

READING INTERROGATIONS #5

SOCIOLOGY 929: ENVISIONING REAL UTOPIAS

MARCH 6, 2008

CHAPTER 5. SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT AND THE STATE

1. Catherine Willis

The proposals in the section are great and very thought provoking. I am interested in how the reproduction of knowledge and ideologies will be affected /affect the outcomes of these institutional designs. This problem is presented below in the context of two of the examples.

a) “Egalitarian public financing of electoral campaigns” is a really amazing idea. Private money in campaign financing is however only one of the ways in which capital influences the political process. Capital can continue to play a huge role in making and breaking candidates through its control of information. Research tanks are often partisan, influential and control large budgets. The sketchier side of politics will persist through manoeuvring (mud-racking research on the lives of candidates) behind the scenes and release of selective information. High profile endorsements would also continue.

Newspapers would also continue to have a tremendous amount of influence. Most voters get a second hand interpretation of candidates’ positions through media sources rather than from the candidates themselves. Would this change under egalitarian public financing? Would people become more involved in campaigns? Inversely, how would indirect support of capital continue to influence political outcomes and would this indirect support increase in response to the inability to provide direct support? **[I think the “democracy card” public funding proposals would not by themselves guarantee good information and certainly would not reduce a range of effects through the media. Ackerman has a companion proposal called “Deliberation Day” which is a public holiday devoted to public meetings, concentrated discussion and debate, and related matters. But in the absence of more organic measures to enhance participation, I doubt if that would have much meaningful effect.]**

b) The role of information is also key in the case of citizens’ assemblies; the importance of “carefully balanced briefing materials” is brought up by Fishkin in Wright (15) and the importance of learning is also addressed by Lang (7-9). There is of course the most obvious question of who chooses the materials (technocrats, university professors etc.) and how the material choice could open or restrict how the citizens conceive of solutions. Furthermore we need to realize that inequalities in current society are not only perpetuated through economic or state power but also through knowledge and ideology. Dominant ideologies are socially reproduced and will be a part of the framing of issues and information given to citizens’ representatives; they will also be integrated into the citizens’ perception of the possible. Can propositions that are paradigm-shifting occur in this context? **[I am not so sure that the issue of the control**

the information for these assemblies is necessarily such a huge issue if the process is open and transparent, particular with the internet and other mechanisms for disseminating information which the members of a citizens assembly would have available. As long as academic settings remain reasonably pluralistic then the spectrum of views and information that would get filtered through an academic process is likely to be sufficiently broad to allow for meaningful citizen problem-solving and deliberation. Still, I agree with you that information in various forms can be a problem – both because of bias and because of potential information overload.]

2. Edo Navot

Since this chapter was focused on case studies and less on principles, I find myself without any significant principled critique (my usual tune this semester). In lieu of something to say, I have a suggestion for structuring our class so that we get more of a dynamic discussion and less back-and-forth, with an added bonus of embodying what we are studying. My suggestion is to pretend we are deliberative citizens' assembly and to use class to hash out some the unresolved issues presented by the chapter. That is, instead of the text itself being the focus of discussion, we discuss the issues the text brings up directly. We like to think of ourselves as informed people, we've just read a background piece to help inform us further – lets see how these democratic experiments are in practice. **[Very nice suggestion – let's go for it! We could organize the time by going down the set of specific proposals/case studies perhaps.]**

I personally find the direct democracy section the most engaging, in part because it seems the most problematic, and because it seems closest to the spirit of radical egalitarian social empowerment. The following are questions that came up for me which may make for some discussion: There are very interesting problems of scalability in direct/empowered participatory governance. The Porto Allegre case demonstrates the enormous complexity of getting a city involved in its own budget-making process, as well as the time and effort involved. I imagine instituting such a process at a state or national level would be orders of magnitude harder. Can we think of pragmatic solutions for scaling up this process? **[The PB is unlikely to be really scalable to higher levels. It was tried at a state level in one state in Brazil but it didn't work well. There may, however, be other types of direct participatory mechanisms for higher levels, for example around more functionally defined areas of policy. Or perhaps citizens assembly time random selection can simulate direct participation for higher levels of government.]** Is participatory budgeting even a desirable institution for states and nations, rather than cities?**[One thought is that ordinary representative institutions would function differently at more centralized levels if the local levels were organized in these more participatory ways because these PB-type local institutions would constitute "schools of democracy" that would shape parties and elections.]**

Do we agree with the "core elements of the model" (p. 8), can we think of others or dispute any of these? Can we think of specific mechanisms of "recombinant decentralization" where the central authorities involved in social deliberation really do

what they're supposed to, support local participatory groups and hold them accountable rather than threaten their autonomy (especially when considering issues of scalability)? Is countervailing power a matter of social serendipity (whoever's got it can achieve EPG, whoever doesn't can't) or are there institutional mechanisms for ensuring it?

3. Rodrigo Salgado

A few things I want to mark

First, about the viability of an alternative. How can we know precisely the viability of an alternative? Can we know if an alternative is viable just knowing how its institutional mechanisms work? Is it possible that we couldn't know precisely how an institution works, or we're wrong diagnostic that an institutional design of an alternative isn't consistent with the existing mechanism of the institution and then discard an alternative that could be viable later in time because of that unknowing or wrong diagnostic? So, what precisely are the elements that we have to consider to the viability of an alternative? **[Ultimately, I think, viability is something determined through an experimentalist process – what some people are now calling “democratic experimentalism” – since it is almost impossible to fully account for the interplay of context and unintended consequences before trying something out. Viability may also be very context dependent so it can easily be the case that a judgment is made that something doesn't work very well and it is abandoned, but in fact this was just because the context needed transformation. Time can also be an issue: some institutions may take longer than others to work themselves in, for the new “equilibrium” of expectations, norms and practices generated by the rules to become stabilized, so if actors are too impatient, then viability may not be achieved. This was almost the case for the participatory budget which was, I am told, a real mess for the first couple of years until it was worked out properly. So, the problem of establishing the viability of an alternative is a process, and is very unlikely to be achieved with high certainty.]**

Second, in Buenos Aires was implemented participatory budget with results not so good. While there was participation in the construction of the agenda of priority issues to be resolved in the region, the final decision of priorities and the implementación of these projects were in hands of the local authority or government officials. The people propose a budget but does not define it or participates in its implementation. There is a making decisions on the problems to be resolved, but not a control in the execution or the implementation. Non-implementation of what was decided generates disappointment in participation of people. How can we deal with that? **[This is the issue at the core of the “EPG” model – that participation needs to be empowered in order for it to be taken seriously. This was the decisive shift in the Porto Alegre case: these assemblies actually did decide the budget –the priorities and allocations.]** The viability and achievement of these projects are subordinate to the role and initiative of the government? It is achieved only with making decisions processes or it is necessary to have greater control over the implementation of what was decided? It is feasible to think

of this type of empowerment in countries where there is no such initiative from their governments? **[In general this sort of proposal does require the acceptance by the government, and usually the initiative from the party in power, since this particular kind of mechanism involves a change in formal power structures. What this means, of course, is that political parties, especially on the left, need to be convinced that enhanced direct empowered participation is desirable on both pragmatic and normative grounds, and then these sorts of things need to become part of party programs.]**

Finally, I am not sure the democracy card can resolve the problem of financing policy, because it not necessarily reduce the influence of the economic sectors in the financing of the politics campaigns. These sectors may use another mechanisms of transferring money, even if the citizens are doing it. So you can have economic interest sectors and the citizens both paying political parties campaigns. I think that instead of considering who is funding political parties, it is possible to think why it is needed so much money to finance the campaigns. I think the emphasis should be on limiting the amount of money available for campaigns. Just a thought. **[If you enforce the rule that politicians and parties cannot receive any “private” funds if they accept democracy card funds, then this could dry up corporate and sectoral funding for campaigns since there would be such large amounts of money in the public funding mechanism and private funds would have a legitimacy problem connected to them.]**

4. Julian Rebon

I believe, the success of participatory budget depends a lot on the social force that you have. In Argentina, five municipal government implemented participatory budget but without important consequences. I didn't know studies about this experiences but I think that an important social organization it's central in order to stimulate the participation levels of citizen and relevance for the government. Nowadays, in Latin America have others process of direct democracy. For example, we can mention autonomous governments in zapatist lands and in Venezuela the introduction of mechanisms of “popular” participation at local level (assembly for example) and pebliscitarios at national level. I consider important in a project about real utopias analyze the more important intents of transformation in the region. **[It is really important to assess the extent to which participation brings with it real power, not just opportunities for expressive and symbolic participation. Without real empowerment then one would not necessarily expect there to be much positive effect. It is not always easy to know how much real power a popular assembly might have because they can be manipulated by local bosses and the like. National plebiscites are a much more ambiguous mechanism and are certainly subject to a lot of manipulation by powerful forces. This is one reason why the citizens assembly for referenda review is an interesting complement to plebiscite elections as described in the chapter.]**

In the part recounted representative democracy you give a lot of importance to “democracy card”. Maybe is a very important proposal to USA (sometimes it seemed that the book was thought for the North American society). But I don’t think that it is so important to other countries (In the last elections in Argentine one of the candidates with most expensive campaign stayed in last positions) May be it’s better and cheap to put a limit to the expense of campaigns and to assure free publicity to all the candidates.

Other question, the last session, we couldn’t understand your answer to the question “What is, in your opinion, a set of proxy variables in order to measure empirically the level of social ownership of different social units?” We consider this issue very important in order to plain and evaluate real utopias in the production world. **[You probably didn’t understand the answer to that question because I am not sure I had a coherent answer! Basically I think of social ownership as meaning democratically controlled public ownership – the ownership is vested in everyone and for that to be meaningful, then the political control over the use of the resource/unit in question must be genuinely democratic.]**

5. Tod Van Gunten

Is there a justification for a “Democracy Card” type mechanism over simple public financing of elections? Relative to the (very low) baseline of the current U.S. system of private financing, the advantages of an institution of this sort are clear to me, but relative to public financing of elections I’m not so sure. In particular, I’m worried about the possibility that the Democracy Card idea might tend to favor highly visible parties and candidates and disfavor less conspicuous “third party” (or fourth or fifth...) contenders. A system of public financing can, at least in principle, avoid this problem by distributing funds equally to all parties (of course there will always be a problem as to who what organizations count as legitimate parties, but this problem would also exist with Democracy Cards if the stipulation is made that the money can only be spent on legitimate political candidates). **[It is not so obvious that an equal distribution of funds to parties would be the most democratic, since it would give large mass parties and fringe parties the same resources. And if it is not equal, then what would be the basis for proportionality. The Democracy Card at least has the advantage of giving funds on the basis of absolute citizen equality. There could, however, be some other funding mechanisms for “start-up funds” which parties and candidates might get in order to have minimum necessary funds to recruit democracy card dollars.]** It seems to me that a truly democratic system of provision of funds (or other resources) for political campaign purposes should be structured so as to allow for newcomer entrants to the political process. Of course, it’s possible that Democracy Cards would favor this to some degree by creating a low-cost avenue to support alternative parties (the only cost would be the opportunity cost of not supporting another party). Compared to the situation in the US, where a vote for the Green party, for example, potentially means electoral victory for Republicans, this is certainly an improvement. But I still don’t see the benefit relative to outright public financing. **[Outright public financing always brings with it the problem of deciding what is a legitimate party and how to**

apportion funds across very unequal political entities. Since the government would be doing the allocating rather than citizens it will have lower legitimacy and be subject to all sorts of biases. What would be the principle involved?]

Another potential problem is the impact of this sort of system on the broader political culture. Would a Democracy Card be compatible with other real utopian institutions? It seems to me that the ethos of participation demanded by, for example, Participatory Budgeting and that implied by Democracy Cards are at odds with one another. **[Why are these at odds since even with lots of EPB institutions there would still be elections and parties and need to fund them?]** What *are* the constraints imposed by political culture on these sorts of institutions? Is the assumption that political culture will adapt to whatever institutional framework is in place?

6. Ruth, Pablo & Santiago

The chapter analyzes proposals for real utopian institutional designs for deepening democracy in the state. These institutional designs should satisfy three criteria: i.) desirability in order to a radical democratic egalitarian emancipatory project; ii.) viability of institutional arrangements to existing ones; the support and contribution to social empowerment.

We have some comments and questions related with the ways in which some institutional designs could be implemented for invigorating a democratic emancipatory project. We think the questions analyzing some difficulties in local experiences and the context of Latin America but they could be extended to other cases.

Ruth, Pablo y Santiago

We agree upon the importance of two ideas: i.) the decision making decentralization, and ii.) centrally coordinated institutionalization. The decentralization could reinforce economic differences between neighborhoods or regions. We wonder if is it possible to find out a type of material resource controlled by poor neighborhoods or regions. **[The inequalities across decentralized units is one of the pivotal reasons for “recombinant decentralization” – i.e. a strong coordinating center. One of its functions is to organize relatively egalitarian resource distribution across these units. Indeed, in the Participatory Budget, the per capita spending allocated by the city budget was higher in poor neighborhoods than rich ones. This was the result of, basically, a needs-based formula for allocating the magnitude of budget across regions of the city. In any case: centralized funding combined with decentralized decisionmaking can partially overcome the disadvantages of some local units.]**

We think that the limits among the neighborhoods or regions areas are a key target because if the repartition is very unequal in economic terms, it could generate political conflicts around economic distributional matters. Which are the mechanisms to coordinate democratic social power?

Ruth

In the case of participatory budget, how to handle issues in which decisions affect conflicting interests or antagonistic points of view concerning basic things as where to

locate a new school or what roads to pave? **[Ultimately priorities within each city regional assembly are voted on, but the aspiration is to try to resolve conflicts as much as possible through a process of deliberation and consensus formation. Of course this works very imperfectly, so majority voting resolves the issue of priorities. Defeated priorities, however, have a certain claim to be given higher priority in subsequent budgets. This makes the on-going iterated character of the process important because of the way this lengthens the time horizons for compromise.]**

Santiago

How to decide what are concrete urgent problems and the ranking of necessity? It is supposed that the community in a democratic making process decide about these tasks. What happens when there is no agreement? Again I want to understand the ways to create consensus between different and some cases opposite interests. We do not see clearly the type of the state that will coordinate decisions **[Gioanpaolo Baiocchi's book on participatory budgeting goes into a lot of effort to explain how the deliberation process actually worked in the regional budget assemblies, the delegated budget councils and the city-wide council. In all of these venues there was conflict and need to resolve conflicts. Even though the ideal was consensus, much of the action involved bargaining and compromises much as occurs in any democratic body. The fact that there was a pragmatic orientation to the task helped, but undoubtedly the process fell short of ideal consensus deliberation.]**

Pablo

How to articulate the political arrangements of a democratic egalitarian project with the organization of the economic structure? Is it necessary a connection between the economic structure and the political superstructure? What happens if some democratic egalitarian measures imply a decreasing in the economic activity of a poor region which needs the growing of the productive forces to improve the wealthy condition? **[So long as the economy remains organized through private capital accumulation and relatively free markets, then democratic-egalitarian decisions will be heavily constrained by the need to foster capitalist accumulation. That constraint is inherent. But it doesn't mean that it is always a tight constraint that leaves no room to maneuver. One of the things that a participatory democratic process can accomplish, for example, is reducing corruption and improving the efficiency of local budgets, and this can have the effect of loosening the constraints. If democratic participatory processes enhance social stability that is also good for economic growth. And furthermore, if indeed there is a trade-off between growth and equality, then a democratic participatory process might be more willing than less democratic forms to accept that trade off.]**

Which would be the relation of the institutional radical democratic project with the territories of indigenous communities? For some of these communities the land it is not an economic resource; How to incorporate either the communities to a real utopian project and the land to economic production? **[The problem of indigenous communities is extremely interesting from the point of view of the radical democratic egalitarian conception of social emancipation and the principles of social justice I laid out in chapter 1 – the equal access to the social and material means to live a flourishing**

life. The claim by indigenous communities is that a central condition for members of these communities to live a flourishing life is for them to have firm control over their own land. This is a reasonable claim, but I don't think its justification should be mainly based on historical arguments or on primordial attachments, but on the authenticity of the claim that indeed this is a condition for flourishing. What matters are the conditions which enable people today to flourish and people in the future to flourish on equal and democratic terms, not the correction of historic denials of the conditions for flourishing in the past (except – again – as these are embodied in current injustices).]

7. Sung Ik Cho

In this chapter, I have just a few questions which need further explanation. First of all, in the varieties of democratic governance, the goal of emancipatory democracy is manifested to transform each of three different governance rule – representative, associational, direct democracy – from the ‘thin democracy’ into ‘deep democracy’ rather than into ‘direct democracy.’ Yet, what is not clear to me in the three different forms of the democratic rule is their interrelationship. With no explication, the table of democratic governance appears to me that those three forms of democratic governance are compatible with one another. But they seem different to me. Representative democracy and direct democracy are political forms as an answer for “how power can/should be legitimated in terms of “rule by people,” whereas associational democracy seems slightly different as an answer for “what kinds of ‘people’ should participate in politics.” For example, associational democracy is bound to confront a fundamental problem of democratizing power in associations because associations themselves are power which should be legitimated by ‘rule by people’ in a way of either representative democracy or direct democracy. **[I agree that associational democracy has a more ambiguous relation to the idea of rule by “the people” since not all association are really associations of the “the people”. It seems to be on the face of it rule by organized interests rather than rule by the people. One way of thinking about this is that associational democracy can facilitate what is sometimes called “stakeholder democracy” – a process of empower problem-solving decisionmaking by those interests affected by specific domains of decisions. The idea is that for certain kinds of decisions, better decisions will be made when associations of people most directly affected by the decision are directly involved in the making the decisions. In these terms, healthcare councils would have associations of doctors, associations of other medical caregivers and associations of patients involved. This would be a better design than a) have healthcare decisions made by a medical techno-bureaucracy, or b) by a direct democracy process in which anyone can show up at decisionmaking meetings in the manner of a town hall meeting. The associational democracy in healthcare would be regulated by representative democracy – just as techno-bureaucracies are. And a deepened form of associational democracy might insure that the associations themselves were internally democratic.]**

On the other hand, associational democracy can shed light on one aspect which representative democracy and direct democracy do not take into account as an important

element of democracy: “who is the ‘people’ in ‘rule by people’?” Here, I think Alexis de Tocqueville was right, when he was concerned about the negative effect of democratization: individualization or even atomization and social disintegration, leading him to consider voluntary associations as a significant mediating role of democratization. For instance, representative democracy as a form of deep democracy might have two possible problems such as a highly interactive mobilizing populist political party representing the masses who are unorganized individuals, or highly interactive mobilizing polarizing political parties separating people into two hostile social groups, leading to favor political compromise and bargaining between two parties rather than deliberation. And in case of deep direct democracy, empowered participatory governance can be a battlefield of individuals for power struggles, if there is no associational democracy, as Tocqueville pointed out. In this aspect, associational democracy has advantages of not only preventing social disintegration by the general effect of socialization but also preventing social polarization by the specific effect of cross-networking. In this sense, while representative and direct democracy deal with causes of power and democracy, associational democracy also responds to social effects of democracy. **[These are very good points. One can also argue that associational democracy can contribute to the process of consensus formation by clarifying interests to people based on various associational identities.]**

Compared to a conventional liberal democracy ruled by the majority, EPG is described as having more advantages for political deliberation rather than political bargaining and compromise. But the way of describing deliberative process of EPG does not suffice to make a distinction from liberal democracy in terms of decision-making process. Even if a conventional liberal democracy follows the rule by majority in the eventual stage of decision-making, it also has many preliminary process of public-hearing and discussion for deliberation. Does EPG have a different institutional way of decision-making in the ultimate stage, such as unanimous consensus among participants, unlike the majority rule? If not, how can we assure that such EPG’s more preliminary deliberative procedures would not end up with political conflicts and bargaining for the final decision-making? **[I agree that there is space for deliberation in representative democracy as well as EPG – in legislative committee hearings there can be, sometimes, genuine deliberation over problems, not just speech making and bargaining behind the scenes. In EPG institutions when a decision ultimately gets made, it will often be by a conventional vote – unanimity rules are generally not feasible because they allow for too much obstruction. I don’t think that this necessarily is a problem. The issue is not so much whether at the end of the process there is a vote, but whether the process involves deep deliberation in ways that allow people to change their minds and develop their views in response to understanding other people’s interests and taking them into account. I don’t see any way that there can be a guarantee that this deliberation is robust, and it will certainly get mixed with bargaining and conventional compromise.]**

As for randomocracy, I am not sure whether it really has some democratic characteristics for representative democracy. It seems that it only represents partially demographic characteristics. But does ‘representation’ in representative democracy not refer to ‘social characters’ rather than just demographic features? Who decides what

social and even demographic characteristics should be considered in randomly selecting citizens? Even, who decides which characteristics are social and demographic? For example, in deciding the age limit for voting, in what age young people should be in such a civic council? **[The idea of representation here is the same as in a “representative sample” in a social survey. There are two reasons for some kinds of “stratification” of the sample: (1) the relatively small size of such assemblies runs the risk of stochastic distortion of the distribution across salient attributes, such as gender, or in some contexts race or ethnicity. By stratifying the sample you avoid this. But of course this makes the criteria themselves potentially controversial. 2) for legitimation reasons it might be necessary to stratify samples geographically, since the citizens assembly is linked to territorial elected assemblies., This is why the BC citizens assembly had two citizens from each electoral district. I am sure that there are problems with any protocol here, but the question is whether they are likely to be good enough for the purposes.]** Furthermore, even if randomly selected civic assemblies can have no direct ties to private interests affecting decision-making, it might, perhaps, be misused by the government to make a legitimate rule in the name of public interests, overriding minority interest as selfish and egoistic. For example, in case of locating nuclear plants in some local neighborhoods, it can be a critical issue for local residents but also national energy issues for consumers. If a national civic assembly is constituted based upon national demographic characteristics, the probable solution is to locate a nuclear plant somewhere and give some remuneration to local residents, rather than reject a plan. **[These kinds of locational decisions will always have winners and losers, and they will always be met by local NIMBY (not-in-my-back-yard) objections. This will be true whether the decision is made by a citizens assembly, a legislature, a bureaucracy or a court. So, the question is which process is likely to uphold egalitarian principles of fair treatment to the greatest degree? Which decision process will be most sensitive to the costs and there most willing to properly compensate the losers?]**

8. Charity Schmidt

I appreciate the idea of mixing types of democracy, as differentiation of political realities among the political hierarchy (for lack of a better term) may require different varieties of democratic organization, if only temporary. I am, however, very skeptical about any formulation of representative democracy and its potential to deepen political participation and social empowerment. Representative democracy (at least in the top-down fashion we are familiar with today) still determines and legitimizes the appropriate candidates and issues and reinforces a disconnection between the people and the state. **[What precisely do you mean by the The top-downness of representative democracy? Is this because of the hierarchical character of parties – the organizations through which representation takes place? If parties were themselves participatory and internally democratic, would you still feel that the politicians elected through parties would be top-down?]** That being said, although the ‘democracy cards’ example is a neat idea and would represent a significant change relative to current democratic standards in countries with representational democracy, **it in no way transforms the ‘choices’ of candidates or even parties.** **[By reducing abriers to entry and undermining the role of private**

money, wouldn't this open the space for ordinary people to be candidates and for new parties to form?] Also, a conceptual link between political power and campaign funding is, I believe, a dangerous idea that serves to reinforce the link between capitalism and politics. In short, can representative democracy, from the top-down, ever really be democratic? **[I don't quite get the point about creating a link between politics and funding inherently reinforces the link between capitalism and politics. Democracy cards is a radically egalitarian mechanism of funding – every person has an identical capacity to allocate resources to politics. That is quite anticapitalist: markets play no role, private wealth plays no role, the ability to translate capitalist power in political power is curtailed. The fact is that political activity does require financial resources, not just time and energy, and this is true whether it is social movement activity or elections, and the democracy card idea tries to achieve the “equal access to the political means” principle by making this aspect of political participation – contributing money – egalitarian.]**

Also, I felt as though an element of expert-community cooperation was not sufficiently discussed. It is true that experts have to work to make their expertise understandable and accessible to community members. However, there is an element of expertise that the communities (we are often talking about poor, uneducated communities, right?) have to share with the experts and state representatives. The incorporation of community members into the state decision making apparatus is not only to increase participation and empowerment, but also to utilize in legislation that invaluable local knowledge developed over generations of living in those communities, knowledge that the experts are often lacking. This also brings the 'real' into real utopian formulations, blending ideas and practical designs. **[You are absolutely right here: one of the core ideas of EPG is that it can tap local knowledge for effective problem-solving. One of the goals is better government not just greater popular power.]**

9. Guillaume Neault

Like last week, I find the reading challenging and quite fascinating. I would like to make one general comment on representative democracy and explore some of its connections to the examples you proposed.

My general comment is the following: I think your definition of representative democracy is too generous, especially its last sentence: 'In most democratic countries, this is by far the most important way by which ordinary people play some role in the exercise of political power.' Your statement is accurate, and I believe that you consider this definition as 'thin democracy'. But, I would like to add to it. I believe representative democracy is unique in the following way: of the three forms of democracy you presented, representative democracy is the only one fully subordinated to state power, where the voter consents to a leader. It is true that we can think of 'deeper forms' of representative democracy, but if ordinary citizens have no power on state decision-making, save the electoral vote, it is hard to imagine what institutional forms there could be for post-capitalist politics. So, in its 'real' form, representative democracy is a conservative model, appropriate for the reproduction of the dominant order. **[I don't think I agree with this as a general statement. What are the effects of representative**

democracy depends upon how it is connected to other forms of democracy. An elected city council that passes ordinances of various sorts is very different if it exists in the context of neighborhood participatory assemblies and participatory budget councils, then it if it does not. In one case citizens are involved in multiple pathways through which their interests and identities are both expressed and formed; in the other they are engaged in only one.]

On a similar note, I think the idea of the Democracy card is good, as it would probably restore the virtues of honesty and equality in political campaigning, but is it really going to “increase the potential for state power to be more fully subordinated to social power?” I think it’s right to say that it would reduce the pathways economic power to state power, but unless voters are directly engaged in the decision-making process (voting power is insufficient to me) it is hard to imagine that state power would be subordinated to social power. One more note: if my point is worth debating, I think Amy Lang’s project features stronger ties to your definition of direct democracy than with representative democracy because ordinary citizens were directly involved in formulating a proposal. This is quite different from representative democracy, which emphasizes competitive elections and representation by proxy.

10. Molly Noble

In light of the fact that this chapter analyzes actual case studies for the first time in the manuscript I found it easier to point out the failures and imperfections of specific empirical programs than to discuss the normative principles upon which those programs are based. Obviously no model is fully going to live up to its ideological goals but what I found myself most grappling with, was at what point do the weaknesses and flaws compromise the ideals? How do you measure the negative externalities against the benefits of the program? Since we have already discussed the potential for a program to both challenge and support current institutional structures...what is the bottom line for determining how to tip the scales? **[Two comments on the issues of “flaws”: 1) I don’t think that there is any specific “bottom line” for this problem for the issues of any given proposal must always be posed against accessible alternatives. That is a very tricky problem because (a) the alternatives to a given proposal include things which may not be immediately achievable but might in the future, and (b) instituting a given proposal may make it harder to achieve something better in the future. This is the sort of discussion people have around health care: instituting some government program for insurance now that works through private insurance may make single-payer harder to get in the future. So the first issue is that flaws and compromises can only be really evaluated against some set of alternatives, not all of which are equally present. 2) All of the proposals we are examining are to be viewed as rough drafts of any institution that would be instituted in practice. All of them require democratic experimentalism to be actually implemented in a real utopian way. So a critical issue in thinking about flaws and designs is the extent to which a given proposal is likely to have real learning capacity built into it.]** I see potential problems with scalability and timeframe along these lines. It is easier to imagine these examples working at the local level rather than at the national or even state level. I can also see

potential for conflict between local and national interests - conflict within the self, between the self and the community, between communities and so on. I was a little confused about “centrally-coordinated decentralization,” specifically – what are the mechanisms through which connections between local units are established and accountability is held? **[This is basically the problem of having a super-ordinate body with meaningful power that oversees the decentralized units in various ways. In Porto Alegre this was the city-wide budget council and Mayor’s office, for example. There are many specific devices through which this could be established.]** Are the means that lead to social empowerment for some now going to lead to disempowerment later? That being said, these are the questions/concerns that came to mind while reading the case studies –

It seems that one of the biggest challenges for each of the cases is that of information. Given that we live in a society with an imperfect system of education and media prone to bias, how are citizens supposed to get the information needed to make intelligent objective decisions about issues they most likely have little background knowledge on? The cases in the chapter deal with the challenge of information dissemination – through courses/seminars or deliberation – in ways that lead to other problems that decrease opportunities for participation mainly because of time requirements. Because there are groups of people who tend to have less free time than others (single parents or people with multiple dependants, workers with long commutes or who depend on public transportation, etc.) any system that requires a time commitment for participation systematically disenfranchises any group that has time constraints. **[This is of course true – people have time constraints and participatory democracy takes time. One way to deal with this is to imagine that participation has a different rhythm at different points in the life course – students and retirees will participate more than parents with young children, for example. Another device would be to be sure that the participatory venues provide good childcare and that parents are comfortable bringing children so that it is a family activity. But ultimately a radical deepening and generalizing of democracy would also require restructuring time use in the society as a whole, which is a bigger problem of course.]**

Another thing I noticed is that all the specific cases mentioned pertain to models geared to increased citizen participation in decision making processes relating to budgets or campaigns/elections – generally political and economic issues. What about social issues? There is no discussion about the nature of the type of things to be decided. Are there universal rights that should be out of research of any sort of decision making entity - guaranteed by the state? Are certain types of rights inappropriate to be determined by citizens given their probable inclination to bias and historic short-sightedness? **[You raise a classically difficult question about the relationship between various kinds of individual rights that are taken out of the democratic arena, rights that should not be subjected to collective deliberation and decisions, and the robust functioning of democracy (direct or representative). Shouldn’t things like same-sex marriage or other sexuality-rights issues be left up to the individual rather than decided by democratic assemblies? These sorts of concerns fuel the fears of “tyranny of the majority” in classical liberalism. Ultimately, in a robust democracy there still needs to be a democratic ratification of the principles underlying these individual rights,**

but I guess I do believe in the “liberal” premises of such rights to want mechanisms to insulate them somewhat from mundane democratic decisionmaking. How to do that is another matter.]

A couple comments about specific cases:

Participatory Budgeting - How much do the recommendations that come out of the initial meetings resemble the final form of the budget? What I'm really asking is: could this system be a way of appeasing the masses (like corporate charitable donations, or nonprofit arms of corporate entities) by creating an elaborate democratic process that ultimately ineffectual to make any real difference? **[The direct participatory assemblies are mostly important in practice in selecting the active delegates to the budget councils that formulate specific priorities and projects. These assemblies select one delegate for every 30 or so people at the meeting (sometimes the ratios vary). The assemblies themselves do ratify the budgets developed by these neighborhood working councils, but it is my impression that this is pretty pro forma. I don't think this means that the direct participation is just symbolic: the real projects that get built come out of direct participation, not city planners offices.]**

pg 6) #2 – Maybe this reflects my own ignorance but 8% does not seem high enough to reflect adequate levels of participation. **[In the initial development of the participatory budget (PB) the activists wanted to maximize participation rates, but quickly they realized that this had disadvantages (meetings got too big). There was a shift to encouraging some participation to come from things like neighborhood associations – so the association would send a few people to the budget meeting, but not everyone in the association had to attend. There was also a realization that what was important is that over a several year period many different people would be involved rather than everyone being involved all of the time.]**

Empowered Participatory Governance – (pg 9) pragmatic orientation - I have a small gripe with your use of pragmatism. As a philosophy of social change I don't think that pragmatism would preclude certain issues "because they are not tractable to such a practical orientation." In fact, I think there are many facets of pragmatism that are geared toward "radical challenges to inequalities of privilege and power." **[It is, you are right, an implication of wanting to pragmatically and experimentally solve problems that there be challenges to inequalities of privilege and power, since these get in the way of practical problem-solving – and generate problems as well. Still, the focus of the distinctively pragmatist approach to problems is to focus on the practical exigencies, at least that is how I understand the tradition.]**

Patriot Card - My biggest problem with the patriot card is that it seems that its success at achieving egalitarian public financing of electoral campaigns would depend on the specific party politics and temporary political landscape of the context. I would imagine that candidates in a saturated election would financially benefit more from private funding, whereas a dominant or incumbent candidate might benefit more from “patriot card” financing. Also, what happens if people don't spend the money? **[If you don't spend the money it reverts to the treasury – it is a credit card with an expiration (as I understand the proposal). I suppose it is true that incumbents would benefit more**

from patriot cards – or democracy cards, which might be a better name. But I would think that the incumbent advantages would be smaller than at present.]

Citizen Assemblies – The problem I see with citizen assemblies has to do with the sampling technique. People can be classified and organized in so many ways, who is to determine what characteristics that should be represented (race, class, religion, gender, etc.)? **[Random selection with a sample of 200-300 should give pretty good representation across the big categories in your list. The choice of explicit criteria is not necessary for representation unless there is a political need to stratify the sample – for example, to assure gender equality in representation.]**

(pg 18) remuneration – the incentives for people to participate do not benefit all people, or are not enough of an incentive to weigh against disincentives (for example- small business owners and single parents.) There are a multitude of issues that could contribute to a person's increased/decreased willingness to participate that are outside the state's control. **[For the Citizen's assembly I think \$150/day + expenses is a pretty good incentive for most people and since it is on weekends would make a pretty big difference for most people other than the rich. I agree that there are specific cases where there are still obstacles – single parents especially, but that will be a problem in any participatory scheme]**

11. Wes Markofski

There are a lot of intriguing proposals for increasing social empowerment over the state in this chapter. I thought it was interesting that, consistent with the general strategy of earlier chapters in the book (eg not defining socialism as “no private ownership” or “no markets”), there is no single prescribed institutional strategy for increasing social empowerment over the state, nor is any particular existing institutional arrangement of democracy proscribed as being irredeemably non-democratic according to radical egalitarian principles. All three types of democratic institutional forms—representative, associational, and direct—are conceptualized as being equally likely or unlikely to increase social empowerment over the state. That is, there is no “thick” vs. “thin” dimension along which these institutional types vary. A more common way of thinking about types of democratic organization seems to be direct democracy > associational democracy > representative democracy in terms of the numbers of people and groups participating in collective decision-making in the state (and thus, the assumption is, in overall social empowerment). In this alternative framework, representational democracy is sometimes acknowledged to be a sort of “necessary evil” due to the scale and complexity of political organization in modern societies. **[You are right that I reject the “necessary evil” view of representative democracy. For some tasks this is the best solution.]**

The benefit of Erik's framework is that by remaining agnostic with respect to specific forms of democratic organization, it adjudicates between the different types in terms of the principle of social empowerment rather than merely *assuming* a particular institutional type will always function in a way that brings social empowerment. It also pragmatically assumes or allows for hybrid combinations of these types as the most likely

viable pattern of democratic government in advanced societies, and opens the way for multiple strategic and incremental paths to increase social power over the state (and thus hopefully leading towards a more democratic egalitarian society.) I wonder, however, what others think about the potential of representative or associative democracy to truly attain a robust goal of social empowerment. I also would be curious to talk about ways in which these three types of democratic organization might actually fit together in a more comprehensive or systematic framework for a given society. While it is understood that *“the set of proposals...does not constitute a comprehensive project of institutional designs for socialism [or] an integrated political program for an anticapitalist party”* (page 1), I wonder whether it would be useful to imagine one or two possible examples of how “deep” versions of these three types of democratic organization might actually be combined to constitute an integrated political structure in a hypothetical socialist society? Or is it better to leave the question of possible combinations open and largely unspecified in order to maintain maximum flexibility and variability in potential strategies of increasing social empowerment, as Erik does here? **[I wouldn't have any principled objections to trying to think through alternative easy these three forms fit together, but I don't have any particular thoughts on that – other than the obvious ones that local decision-making is easier to organize through direct participation, and more functionally-specific decisions/problems seem to be well suited for associational democracy.]**

On another minor point, it does seem to me that the overall analytical framework of the book (which is also very visible in this chapter) is organized primarily against the backdrop of advanced liberal democracies and an incremental strategy for social change. At the very least, the book's analytical strategies greatly facilitate thinking about possibilities for incremental institutional change under liberal democratic conditions. **[I think it is probably true that liberal democracy is the generally assumed background, although many of the proposals would apply to a dictatorship – it is just that dictatorships would have to be democratized in the conventional sense before – or as part of – the process of deepening democracy and social empowerment. I am not sure, however, if they are necessarily incrementalist. Some of the reforms could have a Big Bang quality – being introduced as a full scale institutional alternative.]**

I also found the whole discussion of empowered participatory governance to be fantastic. Particularly, the “core elements” (Figure 5.2) of the EPG model are especially useful. Should we consider these as a bundle of elements without which EPG is really not viable or would fail to embody emancipatory principles? **[I don't think the configuration is an all-or-nothing gestalt. A form of participatory democracy with some but not all of these, or partial implementation of some, would still potentially have some of the positive impact as the full blown model.]** Or are some of these elements negotiable? Also, might some of these core elements be thought of as not just core elements of a specifically EPG model, but of “thick” democratic institutions more generally (whether direct, associational, or representational)? In general, I found the arguments for each of these elements to be quite convincing and useful.

12. Roxana Telechea

I send you my doubts.

Isn't it Utopian to think that through the elections it's possible to obtain something? It is not this idea opposite to the general trend that indicates the repudiation to the elections increase of the electoral abstentionism and the "white vote" (at least in the countries like mine with obligatory vote). According to Michael Moore in Stupid White Man in the USA they used other strategies to achieve that Bush wins Al Gore, For example eliminating of the lists the potential opponents as the blacks people and stamping badly the cards. **[It is certainly true that electoral democracy has been degraded in the US, especially in presidential elections, but it doesn't follow from this that elections are "utopian" or that a transformation of the institutional underpinnings of representative democracy is impossible. What one should do is try to identify what are the characteristics of the election institution that undermine its potentials for popular empowerment. Funding – in the US case – is certainly one of these issues.]**

I agree that "wealthy people and corporations are major players in the game of recruiting funding" and that it constitutes a great difference at the moment of doing a political campaign. It turns out to me difficult to think that they are not going to resort to other strategies to continue being settled. And the scams would be a frequent currency. How to prevent them from not using money of other sources? In Argentina, in the last elections, we had a case: a diplomatic bag appeared in the airport with 800 thousand dollars that seemingly were going to be used for the campaign of the finally elect candidate. **[These problems could be fatal flaws that would undermine every effort at reconstructing and vibrant electoral democracy. It may be impossible to have huge concentrations of wealth and then ban the use of that wealth to influence directly elections. SDtill, providing a citizen-based egalitarian mechanism of funding politics would probably soften the impact of wealth-based politics.]**

In addition, there are many ways of making campaign using, for example, the mass media before to the campaign to become acquaintances (achievement of interviews in prime time, for example). It is done by money. It turns out to me difficult to think about a government putting on rules to prevent it from happening.

With regard to the Democracy Cards, how the mechanism would be established to emit this credit. To the moment to put the Cards, the person already is expressing the will to choose a candidate. There would be necessary to avoid the "sung vote" (I do not know how to say that the vote is not secret. In Argentina we say "voto cantado") and the "purchase" of cards. There wouldn't be a possibility of that would establish a system where people "buy" cards in exchange for favors. **[Undoubtedly corruption would be a problem and people would effectively sell their cards as you suggest. But each card isn't worth that much and there could be at least some monitoring to insure that the card is used by the person to whom it is issued. Maybe I am just optimistic about this because I come from a place without intense corruption of this sort.]**

About the randomly selected assembly, you have laid great stress on the choice of candidates and not in the discussion of offers. In addition, I do not see that there is a direct relation between proportional representation and advantaged minorities. For

example, in Argentina a “law of quotas” was established in order that they enter a women's minimum in all the party lists and it has not solved any problem of gender. In fact, we have a president woman, who carries out the same politics that the previous agent chief executive, her husband. That a candidate belongs to a minority it does not mean that he or she will do anything for this minority. On the contrary, an offer of randomy selected would stop out probably honest fighters who have demonstrated with daily fights the suitability and the will of making changes. **[There is a real trade off between random selection and a political system that would effectively enable “honest fighters who demonstrate their ...will of making changes” to exercise political power. But of course, there is no need to make this choice: randomocracy does not replace associational democracy or electoral democracy; it is meant to be an additional way of creating possibilities of social empowerment. In any case, other democratic institutions are also not all that amenable to “honest fighters”, especially given your skepticism about representative democracy and elections stated earlier. What would be your proposal for how “honest fighters” would get access to political power if elections are hopelessly degraded?**

13. Eduardo Cavieres

My sense up until now is that this book is trying to connect a particular theoretical corpus to concrete examples in which those ideas can be implemented for the flourishing life of people. One way to do so is to look up at and think in institutional designs where such process is possible. From the reading of this chapter I have a set of questions I want to lay out:

What are the possibilities that such approach may lead to isolated experiences (between institutional designs) of utopian renewal? How would it be possible to coordinate them? How can we envision the bottom up of these different experiences and the way they can allow a collective model of society? (If these institutions are envisioned individualistically wouldn't that create an extra source of conflict between these utopian projects that are already struggling against dominant forms of hegemony?) **[I am not sure I quite understand your point about envisioning these institutions “individualistically”. To be instituted, all of these proposals and ideas need to become incorporated into political programs – of parties and social movements. Through that process they get integrated with other strategies and political projects. What is “individualistic” about this?]**

Are each one of these modes of democracy exclusive? Or should they be combined depending on the levels of society in which they are implemented? (At higher levels more representative; while at a local levels more direct?) **[They are definitely not mutually exclusive. And while direct democracy will tend to be local, there may be forms of direct democracy that can occur at higher levels of the system – perhaps even the random selection idea is more like direct democracy. Also note the proposed use of citizens' assembly in conjunction with referenda – that can also occur at central levels.]**

In what moment of time are top-down efforts required (in the Porto Alegre experience it seemed that at the beginning it must have been very important, what does this say about the democratic implications this may have? –unless, obviously, the PT itself had a very democratic nature). **I don't know if there is anything very general that can be said about this. Often there are conjures where an innovation needs to be implemented at the center of some system – the Mayor's office in this case. So that is "top down" at least centralized innovation. But also frequently this is the result of bottom up pressures and demands.]**

Should any particular concern in this utopian project be raised between the conflicts that arise between local (decentralized) and universal (centralized) implementations? Points 5 and 6 of the "core elements" tackle this concern. However, once again, I am kept wondering about the political space where these institutional arrangements should begin in the first place: from the state? From social institutions organizing themselves around particular institutions? I think that it would be enlightening to see the genesis of the Porto Alegre experience within the PT itself.

And, finally, in relation to the concept of "countervailing power". My sense was that it was located within the institutional design. **[Countervailing power is crucial for EPG designs to work, but it is not exactly built into the design. Rather it is a characteristic of the context within which the EPG institution is located. I am not sure how one could build it in the design itself.]** So, what is the place left for those external forces of that design (even though the Porto Alegre experience involves the whole municipality, what happens with the relationship with the rest of the country? How does it affect what is occurring in Porto Alegre?) In this sense, I personally think that it might be useful to think in the importance of scaling up these projects in order to make them sustainable. **[I don't think participatory budgets can be scaled up very well, but what could be scaled up is an increase in the redistribution of taxes gathered at the center to local jurisdictions that deploy effective PB processes. The PB would be more robust if it had more resources to organize through the budget, and that depends upon taxation and tax transfers from the National to the state and city levels.]** However, in many cases scaling up has also brought the weakening of successful experiences. Would the experience of scaling up also require being thought in a particular way within a utopian project?

14. Ricardo Donaire

It may be undeniable that certain institutional devices can improve current democratic institutions, but why are the analyzed experiences called as "radical" or "emancipatory"? Does democracy in a capitalist society not imply an insuperable limit to the influence of civil society over the state? **[The emancipatory element here comes from the stress on deeper forms of equality in the democratic processes. Yes, there are insuperable limits imposed by capitalism on the possibilities of social empowerment, but even given this the democratic forms themselves can still be deepened in egalitarian ways. If this is possible, then this democratization of democracy (to use Boaventura Santos' expresses) could itself be part of the process for eroding capitalism and thus its limits.]**

The issue about differences between classes is mentioned, especially when “pragmatic orientation” and “countervailing power” items of the “Empowered Emancipatory Governance” design are analyzed, but both of them seem to be reduced to a simple obstacle towards a deeper democracy rather than a structural limit. **[What precisely is the difference between a “structural limit” and a “(simple) obstacle?” Aren’t these closely connected – the structural limits on democracy generate obstacles to deepening democracy? In any case, I agree that there are real limits which block democratic power from doing certain things – they are off the table because of capitalism. But it is still possible for the exercise of power within those limits to be more or less egalitarian and more or less deeply democratic.]**

However, due to its social position, the majority of the working class is not able either to acquire and assimilate scientific knowledge or to **involucrate** [??] permanently in social and political activity. It is possible to say that, in certain way, proletariat is culturally underdeveloped against bourgeoisie. I guess this situation could even be extended to the lowest strata of the small petty-bourgeoisie. **[I think this issue is often overstated, both because the bourgeoisie – if by this we mean ordinary capitalists, not bourgeois intellectuals -- itself is generally pretty uninformed and because under conditions of a more accessible and vibrant democracy workers have a pretty strong incentive to acquire relevant knowledge.]**

These structural conditions which keep people away from a deep political participation, can not be overcome by formal mechanisms, but they implicate a radical transformation of society in order to guarantee a minimum level of education and culture and also at least to ensure the following aspects:

- a) It would be necessary a radical reduction of working day in order to people have an enough portion of time to involucrate in public affairs.
- b) People’s basic needs would have to be satisfied. At least, this implies elimination of poverty and unemployment.
- c) Free access to information would have to be guaranteed. This does not only refer to obstacles imposed by media monopolies. It fundamentally refers to information about production, costs, benefits, etc. in hands of capitalist companies and kept away from people by property rights.

[If you are saying that all of these things have to be done before there can be any advance in the democratic participation and empowerment of workers, then I think you are wrong. Of course these transformations are important and they would facilitate a deepened democracy, but I don’t think a more vibrant democratization with meaningful empowerment presupposes a radical reduction of working time, the elimination of poverty, and guaranteed free access to education. If this is true, how could we possibly achieve any of these things since workers would remain passive until they are accomplished?]

Not even a permanent and constant countervailing power (if such thing could be possible to be continuously held) could overcome these limits of democracy imposed by capitalism. Bourgeois regime must be overthrown in order to reach these conditions.

Even if a reform could be implemented to incorporate all the pointed mechanisms into current institutions, would not they still be formally rather than really democratic devices? Which sense would they be “radical” or “emancipatory” in? Would not they be strengthening bourgeois democracy? **[That is a pretty strong position! You seem to reject the idea that there is much possibility for deeply contradictory processes interior to the state within capitalism – that it can be both a bourgeois democracy/capitalist state, and that it can contain contradictory processes that embody deeper democracy and social empowerment. You clearly reject the more general proposal I presented in the previous chapter about economic structures being hybrids within which the socialist component can be strengthened, and that such strengthening can erode the comprehensiveness of the capitalist constraints. Your view seems to suggest that systems are more or less all or nothing – that an economic system must be coherently capitalist or capitalism is destroyed, not a mixed, messy, hybrid of forms and relations.]**

Now, I agree with you that if systems have the character you describe, then it is less likely that a democratization project could make much headway, for the coherence of the economic structure would then – plausibly – impose a condition of complete functional correspondence on the state. Thus every reform that superficially looked like it might advance popular interests or democratic empowerment would necessarily be functionalized to capitalism. As you say the bourgeois regime would have to be “overthrown” in order to break out of these functionalizing conditions. That is an extraordinarily pessimistic perspective since the prospects for such a categorical overthrow are so remote, but of course being pessimistic doesn’t make this incorrect (although I think it is).

15. Rodolfo Elbert

The introduction to the chapter says that the real utopias institutional designs should be desirable (in terms of radical democratic egalitarian emancipatory ideals) and viable alternatives. It is clear to me what the author means by viability. However, I would like to discuss in more detail the idea of desirability. In my opinion, it should be related to the actual chances of generating a cumulative transformation of the system as a whole in the direction of a democratic socialism. Keeping in mind this notion of desirability, I would like to discuss in class the tension that exists between the two characters of the real utopian designs. **Could it be that the more desirable an institution is a less viable its success in a capitalist society?** **[Nice formulation. But my premise is that the expression “capitalist society” is a short hand for the more cumbersome expression “a socioeconomic hybrid containing capitalist, socialist and statist elements within which capitalism is dominant.” This means that even in a society that is capitalist there can be variability in the degrees of social empowerment and the extent to which the state is subordinated to civil society (i.e. is democratically subordinated to processes of social empowerment). To the extent that this subordination happens it is contradictory and corrosive of capitalism. Now, the question is whether this means that such institutional developments necessarily will be unstable and less**

viable. This depends upon whether you believe there can be a *stable hybrid equilibrium* in which the capitalisticness of the hybrid is reduced. One view – which Ricardo expressed above – is that the only stable equilibrium is one in which all elements are fully subordinated – or more, subsumed -- to capitalism, so that the hybrid character dissolves. I don't think that is correct. I think that there are multiple equilibria within capitalist hybrids, some are better for capitalists than others, and that it is possible to have a configuration within which capitalism is less pervasively dominant.] How does Wright deal with this apparent contradiction? In particular, how does this tension affect the selection of cases in the chapter? **[I don't think it affected my selection of cases, but perhaps it did. In any case, I think the principles embodied in these cases do point beyond capitalism in various ways. EPG is a form of democratic empowerment that is in tension with capitalist principles]**

Besides these general questions about the chapter, I would like to focus my interrogation in the indicators justifying the success of the participatory budgeting (page 6 and 7) Since we are trying to see the consequences of very specific institutional designs, I would like to question some of these indicators, that might be showing something different than the success of the institution: 1. The massive shift in spending towards the poorest regions of the city: one could think that this is more the result of a progressive government in office rather than the structure of the Puerto Alegre participatory budgeting. In this case, the actual goal should be win the elections with a redistributive social and economic program, rather than developing the participatory budget. We know that only a portion of the whole budget is decided through participatory means, one way to prove this would be to compare the state budget vs. the participatory one. **[Mostly when left parties get elected in cities they are unable to redirect spending so dramatically as in Porto Alegre. While this was a successful electoral strategy, the PB also enabled this to be done]** 2. We can accept that the participatory budget process is not dominated by educated elites, but what about the fact that most disadvantaged and uneducated segments of the population are under-represented? How does this feature of the process affect its outcomes? **[The least educated were underrepresented compared to the core working class participation, but they were certainly more represented actively than in other forms of political participation. The PB is centered in the core working class and labor movement, but still has a fair level of participation of relatively marginalized groups].** 5. I would apply the same critique as 1. How do we know that the electoral victories of the PT are related to participatory budgeting and not to other features of their policies?