Participatory Governance and Development: In Search of a Causal Nexus

Vera Schattan P. Coelho¹* and Arilson Favareto²
¹Brazilian Centre of Analysis and Planning
²Federal University of ABC – UFABC

Abstract

This paper discusses the causal nexuses between participatory governance and development through theoretical debate and research that empirically investigates this relationship. It starts by discussing literature on participation and then goes on to deal with the most relevant contributions to international debates about development. Next, departing from two of the principal explanations presented in studies about participatory democracy – institutional design and social mobilization – it analyzes empirical evidence that supports the relationship between participation and development. Finally, in light of this discussion, some conclusions are presented concerning the causal nexus capable of supporting the belief in the potentially virtuous relationship between participation and development.

Early literature on participation was broadly optimistic about what participatory governance could achieve in terms of public policies and democracy, often assuming that participation could contribute to more viable and just policies, and have a positive impact on poverty, inequality and development processes. More recently, studies have become more focused on the real conditions under which forms of participatory governance have evolved.

These studies have focused on: the dilemmas of emphasizing either efficiency or the inclusion of the poorest in institutional design (Abramovay et al. 2010; Bebbington et al. 2008); the difficulties of checking the distributive impacts of participatory experiences (Avritzer 2007); the disjunction between the motives and resources mobilized by the agents responsible for organizing participatory spaces; the technical and economic dimensions involved in processing the problems dealt with in these spaces (Coelho 2006; Coelho and Favareto 2007; Dagnino and Tatagiba 2007); and the fragility of the connections between deliberative experiences and governance (Favareto and Demarco 2004; Melo and Baioci 2007). There is a lack of evidence about the causal nexuses capable of supporting the link between participation and development.

The belief in participatory governance associates the inclusion of a broad spectrum of citizens in public life with an increased circulation of information, greater transparency in political processes, and participation in public debate. The democratization of debate and decision-making, together with decentralization, are key elements in an intricate process of improving systems of governance which should contribute toward giving impetus to development.

This belief is based upon the combination of two analytical perspectives. The first suggests that changes in the design of the institutions can contribute to promoting changes in policy. The second draws attention to the role of social actors and their capacity to push for change in processes of development. In both approaches, participation can promote access to public policies, and their quality and responsiveness.
The institutional design narrative argues that the poorest and most marginalized people can be encouraged to participate by reducing the costs involved in the process of political mobilization. This reduction would be guaranteed by decentralization and the associated opening of authorized local participatory bodies (Fung and Wright 2003). It would be easier for an ordinary citizen to influence a decision made in their own neighborhood than one made by the federal government, and this citizen could base their participation on their own experience, rather than external expertise.

The social actors narrative argues that if mobilized citizens gain access to spaces where they can exercise their demands and apply direct pressure for effective responses, the chances of their points of view being taken into account would increase. This would contribute toward the implementation of programs and policies more accountable to their needs (Coelho and von Lieres 2010; Cornwall 2004; Gaventa 2004).

In both narratives, participation would improve the chances of defining and implementing successful policies and programs. This would result in increasing poor people's access to services, thus increasing their chances of inclusion in both politics and the market economy, starting a virtuous circle that would gradually increase their power, resulting in the promotion of social equality (World Bank 2004, 2006).

While attractive, the models supporting these positions remain problematic in some areas. Firstly, it is not possible to foresee whether the process of building agendas expressing the interests of the poorest and most marginalized actually lead to cooperation, or rather to a deepening of certain distributive conflicts (Coelho et al. 2010). Secondly, the assumption that growth in human capital will correspond to an increase in the opportunities presented to individuals may be flawed. Human capital can grow without a diversification of opportunities (Bourdieu 2000) and this can, in particular situations, be associated with choices about how to deal with trade-offs between equality and efficiency. Thirdly, it is assumed that problems requiring technical knowledge can be adequately dealt with by ordinary citizens, but processes of development may require certain forms of coordination and specific social abilities (Fligstein 2001) that are not necessarily put into motion by the democratization of political processes (Pritchett and Woolcock 2004; Schumpeter 1961).

These problems highlight the need to investigate more systematically the causal nexuses that support beliefs regarding the virtuous relationship between participation and development. While participatory processes have led to considerable advances in terms of the empowerment of social agents that traditionally possessed fewer resources, much still needs to be done before it is possible to say that participatory governance has been able to promote dynamism in social and economic life, bringing together collective and individual gains.

**Participation and Development**

In order to analyze the relationship between participation and development it is necessary to begin by examining what can be understood by development. The majority of the many different and disparate current definitions of development are normative. Desires and intentions expressed in the ideal improvement of the economic, social, and environmental indicators of a particular country, region, or group count more than the theoretical and conceptual instruments capable of generating a realistic understanding of the factors which generate these dynamics. Yet studies do play an important role in this normative project, and there has been a revival of the social and scientific validity of the idea of development.
There is a growing perception of the limitations of the best-known economic theories of development, such as the stages of growth model, or those based on commercial flows (Rostow 1968); although these theories are more than four decades old, they are undeniably influential in shaping policies and discourse on development. On the one hand, they omit the importance of the stock of goods and resources on which a given society bases the establishment of dynamic flows. These are resources variously labeled social, human, cultural, and even natural capital. On the other, they do not explain the role of institutions capable of integrating this stock of goods and resources for the promotion of well-being and social cohesion (Favareto 2007).

Some new and innovative approaches in relation to mainstream economic theory aim to understand development in terms of specific historical configurations. Amartya Sen (1992) defines both the causes and effects of development as a process of expanding individual liberties. The fundamental issue of development thus becomes the reduction of the inequalities that prevent this expansion.

Other approaches put greater emphasis on the institutions capable of expanding these liberties. Douglas North (2005) demonstrates that throughout human history there have been periods of intense growth during which individual and collective gains have been brought together by certain forms of coordination expressed in formal and informal institutions. However, his work says little about what it is that leads to the emergence of these institutions.

A third alternative emphasizes the influence of the environment on the trajectories established by different human societies. Jared Diamond (1997, 2006) demonstrates that environment is not a disposable or subsidiary variable, and that various peoples throughout history have had their field of possibilities largely determined by the existence or lack of natural resources. Yet, this same author admits that it is the institutional variable which is capable of explaining why certain societies faced the environmental collapse while others were able to revert this risk.

It is therefore evident that points of dialog and complimentarity can be seen between these three perspectives. To diminish inequalities, which Sen discusses, institutions with this capability must be created, as North shows. Inversely, the possibility of such institutions being created is greater in contexts with more diversified and less concentrated social structures, as can be inferred from Sen. Finally, as illustrated by Diamond’s work, environmental restrictions condition social processes. Thus, if development is understood as the expansion of human liberties, an articulation may be necessary between social structures, institutions, and the environment.

How such articulations emerge is relevant to the debate on participation and development, and is something that the social sciences are just now beginning to address. Mechanisms of coordination, translated into incentives and sanctions on institutional behavior, are fundamental to the style of development in different countries or regions. There is also a direct relationship between what Neil Fligstein (2001) calls social skills and the styles of development, which highlights the themes of power and politics, involving both material and symbolic dimensions.

Therefore, the problem is not just criticism of traditional approaches to development because of the absence of a coherent explanation on the topic of economic change (North, 2005). The greater challenge consists of starting a dialog using explanatory fragments that are spread throughout different theoretical bodies and need to be integrated. This is a task that requires a true research program. Within the limits of this paper, the intention is to discuss this challenge using a specific bias: the interdependencies between participatory governance and development.
If development can be defined as the process of increasing the liberties that individuals have to make choices as a result of specific forms of coordination, the nexus between participatory governance and development must be questioned to seek forms of participation connected to the establishment of incentives and regulatory mechanisms in every sphere of political and economic life. These forms of participation should guarantee the involvement of an important range of political and economic actors in dealing with crucial conflicts and structures that bring about low levels of economic activity, inhibit democratic life, or prevent the expansion of human liberties.

This questioning highlights important gaps. There is no explanation as to how the particular forms of coordination needed can be achieved. Furthermore, in the literature on participation, there is little emphasis on its contribution to bringing together individual and social gains.

**Institutions, Participation and Power**

The idea of social participation prompting development by rendering human rights more effectively reaches the current decade ensconced in the discourse of academics, activists, and policymakers alike. For some, the advance of the participatory project is sustained by its ability to promote instrumental results, guaranteeing that policies reach the population that most needs them with the greatest efficiency. For others, this advance is possible thanks to the civic changes that participation engenders. At the root of both positions is the idea that participatory governance can promote changes in the power relationships between social agents, and as a result clear the way for pragmatic results or changes in civic behavior. Each of these perspectives offers different mechanisms for explaining how changes in power relations take place and presents different empirical elements for demonstrating the validity of their propositions (Gaventa and Barret 2010). Despite vivid debates and the important efforts made to produce rigorous research, we know much less about the impact of participatory initiatives on development than might be expected.

Various studies analyzing participatory experiences draw attention to the limits of their performance. Some highlight that relationships between actors are marked by huge asymmetries, which raises the costs of participation for marginalized actors and makes their inclusion more complex than initially supposed. Participation can also be inefficient, ending up reinforcing the subaltern position of weaker actors and leading them to lose faith in the process (Mahmud 2007; Mansbridge 1999, 2000; Mohanty 2007). The power of state agents in participatory spaces may be excessive, and a number of studies have shown how such spaces are captured by party political groups (Avritzer and Navarro 2003; Coelho and Nobre 2004; Ziccardi 2004).

For those who view participation from an institutionalist perspective, many of these limitations can be overcome by changing institutional design (Fung 2006). Their presupposition is that the rules of the game can orient the behavior of agents in a direction that will lead them to increase their coordination, and that the rules and procedures of institutional design will have a decisive impact on altering the balance of power between the participants, favoring the expression of demands by those who have fewer resources.

The institutional features discussed by this literature can be categorized into *methods* (such as citizens’ juries, consultative development plans, participatory budgets, or tripartite sectoral committees); *mandate* (visioning, goal setting, targeting, monitoring, evaluation); *recruitment* (random selection, purposive selection, self-selection, combination of selection methods); *different levels of governance and types of coordination between them* (neighborhood, local, state, national, international); *forms of engagement* (one-off or on-going; face to face,
electronic); decision making (majority rule or consensus); and formal powers (direct control over decisions or indirect control, such as monitoring and recommending) (Banerjee et al. 2010; Gastil and Levine 2005; Mitton et al. 2009).

A theoretical and practical question that needs to be better addressed by the institutionalist approach is how it is possible to implement institutional features that will guarantee that the less powerful have a voice within a context of asymmetric power relations. Why would politically established actors organize spaces capable of promoting significant changes in the status quo?

To answer these questions, institutionalists need to tackle two distinct challenges. One is to identify elements of design, whether of the fora or the political system, which are capable of favoring inclusion, dialog, and cooperation. The other is to identify the logic and values that motivate actors in the construction of these fora. After all, if it is necessary to recognize the procedures that are inclusive and democratic, it is equally important to identify the politics that cause them to be adopted (Coelho and Favareto 2010; Mohan and Stokke 2000).

Yet for all the institutional innovation of recent years, there remains a gap between the legal and technical apparatus that has been created to institutionalize participation and the reality of the effective exclusion of poorer and more marginalized citizens. For those who view participation from a social mobilization perspective, it is identity formation and collective action that are crucial to the inclusion of actors with fewer resources in participatory fora (Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Gaventa 2004, 2006; von Lieres 2007; Roque and Shankland 2007).

Processes of social mobilization occur before participation, helping to form the collective identities and confidence that will allow a marginalized group to develop the capacity to act in situations where it will have to deal with others who have more resources (Kahane and Fairbrother 2007; Levine and Nierras 2007). Such organization of marginalized social actors, whether into associations or movements or through the complexification and densification of the social fabric (Gaventa 2004; Mansbridge 1999; Tarrow 1994; Young 2000) should, in the words of Neera Chandoke, contribute to mitigating the inequalities that persistently undermine the “linguistic and epistemological authority of subaltern actors and make deliberation a distant ideal” (2003, 186). Despite the centrality of addressing these persistent inequalities, a critical and recurrent shortcoming of the debate on participation has been its assumption that individuals are equally able to form associations and engage in political activity (Chaudhuri and Heller 2002).

Once these inequalities are confronted through processes of mobilization and identity formation other challenges appear. With pressure from one side to represent social demands and thus play an oppositional role in the political sphere, and pressure from the other to negotiate and cooperate, these agents not only face the need to criticize and demand, but also to make the technically competent, realistic, and plausible proposals (Favareto 2006) necessary to become co-producers of public policy. This change in role presents another important pair of analytical challenges. Firstly, under what conditions do agents who have historically mobilized to criticize and make demands, adopt strategies of cooperation and negotiation, rather than conflict and contestation? Secondly, under what conditions do groups mobilized around collective social identities prioritize the defense of development processes?

A considerable part of the answer to these questions seems to be determined by the style of activism practiced by social actors themselves, a style that will result from their own history of mobilization and struggle. Through this history they acquire a repertoire of more confrontational or cooperative strategies, developing more or less willingness to cooperate in local participatory spaces (Coelho and Favareto 2010; Favareto et al. 2010;
Locke and Jacoby 1997). The different collective identities and distinct styles of activism practiced by collective actors influence the performance of the participatory forum and its ability to contribute toward making particular interests universal (Bebbington et al. 2007; Ospina et al. 2008; Reygadas et al. 2007; Toni 2007). In other words, it is not about opposing the existence of conflicts, which are effectively inherent to social life, to cooperation, but rather it is about how their expression through participatory processes can create institutions or processes capable of combining private and social gains.

This brief overview reflects the recognition of a wide range of variables that influence the quality of participation and the likelihood of it achieving expected outcomes in terms of social inclusion and policy effectiveness. Next, we will take a brief look at some systematic empirical studies that are reporting on social participation experiences that have promoted developmental gains.

Empirical Findings at the Development–Participation Nexus

The discussion below outlines the features and qualities of social actors and institutional design that prove to be important to ensuring developmental gains. At the same time, it argues that the developmental gains associated with participation depend both on certain institutional features of the participative project and on the presence of a minimum of social mobilization to make them effective. Below, we present some cases that look at the impact of social participation on processes of territorial development and social policy, areas in which participation gained momentum in recent years and where the authors of this article have worked extensively.

TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

The concept of territory is, of course, very old, and there have been a myriad of meanings given to it by different disciplines and traditions such as geography or anthropology. What is relatively recent is the association of the idea of ‘territory’ to the debates concerning ‘development’. One of the first studies to make this association was done by Arnaldo Bagnasco (1977) – *Tre Italie: La problematica territorile dello sviluppo italiano*. In that book the author first questions himself on where an economic dynamic capable of permitting (a society) to escape stagnation and unemployment would occur. The answer was that it was possible to find a pattern of social organization based on a more diverse social structure (which therefore lacks the predominance of a primary activity, as in the south, or a secondary activity, as in the north) as well as on decentralization (with a greater presence of small and medium sized companies). The mechanism described by Bagnasco could not be summed up so briefly. What matters here, is that this combination had generated a more resilient environment in the face of the unfavorable changes in context which were more open to the introduction of innovations and new activities.

In the following years crisis and realignment of traditional instruments for fostering development together with the decentralization of policies and of industrial activity that was related to reduced and redirected government intervention contributed to a standard being instituted, particularly in the mid-1980s and 1990s. Since then, normative approaches, such as in the well-known OCDE studies (1993, 1996) and others that followed it, such as the World Bank (1997, 2001), FAO (2004), and Cepal (2003) studies gain momentum. Approaches that translated into experiments in the field of politics, whose most recognized initiative was: the Leader program (Saraceno 1996). A remarkable
trait of these experiments is the expectation that participation by local social actors would be converted into a factor of efficiency in allocating public resources.

**Bottom-up, participation and development type strategies:** The Leader (Connections Between Rural Economy Development Actions or *Ligações Entre Ações de Desenvolvimento das Economias Rurais*, in Portuguese) program was created in 1991, as an European Union Community Initiative, marking a wide-ranging process of discussing forms of policy planning on the continent and the growing concern with inter-regional discrepancies. It was innovative firstly for its territorial bias as opposed to the notably sectorial character of investments traditionally earmarked for rural areas; secondly, the type of strategy proposed for promoting rural development, with bottom-up type actions, based on the principle of partnership of a multi-sectorial and integrated nature. This strategy, based on the concept of territorial competition, involves creation of development projects that include a vision of the future, ways of coordinating actors, and the constitution of a local action group (Abramovay and Beduschi Filho, 2004).

In its first phase, from 1991 to 1994, the program supported 217 territorial projects, a figure that shot up to one thousand in the following phase, from 1994 to 1999. The projects are given support according to merit, without any pre-selection, as a way to foster inter-territorial competition and mobilize energy and talent in an effort to find resources. Two essential characteristics that have thus been valued by the Leader program are: the concept that rural development can be achieved through planning and execution of projects and the importance that this happen with a participatory focus.

The first lessons concerning this initiative, which are very positive in tone, show that, by introducing the concept of territorial project, the program is able to go beyond sectorial definition, that decline can be turned around if territorial articulation finds new paths, and that the new territorial focus has been stimulating creativity and the use of local knowledge. Yet the success or lack thereof of this intention was only attributed to the way in which the expectations of social actors were combined. Therefore, there is a strong interactionist bias in the strategy recommended, as if placing agents in contact were sufficient, creating spaces and manners of supporting this articulation. From there opportunities and dynamic connections would be created that are capable of improving the territory’s performance. The territorial development project came about as a result of an alignment of interests.

More recent studies (Coelho and Favareto 2007; Favareto, 2009; Favareto and Schroder, 2008) have called attention to a sort of ‘dark side’ to these processes of inducing territorial development. The logic used to select projects tends to reinforce differences, insofar as the territories that already have the greatest capacity tend to gather better conditions for proposals and, therefore, raise the support offered by the program. Moreover, the way in which these development projects are created and the very articulation of local groups has to come from the base of available resources. One of the problems in making local economies more dynamic is oftentimes precisely the scarcity of resources which allow for reliance on these kinds of initiatives.

Furthermore, if on the one hand there is substantial evidence that participation contributes to efficient application of resources to social policies, such as when there is a specific focus and target public, in the case of developmental activities, this condition proves to be much more complex, since there are many segments involved along with conflicting interests. It is in this case that participatory processes can increase veto power, but not necessarily increase cohesion between local agents. The issue thus moves to a second variable: the characteristics of institutional design capable of aiming the accumulated power of local social actors at projects capable of combining private and social gains.
When the institutional design channels the power of actors toward collective gains: Abramovay et al. (2010) assess the impact of social participation on territorial development processes in southern Brazil. Their study followed the trajectory of two organizations, a union and a cooperative, both of which grew from the social movements connected to the fight to strengthen family farming in Brazil.

Their conclusions point to the fact that although the institutionalized forms of social participation in localized development processes have pushed social movements towards demand-making practices wherein innovation, learning, and construction of innovative processes are practically inexistent, it is possible to overcome this situation through appropriate manipulation of institutional design and incentive mechanisms. (2010, 275)

For the authors, the cooperative’s good performance is the result of the necessarily tense unity between two worlds: social solidarity and economic rationality. The study shows that this unity did not come from the intentions of the actors, but rather from the incentives made available to them by government institutions. The incentives promoted greater convergence between the demands of the cooperative and broader social gains. This was not the case with the union, which did not have the same access to government incentives.

In the same sense, Favareto et al. (2010) showed that the way in which the government absorbs demands and conflicts and translates them into incentives for participation is one of the decisive elements in defining operational styles for three different social movements in Brazil. Although the movements analyzed started with the same kind of conflict (the fight for the right to access and use common natural resources) and in the same ideological line (inspired by the organizational work of the Catholic left in the 70s), the movements’ trajectories have proven to be significantly different. In the case of communities of slave descendents, the recognition of this condition could be seen as the only condition for accessing public resources and land ownership deeds; as a result, the organizations in this segment channeled their power into social pressure around this recognition. In the case of family farmer unions, recognition of this condition is only part of the requirements for accessing public resources. Part of these resources need to be negotiated with other social actors in local forums that define where public investments will be made. As a consequence, there is a mix of demands at these agricultural organizations and the proposal negotiated is geared toward participatory forums.

These examples illuminate ways of connecting processes of empowerment, participation, and development. Both examples show the importance of prior mobilization, while in certain cases, there is a risk that the greater power of mobilization and influence of a particular group might result in their demands being exclusively pursued, calling attention to the decisive role of institutional design and the design of incentives in preventing organized groups from a specific social base from taking over participatory governance.

SOCIAL POLICY: HEALTH AND EDUCATION

In the social area, in a movement parallel to the one described above, there was also a debate which put a check on the supposed neutrality of government bureaucracy and its ‘technical’ decisions and sought to involve citizenship in building new policies for promoting equality. The agenda of participatory governance began to suggest that citizens stop being mere governmental clients and become subjects of the process that would define the content of social policies (Ackerman 2004; Manor 2004; Offe 1984).
A number of experiences embraced this ideal in the areas of health and education, sectors marked by a history of radical promises inspired respectively by the 1978 Alma Ata Declaration and Paulo Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed. The studies presented below briefly describe how authors concerned with evaluating the impacts of participatory governance dealt with the analytical variables discussed in the previous sections.

Institutional design
Three projects – one on participation of rural populations on Health Unit Management Committees in Uganda, another on participatory budget in Brazil, and a third participatory experiment in the area of education in rural zones of Bangladesh – point to the effectiveness of institutional arrangements in promoting more effective public services.

In an experimental study of the effects of community-based monitoring and deliberation to improve local health services in Uganda, Björkman and Svensson (2007) found positive effects on the group that used participatory mechanisms for strengthening beneficiary control over service providers and engaging communities in planning. The initiative tackled two constraints typically faced by communities: lack of information and inadequate local organizational capacity. In fact, the impact on public service delivery was so pronounced that after 1 year into the project the ‘treatment’ communities enjoyed statistically significant increases in infant weight and decreased child mortality, as well as higher utilization of local health services.

Boulding and Wampler (2010) found evidence that municipalities in Brazil that used participatory budgeting during the period 1996–2000 spent higher proportions of their budget on health care relative to municipalities that did not use participatory budgeting. Their tests also show that in terms of well-being, the most positive finding is associated with a reduction in the percentage of population that is living in extreme poverty.

Mozumder and Halim (2006) assessed two participatory components of the Ideal project in Bangladesh and both components – school catchment area mapping and school planning – had positive impacts on increasing student enrollment, regular attendance, and retention at school as compared to the control group.

Design and mobilization
Another three studies, two in the area of health and one in education, show how the type of impact from the institutional innovations described in the previous section are changed through the presence or absence of mobilized actors.

Peters et al. (2009) conducted a systematic review to examine the health outcomes of different approaches of community empowerment interventions. The authors used five broad themes to categorize community empowerment: information and education, financial empowerment, inclusion and participation, accountability, and local organizational capacity. Their results highlight the fact that communities which entered into partnerships with policy makers and technical experts tended to achieve better results (2009, 45).2

Coelho, Fanti and Dias (2010) evaluated the performance of Health Councils, introduced by the 1988 Brazilian constitution as a governance mechanism for bringing civil society organizations, service providers, and public officials together.3 The six Health Councils in the study are located in impoverished areas of the city with similar levels of human development. Three of these areas had a strong history of social mobilization regarding health demands, while the other three did not. The study showed that the councils operating in the more mobilized areas performed better in articulating alliances with public managers and were able to raise a larger amount of resources to build hospitals and health centers; they also had better results in monitoring health services.
Banerjee et al. (2010) reported on a program that implemented two interventions based on the rejuvenation of Village Education Committees (VECs) – consisting of three parents, the head teacher of the village school, and the head of the village government – which existed everywhere, but were almost entirely non-functional. A third intervention recruited volunteers from villages for a week’s training on an educational technique for teaching basic reading skills in reading camps. In contrast to the failure of the two first interventions, the reading camps were successful.

According to Banerjee et al., “the contrast between these results may lie in the fact that large group mechanisms make very different demands on the community than small group mechanisms” (2008, 5). The authors argue that the three parent members of the VEC could not have real control without the active backing of a large number of other parents. At the same time, the reading program, where a single individual could directly affect learning outcomes, did lead to a dramatic increase in reading ability for those who attended.

Looking at these cases, it is possible to state that it is likely that the impacts found by Björkman and Svensson, Boulding and Wampler, and Mozumder and Halim and presented earlier would be even more robust if their studies had included comparison of areas with different legacies of mobilization. They also call attention to the need to match, as in the case described by Banerjee et al., a community’s organizational reality to the different models of participatory action available.

In short, the cases suggest that achieving greater coordination and policy effectiveness through participation on the one hand involves fine tuning of characteristics of the institutional design of the participatory spaces and, on the other, the trajectory of the agents and organizations and, in particular, what this implies for the style of activism they adopt. They show that participatory governance can make a difference while reinforcing how important it is that we consider the role of both some sort of collective action to sustain it as well as of some sort of design of incentives to prevent organized groups from taking it over. These factors create a dialog between elements that, as the literature previously discussed and most of the case studies described show, has too often been analyzed separately.

Final Remarks

This paper builds on substantial literature on development and social participation and inquires as to whether and how participation affects development. The theoretical presuppositions and empirical bases discussed provide an important contribution concerning the design features and social mobilization conditions necessary for bringing private and public gains closer.

For researchers with an institutionalist view of participation, inclusion as well as coordination are to be guaranteed by an institutional design capable of reducing the costs of participation and by linking the contributions of the participatory sphere to the decision-making and implementation processes of public policies. For researchers studying participation in terms of social mobilization, this inclusion will only occur as a result of processes that empower less favored actors.

The cases show that participatory experiences can positively contribute toward more inclusive territorial planning and more effective social policies. In line with the debates on development that highlight the importance of coordination and capabilities and the analyses which have shown that distributive policies favoring the poor may have positive externalities on the size of internal markets, labor productivity, and accumulation of
human capital (Justino 2006; Murphy et al. 1989; Perotti 1993), we suggest that the results presented earlier point to a plausible and positive association between participation and development.

Evaluating the level of community mobilization, choosing between different models of participatory action, recognizing appropriate design features, understanding the incentives available to public officials to implement them, and avoiding capture are necessary steps to be taken by those interested in promoting a positive relationship between participation and development. It is hoped that the discussion provided in this paper may motivate further rigorous empirical research, since evidence will be fundamental to advancing our understanding of the implication of different features of participation and development and the resulting consequences in fostering this relationship.

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Short Biographies

Vera Schattan P. Coelho, social scientist, PhD in Social Sciences, is senior researcher at the Brazilian Centre for Analysis and Planning where she is the Research Director and also serves as the coordinator of the Citizenship and Development Group (NCD). Her research interests are public policies, political participation, accountability, democracy and development. She has led various comparative studies in the areas of new forms of citizen participation, social policies systems, health governance and democracy.

Arilson Favareto, sociologist, PhD in Environmental Science, is professor at the Federal University of ABC and collaborates with the NCD/CEbrap. Favareto is professor of economic analysis at the Centre of Engineering, Modelling and Applied Social Science of the Federal University of the ABC Region, Brazil, and a researcher with CEBRAP. He has published in rural development, and his current interests include new forms of the social use of natural resources.

Notes

* Correspondence address: Vera Schattan P. Coelho, CEBRAP, R. Morgado de Mateus, 615 São Paulo, SP 04015902, Brazil. E-mail: veraspc@uol.com.br.
The following databases were consulted for this paper: Journal Store (Jstore), British Library for Development Studies (BLDS), Scielo, World Bank, and 3ieimpact. We searched for participation and empowerment, health, education, development, human rights, finance, microfinance, corruption, mobilization. The results obtained provide for little analysis on the impacts of participation. Most of the papers and reports discuss conditions for participation with exceptions, especially in the case of social policies. The cases reported here were chosen because they exemplify the type of problems highlighted in this bibliographical base.

Promising good practices include providing feedback by sharing results with communities, using systems for local adaptive learning, using community resources to support programs, and promoting equality.

For more information on participatory spaces in São Paulo, see http://vimeo.com/17165331.

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