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## Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance

*The multifaceted challenges of contemporary governance demand a complex account of the ways in which those who are subject to laws and policies should participate in making them. This article develops a framework for understanding the range of institutional possibilities for public participation. Mechanisms of participation vary along three important dimensions: who participates, how participants communicate with one another and make decisions together, and how discussions are linked with policy or public action. These three dimensions constitute a space in which any particular mechanism of participation can be located. Different regions of this institutional design space are more and less suited to addressing important problems of democratic governance such as legitimacy, justice, and effective administration.*

How much and what kind of direct public participation should there be in contemporary democracy? The multiplex conditions of modern governance demand a theory and institutions of public participation that are appropriately complex in at least three ways. First, unlike the small New England town or even the Athenian city-state, there is no canonical form of direct participation in modern democratic governance; modes of contemporary participation are, and should be, legion. Second, public participation advances multiple purposes and values in contemporary governance. Master principles such as equal influence over collective decisions and respect for individual autonomy are too abstract to offer useful guidance regarding the aims and character of citizen participation. It is more fruitful to examine the range of proximate values that mechanisms of participation might advance and the problems that they seek to address. I will consider the illegitimacy, injustice, and ineffectiveness of particular clusters of governance arrangements here. Third, mechanisms of direct participation are not (as commonly imagined) a strict alternative to political representation or expertise but instead complement them. As we shall see, public participation at its best operates in synergy with representation and administration to yield more desirable practices and outcomes of collective decision making and action.

In this article, I develop a framework for understanding a range of institutional possibilities. Such a framework is a necessary—if incomplete—part of the answer to a larger question regarding the amounts and kinds of appropriate participation in governance. Though I do not develop this framework into a general “theory of the public” (Frederickson 1991), this approach suggests that such a general theory may remain elusive. Whether public institutions and decision-making processes should treat members of the public as consumers, clients, or citizens depends partly on the context and problem in question.<sup>1</sup>

There are three important dimensions along which forms of direct participation vary. The first concerns who participates. Some participatory processes are open to all who wish to engage, whereas others invite only elite stakeholders such as interest group representatives. The second dimension specifies how participants exchange information and make decisions. In many public meetings, participants simply receive information from officials who announce and explain policies. A much smaller set of venues are deliberative in the sense that citizens take positions, exchange reasons, and sometimes change their minds in the course of discussions. The third dimension describes the link between discussions and policy or public action. These three dimensions—scope of participation, mode of communication and decision, and extent of authority—constitute a space in which any particular mechanism of public decision can be located. Here, I will show how regions of this institutional design space are suited to addressing three important problems of democratic governance: legitimacy, justice, and effective governance.

### Participatory Designs: The Democracy Cube

If there is no canonical form or institution of direct public participation in contemporary democratic contexts, then one important task is to understand the feasible and useful varieties of participation. In what remains perhaps the most cited work in the literature on participatory democracy, Sherry Arnstein develops an influential typology in her essay “A Ladder of

Citizen Participation” (1969).<sup>2</sup> She argues that participation is valuable to the extent that it “is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens . . . to be deliberately included in the future.” She posits a “ladder” of empowerment with eight rungs: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and finally, citizen control.

Arnstein’s classification still provides a useful corrective to naive and untempered enthusiasm for public participation. As an analytic tool, however, it is obsolete and defective in two main ways. First, it improperly fuses an empirical scale that describes the level of influence individuals have over some collective decision with normative approval. There may indeed be contexts in which public empowerment is highly desirable, but there are certainly others in which a consultative role is more appropriate for members of the public than full “citizen control.” Second, there have been many advances in the theory and practice of participation since Arnstein’s essay was published. A large body of work in political theory has distinguished between aggregative and deliberative decision making (Cohen 1989; Gutmann and Thompson 1996). Practitioners have developed many techniques to recruit participants such as random selection (Fishkin 1995), to facilitate meetings, and to design entire participation processes suited to civil disputes, regulatory challenges, and even law making (Connor 1988; Creighton 2005).

Out of these many ways in which people come together to discuss public matters, three questions of institutional design are particularly important for understanding the potential and limits of participatory forms: Who participates? How do they communicate and make decisions? What is the connection between their conclusions and opinions on one hand and public policy and action on the other?

This section describes an institutional design space that maps arenas of decision making along these three dimensions. In considering this space, it should be noted that actual decision-making processes are frequently composed of multiple points. Administrative rulemaking, for example, often comprises moments in which interested individuals and stakeholders comment on proposals in public hearings and moments in which regulators (experts) make decisions on their own. Decision making in a complex urban development project, for example, often results from interactions among multiple arenas, such as planning agencies, stakeholder negotiations, neighborhood councils, and public hearings. The space is also delineated to include arenas in which there is no public participation at all—for example, areas in which public officials in insulated agencies operate without direct public oversight or input. This space is a tool for considering governance choices, and so it is

appropriate that the tool include the alternative—often the norm—of no citizen participation to enable comparisons and juxtapositions.

### **Participant Selection**

In what follows, I suppose that the principal reason for enhancing citizen participation in any area of contemporary governance is that the authorized set of decision makers—typically elected representatives or administrative officials—is somehow deficient.<sup>3</sup> They may lack the knowledge, competence, public purpose, resources, or respect necessary to command compliance and cooperation. Whether the direct participation of citizens in governance can remedy one or other of these deficiencies depends in large measure on who participates: Are they appropriately representative of the relevant population or the general public? Are important interests or perspectives excluded? Do they possess the information and competence to make good judgments and decisions? Are participants responsive and accountable to those who do not participate? Therefore, one primary feature of any public decision-making device is the character of its franchise: Who is eligible to participate, and how do individuals become participants? In the universe of direct participation, there are five common selection mechanisms.

The vast majority of public participation mechanisms use the least restrictive method of selecting participants: They are open to all who wish to attend. Actual participants are a *self-selected* subset of the general population. Though complete openness has an obvious appeal, those who choose to participate are frequently quite unrepresentative of any larger public. Individuals who are wealthier and better educated tend to participate more than those who lack these advantages, as do those who have special interests or stronger views (Fiorina 1999).

Two alternative participant selection methods address this difficulty. Some mechanisms that are open to all *selectively recruit* participants from subgroups that are less likely to engage. For example, some community policing and urban planning initiatives employ community organizers to publicize meetings in low-income and minority communities. Selective recruitment may also occur passively, providing structural incentives that make participation more attractive to those who are ordinarily less likely to participate in politics. Some venues that address crime or sewers, for example, are particularly inviting to disadvantaged citizens because those issues are less urgent to the wealthy. Those who have special interests in some question—for example, senior citizens in discussions about the future of Social Security—may nevertheless exploit the open-to-all character of public meetings to stack participation in their favor. *Randomly selecting* participants from among the

general population is the best guarantee of descriptive representativeness. Initiatives such as deliberative polling, Citizens Juries, and Planning Cells randomly select participants to discuss public issues (Fishkin 1995; Gastil 2000; Leib 2004; Smith and Wales 2000).

A fourth method engages *lay stakeholders* in public discussions and decisions. Lay stakeholders are unpaid citizens who have a deep interest in some public concern and thus are willing to invest substantial time and energy to represent and serve those who have similar interests or perspectives but choose not to participate. Many neighborhood association boards and school councils, for example, are composed of lay stakeholders. Finally, some governance processes that have been described as regulatory negotiation, grassroots environmental management, and collaborative planning bring together *professional stakeholders*. These participants are frequently paid representatives of organized interests and public officials.

These five mechanisms of popular participation have been conceived as “mini-publics” that intentionally gather citizens in discrete bodies to discuss or decide matters of public concern (Fung 2003). These devices contrast with two more familiar mechanisms of selecting individuals who occupy positions in the state: competitive elections that select *professional politicians* who supposedly represent our interests and professional civil service mechanisms that select the technical, *expert administrators* who staff our public bureaucracies. They also contrast with the public (perhaps “macro-public”) at large—the diffuse public sphere of mass media, secondary associations, and informal venues of discussion that has been analyzed by Jürgen Habermas (1989, 1996) and others. These eight mechanisms for identifying or selecting the actors who participate directly in discussions or decisions about public matters can be arrayed schematically from most exclusive to most encompassing in a single dimension (figure 1).

### Communication and Decision

The second crucial dimension of institutional design specifies how participants interact within a venue of public discussion or decision. Informed by the political imaginary of the Athenian forum or the New England town meeting, many treatments of citizen

participation implicitly presume that it should approximate some deliberative ideal: participants engage with one another directly as equals who reason together about public problems. But the vast majority of institutionalized public discussions do not occur in this way, nor is it clear that they should. For example, if the main reason for direct participation is one that John Dewey once gave—that the man who wears the shoe, not the shoemaker, knows best where it pinches—then participants need do no more than complain to policy makers (Dewey 1981–90, 264).

There are six main modes of communication and decision making in participatory settings. The vast majority of those who attend events such as public hearings and community meetings do not put forward their own views at all. Instead, they participate as spectators who receive information about some policy or project, and they bear witness to struggles among politicians, activists, and interest groups. There are few public meetings in which everyone is a spectator. Almost all of them offer opportunities for some to express their preferences to the audience and officials there. Think of the citizens and activists who line up at the ubiquitous microphone to pose a pointed question or say their piece. Other discussions are organized in ways that allow participants to explore, develop, and perhaps transform their preferences and perspectives. They encourage participants to learn about issues and, if appropriate, transform their views and opinions by providing them with educational materials or briefings and then asking them to consider the merits and trade-offs of several alternatives. Participants usually discuss these issues with one another (often organized in small groups) rather than simply listening to experts, politicians, or advocates.

Mechanisms employing these first three modes of communication often do not attempt to translate the views or preferences of participants into a collective view or decision. At most public hearings, for example, officials commit to no more than receiving the testimony of participants and considering their views in their own subsequent deliberations.

Some venues, however, do attempt to develop a collective choice through a combination of three methods of decision making. The most common of these is *aggregation and bargaining*. In this mode, participants know what they want, and the mode of decision making aggregates their preferences—often mediated by the influence and power that they bring—into a social choice. The exploration and give-and-take of bargaining allows participants to find the best available alternative to advance the joint preferences they have. A decision at a New England town meeting operates in this mode when the townspeople have polarized over some heated issue prior to the meeting and use the final vote simply to reckon their antecedent views.

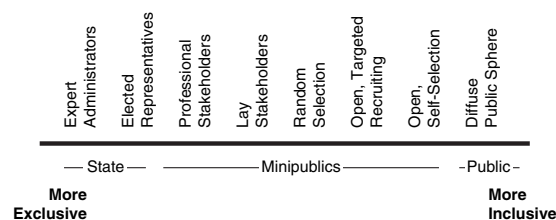


Figure 1 Participant Selection Methods

*Deliberation and negotiation* is a second mode of decision making. Participants deliberate to figure out what they want individually and as a group. In mechanisms designed to create deliberation, participants typically absorb educational background materials and exchange perspectives, experiences, and reasons with one another to develop their views and discover their interests. In the course of developing their individual views in a group context, deliberative mechanisms often employ procedures to facilitate the emergence of principled agreement, the clarification of persisting disagreements, and the discovery of new options that better advance what participants value. Two features distinguish the deliberative mode. First, a process of interaction, exchange, and—it is hoped—edification precedes any group choice. Second, participants in deliberation aim toward agreement with one another (though frequently they do not reach consensus) based on reasons, arguments, and principles. In political theory, this mode has been elaborated and defended as a deliberative ideal of democracy (Cohen 1989; Gutmann and Thompson 1996), while scholars of dispute resolution have described such processes as negotiation and consensus building (Fisher and Ury 1981; Susskind and Cruikshank 1987; Susskind, McKernan, and Thomas-Larmer 1999).

Many (perhaps most) public policies and decisions are determined not through aggregation or deliberation but rather through the *technical expertise* of officials whose training and professional specialization suits them to solving particular problems. This mode usually does not involve citizens. It is the domain of planners, regulators, social workers, teachers and principals, police officers, and the like.

These six modes of communication (first three) and decision making (second three) can be arrayed on a single dimension that ranges from least intensive to most intensive, where intensity indicates roughly the level of investment, knowledge, and commitment required of participants (figure 2).

### Authority and Power

The third important dimension of design gauges the impact of public participation. How is what participants say linked to what public authorities or participants themselves do? Venues such as the New England town meeting lie at one end of the spectrum. The decisions that participants make become policy. Far more common are venues that lie at the other end of

the continuum: Participants have no real expectation of influencing public action at all. Along this spectrum of influence and authority, five categories of institutionalized influence and authority emerge.

In many (perhaps most) participatory venues, the typical participant has little or no expectation of influencing policy or action. Instead, he or she participates to derive the *personal benefits* of edification or perhaps to fulfill a sense of civic obligation. Forums that principally affect participants rather than policy and action employ the first three communicative modes (listening, expressing preferences, and developing preferences) rather than the three more intensive decision-making modes described in the previous section.

Many participatory mechanisms exert influence on the state or its agents indirectly by altering or mobilizing public opinion. Their discussions and decisions exert a *communicative influence* on members of the public or officials who are moved by the testimony, reasons, conclusions, or by the probity of the process itself. For example, although the 9/11 Commission (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States) was created by the U.S. Congress to offer recommendations to lawmakers, its principal source of influence was arguably the enormous public interest and support that its final report generated. Providing *advice and consultation* is a third common mechanism through which participatory forums exert influence on public authority. In this mode, officials preserve their authority and power but commit themselves to receiving input from participants. The stated purpose of most public hearings and many other public meetings is to provide such advice.

Less commonly, some participation mechanisms exercise direct power (Fung 2004; Fung and Wright 2003). It is useful to distinguish between two levels of empowerment. In some venues, citizens who participate join in a kind of *cogoverning partnership* in which they join with officials to make plans and policies or to develop strategies for public action. Each public school in Chicago, for example, is jointly governed by a Local School Council that is composed of both parents and community members and the school's principal and teaching staff. At a higher (though not necessarily more desirable) level of empowerment, participatory bodies occasionally exercise *direct authority* over public decisions or resources. The New England town meeting provides a classic example of direct participatory authority. In urban contexts, neighborhood councils in some U.S. cities control substantial zoning authority or financial resources, allowing them to control, plan, or implement sublocal development projects (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993). These types of influence and authority are idealized points on the spectrum depicted in figure 3.

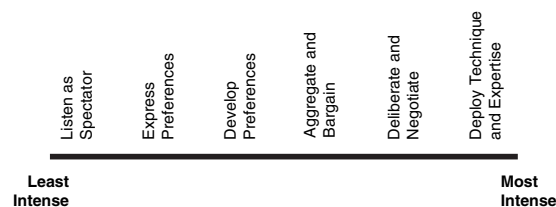


Figure 2 Modes of Communication and Decision



### The Democracy Cube

Putting these three dimensions of participant selection, communicative mode, and extent of influence yields a three-dimensional space—a *democracy cube*—of institutional design choices according to which varieties of participatory mechanisms can be located and contrasted with more professionalized arrangements. Figure 4 plots two familiar mechanisms of governance on this three-dimensional space. In the typical public agency, trained experts use their technical expertise to make decisions that they are authorized to execute. The typical public hearing is open to all who wish to attend. Though many in the audience listen to educate themselves, a few participants express their views in the hope that these preferences will be taken into account and thus advise the deliberations of policy makers. These two mechanisms lie on nearly opposite sides of the cube in terms of who participates, how they communicate, and the extent of their influence on public action. The next three sections will use this rubric of a three-dimensional institutional space to explore the kinds of participatory mechanisms that are suited to addressing problems in contemporary governance.

### Legitimacy

A public policy or action is legitimate when citizens have good reasons to support or obey it. The standard poll question, “Is government run for the benefit of all or for a few big interests?” captures one aspect of legitimacy. If government is really run for the benefit of a few big interests, then that is one strong reason many citizens should not support it. Some problems of legitimation stem from unintentional rifts between officials and the broader public of their constituents. For emergent issues that arise between elections or for issues that cut across the platforms and ideologies of parties and candidates, elected officials and public administrators may be unable to gauge public opinion and will. The potential for this disconnection grows as the circles in which political decision makers operate become more distant from those of ordinary citizens.

A number of initiatives seek to address these two problems by designing participatory forums that are more inclusive and representative on the participant dimension and more intensive on the communicative dimension. James Fishkin’s Deliberative Polls, for

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example, seek descriptive representation through random selection and attempt to shift the mode of communication from preference expression to preference development by providing background materials and facilitating conversations among participants. In a small town in Idaho, officials have adopted a kind of two-track policy process in which they seek wide public advice on issues that may prove controversial or for which they lack a sense of public sentiment. On this participatory track, they have rejected the ordinary public hearing format in favor of a model developed by the Study Circles Resource Center, in which participants—recruited with diversity in mind—are organized into small groups for parallel discussions of some controversial issue. These conversations are facilitated, and participants are usually given background materials that pose policy alternatives and their respective trade-offs. These Study Circles have facilitated the development of public consensus and support on previously divisive issues such as school funding bonds, student discipline policy, and growth management (Goldman 2004).

Many other civic innovators have attempted to improve on the standard public hearing process (Gastil and Levine 2005). Figure 5 below depicts the institutional design differences between conventional public hearings and initiatives such as Deliberative Polls and Study Circles. Almost all of them attempt to improve the representativeness of participants either through random selection (e.g., Citizen Juries, Planning Cells) or targeted recruitment (e.g., 21st Century Town Meetings)—these are marked by arrow 1 in figure 5. All of them also aim to make discussions among participants more informed and reflective, indicated by arrow 2 in figure 5. When they address problems of official misunderstanding and misperception, such mechanisms need not possess formal powers of either cogovernance or direct authority.

### Justice

Injustice often results from political inequality. When some groups cannot influence the political agenda, affect decision making, or gain information relevant to assessing how well policy alternatives serve their interests because they are excluded, unorganized, or too weak, they are likely to be ill served by laws and policies. Some iniquities stem from electoral dynamics, such as the role of money and other private resources in campaigns, special relationships between some interest groups and candidates, and persistent legacies of racialized and gendered exclusion from political offices and organizations. Others stem from aspects of the interest group system and the ecology of secondary associations—for example, when concentrated interests organize themselves more easily than diffuse

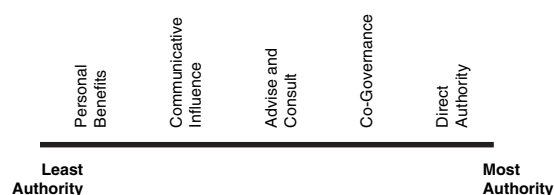
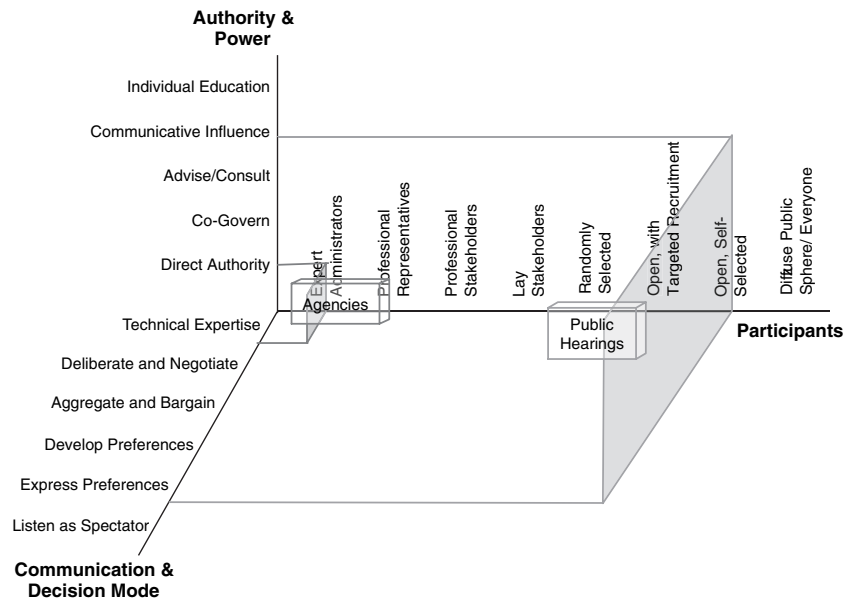


Figure 3 Extent of Authority and Power

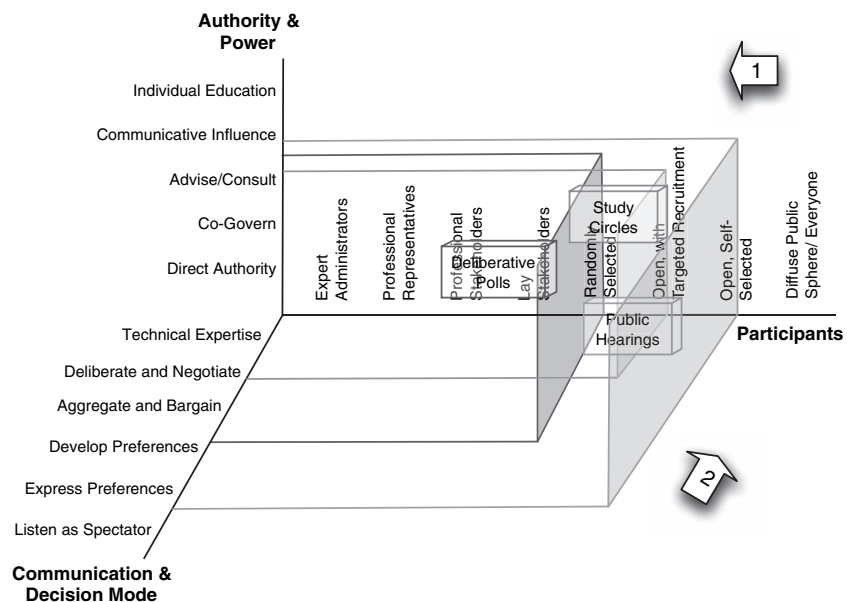


**Figure 4 Democracy Cube**

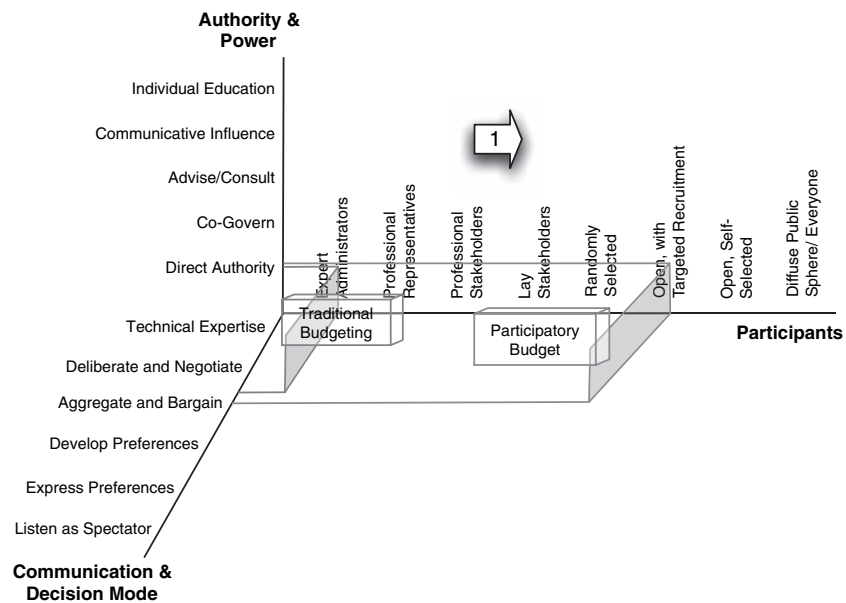
ones (e.g., producers versus consumers) (Stigler 1971; Wilson 1980). While many strategies to increase political equality focus on directly improving the nature of the electoral or group system, participatory mechanisms can increase the justice of democratic governance in two ways. They can either replace authorized decision makers whose actions have become systematically unjust with direct citizen participation, or they can create popular pressures that compel authorized officials to act justly.

One celebrated example of the first kind of justice-enhancing reform is the budgeting process of the city of Pôrto Alegre in Brazil (Abers 2000; Avritzer 2002; Baiocchi 2003; de Sousa Santos 1998). In 1989, the left-wing *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party) was

elected to the city executive based partly on its promises to empower the city's community organizations and social movements. Over the next two years, the party developed a highly innovative mechanism called the *Orçamento Participativo* (participatory budget). The mechanism shifts decisions about the capital portion of the city's budget from the city council to a system of neighborhood and citywide popular assemblies. Through a complex annual cycle of open meetings, citizens and civic associations in the city meet to determine local investment priorities. These priorities are then aggregated into an overall city budget. Though it is a procedural reform, it was born of a substantive political objective: to invert public spending priorities by shifting them away from the wealthy areas of the city to poorer neighborhoods. It has



**Figure 5 Legitimacy-Enhancing Deliberation**



**Figure 6 Participatory Budget Reform**

achieved this substantive goal remarkably well. The poor residents of Pôrto Alegre enjoy much better public services and goods as a result of the participatory budget. The percentage of neighborhoods with running water has increased from 75 to 98 percent, sewer coverage has grown from 45 to 98 percent, and the number of families offered housing assistance grew 16-fold since the initiation of the participatory budget.

In the framework of the democracy cube, the participatory budget increases justice in public governance by changing the actors who are authorized to make decisions. The participatory budget shifts the site of decision making from bodies—expert financial bureaus and an elected city council—that once were corrupted by clientelism to a structure of open citizen participation that affords more equal opportunities for political influence. In figure 6, the “who” of participation shifts from a closed group of experts and professional politicians to open forums for direct citizen engagement. Though the structure is formally open and participants select themselves, actual participation patterns in the participatory budget do not exhibit the familiar patterns of overrepresentation of those who are wealthier, better educated, and otherwise advantaged. Indeed, those who have lower incomes are more likely to participate (Baiocchi 2003). The explanation is that the participatory budget process addresses public problems that are much more urgent for the poor—sanitation, basic urban infrastructure, housing, and other “rice and beans” issues—than for the wealthy. Because of this structural

incentive, which mitigates the participation bias favoring the better-off, the participatory budget is plotted as having an open structure of participation with targeted recruiting (structural incentives that target the poor).

As a general matter, participatory mechanisms that enhance justice by altering who makes particular decisions and policies occupy a region of the democracy cube near that of the participatory budget in figure 6. On the dimension of who participates, they respond to the failure of experts or politicians to respect political equality by shifting decision making toward citizens. Institutions of open participation with incentives for the disadvantaged to participate—exemplified by the participatory budget—offer one strategy for equalization. Participation mechanisms that employ random selection or even lay stakeholder involvement may also enhance political equality if they are properly implemented.

On the influence and empowerment dimension of institutional design, mechanisms that increase justice in this way can only do so if they exercise direct authority over relevant decisions. Because they typically address structures of corruption and exclusion that generate benefits for the advantaged, the recommendations offered by merely advisory mechanisms are typically ignored.

On the third dimension of communication and decision, justice-enhancing participatory mechanisms need not be fully deliberative. The distinctive feature of the participatory budget is that poor people and other previously excluded groups are included in

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sublocal processes of fiscal allocation and planning. Justice results from the proper counting of their voices rather than from deliberation.

### Effectiveness

Even when public decisions are just and legitimate, state agencies may be incapable of implementing those decisions. Public hierarchies may lack the information, ingenuity, know-how, or resources necessary to address social problems effectively (Cohen and Sabel 1997). Nonprofessional citizens possess distinctive capabilities that may improve public action. In the provision of public services such as education and human development, for example, the involvement of clients in coproduction may dramatically increase the quality of some services. Properly structured public participation may belie the common view that direct democracy, whatever its other merits, is highly inefficient. In areas such as public safety and environmental regulation, citizens may possess essential local knowledge that comes from close exposure to the context in which problems occur. In all of these areas and others, public participants may be able to frame problems and priorities in ways that break from professional conceptions yet more closely match their values, needs, and preferences. Similarly, nonprofessionals may be able to contribute to the development of innovative approaches and strategies precisely because they are free from the received but obsolete wisdom of professionals and the techniques that are embedded in their organizations and procedures.

Beginning in 1994, for example, the Chicago Police Department shifted its organizational structure from a classic hierarchy designed to execute traditional policing strategies to a form of accountable autonomy (Fung 2004). Now, rather than insulating professional operations from public scrutiny and influence, residents in each of 280 neighborhood police beats meet with the police officers who serve their areas in open “beat meetings.” The program has been quite well received by city residents. In surveys, more than 1 in 10 residents claim to have attended a community policing beat meeting. However, on most beats, a few residents are heavily involved, while others participate only occasionally. Like the *Pôrto Alegre* reforms, residents from poor neighborhoods participate at rates greater than those from wealthy ones because the institution addresses a problem—crime—that plagues the disadvantaged (Skogan and Hartnett 1999).

Case studies have shown that when these deliberative processes are well facilitated and supported by the police department and community organizations, they produce innovative and effective problem-solving strategies that harness the distinctive capacities and local knowledge of residents.<sup>4</sup> Four factors make this structure of citizen participation effective. First, the dramatic shift to participatory policing has forced

officers to look beyond standard, comfortable, but ineffective approaches such as preventative patrolling, emergency response (answering 911 calls), and retrospective investigation of crimes (Goldstein 1990). Second, when citizens engage in searching deliberation with police officers, they often develop different priorities and approaches than professional police officers would have developed on their own. Third, neighborhood residents provide distinctive capabilities and resources that make different kinds of public safety strategies possible. For example, residents can monitor hot spots such as parks, liquor stores, or residential drug houses with greater scrutiny and frequency than a handful of thinly spread police officers. Finally, the discipline of deliberative problem solving focuses and coordinates a host of other relevant but previously unharnessed city resources such as city attorneys, building regulation, streets and sanitation, and the parks department to address public safety concerns. In the rubric of the democracy cube, the Chicago community policing reforms enhance effectiveness by creating institutions in which a core of active residents who have taken a deep interest in public safety in each neighborhood constitute lay stakeholders who deliberate with one another and cogovern the use of policing and other city resources.

Some features of participatory forums that enhance the effectiveness of governance may not lend themselves simultaneously to enhancing justice. In particular, making public action effective can require extensive involvement from relatively small numbers of citizens who are willing to invest many hours and to acquire substantial expertise in specific policy areas. The most active residents in Chicago’s community policing program invest many hours per month and gain a facility with police procedures, the courts, and city services. Therefore, participatory institutions geared toward enhancing effectiveness are likely to draw a relatively small number of lay stakeholders who have a sufficiently deep interest in the problems at hand to make the required sacrifices. On the other hand, participatory mechanisms that produce justice often do so by organizing extensive participation that includes many diverse perspectives.

On the communicative and decision-making dimension, institutions such as the Chicago community policing program operate through a kind of problem-solving deliberation in which citizens engage in a searching discussion of alternative strategies, settle on those that seem most promising, and compose beat plans or neighborhood action plans that render those strategies into sublocal policy. Finally, on the dimension of influence and authority, these community policing reforms shift substantial authority to the citizens who participate. This sort of empowerment is important because citizens may be reluctant to make the required sacrifices of time and energy unless they



are confident that their deliberations will be translated into action. Furthermore, deliberation and action are so deeply intertwined in these processes that merely advisory deliberations would be ineffective. For example, residents in community policing deliberations often try one strategy, observe its effects, learn from success or failure, and shift course. These three institutional design characteristics—lay stakeholder participants who deliberate about how best to solve public problems and are empowered to act—mark a substantial shift from traditional policing in which expert administrators address crime and disorder through technical procedures and possess direct authority to act on their decisions.

## Conclusion

Citizens can be the shock troops of democracy. Properly deployed, their local knowledge, wisdom, commitment, authority, even rectitude can address wicked failures of legitimacy, justice, and effectiveness in representative and bureaucratic institutions. The contemporary ways in which citizens make these contributions, however, assume neither the forms, purposes, nor rationales of classical participatory democracy. These accounts fail to capture what is most attractive about the cases (and many others besides) described here. Their appeal does not lie primarily in shifting sovereignty from politicians and other political professionals to a mass of deliberating citizens (Pitkin and Shumer 1982). Less still does their attractiveness reside in their potential to educate, socialize, train, or otherwise render the mass of citizens fit for democracy. Instead, these cases mobilize citizens to address pressing deficits in more conventional, less participatory governance arrangements.

Reaping—indeed, perceiving—these pragmatic benefits for democracy, however, requires a footloose analytic approach that jettisons preconceptions about what participatory democracy should look like and what it should do in favor of a searching examination of the actual forms and contributions of participation. Toward that end, I have offered a framework for thinking about the major design variations in contemporary participatory institutions. I have argued that participation serves three particularly important democratic values: legitimacy, justice, and the effectiveness of public action. Furthermore, no single participatory design is suited to serving all three values simultaneously; particular designs are suited to specific objectives. I have attempted to identify the distinct regions of the democracy cube that are suited to advancing each of these. The reasoning in that difficult stage of the analysis proceeded inductively. I identified actual participatory mechanisms that advanced each of these values, traced the institutional design characteristics that enabled them to do so, and mapped these characteristics onto the institutional design space. Far from unfeasible or obsolete, direct participation should figure prominently in contemporary democratic gover-

nance. Specifying and crafting appropriate roles for participation, however, demands forward-looking empirical sensitivity and theoretical imagination.

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## Notes

1. I use the phrase *citizen participation* throughout this article. By *citizens*, I do not mean to indicate individuals who possess the legal status of formal citizenship but rather individuals who possess the political standing to exercise voice or give consent over public decisions that oblige or affect them. Therefore, undocumented immigrants whose children attend public schools are citizens in this sense because they can make claims over the ways in which schools treat their children, just as native-born American parents can make such claims.
2. For those who count, the Social Science Citation Index lists 491 works citing Arnstein's piece, compared for example to 131 works that cite Benjamin Barber's *Strong Democracy* (1984).
3. Many have offered intrinsic reasons to favor greater public participation in politics. This article does not assess those reasons but instead relies on the instrumental consequences of participation for democratic governance.
4. Similar participatory and deliberative governance reforms have also emerged in diverse policy areas such as primary and secondary education, environmental regulation, local economic development, neighborhood planning, and natural resource management (Sabel, Fung, and Karkkainen 2000; Weber 2003).

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