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Expanding Accountability Through Participatory Institutions: Mayors, Citizens, and Budgeting in Three Brazilian Municipalities

Brian Wampler

ABSTRACT

As new political institutions provide Brazilians with unprecedented access to policymaking and decisionmaking venues, politicians and activists have undertaken reform efforts to promote institutional arrangements partly designed to expand accountability. The expansion of participatory decisionmaking venues may grant citizens greater authority, but these institutions could also undermine municipal councils' ability to curb the prerogatives of mayors. This article analyzes participatory budgeting in São Paulo, Recife, and Porto Alegre to illustrate that mayors have differing capacities to implement their policy preferences, and this greatly affects how accountability may be extended.

Citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs) play a more prominent role in Latin America's new democratic regimes than under previous democratic experiences. Efforts to promote transparency, accountability, and participation have led citizens, community organizations, social movements, and nongovernmental organizations to demand a more expansive role in decisionmaking venues. Brazil, Latin America's most populous and most decentralized democracy, has witnessed the proliferation of participatory institutions at the municipal level, granting citizens access to decisionmaking venues as well as the right to engage in oversight activities. Participatory institutions, such as participatory budgeting (PB), represent an effort to devolve and broaden decisionmaking venues with the potential to place a check on the prerogatives of mayors.

The functioning of and outcomes from participatory institutions appear to be intimately related to the breadth and intensity of support extended by mayoral administrations. Mayors must be willing to delegate authority to citizens. Likewise, citizens and CSOs interested in the expansion of participatory institutions must work closely with mayoral administrations to ensure that the rules are followed and public policy projects are implemented. The delegation of authority to citizens has the potential to expand accountability at the local level as citizens contribute to policymaking decisions and work on third-party oversight committees. Yet there is also the risk that the insertion of CSOs into

participatory policymaking venues based on their close political connections to elected mayors may subvert the development of “checks and balances.” This article analyzes the opportunities created by participatory institutions to expand accountability and the concurrent intertwining sets of interests among the relevant actors that may actually limit that expansion.

In Brazil, participatory institutions have been implemented at the behest of political strategies promoted by “participatory” or leftist sectors of Brazil’s political and civil societies. These institutions are designed to overcome numerous social and political problems, such as low levels of accountability, inefficiencies in social service provisions, and corruption, all of which hamper efforts to improve the quality of democratic governance. Brazilian democracy is plagued by a “private” state, where most mayors continue to treat their municipal administrations as personal fiefdoms (García Canclini 1995; Leal 1997; Diniz 1982). In many municipalities, the policymaking process is undertaken far from the prying eyes of politicians and civil society organizations. Participatory institutions, their advocates often argue, will make a dent in Brazil’s social and political inequalities by allowing citizens to deliberate in public, negotiate over the distribution of public resources, and hold government officials accountable (Wampler and Avritzer forthcoming).

This article considers Brazil’s best-known participatory experience, participatory budgeting (PB, *orçamento participativo*), in the municipalities of São Paulo, Recife, and Porto Alegre. This innovative institutional format incorporates citizens and municipal administrative officials into a policymaking process in which citizens directly negotiate over the distribution of public resources. In the most successful cases, PB has had the power to transform basic state-society relations, redistribute resources to underserved neighborhoods, and create transparency in the budgetary process (Baiocchi 2001; Abers 1998, 2001; Marquetti 2003; Fung and Wright 2001; Fedozzi 1998). In less successful cases, PB creates opportunities for activists to raise awareness of public policies, which is still a desirable outcome but has a much more limited impact on policymaking (Nylen 2002; Wampler 1999).

To address the interplay of institutions and interests, this article addresses the following questions: why would a mayor delegate authority to decisionmaking bodies dominated by citizens? and once a mayor initiates a participatory decisionmaking process, what influences the mayor’s capacity to implement particular policy preferences? The first question taps into the mayor’s willingness and preference to redesign policymaking processes. The second question situates mayors in the municipality’s broader political environment to demonstrate how Brazilian mayors face a series of constraints that limit their ability to implement their desired policies.

This study emphasizes the role of mayors because the office of mayor holds most legal, budgetary, and administrative authority at Brazil's municipal level. While authority has devolved from the federal government to state and local institutions, no corresponding deconcentration of authority at the municipal level has occurred (Rodríguez 1997). At Brazil's municipal level, legislatures act as a negative check or veto on the mayor, doing little to contribute to policymaking, because of the concentration of authority in the mayor's office (Wampler 2000). Municipalities nevertheless increased their importance in Brazil's federal structure with the 1988 Constitution and now account for 16 to 20 percent of all government spending (Couto and Abrucio 1995; Montero 2000).

Most research on Brazil's participatory institutions has utilized a single-case study methodology, which limits the generalizability of the theoretical insights that can be gleaned from the cases (Abers 2001; Fedozzi 1998; Baiocchi 2001). The bulk of studies have focused on citizen participation or on the organizing efforts of municipal administrations (Nylen 2002; Abers 1998). Thus we know a great deal about who, how, and why people participate, but much less about how that participation affects outcomes. Comparative studies have appeared in more limited numbers, but these often have been based on the most successful cases, Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte (Jacobi and Teixeira 1996; Avritzer 2002b). The three cases analyzed here produced markedly different policy outcomes, specifically regarding how PB affected the extension of accountability.

The concept of accountability has been employed by political scientists to account for variations in the quality of Latin America's new democratic regimes. Theorizing about diverse arenas, such as institutional authority, citizen participation, and political contestation, is a central concern as political scientists seek to move beyond the "consolidation" debates to assess the processes that generate political renewal. This article draws on the three variants of the "accountability" debates: societal, vertical, and horizontal.

THREE TYPES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Does the expansion of decisionmaking venues limit mayoral authority? Does it undermine the responsibilities and duties of legislative bodies? Is accountability enhanced if citizens must still depend on mayoral administrations? The focus of the accountability debates has been on how one agent (the voters, the courts) can control another agent (elected officials, the executive branch). One weakness of such a focus is that the conceptual variants—horizontal, vertical, and societal—tend to run on parallel tracks, unable to show how citizens, CSOs, politicians, and institutions may place interlocking checks on the ambitions of other actors.

Participatory institutions, by contrast, tap into all three dimensions of the debates. Participatory institutions have the potential to act as a check on the prerogatives and actions of mayoral administrations (horizontal), to allow citizens to vote for representatives and specific policies (vertical), and to rely on the mobilization of citizens into political process as a means to legitimate the new policymaking process (societal).

Vertical accountability, generally framed as the control of public officials by citizens primarily via elections, has received significant attention as scholars have analyzed how citizens can use elections to exercise control over public officials (Przeworski et al. 1999). Horizontal accountability, the distribution of authority among different departments or branches of government, has also received attention as scholars have sought to evaluate the consequences of institutional arrangements that were designed to strengthen democratic practices and rights (O'Donnell 1998). Societal accountability, the pressures placed on state agencies by CSOs to encourage elected officials and bureaucrats to abide by the rule of law, has emerged as a counterbalance to the other two approaches; it can directly link ongoing political activity in civil society to formal political institutions (Smulovitz and Peruzzotti 2000).

Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin's book *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation* (1999) set the tone for the debate on vertical accountability. It engages a classic theme of democratic politics: how can citizens control their governments? Working in the rational choice tradition and employing a principal-agent model to explain outcomes, Przeworski et al. analyze how elections influence the choices of public officials in new democracies, concentrating on the inability of the electoral process to produce binding decisions or guarantee that public officials will remain virtuous. Unfortunately, Przeworski et al. reduce the range of political roles that citizens can play to one: the voter. "Governments make thousands of decisions that affect individual welfare; citizens have only one instrument to control these decisions: the vote" (Przeworski et al. 1999, 50).

Although most citizens may not be actively engaged or interested in policymaking processes, that assertion is greatly overstated; it ignores the vast range of political strategies and actions that activists use to influence public officials and policy outcomes. Citizens now have access to a range of legal and political resources to pressure public officials, including lawsuits, public demonstrations, public hearings, and participatory institutions. Democratic regimes allow citizens to seek redress in a number of decisionmaking venues, including executive, legislative, and judicial branches. In Brazil, groups demanding political reform have utilized municipal and state levels of government to challenge traditional mechanisms of control, which suggests that electoral analysis (especially of

national elections) is not a sufficient indicator for how CSOs affect policymaking (Dagnino 1994; Jacobi 2000; Hochstetler 2000).

Przeworski et al.'s approach assumes the absence of political and social organizing. Elections are only one avenue for citizens to encourage increased accountability and improvements in public policies. The citizen as activist, the citizen as community organizer, the active citizen does not appear in their analysis. This analytical focus ignores the role that CSOs play in democratic politics.

Smulovitz and Peruzzotti (2000) recognize the drawbacks of relying on elections to show how citizens might influence elected officials. They introduce the concept of societal accountability to complement vertical accountability, and they demonstrate how CSOs can act as watchdogs by monitoring the actions of elected officials and bureaucrats.

Societal accountability is a nonelectoral, yet vertical mechanism of control that rests on the actions of a multiple array of citizens' associations and movements and on the media, actions that aim at exposing governmental wrongdoing, bringing new issues onto the public agenda, or activating the operation of horizontal agencies. (Smulovitz and Peruzzotti 2000, 150)

This concept moves beyond a narrow conceptualization of citizen participation to show how some citizens and CSOs are engaged in continual efforts to influence the actions and behaviors of state actors.

Smulovitz and Peruzzotti demonstrate how CSOs have taken advantage of the partial extension of civil and political liberties to develop new strategies to pressure elected officials. Yet their approach is also limited, because it depends on CSOs' putting sufficient pressure on elected officials rather than showing how new actors can contribute to policy outcomes. CSOs are transformed into interest groups rather than active agents that participate in policymaking venues where binding decisions are made. Their empirical examples show how CSOs do not have the authority or ability to make binding decisions, but merely to influence powerholders. The case study for this article, PB, by contrast, offers the opportunity to overcome this theoretical impasse by demonstrating the effects of delegating authority to citizens. Citizens are neither limited to roles as "voters" or "watchdogs" but become real, meaningful players in the policymaking process.

O'Donnell's work on horizontal accountability opened up this line of analysis as it focused on another classic dilemma of politics: how can state agencies act as effective checks on the actions and ambitions of other state agencies? Horizontal accountability "depends on the existence of state agencies that are legally empowered—and factually willing and able—to take actions ranging from routine oversight to criminal sanctions or impeachment in relation to possibly unlawful actions or

omissions by other agents or agents of the state” (O’Donnell 1998, 117). State agents must be able to exert effective oversight to ensure that other state agents—elected and appointed officials or bureaucrats—can be held accountable for the violation of rules and laws.

The system of checks and balances requires that third parties be able to make binding decisions, which means that third parties must be able to carry out and enforce these decisions. “Effective horizontal accountability is not the product of isolated agencies, but of networks of agencies (up to and including high courts) committed to upholding the rule of law” (O’Donnell 1998, 119). This is an important advance to the work of Przeworski et al. and Smulovitz and Peruzzotti because O’Donnell includes formal, binding decisions, which indicate the distribution of authority as well as the length to which the rule of law has been extended.

While O’Donnell’s approach highlights the importance of the judicial branch and the legislature in acting as checks on the potential misuse of authority by executives, this approach, too, is limited because it fails to address how different interests are represented within state agencies. O’Donnell argues that contemporary polyarchies include “various oversight agencies, ombudsmen, accounting offices, *fiscalías*, and the like” (1998, 119), but he does not demonstrate how these institutions incorporate new actors that seek to use their authority to promote alternative institutional formats or alternative policies. These new institutions have the potential to place the political ambitions of different actors into direct competition with one another, thereby promoting interlocking sets of authority. Horizontal accountability, as O’Donnell frames it, does not sufficiently treat how the ambitions of different actors may be pitted against one another to produce different outcomes; institutions seemingly float above political and civil society rather than being occupied by specific actors with particular interests.

The case studies analyzed in this article cut across the three types of accountability. Participatory budgeting, as it has been created in São Paulo, Recife, and Porto Alegre, was initially implemented to allow citizens to deliberate over issues of public policy. The purpose of each program was to incorporate interested citizens and CSOs into decision-making bodies (that is, to expand checks and balances) so as to enhance the quality of policy outcomes while limiting corruption. PB can be viewed as offering the opportunity to allow citizens to promote societal and vertical accountability, but it can also be understood as a policymaking institution that competes with other state agencies over the distribution of authority, power, and resources.

As an innovative policymaking institution, PB provides a unique opportunity for interested citizens and activists to select policy outcomes. PB is not a representative case of urban politics in Brazil or in

Latin America, but its exceptional nature provides the opportunity to demonstrate how citizens exert influence over elected municipal administrations.

The outcomes of PB in São Paulo, Recife, and Porto Alegre were quite varied, ranging from marginal to highly significant. Elected mayors sought to delegate authority even with few clear short-term political benefits. How to explain the emergence of new preferences held by reformist coalitions and reformist mayors? To find out why mayors would embark on this potentially risky path, we must turn to the historical precedents.

BUILDING BRAZIL'S CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society activism reemerged in Brazil during the 1970s and 1980s (Avritzer 2002a; Doimo 1995; Alvarez et al. 1998a). Its new expansion led CSOs and activists to develop new political preferences that challenged the political and social exclusion experienced by many Brazilians (Wampler and Avritzer forthcoming; Doimo 1995). The new political actors utilized innovative strategies as they sought to influence government officials during Brazil's transition to democratic rule. The "explosion" of demands based on rights since then has transformed the institutional format of municipal and state institutions, and also the means by which citizens have sought to negotiate their demands with public officials (Baierle 1998; Avritzer 2002a; Dagnino 1998). The expansion of the number of actors and the type of CSOs during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s helped to create new strategies for engaging politics (Wampler and Avritzer forthcoming).

The expansion of civil society had an important direct effect on political society. Civil society leaders reached out to and worked with politicians to help elect candidates and to influence public policy. Conversely, public officials sought CSO support to mobilize potential voters.¹ The willingness of elected mayors to support and implement participatory institutions is intimately linked to mayors' political connections to the new CSOs. These observations—mayors respond to constituents and potential voters, and interest groups seek to influence policy outcomes—add little to ongoing political science debates, but they provide a necessary corrective to earlier analyses of PB that emphasize the primacy of social movements in creating participatory institutions or the benevolent policies enacted by the Workers' Party (PT) to induce citizens to participate.

During the 1990s, CSO activists became directly engaged in election campaigning, monitoring public officials, and creating new public politics. CSOs proposed new institutional formats and types of policies to help them overcome the legacies of political, social, and economic

exclusion faced by vast numbers of Brazil's population (Wampler and Avritzer forthcoming). Activists paid more attention to how government officials designed and implemented public policies. That led to demands by CSOs for direct involvement in policymaking venues. Proposing alternative policies often requires that citizens build close ties to politicians, often especially with state and local legislators, so that their proposed policies can be introduced into policy debates. Proposing new institutional types suggests that movement activists are attempting to situate themselves and their issues in a broader political and social context. Neighborhood leaders and reformist politicians created political alliances based on the idea that citizens should be directly incorporated into the policymaking process.

The growth of civil society led to the emergence of activists who functioned as political operatives for reformist politicians and as participants in new policymaking venues. The initial expansion of civil society helped to form new types of leaders and eased the way for new political coalitions to be built. Although the high-water mark of citizen mobilization was achieved in the 1984 *diretas já* (direct elections now) movement, which centered on the demand for direct elections for Brazil's presidency, and the 1992 movement to impeach President Fernando Collor de Mello, CSOs continued to organize throughout the 1990s, albeit in new ways. During the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, many CSO leaders worked for and on behalf of leftist party candidates, especially from the Workers' Party and the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB).

The institutionalization and the routinization of elections also suggest that politicians will seek out community leaders who can deliver new constituencies or maintain old ones. The leaders of CSOs now occupy dual roles. First they are catalysts for groups in civil society who work to educate and inform their citizens, as well as strategists using classic mass mobilization tactics, such as public demonstrations, to pressure public officials (that is, seeing societal accountability). Their second role is often as political operatives of a single party or politician, engaged in constituency service, fundraising, and campaigning.

Civil society activists no longer occupy a niche as political outsiders, but often act as intermediaries between political and civil societies. They now mediate between local neighborhood organizations and reformist politicians, between individual citizens and new policymaking venues. How community leaders exercise this role is particularly important to the creation of vibrant participatory venues. In the three cases analyzed in the following section, activists were able to align themselves to mayoral candidates before the candidates' first election, thereby giving the activists the leverage to demand that participatory institutions be established.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN THREE CITIES

To learn about PB, mayors, and municipal councils, this study conducted 30 months of research between 1995 and 2001 in the three subject cities. Budgets, election results, legislative proposals, and the internal memoranda of parties and social movements all were analyzed, and nearly two hundred interviews were conducted with municipal council members, appointed officials, bureaucrats, and civil society activists. Many hours of ethnographic observation were conducted in PB meetings and municipal council offices.

PB has received considerable attention from academics, policymakers and citizen-activists, both within and beyond Brazil. Initiated in Porto Alegre during the late 1980s, PB has now been implemented in more than one hundred municipalities (Teixeira 2003). While the range of outcomes has been correspondingly wide, most studies focus on the most successful cases, Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte (Santos 1998; Avritzer 2002b; Baiocchi 2001).

PB depends on the mutual participation of civil society and state officials in the selection and implementation of policies and public works (Fedozzi 1998; Abers 2001). Civil society is represented by a myriad of private persons, social movement activists, and community leaders. The state is represented by the municipal administration, the mayor's office in particular. PB is designed to bridge the gap between the municipal administration and the nascent civil society that has been developing in Brazil since the late 1970s.

Implementing PB is a potential risk for mayors if the program does not provide positive results, as interpreted by the administration's political allies, interested CSOs, and voters (most of whom are nonparticipants). PB has the potential to redistribute authority and resources, which places institutional reformers on a collision course with entrenched interests. Understanding the political interests of different groups is vital to explaining the risk involved when delegating authority is used as a political strategy.

Certain CSOs have an incentive to participate in PB and promote it as a vital new policymaking institution if the specific organization is likely to benefit from the particular set of rules that govern PB. If a specific organization favors public decisionmaking processes, which require extensive deliberation and negotiation as well as the mobilization of an organization's followers at several key moments throughout the year, then it is likely that an organization will support PB. PB rewards "participatory" CSOs that develop a specific set of political skills: public deliberation and negotiation, mobilization, and the capacity to analyze government data. CSOs that rely on more traditional forms of organizing,

such as clientelism and patronage, will not seek to take advantage of this new form of policymaking because their political resources do not easily mesh with this new system. "Traditional" CSOs, which rely on private exchanges and networks, will not actively support the implementation of PB, and they are not likely to participate in high numbers.

Likewise, some, but not all, elected officials also have specific incentives for supporting this new type of policymaking. First, elected officials who rely on participatory CSOs to help campaign, mobilize voters, and provide their educational material are more likely to support the implementation of a participatory process. Second, elected officials who seek to change how political resources are distributed are more likely to support the implementation of this new policymaking institution. The potential for the transparent implementation of public resources will undermine the private exchanges between elected officials, bureaucrats, and leaders of "traditional" CSOs, thereby enhancing the ability of political reformers to limit the influence of their political opponents.

Third, reformist politicians may seek to use PB as a means to create new bases of political support. The risk, of course, is that the new participatory institutions will produce weak results, or that the mayoral administration will not be able to generate sufficient participation to create a dynamic process. Initiating a new participatory experience is a time-consuming process that does not necessarily offer short-term policy or electoral benefits. Administrations must be willing to commit time, energy, and resources to reforming the policymaking process. Citizens and political opponents can potentially use the new participatory institutions to promote policies, strategies, and outcomes that are not beneficial to the mayor's interests.

Budgetary processes are excellent proxies with which to understand efforts to limit and disperse authority because the process depends on the distribution of basic technical and financial information, debate, and negotiation among interested parties, and the eventual implementation of public works. Budgetmaking and service provision processes incorporate bureaucrats, appointed and elected public officials, and interested citizens. Because budgets and resource allocation are often the center of political disputes, a focus on new budgetary processes should illuminate the extent to which political strategies and relationships have been modified.

Initiating Participatory Budgeting: Mayoral Elections

Porto Alegre, Recife, and São Paulo in the 1980s elected mayors with deep roots in the participatory sectors of civil society. This helps to explain why participatory decisionmaking bodies were initiated. Elected mayors sought to transform governing and policymaking processes not

merely to promote their own political careers but to reward their supporters and reach out to potential supporters.

In Porto Alegre, Olívio Dutra was elected in 1988 with support from the Workers' Party, trade unions, social movements, and community associations. Dutra had matured as a political leader in social movements and labor unions where the ideas and values of direct citizen and worker participation in government were emphasized. Dutra's victory was a surprise come-from-behind win, abetted by being part of a first-past-the-post election. In the 1988 elections, the candidate with the highest number of votes won; there was no runoff between the two highest vote getters. Dutra was elected mayor with just over 33 percent of the vote.

In São Paulo the same year, Luíza Erundina was elected mayor with support from the Workers' Party, social movements, trade unions, and middle-class progressives. Trained as a social worker, Erundina first emerged as a political leader in São Paulo's East Side (*Zona Leste*) housing movement. She was an early crossover between civil and political societies as she was elected to São Paulo's municipal council in 1982 and the state legislature in 1985 before becoming mayor in 1988. Like Dutra, she, too, won with only one-third of the total valid votes.

Recife elected Jarbas Vasconcelos mayor in 1985 and again in 1992. Vasconcelos was affiliated with the Catholic church's efforts to organize groups around land-use issues. Throughout this period, he was a member of the centrist, catchall PMDB (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement), although he was briefly associated with the leftist PSB in 1985.

The three mayors followed similar political trajectories. Each had strong ties to social movements, progressive sectors of the Catholic church, and labor unions. All three had been vocal and public opponents of the military dictatorship, and all had advocated the return to democratic rule. In each municipality, therefore, the mayor's willingness to initiate innovations was high. Dutra, in Porto Alegre, was affiliated with an umbrella organization of community associations (UAMPA), which laid out the first ideas for participatory budgeting in 1986 (Avritzer 2002b). Vasconcelos, in Recife, had ties to the liberation theology-inspired Commission for Justice and Peace, which advocated citizens' direct participation in issues pertaining to land use. While this organization did not develop specific political strategies focused on budgets, it did insist on direct citizen participation. In São Paulo, Erundina was involved in housing and healthcare movements that sought to establish citizen councils (*conselhos*), through which activists could present their demands in public venues (Jacobi 1989; Erundina 1990). Erundina's election was ideal for advocates of participatory programs because the conventional wisdom suggested that a mayor with deep roots in the new civil society could greatly increase citizens' decisionmaking authority.

Table 1. Political Environment for Participatory Budgeting

	São Paulo	Recife	Porto Alegre
Year PB initiated	1990	1995	1989
Mayor, political party	Luiza Erudina, PT	Jarbas Vasconcelos, PMDB	Olivio Dutra, PT
Participatory civil society associations' importance to the mayor's base of support	High	Moderate to High	High
Governing coalition support for delegation of decisionmaking authority	Moderate	Low	High
Support for mayor in municipal council	Low	Moderate	Moderate

Table 1 situates the individual mayors in their broader political and institutional context. While authority is concentrated in the mayor's office, the table highlights the different pressures the mayors must contend with to implement their preferred policy outcomes. The third row indicates that the intensity of the mayor's willingness to implement new policymaking venues was roughly similar in the three municipalities. The fourth row suggests that the mayor's governing coalition affects the degree to which decisionmaking authority can be delegated to citizens. The fifth row suggests that mayors must craft a stable voting majority in the municipal council to establish sufficient political capital to implement a radical overhaul of decisionmaking processes.

All three mayors were reformers with strong political links to organized sectors of the emergent civil society. This is a finding that is assumed but not explicitly accounted for in many accounts of PB; mayors have specific ties to CSOs that are likely to benefit from the creation of participatory, deliberate policymaking bodies. To determine and measure each mayor's particular allegiance to participatory CSOs, each mayor's personal political trajectory, their official statements regarding how they would govern, internal documents of CSOs, and multiple interviews were analyzed. Variation between the three mayors can be accounted for by analyzing each mayor's personal and political connections to the new CSOs.

In Recife, Mayor Vasconcelos was the least supportive of delegating decisionmaking authority; he preferred that the participatory institution

receive and channel citizens' demands rather than being a deliberative body. In Porto Alegre and São Paulo, Mayors Dutra and Erundina supported the delegation of authority to citizens in these new decision-making venues. Each mayor's intense involvement in the municipality's civil society suggests that this was a necessary condition for the implementation of a new institutional format. The table's fourth and fifth rows, however, indicate that factors beyond the direct and immediate control of the mayor affect the ability to implement a new (and potentially radical) PB program. This suggests that mayors operate in a constrained environment, unable simply to govern as they might want. Political risk therefore can be assessed by analyzing how different factions might use competing institutional authority to check the power of other branches.

Table 1 shows that the mayor's governing coalition (that is, municipal council members, appointed officials, and interest groups) affected the extent to which decisionmaking authority was delegated to citizens. The intensity was measured from low to high. Low indicated that the mayor's governing coalition would not support the delegation of authority; high would indicate that the mayor had a green light to innovate. To measure this factor, this study analyzed the percentage of seats that the mayor's party held in the municipal council, the percentage of seats held by potential allies, and the political trajectories of the key municipal and party officials.

In Recife, the governing coalition relied heavily on the centrist PMDB and, later, the conservative PFL (Party of the Liberal Front). Reformist wings in the PMDB supported innovation through the delegation of authority, but traditional political sectors viewed this as a threat to their resources. Mayor Vasconcelos and his closest allies promoted PB, but other groups in his coalition did not support expanding citizens' access to decisionmaking venues. In São Paulo, the support for participatory institution was strong in the governing party (the PT) but ultimately was hampered by disagreements over how to delegate authority. These disagreements led a significant potential base of support to remain neutral to the idea of PB. In Porto Alegre, the governing coalition threw its weight and support behind PB as party and state officials worked to promote PB as a vibrant institutional venue.

Table 1 indicates that the mayor must craft a stable voting majority in the municipal council to establish sufficient political capital to implement a radical overhaul of how decisions are made. PB, as a new policymaking institution, would flounder without direct involvement by the mayor's office. While mayors do hold the most authority, they must negotiate with the legislative branch to govern. Thus, the capacity to build a new decisionmaking body depends on circumstances that extend far beyond the confines of the participatory institution. In order

to measure this, the study analyzed the percentage of seats the mayor's party held in the municipal council, the percentage of seats held by potential allies, the percentage of the vote received by the mayor's party in the mayoral election, and a series of legislative debates and votes.

In São Paulo, Erundina faced a hostile municipal council that nearly impeached and removed her from office. She had difficulty getting her legislative proposals passed because of her party's minority position and its inability to negotiate with potential supporters (Couto 1995). In Porto Alegre, Dutra was also in a minority position, but managed to craft a stable voting coalition by working with political rivals (namely the left-ist-populist PDT). The municipal council was neither a thorn in his side nor a strong asset; instead, it was neutralized as a political actor. Vasconcelos's party in Recife nearly had an outright voting majority. Vasconcelos was able to add the support of rival parties (namely the right-ist PFL). The support for the mayor was strong, although Vasconcelos had to pay attention to the interests of elected officials who did not share his emphasis on participatory decisionmaking. Recife aptly demonstrates the differences between rows 4 and 5 of table 1: Mayor Vasconcelos's support in the municipal council was partly contingent on his being unable to delegate real decisionmaking authority.

Table 1 highlights the embedded character of Brazilian mayors. Individual mayors rely on the support of their political supporters and parties to build a coherent administrative strategy, which, in turn, allows them to build support in the municipal council while simultaneously delegating authority. When the mayor's broader coalition did not support delegation (Recife) or squabbled over the type of delegation (São Paulo), the mayor's efforts to promote PB were thwarted. When, on the other hand, the mayor enjoyed unified support (Porto Alegre), it increased the likelihood that PB would be implemented. Thus PB as a participatory institution has a potential impact on the ambitions and interests of mayors, municipal council members, and citizens. PB has the potential to alter the distribution of authority among these three institutions, which will affect how accountability can be extended.

OUTCOMES: THE RIGHT TO DECIDE, PUBLIC DEBATE, AND LEGAL IMPLEMENTATION

To establish an empirical litmus test for accountability, this study analyzed three factors: the right to make decisions based on access to transparent information (vertical), public debate and mobilization (societal), and legal implementation (horizontal). The right to make decisions creates a link between the participants and the government, which is a necessary first step; it establishes citizens' ability to contribute directly to the governing process. Participants in the policymaking process may make

decisions on specific policy issues, generalized policy trends (for example, basic infrastructure over health care), or representatives in the process. The ability to debate in public and to mobilize citizens to participate in debates and decisionmaking processes are features of societal accountability. Citizens have the opportunity to influence their fellow citizens and government officials by using the public venues to press their claims.

The implementation of projects, as selected by citizens, touches on two aspects of horizontal accountability. If decisions made by PB delegates are included in a municipality's budget, are the projects being implemented? If so, then horizontal accountability will be extended, because municipal administrations are implementing projects selected in one institution (PB), ratified by a second (municipal council), and implemented by a third (municipal administration). In addition, most PB programs have oversight committees, so that projects cannot be considered completed (and, by extension, final payment to contractors cannot be made) until committees approve them. If municipal administrations follow the rules that govern the oversight committees, then it will be possible to confirm that horizontal accountability is being extended.

Porto Alegre

Porto Alegre's PB was initiated in 1989 and is often considered the most successful case in Brazil to date. The municipal administration, as a result of its close ties to activists in civil society, has actively promoted governing practices that encourage the delegation of authority. After nearly 15 years of PB, the municipal administration continues to promote the values embedded in PB and, equally important, follows the rules established by PB. Responsibility for the selection and implementation of public works is shared by the municipal administration and the citizens; citizens have a larger role in the selection of projects, while the administration plays a much larger role in the implementation of the projects.

When PB was initiated in Porto Alegre, the municipal government enjoyed a favorable political context that allowed it to experiment with a new institutional format. The government relied on "participatory" CSOs, which demanded an active role in policymaking. The Workers' Party led the electoral coalition, and most of its members supported direct citizen involvement in decisionmaking venues (Fedozzi 1998). The Workers' Party (PT) was able to cobble together support in the municipal council, based on the support of an opposition party (the Democratic Labor Party, PDT). The governing coalition led by the Workers' Party controlled 10 of the 33 seats. Centrist parties with similar ideologies, most important the PDT, controlled 12 additional seats, while the political and ideological opposition controlled 10 seats. The

PT government could negotiate with the centrist parties to secure a relatively positive atmosphere in which to initiate reform efforts. For example, during Mayor Dutra's administration (1989–92), the PT passed a series of progressive taxation laws, which demonstrates the broad support the administration could achieve. This indicates that the Workers' Party found highly favorable conditions to initiate and implement a participatory venue.

How has Porto Alegre's PB affected the extension of accountability? First, citizens have the right to make decisions about general policy trends and specific public works. Citizens have access to vital technical and financial information that helps them during decisionmaking processes. Information about public policies and budgeting is available to citizens in a coherent and easily understood form. Through the auspices of PB, the government holds meetings to provide basic information on issues such as tax revenues, budget allocation, and debt servicing. For example, each specific project selected by the PB participants receives a tracking number that enables municipal bureaucrats to inform any interested party about the project's current status. This transparency serves as the basis for informed deliberation and dialogue. After PB participants select projects, the implementation process is more administrative than political.

Second, the municipal administration honors decisions made by the PB participants by implementing the public works they select in a timely and transparent manner. Implementation is at the discretion of the mayor, because line items in the budget do not necessarily have to be implemented. In Porto Alegre, decisions made through PB have become binding decisions, as the municipal administrations have implemented projects selected by PB participants.² By honoring the decisions made in PB, the government signals to the population that important public policy decisions are now made in this institutional sphere. This shifts decisionmaking processes away from the private spheres of the government and into the PB meetings (Genro 1995).

The municipal administration has taken a third step that has increased horizontal accountability and public trust by submitting its own policy initiatives for approval by PB participants. Without formal approval in the citizens' forum, the government's specific public works initiatives could not be included in the municipal budget and therefore could not be implemented. This step represents a fundamental change in Brazilian policymaking, because Porto Alegre's government must publicly defend its specific projects and submit these projects to a project-specific vote.

Porto Alegre's PB has made extensive efforts to create a new public arena for deliberation and negotiation (Avritzer 2002a). Citizens are mobilized for a series of local, regional, thematic, and municipal meetings that enable them to interact with each other as well as with public

officials. This allows interested and engaged citizens to maintain pressure on the mayoral administration. It also allows mayoral administrations that support PB participants's demands to argue for the "inversion of priorities" based on the participation of increasing numbers of citizens.

Porto Alegre's municipal budget is much closer to a real budget than the "black box" (*caixa preta*) that budgets tend to be at other levels of government. An accurate budget makes it easier for citizens to understand the budget process and to work to include their own items. Under these conditions, items included in the budget enjoy a much higher likelihood of being implemented than under the more familiar "black box" method. This also gives all factions the opportunity to know what the government is actually doing.

In many ways, Porto Alegre provides the most paradoxical results among the three cases studied. It has simultaneously strengthened and weakened efforts to expand accountability. Citizens have been directly incorporated into decisionmaking bodies that exercise authority, transparency has been increased, participation has steadily increased, and the implementation of public works follows legal means. This has been accomplished under the auspices of a unified government led by the PT that increased the authority of the mayor's office while simultaneously marginalizing the municipal council.

Porto Alegre's PB took the municipal council out of the decision-making process by having citizens make all budgetary decisions that fall within the purview of "discretionary spending." This undermined horizontal accountability, because one branch of government (the municipal council) received a smaller, weaker role in the budgetary process. PB still has not been legally constituted, which means that it is technically and legally part of the municipal administration (mayor's office). While successive Workers' Party mayors in Porto Alegre have gone to considerable lengths to ensure that citizens in public venues make most budgetary decisions, final legal authority still rests with the mayor's office. If PB is considered from the vantage point of horizontal accountability, it is apparent that the mayor's office remains firmly in control of the policymaking process. The municipal administration provides information, allocates the political and bureaucratic staff to conduct meetings, and implements projects. PB is a success in Porto Alegre because it has the firm support of the municipal administration.

If we analyze PB from the vantage point of vertical accountability, we must note that the PB contributes to limits on mayoral authority because citizens are making real, important decisions. PB, however, is intimately associated with the PT's success in winning four successive mayoral elections. Citizens may have greater authority via PB, but the party that implemented it has managed to benefit handsomely from this new institutional type.

From the standpoint of societal accountability, it is clear that through PB, citizens can engage in meaningful deliberation and negotiation. This allows citizens to pressure their government to implement changes in public policies. The groups most likely to benefit from PB are those skilled in mobilization and deliberation, which tend to be supporters of the PT. Again, societal pressures may help to strengthen the mayoral administration by creating short-term benefits for the PT and the party's supporters. There is no evidence, however, that PB creates a permanent set of checks and balances that can be utilized by citizens or opposition parties.

It is not clear whether citizens can legally force the mayor's hand to provide information or implement projects. This means that PB participants must depend partly on the good will and benevolence of the municipal government, which indicates that PB has only partly promoted restrictions on mayoral authority in Porto Alegre. PB in Porto Alegre is noteworthy for how it has modified and expanded decision-making processes, but the outcomes continue to be limited because the PB's positive results depend on intense support from the municipal government. It is hoped that citizen involvement may decrease the power of the mayor's office over the long term, but for the present the mayor's office remains the most important political actor in Porto Alegre.

Recife

The capacity to place real limits on mayoral authority or to create public and citizen-controlled decisionmaking venues through PB has been much weaker in Recife than in Porto Alegre. Yet societal accountability may be somewhat stronger, because Recife's PB was, during the mid- to late 1990s, an institutional venue occupied by groups that opposed successive mayors' inattention to the program. The conditions under which PB was initiated in Recife were much less favorable than in Porto Alegre. The popular mayor, Jarbas Vasconcelos, had a long history of working directly with community organizations, but the relationship with activists was rather personalistic. Vasconcelos channeled the demands for public works through his administrative structure, but he was less interested in delegating decisionmaking authority to citizens (Soler 1991; Soares 1998).

Vasconcelos was a member of the PMDB, a catchall centrist political party whose elected representatives in Recife were suspicious of PB. City council members and state deputies feared that this new institutional sphere would decrease their influence over the distribution of scarce resources, and therefore sought to undermine Recife's PB at every turn (Wampler 2000). There was a legitimate concern for municipal council members, because PB has the potential to transfer deci-

sionmaking authority to citizens and to limit council members' ability to influence policy outcomes.

In Recife, the PMDB municipal council members did not support the delegation of authority to citizens and sought to be personally involved in the distribution of public works projects. Few members of Recife's PMDB had strong commitments to participatory CSOs, and therefore wanted to maintain control of resources as part of the exchange between the mayoral and legislative branches.

At the time that PB was initiated, Mayor Vasconcelos enjoyed a broad base of support in the municipal council. While his coalition held just 16 of 41 seats, 18 centrists were willing to work with the mayor. Only 7 municipal council members could plausibly be identified as opposition. This support gave Vasconcelos sufficient flexibility to experiment with a new institutional type. Municipal council members affiliated with centrist and center-right parties in Recife had few connections to the participatory civil society, which gave prevalence to longstanding political preferences based on clientelistic exchanges, as opposed to support for the delegation of authority. How did this affect the outcome?

First, the municipal administration only partially ceded decision-making powers. Thus, citizens lacked the right to make policy decisions, and vertical accountability was not extended through PB. Participants had the right to decide only a small fraction of the projects to be implemented by the municipal administration (10 percent of all discretionary funding, as opposed to 100 percent in Porto Alegre). Two administrations, led by Vasconcelos (1992–96) and Roberto Magalhães (1997–2000), did not dedicate their full attention or resources to PB. Vasconcelos's links to the groups that most strongly advocated PB weakened over time, while Magalhães's ties to these groups were based on his political alliance with Vasconcelos. Over time, the two administrations began to use the PB structure for other purposes, such as the distribution of money during Carnival, in a manner more reminiscent of clientelism than of an innovative policymaking institution. Decision-making authority was not delegated to citizens, and mayoral authority was not checked.

Second, the administrations of Vasconcelos and Magalhães did not guarantee that the projects selected by PB participants would be prioritized for implementation. The municipality's internal administrative structure was not substantially modified to ensure that the decisions made in PB would be implemented. The binding decisions that have begun to emerge in Porto Alegre were absent in Recife.

Third, PB had a slightly positive effect in that it helped to foster increased transparency in Recife's municipal administration. Administrations had to provide information to citizens and bureaucrats in order to set up and manage the program. Information about public policies and

budgeting was not readily available to PB participants, however; nor were the programs promoted in such a way as to involve the general public. The budget remained a black box; no one was really sure what projects went in or what would come out. The information provided to citizens, moreover, contained multiple inaccuracies, making it virtually impossible for PB participants to make informed decisions related to how the municipal budget and policymaking processes actually worked.

Yet there is one important caveat to this case: negotiations over the distribution of resources, as well as the oversight meetings, which analyzed the administration's performance, were held in public. This gave PB participants the opportunity to work directly with government officials. Denunciations of the administration's actions (or inactions) allowed activists to hold administration officials accountable in a public format. Recife had few other venues that allowed a public discussion of the administration's policy outputs. Confrontations and arguments between participants and the government officials in public meetings were a vital part of the learning process that leads to the increasing openness and transparency of the state. These meetings forced the mayor or his representatives to explain their policies, while also permitting traditionally excluded citizens to enter into discussions and debates that had long been held in the private realms of the state.

This development suggests that societal accountability is being extended in Recife. It also suggests that Recife's PB is a "demand-receiving" institution that depends on societal pressure, rather than an institutional venue in which binding decisions are made. This "success" reflects one of the basic conceptual problems of societal accountability: the concept itself rests on the pressure that can be applied to government officials by civil society actors, while the civil society actors themselves have no authority to make decisions.

The structure of Recife's PB, which coincided with many of the leaders' political beliefs and ideologies, offered opportunities to CSOs to demand rights that could not be guaranteed by other institutional means. Yet participants were caught between demanding that the government fulfill its commitments and asking for compliance; between the demands of rights-bearing citizens and goods-receiving clients (Sales 1994). While these are not ideal conditions in which to develop a new decisionmaking venue, PB did provide an institutional format for citizens to join a public debate.

Recife's PB placed few limits on the mayor's authority and failed to develop into a real decisionmaking venue. Yet PB was an official part of the government's agenda, which gave activists opportunities to raise contentious issues in official, municipally sponsored public meetings. This provided an opportunity to hold administrative officials publicly accountable for their failures. Innovative policymaking institutions are

valuable to the process of building the foundations for accountability, as in the case of Porto Alegre; but the short-term impact may be weak if government officials do not support incorporating traditionally excluded actors into the policymaking process.

São Paulo

Limiting mayoral authority and creating new decisionmaking venues were weakly established through PB in São Paulo during Luiza Erundina's administration (1989–92). Erundina, a member of the PT, was closely aligned to São Paulo's participatory civil society, especially the social movements that had grown rapidly during the 1970s and 1980s. Erundina sought to initiate reform, but her government proved incapable of implementing a vibrant participatory policymaking venue. This suggests that the mere existence of the PT in power is not a sufficient condition to guarantee the success of the program.

Within the PT-led governing coalition, Erundina faced a difficult political struggle over the type of participatory institution that would be created. Discussion centered on "deliberative" versus "consulting" bodies, as well as territory-based versus sectoral bodies (Couto 1995). The intense divisions in the governing coalition made it difficult for Erundina to dedicate her administration's full attention to PB. The demand for PB came from the social movement sector of the PT, but was not necessarily shared by other factions in the party. As Erundina was forced to concentrate on a more limited range of reforms than the PT had originally proposed, she chose to forgo the delegation of authority to citizen bodies (Singer 1996).

Erundina also faced a hostile municipal council that was unwilling to rubber-stamp her proposals. Erundina was forced to dedicate considerable time and energy to building the necessary majority in the council to pass the budget and other legislation. During the 1988–92 legislative period, the PT's governing coalition held 20 of 55 seats in the municipal council. They needed the support of 8 centrist legislators, many of whom were unwilling to negotiate or support the PT's policy initiatives. Ten of the 16 centrists were from the PMDB and would become members of the conservative governing coalition for the 1992–96 period. The political capital Erundina expended to build a stable voting majority undermined her ability to delegate decisionmaking authority, as she was forced to support the political projects of potential supporters in the municipal council. This support, both administrative and resource-oriented, meant that fewer resources were available for PB.

Another important factor is that many of the opposition council members did not support the delegation of authority to citizen deci-

sionmaking bodies. The creation of a parallel decisionmaking process, if successful, could emasculate the authority of the municipal council. Many council members relied on clientelistic exchanges to deliver goods and resources to their constituents, acting as intermediaries between the municipal administration and community organizations. As one council member stated,

You need to have clientelism, radio, and TV because the vote is not an informed vote. Right? . . . I am currently a municipal council member, do I want to continue? If I want to continue, and if I follow the rules of the game, then it is likely that I will not have success, that I will not be reelected. (Author interview, São Paulo, February 18, 1997)

Municipal council members not affiliated with the “participatory” civil society eschewed calls for transparency, openness, deliberation, and public negotiation because it was not to their advantage. The internal strife in the PT-led governing coalition, as well as the hostile opposition, made conditions for launching a PB program very unfavorable. How did this affect PB’s outcomes?

Citizens were given the opportunity to present their demands in PB, but few institutional mechanisms guaranteed negotiation and deliberation over the selection of public works. While PB has the potential to expand the number of decisionmaking venues, the administration’s difficulties in implementing selected public works curtailed any positive impact.

PB in São Paulo did not produce a transparent municipal administration, given that it yielded few concrete results. PB increased direct public contact between citizens and the municipal government, but meetings were sparsely attended (Jacobi and Teixeira 1996b). While PB did increase the amount of information available to interested citizens, most participants sympathized with the municipal government. This did little to provide a check on the policy prerogatives of the municipal administration.

PB as an institution and as a means of limiting mayoral authority was therefore unsuccessful in the municipality of São Paulo. The government that implemented PB had deep roots in civil society; CSOs and citizen activists demanded that government officials delegate decisionmaking authority; but the government could not do so because pressure from the municipal council proved to be far greater than pressure from CSOs.

São Paulo’s PB experience suffered from the administration’s lack of support, suggesting that heightened civil society mobilization is not sufficient to extend accountability. CSOs proved too weak as partners for an embattled administration. São Paulo’s PB therefore had weak impact on the extension of vertical or societal accountability. Yet municipal council members, in the context of a divided government, acted as a check on the prerogatives of the municipal administration. While the

reasons many municipal council members rejected the delegation of authority to citizens may have been politically undesirable (for example, the wish to maintain existing clientelistic networks), it is rather ironic that the municipal council might actually have helped to extend horizontal accountability by not allowing a mayor to do as she pleased. PB did not have a direct effect on the extension of horizontal accountability, but the mayor's inability to promote this new institutional venue suggests that at least one branch of government may be able to check another branch. This is quite different from Porto Alegre, where the Workers' Party-led governing coalition was rarely checked by the municipal council; or Recife, where mayors sought to appease demands from municipal council members and PB participants through the distribution of targeted resources.

CONCLUSIONS

Political innovations in Brazilian municipalities demonstrate how CSOs, political activists, and reformist politicians have, at times, forged political coalitions to place limits on mayoral authority. By imposing such limitations, CSOs and their political allies have attempted to extend accountability. At Brazil's municipal level, this process has been based on the delegation of authority to participatory, citizen-dominated decisionmaking bodies. Participatory institutions increase citizens' access to government and encourage public debate, both of which intensify pressure on municipal administrations to implement policy projects selected by citizens.

The line of analysis pursued in this article has two broader implications for the study of democratic politics in Brazil and Latin America. First, the vitality of participatory institutions that delegate authority to citizens builds on the intense support of mayoral administrations. If mayors and their political allies have significant ties to participatory CSOs, then it is far more likely that mayors will seek to promote the delegation of authority. In Recife, São Paulo, and Porto Alegre, mayors had deep connections to the new civil society, which helps to explain why they all were willing to experiment with the delegation of authority. The form of delegation differed in each municipality, largely based on the degree to which the mayor sought to include citizens in the decision-making process.

Mayors with strong connections to participatory CSOs are also more likely to hold political preferences that may be transformed into policies that support extending accountability. Using public decisionmaking venues, reorienting public spending, and allowing citizens to make binding decisions may contribute to that extension. Yet the intense involvement of municipal administrations in support of these institutions

may have the paradoxical result of undermining accountability, because support for an institution such as participatory budgeting has come at the expense of the municipal council's participation. Participatory budgeting has allowed citizens to wield great authority partly because the institution partly replaces the municipal council's role in policymaking.

A second lesson from these case studies is that mayors cannot govern without the support of their main constituencies, whether these are in the same party or part of the broader governing coalition. This conclusion runs counter to much of the conventional wisdom in Brazil, where governors and mayors are often analyzed as being able to govern with few constraints. A key factor that helps to explain the mayor's capacity to delegate authority is the willingness of the municipal council members to support that action. If municipal council members are unwilling to support participatory institutions, it becomes extremely difficult for the mayor to dedicate the necessary resources to doing so. This was clearly the case in Recife and São Paulo. Participatory budgeting was weakly implemented in both municipalities. On the other hand, if the municipal council members are willing to support participatory institutions, then it increases the likelihood that the mayor will be able to implement preferred institutional reforms. This was the case in Porto Alegre. Mobilizing citizen support, therefore, is insufficient for mayors to successfully implement participatory programs. Mayors must, in the best-case scenario, hope for a majority of council members who are willing to support the delegation of authority. If mayors do not have broad support in the council, they must devise other payoffs to induce recalcitrant council members to support innovative policymaking institutions.

Participatory budgeting helped partly to extend accountability in Porto Alegre and Recife; São Paulo's PB had a negligible impact on this outcome. The paradoxical results from Porto Alegre, which indicated that vertical and societal accountability was being extended through the new institutional type while horizontal accountability was being weakened, suggest that PB may only partially contribute to the redistribution of authority at Brazil's subnational levels of government. PB is by no means a magic bullet to extend accountability and deepen democratic practices. While PB does offer new opportunities for participation and decisionmaking, it continues to bear the risk that authority will be concentrated in the mayor's office, which has the potential to undercut efforts to establish a system of checks and balances at Brazil's local level of government.

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1. Although voting is mandatory in Brazil, political parties and politicians spend considerable resources on election day to remind their supporters to vote, as well as to “win over” voters with weak or no preferences.

2. It is difficult to define “binding” decisions narrowly in the case of Brazilian budgets. Because approved budget lines do not necessarily have to be spent, it is left to the executive's discretion to allocate resources (beyond personnel and debt payments) where appropriate. For PB in Porto Alegre, however, all the PB decisions are entered into the budget. Evidence demonstrates that the executive spent all available discretionary funds on the projects selected by the participants.

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