

Bringing Participation into Governance

A Way to Combat Poverty and Inequality?

A Minor Field Study of a Participatory Program in Brazil

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Abstract

Today there are various views on how democracies can be advanced. Bringing participation into decision making processes has been suggested as one method. It is believed that it can give rise to better government, better decisions and better citizens – but its positive effects will depend heavily on the cultural and local context. Opening up the public sphere for participation is never a simple matter. By using the approach called Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) a local participatory program in Porto Alegre, Brazil has been evaluated. The purpose has been to see if it has succeeded in producing the positive effects that participation is argued to give rise to and to see what obstacles were encountered. The results have been multifaceted. The program had a solid structure and it succeeded in bringing disadvantaged groups into the decision making process. The participants developed new skills and competences. On the other hand, the lack of commitment from the government and the lack of resources were obstacles that negatively affected the outcome. The promise of effectiveness was not fully obtained.

Keywords: Participatory Democracy, Social Justice, Governance, Brazil, Local Engagement

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1 Introduction

The introduction of liberal democracy in nation-states has, at least from a Western perspective, been considered a positive goal to strive for. However, the ongoing discussion – both in the Northern and the Southern Hemispheres – seems to have entered into a new stage that has revealed democracy as a political system in crisis. All around the world we are faced by various types of democratic deficits, which are calling the very strength and meaning of democracy into question (Gaventa 2006:8). In the North the main concern has been the declining patterns of political participation, and the takeover of political processes by special interests and experts (Gaventa 2006:9). In the South, countries have come to enjoy economic growth and secure democratic elections but, on the other hand, have continued to face increasing social inequalities and governments that are characterized by patronage, corruption and lack of accountability.

The recent search for the improvement of democratic rule has brought the topic of the engagement of the common citizen in governance to the agenda of development and democratization. The approaches of participatory democracy have therefore grown in their attractiveness. There seems to be an increasing belief in the possibilities of bringing participation into governance. The implementation of participatory democracy is, however, never a simple matter. Its success depends much on the local context and its pre-conditions (Gaventa 2006:15). Consequently, this highlights the need for further empirical examination of participatory solutions.

This thesis presents a field study about a participatory program in the context of the Brazilian city Porto Alegre. The program has been evaluated with the help of an approach called Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG). The intention has been to contribute to a deeper understanding of the possibilities and obstacles that an implementation of a participatory project can signify. Brazil has been known for bringing participation into decision making processes. One of its most known projects is probably the participatory budget, which also had its biggest success in the city Porto Alegre. It could therefore be argued that the pre-conditions for creating another successful participatory project already exist, which consequently should bring positive to this thesis.

Hopefully this thesis can give some important insights into how a participatory program can become successfully implemented, especially for people fighting poverty and inequality.

1.1 Statement of Purpose

There seems to be an increased belief that bringing participation into governance is a way to respond to the problems of today's democracies. It is argued that opening up the public sphere for broad participation can give rise to better citizens, better decisions and better government. How this potential is translated into actual changes in governance is however, dependent on a range of factors. Opening up the public sphere for participation is never a simple matter. Much depends on the cultural and political context. Consequently, this highlights the need to test the positive assumptions of participation to empirical references (Cornwall and Coelho 2007).

Fome Zero is a national program that was introduced in Brazil in 2003. The purpose of the program has been to combat hunger with the engagement of the Brazilian society. However, it is still a matter of debate whether this joint work has been implemented appropriately, especially whether we are to expect participation to advance effectiveness and social justice.

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine if participation in the program implemented in the local politics of Porto Alegre has been successful from the perspective of EPG. The intention has also been to highlight those obstacles that the implementation of a program characterized by participation may involve when put into real action.

The following questions are raised:

- *Has the local program in Porto Alegre succeeded in producing the positive effects of participation, as suggested by the EPG approach?*
- *What obstacles has the implementation of the program encountered?*
- *What lessons can be drawn from the program?*

My intention has been to raise questions concerning the idea of bringing participation into state funded programs. I argue that participation may only help democracy to evolve, if it is introduced in an appropriate way.

1.2 Methodology

This paper is based on a two month fieldwork conducted between June and July 2008, in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The methodology for this research took the form of a qualitative case study based mainly on observations and interviews.

The interviews were of a semi-structured character; with questions specified and the opportunity for participants to further elaborate their answers (May 2001:150). The intention with having this form of interview was to make people talk more freely and not to obtain prepared answers (Essaiason et al 2003:279).

Since the study was to a great extent about people's experiences concerning participation I found this method to be the most appropriate. By using this kind of method I hoped to get closer to their real experiences regarding participation.

The research questions were modified during the fieldwork. An interview guide that laid down the framework for the research questions was, however, kept during the whole study (see appendix 1).

To be able to give a comprehensive picture of how participation may be a way to advance democracies a qualitative case study seemed to be an appropriate research form. Although, the qualitative method can be criticized for being too subjective, it may give a deeper understanding and a more comprehensive picture of the participatory program examined (Essaiason et al 2003:233). As compared to i.e. an opinion survey or an experiment, the qualitative research method gives the possibility to come closer to the action as it was understood by the actors themselves, which also has been the purpose of this thesis (Feagin et al 1991:8).

The purpose has not been to generalize the results generated by this thesis. My intension has been to contribute to a deeper understanding of the possibilities and boundaries of involving people in governmental programs. Hopefully it can give some important insights into how a participatory program can be implemented successfully.

The persons taking part in the study were chosen through snowball sampling (Essaiasson et al 2003:212). Persons taking part from the beginning of the program were prioritized since they were endowed with more experience. All the persons partaking in the thesis were promised anonymity in order to allow them to talk more openly about their opinions and experiences.

Twelve interviews were conducted, mainly with representatives from civil society. Both local leaders, representatives from the executive coordination and partners to the program were contacted. All the interviews were conducted in Portuguese. Portuguese is not my first language, which may have restricted the possibility of making the questions flexible. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. It should be mentioned that a native speaking Brazilian helped in the transcription procedure and hopefully decreased the occurrence of misunderstandings. Unfortunately, the study only involved two representatives from the city government, who were both nutritionists taking part in the program. According to my interviews there were no politicians partaking in the program, which may explain the absence of their participation. Another obstacle in the field study was the time spectrum. Conclusions from the observations made from the plenary sessions should therefore be treated with some caution. However, they still give some insight into the participants and their behavior.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Participatory Democracy

The idea of having participatory democracy is not a new phenomenon. Already during the 60's the word participation became part of the popular political vocabulary (Pateman 1970:1). Today, most democracies in the world are a reflection of the liberal representative model. This model stresses the importance of getting the institutions and procedures of democracy right. It is especially measured through competitive multiparty electoral processes where the citizens are somewhat passive (Gaventa 2007:xii). Theories concerning participatory democracy can be seen as somewhat contrary to this idea.

Two of the most known philosophers supporting the idea of participation are Rousseau and Mill. One of their main arguments for participation is that it has an educative effect on its participants (Pateman 1970:31). By opening up decision making processes the individual gets the chance to learn about democracy and understand that he has to take into account wider matters than his own immediate private interest if he is to gain cooperation from the others. Additionally, this is argued to give rise to fairer decisions. This is due to the fact that the individuals are forced to deliberate to their sense of justice since the other participants may always resist the implementation of an inequitable demand (Pateman 1970:25).

The idea of citizen exercising direct control over decisions is still a discussion that exists today. Even the one who supports the idea of participatory democracy must know that there are a great variety of competing views within this approach. Its sub-approaches hold different views on the best way to achieve more substantive and participatory forms of democracy, particularly in a way that improves the life of the people facing poverty, inequality and who are relatively powerless (Gaventa 2007:xiii). The Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) is one of the sub schools that has recently been developed by Archon Fung and Eric Olin Wright (2003). This approach has sought to link strands from various sub schools that makes part in the family of participatory democracy (Gaventa 2007:19).

Due to its comprehensive design and its various links to the different sub schools I found it to be the most appropriate sub approach to use for the investigation of a participatory project.

2.2 Empowered Participatory Governance

Fung and Wright explain EPG models as being *participatory* because they rely upon the commitment and capacities of ordinary people to make sensible decisions through reasoned deliberation and *empowered* participation because they attempt to tie action to discussion. Thus, EPG presses the values of participation, deliberation and empowerment (Fung and Wright 2003:5). Many of its normative commitments come from analyses of practices and values of communication, public justification and deliberation. Further on, it supports the family of scholarship that views civic life and non-governmental organizations as possible contribution to democracy (Fung and Wright 2003:15).

The EPG approach lays out three general principals, which should be present in the effort to make participation effective. There should be (1) a focus on concrete concerns, (2) an involvement of ordinary people affected by these problems and officials close to them and last but not least it should be a (3) deliberative development of solutions to these problems (*ibid*). By focusing the issue on a practical problem it offers a potential retort to widespread doubts about the efficacy of state action. Also the involvement of ordinary citizens may open up new channels for those most directly affected by the targeted problems. This gives them the possibility to contribute with their knowledge that distant and narrowly trained experts do not have. The deliberation mode is supposed to give place to fairer decisions since the people involved are supposed to come to a joint-solution by pure reasoning and not necessarily compete to find maximal advantages. An enabling condition for this is equality of power among the participators. This does not require *absolute* equality in the participants' level of expertise, education and status. The differences that do exist should however, not lead to political inequality (Fung and Wright 2003:ch1, Pateman 1970:22).

It is argued that the advancement of these principles can be done with the help of three specific design properties; Firstly, by the devolution of public decision authority to empowered local units. Secondly, by the creation of formal linkages of responsibilities and communication that connects the different units to each other and to the centralized authorities. Thirdly, by the use and generation of new state institutions to support and guide these centered problem-solving efforts (Fung and Wright 2003:16)

Although, decentralization is important for close cooperation between ordinary citizens and government officials, local units should not operate autonomously. This is due to the fact that links to central offices may reinforce the quality of local democratic deliberation by e.g. coordinating resources and solving problems that local units cannot address by themselves. To transform the mechanism of power into permanently mobilized deliberative democratic forms is difficult, therefore it is also suggested that new institutions should be created to make the transformation more durable and widely accessible (Fung and Wright 2003:ch1).

These three institutional properties together with the three general principles are argued to advance deliberation and participation. They may be desirable in

and of themselves. There are however, also important qualities that they may generate. Effectiveness, equity and broad participation are generally mentioned as important qualities that participation and deliberation may contribute to. These qualities may also be used to evaluate the success of a deliberative participatory project (Fung and Wright 2003:24,30). Consequently, in this next section the three expected qualities – effectiveness, equity and broad participation – together with their own inherent implications will be presented with the intention of making the results obtained discussable and measurable.

2.2.1 Effectiveness

If a participatory experiment cannot advance public ends, it can be questioned whether the involvement of citizens really is an attractive institutional setting to strive for (Fung and Wright 2003:25). Bringing people into the decision-making process is supposed to contribute to the effectiveness of a state. There are several reasons why this is expected to occur. Bringing participation into the decision making process is suggested to establish new channels for those most affected by targeted problems such as ordinary citizens and officials in the field. Their experience and knowledge may offer diverse and more effective solutions than those made by distant and narrowly trained experts. The information the officials gain may improve the quality of policy and public action and thereby bring more effectiveness to the state (Fung 2003:349). The direct participation may also reduce the length of the chain of agency that accompanies political parties. This is argued to contribute to an increased transparency and accountability, which may plug fiscal leaks from patronage payoffs (Fung and Wright 2003:16-17,25).

However, it is important to remember that participation by its own is not a guarantee that policies will be effectively implemented. First of all, if participatory mechanisms are expected to succeed, the civil society should be organized to some extent (Coelho IDS Bulletin 35.2:34, Avritzer 2008:7). Otherwise, they may have difficulties to monitor the implementation and hold responsible parties accountable (Fung and Wright 2003:259-260). This also presupposes that the participatory mechanisms are well established and that the participants are empowered to make use of them (Fung and Wright 2003:31, Ackerman 2003:438, Fung 2003:351). Additionally, the commitment of individual bureaucrats is a crucial factor whether policy change will be successful or not (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001:8). If they are not committed, they will not make an effort for making accountability functions workable and information available. Therefore, it is also important to examine if political authorities inform and explain to their citizens about what they have done and how they can participate. Without receiving relevant information about participation and future decisions participants cannot really be expected to act as empowered citizens, who make their concerns heard (Avritzer and Cambraia 2008:10, Cornwall 2004:3). Yet, we have to pay attention to politicians' ostensible commitment to participatory governance. There is always a risk that politicians adopt the mantle of participation only to appear as champions for the cause of open and

accountable government or for the purpose to create allies and gain votes (Cornwall and Coelho 2007:19).

In sum, it is essential to examine if decisions are translated into real action and if they have resulted in better policies than before (Fung and Wright 2003:31). It is therefore significant to ask if the program has brought any redistributive effects, if people feel they are receiving more qualitative service and if the situation has improved. Furthermore, if the program has resulted in policies put into action the state legitimacy should have increased. What are people's opinions about the state? Do they trust their public officials more than before?

2.2.2 Equity

In addition to making public action more effective, the involvement of ordinary people and especially the inclusion of marginalized groups in deliberative policy making are argued to advance social justice in societies. There are several arguments why this may occur. A classic justification for democratic rule is that a decision is more likely to treat those affected by it fairly when they exercise input (Fung and Wright 2003:34). Additionally, the deliberative mode of decision making is suggested to be a procedure that advances equity and fairness because they result from reasons rather than arbitrary advantages (Fung 2003:344). Deliberation gives the people the possibility to make proposals that are justified and regulated according to the fights of reason rather than money, power and status, which consequently increases the possibility of social justice by giving the possibility of people participating on fairer terms (Fung 2003:344, Fung and Wright 2003:34).

However, there are several implications that one need to take into consideration. One important question to ask is to which degree the decision making process is genuinely deliberative (Fung and Wright 2003:30). There is always a risk that deliberation turns into domination because of the unequal positions of the different parties. Thus, it is important to try to evaluate how genuinely deliberative the actual decision making process is when it is implemented in a real context. In reality, nearly all forms of political participation exhibit participation patterns favoring high-status persons (Fung 2003:342). It is therefore essential to ensure that not necessary those with the best ideas or arguments have ample time to express themselves. For people living in poverty, and for those subject to discrimination and exclusion from mainstream society, entering into a participatory space can be extremely intimidating. The professionals may perceive the way they talk and act as chaotic, or unproductive, which in turn may become a silencing power. Inequalities in power and knowledge, which are embedded in political cultures, therefore pose considerable challenges for creating inclusive deliberative form of decision making (Cornwall and Coelho 2007:13,24). It is thus important to see the profile of whose actually participating. Are they disproportionately wealthy, educated and professional? Are they drawn evenly and representatively from all sections of the population? Perhaps disadvantaged people are even over-represented? (Fung 2003:347). There

are several ways to try to mitigate the natural tendencies toward over-representation of the advantaged. The public officials may, for instance, concentrate their outreach efforts on disadvantaged communities or create structural incentives that make the participatory sphere especially attractive to less well off citizens because they address their particular concerns and empower them to act (Fung 2003:348). The participation should be constructed in a way that, first and foremost, allows those without voice and will to form it (Fung 2003::344). It is important to ask if poor uneducated people are represented and effectively taking part in the core activities of governance. Furthermore, it is interesting to know if directly affected social groups are present and if they are present do they only request information or do they also express opposition to the scheme? Or does the discussion tend to express the opinions of organized social civil society more than those of the social groups that are directly affected? The most common way to ensure good deliberation to be inclusive and equal is by trying to steer the choice of representation. It is argued that the fragmentation and heterogeneity in a society should be reproduced within the policy councils if their legitimacy is to be ensured. It is however important to remember that the criteria and procedures for selections that are established can also influence who gets to speak in the name of a heterogeneous community. Thus, not only the issue of power and access within these decision making spaces need to be addressed, but also the power and access surrounding how decisions are taken about who will participate in the new space (Hayes 2004). An important criterion that is generally mentioned is that representation has to be able to guarantee the presence of organized civil society of groups traditionally excluded from access to public services (Coelho IDS Bulletin 35.2:36). It is important that the representatives from the civil society give way for “new included” groups to take part and not just make place to earlier “excluded” but organized groups that already have links to the state (*ibid*). If new groups are not included a reproduction of old hierarchies may occur and undermine the possible effect of increased social justice. It should be examined if the public officials have opened up the process beyond the already organized civil society organizations. It is essential to ask if also unorganized citizens are involved or if representation is monopolized by groups that already have political ties with public managers. Furthermore, since plural representation is important for the legitimacy we have to ask if representation reflects the diversity of social actors –interests, women, men, poor, etc (Coelho 2007:34,158).

2.2.3 Broad and Deep Participation

Participatory forums may advance the democratic value of a society by engaging ordinary citizens in a sustained and a meaningful way. Following John Stuart Mill’s comment, success of democratic arrangements can be measured in two ways; by the quality of the decision that it produces and by the quality of citizens it produces (Fung and Wright 2003:27). It is expected that many, perhaps most, of the participating individuals develop skills and competencies more easily when those skills are integrated with actual experiences and observable effects. By

opening up additional channels for participation to the conventional avenues of political voice, such as voting and pressure groups, schools of democracy are established, where participants can develop their political and technical capacities (*ibid*). As we know, in national and local elections the massive amounts of information that is sold to the citizens can even make engaged, well-educated citizens throw their hands up in frustration and confusion. When reducing the expertise-based barriers and allowing casual non-professional participants to partake and engage in subjects that they are directly affected by and care deeply for gives the possibility to the creation of more effective and well-implemented decisions. Since citizens have to live with both the good and the poor decisions they tend to develop their capacities and master the information necessary to avoid the poor one (Fung and Wright 2003:28, Fung 2003:350). Thus, a participatory sphere can actually train its citizens and improve the political process (Fung 2003:341). However, there are some crucial points to take into consideration.

Opening new spaces for engagement does not automatically bring enlightened citizens. The way the participants are perceived by the inviting state and also how the citizens identify their role in the policy-process are crucial points for the advancement of people's democratic skills. Only with the people's active participation in provisioning and in policy formulation can democratic skills be developed. It is therefore never enough to let citizens just have a say or passively take part in the delivery of existing programs (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001:4). Citizens have to actively take part in the whole process of policy shaping. Otherwise, participation can easily end up only to serve to keep malpractice and financial mismanagement unchallenged (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001:10), especially if citizens are treated as pure users or consumers who do not really have a choice but to accept the service offered or not (*ibid*). Important is also that the people in question do not look to the state as only a provider and guarantor of rights. If they do, they may experience their own agency as limited by the relations of dependency within which they risk to remain locked as lesser citizens (Cornwall 2004:3). By seeing themselves as actors rather than simply passive beneficiaries, participants may be more able to assert their citizenship through seeking greater accountability and transparency in the decision making process (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001:7).

Additionally, if active participation is to be made possible a pre-condition is that the citizens involved are fully informed about the details of the developed program. Otherwise, it can be hard to expect actors from the civil society to actively partake in the policy work and be allowed to propose items on the agenda of negotiations (Avritzer and Cambraia 2008:10, Cornwall 2004:3).

3 The Local Context

Opening up the public sphere for participation is never a simple matter. Much will depend on the cultural and local context (Cornwall and Coelho 2007). Therefore, it is important to give the reader a quick insight of the local context of Brazil, Porto Alegre before getting to know the program.

Brazil has two main democratic deficits. The first one is social inequality (Coelho 2007:33). By whatever criteria used, Brazil is one of the most unjust societies in the world (Vidal Luna and Klein 2006:209). It is the colored population that is found predominantly in the lower strata. Nevertheless, the general inequality of income by class has remained one of the biggest dividing factors in Brazilian society (Vidal Luna and Klein 2006:224,228). The second major problem has been widespread corruption (Utrikespolitiska institutet 2006,712:11). Although, Porto Alegre is considered to be one of the most developed cities in Brazil, poverty, inequality and corruption have remained. In fact, a third of its population still lives in irregular housing i.e. slums and invaded areas (Baiocchi 2003:48).

From the perspective of participatory democracy the Constitution of 1988 drafted during the re-democratization process marked an important event in Brazil. The Constitution recognized participation as a constitutional right and strengthened the role of city governments, which began to play a central role in the promotion of citizen participation in social policy management. Porto Alegre is also a city well known for its vibrant and strong civil society.

3.1 The Program Fome Zero in Porto Alegre

3.1.1 The Beginning

The program Fome Zero was launched by the federal government of Brazil in 2003, when the PT party (Partido dos Trabalhadores) came into power. The purpose of the program was to combat hunger and work for social inclusion of people exposed to hunger (Website:1 2008/08/01). The same year (2003) the city government of Porto Alegre created its own general secretary consisting of four people with the purpose of introducing the program on a municipal level (Interview 5). The formal launch of the program in Porto Alegre took place on the 8th of April 2003 when the so-called Comitê Gestor was founded (State Doc 1, 2004:6). The Comitê Gestor was an institution created with the mixed

representation of people from both the civil society and the public sphere (State PPS, p5). It is constituted of following entities;

-*Plenary Sessions* that reunite all the people and institutions that are interested in developing the program Fome Zero Porto Alegre. It takes place every Wednesday at 18:30 in a room of one of the buildings of the city government (State Doc 2 2004:4, State Doc 3 2004:3)

-*Executive Coordination*, consisting of 6 to 8 people elected by the representatives of the Comitê Gestor. The representatives are from the civil society and the municipal.

-*Technical groups* with the responsibility of different themes inside the program.

-*Regional Committees* with the purpose to stimulate and organize the program in its various regions of the city. They articulate the work of the local nucleuses. The representatives are from the nucleuses and regional organs.

-*Nucleuses*, which are created with the purpose to represent the necessity and interest of the communities. Every single nucleus unites local associations such as mums' club, churches and regional organs and volunteers (State Doc 3 2004:3-4).

The main goal of the program is the inclusion of children age 0-6 years old found in malnutrition (State Doc 4 2004:3). The idea of the program was to create nucleuses in all the 16 regions of the city, where communitarian kitchens accompanied with kitchen-gardens were to be installed with the purpose to serve the families that would take part in courses providing work qualification and income (Interview 5, State PPS). The local nucleuses and their partners would have the responsibility to identify the families with children in malnutrition, organize the delivery of the food supply, give proposals to the program and collaborate in the realization of offered courses (State Doc 2004:8). The health stations would then make regular diagnostics of the children's health situation.

The mobilization of women from the lower class was a priority. Both the leaders of the nucleuses and the families taking part in the program were therefore to great extent women (State Doc 2 2004:6, Plenary Sessions). The program also included groups such as homeless people, *papeleiros* and *recicladores* (people gathering garbage for a living) and people with diseases such as aids and tuberculosis (State Doc 4 2004:5, Observations).

During the two first years the Municipal of Porto Alegre established two conventions with the federal government of Brazil for the realization of 24 communitarian kitchens and kitchen-gardens (State Doc 2 2004:4).

By the end of 2004 five communitarian kitchens had been installed. Furthermore, 19 protocols had been signed with the intention of further installment of communitarian kitchens. The program received a donation of 100 tonnes of food in 2003 and 200 tonnes in 2004, which reveals a great interest and support from the private sector (State PPS).

3.1.2 Changes and election in 2004

Ever since the party PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores) was formed it has worked for the implementation of radical forms of participatory democracy (Vidal Luna and Klein 2006:29). The PT is a left oriented party that has always had a strong support in Porto Alegre, where they have won the last elections of 1988, 1992, 1996, 1998, 2002 until recently, when they lost the election of 2004 (Fung and Wright 2003:11). The new city government that gained control was a center-right coalition, led by the party PPS (Partido Popular Social). This has had a great influence on the recent development of the program.

One of the main reforms that the new city government conducted was the installment of COSANS (Coordenadoria de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional Sustentável) in 2005. The new institution is responsible for the articulation and implementation of the program Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional Sustentável (SANS) in Porto Alegre (State Folder, COSANS). According to the city government the program is not Fome Zero anymore, although the program has adopted some strategies from the former program (Interview 2). However, according to my observations the basic idea of the program had not changed. The plenary sessions, the nucleuses and the idea of having courses parallel with communitarian kitchens and kitchen-gardens were still the main idea of the program. Today there are about 30 to 33 nucleuses but only a few communitarian kitchens and kitchen-gardens seem to work fairly (Observations, Zero Hora 2008/06/11:46, Interview 5).

The latest development took place recently when the municipal council passed a law (Lei Complementar No 577, de 16 de outubro de 2007) in Porto Alegre. The law is supposed to guarantee the permanency of the program SANS. The law was elaborated together with representatives from the civil society and laid down the structure and goals of the program, which in my opinion to great extent reflected the earlier program Fome Zero in Porto Alegre.

Still, in the interviews, several representatives from the civil society criticized the work of the city government. It was argued that the program has been suffering great difficulties since the 2004 election (Interview 1,5,6,7,9,10,12).

3.1.3 “Where is the food?” The Discussion Today

Where is the food? The main concern that was mentioned by representatives from the nucleuses taking part in the interviews was that the food supply did not come regularly anymore (Interview 1,5,6,9,10). Furthermore, the promise of having communitarian kitchens and kitchen-gardens installed in every region had not been realized in many communities (Observations, Zero Hora 2008/06/11). The obstacle of installing more kitchens and gardens was argued to be the lack of space in the communities (Zero Hora 2008/06/11, Interview 1,6). The main reason of the diminishing food supply, however, seemed to be the withdrawal of donations from the private sector. Today there are few private partners still

supporting the program as compared to 2003 when there were 34 corporation and companies donating to the program (Zero Hora 2008/06/11).

The question is why there are not any more donations coming to the program and why a majority of the representatives from the civil society taking part in the program are unsatisfied with the work of the city government (Interview 1,4,5,6,7,9). Nobody really had an answer, but there were various speculations why the donations dropped and why the program technically seemed to have stopped. One explanation given was that the program Fome Zero was only strong in its launching when it was accompanied with strong marketing, which in turn had called the attention of many private donators (Interview 3,4). The program had also become strongly associated with the party PT itself, which may have had called the attention of companies that were rather supporters of the party than the program itself (Interview 12,3,4). Consequently, when the PT lost the election the donations diminished.

The majority, however, believed that the most important reason why the program was suffering today was because of political differences (Interview 1,4,5,6,9,11,12). One suggestion was that the federal government (PT) did not want to collaborate with the new city government because of differing ideology (Interview 11). Another explanation given was that it was the city government that really did not see the purpose of supporting a program that an anterior party had released. In the interviews conducted, the work of the city government was highly criticized by several representatives from the civil society. It was argued that there was a lack of commitment from municipal level. As for instance when the new city government entered it withdraw the room that was devoted for the plenary sessions, and the meetings were reduced from taking place every week to every second week (Observation, Interview 1,5,6,12).

It is hard to say who is cutting off whose legs. The important conclusion is that the political dividends are a factor that seems to have had a great influence on the development of the program(s).

3.1.4 The EPG's three Institutional Properties and Principals

As earlier mentioned, it is important to ask if the three institutional properties together with the three principals suggested by the EPG model (see p 5) are present in the program of Porto Alegre. My conclusion is that they are present. Malnutrition can be considered to be a concrete concern (1). It can easily be treated with the help of healthy food and sufficient purchasing power. Further on, the involvement of the city government and associations from the vulnerable areas can be considered to fulfill principle number two, which is the involvement of ordinary people and local officials close to them (2). The third principle, which should be present, is the deliberative development of solutions to the problems (3). Although, we still do not know how genuinely deliberative the decision making process has been, the idea of having open plenary sessions can be considered to be a way to support a deliberative process. The plenary sessions give people interested in developing the program the possibility to take part and

discuss the matters without any formal restrictions. The three institutional properties suggested by the EPG model also seem to be present. The first institutional property is as mentioned earlier the devolution of public decision authority to empowered local units. With the involvement and creation of nucleuses the city government seemed to have had this intention in their mind. Further on, it is suggested that formal linkages of responsibilities and communication that connects the different units to each other and to the centralized authorities should be present. It is hard to know exactly the relationship between the federal government and the city government of Porto Alegre. However, Fome Zero is a national program that was launched on a federal level, which in turn also means that the local program in Porto Alegre actually makes part of a bigger joint program that takes place on a national level (Website:2 2008/08/04). It is also mentioned in my interviews that the federal government is supposed to send a certain amount to FASC, which is the local office in Porto Alegre responsible for the social programs in the city (including SANS). This confirms the presence of some kind of existing communication between the central and the local authority. The third institutional property that is suggested by the EPG model is the generation and use of new state institutions with the purpose to support and make these problem-solving efforts more durable and widely accessible. The establishment of COSANS and the creation of a law passed recently concerning the structure and idea of the program, confirm the existence of new institutions and the intention of making the program permanent. The three properties and principles are present, but we still have to examine if the expected qualities of effectiveness, equity and broad participation have been generated by the program(s). This has been done with the help of the results gained from the interviews and observations made during the field study.

4 Results from the Interviews

4.1 Effectiveness; Distrust and Lack of Resources

Bringing people into the decision making process is supposed to contribute to the effectiveness of a state (Fung and Wright 2003:25). The situation of the program in Porto Alegre has not reflected an effective solution. The program has not been translated fully into real action and has not resulted in policies that have satisfied the communities (Interview 1,4,5,6,9,10). People are still hungry. Bringing participation into the decision making process is suggested to establish new channels for those most affected by targeted problems such as ordinary citizens and officials in the field (Fung 2003:349). In my opinion the involvement of the local associations was actually a way to open up new channels for those most affected by malnutrition. This is because the involvement of citizens from the regions was from the beginning an important link to gain knowledge about the people living in the communities. As various leaders from the nucleuses explained, they had made visits in order to create an official register with the families that would be included in the program (Interview 1,5,6,10). Local people living in vulnerable areas will always have a greater possibility to move around and find the families living in need. Yet, one person from the city government claimed that the nucleuses did not always have enough knowledge about their community. Another one told me that sometimes they did get important feedback and sometimes not, it all depended on the community itself (Interview 2,3). Furthermore, by being the once responsible for the distribution of the food and (lot of times) being the ones responsible for the courses, the local associations had a bigger chance to create transparency and accountability in a political system that usually is characterized by patronage and clientelism (Fung and Wright 2003:16-17,25). Thus, in my opinion the local nucleuses still were an important channel in the implementation of the program. However, despite the involvement of nucleuses the program has not had success in bringing satisfying results. One could claim that the participating associations were not organized enough, which consequently would have made it hard for them to monitor the implementation and hold responsible parties accountable (Fung and Wright 2003:259-260). The associations taking part in the program reflected a heterogeneous picture. According to my observations the nucleuses were usually not the well-recognized associations that we are used to in the west (such as the Red Cross and Amnesty International). Nevertheless, the ones that were similar to the western structure seemed to have had a bigger chance to make parts of the program workable. As

for instance, one association that I visited had a fairly working communitarian kitchen and was an organization that is recognized as being politically strong and which additionally makes part of a strong network (State Doc 4 2004:15). The other communitarian kitchen that I visited was installed not that long ago, which makes it hard to know what the results will be. Still, they too seemed to have been a strong association because of their resources (from foreign donors) and their comprehensive work with various courses and activities. The third one, which had a communitarian kitchen and kitchen-garden installed, had private partners still contributing to the program. Consequently, the possibility of reaching satisfying results seemed to have been greater when the organizations were well organized in the sense of being independent from the program Fome Zero/SANS. But then again, it is not being a close cooperation between the government and the civil society anymore. A person I interviewed, who took part in the organization of one community, which did not develop at the moment, was pointing at the problem of an unprepared community. "Unprepared" in the sense that they were not organized enough to be able to take the responsibility of maintaining a communitarian kitchen (Interview 8). He argued that the community needed accompaniment and support to learn to be able to work independently (Interview 4).

As it seems today people are unsatisfied with the situation. Especially, at the plenary sessions you could see the anger and deprivation in the faces of people, when nobody was there to give the answer to the problems raised (Plenary Sessions, Interviews). This also implies that the state legitimacy had not been improved as one could have expected from a successful participatory project. Furthermore, a crucial factor that will have a great effect on the success of policy change is the commitment of individual bureaucrats. If they are not committed they will not make an effort for making accountability functions workable and information available (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001:8). In a lot of my interviews, people really did not know why donors did not want to donate anymore and why the program seemed to have got on hold. Consequently, it can be questioned if the government really had given sufficient information about the situation and if it was because of missing commitment. During my visit in Brazil I also took part in three plenary sessions, whereas two of the three times there were no representatives from the city government. This makes the commitment of the government doubtful too. However, it has to be remembered that my visit took place during the preparation for the new election, which may have made the situation extraordinary. A lack of commitment also revealed itself when taking into account that the plenary sessions now only took place two times a month and that the room that was devoted for the program was removed (Observation, Interview 1,5,6,12). One person taking part in the Comitê Gestor also claimed that in the first years there were 42 people from different secretaries of the city government with time disposed to the program as compared to today when the nutritionists were the only ones actively working with the program, as a part of the institution called COSANS (Interview 5). At the same time, the law that was created considering the program still shows a will of making the idea of *segurança alimentar*/food security permanent. The question is though if the lack of resources

may go hand in hand with a lack of commitment, when the nucleuses feel they do not get enough support in their work of getting new donators and responds to their questions (Interview 1,5 6,7,9).

In sum, the effectiveness of the program has been lagging behind and the problems and the discussion concerning the absent of resources (whatever reason for the absence) have been affecting the possible democratic success of the program.

4.2 Equity; Local Leaders and the Plenary Sessions

During my time spent in Brazil, I had the chance to visit three plenary sessions, where I evaluated the profile and the interaction of the people present. As mentioned earlier social justice can be advanced by the involvement and especially by the inclusion of marginalized groups in deliberative-policy making (Fung and Wright 2003:34). To be able to know to what extent the program have advanced social justice we have to know the profile of the people taking part and evaluate how genuinely deliberative the policy making process has been.

At the plenary sessions there were about 20 to 25 people present. There was a higher representation of women in their middle age. This is not that surprising considering the fact that women were prioritized in the recruitment process (State Doc 2 2004:6). According to my observations, the majority of the people present at the plenary sessions were also colored population from the lower strata. Both women and colored people from the lower class are groups that I would classify as marginalized groups in today's mainstream society. As mentioned earlier the entrance into a participatory space can be extremely intimidating for people living in poverty since professionals may perceive the way they talk and act as chaotic, which may become a silencing power (Cornwall and Coelho 2007:13,24). This was not the case at the plenary sessions. Although, the nutritionists may be seen as well educated professionals, the local leaders from the nucleuses did not seem to be shy of expressing their opinion and interact in the session (Observations 08jun/jul). Furthermore, to be able to see how genuinely deliberative the discussion has been it is important to analyze if the ordinary people taking part only do request information or if they also express opposition to the scheme. It is true that the local leaders were requesting information for the purpose to understand why the food supply had stopped coming and to understand the future of the program. However, there was also a lot of criticism that was expressed, which in a way is to express opposition to the scheme. At least it expresses an opposition to the situation they were in (Observations 08jun/jul).

It is also important to analyze if the discussion tended to express the opinions of organized social civil society rather than the social groups directly affected (Coelho 2007:34). The majority of the people present were actually leaders from the nucleuses. Usually these people are from local associations such as mums' clubs and neighborhood associations (State Doc 3 2004:3-4). They are from the vulnerable areas themselves and they therefore too are a part of the marginalized

groups living in poverty. It is however, important to know that the families they represented did not have the time and possibility to take part in the evening sessions. As one of the persons that I interviewed said;

“The majority of the families do not go to the sessions because they take place during the evening hours and because of the travel expenses” (Interview 1).

Although, these families do not take part in the plenary sessions, it is doubtful if they could have a more legitimate representation than their own local leaders, who have been elected by the very community.

In the question of legitimacy, it is relevant to see how the first representatives of the civil society were chosen. As we know, not only the issue of power and access within decision making spaces need to be addressed but also how decisions were taken about who will participate in the new space (Hayes 2004). One important criterion is that representation has to be able to guarantee the presence of organized civil society of groups traditionally excluded from access to public services (Coelho IDS Bulletin 35.2:36). Looking at the different persons participating from the communities today I would say the government had succeeded in this matter. In the question of being organized, one criterion for creating a nucleus was that the association taking part already had some kind of activity related to the development of the community (State Doc 1 2004:9). As my observations from the plenary sessions and my meetings with local leaders also showed was that they generally were from the lower strata of society. For example, I met two local leaders who had been at one time homeless, who were responsible for projects, a group that in my opinion generally is excluded from access to public services.

It is also essential for the legitimacy of a program that the representation is not monopolized by groups that already have political ties with public managers (Coelho 2007:34,158). The local leaders that I talked to had not expressively taken part in a similar program. Several interviewees told me that they were chosen because of their reputation in the community and not because of party support (Interview 1,6,10,11). In one of the state documents it is also mentioned explicitly that a criterion for creating a nucleus is that it does not have *“conotação partidária”*, political significance (State Doc 1 2004:9). In sum, it does not seem like the representation was only constituted by earlier organized groups that already had links to the state. The occurrence is also reduced by the fact that the communities themselves are supposed to elect their local leaders (Interview 2).

Another important criterion for the legitimacy of the representation is that it reproduces heterogeneity in society (Hayes 2004). Today, there seem to be an overrepresentation of disadvantaged people in the program. In my opinion this unbalance could have been resolved by the involvement of more representatives from the city government, who would have actively taken part in the plenary sessions. On the other hand as Fung puts it, participation should be constructed in a way that first and foremost allow those without voice and will to form it (Fung 2003:344). The program does not reproduce the heterogeneity of a society but it

has been constructed in a way where disadvantaged groups are present, which is an important contributor to reaching fairer decisions (Fung and Wright 2003:34).

4.3 The Participation; Willingness without Guidance

A participatory sphere is argued to train its citizens and improve the political process (Fung 2003:341). Since the field study did only take place during two months it is hard to say anything conclusive concerning the development of the participating individual's skills and competencies. Still, there are some conclusions that I would like to express. According to my own observations the local leaders from the nucleuses seemed to have developed their own technical and political capacity. During two plenary sessions, when only representatives from the civil society were present, they had to organize the meeting by their own, without any guidance from the city government. This in my opinion already showed some kind of democratic competence. I also was impressed by how eager they were to understand the significance of the new law that was handed out during one of the plenary sessions. As for instance I had an interview with a woman from one of the nucleuses who told me:

"...They are launching a new project...Because of this the leaders of the communities are setting a day to sit down and discuss what really this here means. They brought a law..." (Interview 6).

They were eager to try to understand what was going on. They were engaged in the subject and seemed to care deeply about the issue. This should give the possibility to the creation of more effective and well-implemented decisions, since they have to live with both the good and the poor decisions made by the city government (Fung and Wright 2003:28, Fung 2003:250). Another person I talked to, who had been a part of the program from the beginning told me;

"The proper leaders in the beginning compared to how they are to day. It is impressive"(Interview 5).

The local leaders appear to have developed as democratic citizens during their years of involvement. Yet, there are still some considerations to be discussed. First of all, it is important to know the way the participants are perceived by the inviting state and also how the citizens identify their role in the policy process (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001:04). As one of the persons working as a representative from the civil society but also as a representative for one governmental institution told me; the understanding of the purpose of creating communitarian kitchens are much more ample today then it was before. As mentioned earlier the purpose of the kitchen and the garden is not to just give food to people in malnutrition. It is to be combined with courses providing work qualification (Interview 12). The same person also argued that the party that is in

charge of FASC (the institution responsible for social programs) today is a populist party and that its conception is to *give* food and not to combat its structural causes (Interview 12). If this is true, the citizens are treated more as pure users or consumers. This would then diminish the positive effects of participation. Yet from the few visits I did, the idea of the program still seemed to have been more of having courses parallel with the kitchens, which would serve food. It has to be remembered however, that the quality of the offered courses was not evaluated.

The second issue that should be taken into consideration is how the citizens identify their own role in the program (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001:4). As I was talking to various leaders I realized that they often had various responsibilities such as organizing courses, getting volunteers to the kitchens, make the budget cover for expenses such as electricity, pick out the families that would take part in the program etc. It is important that the communities have real responsibilities but on the other hand, they need to have some kind of guidance. As one of the partners to the program told me; there is a need of more support from the city government but without making the local units dependent (Interview 4,8). A lot of the representatives from the civil society felt the need of more support from the city government, especially in the search of donations and in the implementation process (Interview 5,6,7,8,9). This leads us into another important question, about how the people in question perceive the role of the state. They should not see to the state as only a provider and guarantor of rights. If they do, they may experience their own agency as limited by the relations of dependency within which they remain locked as lesser citizens (Cornwall 2004:3). One of the persons that I talked to, who also took part in the beginning of the program, when the first local associations were called to participate, told me that a big problem was the dependency that the people had in their relation to the state. They liked the idea of receiving but did not think of the idea of working to illuminate their needs of tomorrow (Interview 12). Another partner to the program told me that one of the problems in his community was that people was used to only receive. Furthermore, he mentioned that the conception of the communitarian kitchen also was viewed simple as a supply of food, which as we know is not really the idea of the program (Interview 8).

If active participation is to be made possible a pre-condition is that the citizens involved are fully informed about the details of the developed program. Otherwise, it can be hard to expect actors from the civil society to actively take part in the policy work and be allowed to propose items on the agenda of negotiations (Avritzer and Cambraia 2008:10, Cornwall 2004:5) According to my observations there were a lot of times a big confusion about where the program was heading, especially after the introduction of the new law. This could be a sign of the need of more information.

In sum, there seemed to be a strong will among the local leaders to make the program work. They wanted to participate and make a difference. An important partner to the program should be the city government, which can give important guidance to the local leaders, especially if the program is to produce positive

effects such as effectiveness. As it seems today there is a strong will to make the program work but there is still a need of more guidance.

5 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to raise questions concerning the idea of bringing civil participation into state funded programs. I argued that participation can only help democracy to evolve provided that it is introduced in an appropriate way.

The results from the implementation of the participatory program in Brazil have been multifaceted. Parts of the program met with success whereas other parts have lagged behind. Its mixed results did not seem to be caused by an inappropriate introduction. In contrary, the idea of the program and the structure of the program seemed to have been well planned and, in my opinion, held within them a great possibility to become a successful participatory program that would have had the prospect to advance effectiveness, equity and the quality of citizens. The three institutional properties and the three principles suggested by the EPG were present in the program. The creation of local units with the involvement of ordinary people living in vulnerable communities have accounted for many of the program's positive outcomes. It opened up new channels and provided new possibilities for marginalized groups to take part in an issue that concerned them. As philosopher Mill said; the success of democratic arrangements can also be measured by the quality of citizens it produces. As my observations and interviews showed, the local leaders had willingness and eagerness to learn and to partake in the program's implementation. Most importantly they seemed to have grown as human beings.

As the study has shown, opening up participation for ordinary people is never a simple matter. It always depends on the cultural and political context. In this case, the biggest obstacles seemed to have been of a political character, followed by the obstacle of a lack of resources. It is hard to know who to blame the situation on. Is it the city government that did not want to support the program or was it the federal government that did not want to collaborate? I do not have the answers to that, but there seems to have been a lack of commitment from the part of the government. I argue that this has had a great influence on the program. Although, it has to be remembered that it can be hard to hold the same standards of a program when the amount of resources (in this case private donations) have diminished.

The results also showed that perhaps the involvement of not that strong organizations may have been an obstacle to reaching effectiveness. The choice of what sort of organizations should be a part of a participatory program will always be a dilemma in the implementation of a participatory program. Still, I find it more important to take the chance and try to engage new groups that maybe do not have the organizational structure to work perfectly, but that on the other hand

may include new groups that are disadvantaged and marginalized in the mainstream society. As the results showed, local leaders were becoming engaged democratic citizens. I find this to be a very important and positive result of the program. It has to be remembered that it is difficult to bring changes, but not impossible. Changing the minds of people and their attitudes can take time. An important part of the program would have been the guidance that the government could have offered to the people willing to engage and change. A participatory program will always be at its greatest strength when it is fully accompanied both by society and state.

In sum, the program in Porto Alegre has succeeded in producing some of the positive effects suggested by the EPG model. It has educated its participants in becoming democratic citizens and has also given space for marginalized groups to generate fairer decisions. The positive effect of effectiveness was however, limited by the lack of commitment from the part of the government and by diminishing resources.

Participation may advance democracies, but it will always depend on the political and cultural context. There is still a need for testing the positive assumptions of participation to different empirical references. Hopefully this thesis has contributed with some important insights.

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Interviews

Interview 1	Part of the Executive Coordination and Nucleus, 2008/06/20
Interview 2	Nutritionist from COSANS, 2008/06/17
Interview 3	Nutritionist from COSANS, 2008/06/17
Interview 4	Unofficial Partner to the Program, 2008/06/19
Interview 5	Official Partner to the Program and Part of the Executive Coordination 2008/06/25
Interview 6	Local Leader from Nucleus, 2008/06/27
Interview 7	Local Leader from Nucleus, 2008/07/04
Interview 8	Official Partner to the Program and part of Nucleus, 2008/07/09
Interview 9	Local Leader from Nucleus, 2008/07/09
Interview 10	Local Leader from Nucleus, 2008/07/17
Interview 11	Local Leader from Nucleus, 2008/07/11
Interview 12	Former representative of Executive Coordination and Present representative of CONSEA-RS (Conselho de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional Sustentável do RS), 2008/07/21

The Plenary Sessions

26th of June 2008

10th of July 2008

24th of July 2008

7 APPENDIX 1 Interview Guide

1 Effectiveness; depends on;

- a** Action
- b** Monitor and hold responsible
- c** Commitment of Bureaucrats

a,b,c Measure;

- c** Well informed
- c** Accountable functions workable
- c,b** Get response
- b** Able to react?
- b** Sanctions that other agencies may impose?
- a** Redistributive effects?
- a** More qualitative service?
- a** Legitimacy of state?
- a** Situation of malnutrition?
- a** Knowledge helped?

2 Equity; depends on;

- a** Genuinely deliberative
- b** Profile of who participate
- c** Choice of representation
- d** New Groups

a,b,c,d Measure;

- a** Whose voice?
- a** Constructed in a way where people without voice can speak
- a** Effectively taking part request information/opposition to the scheme
- b** Heterogenic
- b** Uneducated, poor represented? Direct/indirect?
- c** Structural incentives that make the participation sphere attractive
- d** Opened up for new groups beyond the already organized civil society
- d** Ties to political managers

3 Broad and Deep Participation, depends on;

- a** State perceive citizens
- b** Citizens identify their role
- c** Active in policy formulation
- d** Citizen perceive state
- e** Informed

a,b,c,d,e Measure

- a** Encouraged to take part?
- a** Consumers? Deliver and Implement

- b What are your responsibilities
- c Community participants have real responsibilities?
- d How pursue relation to the state?
- e Informed?