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**Towards widening the democratic canon**

What are the historic roots, social preconditions, and future chances for the participatory democracy movements of the recent years? In this text, an introduction to a book containing case studies of recent democratic movements in Brazil, Columbia, Mozambique, Portugal and India, Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Leonardo Avritzer aim to shed light on the future developments of democratic nation states in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Participatory democracy, they argue, can act as social emancipatory movements, since they work for more social alternatives than the ones imposed by the states and economic conditions. Moreover, they serve to redefine more inclusive social identities, as well as acting as truly transnational democratic units.

Yet if the purpose of such participatory democracy movements is the reinvention of social emancipation, can they really bridge the gap between governmental and financial constraints, economic imperatives and the dynamics of grassroots activism? And in what ways are participatory social movements susceptible to misconduct and corruption?

## Introduction

When recently asked what had been the most important event of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Amartya Sen immediately replied: the emergence of democracy (1999: 3). With a more pessimistic view of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Immanuel Wallerstein also recently questioned how democracy had changed from a revolutionary aspiration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to a universally adopted, though empty, slogan in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (2001: 1). What these two positions have in common, despite significant differences, is the assumption that democracy has played a central role in politics during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whether it continues to do so in the century we have now entered remains to be seen.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was, in fact, one of intense dispute about the question of democracy. This dispute, which took place at the end of both world wars and throughout the period of the cold war, involved two main debates. In the first half of the century, the debate was centred on whether democracy was desirable (Weber, 1919; Schmitt, 1926; Kelsen, 1929; Michels, 1949; Schumpeter, 1942).<sup>1</sup> If, on the one hand, this debate was resolved in favour of the desirability of democracy as a form of government, on the other, the proposal which became hegemonic at the end of the two world wars implied a restriction of broad forms of participation and sovereignty in favour of a consensus on electoral processes to form governments (Schumpeter, 1942). This was the hegemonic form of democratic practice in the post-war period, particularly in countries that became democratic after the second wave of democratization.

A second debate permeated the discussion on democracy in the post-World

War II period. This debate was about the structural conditions of democracy (Moore, 1966; O'Donnell, 1973; Przeworski, 1985) and also about the compatibility of democracy and capitalism (Wood, 1996).<sup>2</sup> Barrington Moore generated this debate in the 1960s by presenting a typology according to which countries with or without democratic leanings could be identified. For Moore, there was a set of structural characteristics that explained the low democratic density in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the role of the state in the process of modernization and its relation with the agrarian classes; the relation between the agrarian and urban sectors and the level of rupture provoked by the peasants in the course of the modernization process (Moore, 1996). Moore's objective was to explain why most countries were not and could not become democratic without a change in existing conditions.

Meanwhile, a second issue was linked with the debate about the structural requirements of democracy—the issue of the redistributive virtualities of democracy. The debate about this issue stemmed from the assumption that as certain countries won the battle for democracy, along with the form of government they began to enjoy a certain distributive propensity characterized by the arrival of social democracy to power (Przeworski, 1985). There would be, therefore, a tension between capitalism and democracy, which, once resolved in favour of democracy, would place limits on property and imply distributive gains for underprivileged social sectors. Marxists, in their turn, understood that this solution demanded a total reformulation of democracy, given that in capitalist societies it was not possible to democratize the fundamental relation between capital and labour on which material production was based. As a result of this, in the scope of this debate, alternative models to liberal democracy were discussed: participatory democracy, popular democracy in the countries of Eastern Europe, developmental democracy in countries which had recently gained independence.

The discussion on democracy in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century changed the terms of the post-war debate. The extension of the hegemonic liberal model to the south of Europe, still in the 1970s, and later to Latin America and Eastern Europe (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986) made Moore's and Przeworski's analyses outdated. The perspectives on democracy in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with their discussions of the structural impediments of democracy, seem somewhat irrelevant, given that dozens of countries have begun the process of democratization. There are enormous differences both in the role played by the rural classes and in the processes of urbanization in these countries. Amartya Sen is among those who celebrate the loss of credibility of the idea of structural conditions when he states that the question is not whether a given country is prepared for democracy, but rather to begin from the assumption that any country prepares itself through democracy (1994: 4). Furthermore, with the dismantling of the Welfare State and with the reduction of social policies in the 1980s, the analyses of the irreversible distributive effects of democracy by authors such as Przeworski or Lipset seemed to be unconfirmed. Thus, the discussion about the structural meaning of democracy was reopened, particularly for the so-called developing countries or countries of the South.

As the debate on the structural meaning of democracy changed its terms, a second question also surfaced: the problem of the form of democracy and its variations. This question received its most influential answer in the elitist solution proposed by Joseph Schumpeter, according to whom the general question of constructing democracy should be seen from the perspective of the problems faced in the construction of democracy in Europe during the period

between the wars. What might be referred to as the hegemonic conception of democracy is based on this response. The main elements of this conception of democracy are the much emphasized contradiction between mobilization and institutionalization (Huntington, 1968; Germani, 1971); the valorization of political apathy (Downs, 1956), an idea stressed by Schumpeter, for whom common citizens possessed neither ability nor interest in politics, other than to choose leaders to make decisions for them (1942: 269); the concentration of the debate on democracy on the electoral designs of democracies (Lijphart, 1984); the treatment of pluralism as a form of sectarian incorporation and dispute between elites (Dahl, 1956; 1971); and the minimalist solution to the problem of participation via the discussion of scales and complexity (Bobbio, 1986; Dahl, 1991). None of these elements, which can be seen as constituting elements of the hegemonic conception of democracy, can adequately address the problem of the quality of democracy that resurfaced with the so-called "the third wave of democratization." The more the classic formula of low intensity democracy is insisted upon, the less the paradox of the extension of democracy having brought with it an enormous degradation of democratic practices can be explained. Moreover, the global expansion of liberal democracy coincided with a serious crisis in the core countries where it had been most consolidated, a crisis which became known as the crisis of double pathology: the pathology of participation, especially in view of the dramatic increase in levels of abstention; and the pathology of representation—the fact that citizens feel themselves less and less represented by those they have elected. At the same time, the end of the cold war and the intensification of the processes of globalization implied a re-evaluation of the problem of the homogeneity of democratic practice.

The variation in democratic practice is viewed with great interest in the current debate on democracy, changing the very adjectives used in the political debate of the cold war period—popular democracies versus liberal democracies. At the same time, and paradoxically, the process of globalization (Santos, 2002) has given rise to a new emphasis on local democracy and on the variations of the democratic form within the national state, allowing the recovery of participatory traditions in countries such as Brazil, India, Mozambique and South Africa, just to mention the countries studied in this project. We may, therefore, point to a triple crisis of traditional democratic explanation. There is, in the first place, a crisis of the structural framework of the explanation of democratic possibility (Moore, 1966); in the second place, a crisis in the homogenizing explanation about the form of democracy which emerged as a result of the debates during the period between the wars (Schumpeter, 1942); and in the third place, a new tendency to examine local democracy and the possibility of variation within national states based on the recuperation of participatory traditions that had been suppressed in the process of constructing homogenous national identities (Anderson, 1991).

In this introduction, we intend to move one step beyond and show that the democratic debate throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century got stuck on two complementary forms of hegemony:<sup>3</sup> a first form of hegemony based on the assumption that the solution of the European debate of the period between the wars would have meant the abandonment of the role of social mobilization and collective action in the construction of democracy (Huntington, 1969); and a second form of hegemony which assumed that an elitist solution to the debate on democracy, with the consequent over-valorization of the role of the mechanisms of representation, could have become hegemonic without linking these mechanisms to societal mechanisms of participation (Manin, 1997). In both cases, the hegemonic form of democracy (the elitist representative

democracy) proposes to extend to the rest of the world the model of liberal representative democracy that prevails in the societies of the northern hemisphere, ignoring the experiments and discussions coming from the countries of the southern hemisphere in the debate on democracy. Starting from a reconstruction of the debate on democracy in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we aim to propose a counterhegemonic course for the debate on democracy, redeeming what was implied in the debate of that period.

### **The hegemonic conception of democracy in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The debate on democracy in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by the confrontation between two conceptions of the world and their relation with the process of western modernization. On one hand, the conception that C.B. Macpherson baptized as "liberal democracy" (Macpherson, 1966), and on the other a Marxist conception of democracy that took self-determination in the world of labour as the centre of the process of the exercise of sovereignty on the part of citizens understood as individual producers (Pateman, 1970). From this confrontation stemmed the hegemonic conceptions within democratic theory that came to prevail in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These conceptions are related to the answer given to three questions: that of the relation between procedure and form; that of the role of bureaucracy in democratic life; and the inevitability of representation in large-scale democracies. Let us examine each of the answers to these questions in detail.

The question of democracy as form and not content was the response given by the hegemonic democratic theory to the critique made by Marxist theory (Marx, 1871; Lenin, 1917). Hans Kelsen formulated this question in neo-Kantian terms, still in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to him, the main point was to criticize the idea that democracy could correspond to a precise set of values and a single form of political organization:

Whoever considers absolute truth and absolute values inaccessible to human knowledge must consider possible not only their own opinion but also the opinion of others. Thus, relativism is the conception of the world assumed by the idea of democracy (...) Democracy offers each political conviction the same possibility to express itself and to seek the will of men through free competition. Thus, the dialectic procedure adopted by the popular assembly or parliament in the creation of norms, a procedure which develops through speeches and replies, came to be known as democratic. (Kelsen, 1929: 105–6)

In its initial formulation, Kelsian proceduralism sought to articulate moral relativism with methods for the solution of disagreements, methods that included parliament, as well as more direct forms of expression (Kelsen, 1929: 142). This moral relativism implied the reduction of the problem of legitimacy to the problem of legality, a reduction that Kelsen took from an incorrect reading of Weber. In the period between the wars and immediately after, Joseph Schumpeter and Norberto Bobbio transformed the proceduralist element of the Kelsian doctrine of democracy into a form of democratic elitism.

Schumpeter begins his reflection with the same element that would generate Bobbio's political reflection: the questioning of the idea of a strong popular

sovereignty associated with a content of society proposed by Marxist doctrine. In his classic book *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Schumpeter criticizes this element by posing the question of whether it is possible for the people to govern. His reply is clear and involves a development of the procedural argument. According to him, we cannot think of popular sovereignty as a rational positioning on a given question by the population as a whole or by each individual. Therefore, the procedural element of democracy is no longer the way in which the process of decision-making refers to popular sovereignty, but precisely the opposite: "a political method, that is, a certain type of institutional arrangement to arrive at political and administrative decisions" (Schumpeter, 1942: 242). In this way, Schumpeter turns the procedural concern with the rules of decision-making into a method for the constitution of governments. The motive for excluding participation from this process is not a part of the procedural argument, but rather of a theory of mass society that Schumpeter smuggles into the procedural discussion.<sup>4</sup>

Norberto Bobbio takes the next step in transforming proceduralism into rules for the formation of the representative government. For him, democracy is constituted by a set of rules for the constitution of majorities, among which it is worth emphasizing the principle of one person one vote and the absence of economic, social, religious and ethnic distinctions among the electorate (Bobbio, 1979). Thus, it is important to recognize that the first route of affirmation of the hegemonic conception of democracy in the post-war period leads from the valorization of pluralism to the reduction of sovereignty, and then from a broad discussion on the rules of the democratic game to the identification of democracy with the rules of the electoral process. At no time in the route that goes from Kelsen to Schumpeter to Bobbio is it clear why proceduralism does not admit enlarged forms of democracy.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, the reduction of proceduralism to a process of elections of elites appears to be an ad hoc postulate of the hegemonic theory of democracy. This postulate cannot provide a convincing answer to two major questions: the question of knowing whether elections exhaust the procedures of authorization on the part of citizens and the question of knowing whether the procedures of representation exhaust the question of the representation of difference. We will return to these two issues later when we discuss the new forms of participatory proceduralism which have emerged in the countries of the South.

A second discussion was central in the consolidation of the hegemonic conception of democracy: the way in which bureaucracy and its indispensability were brought to the centre of democratic theory. This discussion also refers to the period between the wars and to the debate between liberalism and Marxist theory. Max Weber began this line of questioning of the classical theory of democracy by positing, within the debate on democracy at the beginning of the century, the inevitability of the loss of control over the process of political and economic decision-making by citizens and its growing control by forms of bureaucratic organization. The main reason why Rousseau's conception of participatory management did not prevail was the emergence of complex forms of state administration, which led to the consolidation of specialized bureaucracies in most of the arenas managed by the modern state. For Weber, "the separation of the worker from the material means of production, destruction, administration, academic research and finance in general is the common base of the modern State, in its political, cultural and military spheres" (Weber, 1978, II: 1394). Weber's position, which is in direct dialogue with the formulations of Marx in *The Civil War in France*, is an attempt to show that the rise of bureaucracy does not derive from the class organization of capitalist society, nor is it a phenomenon restricted to the

sphere of material production. For Weber, bureaucracy is linked to the rise and development of the modern state, and the separation of workers and the means of production constitutes a general and wide-ranging phenomenon that involves not only workers, but also the military, scientific researchers and all individuals engaged in complex activities in the economy and the state. Weber, however, did not intend to associate sociological realism with political desirability. On the contrary, for him the phenomenon of complexity posed problems to the functioning of democracy insofar as it created a tension between growing sovereignty (the control of governments by the governed) and decreasing sovereignty (the control of the governed by bureaucracy). It is from here that stems Weber's pessimism in the face of the double emergence of the "iron cage" of the "administered world" and of the danger of emotional actions which might instigate new charismatic powers.

Throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the discussion about complexity and the inevitability of bureaucracy became more intense as the functions of the state also increased with the institution of the welfare state in European countries (Esping-Anderson, 1990; Shonfield, 1984). With the growth of state functions linked to social welfare, the discussion about the desirability of the growth of bureaucracy changed in tone and acquired a positive connotation (the exception being the work of Michel Foucault). In the field of democratic theory, Norberto Bobbio was, once again, the author who synthesized the change of perspective in relation to the Weberian mistrust of the increase of the capacity of control of bureaucracy over the modern individual. For Bobbio,

As societies moved from a household economy to a market economy, from a market economy to a protected, regulated and planned economy, political problems which require technical skills increased. Technical problems demand, in turn, experts, specialists (...) Technocracy and democracy are antithetical: if the protagonist of industrial society is the specialist, it is impossible that it could be the common citizen. (Bobbio, 1986: 33-34)

In other words, Bobbio radicalizes the Weberian argument by stating that the citizen, by opting for mass consumer society and the welfare state, knows that he is giving up control over political and economic activities in favour of private and public bureaucracies. However, one question does not seem to be resolved by the theorists who defend the substitution of the mechanisms of the exercise of sovereignty by citizens for the increase of bureaucratic control over politics: the scepticism about the capability of bureaucratic forms of management to deal with creativity and to absorb the information involved in public management (Domingues, 1997; Fung, 2002). The bureaucratic forms described by Weber and Bobbio are monocratic in the way they manage administrative personnel and in the way they advocate a homogenizing solution for each problem confronted in each jurisdiction. That is to say, the traditional conception of bureaucratic management advocates a homogeneous solution for each problem, at each level of administrative management within an administrative jurisdiction. However, administrative problems require increasingly plural solutions, in which the coordination of distinct groups and different solutions occur within the same jurisdiction (Sabel, 1997). Thus, the knowledge held by social actors becomes a central element not appropriable by bureaucracies for the solution of management problems. At the same time, it becomes increasingly clear that centralized bureaucracies are not able to aggregate or deal with all the information required for the carrying out of

complex policies in social, environmental and cultural areas (Sabel et al, 1999). This is the reason for the reinsertion of the so-called "participatory arrangements" in the debate on democracy.

The third element of the hegemonic conception of democracy is the idea that representation constitutes the only possible solution to the problem of authorization in large-scale democracies. Among the authors of the post-war period, it was Robert Dahl who defended this position most emphatically:

the smaller the democratic unit, the greater the potential for citizen participation, and the lesser the need for citizens to delegate government decisions to their representatives. The larger the unit, the greater is the capacity to deal with problems that are relevant for citizens, and the greater the need for citizens to delegate decisions to their representatives. (Dahl, 1998: 110)

The justification for representation by the hegemonic theory of democracy rests on the question of authorization. Two main pillars support the argument of authorization: the first is related to the problem of the consensus of the representatives and came up, within classical democratic theory, in opposition to the forms of rotation in the decision-making process that characterizes direct democracy (Manin, 1997). According to this conception, the direct administration of the ancient city-states or Italian republics involved a lack of authorization, which was substituted by the idea of equal rights to occupy political decision-making posts. As the idea of consensus emerged within the debates on a rational theory of politics, the apportioning peculiar to the republican forms of decision-making no longer made sense and was substituted by the idea of consensus<sup>6</sup>, that is, by some rational mechanism of authorization.

The second form of justification of the question of representation leads to Stuart Mill and the question of the ability of the forms of representation to express the distribution of opinions at the level of society. For Mill, the assembly constitutes a miniature of the electorate, and every representative assembly is capable of expressing the dominant tendencies of the electorate. Such an approach led the hegemonic conception of democracy to focus on the role of electoral systems in the representation of the electorate (Lipjart, 1984). By linking the problem of representation exclusively to the problem of scales, the hegemonic conception of democracy ignores the fact that representation involves at least three dimensions: authorization, identity and accountability (the last of these was introduced into the debate on democracy very recently). If it is true that authorization via representation facilitates the exercise of democracy on a large scale, as Dahl argues, it is also true that representation makes the solution of the other two questions difficult: that of accountability and that of the representation of multiple identities. Representation through the method of decision-making by the majority does not guarantee that minority identities will be adequately represented in parliament. By diluting accountability in a process of re-representation of the representative within a block of questions, representation also complicates the disaggregation of the process of accountability (Arato, 2000; Przeworski *et al.*, 1999: 32). Thus, we arrive at a third limit of the hegemonic theory of democracy: the difficulty of representing specific agendas and identities. We will return to this point in the final part of this introduction.

We can see, therefore, that the hegemonic theory of democracy, at the moment at which the debate on democracy is reopened with the end of the cold war and the widening of the process of globalization, finds itself facing a set of unresolved questions that lead to the debate between representative democracy and participatory democracy. These are particularly pointed questions in those countries in which a greater ethnic diversity exists; among those groups that find it more difficult to have their rights recognized (Benhabib, 1996; Young, 2000); and in countries in which the question of the diversity of interests collides with the particularism of economic elites (Bóron, 1994). In the following section, we will seek to recover what we refer to as a "non-hegemonic conception of democracy," and attempt to show how the problems mentioned in this section can be articulated from a different point of view.

### **Non-hegemonic conceptions of democracy in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The post-war period did not only witness the formation and consolidation of democratic elitism, but also the emergence of a set of alternative conceptions that might be referred to as counterhegemonic. The majority of these conceptions did not break with Kelsian proceduralism. They maintained the procedural response to the problem of democracy, linking procedure with a way of life and perceiving democracy as a way of perfecting human relations. According to this conception, which can be found in the work of authors such as Lefort, Castoriadis and Habermas, in the northern countries, (Lefort, 1986; Castoriadis, 1986; Habermas, 1984; Habermas, 1995) and Lechner, Nun and Bóron in the southern countries (Lechner, 1988; Bóron, 1994; Nun, 2000), democracy is an organizing grammar of society and of the relation between the state and society:

democracy reveals itself to be, in this way, historic society par excellence, the society that by its form gathers and preserves indetermination, in marked contrast to totalitarianism which, constructing itself under the sign of the creation of the new man, in reality acts against this indetermination. (Lefort, 1986: 31)

We can see, therefore, that the concern at the origin of non-hegemonic conceptions of democracy is the same that is at the origin of the hegemonic conception, but receives a different response. It has to do with the negation of substantive conceptions of reason and the homogenizing forms of organization of society, recognizing human plurality. Nonetheless, the recognition of human plurality comes about not only from the suspension of the idea of the common good, as Schumpeter, Downs and Bobbio propose, but also from two distinct criteria: the emphasis on the creation of a new social and cultural grammar and the understanding of social innovation articulated with institutional innovation, that is, with the search for a new democratic institutionality. We will go on to develop both these aspects next.

The problem of democracy in non-hegemonic conceptions is closely linked to the recognition that democracy does not constitute a mere accident or a simple work of institutional engineering. Democracy is a new historic grammar. Thus, the issue is not, as in Barrington Moore, that of thinking through the structural determinations for the constitution of this new grammar. Rather, it is that of understanding that democracy is a socio-historical form, and that such forms are not determined by any kind of natural laws. Exploring this vein,

Castoriadis provides us with elements to think through the critique of the hegemonic conception of democracy: "Some think today that democracy or rational investigation are self-evident, thus naively projecting the exceptional situation of their own society on to the whole of history" (Castoriadis, 1986: 274). Democracy, in this sense, always implies a break with established traditions, and, therefore, the attempt to institute new determinations, new norms and new laws. This is the indetermination produced by the democratic grammar, rather than only the indetermination of not knowing who will be the new holder of a position of power.<sup>7</sup> Thinking about democracy as a positive rupture in the trajectory of a society implies approaching the cultural elements of this society. Once again, a space is opened to discuss proceduralism and its societal dimensions. Within counterhegemonic theories, Jürgen Habermas was the author who opened the discussion on proceduralism as a societal practice and not as a method of constituting governments. Habermas expanded proceduralism, reintroducing the societal dimension originally emphasized by Kelsen, by proposing two elements in the contemporary debate on democracy: in the first place, a condition of publicness capable of generating a societal grammar. For Habermas, the public sphere constitutes a place in which individuals—women, blacks, workers, racial minorities—can problematize in public<sup>8</sup> a condition of inequality in the private sphere. The public actions of individuals allow them to question their exclusion from political arrangements through a principle of societal deliberation that Habermas refers to as principle D: "Only those action-norms are valid which count on the assent of all the individuals that participate in a rational discourse" (Habermas, 1995). Postulating a principle of wide deliberation, Habermas reintroduces societal and participatory proceduralism into the discussion on democracy, introducing a new element in the route that leads from Kelsen to Schumpeter and Bobbio. According to this conception, proceduralism has its origin in the plurality of the ways of life in contemporary societies. Politics, in order to be plural, must count on the assent of these actors in rational processes of discussion and deliberation. Therefore, democratic proceduralism cannot be, as Bobbio supposes, a method of authorizing governments. It must be, as Joshua Cohen shows us, a form of collective exercise of political power based on a free process of presentation of reasons among equals (Cohen, 1997: 412). In this way, the recuperation of an argumentative discourse (Santos, 2000), associated with the basic fact of pluralism and the different experiences, is part of the reconnection of proceduralism and participation. Thus, the procedures of aggregation that characterize representative democracy are seen to be patently insufficient, and the experiments of participatory proceduralism of the southern countries appear in evidence, such as participatory budgeting in Brazil or the experiment of the Panchayats in India.

There is still an extremely important issue to be discussed, which is the role of social movements in the institutionalization of cultural diversity. This issue, which was already anticipated in the critique of hegemonic theory by Lefort and Castoriadis, appeared more clearly in the debate on democracy from the theory of social movements. Starting with Williams (1981), for whom culture constitutes a dimension of all institutions—economic, social and political—various authors within the field of the theory of social movements began to bring up the fact that politics involves a dispute about a complex of cultural significations. This discussion led to a widening of the field of politics in which there occurred a dispute on the re-signification of practices (Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar, 1998). Social movements would be inserted into movements for the widening of politics, for the transformation of dominant practices, for the expansion of citizenship and for the insertion of social actors excluded from politics. The literature on the re-signification of democratic

practices had a particularly strong impact on democratic discussion in Latin America, where it was associated with the transformation of societal grammar. Lechner states, in relation to the current processes of democratization, that

In Latin America, the current revalorization of the formal procedures and institutions of democracy cannot be supported by established habits and recognized norms. It is not a question of restoring regulative norms, but of creating norms which constitute political activity: the transition demands the elaboration of a new grammar. (Lechner, 1988: 32)

Thus, in the case of various countries of the South, redemocratization did not involve facing the challenge of the structural limits of democracy, as the discussion on democracy in the 1960s supposed. By inserting new actors into the political stage, what democratization did was to instigate a dispute on the meaning of democracy and on the constitution of a new social grammar. Giving rise to this type of dispute, the extension of democracy that began in southern Europe in the 1970s and in Latin America in the 1980s brought up again, in the agenda of the discussion on democracy, the three questions discussed above.

In the first place, it posed again the question of the relation between procedure and societal participation. Due to the strong participation of social movements in the processes of democratization in the countries of the South, especially in Latin America (Escobar and Alvarez, 1992; Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar, 1998; Doimo, 1995; Jelin and Herschberg, 1996; Avritzer, 2002), the problem of the constitution of a social grammar capable of changing gender, race and ethnic relations, as well as the private appropriation of public resources, placed in the order of the day the problem of the need of a new social grammar and a new form of relation between the state and society. This grammar implied the introduction of experimentalism in the very sphere of the state transforming the state into an absolutely new social movement (Santos, 1998: 59–74).

In the second place, the accent on social participation also led to a redefinition of the appropriateness of the non-participatory and bureaucratic solution at the local level, posing once again the problem of scale within the debate on democracy. The success of most of the participatory experiments in the recently democratized countries of the South is related to the ability of the social actors to transfer practices and information from the social level to the administrative level. At the same time, the institutional innovations that appear to be successful in countries of the South are related to what Castoriadis calls the establishment of a new *eidos*, i.e. a new political order based on the creativity of social actors.

In the third place, there is the problem of the relation between representation and cultural and social diversity. As the number of actors involved in politics grows, and the ethnic and cultural diversity of social actors and the interests involved in political arrangements increase, Stuart Mill's argument on representation becomes less convincing. The most socially vulnerable groups, the less favoured social sectors, and ethnic minorities are not able to have their interests represented in the political system with the same ease as the majority or more economically prosperous sectors. Forms of relativizing representation (Young, 2000) or of articulating representative democracy and participatory democracy (Santos, 1998) seem to offer more hope for the defence of subaltern interests and identities. For these reasons, participatory democracy is considered in this research project to be one of the five great social and

political fields where, at the beginning of the new century, social emancipation is being reinvented. In the next section we will present a synthesis of the case studies of this project.

### **Participatory democracy in the South in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The reinvention of participatory democracy in the countries of the South is intimately related to the recent processes of democratization that those countries underwent. We are dealing, therefore, with countries that, according to the hegemonic logic of the post–World War II period, were not part of the so–called democratic field. Despite the fact that World War II ended with the defeat of fascism, that system of government prevailed in the south of Europe until the 1970s, namely in Portugal where it lasted for 48 years. Until 1975, Mozambique lived under the colonial yoke, and South Africa, until the end of the 1980s, under an apartheid regime. Brazil and Colombia were, even though very ambiguously, for some time within the democratic field: Brazil alternating between authoritarian and democratic periods until 1985, and Colombia living in a democracy truncated by successive states of emergency and civil war since the 1960s. The exception is India, the only one of the countries studied that remained democratic throughout the whole period, only interrupted by the declaration of a state of emergency in 1977. Even so, it was only with the so–called "third wave of democratization" that participatory experiments like that of Kerala became possible.

All the countries included in this project have undergone processes of transition or democratic expansion from the 1970s. Portugal was one of the countries in which the so–called third wave of democratization began. Brazil and South Africa were reached by this wave in the 1980s and 1990s, the same happening in Mozambique, after having gone through a revolutionary and socialist stage in the first decade after independence. Colombia took a different route. It did not have an authoritarian military regime, unlike what happened in most Latin American countries, and it made, at the beginning of the 1990s, a great effort of social negotiation, which resulted in a new Constitution and a law of citizen participation. Among the countries of the South, India may be considered the one with the greatest democratic continuity, although some of the important processes of participatory democracy in the country are linked to decentralization and differentiated traditions of participation at a local level, which have been recently recuperated.

In all cases, along with the expansion of democracy or its restoration, there was also a process of redefining its cultural meaning or established social grammar. Thus, all the cases of participatory democracy studied began with an attempt to dispute the meaning of certain political practices, with an attempt to expand the social grammar and incorporate new actors and new issues into politics. In the case of Portugal, Arriscado and Serra show how, during the revolutionary crisis the country underwent after the collapse of the authoritarian regime, the SAAL redefined the idea of rights to housing and living conditions, creating the so–called "right to place." During the Brazilian process of democratization and the constitution of community actors, there emerged in a similar way the idea of "the right to have rights" (Sader, 1988; Dagnino, 1994) as part of the redefinition of new social actors. The same redefinition is detectable in many of the cases referred to in this volume: in the case of the march of the *cocaleros* (coca farmers and pickers) in Colombia, Ramirez shows that the struggle against the fumigation of the coca crops expresses an attempt on the part of the peasants in the Amazon region to demand, in a context of external violence, the recognition of an alternative identity to the one constructed by the

state. Considered as drug traffickers and guerrilla sympathizers by the state, these peasants demand to be recognized as independent social actors and citizens of the country and of Putumayo, identifying their condition of citizens with a voluntary policy of coca eradication being negotiated with the Colombian government. Clemencia Ramirez shows how this movement implied associating citizenship with a definition of belonging. By demanding this recognition, the movement sought "to achieve a representation vis-à-vis the State as a differentiated group with its own voice to decide jointly on policies concerning the welfare of the inhabitants of Putumayo." Also relating to Colombia, Uribe's study shows how the inhabitants of San José de Apartadó, by creating the status of a "community of peace," demand the legitimacy of a self-representation alternative to that conferred on them by both the state and violent actors (guerrilla and paramilitary). In her turn, Osório shows the different negotiation strategies of Mozambican women with a view to their insertion into the male-dominated political game. In the context of a post-colonial state which seeks to define externally an identity of the "modern" woman, there emerges the social construction of a female identity leading to "a differentiated appropriation of the ends of political action," even when men and women are part of the same political organizations. The same concept of identity can be seen in the cases of India and South Africa. D.L. Sheth shows how the hegemony of the model of liberal democracy in India did not prevent the emergence of social movements energized by participatory ideals and principles of social solidarity interpreted in the light of a Gandhian concept of self-government (swaraj). Buhlungu shows the strength of the new forms of solidarity and identity that emerged at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s stemming from the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, in which two strong collective actors played important parts: the civic movement and the labour union movement.

Thus, it is possible to demonstrate that, apart from many differences between the various political processes analyzed, there is something which unites them, a common trait which is related to the counterhegemonic theory of democracy: the actors who established the experiments in participatory democracy put in question an identity that had been externally attributed to them by the colonial state, or by an authoritarian and discriminatory state. Claiming rights to housing (Portugal), rights to locally distributed public goods (Brazil), rights to participate and demand the recognition of difference (Colombia, India, South Africa and Mozambique) implies questioning a social and state grammar of exclusion and proposing a more inclusive alternative.

What is at stake in these processes is the constitution of a participatory and inclusive ideal as part of projects of liberation from colonialism (in India, South Africa and Mozambique) or of democratization (Portugal, Brazil and Colombia). India had an independence movement that was highly influenced by the philosophy and practice of Gandhi, which included the affirmation of an autonomous project for the country. As Sheth states, such a liberation movement, in its Gandhian dimensions, as well as its socialist and communist dimensions, implied a broad project of incorporation of the Indian masses—a movement which came together in a Constitution that was understood not only as a document of political organization, but also as "an agenda for the social and political transformation of an independent India." This agenda emphatically included the idea of the participation and political inclusion of poor and marginalized tribal castes. Buhlungu shows us a similar agenda in the case of South Africa, given that the struggle against apartheid was inspired by a participatory ideal which simultaneously postulated the equality of citizens and the recognition of difference. For Buhlungu, "every struggle, as well as the

vision of freedom or liberation that inspires it, always contains a promise of a decentralized or participatory kind of democracy which is inclusive rather than exclusive." In the case of Mozambique, the institutionalization of liberal democracy occurred in the aftermath of a revolutionary experiment dominated by the ideals of participation, although, in practice, often curtailed by revolutionary authoritarianism and sexist domination. Thus, a common trait in post-colonial movements is the importance of participatory democracy. It is important because, as Castoriadis states, it creates an imaginary post-colonial normativity in which democracy, as a project of social inclusion and cultural innovation, is put forward as an attempt to institute a new democratic sovereignty.

Likewise, the recent processes of democratization also incorporate the element of the institution of participation. In the case of Brazil, during the process of democratization, community movements in various regions of the country, and particularly in the city of Porto Alegre, claimed the right to participate in decision-making at the local level:

Participating means directly influencing and controlling decisions [...] If the country is at a new stage, it is possible and necessary that the community movement advances and has a direct influence, presenting proposals discussed and defined by the movement on the [public] budget. (UAMPA, 1986; Silva, 2001: 122)

This participatory drive came to bear fruit, among others, in the participatory budgeting experiments analyzed by Santos and by Avritzer. In the case of Portugal, the revolutionary crisis created a *sui generis* political situation that Santos (1990), taking as a reference point the situation in Russia in the period immediately prior to the October Revolution, characterized as a "duality of impotence," a situation of state paralysis brought about by a void, caused as much by bourgeois power as workers' power. It was in this void that the experiments in popular participation flourished, independent or even hostile to the state in some cases, or negotiating with the state in other cases, such as that of the SAAL experiment analysed by Arriscado and Serra. In the case of Colombia, the negotiation that led to the Constitution of 1991 generated a broad process of participation that led to greater political involvement and visibility of certain social actors. Among them, the indigenous movement that had been fighting for its recognition for some time must be emphasized. Uprimny and Villegas analyze the way this recognition was achieved at the level of the Constitutional Court, and in the third volume of this collection the indigenous issue will be dealt with in more detail.

### **The vulnerabilities and ambiguities of participation**

In the previous section we sought to show that the processes of liberation and the processes of democratization seem to share a common element: the perception of the possibility of innovation understood as the wide participation of different types of social actors in decision-making. In general, these processes imply the inclusion of issues up until then ignored by the political system, the redefinition of identities and affiliations and the increase in participation, namely at the local level.

These processes tend to be the object of intense political debate. As we have seen, capitalist societies, especially in the core countries, consolidated a hegemonic conception of democracy (that of liberal democracy) with which

they sought to stabilize the controlled tension between democracy and capitalism. This stabilization occurred in two ways: by giving priority to the accumulation of capital over social redistribution;<sup>9</sup> and by restricting participation by citizens, as much individual as collective, with the aim of not "overloading" the democratic regime with social demands that could put in danger the priority of accumulation over redistribution. The fear of "democratic overload" presided over the transformations that, from the beginning of the 1980s, occurred in hegemonic democratic theory and practice in the core countries, being then exported to the semiperiphery and periphery of the world system. The idea of "democratic overload" had been formulated in 1975 in a report of the Trilateral Commission prepared by Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki (1975). They argued that the overload was caused by the political inclusion of social groups excluded in the past, and by the "excessive" demands made by these groups on democracy. Thus, we can understand why at the moment when, via decolonization or democratization, the problem of the extension of democracy to the countries of the South was raised for the first time, the hegemonic conception of democracy theorized the question of the new grammar of social inclusion as an excess of demands. In the light of this, it is easy to conclude that the processes of democratic intensification that we have been discussing tend to be strongly contested by exclusionary elites or "metropolitan elites," as Sheth refers to them. Because they go against hegemonic interests and conceptions, these processes are often fought head on or adulterated by co-optation or integration. In this resides the vulnerability and ambiguity of participation, present in a number of the cases analyzed in this volume.

The institutional fragility of participation is very clear in the case of Portugal, since the participatory movement concerning housing was questioned as soon as the short period of the revolutionary crisis was over. According to Arriscado and Serra, "over the years, the 'official' memory of the Revolution has sought to erase all the episodes which, in some way, pointed towards the possibility of an alternative way of organizing society or of involving citizens in the political process."

In the case of South Africa, Buhlungu shows how, as the democratic, post-apartheid regime was institutionalized, the state, the political system and the ANC itself, which had activated the whole social movement in the 1980s, came to discourage and even demobilize popular participation, which had been so important in the toppling of apartheid, under the pretext that representative democracy, now established, guaranteed the adequate representation of the various social interests.

The vulnerability of participation to adulteration, whether by co-optation by over-included social groups, or by integration in institutional contexts that erase its democratic potential, as well as its potential for transforming power relations, is well illustrated in several cases analyzed here. In Portugal, the forms in which citizens can participate in urban or territorial planning analyzed by Isabel Guerra reveal to what extent participation can be turned into a process of social control organized from the top down, where hegemonic interests and actors find a new way of prevailing over subordinated interests and actors with less political or organizational capital. To prevent this danger, Guerra proposes the integration of these forms of participation into broader processes of social negotiation in which the different interests are adequately represented, a proposal that she entitles "from a managerial democracy to a project democracy."

The Colombian cases presented here equally illustrate the vulnerability and ambiguity of participation. Uprimny and Villegas show how the 1991 Constitution incorporated excluded and oppressed forces such as representatives of demobilized guerrilla groups, indigenous peoples and religious minorities, thus diminishing the influence of the liberal and conservative parties, which, up until then, had dominated the political stage in Colombia:

In this pluralistic framework, the diagnosis of many of the delegates [to the Constituent Assembly] was that exclusion, the lack of participation, and weakness in protecting human rights were the basic causes of the Colombian crisis. This explains some of the ideological orientations of the 1991 Constitution: the broadening of participation mechanisms, the imposition of the duties of promoting social justice and equality upon the state, and the incorporation of a meaningful bill of rights, as well as new judicial mechanisms for their protection.

However, the authors show how a contradiction pervaded, from the beginning, the attempt to create a new institutional order, as both the government and the opposition assumed positions that worked against the pacification of the political arena and the expansion of participation and rights. The study of Uprimny and Villegas concentrates specifically on the Constitutional Court created in 1992. For the authors, the case of the Colombian Constitutional Court shows how, in a situation of the demobilization of citizens, the demand for equality and justice can shift from the political field to the judicial field:

Colombians' disenchantment with politics has led certain sectors to demand answers from the judiciary to problems that, in principle, should be debated and resolved by means of citizens' participation in the political sphere. This phenomenon is not exclusive to Colombia (Santos *et al*, 1995), but in this country the weakness of the mechanisms for political representation runs deep, a fact that has enabled the Court to assume a more prominent role.

Thus, in the case of Colombia, we have a double dimension. On the one hand, as the authors point out, Colombia has a tradition of weak social movements. On the other hand, many of the actors that dominated the Constituent Assembly became weak in the following years. Thus, Colombia appears as a case of the vulnerability of participation, revealing the ambiguous impact of a strong judiciary on social movements.

The vulnerability of participation in a scenario of conflict between social grammars is addressed by Maria Teresa Uribe, in a dramatic text in which she demonstrates the contradiction between participation, pacification of political space, and civil war. She focuses on the case of the community of peace of San José de Apartadó, whose inhabitants decided to adopt "a strategy of unarmed civil resistance against the war in order to defend their right to remain on their lands and in their homes, signing a public pact of non-collaboration with any armed actors, including the Colombian State." Situated in a banana-growing area of Colombia, a sanctuary for guerrillas in the country, San José de Apartadó has a strategic geographical position in the Colombian conflict. The pact called *Comunidade de Paz* (Community of Peace) was announced in May 1997 with the help of the local diocese, the Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace and various NGOs. The strong international support to

the declaration of the *Comunidade de Paz* obliged the paramilitaries to respect its neutrality.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, at the end of two years, the fragile balance of power came apart. After the first incursion of paramilitaries in April 1999, there followed various incursions of the guerrilla forces. Until 2000, 83 people were killed in San José de Apartadó. Thus, the case of Colombia reveals the interdependence of the deepening of democracy and the need for the constitution of a new social grammar based on pacification, which implies political negotiations beyond a local scale.

Although to a lesser extent, this same complexity of participation can be detected in Mozambique in the case study analyzed by Osório. Thus, according to the author, women's occupation of political space can be as much a contribution to the challenge of male domination as a consolidation of it. The case of Mozambique demonstrates that, in situations in which democracy does not involve a renegotiation of a more pluralist grammar, expressed by the increase in female participation, the social grammar itself comes into conflict with the working mechanisms of the political model. The author identifies three strategies adopted by women in relation to political participation: the adaptation to existing hierarchies and, therefore, to male superiority; the adoption of the masculine model as universal, using the weapon of formal equality to further women's power; and the vindication of an alternative model capable of subverting the dichotomies on which male power is based. Osório's analysis leads to a reflection on the vulnerabilities of democracy. For her,

the exercise of democracy, in the context of globally legitimated systems, fails to satisfy the demands of new groups, as is the case of women (...) [This case implies] the need for a more plural and transversal action in the different spaces of production of the political.

Thus, the author shows that, even in situations where the increase of participation exists, this increase, to become emancipatory, needs to be adjusted to the attempt to recreate political forms. The complex question of the ambiguity of participation is exemplarily treated by Paoli in her discussion of the case of Brazil, a country in which there are as many positive as negative experiments in participation for us to reflect on. Paoli emphasizes the continuity of practices of participation in the period between the process of democratization and the present. According to her,

The practices of participatory deliberation in Brazil have been, from the beginning, linked to the political visibility of the new social movements and the redefinition of the practices of the labour movement in the 1970s and 1980s. They were understood through a renewed theory of social conflict that pointed to forms of popular participation and various struggles for autonomous representation in the process of distribution of public goods and the formulation of public policies.

However, the case analyzed by her—the social activism of entrepreneurs against social exclusion—shows how the ideal of the participation of civil society can be co-opted by hegemonic sectors with the aim of controlling the dismantling of public policies, taking advantage of the situation in order to accomplish an operation of "social marketing." As she states,

We can see, on the one hand, the innovative potential that responsible entrepreneurial mobilization can have in

overcoming poverty and providing opportunities for the poor. On the other hand, it is clear that this mobilization turns a blind eye to policies that deepen social exclusion and politically disorient Brazilian society itself, apart from advantageously occupying, in terms of its particular interests, the very space that it opens as civil action for a public.

Paoli shows specifically, in the case of the Foundations of Entrepreneurial Philanthropy (Fundações de Filantropia Empresarial) in Brazil, the attempt to appropriate a discourse around the notion of the public. While the social effects of their policies should be emphasized, these foundations tend to reduce the idea of the public to two categories: that of consumers and that of employees of the enterprise itself. The author shows, in this way, the dangers of the appropriation of the discourse of participatory democracy for proposals that do not imply much more than their reduction to mercantile categories.<sup>11</sup>

We can now systematize some of the characteristics of the cases in which participation does not manage to come into being at the end of a process of decolonization or democratization. There are at least four different cases we can think of: in the first place, the Portuguese case, in which the forms of participation were disqualified at the end of a process of dispute for the hegemony of democratic form, a process in which the conservative forces managed to impose their model. We can think of Colombia as a second case, in which the forms of participation did not lose their legitimacy, but could not be established as an alternative model due to the reaction of conservative sectors. The case of Mozambique seems to be different. On the one hand, it is true that the practices of participation in Mozambique did not lose their legitimacy either. Here the need is for a pluralization of the political grammar itself, so that the plurality of society may be assimilated by democracy. And finally, we have the case of Brazil, in which the forms of participation can be part of a process of co-optation, as appears to be the case of the notion of the public used by entrepreneurial philanthropic associations, although they represent a fundamental innovation capable of generating counterhegemonic models of democracy as we will go on to show in the next section.

### **The potentialities of participation**

In the light of the cases studied, Brazil and India are the cases in which the potentialities of participatory democracy are most clearly manifested. In his text on participatory budgeting, Leonardo Avritzer shows the way in which the Brazilian Constituent Assembly increased the influence of various social actors in political institutions as a result of new participatory arrangements.

Article 14 of the 1988 Constitution guaranteed "popular initiative" in legislative processes. Article 29, on the organization of cities, required the participation of popular association representatives in the process of city planning. Other articles establish the participation of civic associations in the implementation of health and social welfare policies.

Thus, the Constitution was able to incorporate new cultural elements, which had emerged at the level of society, into the emerging institutionality, opening up space for the practice of participatory democracy.

Santos and Avritzer show how, among the various forms of participation that emerged in post-authoritarian Brazil, participatory budgeting acquired

particular pre-eminence. The authors show how, in the case of Brazil, the motivation for participation is part of a common inheritance of the process of democratization that led democratic social actors, especially those from the community movement, to debate the meaning of the term participation. In the case of the city of Porto Alegre, this debate was linked to the opening of actual areas of participation by political society, in particular by the Workers' Party. This led to the emergence of effective forms of combination of elements of participatory and representative democracy, through the intention of the administrations of the Workers' Party to articulate the representative mandate with effective forms of deliberation at the local level.

Participatory budgeting emerges from this intention, which, according to Santos, is manifested in three of its main characteristics: (1) participation is open to all citizens without any special status whatsoever being attributed to any organization, including community organizations; (2) the combination of direct and representative democracy creates an institutional dynamic that attributes to the participants themselves the definition of the internal rules; and (3) the allocation of the resources for investments is based on the combination of general and technical criteria, that is, the decisions and rules established by the participants are made compatible with the technical and legal demands of governmental action, also respecting financial limits.<sup>12</sup> According to Avritzer, these general principles are translated into three forms of participatory institutionality. In the first place, there are regional assemblies in which the participation is individual, open to all members of the community, and the rules of deliberation and decision-making are defined by the participants themselves. In the second place, there is a distributive principle capable of rectifying pre-existent inequalities in relation to the distribution of public goods. In the case of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre and also in Belo Horizonte, this distributive principle is manifested in the so-called "tables of needs," whose elaboration precedes the process of deliberation itself. In the third place, there is a mechanism for dovetailing the process of participation and deliberation with the public administration, a process that involves, in the case of Porto Alegre, the functioning of a council that can deliberate on the budget and negotiate priorities with the local mayoralty.

We have, therefore, in the case of Brazil, a successful first form of combination of elements of representative democracy and participatory democracy. This combination occurs on three levels: on the local level, citizens participate in a process of negotiation and deliberation on priorities concerning the distribution of public goods. This process expresses an aspect that has already been emphasized in this text—the need for democracy to be articulated with a new social grammar. In the case of participatory budgeting (PB), this grammar has two elements: the fair distribution of public goods and the democratic negotiation of the access to these goods among the social actors themselves. The regional assemblies, the lists of prior access to public goods and the PB Council express this dimension that we designate above as participatory proceduralism, a process of expanded participation involving a broad public debate on the rules of participation, deliberation and distribution.

Participatory budgeting shows some of the potential of the expansion of participatory democracy. In the case of Porto Alegre, the participation of the population has increased practically every year, while in Belo Horizonte, apart from a little more variation, there has also been an increase. It is equally important to underline that participatory budgeting in Brazil has grown significantly. Between 1997 and 2000 there were 140 municipal administrations that adopted participatory budgeting, the vast majority (127) in

cities of up to 500,000 inhabitants. In about half of the cases (71), these administrations were linked to the Workers' Party (PT) (Grazia, 2001). The extension of participatory budgeting to all the regions of Brazil, in addition to other political proposals, shows the potential of the extension of successful experiments in participatory democracy.

In the case of India, the potential of participatory democracy is equally visible. Sheth discusses how the political and participatory actions that were organized from the beginning of the 1960s "existed as fragments of the earlier political and social movements—movements which had their origins in the Freedom movement [...] They worked in small, stagnant spaces available to them on the periphery of electoral and party politics. But within three decades of Independence new social and political spaces opened up for them." Nonetheless, Sheth equally emphasizes that these forms of participatory democracy, because they do not follow the model of liberal democracy, are considered by metropolitan elites and the middle classes to be suspect and vehicles of negative anti-development and anti-national values. It is because of this that the combination of initiatives in participatory democracy with representative democracy only occurs in specific political contexts, as, for example, in Kerala—the case studied by Heller and Isaac.

The democratic challenge in India is extremely complex because, in addition to differences of class, sex, ethnicity, religion and region, differences of caste must also be taken into consideration. This is then a challenge in the field of the so-called democratization of democracy. The caste system was reproduced within the Indian political system, and inserted hierarchical relationships and profound material inequalities into it (Heller, 2000). Sheth shows how the very project of constructing a shared democracy for all castes and all social groups, establishing a symbolic reference common to the whole population of the country, became gradually subordinated to the particularist agenda of political society.

Two main forms of democratization of the Indian political system can be pointed to at present. The first is a form of local democracy based on the rupture with a grammar of exclusion at the level of society itself. This is the form that democratization has assumed in the province of Kerala. Here, in contrast to other parts of India, the associational infrastructure does not reproduce the dominant pattern of religious organizations and castes that reproduce a culture of inequality.

Kerala has the highest levels of trade-union membership in the country, and in contrast with the national pattern, the unions also reach workers in the informal sector (...) Kerala also possesses a wide range of women's, students' and youth organizations, sponsored by all the parties (...) Just the mass associations linked to the CPM—affiliated to the Communist Party of India—have more than 4.7 million members. (Heller, 2000)

We have here, therefore, a first case of a rupture with the restricted forms of democracy at the local level, a rupture that, in the case of Kerala, occurs in the first place at the level of civil society, through the constitution of an associational grammar, and is extended to political society through the system of the Panchayats. This system was introduced by the Left Democratic Front in 1996 through the launching of the so-called "People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning." This campaign, now in its fifth year, has achieved a

high degree of devolution of decision-making powers to the Panchayats. "All 1,214 local governments in Kerala—municipalities and the three rural tiers of district, block and *grama panchayats* (the all-India term for village councils)—have been given new functions and powers of decision-making, and have been granted discretionary budgeting authority over 40% of the state's developmental expenditures" (Heller and Isaac, 2002). The transfer of decision-making to the local level implied a process of qualitative change in participation and deliberation, involving assemblies in rural areas (*grama sabha*) in which more than 2 million people took part, and development seminars (for assessment of the resources and problems of the area and formulation of a local development strategy) attended by more than 300,000 delegates, in addition to task forces involving 100,000 volunteers (Heller and Isaac, 2002). We can, therefore, perceive an enormous process of participation unleashed by the transfer of the process of deliberation on the budget to the local level.

A second form of expansion of Indian democracy also related to the mobilization of the population at a local level is discussed by Sheth. It involves local movements which organize public hearings and popular courts with the aim of creating political and social constraints for local governments and thus force them to act in a more honest and efficient way. Sheth describes one of the most significant moments of these movements when, in December of 1994–95, several public hearings (*Jan Sunvai*) were held in various states which were attended by journalists. These hearings culminated in a 40-day sit-in (*dharna*) which compelled the government to make its accounts public through the Panchayat Raj.

As much in India as in Brazil, the most significant experiments of change in the form of democracy have originated in social movements that question practices of exclusion through actions that generate new norms and new forms of control of the government by the citizens.

We can point to some similarities and differences between the two cases. In the first place, the experiments in Porto Alegre and Kerala emerged from a process of social renovation. In the case of Porto Alegre, as Avritzer points out, the experiment derived from a proposal of budgetary participation formulated in the 1980s by UAMPA (the Union of Neighbourhood Associations of Porto Alegre), and in the case of Kerala, as Heller and Isaac point out, from experiments in participation at the local level conducted by civil society organizations, in particular by Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (Heller and Isaac, 2002). In the second place, in both cases, a political party had to take the political decision of giving up decision-making prerogatives in favour of forms of participation. In Porto Alegre, the Workers' Party fulfilled this role, and in Kerala it was the Communist Party of India. In the third place, the proposal of participation involved the elaboration of complex rules of participation in both cases, as Santos shows in the case of Porto Alegre, and Heller and Isaac in the case of Kerala. It is important to underline that these rules—which, in the case of Porto Alegre, predetermine the distributive character of the PB and establish incentives to participation for the poor population<sup>13</sup> and, in the case of Kerala, make public the criteria for beneficiary eligibility and prioritization<sup>14</sup>—will be fundamental to the success of the form of participation. The two cases that we can deem successful present two extremely important characteristics: first, they stem from changes in societal practices introduced by the social actors themselves; second, they recover local democratic traditions at first ignored by the hegemonic forms of representative democracy in these countries. Porto Alegre, in the case of Brazil, and Kerala,

in the case of India, express an attempt to extend democracy based on potentials of the local culture itself.

We can also point out some important contrasts between the two cases. In the first place, despite the importance of the Workers' Party in the experiment in participatory budgeting, the party has limited control of the process, and only a small percentage of participants in the PB are affiliated to it. The control of the Communist Party of India over the process seems to be greater, which makes it dependent on an unstable political coalition in a state with a strong Islamic minority. In the second place, there is an important difference in the form of transference of prerogatives on the budget: the PB in Porto Alegre and in Belo Horizonte decentralizes and democratizes only the process of deliberation, and leaves in the hands of the mayoralty the process of the administrative implementation of the decisions. In this case, the control of the public administration is made by the PB Council in Porto Alegre and by COMFORÇAS in Belo Horizonte (Avritzer, 2002), thus creating a mechanism of administrative control which is relatively invulnerable to processes of corruption, given the excess of public mechanisms and forms of control. In the case of India, the resources are transferred to the committees themselves, which leads to accusations of corruption, as Heller and Isaac point out. Finally, everything seems to indicate that, in the case of Brazil, the PB provides electoral advantages to those who practice it, such that other parties want to implement it, while the continuity of the Indian experiment was put in question by the electoral defeat of the Left Front last year.

Thus, the cases referred to here present contemporary democratic practice with not only the inconclusiveness of the debate between representation and participation, but also the need for a new formulation concerning the combination of these different forms of democracy.

## Conclusion

There are more questions raised than answers given in the studies included in this volume. In this, they remain faithful to the central objective of the project "Reinventing Social Emancipation" in the context of which they were carried out. This project sought to draw new horizons for social emancipation, starting from practices that occur in specific contexts to provide answers to concrete problems. Therefore, it is not possible to draw from them universal solutions which would be valid in every context. At best, such practices are driven by wide aspirations of emancipation which they seek to realize in a partial and limited way.

Between the realization and the aspiration is the imagination of the possible beyond what exists. This imagination is composed of questions that constitute the shape of emancipatory horizons. These are not, then, just *any* questions, but questions that result from the excess of aspirations in relation to the realization of concrete practices. In the specific case of the theme of the project discussed in this volume—participatory democracy—the horizons are questions that address the possibility of broadening the democratic canon. Through this broadening, the hegemonic canon of liberal democracy is contested in its pretension to universality and exclusivity, thus giving credibility to counterhegemonic democratic concepts and practices. In what follows, we will pose some questions and provide answers related to some of these issues.

1. *The loss of demodiversity.* The comparison between the studies and debates on democracy in the 1960s and in the last decade leads us easily to the

conclusion that, on the global level, demodiversity has been reduced in the last thirty years. By demodiversity we mean the peaceful or conflictive coexistence of different democratic models and practices. In the 1960s, if, on the one hand, the hegemonic model of democracy, liberal democracy, seemed destined to be confined, as democratic practice, to a small corner of the world, on the other hand, outside western Europe and North America, there existed other political practices that claimed democratic status and did so in the light of autonomous criteria, distinct from those which sustained liberal democracy. In the meantime, as these alternative political practices lost strength and credibility, liberal democracy gradually established itself as the sole and universal model, and its consecration was consummated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund by transforming it into a political condition for the granting of loans and financial aid.

What this implies, from our point of view, is a loss of demodiversity. The negativity of this loss resides in two factors. The first has to do with the justification of democracy. If, as we believe, democracy has an intrinsic value and not a mere instrumental utility, this value can in no way be assumed as universal. It is inscribed in a specific cultural context, that of western modernity, and this context, because it coexists with others in a world that now is recognized as multicultural, can in no way claim the universality of its values. We know today that if this claim refuses to give the reasons that sustain it and to dialogue with others that eventually contest it, it will only be imposed by the force of circumstances that are alien to it and that, as such, transform it into an imperial claim. And this imperial temptation is all the more noticeable when the overwhelming power of neoliberal globalization and of the institutions that, in its name, impose the adoption of liberal democracy on a global level is more pronounced. It makes no sense to postulate the universality of the values that sustain democracy on the basis that there is nothing in other cultures that opposes them, as Amartya Sen does (1999). Such a convergence cannot be postulated as a starting point. It has to be, if anything at all, the point of arrival of an intercultural dialogue in which other cultures can present, not only that which they are not opposed to, but, above all, that which they propose autonomously.

We support such a cultural dialogue and believe it enriches all who participate in it. The convergences that result almost always in forms of cultural hybridization have to be achieved in the practice of argumentation and in the argumentation of practice. Regarding the practices analyzed in this volume, we can see this hybridization surface especially in the case studies on India, but it is present in one way or another in the case studies on Mozambique, Brazil, South Africa and Colombia.

The loss of demodiversity is negative because of a second factor, which, although autonomous in relation to the first, is related to it. It has to do with the distinction between democracy as an ideal and democracy as a practice. This distinction is central to the hegemonic model of democracy and was introduced into the debate to justify the low democratic intensity of established political regimes when compared with the revolutionary democratic ideals of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The universal imposition of the liberal model exacerbated this distinction to such an extent that actually existing democracy is frequently so far from the democratic ideal that it does not seem to be more than a caricature of it. Indeed, this distance is sometimes greater in core countries than in peripheral countries, although the opposite might appear to be the case. It is this distance that leads Wallerstein to respond to the question of what to think of democracy as it has been realized with a reply that

Ghandi gave when asked what he thought of western civilization: "it would be a good idea" (2001: 10).

This volume describes and analyzes democratic practices and aspirations which, in the different countries integrated in this project, seek to have the democratic aspiration taken seriously, refusing to accept as democratic practices that are a caricature of democracy, and above all refusing to accept as a fatality the low democratic intensity to which the hegemonic model subjected the participation of citizens in political life. In a very distinct manner, these practices seek to intensify and deepen democracy, whether by asserting the legitimacy of participatory democracy, or by exerting pressure on institutions of representative democracy in order to make them more inclusive, or even by seeking denser forms of complementarity between participatory democracy and representative democracy.

*2. The local and the global.* We have emphasized the idea that the hegemonic model of democracy has been hostile to the active participation of citizens in political life and, when it has accepted it, has confined it to a local level. This is the well-known question of scales. Later in this conclusion we will return to the issue, showing the counterhegemonic answer to this question, based on which it is possible to construct dense complementarities between participatory democracy and representative democracy and, therefore, between local scales and national scales.

At this moment, we would like to refer to the possible transnational articulations between different local experiments in participatory democracy or between those local experiments and transnational movements and organizations interested in the promotion of participatory democracy. Counterhegemonic globalization is based on these articulations, which allow the creation of the counterhegemonic local, the local which is the other side of the counterhegemonic global. These articulations give credibility to and strengthen local practices by the simple fact of transforming them into links of wider networks and movements with a greater power for transformation. In addition, such articulations make possible reciprocal and continuous learning, which we believe is essential for the success of democratic practices that are energized by the possibility of high-intensity democracy. Because we chose in this project to analyze local experiments in the deepening of democracy, the articulation between the local and the global emerges in these conclusions as a question to which we cannot give an immediate answer, but which we deem fundamental to answer in the future. Even so, some of the cases suggest, at least implicitly, this articulation. In the case of the community of peace of San José de Apartadó, this articulation is explicit. Uribe shows the importance of the network of transnational solidarity in making visible, on a national and international level, the struggle for peace in this Colombian community. In the case of participatory budgeting, we know that similar experiments have been appearing in a number of Brazilian cities and in other countries of Latin America, that the most recent experiments have benefited from previous ones, and that there are even networks of cities, namely in the context of the Mercosur, whose aim is to discuss the different experiments and models of participatory democracy, their limits and their potentialities. The strength of counterhegemonic globalization as regards the widening and deepening of democracy largely depends on the widening and deepening of national, regional, continental or global networks of local practices.

*3. The dangers of perversion and co-optation.* We have seen how the 19<sup>th</sup> century revolutionary aspirations of democratic participation were gradually

reduced to forms of low-intensity democracy in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this process, the objectives of social inclusion and the recognition of differences became perverted and were converted into their opposite. The practices of participatory democracy are in no way immune to the danger of perversion and adulteration. These practices, which seek to expand the political canon and, by doing so, expand the public space and the social debates and demands which constitute it, may also be co-opted by hegemonic interests and actors with the aim of legitimizing social exclusion and the repression of difference. The texts by Paoli and Guerra refer to this danger.

But perversion can occur in many different ways: by the bureaucratization of participation, by the reintroduction of clientelism in new guises, by sectarian instrumentalization, by the exclusion of subordinate interests through the silencing or manipulation of participatory institutions. These dangers can only be prevented by constant learning and self-reflection, from which incentives to new ways of deepening democracy can be drawn. In the field of participatory democracy, more than any other, democracy is an unlimited principle, and the tasks of democratization can only be sustained when they themselves are defined by increasingly demanding democratic processes.

4. *Participatory democracy and representative democracy.* This is perhaps the question to which the studies collected in this volume provide the most answers, and for that reason we dedicate the most space to it. The solution given by the hegemonic theory of democracy to the problem of the relation between representative democracy and participatory democracy—the solution of scales—is not adequate because it leaves untouched the problem of social grammars, and offers a simplistic answer, which is exclusively geographic, to the problem of the combination of participation and representation.

The experiments studied in this project offer an alternative answer to the democratic problem. They show that the ability to deal with cultural and administrative complexity is not increased with an increase in scale. They also show, above all, that there is a process of cultural pluralization and recognition of new identities<sup>15</sup> which leads, as a consequence, to profound redefinitions of democratic practice, and these redefinitions are beyond the aggregative process specific to representative democracy.

In our opinion, there are two possible forms of combination of participatory democracy and representative democracy: coexistence and complementarity. The first implies the coexistence, on various levels, of the different forms of proceduralism, administrative organization and variation in institutional design. Representative democracy at the national level (exclusive power as regards the constitution of governments; the acceptance of a vertical bureaucratic form as the sole form of public administration) coexists with participatory democracy at the local level, accentuating certain participatory characteristics which already exist in some democracies in core countries (Mansbridge, 1990).

The second form of combination, which we refer to as complementarity, implies a more profound articulation between representative democracy and participatory democracy. It presupposes the recognition by the government that participatory proceduralism, the public forms of monitoring governments and the processes of public deliberation can substitute part of the process of representation and deliberation as conceived of in the hegemonic model of democracy. Contrary to what this model seeks to achieve, the objective is to associate with the process of strengthening local democracy forms of cultural

renovation related to a new political institutionality which reintroduces the questions of cultural plurality and the necessity of social inclusion into the democratic agenda. As much in the case of Brazil as in the case of India, the participatory arrangements enable the articulation between argumentation and distributive justice and the transfer of prerogatives from the national level to the local level, and from political society to the participatory arrangements themselves. Representative democracy is summoned to integrate proposals of cultural recognition and social inclusion into the political–electoral debate.

The concept of complementarity is different from that of coexistence because, as we have seen in the cases of Brazil and India, it implies a decision by political society to expand participation at the local level through the transfer and/or devolution of decision–making prerogatives at first held by governments. Thus, both in the case of participatory budgeting in Brazil and the Panchayats in India, regional assemblies or the decision by councillors stem from the option taken by political society to articulate participation and representation.

It seems obvious that the first form of articulation between participatory democracy and representative democracy (coexistence) prevails in the core countries, while the second (complementarity) begins to emerge in semiperipheral and peripheral countries. If such is the case, it is possible to conclude that the deepening of democracy does not necessarily occur as a result of the same characteristics present in the core countries where democracy was first introduced and consolidated. The characteristics that enabled democratic originality may not be necessarily the same characteristics that enable its expanded and deepened reproduction. For this reason, the problem of cultural innovation and institutional experimentalism becomes even more urgent. If such a perspective is correct, the new democracies must change themselves into absolutely new social movements, in the sense that the state must change itself into a space of distributive and cultural experimentation. It is in the originality of the new forms of institutional experimentation that the emancipatory potentials still present in contemporary societies may be found. In order to be realized, these potentials need to be related to a society that accepts the renegotiation of the rules of its sociability, believing that social greatness resides in the ability to invent and not imitate.

### **Theses to strengthen participatory democracy**

We will conclude this introduction with three theses that seek to strengthen participatory democracy.

1st thesis: *The strengthening of demodiversity*. This thesis implies the recognition that there is no reason for democracy to assume a single form. On the contrary, multiculturalism and the recent experiments in participation point in the direction of widened public deliberation and an increase in participation. The first important element of participatory democracy would be the deepening of the cases in which the political system gives up decision–making prerogatives in favour of participatory models.

2nd thesis. *The strengthening of the counterhegemonic articulation between the local and the global*. New democratic experiments need the support of transnational democratic actors in the cases in which democracy is weak, as became clear in the case of Colombia. At the same time, alternative, successful experiments such as that of Porto Alegre and the Panchayats in India need to be expanded in order to offer alternatives to the hegemonic model. Therefore,

the counterhegemonic shift from the local to the global level is fundamental for the strengthening of participatory democracy.

3rd thesis. *The widening of democratic experimentalism*. The above text shows that the successful new experiments sprang from new social grammars in which the format of participation was acquired experimentally. It is necessary for the cultural, racial and distributive pluralization of democracy that experiments are multiplied in all these directions.

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<sup>1</sup> This debate began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Up until then, it was generally assumed that democracy was dangerous, and, thus, undesirable. Its danger lay in attributing power of government to those most ill-equipped to exercise it: the great mass of the population, who were illiterate, ignorant and socially and politically inferior (Williams, 1976: 82; Macpherson, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> Like almost every debate about democracy, this one was anticipated by Rousseau, when he stated in *The Social Contract* that a society could only be democratic when there was no one so poor as to be compelled to sell themselves, and no one so rich as to be able to buy someone.

<sup>3</sup> We understand the concept of "hegemony" to be the economic, political, moral and intellectual ability to establish a dominant direction in the form of approaching a given question, in this case the question of democracy. We also understand that every hegemonic process produces a counterhegemonic process in which economic, political and moral alternatives are developed. In the case of the current debate on democracy, this implies a hegemonic and counterhegemonic conception of democracy. For the concept of hegemony see Gramsci (1973).

<sup>4</sup>

The Schumpeterian doctrine of democracy adopts wholesale the argument of the manipulation of individuals in mass societies. For Schumpeter, individuals in politics yield to irrational and extra-rational impulses and behave in an almost infantile manner when making decisions (Schumpeter, 1942: 257). He never sought to differentiate between large-scale mass mobilizations and forms of collective action, which makes his argument about the manipulation of the masses in politics extremely fragile. For a critique, see Melucci (1996) and Avritzer (1996). The vulnerability of the Schumpeterian argument did not stop it from being widely used by the hegemonic conceptions of democracy.

- <sup>5</sup> Bobbio analyzes, in a different way from Schumpeter, the reasons why the participation of individuals in politics became undesirable. For him, the central element that discourages participation is the increase in the social complexity of contemporary democracies (Bobbio, 1986). The argument of complexity as well as its limitations will be discussed later.
- <sup>6</sup> It is possible, nonetheless, to see that the explanation of the question of consensus by the hegemonic theory of democracy leaves much to be desired (Manin, 1997). For hegemonic theory, the problem of consensus becomes relevant only in the act of constituting governments. However, the act of constituting governments is an act of aggregating majorities, and rarely leads to consensus in relation to the identity and accountability of the governing body. Thus, if the explanation for abandoning the system of rotation of administrative positions seems to be correct, it by no means leads to the recognition of the superiority of the forms of representation in relation to the forms of participation. It only points to the necessity of a different basis for participation—in this case, consensus in relation to the rules of participation.
- <sup>7</sup> Among the authors of the hegemonic field, Adam Przeworski was the one who most emphasized the problem of the indetermination of results in democracy. For him, "democracy is a process of submitting all interests to the competition of institutionalised uncertainty" (Przeworski, 1984: 37). However, for Przeworski, institutionalised uncertainty is the uncertainty of whoever occupies positions of power in a situation of democratization and whether this result can be turned around or not. The concept of democracy with which we are working here implies a higher level of indetermination in as far as it involves the possibility of inventing a new democratic grammar.
- <sup>8</sup> The position of Habermas, however, tends to focus on a proposal of democracy for certain social groups and countries of the North. Criticized for the limitations of his concept of the public sphere (Fraser, 1995; Santos, 1995; Avritzer, 2002), Habermas seems to have only made an effort to integrate social actors from northern countries (see Habermas, 1992).
- <sup>9</sup> For some authors, this priority is inscribed in the very matrix of the paradigm of western modernity, with its emphasis on the idea of progress based on infinite economic growth. It is because of this that it occurred, although in distinct ways, as much in capitalist societies, as in the socialist societies of Eastern Europe (Marramao, 1995).
- <sup>10</sup> On this question, see also Sader, in the present volume of this collection.
- <sup>11</sup> On this question, see also Sader, 2002.
- <sup>12</sup> On this question, see also Sader, 2002.
- <sup>13</sup> See Santos in the present volume of this collection
- <sup>14</sup> See Heller and Isaac in the present volume of this collection
- <sup>15</sup> The theme of identities and the principle of the recognition of difference are treated in detail in the third volume of this collection.

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