

**Session 9. Reading Interrogations. Sociology 929. *Envisioning real Utopias.*  
*Deepening Democracy: EPG***

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**1. Patrizia**

In general I found this proposal very comprehensible. The reasons why EPG could work and what would be the advantages that result from it are clear.

It seems to me though as if this kind of participatory governance does only work under a number of preconditions. At first the existing power backgrounds have to be reduced to a certain balanced level. Otherwise the already powerful could still use their advantages to pursue their interests even within a collaborative form of governance or would just not bother to deliberate at all. But thinking about power distribution and inequalities it seems hard to imagine a situation completely reduced of power inequalities. Thus Rogers and Cohen in their piece try, fighting the argument that even if there are no economic power differences there still exist inequalities in cultural capital, to show that these differences have to be stipulated away if a model of reasoning is constructed (Cohen/Rogers: 249). Of course then after this ideal construction has taken place it would have to be taken into account how such situations with the necessary preconditions might evolve. And in the case of reasoning deliberation this needs to be for both actors an incentive that something might result from this process that they could not achieve otherwise. If there would still be exit options there would be a reason for one party to choose some other form of solving the conflict for example via strategic bargaining, voting or negotiation (Wright/Fung: 19). It seems to me there aren't too many situations like that, it could work only in a prisoners dilemma, right? **[You are correct that where there are prisoner dilemma type failures the formation of stable deliberative democratic processes is probably much easier. But it need not be the case that a decision-context be entirely defined in PD terms – often there are PD aspects of problems, zero-sum + positive-sum components to a problem-solving situation, so there could be enough of positive-sum game in the situation to get the democratic deliberation off the ground. In Porto Alegre, fort example, the participatory budget underwrites a corruption-reduction process which provides real gains for the middle class, and so even if the decisionmaking process also favors allocations to the poor, the middle class might still endorse the EPG institution on the secondary grounds of transparency and corruption reduction (which is a kind of public goods issue). Also, the balance of power issue is also complex in interesting ways since there are different forms of power. If an equality of power was a precondition for democratic bargaining, for example, then unions would never have a chance. There are critical “weapons of the weak” which make them capable of imposing pretty high costs on the powerful even if they do not have the power to win a head-to-head battle. Various forms of disruptive power can provide enough leverage to create some possible gains from accepting a deliberative democratic process to avoid a negative-sum game.]**

Wright and Fung in response to the Cohen/Rogers piece introduce the concept of countervailing power. I am not sure I understand how this is supposed to work. If I

interpret them correctly then they conclude that there still are situations in which EPG doesn't work, because it is difficult to implement countervailing power in already adversarial relationships (Wright/Fung: 266). But then there are also some situations in which countervailing power can develop. How? **[We do not really have a general theory of variation in countervailing power and how it can develop. Our point was more to signal a problem and dilemma. In fact, I think there may be more flexibility in adversarial power being deployed as countervailing power than we may have suggested. This will be especially the case, I think, where the adversarial organization has relatively strong local autonomy close to the problem-solving setting.]**

At last I would like to have clarified the "rules" of deliberation. After the reasoning there will be something like a vote I suppose? So the majority decides to agree on a certain solution? But isn't deliberation then a mere preparational procedure for majority vote like in democracies? **[This is right: deliberation culminates, in general, in a vote which usually would have a simple majority rule to it. But this does not mean it is purely "preparatory" for the culminating vote, especially if one sees decisionmaking as an ongoing process, iterated indefinitely over time. Reasoned argument at time 1 creates presumptive claims for time 2, shifting the probabilities for future votes for one's position if one loses in this round. Deliberation also leads to preference change and redefinitions of the situation, so if we are voting on funding three projects X, Y and Z, the nature of the trade-offs may change by virtue of the discussion, so the projects end up being funded in different ways by virtue of deliberation.]**

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## 2. Adam

For the most part, I like the structure of EPG very much. The project also seems surprisingly feasible compared to basic income or coupon socialism, to the point that case studies (albeit imperfect) of EPG actually exist.

Is it possible that too much participation could overwhelm EPG? That is, could the mass of potential participants become so large that people are battling to be heard? The Porto Alegre case suggests that this isn't too much of a problem – the PB has worked even with linearly increasing first-round participation (p. 51). But could it happen that too much participation would be a bad thing – voices would be much diluted. Still, I think EPG deals with this structurally; and even with excess participation, people can still evince a 'common will,' which could even be stronger with more participants. **[There are also institutional design issues here. If the participation goes up, then the size of primary budgetary districts could be reduced. The key issue is that the participation in the problem-solving sites not be overwhelmed by numbers.]**

EPG is exceptionally clever on raising revenue and compelling implementation, both of which make government function more effectively. When politicians are extremely tax-shy to the point of crippling (I suspect this is not as widespread in other countries as in

the states), the PB offers a way around this: ‘Genro argues that the PB has generated public support for raising land-use taxes; these new taxes were largely responsible for the revenues available for public investment through the PB.’ (65) Plans to raise taxes can be defeated by two claims: ‘this will take money out of your pocket,’ and ‘the government wastes your money.’ Under the PB, participants can see the money returning to a more public sphere where they have some say in allocation; moreover, if the allocated money is squandered, the citizen (presumably) feels more entitled to complain and demand accountability. This appears to dovetail with Ackerman’s suggestions that deliberation can both solve collective action problems and compel politicians to be more attentive to public sentiment.

I was intrigued by the PB’s ability to appeal to the middle class, even though they were not necessarily the primary recipients of its benefits. Using the PB as an element of civic pride – promoting Porto Alegre as ‘capital of democracy’ – provides recognition that middle class residents might value, and at the same time further institutionalizes the PB. Could this work for all forms of EPG? It is harder to image for Habitat Conservation Plans, but that seems to me the weakest of the EPG cases. **[One of the issues here is the extent to which EPG actually enhances problem-solving capacities. Where it does, then it can invoke efficiency considerations that enhance its legitimacy even to those who do not directly gain from the process. HCPs could have this character – these could garner support from actors not directly involved in the rule-forming process if they felt that rules that resulted from the process were genuinely better.]**

I found the comments on self-interest within the EPG context fruitful. Is it possible we achieve a sub-optimal outcome because people are hesitant to articulate what they want? If this obstruction exists, could it be removed within the structure? Is the problem of apathy simply a desire to mitigate conflict with peers? This last suggestion seems likely under certain circumstances – namely, relative equality. But in the Brazil or India context where social divisions are stark and simple public goods are not provided, EPG appears to provide better solutions than the status quo, and engender good participation. **[My guess is that in virtually all decisionmaking contexts actors are not really hesitant to articulate what they see as in their own interests – what they want. The problem is more likely to be that they do not take into due consideration what other people want, nor are the willing to think seriously about what is in the public interests, the collective good. As a practical matter I don’t think the objection about the deliberative ideal excessively downgrading self-interest is likely to be that much of a problem.]**

I thought Mansbridge’s arguments suggested a full social-psychological examination of EPG group processes, a sort of Goffmanian examination of roles. Still, Abers makes the point that seeing the success of self-interest (groups demanding public goods) could spur others to express their concerns. Still, the issue we raised with Associational Democracy and Deliberation day looms here also: can profound moral differences on issues like abortion be articulated and resolved in EPG? **[I doubt if real resolution of moral differences over abortion could be achieved, but it may be possible that zones-of-compromise can be forged in spite of the moral polarization. Thus, in the abortion**

**context, deliberation has lead some decisionmaking settings involving pro&anti-abortion activists to agree on anti-teenage pregnancy initiatives as a way of reducing the need for abortions. To be sure, there are some anti-abortion groups who are intractable on any related issue because of their full-spectrum sexuality politics; but some degree of compromise on issues may be possible even when moral absolutes collide. This capacity for compromise would also increase if there was a stronger culture of deliberation and reasoned respect.]**

Finally, on the issue of asymmetric participation: it seems that setting aside proportions for women and minorities is a beneficial facet of EPG. With this space reserved, EPG cannot comprise only a male majority 'leisure class' with sufficient time to express themselves in politics. I would be curious to know what theory on gender in politics would say about this issue, and also about Bourdieu's concern about the lack of 'linguistic communism' – will women express their concerns in different ways than men? Will these be more or less effective? **[I think Bourdieu is just wrong on this. He assumes that linguistic competence is something so deeply entrenched that it is not possible to fairly rapidly increase this competence, train people in how to listen as well as speak. To be sure, educated middle class men enter communication contexts with more self-confidence and assertiveness than many other categories, and if they are not committed to norms of democratic deliberation – or, at least, prevented from acting against those norms -- they can engage in linguistic domination easily. But rules of participation and training can change this. Archon's research on Chicago indicated that linguistic competence issues were not a may obstacle to serious, intense participation by disadvantaged groups.**

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### 3. Elizabeth Holzer

Two main issues caught my attention:

1. *Who qualifies as potential participants, particularly when there is a division between the citizens and the affected?*

The second principle of the plan is the “involvement of ordinary people affected by these problems and officials close to them” (Fung and Wright 2003:15). So the plan specifies only two characteristics of participants: “ordinariness,” by which I interpret the authors to mean a negative qualification, that is, all those not just experts and elected officials; and “affectedness,” that is, anyone who would conceivably be affected by the issues under deliberation—I think it's important to note that in many empirical cases the institutional designs included active solicitation of the participation of underrepresented affected.

What is unclear in the model is the relationship between participants, citizens, and affected people. In participatory democratic governance the most natural division between participants and non-participants would be citizenship. But a strength of the model is giving power to “affected people” and not all affected people will be citizens

and not all citizens will be affected people. Consider attempting the Chicago education model in California—do Spanish-speaking permanent residents or illegal immigrants take part? **[Nice point. I think the pivotal question here is affected people, not affected citizens: those people who are in practice affected by the governance domain should be able to participate. In practice this might mean that in some specific contexts noncitizens would be nonvoting participants, but this would be a legalistic constraint, not a principled one. In Europe, today, noncitizen residents can vote in city elections, but not national elections, for example.]** If these affected people are included, there may be a strong interest in funding bilingual education, which in the face of the current budget crisis, may need to come at the expense of, say, extracurricular activities. If so, the institution may lose the support of the middle class, who appear from the success of anti-immigrant propositions, not to consider them members of the community—if the support of the middle class is, as one of the commentators argues, as integral to the success (as was the case in Porto Alegre), this may undermine the sustainability of the program. **[Fractures/cleavages in solidarity which lead some members of a community to believe certain groups should be excluded altogether from democratic governance would undercut EPG for sure. But it could also be the case that EPG deliberations might provide a basis for building such solidarity and bridging the cleavages.]** This is unlikely to make things worse than the current system, expect perhaps if it worked against current countervailing powers by, for this case, further tying “Spanish-speaking” with “illegal immigrants” in the public’s mind and thereby undermining interest groups for Spanish-speaking citizens. More generally, the concern is not that the citizen-affected people disparately would make things worse than the current system, but that it would lead the model to, at best, fail to fulfill the normative promise and, at worse, fail to be sustainable.

I see two possible implications for the model: either issue areas that the model can reasonably claim to aid need to be limited to those with a strong correlation between citizens and the affected or an argument against using citizenship as a criteria needs to be a more central part of the proposal.

## *2. How can a participatory governance institution be sustained when the political allies that supported it fall out of public favor?*

The party that created the participatory budget in Porto Alegre has increased its control of municipal government since its creation and Chicago is infamous for its essentially hereditary mayoral office. But a strength and appeal of democracy is its institutionalization of regime change. When a new party comes to office, what component of the institutional design sustains the model? As the authors point out, “it is easy to imagine that these systems of popular deliberative action would be quickly overturned by the social and political elites that they often act against” (Fong and Wright 2003:36).

The argument was presented (I think more than once) that practical successes coupled with appeal to the normative support for participatory governance will give the EPG a broad legitimacy that will sustain it against the attacks of the political office holders. Legitimacy is undoubtedly important and powerful, but I’m hesitant to place so much emphasis on it, especially in the short term. Considering the Supreme Court as an

institution extremely successful in translating legitimacy into power—it was still unable to support some of its decisions more than fifty years into the process (Jackson’s “Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it” comes to mind)—the Supreme Court, of course, has the support of the Constitution and its position as broker between Congress, Executive branch, and the public to sustain it in the long run.

The role of allies seems key in the Porto Alegre case—it would be nice to hear a more systematic analysis of alliance-making and supporting institutions.

**[I am not sure that there can be an institutional device that could genuinely secure an EPG innovation in such a way that it would not be vulnerable to counterattack and destruction by hostile forces if those forces assumed political power. There is also a dilemma that was felt acutely in the Porto Alegre case that legislative institutionalization – changing the city constitution to require EPG – would rigidify the structure and make it more difficult for the structures to evolve in response to learning and changing context. ]**

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#### 4. Stuart Meland

Leaving aside questions about the process of deliberation as being fair for all participants, I would like to discuss the viability of deliberative democracy as a means of deepening democratic participation.

Specifically, I wonder if Empowered Participatory Democracy will deepen the level of involvement of those who do participate but reduce the proportion of the population who are willing or able to participate. I question whether this is an improvement over our current system of little or no deliberation and much higher levels of participation (in electing representatives).

In the Porto Alegre example (12) in 1996, 92% of the population did not participate in the budgetary deliberations. This raises the question, what are the shared characteristics of those members of the population who did/did not participate? Are they more likely to be wealthy, poor, young, old, students, laborers, male, female, educated, illiterate, black, brown, white, conservative, liberal, or handicapped? I question whether deliberative democracy, by using a small sample of self-selected participants, can provide a proportional representation of the population necessary to ensure that all perspectives are included in the deliberations. According to Baiocchi (51-52), the deliberations in Porto Alegre are skewed toward those on the lower end of the economic scale with two thirds of participants representing the lower 45% of wage earners. I’m not going so far as to say that this is a bad thing, only that it does not appear to be terribly democratic.

An argument can be made that those who do not participate don’t deserve to have their opinions considered in the deliberations. But can we really say that those who are not motivated to participate, who cannot find the time to participate, or lack the transportation necessary to participate are not essential to democratic deliberation? If we let a small percentage of the population replace elected representatives who are typically held accountable by the 30-40% of the population that votes in local elections, have we

really deepened democracy? Or have we merely transferred power from the career bureaucrats to a specific, as yet in my mind unidentified, segment of the population?

In contrast, wouldn't a more democratic system be one where members of the population are randomly selected to participate in deliberations? This would give each member of the population an equal chance of participation regardless of any personal characteristics (unless they somehow fell outside the frame of the sample). It would also ensure that all views, no matter how radical or mainstream, are represented in the same proportion as they exist in the population.

**[Very interesting comments. A couple of reactions:**

**1. EPG does not replace representative electoral institutions; it supplements them. Ordinary territorially based elections continue and this defines the political arena within which the parameters for EPG get set. EPG then interjects a direct participatory form into specific decision-making/problem-solving contexts – like forming the budget or setting habit conservation rules.**

**2. 8% participation/year may imply more real democracy than 50% voting if**  
**(a) that 8% is embedded in social networks within which the issues are discussed;**  
**(b) much of the participation is of people also involved in secondary associations where issues are discussed;**  
**(c) people cycle in and out of participation over time. 8% per year could mean that in a ten year period 60% of adults have participated actively in at least one cycle, for example.**

**3. Having 8% of the population participate directly in problem-solving can change the dynamics of electoral participation because there would be a core of people with much higher levels of political engagement prepared to act as intermediaries between parties and citizens in the electoral arena. There can be participatory synergies between the two forms of participation.**

**4. The random jury model might be an especially interesting additional participatory device. We already use it for judicial procedures. What other sorts of problem-solving might be especially amendable to jury-type deliberation?]**

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## **5. César Rodríguez**

1. As presented in the introduction and the epilogue to *Deepening Democracy*, the empowered participatory governance model is both an innovative mechanism for enhancing the efficacy of state action in key policy areas and a powerful tool for promoting grassroots participation in democratic polities. Despite the need to be careful in drawing general lessons from nascent and scant experiences that embody such a model, I believe EPG can plausibly be expected to succeed in advancing the twin goals of

efficacy and participation, as illustrated by the more mature experiences in EPG –e.g., the Porto Alegre participatory budget.

In the spirit of the broader task of imagining real utopias —“non-reformist reforms”, i.e., reforms that open up avenues for further progressive social change—, I think it is worth taking the discussion of EPG beyond the pursuit of the two above-mentioned goals. In other words, it remains to be discussed what the non-reformist aspect of the participatory reforms could be. For instance, is there any potential in the Porto Alegre experience to take participation beyond decisions on how to spend the city budget and into decisions on how to distribute tax burdens — i.e., to go from participatory planning to participatory fiscal policy? Similarly, in the cases of worker participation brought up in the epilogue, is there any possibility of taking such participation beyond issues of enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, so that participation comes to bear, for instance, on decisions such as those on investment or profit sharing? In general, is there any intrinsic aspect of the EPG model that enhances the possibilities of further progressive social change once the participatory institutions are in place? **[I think the constraint on EPG targets is the pragmatic problem-solving quality of the decision-making. This would make things like tax burdens somewhat harder to enact through these sorts of processes, I would think. I suppose there could be some room for this, perhaps, because of the advantages of the deliberation component for preference transformation. But basically in a context where the issue is not working out a practical solution to some problem but directly dealing with distributional matters, direct deliberation may not work as well.]**

One key component of EPG — the emphasis on deliberation — seems particularly promising for introducing non-reformist effects into participatory politics. For — as argued in the introduction — deliberation may bring about the transformation of interests and capacities, thus raising gradually the transformative expectations — and the mutual trust — of the participating parties that aim at deeper social change. If combined with adversarial tactics — which, regardless of the existence of deliberative and collaborative institutions, would probably remain crucial for pushing reforms in a non-reformist direction — deliberation would indeed open up avenues for further social change. **[There is a possible move from participatory budgeting to participatory planning, where longer term goals are mapped out and broad needs for resource acquisition to accomplish those goals discussed. This could set the stage for clearer struggles over taxation and fiscal appropriation.]**

2. I would be interested in further exploring the typology of governance regimes offered in the epilogue, particularly as it bears on two different relations, i.e., that between adversarial and cooperative strategies, and that between deliberation and collaboration.

2.1. As for the former, it is not entirely clear whether the EPG model entails a claim about the overall desirability or scope of adversarial as opposed to cooperative politics. The examples given in the epilogue suggest that while adversarial strategies are helpful for making headway into realms of social policy where no serious reform has been undertaken –e.g., racial discrimination in the U.S. in the 1960s—, cooperative strategies are better suited for carrying out fine-tuned reforms once the broad reformist strokes are in place –e.g., workplace racial discrimination today in the U.S. In general, can we make any general claim about the usefulness/timeliness of adversarial as opposed

to cooperative strategies in furthering progressive social reform? Does each of these strategies fulfill certain roles better than the other? Or is the division of labor between such strategies contingent in nature, thus changing according to particular social and political contexts? **[Good issue. My intuition is that the more a problem-solving arena involves PD-type issues, the more cooperative strategies will have a chance to flourish; the more a set of issues trigger zero-sum conflicts, the more like adversarial strategies are likely to dominate. The ambiguity, of course, is that this contrast – PD vs zero-sum – is partially endogenous to the decision-making procedures: EPG can help generate a zone of compromise and pareto improvement even in contexts that are largely zero-sum, and adversarialism can turn public goods problems into zero-sum conflicts.]**

2.2. As for the relation between deliberation (as emphasized in the introduction) and cooperation (as emphasized in the epilogue), it was not entirely clear to me whether in the EPG model these two forms of problem solving refer basically to the same processes or whether they differ in some important aspect. In other words, does deliberation entail cooperation (as opposed to adversarial strategies) and vice versa? **[Let's ask Archon this. I would say that deliberation is always meant to be cooperative, but cooperation need not rest entirely on deliberation. Good faith bargaining and log-rolling can still have cooperative goals and not rest on mobilization of adversarial power.]**

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## 6. Richard Thomson

I haven't finished reading all the critiques yet, so if I bring up something that is discussed in the critiques – just forget I mentioned it.

1. How to respond to citizens who say this interferes with their one-person, one-vote representative democracy? Also, how to respond to citizens who say this interferes with the property rights of taxpayers? – As the Association of Chicago Principals pointed out this type of Deepening Democracy system (abbreviated here as DD) interferes with individuals' right to vote and control government on a one-person, one-vote representative democracy system (which is the foundation of the U.S. Constitution and government system). P 36 - "The association of principals fought back by arguing that the school reform's functional electoral structure violated the Constitutional mandate of one vote per adult citizen." My concern would be that even if DD is more-effective, opponents would counter that it is irrelevant if the DD system is more-effective, it is still unconstitutional. A similar case could be made that a DD-type system would interfere with the property rights of taxpayers to have government work in the best interests of the constituency without being limited in their exercise by "other outside stakeholders." Again, even if we assume DD is more-effective, could opponents still contend that it is wrong based on unconstitutional grounds? **[As I mentioned in response to Stuart's memo, EPG is combined with Representative democracy; it does not replace it. So the issue is: does this enhance the democraticness of a system with only one-person-one-vote elections? What it**

**typically replaces administrative procedures for decisionmaking – for example, the budget being prepared by the technical staff of the mayor’s office, or EPA experts setting the rules for Habitats.]**

2. How representation is established? – Under a DD system, a crucial determinate is whether or not your group, or your group interests, are at the table and given due consideration. For example, in the Chicago School Boards the parents are well-represented, but the employees and students of the school district are not as well-represented. Will this lead to significant conflicts over how representation is established (and more precisely who is represented well and who isn’t.) What impact will this have on DD outcomes? **[This is certainly a potential problem. In some situations the relevant constituency is unproblematic; in others it is more difficult. This is like the functional representation problem in Associations & Democracy.]**
3. Unfunded mandates / Form of privatization – One concern is that this type of system is very susceptible to becoming an “unfunded mandate” or a “privatization scheme” when a different political party comes into power or when money is tight (e.g. state budget cuts). As the Kerala example detailed in the conclusion, once the other political party got into power, the other party began to piece-meal break-down the DD system. Could this Kerala example, stymie other DD-type progressive reforms? **[Why is this a special problem in DD-situations? New parties in power can always subvert previous programs. I am not sure why this poses special problems for DD.]**
4. Could decentralization lead to a possible rollback of previous progressive gains of centralization (e.g. welfare reform) – As noted in Part I, much of the New Deal gains were created at central levels (e.g. the national or state level). Depending upon how decentralization is implemented over the long haul (i.e. during the reign of different political parties), it could be more beneficial, or more detrimental, for those stakeholders involved (e.g. society, consumers, workers, etc.) – one question is are the benefits significant enough to offset the possible detrimental benefits that could just as easily come with decentralization (over several political regimes)? **[Recall that EPG is NOT radical decentralization. It is *recombinant decentralization*, a form which combines devolution with a strong central coordination, which includes standard setting and monitoring. In some ways EPG is more demanding on central authorities, requiring higher levels of techno-administrative competence than old fashioned command and control centralization.]**
5. Costs – Will the wealthy (and maybe even middle-class) oppose DD solutions because it could significantly raise costs (e.g. taxes) for them (as in the Porte Alegre and Kerala examples), but the benefits flow to predominantly to underserved areas (which they won’t see the benefits of)? **[They might, but on the other hand, DD may increase their willingness to pay out of a sense of civic obligation and enhanced solidarity.]**

**Random Thoughts** – These random thoughts do not need comments, I provide them in case anyone else wants to discuss them:

6. Information asymmetries – In the Chicago example, both school district employees and police officers would be in a better position to know the health of the organization than parents and/or community members. Parents on these School Boards would be like independent Directors on corporate Boards of Directors who are limited in their capacity to independently criticize and manage because they are dependent upon the information provided to them by the employees of the School. How effective can parents on School Boards be in managing and criticizing Schools, when the information they have is provided by the employees of the School?
7. Dispersed group vs. undispersed group – Along the same lines as number four, teachers and cops are organized and frequently are members of unions. Whereas, the parents and community members are frequently autonomous individuals, or if they are in a group, in a weak organization with little funding or coordination. Will this place parents and community members at an unequal standing relative to teachers and cops?
8. Too great of a governance role for Porte Alegre’s “street commissions” – One benefit touted of PB in Porte Alegre was that organizations can easily form which reduced the advantages to prior organization. I found this a little problematic. I have no problem with groups forming quickly to represent individuals, but to give them a role in governance; I felt that they should have some permanence, stability, and some indication that their viewpoint represents X many citizens before assuming a role in governance. I was concerned that effortless group formation and a role in governance could lead to problems of governance without representativeness. The book mentions this concern on p 63 – 64, “And while this design has succeeded in fostering new associations, there is no assurance of the “internal quality” of these organizations. While architects and managers of the PB in Porto Alegre are well aware that certain neighborhood associations may leave something to be desired in terms of certain procedural standards, City Hall has nevertheless refrained from interfering in these popular organizations.”

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## 7. Linda M. Zech

For countries where the opportunity for radical transformation of institutions following changes in political power is possible, EPG offers an excellent blueprint for fairly widespread devolution of power to participatory governing bodies made up of ordinary citizens. While it, difficult to image that any state in the Union (okay maybe Vermont) – or for that matter any major state city, will delegate significant budgetary power to decentralized citizen groups, increased participation in governance offers its greatest promise for U.S. citizens facing narrower problems experienced direct and urgent matters.

The approach outlined in Deepening Democracy – especially those examples taken from the Chicago grass roots experiments – suggests a desperately needed alternative for dealing with difficult issues that face local, state and federal governmental units in this country. Apparent Hobson's choices abound – should we increase taxes, or cut services? Allow unfettered expansion of commercial development or maintain green space? Permit ordinary citizens to carry concealed weapons or restrict this privilege to individuals with security responsibilities? Effective and efficient solutions to these and other problems have been illusive because of, inter alia, pressure exerted by conflicting interest groups, lack of information about citizens real desires, and even the lack of cooperation among elected or administratively appointed officials. On the federal level many voices are crying for better and more accessible health care and affordable prescription drugs – but others proclaim that the free market must be allowed to function in these areas.

Many concerned citizens know enough about issues to be alarmed, but may feel they don't know enough to push to their elected representatives. They may believe they have no chance of having their concerns heard. They may give up on what they believe are lost causes, despite passionate concern, or may throw in with extreme interest groups that do not have a forum for collaborating on deliberative solutions. Citizens don't know how to take their power back. Fung and Wright's EPG envisions a design which addresses these concerns, and invites fruitful empowered participation by citizens in their own backyards.

The authors make it clear that elements of any participatory plan must be tailored to the situation if the goals of democracy are to be furthered by EPG. Careful planning is inherent in a tailored approach. To me the biggest challenge in implementing any empowered participatory governance is who will plan the EPG system. Can they be trusted to use their best efforts to design workable institutions that futher the goals of democracy? The answer will vary depending upon the circumstances attending creation of such a plan. For example, if a new political party is swept into power, new well thought out participatory institutions may spring up as part of the determination of the party to increase democracy ( as in Porto Alegre and India). However, if there is no such radical shift of power and it is only frustration and stagnation that forces a turn to an EPG method there is a great risk that robust institutions will not be created **[It is important here to note that the EPG institutions of the participatory budget were NOT well thought out designs – these were introduced in an uneven, ad hoc manner, initially with quite disastrous results, and only over time were reconfigured, amended, fine-tuned through a process of trial and error and dynamic learning. The “who” is still important – it was crucial to have a good faith political project of the left in power willing to learn and listen. But this was not the result of brilliant design and manipulation.]**

It seems to me that the possibility of reaching egalitarian, effective and efficient outcomes can be too easily undermined by defective planning. Domination of elite groups can be built into fora – whether intentionally or inadvertently. Even the selection of meetings times and locations (as in the case of the Indian Grama Sabhas) can

effectively eliminate knowledgeable and motivated citizens from participating and reduce egalitarian participation. Planners and participants need a clear and detailed understanding of how the body will function during its initial term, what power is granted, how members will be selected, and what problems the body will be authorized to address. For example, if a body is given the power to resolve a development issue where the interests of farmers and real estate developers conflict, holding an initial county-wide plenary session during harvest time may preclude farmers from being elected to a representational position. In communities where many poorer citizens work in manufacturing jobs which run on shifts, holding early afternoon meetings may limit participation.

To avoid unintentional problems in EPG design, the membership could be granted the power to make adjustments throughout the term, or if of sufficiently lengthy duration, for the next cycle of meetings. **[I think what is needed is a process for institutional innovation that has multiple points of intervention. In a sense what is needed is a reflexive EPG for EPG itself. In Porto Alegre, the city-wide budget council was the place where new rules were discussed and then institute for subsequent rounds, but it was often the major's office, engaged in the centralized coordination, that saw the problems and pose the need for solutions, and – I think – often proposed new weays of doing things. But the whole process was pretty messy.]** In addition a sunset or review term might be built in to any special purpose fora designed for a limited purpose. This will mandate a reconsideration whether the goals of the group are being served by the design, whether a different purpose has arisen mandating a new design (e.g., where monitoring has become the primary goal not program development), or whether new mechanisms need to be implemented to avoid such problems as domination, lack of egalitarian outcome etc. A sunset provision might also encourage those who would otherwise forum shop, from jumping ship early in the process. Those who are dissatisfied may be willing to give a new institution time to work – and then seek changes at the end of the sunset. Elected representatives and administrators who turn to EPG methods may be more willing to grant real power to the citizen groups – if a review period is built in.

It might also be useful to create term limits for participation in higher level positions to avoid a new elite from forming. These limitations could increase the likelihood that the institutions would be fair, effective and sustainable over time -- which giving citizens the experience of being a part of a deliberative democracy. **[This was a major issue in Porto Alegre, where a two term limit was imposed for city-wide budget councilors. This created a problem of the learning curve to be a good city-wide budget reconcilor and deliberator. To the extent that real knowledge and skills are needed for these demanding practices, then severe term limits may be problematic.]** This limit will necessarily be tailored to the purpose. For example landowners in a county who are members of an EPG monitoring an environmental program, may be the most appropriate pool for community representatives. While parental members of bodies involved in selection of school administrators or oversight of school budgets, should probably only serve while they are parents of students in the system. The education the

members have gained during their participation will not be lost however, as they can go on to use lessons in democracy in other secondary associations or other EPG bodies.

In this country, a system of many varied EPGs could work hand in hand with a Deliberation Day concept. Together they could create an enlightened citizenry, with increased tools for exercising power to shape their environment – in a reasonable manner. These experiences could form the essential stepping stone to electing representatives that might allow their well schooled citizenry to participate in a more expansive devolution of power, such as the Porte Alegre and Kerala experiments.

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## 8. Matías D. Scaglione

### *Empowered Participatory Governance as a process?*

The model of Empowered Participatory Governance proposed by Archon Fung and Erik Wright addresses a range of empirical responses to what they consider are the new challenge of “the Left”: the development of transformative democratic strategies “that can advance our traditional values – egalitarian social justice, individual liberty combined with popular control over collective decisions, community and solidarity, and the flourishing of individuals in ways which enable them to realize their potentials” (p. 4). Although the particular real-world responses analyzed by the authors certainly deepen the participation of “ordinary people” in a set of important public policies, it is not clear how this institutional arrangement could effectively *contribute* to achieve the “traditional values” of the “Left”.

There are some specific theoretical limits in the model that maybe hinders my understanding. Assuming that I am convinced about the virtuous circle of deliberation, I am not convinced about the emancipatory potential of a “development of political wisdom in ordinary citizens” based upon “practical knowledge” (p. 29), mainly when this practical knowledge is highly related to local experience, both geographically and in thematic scope. I would be more convinced if the model described by the authors is part of a *process*, in which both the thematic scope and/or the geographical dimension increases, thus increasing the wisdom of the citizens. However, I think that in this process practical knowledge is not enough, and that theoretical, scientific social knowledge\* should be incorporated. I do not see how a “perpetual [local] participation” (p. 22) with no guidance, that is, with no participation of theoretical knowledge, could surmount its political static nature.

\* I assume that in this situation the social sciences also increase its “wisdom” *pari passu* the “wisdom” of the citizens.

**[I agree with you almost entirely here: there is no spontaneous inductive process by which the deepening of practical knowledge would cumulatively generate more system-level understanding and perspectives on social change. So, clearly, if our arguments are taken to mean that the “development of political wisdom in ordinary**

citizens” based upon “practical knowledge” is a *sufficient* condition for advancing the traditional radical egalitarian values of the left, then this is false. This is not what we meant to suggest. Rather I see the practical political engagement of citizens in empowered participatory local problem-solving as contributing to an expansion of political potentials. The process by which those potentials would be realized, however, would require additional political forces and political learning. The question, then, is whether EPG-like institutions would be expected to have any particular kind of effect on the probability of these additional conditions occurring. Would EPG increase the likelihood of progressive political forces flourishing in ways that would enhance such political learning? Would it interfere with such political forces, perhaps by “taming” or containing them in bounds of respectability? Or, perhaps, there is no necessary relation here – the prospects for the right kind of political forces developing and contributing to political learning of ordinary citizens is largely independent of any experiments of EPG-type institutions. My own intuition is that this opens up spaces for progressive politics and learning; local empowerment in a participatory way is still empowerment, and empowerment opens up horizons in both thought and action.]

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## 9. Chang

### *Precondition for EPG: Countervailing Power*

I think EPG is the fascinating project. I totally agree to three principles of EPG. Let’s suppose one situation. Here is my experience.

I have thought that Erik does not understand me until today. Now I understand his position. In *Deepening Democracy*, Archon Fung and Erik suggest, “Empowered participatory Governance” as an alternative thinking. What I understand is the atmosphere of the class, which Erik really wants and intends to create. That’s EPG. I was a Marxist when I was a college student and have studied in contexts of top-down adversarial governance in Korea over fifteen years. I experienced the militant student movement, the resistance to the political Dictator. So, I was accustomed to the aggressive discussion culture. One more thing! What I expected from Erik was the charisma of an American Marxist. My thoughts changed a lot, however, though the on-going discussion of the class. But, I could not participate fully in the seminar because of my short English. In my brain, there came many thoughts on the topic, but, I could not express my ideas in English. In that case, is EPG possible? In terms of cultural capital, I am poor and powerless. In that situation, is deliberation possible? I think there is a certain historical, social and political context in which EPG is possible. What’s the political and social conditions that are necessary for EPG to operate fairly? As Fung & Erik point out, the critical question about EPG goes to its scope (p.38). Is it directly applicable to the Third World countries in which the dictator oppresses the people or Korea in 1980s? As Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers criticize, in terms of power inequality, EPG seems to have no

answer. I have one question about the countervailing power. “How to put countervailing power into collaborative decision-making?”

**[I would think that in general, under conditions of repressive dictatorship, anything like EPG really is not very possible, since democratic governance is itself off the agenda. However, this would not mean that struggles for EPG could not be an organic part of struggles against dictatorship and for democracy, and furthermore, that some of the principles of empowered participation could not be part of the internal participatory spirit with the social movements opposed to the regime. But certainly, under repressive conditions the limits here would be significant.]**

**In terms of the issue of cultural capital: you are certainly right that ease at verbal communication would seem to be a pretty significant issue in deliberation. Where there are serious linguistic barriers, then, some specific procedures would have to be introduced. Perhaps having sub-deliberations within language groups and then have bilingual bridging discussions between such groups. But this would certainly impede the easy flow of reason-giving that is at the core of deliberative communication. The cultural capital issue, of course, also affects deliberation among native language speakers, for it is not just sheer language facility that is an issue, but facility with speaking in a particular way in particular contexts. Bourdieu is very skeptical that this can be overcome. I think that training both in listening and in speaking can move things pretty far.]**

**I am not sure exactly what your question about countervailing power is, but we'll discuss the theme in class and you can raise it there.]**

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## 10. Jay Burlington

[With apologies for the slap-dash nature of these comments:]

A key component of the Empowered Participatory Governance model is deliberation. In order for deliberation to be effective; effectiveness “relies on upon individuals remaining open to new information and proposals rather than doggedly advancing preformulated ones” (Fung & Wright, p. 30).

I would like to suggest the general hypothesis that the more firmly entrenched people's interests entering deliberation are, 1) the less likely it is that the norms and procedures of deliberation will be genuinely adhered to, and 2) the more likely the deliberative arena is to become one of strategic bargaining by the most powerful actors, and that 3) this will undermine the deliberative process in such cases. **[One issue comes to mind immediately here: these claims depend a bit on exactly what one packs into the idea of interests. In the quote above we refer to “information and proposals”, not “interests”. I may have an unshakable interest in protecting endangered species, but**

**still be open to new proposals on the basis of new information that emerge in the course of deliberation and which expand the zone of possible compromise with people whose interests are in economic development. The interests may be pretty fixed and yet the practical proposals can still be flexible and open”**

The more the powerful stand to lose, the less willing they will be to participate in the deliberative arena. A stubborn economically rational actor, knowing that participating in deliberation in a spirit of openness will likely yield a Pareto-suboptimal outcome for his or her material interests, will decide to undermine the deliberative process by being hard-nosed and refusing to participate in a spirit of openness in deliberation itself, and working outside the deliberative arena to undermine the power of the deliberative process in determining outcomes and implementing solutions. **[But stubborn economic rationality can also lead to a willingness to take a pragmatic approach to problem-solving which may be enhanced by deliberation. The various deliberative resolutions of zero-sum conflicts on the environment have this character. Look at some of the material on the Quincy Library Group website, for example:**

**<http://www.qlg.org/>,  
<http://www.qlg.org/pub/contents/overview.htm>,  
<http://www.qlg.org/pub/miscdoc/terhunecasestudy.htm>]**

This suggests to me that it will be quite difficult to build forces of countervailing power (cf. Fung & Wright, Chapter 11) the more clearly interests are pre-defined and the more economically rational actors are.