Specificity and Difference Matters For Democracy: A Movement-Relevant Participatory Democratic Theory in Dialogue with Participatory Democratic Social Movement Praxis

Social movements rarely start out by posing radical challenges to dominant social warrants. They generally focus on modest and melioristic reforms, on immediate obstacles rather than abstract enemies. But the practical activities of struggle produce new possibilities and prohibitions that compel activists to change themselves in the process of changing societies. Rebels need revolutions, argues Karl Marx, not just to overthrow their oppressors, but also to rid themselves of the murk of the ages and become fitted to found society anew . . . For centuries, emancipatory projects have revolved around concepts like universality, equivalence, interchangeability, and equality. From this perspective, difference is a problem to be overcome. But contemporary capital does not do its work by making people more and more alike, as Marx sometimes predicted. Instead, contemporary capital exercises hegemony by creating endless new forms of difference, inequality, and incommensurability. In addition, the very system that produces so much difference and fragmentation confines us to a political language built on simple binary oppositions and appeals to interchangeability and equivalence as the only possible forms of justice . . . Effective oppositional movements under these conditions can neither evade nor embrace ostensibly ‘essentialist’ identities. They cannot confine themselves to purely local, national, or global terrains, but must move strategically in and out of each level to produce new and perhaps unexpected affiliations, alliances, and identifications. The renegotiation of relations between individuals and groups must at some point also aspire to radical transformations in existing social structures and power relations. The challenge is great, but as Stan Weir’s meaningful memoir proves, it is not new (Lipsitz 2003, pp. 33, 39, 40).

I. Introduction

Power, institutionalization, and analytical codification are always already present. And because the present is always haunted by the past, radical “new” social movements as well as their institutions and organizations, reflect what is and what has come before (Derrida 1994, Gordon 1997, Lipsitz 2003, Schrader forthcoming). Though participatory democratic social movements must face the spirits of past and present, as Lipsitz (2003, p. 35) states, “in social movement struggles, the past often ‘ghosts’ the present in
productive ways.” Thus, these particular social movements’ political cultural contestations and cultural political enactments reveal and allow us to imagine complex possibilities for social, cultural, and political transformation.

Drawing on my previous field statement (2005), participatory democratic social movements are understood as “new” social movements, though their praxis may not necessarily be novel. “Participatory democratic social movement” is an analytical category that I as a theorist consciously utilize in order to signal, explain, and actively listen to particular relationships between structural variables (external events, matrix of domination, and material “realities”) and processes of collective identity formation. Moreover, informed by the work of Appadurai (2000) and Scott (1998), participatory democratic social movement organizations (SMOs), institutions, and structures are presented as processes – constructed categories that are consciously used by theorists and social movements in order to explain, codify, and provide stability for particular constantly changing relationships. As Appadurai (2000, p. 5) states, “It has now become

1 As Collins (1990), Dussel (2005), Sandoval (2000) and others have argued, power cannot be conflated with domination. Unlike Foucault’s (1991) formulation of domination enabling resistance (a reactive process), an intersectional methodology of the oppressed allows for the conceptualization of power, identity, political culture, cultural political enactments, and many other processes as always already multiple embodiments of internal and relational tensions.

2 This paper frames participatory democracy as praxis: simultaneously a theoretical ideal and political project.

3 In my previous field statement (2005, p. 32), I discuss the novelty debate regarding new social movements and the potential threat it poses for the study of social movements. Though participatory democratic social movements invoke “old” liberal values and ideals, they nonetheless enact “new” cultural political struggles that re-vision “politics”.

4 These specific terms are developed in Turnbull (2005) in order to explain the multiple “external” processes that are mutually constitutive of collective identities. This fluid theory of social movements allows for a movement-relevant social movement theory and concomitant feminist methodology that is informed by and thus relevant to social movements.
something of a truism that we are functioning in a world fundamentally characterized by objects in motion. This is a world of flow. It is also, of course, a world of structures, organizations, and other stable social forms. But the apparent stabilities that we see are, under close examination, usually our devices for handling objects characterized by motion.” Though Scott’s (1998, p. 353) vision of “multifunctional, plastic, diverse and adaptable” structures has in many ways been realized by participatory democratic social movement praxis in the Americas, their institutional translations of participatory

5“The Americas” as an area of study is used to intervene and transform the positivist epistemology of Latin American Studies (LAS). LAS has produced a great deal of knowledge about Latin America and has led to many cross-cultural avenues for dialogue such as Latin American Studies Association (LASA) and the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA). Yet, Mignolo (2003, p. 66) warns that “it is not enough to produce knowledge about Latin America with honesty and high caliber scholarship. Honesty and quality contribute to reproducing the subaltern position to which Pensamiento Crítico and Latino/a studies have been placed within the distribution of knowledge in the U.S. institution and intellectual life. Recognition and inclusion are always decided from the hegemonic perspective.” Therefore, LAS’s positivist baggage does not always allow it to recognize Latin American and Latin@ scholarship or the fluidity of Latin America as an analytical category rather than a bounded geographical location. In fact, Tinsman and Shukla (2005, p. 18) conclude that LAS “still awkwardly references the basis of inclusion and still functions to explain Latin American otherness to U.S. audiences.” Therefore, my understanding of the Americas seeks to simultaneously examine transnational, transregional and translocal processes. The formulation of the Americas as an area of study enables a critical refraction of the Western (imperialistic) gaze that is characteristic of traditional area studies. Rather than seeing the U.S. (particularly the U.S. academy) as the unquestioned optic from which to analyze “outside” others, the Americas allows us to look within the U.S., across national, regional, ethnic, cultural, social, racial, and other boundaries. Moreover, it enables the theorization of what Collins’ (1990) refers to as axes of domination and interlocking oppressions and thus their related dominant and subjugated knowledges. The Americas recognizes that one must not theorize from, live in, come from, represent, speak for, or understand either the United States or Latin America. One can, and most likely does, come from multiple places and spaces simultaneously. Depending on context, one’s subject position and privilege, the materiality of these borders changes significantly. Therefore, if used with constant vigilance and reflexivity, the Americas can be seen as a fluid analytical category that grants agency to Latin American and Latin@ scholars and explains the complex processes and movements across, through, and within the multiple literal and figurative boundaries of this area. Because I am writing in English, I
democratic theory are inherently tenuous. The particular participatory democratic social movements that will be discussed in this paper, exist(ed) in capitalistic societies that rely on liberal values, and therefore reflect specific hierarchical social, economic, cultural, and political relations that are always already in danger of fetishization and reification.\footnote{These negative ghostly aspects are highlighted in the Marx’s (1990) discussion of the fetishism of the commodity (where the commodity stands on its own two feet and the process(es) that created it is forgotten or erased) and Lukács (1990) concept of reification (which also articulates the ways in which routinization and replication enabled by capitalism’s particular mediation of human relations, makes processes appear as things in and of themselves).}

As Barber (1984, p. xi) perceptively argues, democratic praxis is inherently tied to liberalism. “In implicating liberalism in the insufficiencies of democracy, I do not mean to attack liberalism. There is little wrong with liberal institutions that a strong dose of political participation and reactivated citizenship cannot cure.” In this vein, participatory democratic social movements contend that a more effective, efficient, and just vision of democracy requires the active involvement of empowered “ordinary people” in the various decision-making processes that affect their lives. Therefore, they enact cultural political\footnote{My use of cultural politics is drawn from the work of Jordan and Weedon (1995), Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar’s (1998), Kelley (1994), and Scott (1990). For a full definition see: Turnbull (2005, p. 3).} struggles to revise the liberal notion of citizenship – based on the definition of the citizen as a free, equal, rational, and autonomous individual – as Daginio (1998, p. 34) states as “the right to have rights” and thus the ability to imagine and create “a new

\textit{Las Américas}. Because Portuguese, French, and many native languages are spoken in the Americas, to refer to \textit{Las Américas} would be to privilege the Spanish language as the conceptual home of a counter-hegemony. I appreciate scholars’ code-switching as a way to problematize the unquestioned central position of English in the Americas (Anzaldúa 1999, Moraga 1983). I recognize it as Rosario Sánchez (2003, p. 20-21) states, “a conscious resistance en este English-only state”. Yet, bi-lingual (English and Spanish) interventions are not sufficient. In my dissertation I will pursue this area as it relates to the travels and translation of participatory democratic across the Americas.
society.” These social movements argue that citizens should be free of coercive domination (in both public and private spaces); equal through access to information, means of communication and distribution; capable of engaging in rational dialogue in order to collectively make decisions in the interest of the common good. Therefore, they require the creation of fluid and open institutions – both social movement organizations (SMOs) and institutionalized political cultural structures – in order to encourage and empower these reconstituted citizens. Yet, because participatory democratic social movements are reliant on liberal categories and values they often replicate their epistemological and empirical presuppositions, creating tensions for the translation of their vision into practice. Specifically by maintaining the liberal (and socialist) formulation of unity based on sameness and the separation of the private and public sphere, participatory democratic praxis often renders “personal” concerns irrational or irrelevant. Hence, these social movements overlook and/or erase the productive multiplicities and differences reflected in individual and collective identities and the ways in which these allow for the re-visioning of democracy.

This field statement will begin by presenting a critical exegesis of the predominant modes of theorizing deliberative democracy, namely Habermas’

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8 My use of political culture is distinct from Almond and Verba’s (1963) formulation. I instead draw on the definition of political culture formulated by Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (1998 pp. 8). As “the particular social construction of in every society of what counts as ‘political’. In this way, political culture is the dominant practices and institutions, carved out of the totality of social reality, that historically comes to be considered as properly political.”

9 As in my previous field statement (2005, p. 3), in this field statement I consciously distinguish between revision and re-vision.

10 Bessette (1980) is citationally recognized for coining the term “deliberative democracy” (Bohman & Rehg 1997, p. xii). He argues that constituents (i.e. ordinary people) “lack the time, inclination, or setting to engage” in deliberation, and therefore
representative systems provide the most sustainable model of democracy” (Bessette 1980, p. 105). Due to their education, experience, and the fact that they “operate in an environment that fosters collective reasoning about common concerns,” representatives can make better decisions than the people themselves (Bessette 1980, p. 105). In fact, “it is wholly unrealistic to expect people who spend most of their time earning a living to match the effort devoted by the legislator to public issues” (Bessette 1980, p. 105). Therefore, his formulation of deliberative democracy is based on context specific reflections on the democratic nature of the U.S. Constitution and articulates a theory of elitist rather than participatory democracy.  

In this work, Hall (1988) speaks directly to the British left and argues that it must “think problems in a Gramscian way” in order to effectively counter and transform the reactionary discourse and policies of Thatcherism. Moreover, he argues for a new socialism. “I don’t say socialism, lest the word is so familiar that you think I mean just
Therefore, I will actively listen to the praxis\textsuperscript{12}—the theoretical contributions, translations, and negotiation of tensions—of two specific participatory democratic social movements—the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Orçamento Participativo (The Participatory Budget Process, OP). By learning from the particular promises and pitfalls of these participatory democratic experiments, a movement-relevant participatory democratic theory can be developed. This theory presents a more complex genealogy of participatory democratic theory by recognizing the fundamental importance of participatory democratic social movement praxis and feminist methodology. Moreover, it frames participatory democracy as a means and an end.

Participatory democratic social movements undertake specific projects and develop open structures in order to articulate and engage in the “wars of position,” “long marches through the institutions,” and cultural political struggles necessary to re-vision the “social warrant”\textsuperscript{13} of democracy (Smith 2003, Marcuse 1972, Lipsitz 2003). In addition, it argues that the translation of participatory democracy as a theory into practice requires a putting the same old programme we all know about back on the rails. I am talking about a renewal of the whole socialist project in the context of modern social and cultural life. I mean shifting the relations of forces—not so that Utopian comes the day after the next general election, but so that the tendencies begin to run another way. Who needs a socialist heaven where everybody’s exactly the same? God forbid. I mean a place where we can begin the historic quarrel about what a new kind of civilization might be” (Hall 1998, p. 172-3).

\textsuperscript{12} The feminist methodology of participatory democracy cannot be separated from the political project of transforming social relations and the creation of a “beloved community” (Marsh 2005). This is a development of Alvarez et. al.’s (forthcoming) argument that the a women of color lens (methodology) is inseparable from embodied women of color and their political projects.

\textsuperscript{13} “A social warrant is an understanding that is rarely written down, but functions as a ‘Bill of Rights’ articulating foundational principles about obligations and entitlements, about exclusion and inclusion. Social warrants author and authorize new ways of knowing and being; they challenge and transform the nature of what is permitted and what is forbidden. They are part of what social movements can win when they battle for resources, rights, and recognition” (Lipsitz 2003, p. 3).
constant vigilance enabled by a feminist methodology of the oppressed. Thus analytical categories are necessary for praxis and formal structures, organizations, institutions are tactically necessary for the sustenance of these social movements. Yet, they are always already (and therefore must remain) temporary, fluid, and mutable.

Re-visioning democracy is a radical political project not an intellectual exercise. By theorizing participatory democracy as the active participation of new citizens through fluid institutions and mechanisms to undermine informal, educational, and material inequalities, this movement-relevant theory enables a participatory democratic social movement praxis capable of transforming individual and social relations in order to inform contemporary and future social movements which seek to realize the utopian freedom dream of the World Social Forum, that “another world is possible” (Fisher and Ponniah 2003, Sen et. al. 2004).

II. The idea of deliberative democracy

A. Habermas’ explicitly utopian autonomous public sphere

Habermas (1995) traces the development of the “public sphere” from the Greek polis to its modern bourgeois form. He argues that the demarcation of the bourgeois “public sphere of civil society,” expanded the public sphere by including a new “stratum of bourgeois’” which due to their education and access to information claimed the right to make decisions regarding “taxes and duties and, generally, official interventions into the privatized household.” Thus, the state and its policies became “a subject of public interest” and “provoked the critical judgment of a public making use of its reason” (Habermas 1995, p. 24). Yet, he argues that welfare capitalism has changed this
function. In contrast to its promises of horizontal exchange among free and equal
individuals, “under conditions of imperfect competition and dependent prices social
power became concentrated in private hands . . . The more society became transparent as
a mere nexus of coercive constraints, the more urgent became the need for a strong state”
(Habermas 1995, p. 144). In other words, those who were economically marginalized
were forced to turn to the state\textsuperscript{14} but once these moves began to translate into formal
power that threatened fundamental organized monetary interests, they were often
thwarted.\textsuperscript{15} In fact, the complex process of emergence and function of the modern
welfare state illuminates the blurring of boundaries between the public and private
sphere.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} Habermas (1995, p. 147) explains this function is seen through “the provision of
services that hitherto had been left to private hands, whether it entrusted private persons
with public tasks, coordinated private economic activities within the frame of an overall
plan, or became active itself as a producer and distributor.” Yet, “the concentration of
power in the private sphere of commodity exchange on the one hand, and in the public
sphere with its institutionalized promise of universal accessibility on the other,
strengthened the propensity of the economically weaker parties to use political means
against those who were stronger by reason of their position in the market” (Habermas

\textsuperscript{15} Habermas (1995, p. 146) presents an argument distinct from Marx’s formulation of the
state as the representative of the bourgeois. Though it in many ways promotes the
interests of the powerful, it is better explained as a means to mediate antagonistic class
interests. “The interferences of the state in the private sphere since the end of the last
century showed that the masses, now entitled to political participation, succeeded in
translating economic antagonisms into political conflicts. In part these interferences
favored the interests of the economically weaker strata, in part they served to reject them.
In any given case it was not always easy to establish clearly which side’s collective
private interests were favored more. In general terms, at any rate, state interventions,
even where they prevailed in opposition to ‘ruling’ class interests, were guided by the
interest of maintaining the equilibrium of the system which could no longer be secured by
way of the free market.”

\textsuperscript{16} The welfare state cannot be understood as the reflection of either exclusively popular
or corporatist interests. Habermas (1995, pp. 147-8) states that the “formulation of
‘collective provision for the necessities of life’ obscures the multiplicity of functions
newly accrued to the state making social welfare its concern; it also hides the complexly
Moreover, the increasing interconnection of these spheres has led to fundamental changes in the conception and role of reproductive and productive labor. “Today time not spent on the job represents precisely the preserve of the private, which the ‘job’ begins with the step into occupational activity . . . The family, increasingly disengaged from its direct connections with the reproduction of society, thus retained only the illusion of an inner space of intensified privacy. In truth it lost its protective functions along with its economic tasks” (Habermas 1995, pp. 155, 157). These transformations have reduced the ability of “private” citizens to engage in politics.

The shrinking of the private sphere into the inner areas of a conjugal family largely relieved of function and weakened in authority – the quiet bliss of homeliness – provided only the illusion of a perfectly private personal sphere; for to the extent that private people withdrew from their socially controlled roles as property owners into the purely ‘personal’ ones of their noncommittal use of leisure time, they came directly under the influence of semipublic authorities, without the protection of an institutionally protected domestic domain (Habermas 1995, p. 159).

There is a great deal of literature that addresses the competing interest that prompted this transformation as well as the present “crisis” of the modern welfare state. For example, in the U.S. the negotiations between progressives, populists, and elites led to the development of the modern welfare state and are therefore are reflected in its institutions and tensions. Namely the focus on individual redress and benefits is the result of a complicated theoretical and historical debate, which continues to frame contemporary discourse regarding the validity, effectiveness, and proper place of the state in the allocation of resources (Heilbroner & Milberg 2001 and Skocpol 1995).

17 This, in turn, transformed homes and cities.
18 This invokes the Foucaultian (1999) notion of consensual domination and shows the ways in which the state lives in our bodies. Thus, there is an appearance of “the private” but increasingly we are monitored in these spaces. In fact, we are participants in our domination while at the same time are increasingly unable to signal specific sites of power, coercion, and therefore opportunities for resistance. With the “democratization of oppression” the enemy becomes difficult to name (Sandoval 2000). In fact, we are often our own worst enemy (Anzaldúa 1999, Collins 1990). Therefore, as Anzaldúa (1999, p.100), Lipsitz (2003), and others highlight, confrontational strategies – “counter-stance” social movements that are organized based on a fundamentalist and essentialist logic – are “proudly defiant” but “not a way of life.”
Moreover, bourgeois consumer culture has transformed critical public debate into apolitical leisure time and discussion into “a consumer item” (Habermas 1995, p. 164). Thus, public debate, education, and dialogue no longer empower citizens to make political claims.

When leisure was nothing but a complement to time spent on the job, it could be no more than a different arena for the pursuit of private business affairs that were not transformed into a public communication between private people . . . The leisure activities of the culture-consuming public, on the contrary, themselves take place within a social climate, and they do not require any further discussions. The private form of appropriation removed the ground for communication about what has been appropriated (pp. 160, 163).

Habermas (1995) concludes that contemporary political culture, and its related illusionary distinction between the public and private sphere, mask power relations leading to increased centralization of political power of economic elites and decreased ability of the populace to signal, critically debate, and ultimately engage in the cultural political struggles necessary to transform these institutions and their related social and human relations.

In order to address this “refeudalization” of society under the bourgeois public sphere, Habermas (1997, pp. 57-8) calls for the reformulation of the public sphere as the rightful space for free, rational debate among equals in pursuit of the common good. He argues that this requires a political culture that holds official governmental representatives accountable to their constituents. Though this is an explicitly utopian project, Habermas (1997, p. 60) argues that:

It is not utopian in a bad sense. It would be realized to the extent that opinion-forming associations developed, catalyzed the growth of autonomous spheres, and, in virtue of the natural visibility such associations enjoy, changed the spectrum of values, issues and reasons. This would both innovatively unleash and critically filter the elements of discourse that have been channeled by the mass
media, unions, associations, and parties, according to the dictates of power. In the final analysis, of course, the emergence, reproduction, and influence of such a network of associations remains dependent on a liberal-egalitarian political culture sensitive to problems affecting society as a whole – a culture that is even jumpy or in a constant state of vibration, and thus responsive.

Thus, “the political” can be transformed if autonomous public spheres can translate their values and attitudes through common sense to political culture and its institutions.

**B. Barber’s strong democracy**

Barber’s (1984) call for strong democracy is meant to address what he sees as an inherent tension in democracy: its liberal foundation. “Excess of liberalism has undone democratic institutions: for what little democracy we have had in the West has been repeatedly compromised by the liberal institutions with which it has been undergirded and the liberal philosophy from which its theory and practice has been derived” (Barber 1984, p. xi). Therefore, his project is to reformulate liberal ideals and resurrect them from the grips of elitist contemporary liberal rhetoric and politics. Thus, he views democracy as particular “form of human relations,” “a way of life” (not an ideal institution that can be evaluated through truth claims), and a means through which to foster cooperation (rather than competition) between equal, rational, free, individuals (Barber 1984, pp. xii, 118).

Strong democracy is participatory and “rests on the idea of a self-governing community of citizens who are united less by homogenous interests than by civic education and who are made capable of common purpose and mutual action by virtue of their civic attitudes and participatory institutions rather than their altruism or their good nature” (Barber 1984, p. 117). He explains that this theory and its practice allows for a
fluidity through which humans can transform their individual concerns in the service of the common good, by recognizing their mutuality.

Open to change and hospitable to the idea of individual and social transformation, strong democracy can overcome the pessimism and cynicism, the negativity and passivity that, while they immunize liberalism against naïve utopianism and the tyranny of idealism, also undermine its cautious hopes and leave its theory thin and threadbare and its practice vulnerable to skepticism and dogmatism. Under strong democracy, politics is given the power of human promise. For the first time the possibilities of transforming private into public, dependency into interdependency, conflict into cooperation, license into self-legislation, need into love, and bondage into citizenship are placed in a context of participation. . . . Where democracy is end as well as means, its politics take on the sense of a journey in which the going is as important as getting there and in which the relations among travelers are as vital as the destinations they may think they are seeking (Barber 1984, pp. 199-120).

His formulation of strong democracy is a messy and never-ending process that poses many challenges; but his theory of strong democracy provides an institutional framework for a “realistic and workable” democracy that can modify liberal democracy, provide “safeguards for individuals, minorities, and for the rights that majorities governing in the name of community may often abuse,” address the obstacles of “scale, technology, complexity, and the paradox of parochialism,” and “make possible a government of citizens in place of the government of professionals” (Barber 1984, p. 262). He points to the strong democratic potential latent within neighborhood assemblies and television town meetings. Therefore, he specifically calls for government subsidies on educational materials, a national initiative and referendum process, electronic balloting, election of local officials by lottery with paid incentives, vouchers for participation in civic projects, mandatory general national service for military and/or civic purposes, workplace democracy, and new architecture of civic and public space (Barber 1984, pp. 267-307).
III. Pateman’s industrial participatory democratic praxis

Pateman (1970, p. 103) argues that theories of democracy have been significantly revised in recent years, but have nonetheless continued to be “obscured by the myth of the ‘classical doctrine of democracy’ propagated so successfully by Schumpeter . . . This has meant that the prevailing academic orthodoxy on the subject, the contemporary theory of democracy, has not been subjected to substantive, rigorous, criticism, nor has a really convincing case been presented for the retention of a participatory theory in the face of the facts of modern, large-scale political life.” She seeks to provide critical and engaged scholarship in order to enable a fundamental re-visioning of participatory democratic praxis.

Firstly, Pateman (1970) claims that there are epistemological and empirical incommensurabilities between previous democratic theories that preclude theorists’ recognition of their inherent interconnections.

Both sides in the current discussion of the role of participation in modern theory of democracy have grasped half of the theory of participatory democracy; the defenders of the earlier theorists have emphasized that their goal was the production of an educated, active citizenry and the theorists of contemporary democracy have pointed to the importance of the structure of authority in non-governmental spheres for political socialisation. But neither side has realized that the two aspects are connected or realized the significance of the empirical evidence for their arguments (Pateman 1970, p. 105).

Therefore, both social and institutional theories of participatory democracy point to important processes and interactions. Pateman (1970) does not intend to determine whether participatory democracy is best defined by direct participation in political spheres or as mediated representation through elected officials. Instead she points to
particular contemporary participatory democratic experiments in the industrial context in
order to illustrate that participatory democracy is not a utopian dream but a feasible
model for organizing, mediating, and transforming human relations.

Yet, this work poses inherent challenges. “The major difficulty in the discussion
of the empirical possibilities of democratising industrial authority structures” is the lack
of scholarly attention and research in this area. “We do not have sufficient information
on a participatory system that contains opportunities for participation at both the higher
and lower levels to test some of the arguments of the participatory theory of participatory
democracy satisfactorily” (Pateman 1970, pp. 106-7). Thus, she examines various
examples of participatory democracy in the workplace and offers a detailed case study of
workers’ self-management in Yugoslavia. She concludes that this empirical evidence
demonstrates great possibilities for the practicality, efficiency, and replicability of this
model.

The analysis of participation in the industrial context has made it clear that only a
relatively minor modification of existing authority structures there may be
necessary for the development of the sense of political efficacy. It is quite
conceivable, given the recent theories of management, that partial participation at
the lower level may become widespread in well-run enterprises in the future
because of the multiplicity of advantages it appears to bring for efficiency and the
capacity of the enterprise to adapt to changing circumstances (Pateman 1970, p. 105).

These case studies also highlight the intricacies of this process. “There is very little
empirical evidence on which to base the assertion that industrial democracy, full higher
level participation, is impossible. On the other hand there is a great deal to suggest that
there are many difficulties and complexities involved” (Pateman 1970, p. 106).
IV. Participatory democratic social movements’ praxis

A. Contextualizing these new social movements

1. The Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

SNCC was a militant youth led social movement and social movement organization (SMO) that drew the nation’s attention to the blatant racism and segregation in the South, increased civil rights, challenged traditional civil rights organizing tactics, and inspired other radical social movements.\(^\text{19}\) As Lipsitz (2003, p. 27) argues, “that organization’s efforts to build a new social warrant premised on participatory democracy and the search for a beloved community eventually informed, inflamed, and ennobled most of the social movements in the 1960s.”

SNCC emerged due to the energy and radical tactics of the 1960 sit-in movement. On February 1, 1960 four freshmen from North Carolina A&T College went to a local Woolworth’s in Greensboro North Carolina. They sat down at a lunch counter and demanded to be served. This was a direct challenge to the Jim Crow laws and the rampant segregation and racism in the South. The students increased risks and modified the teachings of non-violence\(^\text{20}\) in order to highlight the unjust and dehumanizing conditions of racial discrimination across the South.\(^\text{21}\) This action was planned from “below” and sparked a movement that spread quickly due to “pre-existing social

\(^{19}\) Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were explicitly inspired by SNCC as were other explicitly feminist social movements and SMOs.

\(^{20}\) SNCC’s founding statement is reflective of James Lawson’s teachings on non-violence. Yet this social movement increasingly distinguished itself from other civil rights organizations by viewing and strategically utilizing non-violence as a tactic rather than a principle or end in and of itself. See: Zinn (1965).

\(^{21}\) It also highlighted non-institutionalized (de-facto) racial discrimination in the North.
movement networks” created in the civil rights battles of the 1950s and before (Payne 1995, p. 78). By spring there were sit-ins in cities across the South and many Northern students targeted local chains in solidarity.

This social movement was quite different than mobilizations of the past due to its proactive tactics. Moreover, the participants were mainly young college students that brought new energy to the civil rights movement and presented a different sense of power. As Casey Hayden, a SNCC activist (and notable “feminist” voice in the organization) explains, “What we were into at that time was the redemptive community, that we were into healing and reconciling. We were not into gaining power” (Greenberg 1998, p. 132).

The student’s experimentation and leadership gave them a sense of efficacy: they felt that they could change U.S. society and politics. In order to capture and sustain this movement, Ella Jo Baker organized a conference in Raleigh, North Carolina in April 1960, calling together hundreds of active university students. Miss Baker saw the necessity of creating a network that maintained the autonomy of the students and embodied a more inclusive sense of democracy. “She wanted to preserve the brazen

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22 Her limited and often frustrating positions in the foremost civil rights organizations in the 1940s and 1950s taught her as much about what she didn’t want to see in SNCC as it helped her to form an alternative vision of democracy. She worked in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) for various years. She used her contacts in these organizations to gather resources to support SNCC (Mueller1990 and Ransby 2003). Moreover, Baker’s vision for SNCC was based on the cell structure of the Communist Party. Lipsitz (20003, p. 27) explains that she encountered this organizing structure “in the 1930s while working for Black Co-ops and labor organizations like the Women’s Day Workers and Industrial League. She felt that these small groups unleashed the power of individuals by forcing face-to-face deliberative talk and decision making among equals. Yet the same experiences made her suspicious of top down forms of organization and authority, of large organizations, and of leaders whose sense of self-worth increased with their distance from the rank and file.”
fighting spirit the students had exhibited in their sit-in protests. She did not want them to be shackled by the bureaucracy of existing organizations. . . She saw enormous promise in their courageous actions, their creativity, and their openness to new forms of struggle, and she wanted to give them the space and freedom for that potential to develop” (Ransby 2003, p. 244). Therefore, Baker did for SNCC what SNCC would later do for many communities and individuals throughout the South: she provided group-centered leadership, offering the students guidance and resources to find their own voices and the ability to make their own decisions, collectively.

Though bold and unique, SNCC’s attempts to challenge the widespread racism across the South, institute radical new forms of decision-making, and alter social relations were difficult to sustain given the pressures of U.S. political culture, the constraints of capitalism, and the prevalent notions of liberal democracy. Therefore, SNCC’s vision of participatory democracy was ultimately negated through its translation into practice. Yet, the ways in which SNCC struggled to maintain these tensions informs a movement-relevant participatory democratic theory that can inform contemporary and future participatory democratic social movements.

2. The Orçamento Participativo (The Participatory Budget Process, OP)

Brazil has had a troubled “transition” to democracy due its political culture of patronage politics. On the national level, legislators and other representatives have traditionally supported programs in order to gain votes. This has been referred to as troca de favores (exchange of favors), in which goods and services are distributed to clients (both local elites and “ordinary” citizens) on a particularistic basis to ensure a return at
election time. On the local level, neighborhood assemblies and other bodies existed to support the *cabo eleitoral* (vote getter). In essence, clientelism has tied citizens to particular candidates and the allocation of resources has been equated with personal favors rather than citizen rights; resulting in an intense distrust in government and distance between institutional political power and decision-making and those affected (Abers 2000 and Baiocchi 2005).

In the 1970s and 1980s many urban social movements, community organizations, and individual activists began to question these relations. Formal groups culminated such as the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Worker’s Party, PT),\(^{23}\) whose platform promoted an *inversão de prioridades* (inversion of priorities) and *participação popular* (popular participation). When the PT won various municipal elections in 1988, there were attempts to codify these values. One of the most notable and lasting experiments was the OP, a radical democratic experiment initiated by the PT in Porto Alegre in 1989.\(^{24}\)

The OP process was designed to increase transparency, accountability, and the *quantity* and *quality* of citizen participation in municipal budget allocations. It is defined by a unique combination of centralized budgeting, representative and participatory decision-making. Brazil’s 1988 Constitution decentralized the national budget, allowing for individual municipalities to allocate funds. When the PT’s Olivio Dutra became

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\(^{24}\) As a cautionary note, the OP should not be conflated with the PT, though they are mutually reinforcing. Baiocchi (2005) explains that the OP emerged due to the political opportunity of PT elected officials, but the impetus came from the actions of popular councils, neighborhood assemblies and the input of various NGOs. Baierle (1998) also highlights the history of urban protest movements whose radical democracy informed the framework of the OP. Yet, Santos (1998) underscores that the OP is also responsible in many ways for the electoral successes of the PT.
Porto Alegre’s mayor in 1988, he took advantage of this political opportunity and instituted the OP. Yet, due to financial crises and its clientelistic history, Porto Alegre had a disorganized bureaucracy with few resources; nearly crippling the OP in its first two years. Therefore, in 1991 all budget decisions were centralized into the prefeitura (executive branch). Moreover, the government raised taxes, allocated a portion of the city’s annual budget to the OP, and created various institutions to facilitate this process. Individual citizens, representatives, and prefeitura employees collaborate through various OP structures to present proposals and prioritize the distribution of these funds.

In Regional Assemblies (RAs), citizens on a regional level, discuss and designate tangible local projects, “beans ‘n rice works” such as sewers, roads, and traffic lights to be implemented (Santos 1998, p. 485). In addition, RAs elect representatives to the Participatory Budgeting Council (COP), a channel where regional representatives discuss their particular proposals, negotiate, and collectively propose programs. In Thematic Assemblies (TAs), citizens on a municipal level, discuss “major works” such as municipal priorities and decisions regarding the overall OP process, rules, and scope of the OP process (Santos 1998, p. 495). Lastly, both the RAs and TAs elect representatives

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25 Before this change the Legislature allocated funds and there was very little opportunity for public oversight. With the centralization and the implementation of the OP, government spending has become far more transparent and accountable. Abers (2000) explains this as the result of astute political negotiations. 26 The exact percentage differs in the literature, Wampler (2005, p. 7) states that 5-15% Baioocchi (2006, p. 38) states that 10%, and Abers (2000, p. 88) states that 7% of the city’s annual budget is controlled by the OP. 28 Porto Alegre is divided into 16 regions.
for the Municipal Budget Council (MBC), which gives final\(^{29}\) approval of OP budget proposals.\(^{30}\)

The home of the OP, Porto Alegre, has been touted as a bastion of democracy,\(^{31}\) and the OP process has been replicated across the world (Fung & Wright 2003, Goldfrank 2005, Nylen 2003, Pasotti 2005, and Wampler 2005). Though the OP has successfully transformed deep-rooted patron-client relations, increased spaces for citizen involvement in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities, government transparency, accountability, and popular education, it should not be uncritically celebrated or translated. The quality of participation is threatened in the OP by insufficient dissemination of technical knowledge, perpetuation of power hierarchies, fiscal constraints, unsustainability of a non-material reward system, and routinization. Therefore, a movement-relevant participatory democratic theory that actively listens to the OP processes’ struggles can provide the critical praxis necessary for future experiments.

\(^{29}\) Technically, the Câmara dos Vereadores (Legislative Body) gives final approval. But this has become somewhat of a formality. This has led to competition between the Câmara and OP, which will be discussed below in terms of proposals for the juridical consolidation of the OP (Santos 1998).

\(^{30}\) There are also two additional institutions, which have been established to facilitate this process. The Gabinete de Planejamento (Planning office, GAPLAN) which determines the technical and economic viability of citizen demands and the Coordenação de Relações com as Comunidades (Coordination of Relations with the Communities, CRC) which mediates between the government and the RAs and TAs (Santos 1998, p. 468).

B. Participatory Democratic Social Movement Praxis

SNCC and the OP process are social movements that attempt(ed) to translate their vision of participatory democracy – the empowerment of “ordinary people” through open and fluid institutions and mechanisms to undermine educational, material, and informal inequalities – into practice. Hence, learning from these social movements’ participatory democratic praxis offers the ability to re-vision participatory democratic theory.

SNCC and the OP openly and fluidly institutionalized processes as a means of formalizing particular relationships and organizational tactics. SNCC’s organizational and ideological openness distinguished it from other civil rights organizations of the time. In a time in which red baiting was rampant, “SNCC was willing to accept help from all who were willing to ‘put their bodies on the line’” (Carson 1981, p. 180). In fact, SNCC allowed women and those of lower classes a much greater role than in the hierarchically organized civil rights organizations of the time. It must be acknowledged that, like most spaces, there were clear gender hierarchies in SNCC. Yet, due to its radical participatory democratic ethos, these ideas and practices were challenged.

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32 This is not meant to imply that feminism can be equated with the presence or lack of women’s bodies.
33 As Kathie Sarachild, a volunteer in Freedom Summer explains, the sexism in SNCC came as no surprise. “Even though I did experience sexism as far back as 1964, in my case I was already aware or conscious of male chauvinism as a political problem. I had come from an Old Left family and people talked about male chauvinism and gossiped about who was a male chauvinist, and I had learned that there was discrimination against women in society. So that running into it in SNCC was nothing really new or special about SNCC. It was rampant in the Old Left and the New Left. What was new in SNCC were these positive things” (Greenberg 1998, p. 147).
In fact, strong “feminist” leaders fostered a feminist consciousness within its members as well as onlookers. As Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Toure) stated, “I would not have been taken seriously as a leader of an organization like SNCC if I had not taken seriously the leadership of women. A woman like Ella Baker would not have tolerated it” (Ransby 2003, p. 310). The rise of the Black Women’s Liberation Committee (BWLC) which later became the Third World Women’s Alliance (TWWA), were informed by Miss Baker and other’s yet unnamed “feminist” methodology (Anderson-Bricker 1999).

Additionally, the political debates within SNCC in 1967 and 1968

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34 Though we cannot make the mistake of reading back through history with a contemporary lens and using anachronistic labels, I will still argue that an analysis of SNCC provides ample evidence that feminism and an intersectional methodology emerged far before the 1970s. In fact, Ransby (2003, p. 367) argues in her discussion of her personal interview with Eleanor Holmes Norton, who met Miss Baker in her 20s, that Baker was an implicit feminist. She was “a woman who seemed unintimidated by the fact that she was a woman in a movement led by men. She was just very smart. And she wasn’t afraid to be a smart woman.” Baker never called herself a feminist. She could not have, Norton insists – ‘there wasn’t any such animal then.’ At that time, Ella Baker performed and acted as a feminist” (Ransby 2003, p. 367).

35 SNCC’s model of participatory democracy inspired Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the group that is often given credit for the intellectual formulation of participatory democracy. Moreover, the collective ethos of many explicitly feminist social movements can be directly linked to the contributions, if not the members of SNCC. As Joyce Ladner explains, “feminism is an outgrowth; it emerged because SNCC served as a model, a prototype of what could become a better kind of society. It gave rise to not only a feminist consciousness but other groups like gay people, the elderly, students, a whole range of people within society who had also been oppressed. They began to use the SNCC model to pattern their own movements” (Greenberg 1998, p. 145).

36 In Baker’s work, words, and life she highlighted the intersections between race, class, sexuality, and gender. As early as 1935, in “The Bronx Slave Market,” she and Marvel Cooke argued that although poor black women were sexually exploited as women, there was no magical, raceless and classless sisterhood between them and their white female employers. These white women were just as eager to use them for their “muscle as their husbands were to use them for their sexual vices” (Ransby 2003, pp. 76-7). Therefore, drawing, in the 1930s!, clear connections between race, class, and gender and the ways its particular relation to the capitalist mode of production and its concomitant social relations. Moreover, throughout her life, Ella Baker was attentive to issues of sexuality. Though she did not write or give large speeches on the issue, we must remember that for
between Carmichael (Toure) and Foreman highlight the developing intersectional analysis\textsuperscript{37} articulated in this SMO (Foreman 1985, p. 515).\textsuperscript{38} Additionally,

Moreover, SNCC had no organizing blueprint. On the contrary, local contexts determined the proper and most effective tactics. “Their openness to learning from experience meant they could more fully exploit whatever sources of strength a particular locality offered, whether found in a pulpit or a whorehouse” (Payne 1995, p. 247). SNCC’s ideological, organizational, and tactical openness was one of the greatest strengths of its early organizing. According to Foreman (1985, p. 294), “SNCC’s role in helping to create a climate for radical thought and action was the most important contribution, in my opinion. It was one more way in which SNCC helped to accelerate the course of history.”

The OP’s open process and institutions are similar in many respects to SNCC. In RAs all regional residents and in TAs all Porto Alegrans are encouraged to participate, regardless of party affiliation, membership in social clubs, or neighborhood associations (Goldfrank 2005, p. 33). Nylen’s (2003) research documents that the majority of OP participants are not petistas and in practice the OP is distinguished from the PT. For her relationships were revolutionary. Hence, her friendship with Bayard Rustin, “who was gay long before there was a gay rights movement, at a time when such sexual choices, if made public, could and often did result in severe personal and political penalties,” is quite telling (Ransby 2003, p. 163). She “accepted him without condition” and they worked together on various campaigns (he was an important SNCC advisor as well) (Ransby 2003, p. 163). Baker in fact was critical of leading civil rights organizations at the time, such as SCLC, which could not accept his “lifestyle” and therefore refused to nominate him as executive director of the organization.\textsuperscript{37} For a developed critical discussion of intersectional analysis see: Turnbull (2005, pp. 43-49).\textsuperscript{38} In fact, Foreman’s (1985) speech entitled “Liberation Will Come From a Black Thing,” delivered in 1967, clearly explicated the interconnections between various subject positions.
example, there are significant efforts to separate and exclude discussions of political parties and elections from the OP process. Abers (2000, pp. 100-101) concludes that the OP was created as “an open process, in which anyone could participate and, if he or she played by the rules, could benefit.”

These social movements also both developed fluid and open mechanisms in order to realize their vision. SNCC organized based on a two-pronged strategy of direct action and voter registration. Direct action was “designed to counter apathy, fear, and resignation through an assertion of independence, as well as to exercise influence on behalf of collective goals” (Mueller 1990, p. 65). So too, legislative battles were seen as opportunities for mobilization and “registration was a tactic, a means to the more important end of getting people involved politically” (Payne 1995, p. 130). SNCC organized marches, rallies, voter registration campaigns, and the famous Freedom Rides and Freedom Summer as means to enact a broader vision of U.S. citizenship. SNCC was seen as a vehicle to empower its participants and the larger U.S. society. As an institutionalized SMO, SNCC formalized the ties between various student activists and organizations across the country as well as recognized and developed local leadership in the South.

Similarly, though the OP’s stated goal is decentralizing budgetary decisions. This is a means through which to empower new citizens and improve the quality of democratic participation and representation. OP proponents “argue that the only long-term solution is civic education and citizen empowerment, ‘pluralizing’ or diversifying democratic activism, and bringing important decision-making processes out into the public eye precisely through such participatory institutions and processes as the OP” (Nylen 2003, p. 25).
121). Thus citizenship is constructed by the direct and indirect participation of political subjects, not only solving their problems in public spaces where collective decisions can be made but also by “engaging in a process of democratic radicalization aimed at transforming the very order in which they operate” (Baierle 1998, p. 123). By increasing the quantity and quality of participation and representation, the OP institutionally recognizes various political spaces and economic rights, and allows for legitimate claims to social and cultural rights.

Hence, both social movements present(ed) a vision of participatory democracy as the transformation of centralized political cultural leadership and decision-making power through the empowerment of ordinary people. SNCC’s “group-centered” leadership\(^\text{39}\) enacted their critique of traditional, charismatic leadership. Baker coined this term to explain the new form of leadership potential she saw in SNCC. Her “outsider within”\(^\text{40}\) status in the civil rights movement made her keenly aware of the disempowering effects of charismatic leadership (Collins 1990, pp. 11-13, 232-3). “Strong people, don’t need strong leaders . . . My basic sense of it has always been to get people to understand that in the long run they themselves are the only protection they have against violence or

\(^{39}\) This reflected the teachings of Myles Horton, who explained his counterhegemonic pedagogical philosophy as follows: “We debunk the leadership role of going back and telling people and providing the thinking for them. We aren’t into that. We’re into people who can help other people develop and provide educational leadership and ideas, but at the same time, bring people along” (Morris 1984, p. 142).

\(^{40}\) Collins’ (1990) term “outsider within” was used to explain the role of black women who worked as domestics. They lived in close proximity to their “white family” but also clearly saw that they would never be part of that family. Their position allowed them considerable power and a unique position from which to form insights not possible or accessible to those of the whites that inhabited a different social, political, and cultural location. Baker had a similar relationship with traditional civil rights organizations. She was involved but never part of the “club” due to her gender, leadership style, and unorthodox “eclectic” political views (Ransby 2003, p. 370-2).
injustice . . . People have to be made to understand that they cannot look for salvation anywhere but to themselves” (Payne 1995, p. 93).

Therefore, SNCC’s group-centered leadership attempted to re-vision leadership as facilitation rather than direction. This required SNCC fieldworkers to actively listen to the knowledge and opinions of the ordinary people they worked with and also challenged local leaders to empower others. The now famous Fannie Lou Hammer’s activism was transformed through this practice. Before being introduced to SNCC field organizers and attending local meetings, she did not even know she had the right to vote. Yet, when she realized that there was systematic disenfranchisement due to Jim Crow laws and other institutionalized mechanisms, she dedicated herself to the struggle for empowerment (Crawford 1990). In fact, the work and involvement of Ms. Hammer and other organic intellectuals necessitated and radicalized SNCC’s commitment and practice of group-centered leadership. As Payne (1995, p. 239) explains, “People referring to SNCC as non-elitist often forget that SNCC had no choice in the matter. If you wanted to be around people like Amzie Moore or Ms. Hammer, you had to be non-elitist, you had to listen.”

The OP is also explicitly based on the empowerment, allocating greater resources to poorer regions and fostering efficacy in the poor, uneducated, and those otherwise underprivileged. The OP’s decentralization of decision-making power increases institutionally recognized channels for citizen participation by transferring leadership and representation from “experts” (i.e. formally elected political cultural representatives and government employees) to “ordinary people.” In the spirit of inverção de prioridades, the OP’s fluid structures encourage all citizens of Porto Alegre to participate and “its
rules are geared towards helping low-income residents make significant policy choices” (Wampler 2005, p. 5). Abers (2000, pp. 123-5) demonstrates that the majority of RA participants have significantly lower household incomes than the population as a whole. Therefore, citizen involvement in the budgetary decisions that affect them is seen as an end to improve the quality of their individual and community lives and a means to improve the quantity and quality of participation and representation in Porto Alegre.

These participatory democratic social movements also contend(ed) that knowledge is power. Thus, the distribution of this valuable resource through horizontal methods was/is seen as a means of liberation. SNCC’s radical educational philosophy was inspired by the teachings of Myles Horton. His Highlander School, which was founded in 1932, was attended by the majority of SNCC activists (Payne 1995 and Ransby 2003). The lessons they learned while there, were reflected in SNCC’s ideology and projects. For example, in 1962, the Freedom Schools were founded as parallel educational institutions in the South. They were designed for Black youth who received a subordinate education in the South and older Black residents that had been denied or economically pressured (often forcefully coerced) to work rather than attend school. Freedom Schools used the Socratic teaching method – asking questions rather than presenting answers—and translated the everyday experiences of the participants into

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41 Abers (2000, Ch. 12) provides ample evidence supporting the empowerment thesis. 42 This method is related to Paulo Freire’s (1989) articulation of critical pedagogy. In this model he contrasts the “banking method”, depositing information and facts in students to be withdrawn at a later moment, to critical pedagogy in which students learn in collaboration with teachers. According to Freire (1998), teachers are not the ultimate authorities, instead they ask critical questions which cause students to reflect on their own lives, arrive at their own conclusions, and in the process knowledge becomes tied to their life experiences. Thus, it is based on embodied rather than abstract knowledge (McLaren 2000).
larger social issues. Offering classes on finance, farming, sewing, and basic literacy, these institutions fostered the efficacy necessary for participants to take greater control over their personal and public lives. For example, many were empowered to engage in the dangerous process necessary to register to vote in the Jim Crow South (Payne 1995 and Ross 2003).

Similar to SNCC, critical pedagogy is central to the OP process. In fact, the OP process was directly influenced by Friere’s (1989, 1998) teachings. Baiocchi (2003, p. 56) explains that “the ideas of popular educators of urban social movements were an important source of inspiration in how to run meetings and how to develop norms of dialogue that were respectful of different types of speech.” OP administrators and community organizers, like SNCC field secretaries, are encouraged to see their role as didactic. Moreover, they travel directly to regions and neighborhoods in order to inform residents about the existence of the OP, how to get involved, as well as the benefits of participation.43 Once involved, technical staff of the executive is sent to RAs, TAs, and neighborhood meetings to disseminate pertinent technical information regarding the budgeting process.

Due to internal critique, municipal workers and technical staff must now attend workshops to learn the importance of active listening and translation. Santos (1998, p. 500) explains:

The technical staff has increasingly been submitted to a profound learning process concerning communication and argumentation with lay populations. Their technical recommendations must be conveyed in accessible language to people who do not master technical knowledge; their reasonability must be demonstrated in a persuasive way, rather than imposed in an authoritarian fashion; no

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43 This method of outreach also significantly reduces the cost and travel time for citizens (Abers 2000, p. 151).
alternative hypothesis or solution may be excluded without showing its inviability. While earlier a technobureaucratic culture prevailed, gradually a technodemocratic culture has emerged.

Therefore, the OP process is often referred to as a “school of democracy” for staff and citizens alike (Abers 2000, Baiocchi 2003, 2005, and Nylen 2003).

Trust is also an essential aspect of SNCC and the OP process’ participatory democratic praxis. These social movements argue that there must be a fundamental transformation of political culture and human relations in order to undermine systematic informal and formal inequalities. Therefore, they enact a cultural politics of accountability and transparency markedly different than common sense notions of participation, representation, and democracy.

SNCC participants were bound together in a “circle of trust” based on the conscious development and sustenance of deep personal friendships (Polletta 2002). In fact, Payne (1995, p. 243) explains that “SNCC’s early organizers often portray much of their work as simply building relationships.” As Foreman (1985, p. 301), an influential member and former SNCC chairman, articulated, the general feeling of SNCC in the early 1960s “was permeated by an intense comradeship, born out of sacrifice and suffering and a commitment to the future, and out of a knowledge that we were indeed challenging the politics of the country, and out of a feeling that our basic strength rested in the energy, love, and warmth of the group.”

Unlike SNCC’s model of trust predicated on friendship, the OP seeks to increase citizen confidence by undermining the long-standing Brazilian political culture of clientelism. Its institutions provide various mechanisms to increase and ensure formal accountability and transparency. For example, in 1991 the prefeitura created a
computerized Project Management System (PMS), making governmental financial records accessible, organized, and up-to-date (Abers 2000, p. 78). This facilitated citizens’ ability to verify the status of designated OP projects and institutionalized governmental over-sight at all levels. Moreover, a Municipal Day of Accountability was initiated in 1990, formally recognizing and requiring the executive to annually hold a public meeting to officially report on the fulfillment of OP demands. In addition, the GAPLAN “publishes a booklet with the Investment Plan, a list of all the approved works described in detail, as well as a list of names and addresses of every councilor, as well as the telephone number of the PB coordinator in every region” in order to hold representatives individually accountable (Santos 1998, p. 494). Lastly, the OP itself serves as a monitoring body. Whereas previously street mobilizations were necessary to compel the state to fulfill its promises and duties, participants in the MBC evaluate the allocation of funds to ensure that approved projects are in fact executed.

Both SNCC and the OP process reflect a vision of participatory democracy rooted in an equality and solidarity based on sameness, and have instituted particular policies in order to reduce informal inequalities and differences among members.⁴⁴ Collective consensus-based decision-making was (is) their translation of Habermas’ (1996, 1997) ideal speech situation and reconstructed public sphere(s) as a means to encourage the active participation of free (from economic and other power constraints), equal (all have equal opportunity to participate based on their sameness in the public sphere(s)), rational

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⁴⁴ They argue that “pure” democracy improves the quantity rather than the quality of participation and representation. In fact, total participation is impractical, inefficient and also potentially coercive. For example, in Brazil’s current national electoral system voting is mandatory. Thus all citizens must participate but many are uninformed and disengaged (Abers 2000, pp. 115-134).
participants must present informed arguments based on facts rather than personal views or troques), and collective (participants are encouraged to engage in “public-mindedness” in order to make decisions based on the collective good rather than self-interest) individuals (Avritzer 2002, Baiocchi 2005, Fraser 1993, Mansbridge 1980, 2003, and Polletta 2002).

For SNCC, “participatory decisionmaking strengthened the movement, but, more than that, it was the movement. It tendered new political possibilities, new bases and criteria for leadership, and new mechanisms of participation” (Polletta 2000, p. 70). In the OP process, the fluid and open structure of the RAs are meant to engage local residents to voice their particular communities’ concerns and engage in rational dialogue with the views and desires of other regions. Moreover, TAs are explicitly designed to promote “enlarged thinking,” challenging participants to consider municipal issues and long-term projects (Abers 2000, pp. 177-194).

Moreover, these participatory social movements sought/seek to undermine material inequalities among participants and employees. Both organizations instituted a non-material reward system to balance significant financial constraints and as a tactic to verify one’s commitment to the larger cause of societal transformation.

45 This policy must first be seen as an end. SNCC’s autonomy was due in large part to its refusal of monies with “strings attached”. Yet, because this organization did not prioritize fundraising, it was plagued by financial concerns for the majority of its existence (Foreman 1985). For example, there was heated debate whether the organization should accept significant governmental resources in order to initiate its citizen empowerment projects. In 1962, SNCC accepted a government grant for its Voter Education Project (VEP) and created the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) to manage the funds and reduce internal conflicts over these resources. This allowed SNCC to exponentially expand its institutional capacity (hiring many new workers, increasing wages, and the geographical scope of its efforts). Yet, the money came with significant restrictions. VEP and COFO became ends in themselves and bureaucratic nightmares for
SNCC’s low-wage scale was framed explicitly in contrast to predominant civil rights organizations of the time. Foreman (1985, p. 237) explains that the NAACP, SCLC, Urban League and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) were “oriented toward capitalism and this is reflected in their attitude about personal monies received for their work. It was clear to me and others present that we had to keep our militancy by structuring ourselves in a different way form the conventional organizations and by setting a wage scale that would make it impossible for anyone to develop a vested interest in the survival of the organization.” Moreover, SNCC field secretaries’, for the most part voluntary poverty, forced them to live like the people they worked with. Alberta Garner, a former SNCC worker, explains that local people had “a little trust and confidence in you—just from the way that you live” (Payne 1995, p. 254). Therefore, this low wage scale sustained SNCC as an organization and functioned as a “screening device” (Payne 1985, p. 353).

Similar to the organizational structure of SNCC, community organizers and OP administrators are paid modest wages. Though they labor long hours, routinely working

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46 Yet, it must also be seen as a means. In fact, this policy can be linked to the social warrant and ideology of the Cuban Revolution. Specifically Guevara’s articulation of “el hombre nuevo” agued that “the new man” was a righteous and moral revolutionary agent who received satisfaction from community development and revolutionary actions rather than material rewards (Deutschmann 1997, Loveman 1997, Loviny 1998, Perez-Stable 1998).

47 Though SNCC was usually in the red, it was able to eke by for many years due to a variety of skillful tactics (Carson 1981, Foreman 1985, Payne 1995, Ransby 2003).
weekends and nights, these predominately former activists are non-materially rewarded by the OP process. Nylen (2003, p. 144) concludes that their dedication “is the stuff of real-world heroism.” This can also be said of the citizens who engage in the OP process: the RA and TA delegates, MBC members, and the citizens who attend the OP forums at all levels, are volunteers. Though motivated by personal and community “rice ‘n beans works,” significant affective rewards are also gained through involvement in the OP process.

Thus, both SNCC and the OP rely on el hombre nuevo as the revolutionary agent to enact these participatory democratic experiments. Yet, this mechanism is based on an understanding of equality based on sameness, and therefore did allow SNCC as an organization to fundamentally recognize and work through class differences. The same can be said currently of the OP process. Therefore, this strategy addresses differences but is not sustainable or transformative.

V. Re-visioning a movement-relevant theory of participatory democracy

A. Who can freely, equally, and collectively engage in rational debate in the public sphere?

Habermas’ (1987, 1995, 1997) explicitly utopian theory has prompted a great deal of debate among democratic theorists. Fraser (1993), Mansbridge (1980, 1990, 2003), and other feminists (Mehan 1995) have developed Habermas’ critique of the bourgeois public sphere, arguing that it explicitly and implicitly excludes particular bodies and voices by requiring a “specific kind of discursive interaction” based on “an ideal of unrestricted rational discussion of public matters” (Fraser 1993, p. 4). As U.S. third
world feminists have argued in regard to socialist feminism, the bourgeois public sphere recognizes differences only to erase them. Because it was constructed “to be open and accessible to all . . . merely private interests were to be bracketed; and discussants were to deliberate as peers” (Fraser 1993, p. 4). Therefore, though this version of the public sphere transformed the liberal notion of the abstract individual into a collective being, it masked informal power inequalities and therefore forms of domination. As Mansbridge (1990, p. 127) explains,

The transformation of ‘I’ into ‘we’ brought about through political deliberation can easily mask subtle forms of control. Even the language people use when they reason together usually favors one way of seeing things and discourages others. Subordinate groups sometimes cannot find the right voice or words to express their thoughts, and when they do, they discover they are not heard. [They] are silenced, encouraged to keep their wants inchoate, and heard to say ‘yes’ when what they want to have said is ‘no.’

Hence, feminist theorists illustrate that the bourgeois public sphere not only promotes the interests of a particular class, as Habermas (1995, 1997) has clearly articulated, but also a particular gender.

Yet, feminists have also argued that the inherent (informal and formal) exclusions on which the bourgeois public is based have not been sufficiently problematized in Habermas’ (1987, 1995, 1997) work. Fraser (1993, pp. 13) contends that his unitary formulation of the public sphere “like the bourgeois conception itself, is informed by an underlying evaluative assumption, namely, that the institutional confinement of public life to a single, overarching public sphere is a positive and desirable state of affairs, whereas the proliferation of a multiplicity of publics represents a departure from, rather

48 My previous field statement (2005, pp. 9-16, 36-37, 41-56) presents a detailed discussion of the complex genealogy, theoretical production, and critiques of hegemonic feminisms presented by U.S. third world feminists.
than an advance toward, democracy.” In fact, the ways in which “subaltern
counterpublics” provide “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated
social groups49 invent and circulate counterdiscourses, so as to formulate oppositional
interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” makes a theory that is based on a
“multiplicity of publics preferable to a single public sphere” (Fraser 1993, pp. 14, 27).
Therefore, the recognition and theorization of multiple public spheres, would allow for
the inclusion “of interests and issues that bourgeois masculinist ideology labels ‘private’
and treats as inadmissible” (Fraser 1993, p. 27).

Fraser’s (1993) theorization of multiple publics does problematize many of the
exclusions inherent in the bourgeois and Habermasian (1987, 1995, 1997) formulation of
the unitary public sphere. Yet, as Lipsitz (2003, p. 39) illustrates, contemporary
capitalism creates “endless new forms of difference, inequality, and incommensurability”
and therefore our forms of resistance, organization, and democracy must be also be
multiple and differentiated. U.S. third world feminist praxis illuminates that it is not
enough to simply recognize and create spaces that allow for difference. These theorists
argue that particular forms of domination, oppression, supremacy, and fundamentalism
are maintained, replicated, and even created within these subaltern counterpublics
populated by subordinated social groups. For example, women of color are critical of
hegemonic feminisms’ tendency to imagine and thus (consciously and unconsciously)
promote a particular subject. As Sandoval (2000, p. 195) states hegemonic feminist
praxis “does not provide the opportunity to recognize the existence of another kind of
woman – to imagine another, aberrant form of subjectivity, aesthetics, politics, feminism.

49 Fraser (1993, p. 14) defines these subordinated groups as “women, workers, peoples of
color, and gays and lesbians.”
That is why U.S. feminists of color have argued that each hegemonic feminist phase tended to generate its own equivalent forms of racist ideology.” For example, Collins (1990, p. 229) argues that “white feminists routinely point with confidence to their oppression as women but resist seeing how much their white skin privileges them.” The ways in which women of color have developed this argument through intersectional analysis is explicated in Turnbull (2005). By learning from SNCC and the OP process’ mechanisms of ensuring qualitative participation, representation, and accountability, this movement-relevant social movement theory argues that these translations increased the ability of SNCC and OP participants to voice personal concerns, address differences, and work toward common goals. Nonetheless important differences were/are often overlooked in order to form an equality and unity based on sameness.

SNCC’s participatory democratic praxis created a collective decision-making process enabled by the trust of a circle of friends. By analyzing the time at which the collective decision-making process ostensibly became the issue we can glean a great deal regarding SNCC’s struggles and those of translating participatory democracy as an ideal into practice in general. The exponential growth of SNCC in 1964 and the consequent “Moses-Foreman” split” have led to the characterization of “early” and “later” SNCC. 1964’s Freedom Summer campaign, which initiated a large mock election across Mississippi in the hopes of proving that blatant discrimination at the ballot boxes rather than Black people’s lack of education, apathy, or political interest, prevented their political participation. This campaign registered thousands of voters for the Mississippi

50 Though I highlight particular moments, I do not want to repeat the mistakes of many civil rights historians that portray big events as the movement. Therefore, these moments are seen as elements of larger cultural political processes (Payne 1995).
Democratic Freedom Party (MFDP) and required the recruitment of thousands of volunteers. Yet, due primarily to the fact that these positions were dangerous and unpaid, mostly white, Northern university students responded.\(^{51}\) After, Freedom Summer\(^{52}\) many of the volunteers asked to be employed full-time by SNCC. But SNCC’s collective decision-making model was not able to manage the tensions that arose over this request.\(^{53}\)

In fact, SNCC had no clear structure or criteria for decision-making. As Forman (1985, p. 434) explains, “The free-for-all collective style of our staff meetings had never reached the point of examining conflicts in an honest, thorough, collective way that would put problems in perspective and reduce frustration. Many times SNCC staff members would express criticisms of a meeting or an individual—outside the meeting, in private.” Thus the issue “was finally put to a vote, one of the very few times up to then that we employed this method of arriving at a decision” (Foreman 1985, p. 421). Though the volunteers were ultimately accepted, this signaled a key moment in the organization. Many began to believe it was “too unwieldy to depend on consensus” (Foreman 1985, p. 435).

In later years conflicts only increased. The influx of these new SNCCers led to various challenges and confrontations with “veterans”. This is highlighted in the split between “freedom highers,” associated with Moses-Paris, and “centralists,” associated...
with Foreman. “Freedom highers” took both indigenous leadership and collective
decision-making to an extreme. They accused “veterans” such as Moses-Paris and
Foreman of betraying the ideals of group-centered leadership and empowerment by
relying on their unequal levels of knowledge and experience. Moreover, they argued that
decisions, both in the field and in SNCC itself, could only be made “by the people.”
Therefore they were accused of suffering from “local-itis,” a romantization of local
communities that resulted in the uncritical acceptance and deference to the embodied
knowledge and experience of locals and the conflation of facilitation with hierarchical
leadership (Foreman 1985, p. 422). “Centrists” on the other hand, argued that too many
autonomous decisions were being made which undermined SNCC’s long-term
commitments to communities. In fact, they labeled “freedom highers” “floaters” because
they seemed to float from one site to another. Moreover, the “centrists” saw the
increasing lack of discipline, namely drug use within staff, as a dangerous trend.
Therefore, these SNCCers argued that a more traditional leadership style and
organization could provide stability, consistency, and address these specific concerns.

Though it is clear the “side” one took on this issue had a great deal to do with
ideology, this debate also revealed the diminishing trust and unaddressed racial, gender,
and class hierarchies in SNCC. Much of the desire to move to voting rather than
deliberative decision-making was the result of the changing atmosphere in the

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54 I will use “freedom highers” and “centralists” as analytic rather than explanatory
categories. This separation allows for the isolation of key ideological divergences within
the organization, but guards against the oversimplification and emphasis of these
boundaries, especially the attribution of these strains to particular figures. In texts such as
Polletta (2002) these lines are firmly drawn and many nuances are erased. Because race,
class, and gender were key components of this struggle, these categories are useful in this
case but are far from the key explanatory variables.
organization. Instead of a circle of trust, wherein SNCCers could talk together and work through decisions, the organization became increasingly invaded by suspicion and fear.\textsuperscript{55} As Baker stated, “they began to sort of eat on each other” (Payne 1985, p. 367).

SNCC’s model of trust based on friendship proved unsustainable and resistant to expansion.

If friendship supplies the trust, mutual affection, and respect that facilitate fast and fair decisions, it also makes it difficult to expand the deliberative group beyond the original circle. Newcomers lack an understanding of the history of the issues at stake as well as the idiosyncratic practices of this organization. Veterans may fail to inform and consult them. But newcomers’ lack is affective as well as informational. Since newcomers by definition threaten existing friendships, they may find it difficult to secure the trust, respect, and solicitude that veterans enjoy. Newcomers’ social marginality may translate into political marginality, or they may fear that it is doing so. What veterans see as a friend’s momentary lapse in a participatory democratic ethos, newcomers may see as yet one more instance of elitism. And the veterans may realize that they have been exclusive only when newcomers attack them for their insufficient commitment to participatory democracy (Polletta 2002, p. 140, emphasis in original).

There were racial tensions, both before and after Freedom Summer. Gender tensions were clear in the gendered division of labor and explicitly articulated at the Waveland meeting (Kuumba 2001, pp. 153-5).\textsuperscript{56} But SNCC’s exponential expansion made its solidarity model of close personal relationships and exclusion of others unmanageable.

Because trust in the OP model is related to formal qualitative and quantitative accountability and transparency, rather than friendship, it can more easily expand and address differences than SNCC. In fact Avritzer (2002) and Baiocchi (2003, 2005)

\textsuperscript{55} This is one example of how SNCC was negatively affected by the efforts of the FBI’s Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) (Carson 1981).

\textsuperscript{56} The Waveland Position Paper was presented as anonymously written but it has been since recognized as the creation of Mary King and Casey Hayden. This paper was seen as divisive and irrelevant at the time, but has spurred a great deal of debate regarding feminism, sexism, and racism within SNCC from 1964 to today (Anderson-Bricker 1999, Greenberg 1998 pp. 127-151, and Kuumba 2001).
conclude that the OP process reveals the successful translation of concerns from the public sphere to the level of political culture. Though Baiocchi (2005, p. 144) explicitly addresses Fraser’s (1993) critique, both of these theorists maintain Habermas’ (1985, 1995, 1997) unitary formulation of the public sphere and therefore do not capture the fluidity or multiplicity of the OP. The OP process is composed of and explicitly created to empower the “hitherto excluded” (Abers 2000, p. 7). Therefore, it can be seen as an example of Fraser’s (1993) subaltern counterpublics and reflects the ways in which these spaces replicate particular inequalities and forms of domination. In fact, the OP’s reliance on the liberal ideal of free, equal, and rational collective deliberation does not allow for a complex understanding, theorization, or praxis of equality as equity.

Avritzer’s (2002, p. 5) critique of elitist democratic theory, argues the public sphere “lies between the market and the state and involves individual communications and deliberations through face-to-face interaction” and that the transformation of political culture requires “the capacity to transform new practices from a societal innovation into a public form of decision making,” or to institutionalize “societal practice.” He therefore expands Habermas’ (1985, 1995, 1997) notion of the public sphere into “participatory publics;” defined as “face-to-face deliberation free expression and association,” the role of social movements and voluntary associations is to “address contentious issues by introducing at the public level alternative practices,” “public deliberation and decision making,” and “binding deliberations,” public oversight and accountability (Avritzer 200, pp. 7, 52). Yet, these participatory publics only account for rather than work through differences that emerge in these spaces. Baiocchi’s (2005, p. 73) formulation of “emergent public spheres” defines deliberation as “discussion among ‘equal, free, and reasonable’ participants.” Through his relational sociological approach, he critiques Habermas and argues that debates also happen outside of the “lifeworld” (Baiocchi 2005, p. 95). He defines the emergent public sphere as “neither a particular place nor a particular institution, but rather as the actual conversations between people that meet the standards of open-ended and public-mindedness . . . Only those discussions framed in terms that consider broad ranges of interests and do not regard any individual or group interests as more or less worthy” are considered (Baiocchi 2005, p. 96). Therefore, he claims that through public-mindedness one can look beyond personal needs, wants, and concerns and therefore he includes personal concerns in the emergent public sphere, but only to ultimately be deferred in the service of the greater good. Therefore, Fraser’s (1993) and Mansbridge’s (1980, 1990) are not sufficiently addressed by either of these formulations.
Overall, it appears that the OP has significantly increased transparency, citizen trust, and empowered many poorer residents. Yet, many hierarchies are replicated by and through this process and participants’ recognition of this fact is often rendered irrelevant.

For example, similar to the civil rights movement, more than half of the OP participants are women, but men occupy the majority of leadership roles (Fung & Wright 2003, p. 53). Abers (2000, pp. 128-9) finds “women elected to the executive committees of the Regional Budget Forums or other organizations more often acted as secretaries – taking notes during the assemblies, maintaining the files, and conducting much of the routine, administrative work of the organizations – and less often participated vocally in the discussion taking place.” Thus similar to the dynamics in SNCC, women in the OP perform vital tasks yet due to the feminization of these roles they are not adequately valued. Moreover, the relative authority attributed to men’s voices is both reflected and enabled by many women’s lack of self-confidence to speak in public. Race also may be a barrier to participation. Baiocchi (2005, p. 53) states, “The best estimate of race of participants also suggests that there is no evidence of lack of parity on racial grounds,” but there is no substantive discussion nor clear statistics on this issue in any of the literature. In my initial fieldwork, Glorimeri (Turnbull 2005), a woman of color activist recently elected RA representative in Restinga, emphasized that her election was

59 This is can be read through a feminist analysis of the relative value of reproductive and productive labor. Social movements and organizations undervalue the reproductive labor (gendered female) that enables their productive activities (gendered male).
60 This is somewhat addressed in Abers (2003). In fact most of the literature does not employ a feminist analysis, only mentioning gender power imbalances in passing. The implications of the masculinized voice equated with authority, is not explored. This is strikingly clear in Baiocchi (2005, pp. 127-9). I look forward to exploring the intricacies of these questions through a feminist methodology in my fieldwork in Restinga.
significant because she is a woman of color. This is but one example and I clearly cannot extrapolate in order to make a definitive claim on this issue. Nonetheless, I want to signal race as a crucial area of power in the OP process that calls for further investigation. Moreover, Nylen (2003) and Wampler’s (2005) research pose a clear challenge to empowerment thesis by demonstrating that the OP provides more spaces for those already active, rather than mobilizing the politically disengaged. “Indeed, it would appear that the OP amounts to a great deal of ‘preaching to the choir,’ that is to the already empowered, and comparatively very little actual empowerment” (Nylen 2000, p. 70).\footnote{This is supported by Wampler’s (2005, p. 16) research findings that one’s previous engagement in Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) is a good predictor of empowerment.} The maintenance of these power hierarchies and the “activist” nature of the OP, clearly temper overly celebratory pictures of this process.

Additionally, Wampler (1995, p. 16-18) has demonstrated that citizens are mobilized due to “rice ‘n beans” concerns and the OP’s mechanisms of accountability are for the most part directly tied to self-interest. Hence, “when citizens develop a vested, specific interest in public policy they will also learn how to use monitoring procedures.” Yet, the OP is currently seeking to increase participation in TAs and focus on larger municipal-wide projects. Yet, there may be few vested material interests in these areas and it is questionable whether people have the motivation to hold the government accountable. Lastly, accountability and the OP process as a whole, are quite vulnerable to economic swings. As was clear in the first few years of the process, without resources this process is significantly if not mortally strained (Wampler 2005, p. 18). It is a vicious cycle because participation is directly related to perceived benefits, if citizens make
demands that are unable to be fulfilled, they lose faith in the government, which in turn decreases their sense of efficacy (Wampler 2005, p. 21).

Thus, both SNCC and the OP process recognize(d) differences but their institutional mechanisms sought to equalize power relations by encouraging sameness not equity in participants. These struggles therefore highlight the need for a movement-relevant theory capable of re-visioning participatory democracy as solidarity and coalition building rooted in difference.

B. Is strong democracy flexible?

Barber (1984) argues that his formulation of strong democracy may appear to advocate for too much participation. I would argue the contrary. Barber (1984) relies on Habermas’ notion of a unitary public sphere and therefore the previously mentioned critiques apply. Moreover, by calling for mandatory civil service his theory can be said to suffer from many of the problems, namely the coercive nature, of “pure” democracy. Additionally, the troubles that SNCC and the OP have had in democratizing knowledge highlight the tensions of Barber’s (1984) mechanism for distributing information. These social movements reveal that it is not more information, but how and by whom knowledge is presented that engenders or stifles participatory democracy.

SNCC did not sufficiently prioritize pedagogy. Thus, information and power became increasingly unequal within the organization and between participants and the communities they worked with. Veterans and those in leadership positions often possessed more information about the funds and bureaucratic aspects of the organization.

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62 This discussion is related to Foucault’s (1991) formulation of the integral relationship between knowledge and power.
This spurred later critiques of elitism and the delegitimization of key leaders (as previously discussed). Moreover, field organizers possessed a great deal of knowledge about the communities in which they worked. This could have been productively translated into larger conversations regarding effective organizing tactics. Yet, it was rare for SNCC workers to dialogue together and learn from their successes and failures. Organizing meetings, which were few, often did not focus on specific projects. In addition, most of those working in the field did not see the value of these larger meetings when there was so much work to be done “on the ground”. Foreman (1985) laments in his reflections on SNCC, that even when crucial decisions had to be made, field organizers were often not present.

In addition, the gendering of “spade work” and the ultimate abandonment of the Freedom School project highlight that the value of critical pedagogy was often ignored or deferred. The essential “spade work,” which sustained and distinguished SNCC was increasingly devalued and seen as “women’s work.” Women were expected to perform essential tasks in the organization, but were not adequately recognized for their contributions. “Women did most of the work but few women held authority” (Standley 1990, p. 197). For example, Ruby Doris Robinson, who became the first female executive secretary of SNCC in 1966, performed the majority of the bureaucratic duties for the organization. Yet, Robinson’s contributions were rarely recognized internally and

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63 This was the highest elected official position of any woman in any large Civil Rights Organization (Ross 2003, p. 214). Yet Foreman (1985, p. 480) explains she had difficulty exercising full authority in this position. “Ruby had endured vicious attacks from some of those people in SNCC . . . they also embodied male chauvinism in fighting her attempts as executive secretary to impose a sense of organizational responsibility and self-discipline, trying to justify themselves by the fact that their critic was a woman.”
she has been omitted from the majority of movement histories.\textsuperscript{64} Though it is difficult to determine the extent of the sexism in SNCC, the gendering of particular labor undermined the ultimate goals of this organization such as the Freedom Schools. Payne (1995, p. 305) explains, “In part the Freedom School model got lost in the desire to do something bigger, something that would have more impact sooner. This was emblematic of a larger impatience.” It reveals the developing romantization of confrontation, which reduced the value placed on the acquisition and dissemination of information, critical reflections on SNCC’s values, structures, and projects, and individual responsibilities, duties, and accountability.

Though the OP process has made significant efforts to encourage “technodemocratization,” educational and informational inequities and barriers continue to complicate participants’ efficacy and trust. Abers’ (2000, p. 152) research demonstrates that “government-employed community agents had few resources to help them along and little formal training. They often went to meetings with posters and pamphlets that they had put together themselves.” The insufficient distribution of economic resources for education and information has reduced effectiveness. For example, there are very few (if any) empowerment or public speaking classes offered or childcare provided in order to increase and improve the quantity and quality women’s participation. Moreover, technical knowledge remains unequal. This is quite clear in the

\textsuperscript{64} This is also the case with Miss Baker and other prominent female activists in SNCC. This does not say anything about their importance in the organization; rather it reveals a masculinist tendency within historical narratives. For example, Carson’s (1981) work reveals an almost exclusively masculinist history of SNCC. This tendency is also clear in Foreman (1985, pp. 200-201, 260-262). He articulates his great respect for women activists such as Robinson and Bernice Johnson Reagan. Yet his comments are often quite patronizing.
MBC. On all levels, community demands are subject to feasibility reviews by executive staff members with a great deal of technical expertise. Whereas in RAs, citizens often rely on their “everyday” knowledge to counter “expert” findings, this is for the most part not possible at higher levels of the OP process (Santos 1998, p. 492). Abers (2000, p. 201) finds that “most of the time, [MBC] council members had neither the technical capacity nor the time to seriously evaluate [proposals] them. Most members had little more than primary education and many had full-time jobs that severely limited the time they could devote to council activities. The result was that, with few exceptions, the council simply rubber-stamped government proposals.”

In addition, because the OP is a “school of democracy,” experience translates into knowledge. Yet, there is a significant learning curve (Baiocchi 2005, p. 139). In order to prevent more experienced participants from becoming new patrons, a two-year term-limit has been instituted for representatives. Yet, because Wampler (2005, pp. 15, 26) demonstrates that experience is equated with authority, in addition to undermining indigenous leadership this policy threatens the accountability mechanisms of the OP process. Santos (1998, p. 490) argues that this accountability mechanism may be counter-productive. In fact, the OP process must guard against going the way of the “freedom highers,” ostracizing important veterans who can provide information and leadership because of their experience.

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65 Baiocchi’s (2005, pp. 139-141) research highlights the expertise, efficacy, and authority of long time participants.
C. What about other contexts?

Pateman’s (1970) praxis based theory of participatory democracy in the workplace re-visions the study of participatory democracy. Yet, she is correct in arguing that there is little empirical evidence to support her theory. Moreover, because she only examines experiments in the industrial context, her theory is not necessarily relevant to participatory social movements’ cultural political enactments. Yet, this theory can be developed (and become relevant) by actively listening to SNCC and OP’s tensions in translating their ideal of a non-material reward system into practice.

In SNCC, this mechanism revealed a strong class bias and was not a sustainable for ensuring the commitment of SNCC employees. In fact, SNCC’s success ironically undermined this practice and its concomitant ideology. When the opportunity for fame arose, Miss Baker explained that due to the internalization of U.S. political culture, it was difficult to resist. “To me it is part of our system which says that success is registered in terms of, if not money, then how much prestige and how much recognition you have” (quoted in Payne 1995, p. 379). Spokespeople became celebrities and were increasingly portrayed as traditional leaders. Though this dynamic was challenged, many individual SNCCers began to speak for the community and used their status for personal gain. As Owen Brooks of the Delta Ministry explains, people developed “a self-serving attitude . . . I paid my dues and it’s time for me now to collect some premium on the dues” (Payne 1995, p. 355). For example, as the chairman of SNCC Stokely Carmichael (Toure) gained a great deal of notoriety and was invited to speak all across the world. “Much of what Stokely said while abroad was good, but his general attitude represented the zenith

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66 He was elected in 1966.
of an individualism that has hurt the black struggle in many quarters. His actions indicated that he was more interested in building a cult of personality rather than a strong organization” (Foreman 1985, p. 521). Therefore, he began to be referred to as “Stokely Starmichael”. Though Carmichael (Toure) was prominent, he was not unique. In fact, the desire for traditional leadership and recognition increasingly became the norm.

Moreover, most SNCC workers were previously university students who renounced their economic privileges by undertaking this employment. Yet, there were SNCCers, such as Ms. Hammer, who had been poor their whole lives (Rogers 2005). Therefore, SNCC’s low-wage scale was class biased and unsustainable. SNCC workers in general had trouble paying their bills. As they got married and had children this became even more difficult. It was a struggle to support a family on a field organizer’s salary. Though there was a policy instituted to give married organizers, and those with children higher wages, a living wage was never implemented. In Hammer’s famous words, like the majority of the Blacks in the South, SNCC workers “were sick and tired of being sick and tired” (Payne 1995, p. 401).

In fact, the staff members were over-worked (constantly mobilizing and performing multiple tasks simultaneously) and under-paid which caused them to “burn-out.” Foreman (1995) reflects that he and his fellow workers were usually so tired that they had little time to focus on “larger” questions of group organization or tactics, internal and external critique, or their physical and mental wellbeing. In fact, the long hours and minimal pay led to multiple mental and physical health problems. In his autobiography, Foreman (1985) explains that at times he became so sick he was forced to stop working all together. Kathlene Cleaver illustrates that gender complicates this
matter even further. Women in SNCC “carried the double burden of their jobs and their duties as wives and mothers, and also had to contend with the male staff members’ refusal to accept them as their equals” (Crawford 1990, p. 197). Cleaver goes so far as to argue that these multiple burdens eventually led to Robinson’s untimely death.67 “What killed Ruby Doris was the constant outpouring of work, work, work, with being married, having a child, the constant conflicts, the constant struggles that she was subjected to because she was a woman” (Crawford 1990, p. 197).

Similarly the “heroism” of OP administrators may be admirable but not sustainable. To begin with those who take up this job are “special,” they usually have a history of political activism and see their work as a justified “sacrifice.” Yet, for OP volunteers this work is supplementary to the necessities of paid employment and reproductive labor. Therefore, it is difficult for women and those of lower classes to make the time commitment required of elected positions.

Therefore, the mechanism of a low-wage scale as a measure of commitment is not sustainable.68 In fact, Upski Wimsatt (1998) argues that this is not only unnecessary but also counter-productive. This logic attempts to overlook the fact that social movement actors do and must engage in the capitalistic system. By ignoring rather than fundamentally maintaining this tension,69 the participatory democratic value of

67 Robinson died from cancer on October 7, 1967.
68 In fact, the idea that those engaged in work for social justice should have to “sacrifice” is prevalent within NGO communities and activists in general. This is an important area of study that brought me to graduate school and I look forward to pursuing it at greater length in the future.
69 This is arguably one of the most difficult tensions to maintain: maintaining and translating an anti-capitalist ideology in a capitalistic system.
“sacrifice” ultimately leads to martyrdom and undermines the larger goal of individual and social transformation.

D. The tension of institutionalization

SNCC and the OP process reflect the difficulty of creating institutions that are open to change. The ongoing debate regarding OP’s juridical consolidation highlights this tension. Because the OP and the Câmara serve similar functions, there are various proposals to make the OP the legislature. On the one hand, the OP currently relies on a tenuous executive mandate, and is therefore vulnerable to partisan politics. Yet, on the other hand, further institutionalizing the OP may demobilize social actors. Militancy has been essential to the expansion, accountability, and development of this process, but the recognition and legitimacy of the OP has led to the decline of internal and external critique of the process itself (Goldfrank 2005, p. 30 and Abers 200, p. 210-215). Baiocchi (2005, p. 134) concludes that militants are becoming citizens. “Everything is through the OP.” Yet, this conflation poses significant problems. If all claims must go though institutional channels, the “movement” has in many ways won.

Yet, Santos (1998, p. 506) argues that victory is a process.

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70 Santos (1998) and Nylen (2000) highlight that there is in fact unhealthy competition between the two that often hinders the work of the OP.
71 Of note is that the PT lost the last gubernatorial election in Porto Alegre. As Wampler (2005, p. 28) explains that the “PB has become sufficiently institutionalized so that opposition parties recognize it as a necessary institutional venue for decision-making.” Therefore, the continuation of the process has been assured, and it is occurring.
72 Though there are constant efforts to separate the OP from the PT, the break is not complete and therefore partisan affiliation is a clear issue. Moreover, with the current problems facing Lula’s administration many are losing faith in the PT. Because the OP is not equal to the PT, but is closely tied with it, this decreased legitimacy poses a serious threat to the sustainability of the OP process.
The routine of mobilization calls for the mobilization of routine. Participation will remain high, but common citizens will gradually be replaced by specialized participatory citizens. The dilemma here is that while further radicalization of the experiment is the only weapon against routinization, there is an undeterminable threshold beyond which radicalization will irreversibly compromise the success of the experiment. . . The tension it creates may be itself sustainable – therefore contributing to the continuing, if always problematic, success of the experiment – provided the participants engage in reflective self-subversion: a constant radicalization of political consciousness focused on the limits of radicalization of political practice.

The perception on the part of citizens that opposition to the government is decreasingly necessary is positive, but as the SNCC revealed, institutions cannot be routinized to the extent that they are immune from critique. For example, the MBC has the power to review and alter the OP process itself. Yet, this body is overburdened and not functioning self-reflectively. Baiocchi’s (2005) title, Militants and Citizens, must be enacted. Rather than transforming militants into citizens, the OP and participatory democratic institutions must redefine citizenship as constantly vigilant militancy – self-critique, frequent programmatic and structural reviews, popular education, and the dissemination of information – dedicated to imaging and creating a new society.

VI. Conclusion

This paper has argued that participatory democracy cannot be understood as or through abstracted political theory. Instead, participatory democracy must be thought in a “Gramscian way” by attending to the specificities and differences embodied in social movement praxis. SNCC and the OP process, as well as the industrial based participatory

73 In line with differential social movement theory, the goal is not to challenge but transform the institutions of power.

74 This is based on the idea that those outside the public sphere (the uncivil militants) can be incorporated as civil participants (citizens) through the incorporation of the values of the public sphere into political culture and common sense.
democratic experiments Pateman (1970) examines, reveal inherent tensions in this process. Therefore, it is only through the constant vigilance enabled by a feminist methodology of the oppressed that contemporary and future social movements can appreciate and negotiate the productive differences, incommensurabilities, and tensions of their individual and relational identities in order to form coalitions based on solidarity and equity that can re-vision the social warrant of democracy.


Jonas, Susanne, forthcoming. Trans-Regional Political Networks for Guatemalan and Salvadoran Migrant Rights.


