With a population of almost 20 million, São Paulo's metropolitan area is one of the world's five largest urban centers (Emplasa, 2006). The city is famous for its deeply ingrained spatial and social inequality (Caldeira, 2000), its role as Brazil's economic engine (Schiffer, 2002) and its high level of political polarization leading to alternating periods of conservative and leftist city administrations (Graham and Jacobi, 2002; Limongi and Mesquita, 2008). Certainly this is not a context where many would expect to encounter citizen participation leading to social inclusion. However, the opposite has been the case. Citizens and reformers in São Paulo and other cities in the global South have shown their capacity for designing participatory institutions to address complex problems through inclusive forms of deliberation (Baiocchi, 2001; Avritzer, 2002; Melo and Baiocchi, 2006; Goldfrank, 2007; Goldfrank and Schrank, 2009).

Democratic experiments of this sort are aligned with a growing consensus about the value of citizen participation in urban policies. For example, UN-Habitat (2003: xxvii) emphasizes that poor residents' 'participation in decision-making is not only a right, but is also instrumental in achieving greater effectiveness in the implementation of public policies'. This double emphasis on rights and effectiveness in turn reflects the content of two parallel debates on deliberative democracy and urban governance (Melo and

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[Baiocchi, 2006](#)), raising two questions: When and how is this possible? Under what circumstances is the participation of citizens usually marginalized from the mainstream political arena feasible and sustainable? The participatory budget (PB) first implemented in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989 constitutes one of the best-known responses to these questions. An explicit focus on working with 'the unorganized and the poor', transforming the state bureaucracy, working across political sectors (Abers, 1998: 12–13), developing the PB as a 'school of democracy' (Pontual, 2000) and as a training space for activists (Baiocchi, 2001; 2005) while ensuring redistribution through the city budget (Navarro, 1998), are all cited as key success factors of the model.

What happens then when the PB is implemented in urban contexts that are much more polarized than Porto Alegre? What kind of modifications would this entail? The participatory budget of São Paulo is an excellent case to address these questions while searching for a more explicit dialogue between the deliberative democracy and urban governance literatures ([Melo and Baiocchi, 2006](#)). Unlike the PB in Porto Alegre and other PB models in Brazil and Latin America, São Paulo's PB offers an opportunity to examine the possibilities and limitations of affirmative action mechanisms intended to level the field among otherwise unequal participants. Moreover, the implementation of the PB for four years constituted a short-lived and yet revealing deliberative moment in a metropolis marked by class-based political polarization and contention (Graham and Jacobi, 2002; [Limongi and Mesquita, 2008](#)).

The article analyzes the 'socially vulnerable segments' devised as a 'mechanism of social inclusion' (Sánchez, 2004: 153) in the city's PB during the last two years of the Workers' Party administration of 2001–04. In essence, the methodology consisted of an institutional design where participants who self-identified as members of any of the 'segments' needed fewer votes to become PB representatives. This gave segment representatives the legitimacy and resources many of them used to influence policy directly for the first time. The PB targeted nine historically disadvantaged groups or 'segments': Afro-Brazilians, senior citizens, children and adolescents, youth, the GLBT community, women, indigenous groups, the homeless and people with disabilities. The article addresses the origins and functioning of the segments as well as the lessons this affirmative action methodology might offer for enhancing inclusion in other urban contexts.

My analysis builds upon Avritzer's (2002) definition of 'participatory publics' to look at the conditions under which inclusive deliberation ([Habermas, 1984; 1996](#)) can coexist with participants' ability to make decisions about public policies. I combine Avritzer's synthesis of selected strands in the deliberative and participatory democracy literature with insights from studies on affirmative action and diversity (e.g. [Mannix and Neale, 2005; Summers, 2006](#)) and the literature on factors underpinning São Paulo's urban governance ([Santos, 1996; Schiffer, 2002; Marques et al., 2005](#)). Interviews with PB representatives and public officials in charge of the process<sup>1</sup> indicated that the increase in the number of 'segment' representatives between 2003 and 2004 enriched deliberation and helped to deepen the redistributive effects of the PB. Although citizen participation does not necessarily have to offer an answer to redistribution issues, that such perceptions were generated suggests that under certain conditions it is possible to do so while addressing long-standing forms of social exclusion at the city level. Findings from this study show that the PB in São Paulo constituted a participatory public ([Avritzer, 2002](#)) in the modality of direct participatory deliberation described by Cohen and Fung (2004). This PB model became a counterpublic ([Fraser, 1992](#)) within the city

1 The article is based on fieldwork conducted during the summer of 2004, including more than 30 interviews with PB representatives, PB staffers and key informants. Fieldwork also involved participant observation of multiple PB assemblies, seminars and meetings. Key informants included academics with extensive expertise about participatory mechanisms in Brazil, particularly in São Paulo. I use Burawoy's (1998) extended case method to expand the literature on the PB by looking at the case of São Paulo.

administration as a result of the class-based political polarization of the city and power struggles within the Workers' Party. At the same time, the PB contained a multiplicity of smaller counterpublics where segment representatives interacted among themselves and with public officials.

Finally, the segments were designed to go beyond material redistribution in order to better address the continuum of social exclusion in São Paulo. Latin American researchers and practitioners have appropriated the concept of social exclusion to address the dramatic inequality present in the region. For example, similarly to Silver and Miller (2003),<sup>2</sup> Sojo (2001: 51) argues that '[t]he idea of social exclusion involves moving along a historically defined continuum of exclusion and inclusion. In between these two polar situations there is an interregnum of vulnerability in which social groups face the risk of becoming more or less excluded/included'. My goal is to keep this *multidimensional and dynamic emphasis* while thinking about the differences between deliberation and conflict called for in the introduction to the symposium. Indeed, the PB in São Paulo constituted a rare attempt towards consensus building in a historically divided city. Nonetheless, the PB reflected high levels of contention in at least two instances: the ongoing usage of protest politics by social movements associated with the segments; and the divisions within the Workers' Party and the political polarization in the city as a whole that ultimately led to the demise of that administration and the PB.

## Theoretical debates

### The participatory budgeting model

The participatory budgeting (PB) model has gained visibility within and outside Brazil as an exemplar of the manifold possibilities of achieving democratization and social inclusion through participation. Brazilian and international researchers have extensively studied the PB model (Abers, 1998; Baiocchi, 2001; 2005; [Fung and Wright, 2001](#); [Heller, 2001](#); [Avritzer, 2002](#); [Avritzer and Navarro, 2003](#); [Vitale, 2004](#)), while it has also been adopted as best practice by organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank. However, the PB has also become an instance of 'institutional mono-cropping' ([Evans, 2004](#)) when applied as a uniform recipe for 'good governance' particularly in state-reform initiatives with support from international organizations ([Goldfrank, 2007](#); [Hernández-Medina, 2007](#)).

Another problem that limits our understanding of the PB is that most of the literature has focused on the pioneering case of Porto Alegre. The PB in Porto Alegre is considered to be one of the most successful examples of empowered deliberative democracy (EDD)<sup>3</sup> around the world, and of municipal socialism<sup>4</sup> in Latin America and the Caribbean

2 'Social exclusion is (1) multidimensional or socioeconomic, and encompasses collective as well as individual resources, (2) dynamic or processual, along a trajectory between full integration and multiple exclusions, (3) relational, in that exclusion entails social distance or isolation, rejection, humiliation, lack of social support networks, and denial of participation, (4) active, in that there is a clear agency doing the excluding, and (5) relative to context' ([Silver and Miller, 2003: 8](#)).

3 EDD includes '(1) a focus on specific, tangible problems, (2) involvement of ordinary people affected by these problems and officials close to them, and (3) the deliberative development of solutions to these problems ([Fung and Wright, 2001: 17](#)). EDD is similar to Cohen and Fung's (2004) 'direct participatory deliberation' approach.

4 'Unlike the traditional populist or clientelist machines and parties that undergirded ISI and continued into the neoliberal era... Latin America's municipal socialists emphasize — and in many ways depend upon — popular participation in local government. If free trade zones are the characteristic features of municipal neoliberalism, participatory policies — ranging from public meetings on government spending and urban planning to collaborative provision of services like cooperative housing, health clinics and pre-schools — are the hallmarks of municipal socialism'. ([Goldfrank and Schrank, 2009: 452](#)).

(Goldfrank and Schrank 2009). According to observers, this model has delivered three critical outcomes: a significant decline in 'corrupt behavior and administrative malpractices'; a similarly impressive reduction in clientelism through the pressure on city councilors and potential candidates exerted by a more 'demanding and informed population'; and an important increment in progressive redistribution achieved through allocations in the city budget (Navarro, 1998: 68–71). Abers (1998: 12–13) emphasizes three key strategies implemented in Porto Alegre: an explicit emphasis on mobilizing 'the unorganized and the poor'; the transformation of the state bureaucracy so that it is 'capable of custom tailoring projects to participant demands and of disseminating information and skills to ordinary citizens'; and a concerted effort to elicit a wide base of political support across sectors.

Along similar lines, Baiocchi (2001) found that the PB's emphasis on procedural learning inspired by Paulo Freire's 'popular education' had succeeded in making deliberative practices accessible to all participants. In his view (*ibid.*: 59–61), the outcomes of the PB were associated with concrete institutional features such as making sure 'that anyone can in principle be part of deliberations'; including issues deemed crucial by civil society; providing 'indirect subsidies' such as a training space for new activists; and openly recognizing all organizations and individuals. While these are indeed crucial contributions, it is necessary to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of PB models implemented in more stratified urban contexts in order to deepen our understanding of this and other methodologies' potential to increase social inclusion.

### Counterpublics and the importance of a critical mass

Although Habermas' work on the public sphere started by analyzing its early bourgeois version, the author and others have addressed how its increasing inclusiveness and the role of modern media gave birth to a larger contemporary public sphere (e.g. Habermas, 1991; Calhoun, 1992). Fraser (1992), in particular, underscored the existence of multiple publics while focusing on 'subaltern counter-publics',<sup>5</sup> i.e. those constituted by groups marginalized from the mainstream political arena. Counterpublics perform a crucial role in stratified societies: '[o]n the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics' (*ibid.*: 124). Additionally, Fraser differentiates between 'weak' and 'strong' publics where the latter have decision-making capabilities. Marginalized groups create subaltern counterpublics in order to respond to situations similar to those addressed by Becher (2010, this issue) and Aylett (2010, this issue). i.e. in order to have an exit strategy to ensure their autonomy while they interact with government and other powerful actors.

The literature on affirmative action and diversity has long emphasized the need to include members of marginalized groups based on issues of justice and fair access to opportunities usually reserved to members of mainstream groups. More recently, scholars in these areas have also underscored that, under certain conditions, an increase in the presence of members from historically excluded groups can have important positive effects on decision-making processes (Mannix and Neale, 2005; Summers, 2006). The positive impact of diversity is more likely to be seen when teams work on exploring new opportunities or use their creativity to come up with new solutions. On the contrary, homogeneous teams seem to be more appropriate for implementing known solutions and processes (Mannix and Neale, 2005). For example, studies on the impact

5 According to Fraser (1992: 123), the revisionist historiography about the public sphere 'records that members of subordinated social groups — women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians — have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics. I propose to call these *subaltern counterpublics* in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs'.

of racial diversity in mock jury trials in the United States have found that people in diverse groups asked more questions, made less factual mistakes, and were more open to discuss racial issues than they were in groups exclusively composed by whites (Summers, 2006).

Nonetheless, for diversity's positive effects to be realized there needs to be a 'critical mass' of new actors. This is the case because: (1) members of the minority group are less likely to risk being ignored or further marginalized if there are not sufficient allies at the table (Bowers *et al.*, cited in Summers, 2006); and (2) because in diverse groups, members of *the majority* are more prone to check their own and others' prejudices (Summers, 2006) and consider other views. In their review of the literature, Mannix and Neale (2005: 47) found that '[i]t has consistently been shown that individuals exposed to opposing minority views exert more cognitive effort, attend to more aspects of the situation, think in a divergent way, and are more likely to detect novel solutions or come to new decisions'.

In fact, some studies show that the threshold for such a critical mass might be around 30–35% of the total membership of a given group or institution (Mannix and Neale, 2005). Along similar lines, research on the impact of increased women's participation in the economic arena has shown that the decision-making dynamic starts to change when there are at least three women serving on corporate boards (Kramer *et al.*, 2006). Similarly, a recent report on women in fund management calls for applying the critical mass principle in order to take advantage of women's more complex and consistent decision-making style (NCRW, 2009). Finally, an important example from the political world is the link found between women's attaining the right to vote and the improvement of children's welfare in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century (Miller, 2008).

### Conflict and deliberation

This article subscribes to the view presented by Becher (this issue) and Aylett (this issue) that 'conflict is not only unavoidable, but [is] also a legitimate and potentially beneficial form of participation'. Instead of looking at conflict and deliberation as mutually exclusive dimensions of political engagement, it is important to acknowledge the 'plasticity of participation' (Chaudhuri and Heller, 2005), i.e. the ways in which institution building, including that of participatory mechanisms, interact with and might be informed by contentious politics. Citizens' ability to engage with the state is not 'a stock variable'. On the contrary, '[s]uch capacities are constructed from below — through particular patterns and trajectories of mobilization — and from above, in . . . the ways in which states create and structure channels, opportunities and incentives (or disincentives) for collective action. Citizen capacities are as such highly malleable and forged in and through state-society engagements' (Heller, 2001: 148).

Elsewhere I have looked at this continuum by categorizing citizen participation in urban policy into three different moments: (1) 'exclusion', defined as the total absence of civil society and other actors from decision-making processes for formulating and implementing urban policy; (2) 'mediated' participation where citizens have to resort to more sporadic modalities such as demonstrations, clientelistic networks or mere consultations; and (3) 'synergistic' participation, which would be the ideal (yet relatively rare) type of interaction, implying a regular and collaborative space between citizens and policymakers that ensures mutually beneficial policy outcomes for both sides (Hernández-Medina, 2008). In my opinion, using this model is useful in analyzing how the role of city officials influences the interaction between multinationals and local elites on one hand, and international NGOs, marginalized groups and international mixed networks of practitioners on the other. However, using static categories like the ones mentioned above makes it more difficult to analyze how conflict can *simultaneously* have a positive effect on increasing citizen participation without considering it as an intermediate form of participation. Indeed, contentious politics did play a role in São



Paulo's PB as I discuss later in this article. But results of mayoral races in the last couple of decades (Limongi and Mesquita, 2008) lead me to believe that conflict has more explanatory value in studying the sustainability of the PB process *vis-à-vis* the class-based political polarization in the city, a point I will return to in the conclusion.

## Characteristics of the PB and the city

### Socio-economic and political polarization in São Paulo

With an estimated population of almost 20 million in 2006, São Paulo's metropolitan area is the largest in South America and one of the five largest worldwide; a list that also includes Tokyo, Seoul, Mexico City and New York (Emplasa, 2006). São Paulo is a key urban center in Brazil: it concentrates 16.7% of Brazil's GDP, and 46.7% of the GDP generated in the state of the same name (Prefeitura do Município de São Paulo, 2004). More importantly, the city plays a crucial role in linking the Brazilian economy to the regional bloc of MERCOSUR and hosting an important number of multinationals doing business in Latin America (Schiffer, 2002). In this context, the opening of the Brazilian economy to compete in global markets had a marked impact on the socio-economic composition of the city. In particular, it increased the gap between the relatively few highly skilled, well-paid jobs and huge numbers of low-skilled, badly paid ones, in what had already started to be a markedly segmented labour market (Santos, 1996).

Data for 1990 showed that the city's middle and upper classes which had benefited from the expansion of the economy in the 1960s and 1970s were continuing to grow. According to Santos (*ibid.*: 230), 'São Paulo contained 10 percent of Brazil's population and 11 percent of its labour force, but also 20 percent of persons earning more than 10 times the minimum salary. But, although it had a higher proportion of high-income people than any other Brazilian city — 48,000 families were earning more than US\$100,000 per annum — vast numbers earned very little'. More recently, studies have found that social conditions improved during the 1990s in the metropolis as a whole. But those improvements did not change the spatial inequality patterns in the city and income inequality actually worsened (Marques *et al.*, 2005).

São Paulo's history of socio-economic polarization is spatially mirrored in the concentration of most of the city's infrastructure, services and jobs in the central part of the city. The center-periphery model of urban segregation is based on higher levels of dispersion, home ownership and dependence on transportation for both rich and poor residents in the city (Caldeira, 2000; Schiffer, 2002). Such features reflect the transformation of São Paulo into the industrial center of the country and the extensive labor immigration coming from the northeast and Europe that took place for more than a century (Santos, 1996; Schiffer, 2002). The center-periphery pattern is also visible in a remarkable unevenness in the provision of public services. The 'periferia' (marginalized areas in the outskirts of the city) concentrates most of the population of São Paulo but receives a disproportionately low share of public services. For example:

Whereas in the central district (Centro) 1.3 percent of the domiciles lacked water, 4.5% lacked sewage treatment, 1.7 percent lacked paving, and 0.8 percent lacked garbage collection, in Itaquera, a new district in the eastern periphery, 89.3 percent of the domiciles lacked water, 96.9 percent lacked sewage services, 87.5 percent lacked paving, and 71.9 percent lacked garbage collection (Caldeira, 2000: 228).

The center-periphery model now coexists with a more complex pattern of urban segregation in which the upper and middle classes live side-by-side with poorer residents. But they avoid contact with their poor neighbors by living in 'fortified enclaves' or gated communities in the outskirts of the city (Caldeira, 2000). São Paulo's socio-economic polarization has also been associated with a high level of political

polarization. The latter, combined with its strategic importance in the context of Brazil, makes the PB model implemented in the city even more intriguing: '[t]he challenge of delegating authority is even more complicated in a mega-city like São Paulo, given an ideologically and politically polarized environment, the national political relevance of the city, the combative and tireless participation of civil society organizations and the financial crisis that devastated city government during the 1990s' (Wampler, 2005; my translation).

The politics of São Paulo mirrors a long-standing struggle between conservatives and reformers that characterizes Brazilian politics, but is also distinctively associated with the history of the city. This trend stands in contradiction with the top-down account of Brazil as a political regime exclusively driven by competition among regional elites. The actions of the working and middle classes in opposition to the elites, as well as those of progressive actors in São Paulo against authoritarian control at the national level have also shaped Brazilian politics (Graham and Jacobi, 2002). Additionally, participatory institutions created under municipal socialism are not merely symptoms of what takes place at the national level but rather, deliberate reactions in the opposite direction; in this case, against free-market reform (Goldfrank and Schrank, 2009). It is the result of these two types of competition, class-based competition within the city and the rivalry between São Paulo and the national center, which has determined the available space for citizen participation, especially after the democratic opening of the 1980s. Starting in that decade, the alternating dynamic between the right and left in city government has been clearer, accentuated by the political strengthening of both political forces (Limongi and Mesquita, 2008).

### Origins and characteristics of the participatory budget in São Paulo

The participatory budgeting implemented from 2001 to 2004 constituted an opening in the city's space for citizen participation. The PB implemented by Mayor Suplicy built upon efforts to establish participatory mechanisms during the first Workers' Party administration headed by Mayor Luiza Erundina (1989–92). Erundina's administration had limited success in this regard and ended up being replaced by conservative parties for two more terms. The PB was rescued during Marta Suplicy's administration almost ten years later (Sánchez, 2004). Suplicy appointed Félix Sánchez as the PB coordinator. Sánchez had not only already worked in Erundina's administration, but he also belonged to the 'Democracia Socialista' bloc within the Workers' Party. 'Democracia Socialista' was the most participation-oriented faction as shown by its role in creating the PB in Porto Alegre. PB staffers and key informants alike emphasized that this faction was much weaker in São Paulo. Nonetheless, Sánchez applied his experience in developing a methodology to fit the city's size and complexity.

The new Workers' Party government created an office to coordinate the PB, the *Coordenadoria do Orçamento Participativo (COP)* through Law 13.169 in June 2001. According to the first study about São Paulo's PB (Vitale, 2004), the creation of COP expressed the new administration's commitment to increase citizen participation but was also an indicator of two problems that would prove to be recurrent. The first one was that the mandate of another 'coordenadoria' created by the same law, the office in charge of popular participation, overlapped with COP's role. The second problem was that COP was not conceived as, and never became, part of a comprehensive administrative reform through which the PB could become the center of a new planning structure for the city, as was the case in Porto Alegre (Vitale, 2004). According to Vitale and several interviewees, there was a high level of agreement within the Workers' Party in São Paulo about the need to implement the PB, but not about the degree to which it would become embedded in the city government structure. This reflected the power struggle between 'Democracia Socialista' and less progressive factions within São Paulo's Workers' Party, a power struggle that was never resolved.



The PB in São Paulo initially followed the blueprint of the PB cycle implemented in other Brazilian cities (Sánchez, 2004). The rest of this section summarizes the way in which this PB model changed over time based in two regards: (1) its evolution in terms of the types of policies included and its general scope; and (2) the modalities of participation through which ordinary citizens got involved. Table 1 below summarizes the first point, clearly indicating the increasing scope of the PB. Starting in 2002, city officials included services associated with the new infrastructure discussed in the PB as part of deliberations. For example, PB representatives were able to discuss the hiring of teachers for new schools.

Table 1 also shows a consistent, but modest, increase in the relative share of the city's budget decided through the PB from 5% in 2001 to 8% in 2004 (COP, 2004a). It is important to note that the investment component of the municipal budget was very small in the first place, i.e. 12.49% in 2003 (CONOP, 2004). However, the average percentage of the city's investment budget decided through the PB in its four years of implementation was much higher: 62–63% (COP, 2004a). In fact, the absolute resources assigned through the PB were not insignificant: approximately US \$160.3 million in 2001, US \$220.66 million in 2002 and US \$366.67 million in 2003 (Sánchez, 2004). These figures and the budgetary execution shown in Table 1 indicate that the PB played an important role in allocating public resources to marginalized communities. Indeed, maps produced by COP showed that the areas with the highest indices of social exclusion in the city's 'periferia' received the highest levels of investment decided through the PB (*ibid.*).

There were three levels of representation in the PB: regular participants, delegates and councilors. These three modalities entailed different rights and responsibilities:

1. *Regular participants* were ordinary citizens who attended the assemblies at the beginning of the PB cycle (January to April) and elected delegates among themselves as their representatives for the rest of the process (see Table 3). Most participants were low-income residents and a significant number had extensive experience as activists in neighborhood associations or social movements, although the PB was open to all.<sup>6</sup>
2. *Delegates* embodied the 'first level' of representation in the PB (Vitale, 2004). There was one delegate elected per 20 participants whereas the norm in other PB cities has been to elect one delegate per 10 participants. Delegates organized various 'Regional Forums' around the city to keep their communities updated on the implementation of proposals approved through the PB. Although COP encouraged the creation of the forums, they were totally self-regulated. According to my interviewees, such forums became an important source of pressure for accountability in the PB. In fact, delegates continued meeting among themselves and with government officials regarding proposals approved in the city's investment plan long after the PB cycle ended (see Table 3).
3. *Councilors* were elected from among the delegates and embodied the 'second level' of representation in the PB (Vitale, 2004). Councilors played a critical role since the CONOP or PB Council was the final decision-making organ. CONOP, which normally met every month, decided upon the PB Plan of Works and Services, which included demands presented by participants through the PB and the considerations presented by city government. Both sources, in turn, informed the law for the annual budget. Table 2 shows the evolution in the numbers of PB representatives and the assemblies they attended.

6 A study in 2003 found that 78% of respondents belonged to neighborhood associations or social movements and 55% of respondents were in leadership positions within at least one association. These are strikingly high numbers in a city where 19% of citizens are organized and only 5% of them participate in social movements or neighborhood associations. The study found that 63% of the respondents are part of families with at most 5 times the minimum wage and almost half of them have not completed the second grade of elementary school (Wampler, 2005).

**Table 1** Public policy areas and scope of the PB in São Paulo

Year	Public Policy Areas	Types of Policies	% of City's Budget	Type of Representation	% of Budgetary Execution
2001	Health and education	New public works	5.0	Regional	N/A
2002	Health, education and a third optional area selected in each region	New public works + public services	6.6	Regional + thematic	76.4 (2001/2002)
2003	All public policy areas in city government	New public works + public services	7.7	Territorial + thematic + segments	97.5 (2002/2003)
2004	All public policy areas in city government	New public works + public services	8.0	Territorial + thematic + segments	N/A

Sources: Derived from COP (2004a), Sánchez (2004) and Wampler (2005)

**Table 2** Levels of participation and representation in the PB in São Paulo

Year	No. of Participants	No. of Delegates	No. of Councilors	No. of Assemblies
2001	34,000	1,076	112	191
2002	55,000	1,134	139	386
2003	80,000	2,131	216	450
2004	82,000	2,219	241	653

Source: Derived from COP (2004a)

**Table 3** Overview of PB cycle in São Paulo (2004 round)

Period	Actions
January-February	Publication of Plan of Works and Services and reporting on outcomes from previous year; 'thematic cycle' starts
March-April	'Territorial' and 'segment' delegates are elected
May	'Intermediary' round of preliminary negotiations between delegates and public officials about which proposals are technically feasible
June	Continuation of 'territorial' cycle and election of councilors by and among the delegates
July	PB Council (CONOP) starts to operate
August-September	CONOP deliberates with city government about proposals presented by citizens in the PB for next year's budget
October-December	CONOP follows up on decisions and negotiations

Sources: Derived from COP (2004a) and Sánchez (2004)

There was a lot of exchange and an incipient division of labor among the councilors. This was the case particularly because the councilors did not have enough time to attend all the meetings with government officials they needed to be present at. Still, they managed to devise systems of mutual support through which they defended each other's proposals at different meetings. Table 3 reflects the complexity of the process in São Paulo based on data for the last PB cycle in 2004.

### Social inclusion through participation: the 'socially vulnerable segments'

This section analyzes the 'socially vulnerable segments' in more detail. According to government officials in charge of the PB, this approach was a response to São Paulo's extreme polarization. The few available comprehensive reviews of PB models (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2004; Cabannes, 2004; Goldfrank, 2007) as well as the rest of the literature indicate that the São Paulo PB model is the only one to date to combine affirmative action and participatory mechanisms in this way. The PB targeted nine historically disadvantaged groups: Afro-Brazilians, senior citizens, children and adolescents, youth, the GLBT community, women, indigenous groups, the homeless and people with disabilities.<sup>7</sup>

7 However, the last round of the PB in 2004 included only eight of these groups. Work with children and adolescents became a separate and very successful process called 'OP Criança' (PB for Children).

**Table 4** Delegates by segment in the PB in São Paulo 2003 and 2004

Segment	No. of Delegates 2003	No. of Delegates 2004
Women	174	275
Afro-Brazilians	76	99
Homeless population	30	53
Youth	108	253
Indigenous population	11	40
People with disabilities	57	58
Senior citizens	132	200
GLBT	32	12
Total	620	990
Segment delegates as a % of total PB delegates	29% (620/2,131)	44.6% (990/2,219)

**Sources:** Derived from COP (2004) and Sánchez (2004)

The origins of the segments can be traced back to a proposal presented by COP to the PB Council during the 2002 cycle. The Council debated and implemented the idea using its prerogative to adjust the methodology for subsequent cycles. Table 4 presents the numbers of segment delegates elected in 2003 and 2004. Unlike other affirmative action mechanisms, these results were not decided through predetermined quotas. On the contrary, participation fluctuated based on the interest of movement activists in taking advantage of the lower number of votes required to represent their groups. Table 4 indicates that, with the exception of two segments, (people with disabilities and the GLBT community) participation significantly increased from 2003 to 2004.

Firstly, the segments were explicitly conceived as a 'mechanism of social inclusion' (Sánchez, 2004: 153). Informative pamphlets about the segments emphasize that they contributed to 'a new definition of citizenship' so that 'human rights have a concrete channel of expression in the PB' (COP, 2004b). Segment representatives only needed one or five votes instead of the 20 votes usually required to become a PB delegate or councilor. The number of votes depended on the degree of vulnerability associated with a given segment. Accordingly, persons with disabilities, members of the indigenous population and the homeless only needed one vote to be elected (i.e. an individual from these groups just needed to vote for herself or himself) whereas members of other groups required five. This favorable treatment was awarded to members of disadvantaged groups as long as they publicly identified themselves as such. For example, an Afro-Brazilian woman with disabilities could show up at an assembly to elect segment delegates or councilors and identify herself either as a member of the Afro-Brazilian segment, the women's segment, or the segment of persons with disabilities.

Segment representatives were expected to operate in a slightly different way from representatives elected based on geographical criteria (the 'territorial' delegates and councilors expected to represent their neighborhoods) or those elected based on policy areas (the 'thematic' delegates and councilors expected to work with other representatives with demands in those areas). According to a pamphlet COP distributed in 2004:

Segment delegates have the responsibility of giving visibility to issues relating to the following social segments, regardless of whether they belong to organized groups or not: women, blacks, senior citizens, people with disabilities, youth, indigenous population, the homeless, GLBT . . . (COP, 2004b: 28; my translation).

Similarly, segment delegates' first task was to:

participate, debate, preserve and guarantee the inclusion of ideas and proposals that reflect the social inclusion of those segments through attitudes of respect, [and] tolerance to difference with regard to origin, sex, [skin] color, age, physical disability, sexual and cultural diversity, in defense of [the concepts of] non-discrimination and non-prejudice in all PB spaces (*ibid.*; my translation).

Furthermore, delegates in this category were expected to know and defend the issues associated with their segments; know and debate public policies for those segments; advocate for public works and services to address their needs;<sup>8</sup> participate in their segments' municipal assemblies; interact with other institutions related to their segments; and participate in training activities designed specifically for them. The segments addressed a crucial problem faced by the PB model in general: how to involve those more at risk among PB participants (Baiocchi, 2001; Sánchez, 2004). The label of 'socially vulnerable' groups refers to this identity-based form of social exclusion as suggested by the following quote in the official PB bulletin:

There are some limitations with the word 'vulnerable', because it implies that the population as a whole, unlike us and the other segments, is 'invulnerable'. But at the same time, it gives us the advantage to give a name to a society that 'makes [others] vulnerable' . . . Therefore we are vulnerable because anyone can hurt us. A homosexual is murdered for the only reason of being homosexual. Which name can better explain our situation? Persecuted? Excluded? Marginalized? (interview with GLBT councilor Jayme Camargo, PB bulletin August 2003; my translation).

Camargo's words are similar to the reactions of many interviewees and the content of documents produced by COP and the PB Council. There is a constant emphasis on the fact that the segments made visible ingrained patterns of discrimination in the city. Such emphasis as shown in the quote above reflects a relational vision of social exclusion in line with Silver and Miller's (2003) definition. Segment councilors I interviewed also shared this perspective. They based their definition of the PB as a whole on its potential to compensate marginalized groups for their historical exclusion. For example, a councilor from the Afro-Brazilian segment underscored that redressing their exclusion and that of the indigenous populations in the city constituted a collective 'civic duty'.

Finally, PB participants and staffers alike evaluated the role of the segments in positive terms. One such claim was that the segments helped to 'tie the city' together since they were less linked to geographical areas. In the words of a segment councilor, they had more room to 'think about macro-policies, not about a specific school in a given community'.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, PB staffers shared their optimism about the potential associated with the sharp increase in the number of segment delegates: they constituted less than 30% of the total (620 out of 2,131) in 2003 whereas they represented nearly half of the total in 2004 (990 out of 2,219). Such an increase was perceived as a possibility for change since, for the first time, segment representatives would be on an equal footing with their peers. As often occurs with affirmative action mechanisms, some of the latter showed reticence about segment representatives being elected with less 'effort' (i.e.

8 Some examples explicitly referred to in this document are 'accessibility for people with disabilities, inclusion of senior citizens, women and youth in programs and projects happening in the public sphere, educational programs about identity and social and sexual diversities, rescue (*sic*) of citizenship for the black population among others, therefore contributing to the establishment of affirmative social and urban action policies by the municipal government' (COP, 2004b: 28–9; my translation).

9 This councilor's perception was not totally accurate since, in fact, 'thematic' councilors also had the responsibility of thinking about macro-policies because they were selected based on policy areas. However, their presence in 2003 and 2004 was negligible in comparison to both 'territorial' and 'segment' representatives.



fewer required votes) when the methodology was first implemented. Table 5 summarizes the outcomes achieved by each segment in 2003 and 2004.

## Preliminary lessons

### Lesson 1: The impact of the minority in face-to-face deliberation

Despite the initial reservations held by other PB representatives, most interviewees argued that segment representatives helped to change the nature of the conversation by bringing new issues to the table. Interviews and observations of multiple meetings indicated that face-to-face deliberation increased the willingness of many PB representatives to change their minds and support the claims of other communities when convinced about the merits of their claims. In this context, it is important to note that the pronounced increase in the proportion of segment representatives shown in Table 4 represented a significant jump beyond the critical mass threshold suggested in diversity studies.

Face-to-face deliberation in São Paulo's PB also served as a 'school of democracy' (Pontual, 2000) that helped participants expand the foundations of their decisions (their interests and preferences), improve their decision-making capabilities and gain a better understanding of the way city government works and how to have an impact on it. Such a steep learning curve provided PB representatives with leverage to challenge technocrats' monopoly of administrative decisions, another key feature of participatory publics (Avritzer, 2002). As a segment PB councilor stated while talking about the negotiations between city government officials and regular citizens participating in the PB: 'You are the technocrats but we are the ones who know!'

### Lesson 2: The segments as counterpublics

The second feature of participatory publics refers to how 'social movements and voluntary associations' contribute to the inclusion of new issues and introduce 'alternative practices, such as non-clientelistic forms of claiming public goods or practices that are compatible with human rights' (Avritzer, 2002: 136). That is the case of several PB models in Brazil, particularly the original template in Porto Alegre. In São Paulo, participants used the segments as spaces to regroup and plan their interventions not only in the PB but also in other decision-making bodies at both city and state levels. In the words of a GLBT councilor: 'I think [the segment methodology] it's great because when it's divided into segments, you work on the issues related to the segment. And then you are able to achieve a lot of things because each segment has its own problems'.

At the same time, the segments granted certain legitimacy to social movements representing groups previously ignored as political actors. Marginalized groups purposefully increased their presence in the PB in order to enlarge a critical mass of representatives in São Paulo's political life. The GLBT movement is a primary example. According to several interviewees, this is one of the most stigmatized identity-based groups in Brazil. GLBT representatives and PB staffers also described it as one of the most fragmented movements in the city, particularly along class lines. The GLBT councilor mentioned above invested a lot of time and effort in trying to get a '*Casa de Atenção*', a special facility for GLBT sex-workers and other low-income GLBTs, approved through the PB.

This councilor was practicing his motto ('politics is the art of occupying spaces') by contacting elected officials on an almost daily basis. Despite his multiple connections, he would ground his interaction with elected officials and others in his role as a PB councilor. His strategy was to translate the practices he and other activists in his sector

**Table 5** Required votes and main outcomes of the 'socially vulnerable segments'

Segment	Required Votes	Main Outcomes
Women	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint work with women's <i>Coordenadoria</i> and feminist NGOs in the activities mentioned below</li> <li>• Awareness-raising and skill-building events to facilitate women delegates' and councilors' active participation in the PB</li> <li>• Strategic planning to elaborate proposals addressing women's and community's problems in the PB, e.g. day-care centers, recreation centers for women and community-based restaurants</li> <li>• Training events for participants to analyze budgetary proposals from a gender perspective</li> <li>• Achieved inclusion of a designated representative from the segment in the PB Council or CONOP</li> </ul>
Afro-Brazilians	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint work with the Afro-Brazilian <i>Coordenadoria</i> and alliance with the Afro-Brazilian movement in awareness-raising and cultural activities about racism and the Afro-Brazilian legacy in São Paulo, and in Brazil</li> <li>• Approved proposal to train a network of healthcare professionals regarding health problems specific to Afro-Brazilians</li> </ul>
Homeless population	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint work with São Paulo's Ministry of Social Assistance and the homeless movement, particularly in working with shelter personnel in order to improve their services and increase the participation of people from the segment in the PB</li> </ul>
Youth	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural events in collaboration with youth organizations, particularly in the city's marginalized '<i>periferia</i>', e.g. organizing artistic competitions, fomenting Brazilian hip-hop with a social content, among others</li> </ul>
Indigenous population	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint work with indigenous communities to design special schools (CEUs) based on their traditions, e.g. offering instruction in their original Guaraní language to be later combined with Portuguese</li> <li>• Building and finishing the 3 CEUs designed by the community in the regions of Parelheiros and Jaraguá in the South of São Paulo</li> </ul>
Persons with disabilities	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint work with Ministry of Social Assistance, especially in providing assistance to participants for them to be able to attend PB events (e.g. providing wheelchairs and/or ambulances)</li> </ul>
Senior citizens	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint work with five '<i>subprefeituras</i>' (city's administrative subdivisions) and the Ministry of Social Assistance to establish an advocacy and service-oriented center for senior citizens and improve transportation services for people from this segment</li> </ul>
GLBT community: gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint work with GLBT movement to establish a facility offering healthcare and other services for poor GLBTs (many of whom were sex workers) in the center of the city</li> <li>• Joint work with GLBT movement and the city's Health Ministry on a proposal for awareness raising and training programs for health care professionals to reduce their prejudices against treating GLBT patients</li> </ul>
Votes required for others	20	

**Sources:** Derived from Sánchez (2004), Hernández-Medina (2005) and fieldwork material

(i.e. practices aimed at legitimizing GLBT issues as a matter of human rights) had developed into the PB and into the daily functioning of government institutions. This gradual legitimization of the GLBT community and their issues was also evident in the respectful way in which other councilors would refer to this segment.

### Lesson 3: Using both conflict *and* deliberation to get results

Another feature of participatory publics is the transformation of issues raised by civil society organizations at the public level into institutional mechanisms and outcomes (Avritzer, 2002). São Paulo's PB is not a successful example in terms of sustainable institutional changes favoring citizen participation. In fact, the defeat of the Workers' Party in the municipal elections of November 2004 seemed to confirm that innovations like the PB and the segments methodology were implemented without taking into account the political polarization of the city, i.e. without reaching out sufficiently to progressive sectors in the middle and upper classes, and (according to some key informants) without addressing the fact that the PB was not a change pushed for directly by social movements, as was the case in Porto Alegre.

However, it is clear that the social groups represented in the segments benefited in terms of concrete outcomes as shown in Table 5. Those groups followed the same logic used by other PB participants of investing their scarce resources in the venues where they could see concrete outcomes. In other words, segment representatives took part of both contentious and participatory politics in order to get results. This trend is consistent with the point made by both Aylett (this issue) and Becher (this issue) about social movements' need to defend their autonomy by keeping their options open. Similarly, Table 5 shows that the actual gains achieved by the segments were very uneven. Success depended on the relative strength of the movement behind the segment, its resources and the level of interest with which it participated in the PB.

In my interviews, segment councilors referred more explicitly to the opportunity to use the PB as one of several springboards for their actions vis-à-vis city government and other powerful actors. Movement activists elected as segment representatives considered that engaging in participatory deliberation did not preclude, but rather complemented, their involvement in contentious politics. This double emphasis on identity and strategy, on deliberation and contentiousness confirms that the segments constituted counterpublics or springboards for regroupment and public actions along Fraser's (1992) lines. For example, a PB councilor from the homeless people segment emphasized the need to participate in as many different spaces as possible while expanding their 'repertoires of contention'<sup>10</sup> (McAdam *et al.*, 2001):

And we even told this to the people from the Ministry of Housing: if it's necessary to occupy the cabinet and to occupy the municipal council, we will do it together . . . If we talk to the others about what's happening they will come . . . We are only asking for the law to be implemented. That's all we're asking; we're not asking for anything out of this world. And if you don't want to negotiate, then we will leave . . . The media, informatics, the Internet come together so really pay attention, ok? Because this is a game, this is a chess game. This is a chessboard. You give them checkmate . . . until you give check to the king (interview, August 2004).

### Lesson 4: The importance of participation's intangible dimensions

Finally, it is important not to underestimate the intangible dimensions of participation through deliberation. Many PB representatives were attracted by the possibility of solving problems affecting their communities. But the longer they stayed in the process by becoming PB delegates and councilors, the more invested they became in a different type of outcome, i.e. the sense of entitlement and respect they gained in their interactions

10 The concept refers to the 'the forms of claim making that people use in real-life situations' (McAdam *et al.*, 2001: 16). These forms depend on factors such as the previous history of the movement, e.g. what tactics have worked or have not worked in its interactions with other actors.

with their peers and public officials. This was especially true in the case of segment representatives who felt at least partially compensated for the history of discrimination against their groups and took pride in having the responsibility to represent them. For example, the GLBT councilor mentioned above emphasized that the segments constituted 'a space where you have all the freedom as gay, or as a lesbian, or as a bisexual within the PB. We have liberty, respect and recognition. The first public space where I felt really [acknowledged] as a person was within the PB' (interview, August 2004).

Segment representatives valued the opportunity to engage in deliberation 'as equals among equals' more highly than any other positive feature of the PB. This dimension of the PB constituted a priority for them. For example, the homeless segment councilor mentioned earlier emphasized that the PB provided him with the 'pleasure of exercising the right of citizenship . . . and the comrades who are participating in the PB are people who are rescuing their dignity and awakening their right to be citizens' (interview, August 2004).

## Conclusion

This article analyzed the 'socially vulnerable segments' recognized in 2003 and 2004 as part of the participatory budget implemented by the Workers' Party in São Paulo, Brazil. My argument has been that this methodology not only sets São Paulo's PB apart from other PB models in Brazil and Latin America, but it also offers important clues about how to work towards the social inclusion of marginalized groups in urban contexts. First, the implementation of São Paulo's PB as a whole confirms that *the potential of any PB model is bounded* by its urban context, its institutional design and the relative strength of the political actors involved. In this case, the PB did open up the political opportunity structure of the city to poor residents and other excluded populations and had some important redistributive effects. São Paulo's PB shows that the model has the potential to become, in the words of an interviewee, 'a political space for popular sectors' including those more consistently excluded from the mainstream political arena.

However, political struggles within and outside the Workers' Party seriously limited the success of the PB and ended up precluding its sustainability. On one hand, the 'Democracia Socialista' faction in charge of the PB was a minority within the Workers' Party whereas the opposite was true in Porto Alegre. Therefore, this group was never able to transform the process into a mainstream policy within city government. For that it would have needed a more explicit and stronger alliance with the more pro-business factions of the party in the city.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the latter's need to attract at least some sectors of the *paulistanos* middle and upper class was real. But that need was consistently ignored in the implementation of the PB.<sup>12</sup> It also made Mayor Suplicy seek alliances with traditional politicians; many of which used clientelistic practices that undermined the PB and other participatory institutions in the city. As a result, the PB as

11 Even Mayor Suplicy who belonged to the dominant and more conservative faction within the Workers' Party would rarely, if at all, talk about the PB in non-PB public events. According to some interviewees, she was trying to avoid alienating the middle- and upper-class voters she needed to win the upcoming election at the end of 2004.

12 Middle-class participants constituted around 25% of the total in the first round of the PB (2001/2002). I asked several interviewees about the abrupt decline in middle-class participation after the first round and none of them seemed to be concerned about the reduction. Nonetheless, I think that encouraging more middle-class participation could have been an important mechanism to increase the sustainability of the process.

a whole became a sort of 'counterpublic' (Fraser, 1992) within city government in the same way that the segments became counterpublics within the PB. These challenges underscore the error of assuming, as international organizations often do, that any PB model is automatically synonymous with 'good governance' and progressive institution-building (Goldfrank, 2007; Hernández-Medina, 2007).

The fact that the Workers' Party was unable to regain control of city government in the 2008 elections (despite having won the first round) indicates that new attempts to continue the PB will not be taking place in the near future. These outcomes are related to a second point about this case, namely (and as emphasized in the introduction to the symposium) the importance of *thinking dynamically about different moments and modalities of participation*. In São Paulo, class-based political polarization has been deepening in the last few decades resulting in the strengthening of the left and right at the expense of parties representing the center of the political spectrum (Limongi and Mesquita, 2008). The implementation of the PB took place at a moment where the political pendulum was favorable to the idea of including the interests of the poor and other marginalized groups. In this context, it made sense that social movements representing those actors would engage in inclusive deliberation. Such involvement did not prevent them, however, from engaging in contentious politics when necessary, or from attempting to occupy other decision-making arenas like the municipal councils mandated by the 1988 Brazilian constitution. Similarly, it also makes sense that these groups would go back to exclusively using contentious politics when deliberative spaces like the PB or the municipal councils are not longer available or access to them has been curtailed.

A third and related point refers to the need to *develop more open categorizations of citizen participation* in urban contexts. Analyzing participation as a 'cycle of contestation and consensus' (Silver *et al.*, 2010, this issue) is an important step in moving beyond the either/or logic found in much of the literature. Becher's (this issue) proposal about looking at this continuum based on the relative power of the actors involved might be a useful starting point in this regard. For instance, 'intermediation' seems to be an adequate categorization of PB councillors' role in São Paulo. Their responsibilities in the context of the PB certainly included to 'represent citizens to government, and government to citizens' as suggested by Becher. Along similar lines, Vitale (2004) defined the councilors as the 'second level' of representation and mediation in the PB, the first one being the delegates. In her analysis, the councilors represented 'the bridge between the delegates and the Executive and, therefore, between the former and the population' (*ibid.*: 26).

Houtzager *et al.* (2005: 2) proposed a similar categorization in their comparison of citizen participation in São Paulo and Mexico City: 'direct' participation involved making 'extensive demands on the state'; when that failed, citizens resorted to 'contentious' participation, whereas 'detached' participation took place when citizens relied on self-organization instead of engaging the state. As mentioned earlier, I have developed a comparable continuum including 'exclusion', 'mediated' and 'synergistic' forms of participation (Hernández-Medina, 2008). However, all these categorizations are still too static to analyze moments when conflict and deliberation are taking place simultaneously as in Aylett's (this issue) article about the environmental movement in Durban.

Another topic for further research is whether the sequence in which moments of consensus and moments of conflict take place is in any way related to local political trajectories and/or the features of democracies in the global South versus the North. For example, Becher (this issue) addresses a process where cooperation is attempted first and conflict comes later to counterbalance the 'moment of betrayal' that inclusive participation might entail. In Aylett's (this issue) article, however, there is a different trajectory: an organization earned its place at the table through conflict and still uses contentious tactics in order to avoid cooptation. In the case of the São Paulo PB model, a relatively rare participatory moment was preceded, complemented, and seems to have



been replaced, by contentious politics, at least on the part of the poor and other marginalized actors. A potential avenue to continue exploring these issues would be to deepen our understanding of the link between conflict and legitimacy raised by Aylett. My impression is that this link is particularly valuable in the developing world, where overt political conflict ‘in the street’ appears to be more common than it is in contemporary Europe or in the United States.

Finally, the segments are an example of *how affirmative action mechanisms can be used to improve decision-making processes and address social exclusion* in urban contexts. The PB Council and government officials in charge of the PB not only took into account the history of non-income based discrimination in the city, but they also created a channel for the emergence of smaller counterpublics within the PB. Social inclusion requires ‘access, participation, and “voice” rather than making [people] passive recipients of material assistance’ (Silver and Miller, 2003: 10). Segment representatives played a fundamental role by transferring the rights-based practices developed in their organizations into the public forum of the PB. This answers one of the questions posed at the beginning of the article. Under certain conditions, it is feasible to implement affirmative action mechanisms to encourage ‘access, participation and voice’ on the part of historically excluded groups. Such conditions include a political party in power (or at least a faction within it) committed to increasing citizen participation, a flexible institutional design that allows for modifications to match the characteristics of the urban context in question, and experienced activists able to take advantage of such a design to further their cause.

Nonetheless, the segments never became a cross-institutional component of city government, nor did they lead to an integrated set of policies to address the multidimensional challenges of social exclusion. This methodology did provide unprecedented access, knowledge about the functioning of city government and concrete solutions to some of the day-to-day problems of historically discriminated populations. But conditions were not favorable enough to make the PB process sustainable. For example, government officials and PB participants ignored the consequences of political polarization ‘outside’ the PB, and therefore missed the opportunity to attract and influence the middle class and other groups occupying the center ground of São Paulo’s political spectrum. In sum, the segments’ partial success indicates that there is value associated with focusing on social groups and movements, instead of individuals or territories. In other words, there is potential to build community and citizenship around identity politics both in the deliberative and the contentious moments of citizen participation in urban contexts.

Esther Hernández-Medina (esther@brown.edu), Department of Sociology, Brown University, Box 1916, Maxcy Hall, 112 George Street, Providence, RI 02912, USA.

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## Résumé

*L'un des plus grands centres urbains du monde, São Paulo au Brésil, se caractérise par des niveaux élevés d'inégalité socio-économique et de polarisation politique, ce qui complique considérablement les enjeux de la gouvernance urbaine. Bien que conçu en partie pour traiter ces problèmes, le budget participatif appliqué à São Paulo était contraint par son contexte urbain, son modèle institutionnel et la puissance relative des acteurs politiques impliqués. L'article analyse un mécanisme créé au sein du système de budget participatif dans le but d'intégrer des groupes traditionnellement désavantagés, ou 'segments socialement vulnérables', pendant l'administration municipale du Parti des Travailleurs de 2001 à 2004. La méthodologie des segments constitue une illustration intéressante de la manière dont une action antidiscriminatoire peut servir à améliorer des processus de décision et intervenir sur l'exclusion sociale dans des contextes urbains. Les segments ont notamment agi en 'contre-public' dans le budget participatif, aidant les militants qui représentaient les segments à élaborer des stratégies visant à influencer les politiques urbaines et sociales de la ville.*