

transformative
social innovation
theory

Transformative Social Innovation: Participatory Budgeting

A summary of the case study report on Participatory Budgeting – the IOPD - International Observatory of Participatory Democracy (*OIDP- Observatório Internacional de Democracia Participativa*)



This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 613169

About TRANSIT:

TRANSIT is an international research project that aims to develop a theory of Transformative Social Innovation that is useful to both research and practice. It is co-funded by the European Commission and runs for four years, from 2014 until 2017. The TRANSIT consortium consists of 12 partners across Europe and Latin America. For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/>.

About this Document/ Disclaimer:

This is a summary of a case study report on the IOPD. Both, the case study reports and this summary were guided by empirical research questions based upon a preliminary conceptual framework of the TRANSIT-project. These questions concern inter alia:

1. Emergence of Social Innovation
2. Transformative Social Innovation dynamics
3. Agency in (Transformative) Social Innovation

This summary presents the interpretations of the researchers, and does not necessarily reflect the views and nuances of the initiatives and respondents themselves. For a full account of each transnational network and local case, including interview quotes and expressed nuances by respondents, we refer to the case study report, which is available via communication.transit@ihs.nl. Both, the case study report, as well as this summary document, is the basis for future research activities and publications.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank the technical secretariat of the IOPD, the team of ObservaPOA (Municipality of the City of Porto Alegre), the team of Porto Alegre Participatory Budgeting as well as the Dutch budget monitoring and neighbourhood budget instrument team in the Indische Buurt, Amsterdam. We would like to thank Adelaide Saez, researcher from Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – UFRGS (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul), who kindly send us her thesis about Porto Alegre's PB process and was essential regarding contacts with the community.

Suggested citation:

Cipolla, C., Afonso, R. C. M., Wittmayer, J.M., Serpa, B. and S. Rach (2016). Transformative Social Innovation: Participatory Budgeting. TRANSIT: EU SSH.2013.3.2-1. Grant agreement no: 613169.

Date: January 2016

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1. Introduction to the IOPD

This document focuses on the **International Observatory of Participatory Democracy – IOPD**, a global network of cities, supported by associations, organizations and research centres focusing on participatory democracy, and configured as a decentralized cooperation effort to foster a production of knowledge and exchange of best practices able to improve representative democracy as practised in municipalities. The network, founded on 2001, includes 341 local governments and 274 universities, research centers and associations in 71 countries (in 2015).

Next to the network, this report also covers **two associated local initiatives**, namely **Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre**, Brazil and **Participatory Budgeting in the neighborhood of Indische Buurt**, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre started in 1989 and is a recurrent yearly process of deliberation and decision-making between the local population and the local government with regards to the municipal spending for the coming year. The Dutch local initiative started in 2010 and emerged out of two distinct initiatives: a citizen-initiated stream focusing on budget monitoring and a municipality-initiated stream focusing on a neighborhood budget instrument.

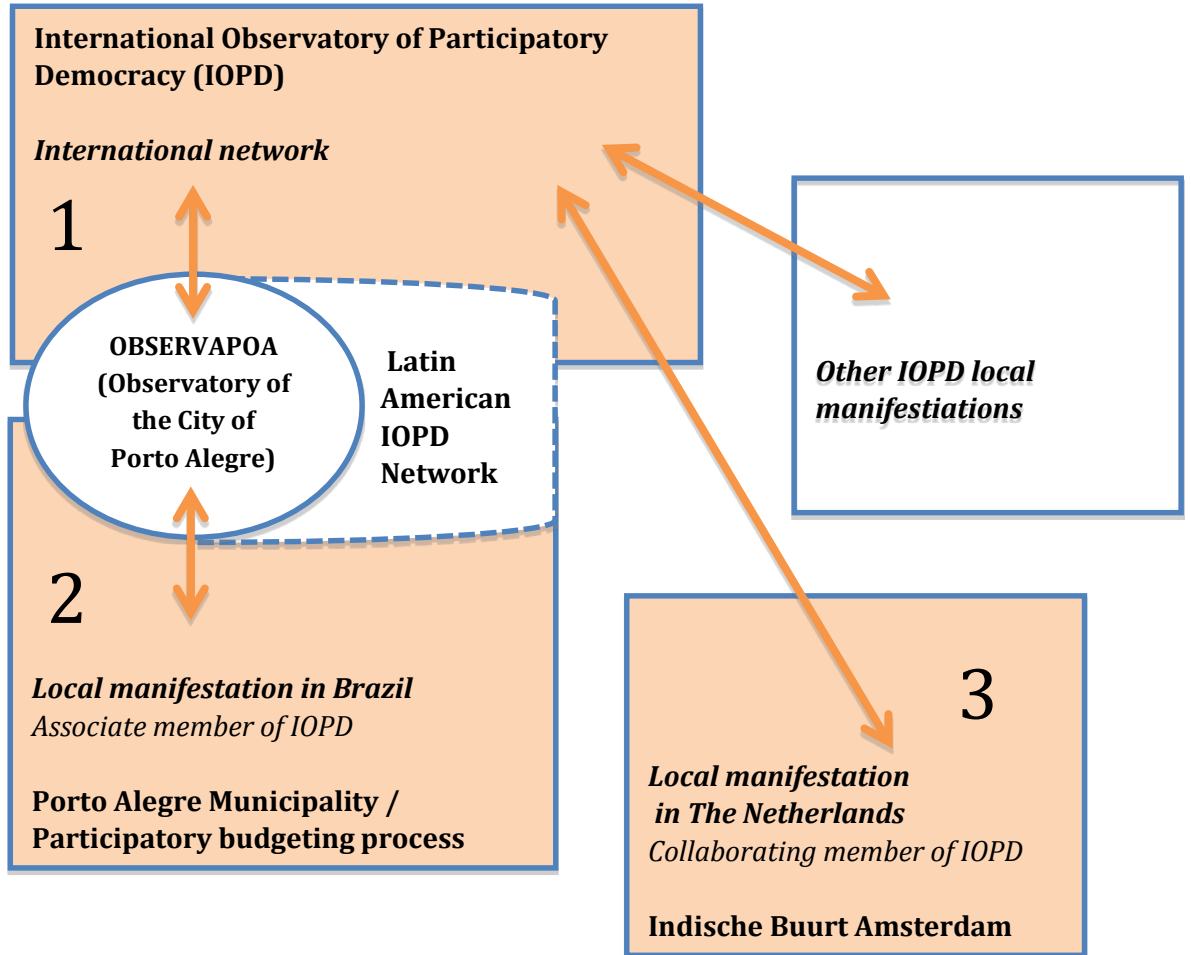
The two local manifestations are quite distinct. Firstly, the Dutch initiative is situated in a neighborhood, while the Brazilian initiative covers the whole city. Secondly, the affiliation to the IOPD is different. While Porto Alegre is an associate member of IOPD, represented by its municipal government, in the Dutch case it is a community foundation located in the neighborhood, which is a collaborating member. Thirdly, participatory budgeting has a much longer history in Porto Alegre than it has in Amsterdam (26 years as compared to 5 years). Fourthly, in Amsterdam it is two initiatives (one from the local government and one from citizens), which together form the participatory budgeting, while in Porto Alegre, this is one coherent, and currently highly institutionalized process.

Both, the academic and non-academic literature on Participatory Budgeting (PB) are vast and varied. The academic literature covers disciplines such as political science, sociology, economics or urban studies journals. Generally, academic contributions include (a mixture of): (1) Socio-political analysis mostly considering local arrangements and political changes that emerged from PB initiatives (Saez, 2015; De Sousa, 2011; Borba and Ribeiro, 2012; Nuñez, 2010; Moir and Leyshon, 2013); (2) analysis and recommendations with regard to PB participatory decision-making and its outcomes (Wu and Wang, 2012; Gomez et al., 2013); (3) description and (historical) comparison and analysis of PB initiatives and their differences worldwide, mostly from a management and policy perspective (Melgar, 2014; Allegretti and Allulli, 2012; Bassoli, 2012; Centner, 2012; Sintomer et al., 2008); (4) Elaborations, mostly from a fiscal economics perspective, on welfare mechanisms to escape the poverty trap (Timmons and Garfias, 2015; Marquetti, 2012); (5) interpretations of state, private sector and civic society relationship in the PB processes and its implications (Novy and Leubolt, Rubin and Baierle, 2014); (6) analyses of current and past citizen engagement and strategies for improvement (Sintomer et al., 2012; Polletta, 2013).

There are also publications aimed at making the academic debate more accessible to a broader public and to political activists. Most of these types of publications are available on-line and for free and cover more than one medium. The boundaries between academic debate, journalistic reflections and political activism are fluid and many academic authors mentioned above are also engaged in the popularization of the concept.

The IOPD network is performing an important role in diffusing and promoting replication of participatory democracy practices by selecting and giving visibility to them through the IOPD Distinction of Best Practices on Participatory Democracy. The IOPD conferences also provide an annual analysis of the state-of-the-art of the participatory democracy worldwide, and a set of guidelines for municipalities on how to improve their practices.

Figure 1: Case demarcation – the IOPD network (1) and its local manifestations (2 and 3) described and analysed in this report



2. The Emergence of Social Innovation

The IOPD network was created in 2001, in the framework of the Urb-AL program of the European Community to develop linkages between local authorities and to organize exchanges of experiences regarding different urban policies (Dominquez, 2015, Otero, 2007). Its initial aim was to contribute to the wider goal of promoting social cohesion in Latin America and Europe by recognizing the need to reinforce the local level (municipalities) and its participatory practices. Today, it is established as a decentralized cooperation effort mainly run by municipalities, which provide funding and support for the network operation. It includes 341 local governments (also outside LA and EU) and 274 universities, research centres and associations in 71 countries (2015).

IOPD members consider **participatory democracy as a social innovation**, because it aims to improve existing mechanisms and opportunities of a representative democracy and to contribute to the reinforcement of elective institutions. They also see a possibility to adopt new ways of doing, organizing, framing and knowing (i.e. more participatory ones, as detailed in the next paragraphs), which can transform the representative democracy in their municipality. This implies (as stated by IOPD members) a change in the social relations between the citizens living in the territory over which a municipality has jurisdiction and the local administration, generating more involved forms of citizen participation and greater political representation than the current representative democracy can provide.

In this, the IOPD network promotes participatory democracy practices mainly through the production of knowledge to support these practices at a local level. The network members gather in the annual IOPD conferences to issue guidelines to be followed by municipalities to consolidate participatory democracy practices. Each year, best practices on participatory democracy are selected and showcased through the IOPD Distinction of Best Practice on Participatory Democracy worldwide. On average, more than 20 Participatory Democracy practices are submitted each year for the IOPD Distinction, which has been running since 2006.

Participatory budgeting in all its varieties is the most diffused and recognized form of participatory democracy. In the local initiatives, the participatory budgeting is aligned with participatory democracy efforts (by its affiliation to the IOPD) and the initiatives work actively to consolidate participatory democracy at a local level.

The Participatory Budgeting (PB) process was developed as a top-down (initiated by the government) and bottom-up (initiated by civil society) movement in **Porto Alegre** and in **Amsterdam**. The bottom-up movement shows that local social capital seems to be an important requirement for PB to happen. However, in both cases we also see that political will and interest does play a comparable role.

The initiative in Porto Alegre operates in the whole city, while in Amsterdam the focus is on the neighborhood level. In Porto Alegre, PB is a deliberative process with massive citizen participation, in indirect and direct ways. In Amsterdam on the other hand, it is a small-scale process involving 20 participants at a time, while there are attempts to involve others, either directly or indirectly through surveys.

The **relationship** between the initiatives and the network differs considerably. The Municipality of Porto Alegre is a member of the IOPD with an active role in the development of the network. It plays an important role in legitimizing the network through its long-term reputation on a worldwide-recognized participatory democracy process (the PB). For the Dutch initiative, it is not the Municipality of Amsterdam who is a network member, but the Makassarplein Community in the Indische Buurt, a community foundation. It is a

collaborating member, who is not actively involved but who affiliated itself to learn about participatory democracy activities worldwide.

Participatory democracy and participatory budgeting are **social innovations** as they refer to ideas and activities, which imply and demonstrate a change in social relations that are associated with:

- **new ways of doing:** For IOPD members, a best practice in participatory democracy involves the use of appropriate techniques: adapted to the territory and defined by the participating community based on the historical, cultural and social history of the territory; it is a careful planning process, in which social agents (local administration, associated networks, private sector, unions, etc.) should be involved in all of the phases; it may include the use of ICTs to promote transparency, openness of data, accountability and citizen's collaboration and participation; all this to instill a sense of legitimacy and confidence in public powers, increase transparent decision-making and improvements in governance.

In Porto Alegre, the citizens and communities representatives participate in a deliberative process to define investment priorities and to develop an investment plan; in the Indische Buurt in Amsterdam, the citizens and civil servants are collaborating in drawing up the yearly Area Plan based on the municipal-led area agenda and the citizen-led outcome of budget monitoring.

- **new ways of organizing:** For IOPD members, a best practice in participatory democracy includes 1) facilitating the participation of all social groups, applying especially gender policies; 2) transparently and intelligibly establishing responsibilities within the organization and the process; and 3) a solid political leadership of the government team, understood as the capacity to promote an initiative by stimulating participation, cohesion and motivation of all involved parties. The PB processes in both local manifestations include new models of organizing internal municipal processes and processes between local government and citizenry, even though those process vary between the initiatives.
- **new ways of framing:** IOPD members consider municipalities to be suitable entities (due to their proximity with the local population and the governance practice) to radically address social inequality through participatory democracy processes which are able to increase trust in elective institutions. In the local manifestations, PB is related to participatory democracy, 'participation society' and new relations between government and citizenry, human rights and transparency.
- **new ways of knowing:** For IOPD members, a best practice in participatory democracy cannot be limited to a single participatory moment. Instead, it requires an educational process. Local governments should report on the various phases of the process and ensure that the principles of the process are communicated to and understood by citizens and social agents. In addition, local governments should guarantee that the opinions and inputs by citizens and social groups find their way back to local authorities. A best practice should involve the establishment of a fiscal system through which to account for the measures taken and to control whether these result in the declared objectives. In Porto Alegre, ObservaPOA generates formal knowledge about participatory budgeting (and more widely about participatory democracy) practices in Porto Alegre – an unknown practice hitherto. In Amsterdam they are working with different kinds of knowledge and competences (e.g. publicly available budget information on neighborhood level, linking public budgets with democracy and human rights) to collaboratively draw up an

alternative municipal budget and set priorities. For both initiatives the participatory budgeting process itself is a tool for social learning and capability building for those (citizens and civil servants or officials from municipality) who engage in it.

Figure 1: Left: Annual Internal meeting of Network members, in the 14th Conference in Canoas (Brazil). 2014 (Source: Internal meeting Report). Right: Picture of budget monitoring session in the Indische Buurt Amsterdam (Source: CBB 2014a).



3. Transformative Social Innovation dynamics

As the network and the local initiatives were born in different locations and times, they show distinct characteristics considering their dynamics and context.

Since its foundation in 2001, the IOPD has been continuously monitoring the overall social context, socio-economic situations, challenges or game changers and how it enables or challenges the development of participatory democracy. Neoliberal policies and the market-economy, which aim to reduce the role of the state and globalization, which threatens citizenship are considered key challenges. The concentration of power in supranational spheres, such as the IMF and the WTO, is considered to weaken the sovereignty of the state and of democracy itself. In parallel, there is a recognition that a new citizenship is emerging, a “horizontal structure, networked, in which all are protagonists, a fragmented action, multifaceted, with hundreds of causes that mobilize a crowd” (IOPD Conference in 2014). IOPD members are developing participatory democracy practices in different cities in an effort to address demands and to fulfil the network aims.

In [Porto Alegre](#) the PB process has a partisan political nature. Since the beginning, the PB was closely related to political parties and was adapted by different parties that took seat in the city hall during PB’s 26 years of existence. During those years, the process changed and developed into an organised system. In the [Indische Buurt \(Amsterdam\)](#), the way the PB could be conducted was influenced by changes in the municipal structure (rather than in terms of political parties) and decentralization processes. Other influences were the dynamics of a changing welfare state, accompanying budget cuts and changing relations between government and citizens.

In face of this overall social context, the broader **transformative ambition** of the initiatives varies from each other:

- The IOPD aims to reinforce the presence of the state and representative democracy, by on the one hand increasing local participatory governance, and on the other reinforcing the value of localities and local cultures. It also takes account of the potential of communication and information technologies (ICTs) for enabling new forms of citizenship and participatory democracy practices on a local and a global scale.
- The PB in Porto Alegre aims to promote an environment of citizen participation in planning the participatory budgeting of the city in a democratic and deliberative way.
- The PB in Amsterdam aims to re-invent the role of the citizen, as well as the role and internal processes of the government and the relation between the two.

The **transformative potential** of the local initiatives and the IOPD relates to the relationships between actors:

- The IOPD network itself has the potential to intensify relations between different cities, which can lead to increased cooperation and mutual learning processes with regard to participatory democracy practices. Such practices should “not be isolated experiences but continuous activities and processes, and expressions of a clear political will” (IOPD conference, 2001).
- As a consolidated initiative, the PB in Porto Alegre has demonstrated that the PB process is scalable and adaptable. The current PB process differs from the one in the beginning, when citizens had more power. Nowadays, the process lost its potential to change the relations and decision-making power in the city.
- The PB process in Amsterdam challenges the current understanding of local democracy by altering how the roles of citizens and local governments and the relationship between them is understood.

The **transformative impact** of the local initiatives and the network differs due to their differences in age and major aims:

- The transformative impact of the IOPD is realized through the knowledge generation process it fosters. The network promotes a continuous learning process between its members (mainly civil servants and officials from municipalities and researchers), who are understood as agents for the development, promotion and support of participatory democracy processes at a local level.
- The PB in Porto Alegre has been a major force in changing the relationship between citizens and the local government by empowering the former in participatory democracy processes on the local level. The PB changed the way the city conducts its policy and participation. Besides the impact at the local level of Porto Alegre, the successful PB process of Porto Alegre has been an inspiration for cities worldwide. There are over 1500 cities in the world that have some kind of participatory budgeting process.
- The PB in the Indische Buurt, Amsterdam did not have transformative impact in its five years of existence, while it did have a number of notable impacts, for example, citizens impact policymaking and actively collaborate with the local government. Besides that, other districts within Amsterdam and other Dutch cities are engaging in the idea of participatory budgeting, along the example of the Indische Buurt.

4. Agency in (Transformative) Social Innovation

The (dis)empowerment of those involved in the IOPD network varies depending on the relation they have with the network. There are associate members (municipalities and its civil servants or officials – e.g. the city hall of Porto Alegre); collaborating members (associations, universities, research centres, etc. – e.g. the Makassarplein Community, a civil society organisation from Amsterdam); and citizens that are involved in participatory democracy processes and engage in these initiatives at a local level.

For the associate members, specifically for the municipalities, the local organization of IOPD conferences (alternately organized by different associate members each year) is an opportunity to highlight and gain recognition for its participatory democracy processes. During one year the city is in the spotlights, for example, as the “world capital of participatory democracy” (The city of Canoas in 2014). Municipalities are also empowered in their participatory practices by receiving the IOPD Distinction of Best Practice in Participatory Democracy. Specifically, the officials or civil servants of the municipalities affiliated to the IOPD express their agency through a kind of ‘activism’, by working actively to keep the IOPD network running. Today, these officials or civil servants are the main drivers behind the network. The IOPD can be considered a “network of people”, i.e., consisting of a set of active and committed people. At the same time, the IOPD empowers them by providing international *reputation* and recognition to their local work.

For collaborating members, the IOPD provides access to research activities in participatory democracy. The empowerment of citizens in participatory democracy processes may take place through the activities of the Local Observatories, originally conceived in the beginnings of the IOPD Network, aimed to evaluate the quality of participatory experiences at the municipal level by incorporating citizen participation in evaluation processes.

The IOPD Network does not have an explicit **monitoring** procedure to evaluate its impact as a network. However, more important is that the IOPD network itself can be considered as a monitoring unit for participatory democracy practices at a global level and particularly among its members. This is done through the IOPD Distinction, which “seeks to recognize innovative experiences in the field of participatory democracy, coordinated by local governments, which may be susceptible to reply. Local government members of the IOPD can submit initiatives to this distinction” (IOPD website, 2015). The cases are accessible via the IOPD website to nurture learning process within the network and to increase replication of such cases.

In terms of **resourcing**, the IOPD does not ask membership fees. Instead, each member is required to finance their own activities and pay any travel expenses incurred. However, this is not a satisfactory situation and the network is looking for a regular source of funding.

There are three explicitly organized **social learning** processes through which the members of the IOPD network acquire and share information, knowledge and experiences: 1) the annual IOPD Conferences, which result in “Letters” drafted by members, i.e. the analysis of the current social context, socio-economic situations, challenges or game changers and their influence on members’ aims and definition of guidelines for actions; (2) the IOPD Work Groups, which gathers members around issues to be discussed between annual conferences; and (3) the IOPD ‘Distinction of Best Practices of Participatory Democracy’.

About internal **governance**, the IOPD coordination roles includes: the Presidency; the Technical Secretariat and the Coordinating Committee which is made up of the most active,

committed associate and collaborating members of the network. Strategic decisions are made in internal meetings at each IOPD conference. In terms of external governance the IOPD consider a priority to diversify the composition of the network's members to reach as much as possible to all the cities and regions in the world.

The **local initiatives** consist of and influence a wide range of actors. The main actors of the PB in Porto Alegre changed over time: the civil society organisations and social movements lost their strength, e.g. external actors such social associations do not participate in the process anymore. At the same time, the political parties conducting the process enlarged their decision-making power and aligned the PB with their own interests.

In the Indische Buurt, the main actors include the Centre for Budget Monitoring and Citizen Participation (CBB), the district Amsterdam-Oost, the communities of the Indische Buurt, the participants of the participatory budgeting and Oxfam-Novib and INESC. There are active civil society actors, which currently have a very productive and good relationship with the local administration.

In Porto Alegre the city council and ObservaPOA monitor the process annually. The **monitoring** focuses on participants (number and profile, for example) and the process itself (what demands were established, what themes were prioritized, etc.). Due to being performed by the government, the monitoring and evaluating is perceived to have lost its independence and autonomy (in the beginning it had been done by an external and critical NGO, Cidade). In Amsterdam, monitoring is not done systematically or regularly. Two internal evaluations took place (one for an early iteration of budget monitoring and one for an early version of the neighbourhood budget instrument). Rather than evaluating the broader impacts of the process, the evaluations seem to have focused on the experiences of the involved citizens and were used to further develop and adapt the method.

Social Learning appears as strong aspect of the participatory budgeting experience in both initiatives. In Porto Alegre, social learning involves both citizens and the government. The people who engaged in the process as assembly participants and especially the community representatives have learned a lot about the way the government system operates and the rights and duties of citizens. In Amsterdam, learning had taken place with regard to the method, which had been improved and adapted. As in Porto Alegre, citizens learned about the local government structure and the background of municipal budgeting processes.

In both local initiatives, the main financial **resourcing** comes from governmental actors. In terms of human resources, the PB process in Porto Alegre is located at the city council, which maintains administrative local centres and has specific staff to work within the communities. Adding to that, the city council also maintains ObservaPOA as a research and monitoring actor. In Amsterdam, the district municipality financially supports the CBB (NGO) to organize the budget monitoring processes. However, next to financial, also human resources and information are vital resources for both PB processes.

Regarding **governance**, both cases have blurred boundaries between institutions that govern the local initiatives. For Porto Alegre's PB, the citizens representatives (through the PB's Committee) are responsible for the decision-making process through which the investment plan is designed. The city council is responsible for organising the PB process and evaluating the demands and possibilities of investment. They both work as regulators of the process and have a very interactive relationship in the governance of PB. In Amsterdam, the CBB (NGO) and the district administration share the responsibilities of organizing the process. Regarding the community-initiated trajectory, budget monitoring, the CBB provides the trainers and invites participants, while the district municipality participates and takes the results further. On the other hand, for the neighbourhood budget instrument, the lead is clearly within the municipality and it has been residing in a

collaboration of the neighbourhood management department and the financial department within the former district municipal structure.

In both cases, participants report individual **empowerment** such as learning, a sense of impact or new understanding and insights into the system. In the PB of Porto Alegre, it was recognised that in the past years citizens and the PB's Committee (composed by citizens representatives) have been disempowered through administrative mechanisms. In Amsterdam disempowerment was also reported as it was not fully clear in how far citizens were 'used' to legitimize current policies and those participating constituted an exclusive group. The participants are commonly referred to as either willing, educated or part of an elite and also have the necessary time to get engaged.

Figure 2: Left: Regional assembly of PB Porto Alegre (Campo Novo). Middle: Research conducted during assembly. Right: Regional assembly of PB Porto Alegre (Restinga). (Source: Pictures taken by authors).



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