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Deepening Democracy Through Citizen Participation? A Comparative Analysis of Three Cities

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Abstract:

This paper analyzes local-level participation programs in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Montevideo, Uruguay, and Caracas, Venezuela. The central argument is that three important factors affected the design of the participation program in each city: local government capacity, type of party system, and strength of community organizations. The participation program in Porto Alegre was the most accessible, wide-ranging, and decisive because its City Hall had the most capacity and because the PT faced a divided opposition and a strong community movement. Montevideo's municipal administration had close to the same capacity as Porto Alegre's, but the Frente Amplio encountered fierce opposition from the dominant parties in Uruguay's two-party system and weakly articulated community organizations. In Caracas, the Causa R confronted even greater opposition from Venezuela's dominant parties, weak community organizations, and a municipal administration lacking authority and financial resources.

1. Introduction

Old and new democracies of Latin America began to redesign their political institutions during the 1980s and 1990s. During this transition from the centralized and often authoritarian regimes of the past, the general notions that the governments in the region required more citizen participation and greater decentralization found support from an uncommonly wide ideological spectrum, from leftist political parties and social movements to mainstream international development donors. The World Bank and the UNDP encouraged the adoption of these policies as part of a larger reform of the state. They viewed decentralization and participation as methods of expanding and improving public services, which would in turn help governments gain legitimacy in the eyes of citizens and thus aid in the stability of democracy. The Left, on the other hand, pushed the two policies as part of its general call for “deepening” democracy. Deepening democracy implied democratizing the state by giving citizens more direct participation in deciding public policy and by ensuring that public services reached the entire public.

Ideological nuances notwithstanding, the laws and constitutions written in the 1980s did in fact give local governments more authority and local citizens more potential instruments of participation, though to varying degrees throughout the region.

These changes, particularly the introduction (or reintroduction) of direct elections for mayors in major cities,¹ provided an opportunity to govern for many of those parties on the left that had advocated decentralization and participation. My research concentrates

¹ For example, Uruguay and Brazil reintroduced elections for departmental and municipal mayors of all cities in 1984 and 1985, respectively. Venezuela separated municipal from general elections and allowed voters to directly elect mayors (a post which had not existed previously) and governors in 1989. By 2000, Mexico, Chile, and Argentina had all instituted elections for mayor in their capital cities for the first time.

on three municipal administrations which advanced programs of decentralizing city services and creating channels for citizen input into local government. The administrations were led by: the Workers' Party (PT) in Porto Alegre, Brazil (1989-1992; 1993-1996; 1997-2000; 2001-present); the Broad Front (FA) in Montevideo, Uruguay (1990-1994; 1995-2000; 2000-present); and the Radical Cause (CR) in Libertador, the largest municipality of the metropolitan area of Caracas, Venezuela (1993-1995).² A particularly significant feature of each administration was the introduction of mechanisms for citizens to deliberate over the municipal budget, whereas prior administrations in these cities had made budget decisions behind closed doors and rarely met citizens' needs.

Through the examination of these cases, I seek to answer three fundamental questions. The first two are empirical: How successful were the new institutions in actually attracting and sustaining a large number of citizen participants? What were the effects of the participatory mechanisms on local government transparency and inclusion and on wider civic engagement? The answers to these questions varied in each case. In brief, Porto Alegre experienced a large rise in citizen participation and significant improvements in government, becoming perhaps *the* international reference for participatory governance and exporting its model to dozens of city governments around the world and to several Brazilian state governments as well. In Montevideo, the participatory program was less capable of sustaining a large number of participants but government service delivery improved considerably, earning the program widespread

² Although the PT and the FA remain in local office in Porto Alegre and Montevideo, respectively, I am analyzing the period up until 2000. Thus I use the past tense throughout this paper.

public approval. Finally, the experiment in Caracas neither sustained significant participation nor achieved large advances in terms of local government. These outcomes lead to the third, more analytical question: Why did the participatory experiments succeed in encouraging civic engagement and improving government in some cities but not in others?

This paper is part of a larger project which attempts to answer these questions. I will first lay out a schematic version of the project's general argument and then focus on the initial links in the causal chain. For reasons of space, evidence will be provided only in the sections on these initial links.

The municipal administrations led by the CR, the FA, and the PT all intended to deepen democracy by introducing participatory programs. They did this not only because of their belief in the intrinsic value of participation in local government, but also because they believed such participation would both force the state to become more transparent and inclusive (which I will call "government impartiality") and would stimulate greater participation in other political and social arenas (which I will call "civic engagement") (see Figure 1).³

-----Figure 1 here-----

³ In addition to these two explicit goals, many of the parties' members also assumed that the new channels would help the parties gain new adherents and win re-election, and some believed that they would be embryos of revolution. My project focuses on the explicit goals listed above, but will not ignore these other motives, especially in so far as they hinder the overt objectives.

Yet only Porto Alegre displayed a combination of a large and rising number of program participants, an increase in government impartiality, and an expansion of civic engagement. The Caracas administration, for the most part, achieved none of these three goals. Montevideo lay somewhere between these two extremes, with a moderate but declining level of participation in its program, an increase in government impartiality, and stagnation with regard to civic engagement (see Figure 2). These outcomes suggest that the success of the programs in sustaining participation correlates with the level of wider civic engagement and the degree of government impartiality.⁴ At the same time, they beg the question of what caused the variation in the success of the programs.

-----Figure 2 here-----

I argue that the success of the participatory programs in attracting and sustaining citizen interest depends primarily on the design of the program itself. The design includes three important aspects: 1) Structure, meaning the method of selecting participants and the periodicity of meetings and participants' terms; 2) Range, or the number of significant issues open to participation; and 3) Weight, or the importance the government gives to the participants' input. More citizens participate over time when the structure of participation is more inviting, the range of significant issues over which citizen input is invited is wider, and most importantly, the weight given to that input is greater. Put simply, citizens participate more when their participation is more highly valued. (See Figure 3.)

⁴ To be clear, I am not arguing that the participatory programs in Caracas and Montevideo caused the stagnation of civic engagement in those cities, but that they did nothing to encourage it, as was the case in Porto Alegre.

-----Figure 3 here-----

Yet the design of the programs did not depend solely on the intentions of the local parties in power. The ultimate design depended both on pre-existing conditions and on ongoing political processes. Three factors proved important in this regard: 1) the extent of local government capacity, by which I mean the extent to which municipal authority and resources corresponded to the city's infrastructural and service needs; 2) the strength of community organizations, particularly how interconnected they were with one another and how autonomous they were from political parties; and 3) the type of local party system, especially whether the incumbent party faced united rivals from a two-party dominant system or divided opponents from a multi-party system. The degree of local government capacity set limits on both the range and the weight of the programs, the fierce opposition from the formerly dominant parties in the two-party systems induced further limitations by making the structure of participation less inviting and reducing its weight, and strongly linked and autonomous community organizations negotiated more accessible structures, a wider range of issues, and greater decision-making power for citizens (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 also indicates that the local government capacity and party system variables had indirect as well as direct impacts on the institutional design. Where municipal jurisdiction and budget covered more of the city's needs, the government was better able to respond to the demands made in the participatory program, thus increasing the weight of participation. And in two-party dominant systems, the opposition parties

reacted not only directly against the participatory programs (both within them and in the local legislatures), but made it difficult for the government to make improvements in general by encouraging city workers to strike and by reducing or eliminating funds destined for the city from the higher levels of government where the dominant parties were still in control. This weakened the government's ability to respond to demands from the participatory programs and thus reduced the weight of participation.

----Figure 4 here----

Figure 5 diagrams the whole causal chain which this presentation of the argument has given step by step, moving backwards from civic engagement and government impartiality to capacity, party systems, and community organizations. The rest of this paper will focus on these last three factors, which are the building blocks of my argument. Before comparing the cases along these lines, the next section examines contemporary analyses of participatory programs, which have yet to provide a complete explanation for their successes and failures.

-----Figure 5 here-----

2. Contextualizing and Historicizing Participation

Recent scholarship on local-level participatory programs and state-society cooperation suggests two possible obstacles and one potential facilitator for such endeavors. The first obstacle many scholars have pointed to is the limited resources

available to local governments.⁵ While the magnitude of resources is clearly crucial to the sustainability of participation programs, resources are only important in relation to the problems and responsibilities to which they are applied. We need to place the issue of resources within the larger urban context in which these programs operate. In cities with ample infrastructure and efficient services, new participation programs will likely have difficulty attracting citizens regardless of municipal resources and responsibilities. In cities with serious deficiencies, citizen interest in such programs may be sparked, but to maintain that interest, the municipal government needs both sufficient resources and jurisdictional authority to address the problems. Without equivalent responsibilities, resources may be squandered on issues unrelated to citizens' needs. And without adequate funding, jurisdiction over serious problems undermines government capacity. In either case, participant enthusiasm will quickly fade.

The existence of an urban context that is favorable to participatory programs – one in which resources and responsibilities at least come close to matching needs – largely depends on the degree of national decentralization. National laws determine which competencies pertain to the local level, which taxes local governments may levy, and how revenues are distributed between the different levels of government. In more decentralized countries, municipal governments have jurisdiction over a wide range of services, have greater powers to tax, and receive significant federal government transfers (and thus administer relatively large budgets). In this sense, just as its advocates argue, decentralization facilitates participation. Yet the urban context is not shaped solely by

⁵ See Schönwalder (1998) on two participation programs in Lima, Petersen (1997: 16), for a review of several local programs, and Evans (1996: 1126) on how scarcity of resources hinders state-society collaboration.

the national degree of decentralization. The quality of local infrastructure depends on a variety of factors, some of which are endogenous. And city size, level of development, and administrative capacity to collect taxes and find alternative revenue sources each have a substantial impact on the size of the municipal budget.

A second salient obstacle is the often intense competition among factions in Left parties (Nylén 1996; Schönwalder 1998) and the frequent reluctance of party leaders to cede power to new actors in participatory programs (Borja 1989: 265). The intrusion of internal party wrangling into public forums can drive away potential participants who recoil from party politics and from being pressured publicly to take sides in political debates. This is particularly significant in Latin America, where social organizations frequently criticize political parties for trying to use them to advance party goals rather than respecting their autonomy. Maintaining internal party discipline is crucial for incumbents with participatory agendas, but more important is something which has mostly been overlooked: the reaction to participation programs from the political parties out of office.

Given that such programs may lure important constituencies to the incumbents, we cannot assume that opposition parties will passively accept their arrival. Unlike in many other developing regions, in Latin America party competition at the local level is generally fierce. Competition may be particularly intense in the cases studied here. The newly incumbent parties (PT, FA, and CR) are all union-based parties looking to expand their social bases by increasing their presence among the opposition parties' voters. We should therefore expect that rival parties will resist the introduction of participatory

programs and, if that fails, do everything possible to impede their success. The ferocity of their opposition should increase in accordance with how much they have to lose. Those parties with a long history of local power, usually found in stable, two-party systems, should thus react more forcefully than lesser rivals in multi-party systems. Once again, then, it is important to view the parties within a wider context: the local party systems.

Finally, most scholars of participation concur that the existence community organizations is not only helpful but a requirement of successful programs (Cunill 1991:127; Herzer & Pirez 1991:91; Borja 1989:266). Likewise, state-society theorists generally agree that social capital – trust and solidarity built in local associations – aids good government (Putnam 1993; Evans 1996). Arguing from the perspective of the community organizations, rather than from that of government actors, Schönwalder (1997) sees the potential for co-optation in the Left's new participatory programs. He proposes that in order for such groups to avoid co-optation yet still benefit from the new programs, they should attempt to build ties not only with the party in local office, but with amongst themselves, with other parties, and with state agencies at other levels of government. The importance of such horizontal and vertical linkages has been highlighted by theorists of social capital as well (Woolcock 1998; Evans 1996: 1124-1125). The nature of such linkages largely determines the effectiveness of community organizations in promoting and sustaining local participation programs.

Community organizations that helped develop participatory proposals and that are closely tied to the party in power can be expected to aid the implementation of the

proposals but might not welcome the involvement of other organizations or previously inactive citizens, which endangers the sustainability of new programs. Organizations with strong links to rival parties are unlikely to serve as providers or recruiters of participants for new programs. The leaders of these types of associations may in fact look at participatory programs as threats to their position as conduits of neighborhood demands. On the other hand, some local organizations have a strong spirit of community autonomy and either explicitly reject connections with political parties or strive for balanced party representation in leadership positions and refuse to accept party-made decisions. These last two types of organizations have the most promise for helping to sustain participatory program because they will probably welcome such potentially empowering programs, yet at the same time are unlikely to view themselves as the programs' sole owners and thus attempt to exclude others from participating.

This section has suggested that analysis of participation programs can benefit from examining resources and decentralization from a wider perspective, emphasizing party systems and not just incumbent parties, and studying the prior history of community organizations' internal and external ties. The following sections illustrate these arguments by comparing each of these factors in Caracas, Montevideo and Porto Alegre. The key point is how local government capacity, the type of party system, and the strength of community organizations affected the design of the participation program in each case.

3. Local Government Capacity in Three Cities

Compared to the local governments in Porto Alegre and Montevideo, the Alcaldia in Caracas faced the most severe problems of services while enjoying the least jurisdictional authority and the smallest budget. There are two primary reasons for this. First, Brazil and, surprisingly, Uruguay, are more decentralized than Venezuela. All three countries experienced decentralizing reforms in the late 1980s, but the reforms in Venezuela were much more gradual and tentative, involving incomplete transfers of services and financial resources. Second, Porto Alegre and Montevideo had long histories of reasonably effective urban planning, while the fragmentation of authority in the metropolitan area of Caracas had frustrated planning attempts there.

Figure 6, comparing each city's total budget, shows that receipts in Montevideo and Porto Alegre were generally much larger than in Caracas. In addition, while Caracas' budget shrank over the Causa's first term in office, the budgets of Montevideo and Porto Alegre grew impressively. The budget comparison is not completely fair, because the local government in Caracas provided fewer services than in the other cities. Figure 7 compares the responsibilities of the three city governments. Generally, Brazilian and Uruguayan local governments provide more services than their Venezuelan counterparts. Most importantly, Caracas City Hall lacked jurisdiction over two crucial problems in the city: water shortages and crime. The governments in Montevideo and Porto Alegre, in contrast, had authority over the most significant problems: public lighting and trash collection in Montevideo, and road paving and sewage systems in Porto Alegre. In sum, the administrations in Porto Alegre and Montevideo had jurisdiction

over a wider range of services for which to invite citizen participation and more resources with which to address their relatively smaller problems. This becomes clearer when we examine the cities individually.

Caracas, “La Horrible”:⁶ La Causa R did not take on just any city, but Caracas, a city regularly described as chaotic, ungovernable, indomitable, and, in a 1980 book of interviews with eleven prominent academics, city planners, and politicians, horrible (Buitrago 1980). To be sure, the CR had only been elected to govern the Municipality of Libertador (known as the Alcaldía de Caracas), but this is the largest municipality in the metropolitan area of Caracas (AMC) and home of the largest number of poor people. Occupying the entire western part of the city, Libertador takes up over half the territory of the AMC and holds more than half of its approximately three million inhabitants.⁷ The AMC includes at least five municipalities, one (Libertador) in the Federal District and four in the neighboring state of Miranda (Sucre, Chacao, Baruta and El Hatillo). Five municipal and two state governments, plus two national ministries (Urban Development; Transportation and Communication), several nationally funded organs (Centro Simón Bolívar, Fundacomún, CANTV), metropolitan entities (the Metro and Hidrocapital), and privately contracted companies (Fospuca and Cotécnica) all provide services in Caracas.

⁶ This discussion of Caracas is based on the more detailed account in Goldfrank (forthcoming).

⁷ These calculations are based on the 1990 census and on viewing the metropolitan area as five municipalities. Libertador contains the historical center of Caracas, all the national government buildings, and is known as Caracas City Hall. Of Libertador’s 1.8 million inhabitants, 41.3% live in the unplanned and unregulated neighborhoods (often created through land invasions) known as *barrios*, and this represents over 70% of the metropolitan area’s population living in *barrios* (Fundacomún 1993: 1).

Not only did the Alcaldía of Caracas have little jurisdictional scope, it also had the lowest per capita budget of all the municipalities in the AMC (see Guérón & Manchisi 1996:392). In addition, it faced enormous problems, including high crime rates and extreme water shortages as mentioned, but also insufficient housing, a chaotic and congested transportation system, blackouts, and unmaintained roads and sewerage (Vallmitjana et al. 1993: 87-93; López Maya 1997: 120). An aptly titled 1993 article, “From the Crisis to the Collapse of Public Services in the Metropoli,” reported that 30% of the population of Caracas did not receive water regularly and one million people relied on water trucks (Marcano 1993: 58).⁸

The combination of overwhelming demand for services, inadequate resources, and lack of municipal authority severely limited the CR administration’s ability to design an effective participation program. The parish government program it embarked on attempted to overcome the Alcaldía’s weak capacity by inviting other public organs to take part at the parish level. However, since the other public service providers were not committed to the CR’s participatory project, the parish governments usually could not convince them to pay attention to their requests. This limited the range of issues which citizens could debate in the parish governments. In addition, the municipal government’s nearly empty pockets made it essentially impotent to carry out many of the proposals emanating from the parish governments. Thus the actual decision-making power of citizens through this program was close to non-existent.

⁸ This refers to all of Caracas, not just Libertador.

Montevideo, the Geneva of Latin America?: Until the military coup in Uruguay in 1973, the country (of which Montevideo's residents make up nearly half the total population) was often referred to as the Latin American version of Switzerland, with its relatively tranquil democracy and high standard of living and public services. During Batlle's administrations in the early half of the 1900s, Montevideo began to be a well-planned city. For example, it was the first Latin American city with a sewage system (Rial XX). Nonetheless, by the time the Frente Amplio won municipal office in 1989, economic crisis and governmental neglect had led to the "Latin Americanization" of Montevideo, meaning a decline in services and a rise of poverty, social segregation and informalization of the labor force (Veiga 1989: 299; Aguirre 1993: 92).

The Frente inherited a city that by all accounts was "full of pot-holes, dirty and dark" (Rubino 1991: 6). Compared to Caracas, however, Montevideo's problems were less severe and less costly to resolve. The Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo (City Hall) made special efforts in two areas citizens deemed most troubling – trash collection and public lighting – but neither of these are particularly costly. Local government capacity in Montevideo was enhanced by the fact that the Intendencia had a relatively large number of services to provide and with the corresponding autonomy to raise its own taxes. Central government transfers account for under 5% of Montevideo's budget (Nickson 1995). The Intendencia thus had both the resources and the jurisdiction to provide for many of the most urgent needs of Montevideo's residents. The participation program thus theoretically could provide citizens both wide-ranging and decisionary input. However, Montevideo's Intendencia is one of the nineteen departmental governments in Uruguay's unitary system, and as such, it is subject to national legislation

which regulates local governmental institutions. Uruguayan laws provide that politically-appointed local boards (*juntas locales*) may have some local authority, but does not mention volunteer or elected local councils. The local councils were thus reduced to a consultative rather than decision-making role.⁹

Porto Alegre, Capital of the Quality of Life: In 1996, the PT administration of Porto Alegre proudly pointed out that the city had been named the Brazilian capital with the highest quality of life by *Isto É*, a popular magazine. According to older politicians, Porto Alegre had always been cited in such terms.¹⁰ Indeed, like Montevideo, Porto Alegre had a long history of urban planning. It was Brazil's first city with a *plano diretor* (master plan). This does not mean that Porto Alegre was a problem-free city. During military rule (1964-1985), the city's appointed mayors dedicated the Prefeitura's (City Hall) resources to the middle- and upper-class neighborhoods and to large public works projects such as overpasses and tunnels. Few investments were made in the peripheral areas of the city, such that when the PT arrived in City Hall in 1989, these lower-class areas lacked basic sanitation (sewerage), paved roads, and other services.

The problems facing city administrators were fairly well-matched by the Prefeitura's jurisdictional scope and financial resources. Brazil's 1988 constitution granted municipalities "the more resources and greater fiscal independence than local governments enjoyed in any other nation in Latin America" (Abers 2000: 28). Montero (2000: 65) shows that municipalities nearly doubled their share of tax revenues after the 1988 constitution, and Abers (2000: 76) reports that Porto Alegre's current revenues

⁹ For details of the Montevidean case, see Goldfrank 2002.

¹⁰ Former Porto Alegre mayor, João Dib, told me that the city earned the "capital of the quality of life" moniker each year of his term (1983-1985) (Dib, interview, 4/20/99).

increased by 22% just in the first year after the constitutional change. What makes local government capacity in Porto Alegre stand out compared to Montevideo is the municipality's autonomy, especially its ability to pass its own organic laws, not subject to state or federal approval (see Samuels 2000: 82). Not only, then, did the Prefeitura in Porto Alegre have the jurisdiction and the resources to meet the city's most pressing needs, but it had the autonomy to design participation without interference from other levels of government.

4. Party Systems and Party Reactions

The type of local party system largely determined the force with which opposition parties reacted to the new participatory programs. Caracas and Montevideo both had two-party systems with a tradition of power sharing among politicians, historical patron-client networks in society, and strong partisan identification in the citizenry. The party system in Porto Alegre, in contrast, had no clearly hegemonic, historical parties with strong local organizations, but rather a number of recently created parties that had yet to establish durable links to voters nor stable alliances with one another. These differences meant that when the Causa Radical and Frente Amplio attempted to introduce participatory programs, their opponents had much more to lose than did PT rivals, and many more weapons at their disposal. The reaction of the opposition parties was thus much stronger in Caracas and Montevideo, where it had significant consequences for the design of participation.

Caracas: The centralized, two-party system that characterized Venezuela from the Pact of Punto Fijo until the early 1990s is well-known and well-documented.

Coppedge (1994) goes so far as to call the Venezuelan political system a “partyarchy” to indicate the degree to which political parties, and particularly Acción Democrática (AD) and Copei, dominate the political and social arenas. This domination stretched from the national to the local level, such that the National Executive Committee of AD, for example, even interferes in city council elections (Coppedge 1994: 21-22). AD and Copei used municipal administrations as “paradises of clientelism” (Timmons 1994: 18), rewarding supporters with jobs and material benefits and imposing “clientelist practices in the selection, promotion, and dismissal of staff at all levels” (Nickson 1995: 263). AD, in particular, had strong ties to trade unions, and more importantly here, to the municipal workers’ unions.

In 1989, AD won the first-ever mayoral elections for Caracas City Hall, and when the party lost subsequently to the Causa R in 1992, it attempted to block the CR from taking power (López Maya 1995: 229). When this failed, the opposition parties, and especially AD, launched a “three-year war” against the Causa administration (Muñoz, interview, 12/9/99). Given that presidential elections were due in 1994, none of the parties wanted to see the CR succeed in governing Caracas. AD made it party policy to prevent success for the Causa’s participatory proposal, and Copei’s city councilors consistently voted in line with AD. AD’s representatives on the parish boards obstructed public meetings, its city council members voted against proposals from the parish governments, and AD urged its neighborhood association allies to abstain from participating. Even more importantly, AD-controlled municipal unions sabotaged the Causa administration by destroying computers and city records, stealing municipal property, holding frequent strikes, and taking the mayor to court forty-eight times in a

single year (see Harnecker 1995 and Isturiz 1997). One disgruntled city worker even shot at the Causa mayor, but the Alcaldía had trouble firing any municipal workers because AD controlled the labor courts (Isturiz 1997: 145).

AD's tactics crippled the Causa administration's ability to govern effectively and to respond to demands from the parish governments. Opposition from AD, then, combined with the low capacity mentioned above, meant that participation had little weight in Caracas.

Montevideo: Support for Uruguay's two dominant parties, the Colorado Party and the National Party (known as Blancos), was strongly divided geographically. While the Blancos generally earned more support in the "interior" (the departments outside the capital), the Colorados controlled Montevideo. The Colorados had traditionally used the city government as a resource for offering clientelist exchanges (Sierra & Charbonnier 1993; Benton 1986: 46). In the first local elections following military rule (1985), the Colorados won Montevideo and attempted to resume their previous style of patronage politics (Aguirre 1993: 94). Thus the Colorado Party had the most to lose when the Frente Amplio prevailed in the 1989 mayoral race.

As the Frente mayor took office, opposition city councilors from both the Colorado and National parties began campaigning against the FA's participation program. The Colorados and Blancos took their case against the program to the national parliament, arguing that it was unconstitutional (San Martín 1993: 31-33). In addition to this legislative arena, the FA's opponents consistently condemned the participation program in the (traditionally partisan) press. In over 150 attacks in the media in the first

two years, both the Colorados and Blancos accused the Frente of borrowing tactics from the Soviet KGB and the Cuban Committees for the Defense of the Revolution in order to manipulate citizens with its participatory policy (Sierra & Charbonnier 1993). Finally, the opposition parties also urged their supporters not to participate in the Intendencia's programs.

The persistent aggression from opposition leaders forced the Frente to compromise its original proposal. Whereas initially citizens could voluntarily participate in local deliberative assemblies, the ultimate design of participation gave the average citizen a consultative role and made formal elections part of the structure. A new, politically-appointed organ with decision-making power was added as well, which gave the opposition parties automatic seats at the local level.¹¹ The structure of participation thus became less accessible and average citizens lost decision-making power.

Porto Alegre: Brazil's party system is much newer than that of Uruguay or Venezuela, and Brazilian parties are comparatively weaker, with inconsistent ideologies and alliances, and tenuous ties to supporters.¹² The authoritarian regime's abandoned its own attempt to create a two-party system as a way diluting its opposition at the start of the 1980s. Throughout the decade dozens of parties were created, and no single party or even pair of parties gained hegemony.¹³ In 1987, eleven parties had congressional representation, and by 1991, nineteen parties did (Power 2000: 29).

¹¹ For a complete account of the changes in the participatory program, see Goldfrank 2002.

¹² See Mainwaring 1999 for a history and explanation of the Brazilian party system.

¹³ The PMDB did dominate first elections, winning nearly all governor's races throughout Brazil.

The national situation was reproduced at the local level in Porto Alegre. No party had ever won re-election to the Prefeitura, and eight parties fielded candidates in the 1985 and 1988 municipal elections. In addition, politicians frequently switched parties and electoral alliances among parties constantly changed. In the 1980s, parties also lacked strong ties to unions and community organizations. Most importantly here, the municipal workers' union always had a plurality of parties in its leadership (Pureza, interview, 5/20/99), as did the union of neighborhood associations, known as UAMPA (Fedozzi, interview, 5/12/99).

When the PT began to implement its participatory budget process in Porto Alegre in 1989, then, the opposition parties had little to lose compared to those in Montevideo and Caracas, and lacked the organizational ties to fight against the process. The party with the most to lose, since it was the previous office-holder, was the PDT. Yet many *pedetistas* considered themselves socialists, and the PDT had its own participatory proposals. Thus opposition parties in Porto Alegre either ignored or reacted weakly to the participatory budget process.¹⁴

While party leaders often denounced the PT project in the city council, and the media kept a complete silence with regard to the process, at the base, many low-level neighborhood leaders participated regardless of their party's stance. Asked about the reaction of the opposition to the participatory budget process, a former mayor during the military regime said: "I think there was an accommodation, especially from the PDT. The

¹⁴ All of my interviewees concurred on this point.

PDT let the thing go,... and later they realized. The PTB too. In fact, the only party that always reacted was mine” (Dib, interview, 4/20/99). Thus opposition parties had virtually no affect on the design of the participation program in Porto Alegre, unlike in the other two cities.

5. Community Organizations

The history of community-based organizations in Caracas, Montevideo, and Porto Alegre largely mirrors the general Latin American pattern of a rise of such organizations in the 1970s and early 1980s followed by a decline in their numbers and influence in the late 1980s. Thus, although a considerable number of community organizations existed in each of these cities when the participatory programs were implemented, they had lost their intensity of previous years. Table 1 shows the number of the most numerous type of community organization – neighborhood associations – in each city at about the time programs started. More important than the number of associations are their links to one another and their ties to political parties.

Table 1:

	Caracas (Libertador) 1994	Montevideo 1988	Porto Alegre 1988
Number of			
Associations	427	436	240 (estimate)

Sources: Wikander 1994: 82 (Caracas); González 1995: 39 (Montevideo); Baiocchi 2001: 55 (Porto Alegre)

The community organizations in Porto Alegre had the most autonomy vis-à-vis political parties and the most experience cooperating with one another at the municipal and especially sub-municipal level, where the new programs were concentrated. The majority of such organizations in Caracas, in contrast, had close ties to rival parties, while those in Montevideo were split between the incumbent party and the opposition. Attempts to coordinate among community organizations in these latter cities were either short-lived or under party auspices. In Porto Alegre, then, the most organized regions protested when the administration was slow to respond, and constantly pushed for changes in the participatory budget. Community organizations in Montevideo were timid in comparison, and many of those in Caracas, tied to AD, disrupted participation rather than facilitating it.

Caracas: The neighborhood association movement in Caracas was a key actor pushing for greater decentralization and citizen participation in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁵ Leading the movement was FACUR (Federation of Associations of Urban Communities), a federation based in the middle-class zones of southeastern Caracas. The movement won several victories, such as the separation of municipal from national elections, the creation of the position of mayor, and the direct election of mayors and governors. Yet the very success of the movement led the major political parties to try to penetrate and coopt it. The influence of parties in the neighborhood associations is constantly stressed in the literature and in interviews with local actors. A former president of FACUR (1988-1989), Elías Santana, told me: “The parties were accustomed to penetrating and

¹⁵ See Ellner 1999 and Ramos 1995, among others.

controlling the unions, and they began to make themselves present.... At the beginning of the 1980s, the party that invested most in this was Copei, because it held the presidency. At the end of the 1980s, it was AD, which created a huge national structure to control the neighborhood associations” (Interview 12/23/99).

The CR had its own attempt to stimulate community organizing in the 1970s in Sucre, the largest parish in Libertador. Its movement, Pro-Catia, began to weaken after a split in the Causa in 1983, and had lost force as a movement by the 1990s (Uzcátegui, interview, 1/21/99). Leftists and independents made other attempts to coordinate *barrio* organizations in the 1980s and early 1990s, such as the Assembly of Barrios and the Regional Neighborhood Coordinator, but these generally did not endure for long. By 1993, when the Causa took office, most neighborhood associations were aligned with either AD or Copei. Thus rather than pushing for greater access or more decision-making power in the Causa’s parish government program, many associations ignored it. In more than one parish, the associations openly attacked the mayor. For instance, in La Vega, an unofficially AD-affiliated organization representing 56 neighborhood associations (Freindeco) convened a “popular referendum” against the mayor in 1994 (2001, 3/3/94). In general, the party-penetrated neighborhood associations in Caracas hindered the parish government program instead of working to improve its design.

Montevideo: Community organizations of several types sprung up during the latter half of the military dictatorship (late 1970s and early 1980s) in response to economic hardship and lack of political access. Many of these organizations – soup kitchens, health clinics, food-buying and housing cooperatives, and neighborhood

associations – had organized into coordinating committees by the mid-1980s. However, with the return to democracy in 1985, nearly all these organizations went into decline (with the exception of the federation of housing cooperatives – FUCVAM) as the political parties reasserted themselves and drew off community leaders (Canel 1992: 278-282; Aguirre 1993: 92-93). At their height in 1985, there were 592 active neighborhood associations registered with the Intendencia (Canel 1992: 279); by 1988, 436 remained active (González 1995: 39). Similarly, the coordinating committees had lost member organizations and begun to dissolve by the late 1980s, particularly MOVEMO (which coordinated neighborhood associations) (Canel 1992: 280).

As in Caracas, many of the community organizations had party loyalties. The leaders of FUCVAM, for instance, are mostly members of the Uruguayan Socialist Party (which is part of the Frente Amplio). Two censuses of neighborhood associations by González (in 1988 and 1991) show that their creation and dissolution follows from which party is in local office. The 436 functioning neighborhood associations active in 1988 had declined to 371 by 1991 (González 1995: 39-40). Most importantly here, there was a surge of new associations—136 had been formed since mid-1989 (the year the Frente won office)—and the demise of 257 associations that had formed in the 1985-8 period (when the Colorados held the Intendencia).¹⁶ Generally, then, when the Frente took office in 1990, community organizations were in decline, had some history of coordination around issues (but little territorially-based coordination), and stronger ties to political parties than to one another. When the Frente began implementing its

¹⁶ My calculations from González 1995: 39, 113 and González 1992: 103. My interviewees in Montevideo confirmed this rise of Frente-friendly associations in 1990.

participation program, those organizations aligned with the opposition Colorados and Blancos largely ignored it, and those aligned with the Frente did not make coordinated and powerful efforts to change the design of participation even when they believed the design to be flawed.

Porto Alegre: The state of Rio Grande do Sul and Porto Alegre itself had long histories of territorially-based community organizing. Since the 1950s, there was a state federation of community associations (FRACAB) based in Porto Alegre. In 1983, a separate organization arose to coordinate the neighborhood associations in Porto Alegre alone (UAMPA). Porto Alegre was also the scene of issue-oriented movements in the 1970s and early 1980s, particularly for health and education. In several regions of the city, territorially-based “popular councils” and “unions of associations” had organized by the late 1980s to coordinate both neighborhood associations and the other types of local organizations (such as mothers clubs, cooperatives, and day-care centers). Indeed, seven of the sixteen regions Porto Alegre was divided into had such coordinating organizations by 1989, either fully formed (Partenon, Glória, Norte, Cruzeiro/Cristal) or in an embryonic stage (Leste, Lomba do Pinheiro).

As in the other cities, the late 1980s saw a relative decline in community organizing along with a rise of attempts by parties to insert themselves into and “guide” the organizations. The crucial differences were that many community organizations allowed multiple parties in so that none could dominate, rejected party politics within them, or offered only transitory support. When the PT started the participatory budget process (PB) in 1989, many community organizations were distrustful of it, and only

gradually began to take part. The seven most organized regions pressed for changes in the design of the PB from the very beginning, arguing for such items such as creating sixteen city regions rather than five, dispersing investments rather than concentrating them in a few regions, and adding new budget issues to be discussed. The pressure from the community organizations forced the structure of the PB to be accessible, forced the range of issues debated in the PB to widen constantly, and expanded the decision-making power of the PB participants.

6. Conclusion

This look at the cases may make it appear pre-ordained that Porto Alegre should experience the most success with its participatory program. In fact, however, the three programs started off similarly, with open public assemblies throughout the city to hear people's demands. Yet the few hundred participants in Porto Alegre paled in comparison to the thousands who participated in both Caracas and Montevideo, giving no indication that things would change so dramatically over the next few years as the design of the programs took shape.

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Figure 1

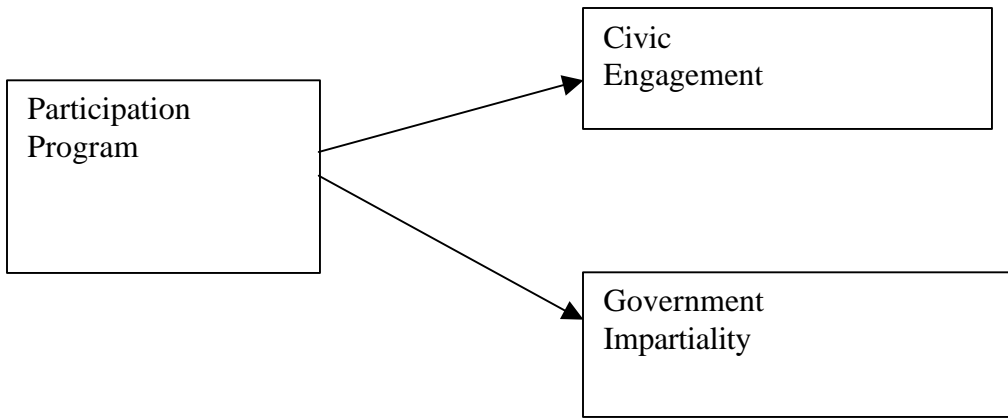


Figure 2

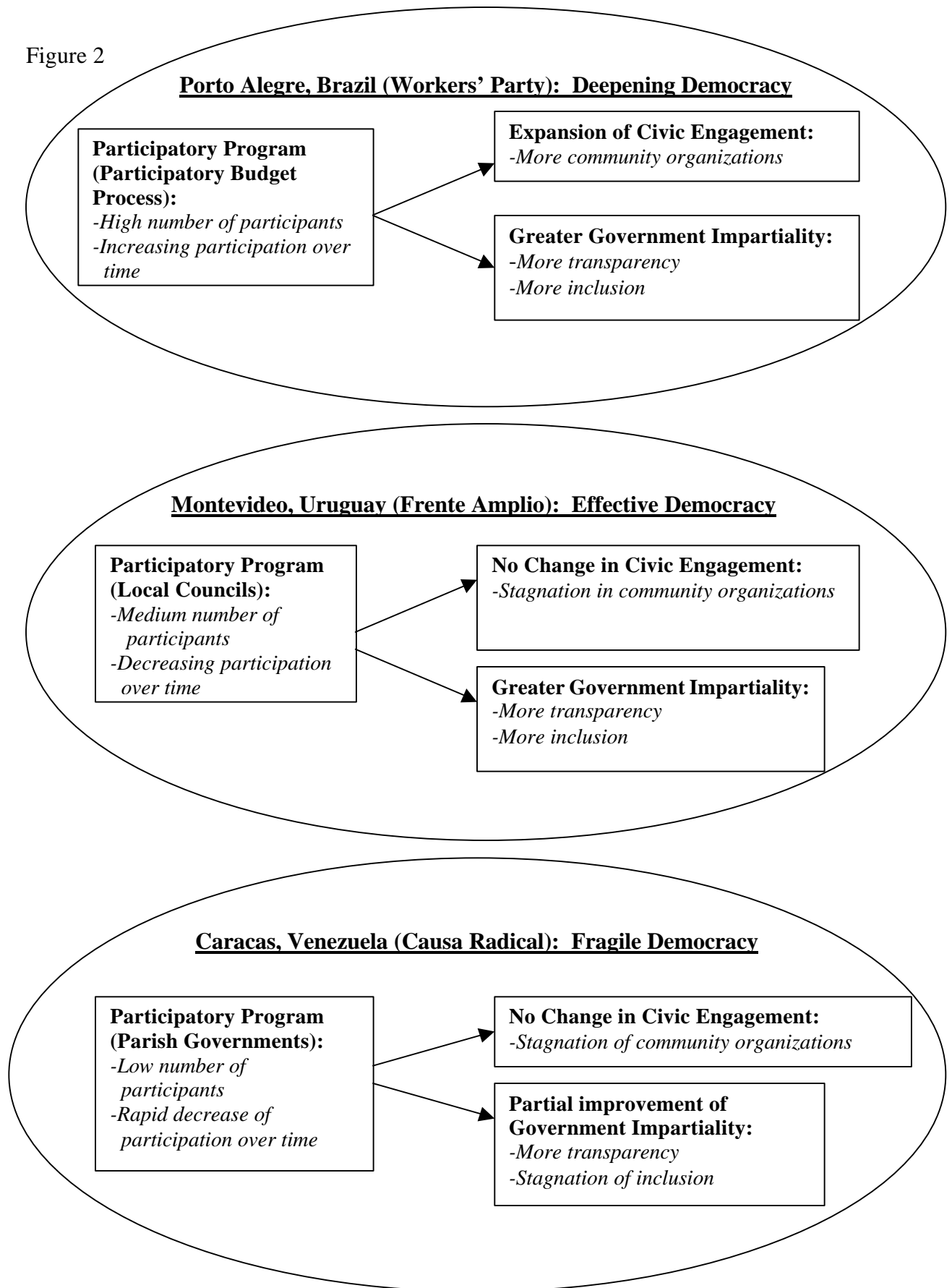


Figure 3

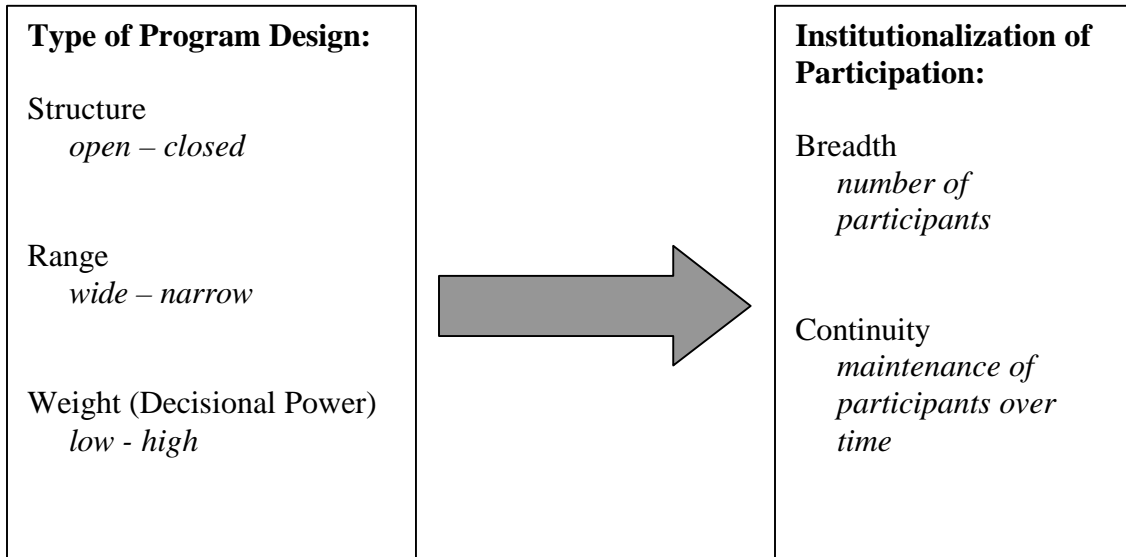


Figure 4

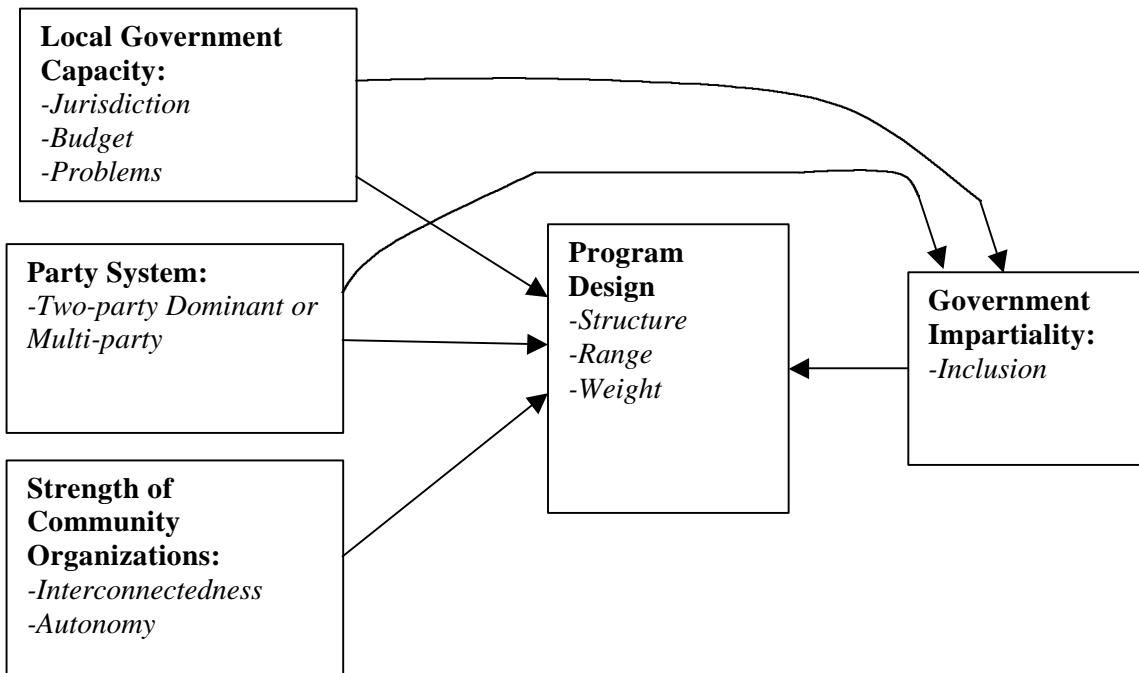


Figure 5:

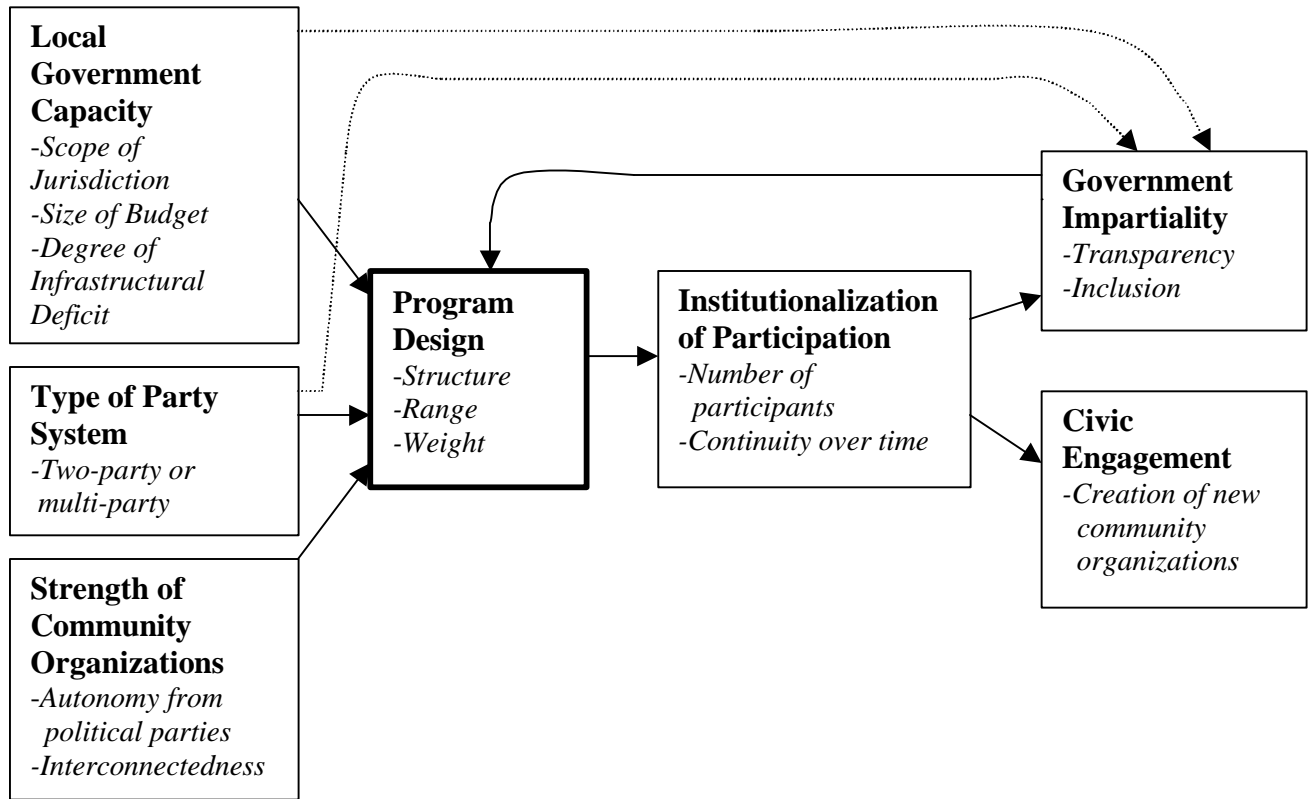


Figure 6: Muncipal Budget Per Capita (First term in office)

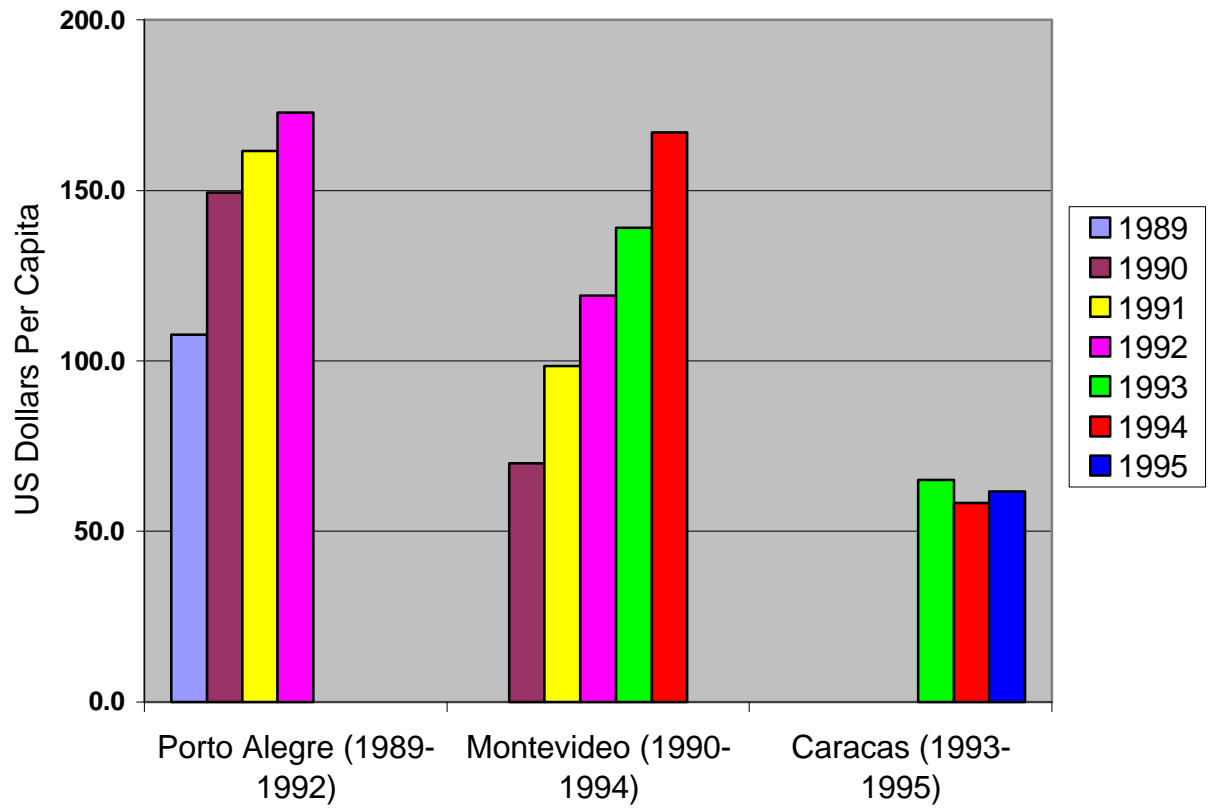


Figure 7: Jurisdiction Over Urban Services

<u>Urban Services:</u>	<u>Porto Alegre*</u>	<u>Montevideo</u>	<u>Caracas</u>
Preschool	4	4	4
Public markets	4	4	4
Land use zoning	4	4	4
Garbage collection	4	4	3
Building inspection	3	4	4
Recreation, sports, parks	3	3	3
Culture	3	3	3
Public transportation	4	4	2
Local road construction	3	4	2
Storm drains	3	3	2
Squatter settlement upgrading	3	4	2
Public housing (maintenance)	3	2	4
Public lighting	3	4	0
Public housing (provision)	3	2	0
Sewage system	3	2	0
Water	3	2	0
Primary health care (clinics)	2	2	1
Tourism	2	2	0
Basic welfare (children/handicap)	2	2	0
Local economic development	2	0	2
Primary education	2	0	1
Industrial & commercial licensing	2	0	2
Food hygiene	0	4	2
Hospitals	2*	0	0
Electricity	0	0	0
Fire Department	0	0	0
Police Department (Crime)	0	0	0
TOTAL SCORE	67	63	45

0 = No municipal role

3 = Mainly municipal role in practice

1 = Municipality plays supplemental role 4 = Municipal responsibility

2 = Responsibility shared with other levels of government

**In Brazil, in theory, all functions are shared with higher levels of government except public transportation, solid waste management, and pre-school education. Porto Alegre assumed complete responsibility of hospitals in 1998.*