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Participatory Budgeting: A Bourdieusian interpretation

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ABSTRACT

Our research builds upon Bourdieusian theory in order to understand the conditions to access and the effects of having accessed representative positions in the Participative Budget in Porto Alegre (PBPOA), which is a participatory accountability arena for decision-making in the local government budget. Based on eighteen semi-structured interviews of past or present PBPOA councilors, on two months of ethnographic observation and on statistics provided by the NGO CIDADE and by Fedozzi (2007) upon PBPOA participants, we conclude that given inequalities in the distribution of capitals, all the PBPOA participants do not have the same possibilities of accessing representative positions. Nevertheless, the Participative Budget may be seen as a socialization arena in which capitals are (re)distributed among participants. Consequently, traditional logics structuring the social space may change and PBPOA participants may experience shift in their social becoming. Therefore we suggest that the creation of a participatory accountability arena, while creating new domination logics, may lead to changes in the social trajectories of some participants.

Keywords: Accountability, Bourdieu, Participatory Budgeting, Militant Capital, Social trajectories