

Participatory Budgeting: a Bourdieusian interpretation

All participants are equal but are some participants more equal than others?

Luis Emilio Cuenca Botey & Laure Célérier

PhD candidates – HEC Paris

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ABSTRACT

Twofold purpose:

- To introduce an accounting and accountability device, Participatory Budgeting, in social studies of accounting;
- To better understand, through a use of the Bourdieusian theory, the social conditions of possibility of having a legitimate voice in a participatory and accountability arena.

Design/Methodology/Approach: We use the Bourdieusian theory to understand the conditions to access and the effects of having accessed representative positions in the Participative Budget in Porto Alegre (PBPOA), Brazil. Our study relies on eighteen semi-structured interviews of past or present PBPOA councilors, on two months of ethnographic observation (July to September 2006) and on statistics provided by the NGO CIDADE and by Fedozzi (2007) upon PBPOA participants between 1993 and 2005.

Findings: 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.

Research limitations / implications: Our analysis is specific to the PBPOA: generalization is not our purpose. Yet, we suggest that the creation of a participatory arena, while creating new domination logics, may lead to changes in social trajectories.

Originality/value:

- We study the most emblematic experience of participatory democracy in South America;
- We explore the potential of accounting and accountability devices for enhancing changes in the socio-political trajectories of individuals.

Key Words: Accountability, Bourdieu, Democratization, Development, Participatory Budgeting, Militant Capital, Participatory democracy, Porto Alegre, Social trajectories, Participation.

Introduction

“How can accounting and accountability mechanisms better facilitate democracy?” This question has been at the center of political agendas in Latin America since the end of the nineteen eighties (Mainwaring & Welna 2003). Considering the authoritative nature of regimes in the sub-continent during the Cold War, claims for more transparency and accountability within the public sector were at the core of the revolutionary and/or reformist projects of various socio-political groups during the transition to democracy (Bertntzen 1993; Kamrava & Mora 1998). These demands met the discourse for more accountability, transparency and efficiency in the public sector addressed by the neo liberal “Washington Consensus” (Williamson 1990), which was very influential in Latin America (Stiglitz 2004; Stiglitz 2003).

In Brazil, and more especially in the city of Porto Alegre, capital of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, after 21 years of military dictatorship (1964-1985), claims for innovative participation were at the center of the civil society political agenda (Benevides 1991). Elected at the 1988 municipal elections in Porto Alegre, the Partido de los Trabajadores (PT or Workers’ Party) endorsed these claims: a parallel mechanism for popular decision-making within municipal budgetary issues, called “Orçamento Participativo” (Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre or PBPOA), was progressively settled. The PBPOA was supposed to take over the egalitarian ideal of a direct and participatory democracy, between the pitfalls of the representative democracy and the Athenian direct democracy. As the PT politician Olivio Dutra, who was elected Mayor of Porto Alegre in 1988, once said: *“We are not selling the illusion of the direct democracy in the Greek plaza which, let us bear in mind, was not the democracy of all but the democracy of the best.”* Nowadays, participatory budgeting is being used in 1,500 cities over the five continents (Ganuza & Baiocchi 2012). It has been raised by international agencies and development studies as a *“best practice”* for the promotion of government accountability (Speer 2012, p.2379). Thus, the PBPOA exemplifies one of the most important paradox of participation and accountability discourses and mechanisms in Latin America, being simultaneously considered as a hope for “democratizing democracy” (Santos 2007) and a tool for a neoliberal transformation of the State.

This paradox will be at the center of the first part of this article. In order to introduce the literature of participation and participatory mechanisms in developing countries to accounting scholars, we will start our article with a literature review on participatory mechanisms. Because we consider the PBPOA as an object belonging to the political space of a territory and having important social implications, this review will focus on the political aspects of the promotion of participation in developing regions. Undeniably, the political space, as well as accounting and accountability mechanisms, have largely been left unexplored by the literature upon accountability (except for example in Neu (2006)). Few researchers have deeply analyzed the extent to which participatory mechanisms provide every citizen with an equal access to participation and decision-making and change domination logics, thus making the promise of a real participatory democracy come true. Considering that the role of the sociologist is to question social reality, we adopt a critical and comprehensive standpoint on the PBPOA. Consequently, after having presented our literature review, our article will be dedicated to answer the following questions: to what extent does the political and public accountability (Sinclair 1995) that was set up by the PBPOA give an equal access to public debates and political decision to every citizen ? To what extent does participation to the PBPOA may affect the social becoming of agents? In order to answer these questions, we will use Bourdieu’s theory of the social division of political work and theoretical elements added by Bourdieusian sociologists studying militants (Gaxie 1977; Gaxie 2005; Collovald 2002; Matonti & Poupeau 2004).

Following Bourdieu (1981, p.3), we consider that the engagement process is not natural, so that it is

important to examine the conditions of possibility for participation and access to representative positions in the PBPOA. We consider the PBPOA as a new socio-political arena, where people are vying for different kinds of capitals, which values agents with given capitals and which can affect individuals in their “*social trajectories*” (Passeron 1990; Bourdieu 1992). Consequently, we will look at the social conditions under which people can acquire militant and political *capitals* (Bourdieu 1981; Matonti & Poupeau 2004), so as to benefit, for their social becoming, from the change in accounting and accountability mechanisms that are introduced by the PBPOA.

Our study of PBPOA participants and participatory councilors relies on secondary quantitative data and primary qualitative data. We use, as secondary data, statistics from a database produced by the NGO CIDADE (CIDADE 2003a; CIDADE 2003b) and Luciano Fedozzi (2007), providing information concerning the social capitals of participants between 1993 and 2005. Our primary and qualitative data are eighteen semi-structured interviews and two months of full time ethnographic observation, from July to September 2006. The interviews were run in 2006, with past or current participatory councilors, who endorse / used to endorse the most prestigious representative position in the PBPOA, as members of the Council of the PBPOA (*Conselho de Orçamento Participativo* or COP). These data enable us to analyze in a comprehensive way the social trajectories and the acquisition of militant and political capitals of those who managed to have a legitimate voice in the PBPOA.

In our article, we will at first present the origins of the PBPOA as a participatory mechanism praised by both left-wing movements and neo-liberal development institutions. In a second part, we will consider the PBPOA as a public and political accounting and accountability mechanism (Sinclair, 1995) which can be relevantly analyzed using a Bourdieusian lens and we will present our methodology and field. In a third part, we will explain the participatory device, first in a descriptive and formal fashion, then using the Bourdieusian theoretical framework, in order to explain the functioning and rules of the game taking place in the field we are studying. In a fourth part, we will discuss the social trajectories of councilors, which will enable us to give some insights about the commitment process and the social transformation of those who experienced a successful participation in the PBPOA. Then we will discuss our findings and lastly, we will conclude.

1. The PBPOA in the “*window of opportunity*” (Abers 2000): the implementation of an accountability and participatory mechanism.

Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre inherits a rich and diverse tradition of promotion of participation in developing regions (1.1.). It benefitted from a favorable Brazilian context, which led to its creation in 1989 (1.2.). The PBPOA has now been recognized by diverse organizations as a successful innovation (1.3.).

1.1. Participation in developing regions and the promotion of the PBPOA.

The promotion of participation for development purposes has been endorsed by diverse ideologies and projects (Hickey & Mohan 2005, p.9). In the last decades, international development institutions have promoted participation as a necessary accountability ingredient for a successful development recipe, while Latin American intellectuals have supported an “*emancipatory participation*”.

Participation within developing regions emerged eighty years ago with the promotion of community development in British and French colonies (De Kadt 1982; Hickey & Mohan 2005). Colonial administrations promoted community development to face socio-political changes caused by economic growth, to control political movements and to improve education and institutional creation (Hickey & Mohan 2005, p.6). In the case of the British Empire, one purpose was also to prepare the colonies for a more autonomous government (Classen et al. 2008, p.2403). In post-colonial governments, participatory processes were engaged to involve communities in national development (Hickey & Mohan 2005; De Kadt 1982). Community development was supposed to overcome the lacks of big development projects, which were accused of ignoring the “*felt needs*” of the population (De Kadt 1982, p.574), and became increasingly important during the 1960s. In 1966, the American Congress amended Title IX of the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act, so that priority “*be placed on assuring maximum participation in the task of economic development by the people of the developing countries*” (US House of Representatives – US Senate 2003). Since then, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was asked to assist furthering participation in developing countries (Cohen & Uphoff 1980, p.214), and participation became a part of mainstream development recipes advocated by western agencies for developing countries.

The enactment of Title IX had an implicit ideological dimension. Participation was seen as a way to render marginalized people more productive and less dangerous (Osmont 1995) and “*persuade late developing nations to base their revolutions on Locke rather than Marx*” (Cohen & Uphoff 1980, p.217). During the 1980s, the fall of authoritative political systems and centralized States, the rise of economic liberalism and the promotion of decentralization (Blair 2000) led to a focus on participatory techniques and discourses in the programmatic agenda (Goulet 1989). For the last two decades, international institutions for development and cooperation such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and USAID have promoted the idea that democracy and transparency are a condition for economic progress. Hence, participatory devices have become interlinked to democracy, decentralization, accountability, transparency and human rights (OECD 1995, p.8; Blair 2000).

In Latin America, the promotion of participation was also in the agenda of left-wing intellectuals and community development movements who claimed for more political participation during the 1960s and the 1970s. Their participatory discourses and practices took a very specific form, called emancipatory participation, or “*concientización*” of the masses (Goulet 1989; Hickey & Mohan 2005). Emancipatory participation was inspired by intellectuals, as the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire (2011) and the Colombian sociologist Fals Borda (1987), and promoted by radical movements within the Catholic Church such as the “*base Christian Communities*” (Daudelin & Hewitt 1995; Bidegain 1993). This emancipatory participation was the social technology for a political revival of the poor (De Kadt 1982, p.574), which was fundamental in the creation, in 1980, of the Brazilian Partido dos Trabalhadores (Utzig 2000, p.6).

In Latin America, the PBPOA inherited from ideologically diverse discourses for political participation. Since it was implemented by the PT, we may regard it as a leftist ingredient in the Brazilian transition to democracy.

1.2. Participation in Brazil: the leftist ingredient for the democratization recipe?

In Brazil, from 1964 to 1985, a military dictatorship ruled over the country. After having suffered all kind of abuses from conservative military regimes, the Brazilian population asked for more popular political participation. Among diverse social movements and political forces in the country, left-wing political parties endorsed these claims.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Brazilian leftists turned their backs on the Cuban model and looked for non-authoritative political alternatives. Inspiring themselves from community development movements, left-wing organizations adopted the concept of democracy. Thus, they competed with the traditional vision promoted by the bourgeoisie (Fals Borda 1987, p.35) and found allies in social forces, all of which were not acting in the official political arena, such as community movements and associations. Participatory democracy has long been a claim of Brazilian social movements from the new left, advocating democracy and political discussion (Wolford 2010, p.92). These movements borrowed their ideas from the Habermasian philosophies (Daniel Filho & Cuenca Botey 2009), the renewal of Anglo Saxon democratic theories (Pateman 1970), as well as from the Marxist literature and experiences of the Russian soviets and the Paris Commune (Genro & Souza 2000). Social movements and the Porto Alegre umbrella for communitarian associations (the *União das Associações de Moradores de Porto Alegre* or UAMPA), which was created in 1983, claimed community control over municipal finances as soon as 1985 (Ganuza & Baiocchi 2012, p.2; Avritzer 2002). The PT, which was closely linked to organized Christian communities (Bidegain 1993), radical leftists and new social movements, promoted popular participation and participatory democracy.

Nevertheless, in Brazil, the focus on popular participation was not the monopoly of leftists. Many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and political parties had promoted participation with different political purposes (Kunrath 2001) in a context of suspicion towards institutions of the representative democracy, of important *clientelism* and corruption in public affairs (Utzig 2000, p.6). Furthermore, participatory democracy, especially concerning municipal budgets, was seen as a tool for a more structural change, that is a return to the Brazilian tradition of State decentralization, after a dictatorial period of centralization (Wood & Murray 2007, p.20). The 1988 Constitution, which was made by the whole political forces of the country, transferred substantial amounts of power from the central government to states and municipalities (Navarro 2004; Wood & Murray 2007). This gave rise to new demands of the civil society and of associations to have a word to say in the investments of the municipality. The same Constitution provided the legal infrastructure for popular participation: it recognized the exercise of sovereignty through popular initiative and required the participation of the civil society in the elaboration and control of city, health and social security policies (Avritzer 2006, p.2; IADB 2005).

The PT had campaigned in 1988 on the promise of a participatory government and of popular participation into the budgetary decisional process. Once elected in 1988, at the head of Porto Alegre's local government, among a coalition of left wing parties called the Popular Front, the PT held its promise. The "Orçamento Participativo" was proposed in April 1989. This participative budget modified decision-making processes at the municipality level: it was added to the two bodies detaining the power in Brazilian cities and which are separately elected: the mayoralty or *Prefeitura*, which detains the executive power and determines revenues and expenditures, and the parliament or *Camara de Vereadores*, which detains the legislative power and has the last word on the approval of the budget. The creation of the PBPOA strengthened the executive to

the detriment of the legislative power, providing increased legitimacy to the mayoralty. This was of strategic importance to the PT and its alliance, which did not have the majority in the Parliament (Goldfrank & Schneider 2006; Sintomer et al. 2008; Sintomer et al. 2010; Utzig 2000, p.7-8).

Three goals have been attributed to the PBPOA (Utzig 1996; Sintomer et al. 2008; Sintomer et al. 2010) : the first, political goal was to “democratize democracy” (Santos 2007) through a wide movement of mobilization; the second, social goal was to concentrate the city’s investments on the most deprived populations and areas; the third, governance goal was to eradicate corruption and *clientelism*. The PBPOA is said to have been successful regarding these three goals. It has contributed to the electoral success of the PT, which was re-elected in Porto Alegre in 1992, 1996 and 2000. After its implementation, both left-wing organizations and international development institutions promoting neo-liberal programs and ideas for development have lauded the PBPOA.

The PBPOA was implemented as the result of a combination of political will and civil society mobilization (Sintomer et al. 2008, p.167), in congruence with the recommendations of international institutions. The PBPOA is now recognized as a successful initiative that has reached its original purposes. Both left-wing organizations and neo-liberal institutions have praised this participatory mechanism.

1.3. The PBPOA with the crossed praise of left-wing organizations and neo-liberal institutions.

The PBPOA is now praised by left-wing and neo-liberal organizations all over the world.

Participatory budgeting is considered as a new fortune for leftist parties and organizations, contributing simultaneously to transform capitalism, to strengthen democracy, social justice and good governance, and to bring electoral successes (Ganuza & Baiocchi 2012, p.1). It is also the budgetary and accountability dimension of the political project behind the World Social Forum (Teivainen 2002), that first met in Porto Alegre in 2001 and was hold 3 other times in this city. In the eyes of left-wing organizations and anti-globalization movements Porto Alegre became the “*world capital for hope*” (Sader 2003) (Goldfrank & Schneider 2006, p.15).

The PBPOA is also one of the most promoted “*best practices*” for participatory democracy by neo-liberal institutions. Many institutions, such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Inter American Bank for Development (IADB), encouraged cities all over the world to adopt this participatory device (see for example (Cabannes 2004), whereas the United Nations Human Settlement Program (UN-HABITAT), in 1996, launched participatory budgeting in the UN system (Navarro 2004, p.250). Since the mid nineteen-nineties, the World Bank praises the PB for improving governance and enhancing the efficiency of the public administration (Ganuza & Baiocchi 2012; Navarro 1997; World Bank 2008, p.1-2), even “*in combination with budget austerity*” (Cleuren 2008, p.21).

As a participatory mechanism, the PBPOA embodies the hopes of a real democracy after the Brazilian military dictatorship. As an accountability tool, it is also invested in the hope of increasing accountability and transparency in the Brazilian public sectors. Since its implementation, it seems to have fulfilled the democratic hopes that had been invested in it. The unanimous praise around the PBPOA invites us to analyze more deeply its functioning as an accounting and accountability mechanism.

2. The PBPOA as an accountability and participatory mechanism.

The PBPOA is an accounting and accountability mechanism, through which the municipality gives account for the money invested in the Porto Alegre districts and through which the population may contribute to decision-making processes in the city. Using Sinclair (1995), we define the PBPOA as a public and political accountability mechanism (2.1). This mechanism may be understood as a field (Bourdieu 1992; 1990; 1984) in which participants are vying for different sorts of capitals (2.2). Qualitative and quantitative data will help us in the analysis of this field (2.3).

2.1. The PBPOA as a public and political accounting and accountability mechanism.

We identify the PBPOA as a public and political accountability mechanism (Sinclair 1995).

In our research, we define accountability both as a relationship and as an obligation. As a relationship, accountability is *“the giving and demanding of reasons for conduct”* (Roberts & Scapens 1985, p.447). Participants to the PBPOA ask the municipality to justify the existing and coming expenses, and the municipality provides justifications. From the perspective of the municipality, accountability may also be perceived as *“an obligation to present an account of and answer for the execution of responsibilities to those who entrusted those responsibilities”* (Gray & Jenkins 1993, p.55).

Out of the five forms of accountability identified by Sinclair (1995) – personal, professional, managerial, political and public accountability – the PBPOA borrows from political and public accountabilities. Political accountability means the loyalty of a public sector manager to the ruling government and the elected parliament, who in turn are held accountable to the electors; public accountability can be defined as answering the needs expressed by the electorate and *“answering (...) public concerns about administrative activity”* (Sinclair 1995, p.225). Political and public forms of accountability are complementary and may be woven into one another (Broadbent & Laughlin 2003, p.36), such as in the case of the PBPOA: the municipality has to give accounts to the PBPOA, which is a participatory mechanism with a representative and elected body, representing the Porto Alegre population and to which the Porto Alegre inhabitants participate. The PBPOA embodies an accountability that is more formal than what is expected by public accountability and less direct than what public accountability presupposes. Thus, we consider it as a mechanism characterized by mix of public and political accountability.

According to Sinclair (1995, p.222), the last decades have seen the rise of public accountability in the public sector. This trend occurred in a neo-liberal context, which led to an increased management and accounting control of experts (Humphrey et al. 1993, p.19) and to a multiplication of the legitimate centers contributing to decision-making. Neo-liberalism also encompasses New Public Management (NPM) recipes and a *“liberal-democratic”* approach *“based on broader stakeholder relationships in which the rules and procedures of accountability (...) are realigned to serve rights to information in a participatory democracy”* (Shenkin & Coulson 2007, p.307). In this context, managerial accountability has risen in the public sector and citizens were more and more encouraged to scrutinize the actions of the administration.

Several studies already underlined the limits of public accountability. Concerning participatory mechanisms and citizen participations, Goddard (2004, p.546) writes that it is now time to examine accountability mechanisms *“in the context of how bureaucracies are to be controlled and how bureaucrats can be made responsive to the wishes of elected politicians and the public”*. Goddard also deplores that *“there are no empirical studies of the relationship between accounting and accountability in local government”*. According to Shenkin & Coulson (2007, p.303), the accounting literature discussing accountability *“has failed to recognize the scope of the political space”*.

In our research, we question the possibility to have a legitimate voice and be given accounts in an accounting, accountability and participatory mechanism, which we analyze with a Bourdieusian perspective.

2.2. A Bourdieusian perspective on public accountability and participatory mechanisms.

Our aim is to study, using a Bourdieusian perspective, the social conditions for successful participation and for the possibility of speaking out, asking and being given accounts in a participatory mechanism. Five Bourdieusian concepts – *field*, *illusio*, *doxa*, *habitus* and *capital* – will be at the core of our analysis and, among the diverse sorts of capitals, we will focus on the militant capital.

Several articles have deployed a Bourdieusian perspective on accounting and accountability issues (see Malsch et al. (2011)). Two articles by Cooper & Johnston (2012) and Neu (2006) are close to our research. Cooper & Johnston (2012), studying the field of football with a Bourdieusian and Lacanian lens, state that accountability, as an “*opiate*”, merely “*serves to immunize the most powerful from criticisms*”. In our research, we do not take this assertion for granted; instead, we analyze who, under which condition and with which effects, is given visibility in an accountability mechanism. Neu (2006) shows how accounting and accountability mechanisms order the public space and modify the distribution of capitals and positions in the institutional field of education in Alberta. We adopt a slightly different perspective. First, we will not analyze the broader public or political space and we do not analyze changes in a given field since we consider the PBPOA as a new arena. Lastly, we wonder which capitals are valued by a participatory accounting and accountability mechanism so that it may change trajectories, rather than the distribution of capitals.

Five concepts will be at the center of our analysis: *field*, *illusio*, *doxa*, *habitus*, *capital* and *social trajectory*. Each of these concepts will be nourished by the empirical data we have collected. Our study identifies the PBPOA as a *field*, which is a system of social positions that is internally structured in terms of power relations and “*within which struggles (...) take place over resources, stakes and access*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). Each field has its own rules. The acceptance of the rules is a complex social operation needing a collective and shared interpretation of reality, a shared and fundamental belief that the game is worth being played and which takes participants into the game (Bourdieu 1998, p.11) *i.e.* an *illusio*. In the field of the PBPOA, we consider the supposed equal participation of citizens and their equal chances of directly asking and receiving accounts from the municipality as an *illusio*. The real rules of the game, which legitimate the given social order in a given field (Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu 1992), and finally lead to the selection of the agents for the dominant positions compose the *doxa* of the field and differ from this *illusio*. This selection depends on the social dispositions of the participants.

Because the aim of our study is to understand the social conditions of possibility to have a voice within the PBPOA, we need to apprehend the social process generating the disposition to participate and become a councilor. The notion of *habitus* will help us in this task. The *habitus* of an agent is a socially constituted system of lasting and transposable dispositions which orient the individual behavior and practice (Bourdieu 1969; Bourdieu 1979; Bourdieu 1990) and which function as a “*matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions*” (Bourdieu 1969). The *habitus* is a product and a cause of the “*social trajectory*” (Passeron 1990) of an agent, which we define as “*the series of positions successively occupied by the same agent or group of agents in successive spaces*” (Bourdieu 1996, p.258). Depending on the structures of a given field, the meaning and value of the biographical events of an agent will be understood as placements/investments or displacements/disinvestments (Bourdieu 1996). The possibility to successfully participate in the PBPOA depends on the initial *habitus* of an agent. Participation to the PBPOA may value biographical events in the life of an agent, thus changing his/her *social trajectory* through the acquisition, by the agent, of new *capitals*. Capitals are at the same time the active properties which define the existence of the current fields and the objective characteristics of agents which determine their positions in the field. They are resources of diverse

types – economic, social, cultural and symbolic – which may be embodied, objectified or institutionalized. Since we consider the PBPOA as belonging to the broader political field of the city, we will give special attention to the militant and political capitals, which we understand as the specific capitals enabling agents to fight for power in the political field.

The militant capital designs a “*know-how, which has been specifically acquired through social properties enabling the agent to play, more or less successfully, in a space that is far from being united*” (Matonti & Poupeau 2004, p.11). Agents mobilize this know-how so as to adapt themselves to the dynamics of the participatory process and to learn from these dynamics. Thus, the acquisition of the militant capital is a result of the combination of the cultural, social and economic capitals the agents already have and of a learning process through which agents cope with the requirements of a successful participation in the PBPOA. The political capital differs from the militant capital because of its very nature. While the militant capital refers to a pragmatic skill, the political capital designs a form of symbolic capital. The political capital is “*an objective power which can be objectified in things (and in particular in everything that constitutes the symbolic nature of power – thrones, spectres and crowns) [and] the product of subjective acts of recognition and, insofar as it is credit and credibility, [it] exists only in and through representation, in and through trust, belief and obedience*” (Bourdieu 1999). In Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, capitals are not fixed or stable. An agent can acquire and/or convert different sorts of capitals during his/her life. The political field is a privileged scenario to observe the conversion of capitals which have been acquired in other fields, so that agents maintain their position in the social structure (Bourdieu 1981). To be a councilor within the PBPOA, agents need to convert political capital into militant capital and/or to create militant and political capitals. Consequently, we will focus on the analysis of the conditions of possibility for an agent to develop those kinds of capitals.

Once we have presented our Bourdieusian perspective on an accounting and accountability mechanism, we present our data and methodology.

2.3. Data and methodology

Our paper is based on multiple data. First of all, the analysis of statistics upon the PBPOA participants¹, provided mostly by the “Centro de Assesoria e Estudos Urbanos” (CIDADE 2003a; CIDADE 2003b) and Luciano Fedozzi (2007), allows us to study the “*deliberative gap*” (Avritzer 2006) in the PBPOA, which is determined by the dispositions and capital structures of the participants.

Secondly, the paper is based upon 2 months of ethnographic observation² and 18 semi-structured interviews of participatory councilors³. The interviews are the main data to analyze the question social trajectories. During our journey in Porto Alegre, we have interviewed 18 councilors or former councilors about their lives, focusing on their participation experience. Throughout the interviews, we learned a lot about the past experiences of our interviewees as well as about the social trajectories of other PBPOA leaders. Thus, we could explore the main common characteristics of those who became councilors and measure the relation between the placements and displacements in the social space on the one side and the participatory commitment on the other side. The ethnographic observation is composed of the attendance to twenty-two PBPOA assemblies, of many informal meetings, NGO and communitarian activities, where councilors or former councilors have invited us. We also followed some of the past and present councilors in their daily lives in order to understand the whole dimensions of a councilor existence. This ethnographic observation allowed us to define the *illusio* and *doxa* of the field and open our eyes about the relations between the participatory mechanism and other spaces, such as the political field of the city.

At this stage, it is important to point out that our study is specific to the PBPOA. We do not pretend to generalize our findings, all the more than most of the persons we interviewed were close to the PT: only three councilors had no relations to the PT or to the Communist Party (Pcdob).

3. The PBPOA: instructions for the successful use of the field.

In this part, we will present the formal rules of functioning of the PBPOA (3.1.), the informal rules composing the *doxa* we have identified (3.2.) and the structures of capital and dispositions that play a determining role in the access to a position councilor (3.3.).

3.1. What are the formal rules of functioning of the PBPOA?

The PBPOA has rather complex and frequently changing rules. From what we have observed in 2006, we can draw the following description of the functioning of the PBPOA. The activity of the PBPOA is divided into participation cycles beginning in March or April of each year. The structure of the PBPOA relies on the division of the city in 16 regions and on 6 themes. Debates take place during preparatory meetings and rounds – called *rodadas* – of thematic or regional plenary assemblies. During these assemblies, *delegates* and *councilors* are elected. In this process, the executive “*coordinates the meetings and sets the agenda*” (Santos 1998) and 4 investment priorities are decided in order to determine the areas where the municipality will invest in the year to come. The representatives elected in the PBPOA are the delegates and the councilors, who have a one-year mandate and limited possibilities of re-election. Ten votes are needed to be a delegate and between 250 and 500 to be a councilor. The delegates are elected to the Fora of Delegates (one forum per region and theme). They play a role of intermediaries between the councilors and the citizens, coordinate the rounds of plenary assemblies with members of the municipality and councilors, and once the amounts of investment per region and theme have been determined, they decide and supervise the implementation of the budget in their own communities.

The Council of the Participatory Budget (COP) is the most important and prestigious institution of the PBPOA. It is composed of two councilors and two substitutes for each region and theme, plus one councilor and one substitute representing the union of the municipal employees (SIMPA), one councilor and one substitute representing the Community Associations’ Union of Porto Alegre (UAMPA). The city government has, for coordination purposes, two chairs in the COP, but with no right to vote. The COP supervises the investment budget for the year to come. The budget is decided upon the basis of the priorities established during the intermediate meetings and *rodadas*, and of an allocation formula that can change every year. It is constrained by the fixed expenses estimated by the government.

How is organized the participation to the PBPOA during a year?

[INSERT GRAPH 1 HERE]

At the beginning of each cycle, popular councils or community leaders organize preparatory meetings. During these meetings, the councilors present the investments that have been decided the year before, leaders organize a discussion of the priorities for the year to come and a preliminary selection of delegates is organized. The priorities that have been discussed are to be debated during the two *rodadas*, which are open to everyone and are organized in every region between March and July. During the first *rodada*, in March and April, the executive accounts for the Investment Plan of the previous year and the Investment Plan for the current year is presented. Participants formulate claims, which have to respect precise technical criteria not to be rejected, and are not allowed to speak more than three minutes to the audience. Between the *rodadas*, intermediate preparatory meetings take place, during which the priorities of each region are voted.

During the second *rodada*, usually in June and July, the investment plan for the year to come is discussed; the remaining delegates are elected and every region chooses two councilors and two substitutes. For every

election, registered inhabitants of the region above 16 years old have the right to vote. The ethnographic observation started from July to September 2006, during the second *rodada* of plenary assemblies, so that we could observe the nomination and election rituals where the *illusio* and the *doxa* can be clearly perceived. After the two *rodadas*, the Fora of Delegates and the COP work on the budget and on the investment plan. From July to September, the COP votes the budget, and from September to December, the negotiation process focuses on the investment plan. The PBPOA has a complex functioning and participating to the meetings requires, among others, time and money. Our ethnographic observation allowed us to understand the fundamental motivation presiding over the participation to the PBPOA.

3.2 “Participando, articulando, cobrando”: the *illusio* and *doxa* of the PBPOA field.

In 2006, almost one million persons were above 16 years old and thus fulfilled the age requirement to participate to the PBPOA. Around 1.15% of this population participated to the PBPOA in 2006 (against 1.33% 4 years before, on 2002)⁴. Participation to the PBPOA has thus remained marginal at the scale of the city. Why do some people decide to participate in a participatory budget? Which are the common ideas and practices shared by all the participants who succeed within the mechanism?

The functioning of the PBPOA is based on the belief of egalitarian possibilities for participation and decision making, so that investment in the PBPOA is worth the effort. This belief, which takes participants into the participatory game, is the *illusio* of the field, *i.e.* an “*illusion of reality collectively shared and approved*” (Bourdieu 1992, p.334). The official ideology of this participatory arena is based on three main ideas: the people, instead of the elite, will decide for budgetary allocation; every citizen has the right and the obligation to participate; participation is a school to become a real citizen. When we went to Porto Alegre, the official slogan of the PBPOA was “*Voce faz a Cidade*” (‘You are building the City’), which means: “You, the people who participate, are deciding for the investment projects that you are seeing around you”. Nevertheless, our sociological perspective brings us to question the reality of this slogan. As we will demonstrate, in the PBPOA, if all participants are supposed to be equal in their chances to have a legitimate voice and access representative positions, some participants are “more equal than others” (Orwell 1946). Indeed, the PBPOA imposes on agents given forms of struggles for the access of dominant positions. These given forms of struggles imposed by the field correspond to the *doxa* of the field. In our case, they are the participation to several meetings of the PBPOA (*participar*), the articulation of demands made by participants and the connexion between participants (*articular*), and the capacity to practice accountability (*costrar*).

According to our ethnographic observation, “*participar*” is a horizontal movement that encompasses all agents, makes them equal and distinguishes them, because it allows them to learn citizenship. The action to participate is supposed to be democratic. As one of the councilors we have interviewed said, “*Participatory Budgeting is kind of a universal concept, participation is a universal concept. Thus, we have to feel the universality of participation and participation has to penetrate the whole reality*” (Councilor 15). Nevertheless “*participar*” is not enough to achieve individuals and communitarian goals. A person who wants to succeed in his/her participation needs to face the complexity of social relations within the mechanism. A participant who wants to get votes for his/her demand needs to compose with other people’s demands and to get support from other councilors, from his/her own community, and so on. Councilors use the word “*articular*” (to put together, to organize) to describe the actions which allow them to find the necessary relations for the strategic game of power in the PBPOA. A person with important organization and strategic skills will be called as “*articulado*” (organized, able to put together several people from different social spaces), and the action that describes this kind of movement is the “*articulação*” (articulation). Councilor 2, being asked about how she gets what she demands, replied: “*Then I did this one that I told you... the ‘articulação’... I went to find ten or fifteen people from my community, this was not a lot if we*

*compare to the one hundred people coming from the ‘Morro’ (another community participating to the plenary assembly of her region). I arrived to the Morro and said, ‘you have one hundred and I have fifteen’, they answered me, ‘this is not enough’... and I said ‘think about it, is better than nothing. What you will ask for?’ ‘We are asking for tarring’ ‘well I am asking for sanitation’, ‘so, we can exchange you put thirty of your people voting for my demand and my fifteen votes will go for your demand’ And surprise... I succeed my demand!” (Councilor 2). Participating and organizing are the two first forms of struggles. But what about to account for and to be accountable? The chain of accountability is explained within the PBPOA by the verb “*cobrar*” which means to claim, to demand and to beg for. Councilors have to “*cobrar*” to the administration, delegates have to “*cobrar*” to councilors, and the “*comunidade*” (community) or the “*povo*” (the people) have to “*cobrar*” to all of them. Even though the Mayor is from one participant’s political party or community, “*cobrar*” is an obligation. As Councilor 1 explained us: “Well, if the Mayor comes here and he belongs to my party I will tell him: ‘hey Mister So-and-so, you didn’t did this and that’. It is not because he belongs to my party that I’m not going to ‘*cobrar*’ to him. I will ‘*cobrar*’ him, you understand me? You must ‘*cobrar*’, you have to fight!”*

Thus, among all the participants, those who are able to “*participate*”, “*articular*” and “*cobrar*” are “*more equal than others*” to participate and access representative positions. To be succeeded, these forms of investment in the field and struggles for the access of dominant positions require different types of *capitals* and dispositions. As we mention above, some of these capitals are specific of this field: the political and the militant capitals. In the PBPOA, people may learn how to act, politically speaking, within the mechanism. They need to acquire a militant and a political capital, which will help them access representative positions. Yet, the acquisition of those capitals depends on the initial capital structure of the agents and on their primary *habitus*. Participation can have important consequences for some individuals, who were not necessarily predisposed to success in their will to have a voice in politics, and who will experience a change in their “*social trajectory*” (Passeron 1990). Therefore, we will analyze the initial capital structure of participants and representatives within this participatory mechanism.

3.3 Social dispositions and “capital requirements” to become a councilor in the PBPOA: an analysis based on descriptive statistics

Who are the participatory councilors of the PBPOA? How do they become councilors? Following Bourdieu, these naive questions are essential ones when we look for an understanding of the social division of political work (Bourdieu 1981). Thus, we will try to suggest who the representatives within the PBPOA are, in terms of social characteristics and capitals.

3.3.1. Gender, age, civil status, time and the access to representative positions

Gender, age civil status and time are important elements in the access to representative positions.

Women have long been underrepresented among councilors. They became a majority of the participants over the years, constituting 46.7% of the PBPOA participants in 1993 and 56.4% in 2002. In 1990, 10% of the COP councilors were women, against almost 50% in 2006. Women are, last but not least, overrepresented among delegates: 60% of the people having been delegates in 2002 were women, against 52.5% in 2005 (CIDADE 2003b, p.18; Fedozzi 2007, p.16). Yet, women and men do not share the same social characteristics in the PBPOA and in the COP. It seems that women need a superior level of training to impose themselves in the political discussions. 82% of women have at least an incomplete high school, against 75% of the men. In 2002, 40% of female councilors have university training against 35.5% of the men. Women also need higher levels of revenue: 30.8% of female councilors have an income superior to 8

minimum wages against 27.6% for men; among the councilors having an income inferior to 2 minimum wages, they are a minority (7.7% against 20.7%). These elements illustrate and confirm Bourdieu's observations on gender inequality: "*whatever their position in social space, women have in common the fact that they are separated from men by a negative symbolic coefficient which, like skin color for blacks, or any other sign of membership in a stigmatized group, negatively affects everything that they are and do, and which is the source of a systematic set of homologous differences*" (Bourdieu 2001, p.93). The promotion of women in the PBPOA is an important issue. The PBPOA is the result of a community movement, with, since the beginning, a strong presence of women and a focus on democratic and egalitarian values. Several initiatives are taken, such as the "Congresso da Cidade", organized in 2003, so as to reach parity between men and women (Fedozzi 2007, p.15). Nevertheless the historical majority of men in the COP may be linked to the broader question of gender inequalities in the *Porto Alegre* society.

Age is another crucial element in the access to representative positions. People between 34 and 50 are overrepresented among participants and representatives. The population above 50 years old represents the most important age group among the participants, as it is in the society (Fedozzi 2007, p.20). It represented 44% of the councilors and only 24.5% of the participants in 2005. Most of the persons having been a representative were above 50 years old. This specific attractiveness of the PBPOA for people over 50 years old may be explained by the fact that these people fought against the dictatorship during several decades and may have developed an important commitment to the PBPOA. Concerning the combination of gender and age, 93.3% of female councilors are more than 42 years old against 67% of the male councilors. This has probably to do with the workload associated with young children: if 3.2% of female councilors are between 26 and 33 (against 0% for the men), councilors represent 6.7% of the women between 34 and 41 against 29% for the men. Related to this, we notice that being married does not seem to be a favorable condition for women who want to be councilors: in 2002, 20% of the women councilors are married, against 58.1% of the men. The same year, one third of female councilors have never been married, one third are separated, against 22.6% and 16.1% for men (CIDADE 2003a, p.13). Only 22% of the participants and 14.7% of the persons having been councilors do not have children.

Participation to the PBPOA requires time. Participatory councilors and delegates participate at least to two meetings per week, most of which take place at night or during the weekends. Moreover, participation to the meetings is rarely enough: the construction of a reputation is made possible by the participation to various instances such as neighborhood associations, NGOs, political parties, childcare facilities, schools, unions. The time management that facilitates an investment in activities that are necessary to be "participativo" may explain the rise of autonomous workers among participants and councilors: autonomous workers represent the most important professional category among participants (21,9%) and 39.2% of the councilors are autonomous workers in 2005 (against 19.7% in 2002) (CIDADE 2003b, p.25). Yet, this rise of autonomous workers may also be associated with the decline of civil servants among participants and councilors at the beginning of the 2000's (12.1% of the councilors are civil servants in 2005 against 21.3% in 2002), in a context of weakening of the PBPOA as the central element of a society project orchestrated by the PT. If time is an important resource, how to explain that unemployed people (14.7% of the participants in 2005) represent only 12,1% of the councilors in 2005 ?

3.3.2. Economic, social and cultural capital in the access to the COP.

Participation to the PBPOA requires economic, cultural and social capitals. The economic capital encompasses assets that are directly convertible into money; the cultural capital corresponds to sources of cultural legitimacy, which may be institutionalized (such as diploma), objectified (such as books) and embodied (and in this case, it composes the *habitus* of the agent); the social capital may be understood as *“the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”* (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992).

Participation to the PBPOA requires important economic capital. As we wrote, councilors and delegates participate at least to two meetings per week, which represents important amounts of money, to pay for the bus and the oil. In 2006, 28.57% of the minimum wage is estimated to be necessary to attend all the meetings of councilors of the PBPOA in a month (Cuenca Botey 2007). Most of the participants are modest, with low or very low income. In 1998, 30.9% of the participants had an income lower than 2 minimum wages against 49.8% in 2005 (CIDADE 2003b, p.26; Fedozzi 2007, p.20) whereas in 1998, 21.9% of the participants have an income that is superior to 8 minimum wages against 7.7% in 2005. This evolution may be a symptom of a decline in the interest and participation of the upper and middle classes, revealing a decline in the relevance of the PBPOA in the local political field, which we have already underlined. Concerning the access to the COP, in 2005, 37.1% of the participants to the PBPOA don't have any paid work against 28.2% of the councilors and 32.7% of the delegates. Most of the past and/or present councilors work more than 40 hours a week (59.1% in 2002 and 51.4% in 2005) (CIDADE 2003b, p.20; Fedozzi 2007, p.22). Thus, money is at least as discriminating as time in the access to the COP.

The access to the economic capital is not the most important element: once an individual has been elected delegate or councilor, he/she has to develop a social capital that will help overcome the scarcity of economic resources. The ability of “articular”, which brings connections inside and outside the PBPOA, is an expression of the social capital.

Moreover, a councilor has to know how to read, write and speak publicly. He also has to understand the accounting and budget figures of the city, write meeting reviews, understand the rules of procedure. This requires an important cultural capital. This cultural capital may be institutionalized in diploma and indeed, according to (CIDADE 2003b, p.23) among those who have been councilors, only a few percentage is composed by people with any instruction (5.5% in 1995, 3.8% in 2002 and 1.5% in 2005) and there is an overrepresentation of people having received higher education among councilors : in 2002 12% of participants have received university training in comparison to 29.5% of the councilors. More than one third of the participants did not achieve the “Ensino Fundamental”, which corresponds to the first eight years of school against 27.9% of those who have been councilors in 2002. We observe that the most educated people seem to progressively abandon the PBPOA: in 2000, 20% of the participants have a university education against 12% in 2002 and 15.5% in 2005, which coincides with the overall impoverishment of participants.

The first result of our descriptive observation is that a diversity of the social groups participate to the device. Yet, all of them are not equally represented. If we accept the assumption that the overall impoverishment in cultural and economic resources of the participants could be a symptom of the decline of the PBPOA after the PT defeat in the municipal election in 2004 (Cuenca Botey 2007, p.144 - 150), we still observe trends on the characteristics and capitals of participants and councilors. A typical male representative would be between 34 and 50, married, with children, working and living in a household with an income below 8 minimum wages having achieved at least primary school, but a man with the highest chances to be a representative is above 50, with complete or incomplete university training, earning more than 8 minimum wages. A typical female representative would be above 50, single, separated or divorced, with complete /

incomplete high school education and earning between 4 and 8 minimum wages, but a woman with the highest chances to have a legitimate voice is a single woman above 42 years old, university training and earning more than 8 minimum wages. The disposition to participate and to have a voice within the mechanism is also determined by economic, cultural and social capitals.

Nevertheless, not all the people who have these dispositions became councilor and not all the councilors possess these social dispositions. Hence, the interest for qualitative data is to understand the logics that structure the social division of political work and their interaction with the agents' *habitus*. We have to follow the trajectories of those who are / used to be councilors in order to understand the social process which explains how an agent has acquired enough militant and political capitals to become a representative.

4. Social trajectories: a comprehensive approach to understand how an agent becomes a councilor and what councilors become.

“And then, we created an association.... But before, they were afraid to see how I could be organized... I went door to door saying to the people ‘listen, we will bring the tar’. So I achieve to come with dozens of people to the rodada. And this year, I was invited to become a councilor of the PBPOA.” (Councilor 1).

As we already explained, participating to the PBPOA is a long-lasting, time- and money-consuming activity, with no pre-determinate end. It is seen positively, as an important commitment, even as a sacrifice. Being “participativo” means being here, at all times, and apologizing when, for any reason, it was not possible to attend a meeting. Thus, we can wonder what triggers the participation and the candidature of participatory councilors to the COP. Two key characteristics of PBPOA councilors are commitments to charities and associations before participation to the PBPOA (4.1.) and an experience of demotion (4.2.). To these councilors, the PBPOA brought capitals (4.3.) symbolic retributions (4.4.) and allowed, in some cases, a change in social trajectories (4.5.).

4.1 Devotion experiences: the common primary habitus characteristic of councilors

According to Collovald (2002, p.177-178), it is necessary to consider participation as a devotion to others if one wants to understand political and militant commitment. And indeed, most of the past and/or present participatory councilors we interviewed had previously experienced commitment to various social organizations and/or political activism. Only four councilors had no experience in associations, charities or political activities.

The notion of devotion appears as the common feature of the *habitus* for almost all the councilors we have interviewed. Fourteen out of the 18 interviewed participatory councilors had previously experienced devotion and come from families oriented towards religious and/or activist experiences (Councilors 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18). Out of the 14 persons, 6 had charity activities linked to the church. One of the interviewed is also the son of an evangelist pastor (Councilor 4) and another is an active member of the movement of Christian families (Councilor 3). Two persons, a man above 60 (Councilor 15) and a woman above 80 years old (Councilor 7) had an important experience in the community movement: the man used to be a sport leader and an event organizer for the community, whereas the woman, who used to be a primary school teacher in catholic schools and to commit herself to the activities of her church, was an experienced militant in the community movement when the PBPOA was created. This woman used to declare: “Eu sou comunitaria!” (‘I am a communitarian person!’), in order to characterize her identity and to differentiate herself from those from the political world.

Five of the interviewed persons come from the political field (Councilor 5, 8, 13, 16, 18). They are all men between 40 and 70 years old, whose participation in the PBPOA is in the continuity of their activist and political career. Among them, 4 are Brazilian unionists, the last one is a political exile from Uruguay. The oldest men have invested the community movement as a refuge against the control of political activities under the dictatorship; the others have been activists in unions that appeared during the 1970's (such as Councilor 18).

The four left councilors (Councilor 6, 9, 10, 11) had no previous experience of devotion. They are 3 men and a woman between 40 and 50 and a young woman of 19 years old. Two of them say they have experienced a strong moment before devoting themselves to others (Councilor 9, 10): councilor 9 had a first career as a sales representative in the industrial sector, before he had to retire because of a heart disease. Councilor 11 began participating when she was 15, after she discovered her passion for theatre and became acquainted with a theatre professor. Lastly, the commitment of Councilor 6 began with his struggle to save the Faroupilha park (The « Central Park » of Porto Alegre), which was highly coveted by politicians and real estate developers. Councilor 6 saw in the projects of the real estate developers the risk for a further decline of his city center district, to the profit of richer Porto Alegrense areas.

Councilor's commitments for other people are very often inscribed in prior experiences of devotion, which have shaped their *habitus*. Nevertheless, what is at stake here is also the reason why these councilors once decided to transform their experiences in a more political commitment. Social trajectories of the individuals suggest that a downgrading in social status is also an important condition of possibility to commit oneself in this kind of participatory arena.

4.2 Social demotion and militant commitment

One very important element, which appeared to us as having triggered commitment, is displacement in the social, urban and political spaces. Social demotion is very present in the interviews of PBPOA councilors, many of whom felt as a social demotion their expulsion outside of city centers and politically committed themselves for the improvement of the new area they had to live in, while others experienced the degradation of their own district. Lastly, among the councilors, many experienced demotion in their trajectories as activists and politicians.

Councilors 1 and 3 had to live in deprived districts, due to a social demotion. When she talks about her first experience in the suburbs, Councilor 1 said: *“And then, when I had just arrived here, in the Lomba do Pinheiro, you see, in 1992, here, in this tarmacked street (at that time the street was not tarmacked and sewers were just in front of my place...), I told myself: ‘This is not possible!’ Because you just arrived from downtown, so you don’t understand, you don’t know how it works in the suburbs. Thus, I asked for an interview with Olivio Dutra, the mayor at that time. And he told me “I can not help you, now you have to help yourself, now we are implementing the Participatory Budget”.* For Councilor 3, who comes from an upper class family living in the Rio Grande do Sul countryside and who used to live in the Porto Alegrense city center, moving to the suburbs has been a hard demotion experience. He said: *“I was evicted from the city!”* Councilor 3 worked as an accounting and management teacher in a vocational high school, which did not provide a sufficient income to buy a house in his former city center district. He moved with his family to the suburbs, which was the spatial consequence of his social demotion.

Councilors 2 and 4 had experienced the degradation of their districts. Councilor 2 has lived in the same place all her life, but important changes in her neighborhood triggered her political commitment. She was born in a rural place, which used to be exclusive for firemen families and which progressively became one of the most dangerous suburbs in Porto Alegre. Councilor 4 got involved into politics after the occupation of a

land next to his house by marginal groups. In order to prevent the settlement of a marginalized community, neighbors organized themselves to occupy the land. Councilor 4, who was the leader of this group of neighbors, was finally the only one who stayed in the area after the arrival of “*hundreds of poor families*” asking for a place to live. Thus, Councilor 4’s involvement in politics seems paradoxical: he started with fighting against marginal populations and became a delegate and a participatory councilor who fought for the interest of those same deprived people. For those with a prior activist experience, social demotion was experienced at the level of their political trajectories. For example, Councilor 18 was an important unionist and political prisoner during the military dictatorship. When the PT won the elections in 1988, he was relegated to a very degrading position as a controller for street vendors: “*When we won the elections, you can access a position with high wages enabling you to create important relations with different communities. Then you can run for a political campaign. So, why they put me in this kind of position? Why they throw me there? Why they did not give me a position as a Mayor adviser? They have so many positions like these ones... I could be useful in the housing program or in the Mayor Cabinet.*” (Councilor 18). In order to resurge from this political degradation, councilor 18 became councilor in the PBPOA where, as we will see afterwards, he found the resources to change his political trajectory.

To some of the participants, the PBPOA means a struggle against a loss of status, whether it is social, spatial or political. The PBPOA is a field where agents fight for militant and political capitals. Yet, these notions are very abstract for the participants, most of whom see that the commitment process is nourished by retributions (Gaxie 1977; Gaxie 2005), which are the symbolic and material benefits that agents acquire during their participatory commitment. In the PBPOA, becoming a councilor offers prestige, as well as the possibility to change one’s own personal living conditions and social position.

4.3 Militant and political capitals.

In a militant space, the first retribution that participants get is “*the integration in a micro-society, with all the psychological and social advantages that can be associated with it*” (Gaxie 1977, p.138). In the PBPOA, being “*participativo*” means integrating a dense network of relations which can increase the capitals detained by the agents.

The PBPOA is a deliberative arena composed by organized communities, movements and associations, and the rules of the device do not allow isolation: participants have to *articulate* in order to achieve their goals, which implies to participate to group and community activities and to build alliances. The testimony of Councilor 9, who never experienced devotion before the PBPOA, enables us to enlighten these two dimensions : “*The PBPOA was a training school. Now I have a little political experience and an overall view of political issues. Of course, in a certain moment I was the reference for problems related to people with disabilities, but... because I did not have political support, I didn’t belong to a political party, it was harder for me. Now is going better, I have more possibilities to help my people*”. The concept of militant capital is central to understand what is at stake. To acquire this capital and to become a leader who can change things in his community or district, one has to develop relations to established and legitimate organizations, such as political parties or unions. These organizations are spaces in which individuals can consolidate the new competencies, resources and militant know-how that they acquired in the PBPOA. The more a participant consolidates his/her militant capital, the more he/she can access institutionalized political organizations. And indeed, among the persons we interviewed, 7 persons took out their membership in a union or political party when they began participating (Councilor 1, 2, 4, 9, 12, 14, 13), 6 entered the participation device after having been registered in a party (Councilor 5, 7, 8, 16, 15, 18) and 5 were not registered but had positions that allowed them to have a status independent from political machineries (Councilor 3, 6, 10, 11, 17).

To the councilors, an important retribution the PBPOA brings is the transformation of their militant capital, of their activist know-how, into political credit and capital. This corresponds to a complex operation, requiring strong investments at all levels. The possession of a political capital is a *sine qua non* condition to access representative functions, and thus to transform devotion into a profession. Those who did not have any previous political commitment need to acquire militant capital, which is possible through a mobilization of all the capitals that have been acquired during previous experiences, and of the learning-by-doing of the necessary codes and competences to deal with the dynamics of the PBPOA. Nothing is natural in this acquisition of militant capital and participatory know-how and the participants are not in equal positions. Moreover, this acquisition requires the internalization of the purposes of collective action by agents. Retributions will play a central role in this process.

4.4 Retributions and investments in the cause.

The PBPOA is a space where the dispute for the access to resources is open. These resources shall be used in development projects for the good of the community since the PBPOA forbids all the material retributions for participants and representatives. Yet, the subjective perceptions of agents concerning the retributions are not very clear and depend upon previous trajectories as well as on the social and political uses of participation.

To those who are already involved in politics, retributions are obviously collective and integrated into a political struggle with a universal scope. To those who experienced other forms of commitment, this affirmation is not relevant. Thus, Councilor 2, who had previous experiences in charities, with Franciscan priests and curates, explains: *“Now I like what I’m doing. But my first intuition was... my first attempt, that led me to participate, was the possibility to repair the street. That was my way, the door that opened to the PBPOA. After six months I was elected. I started attending to the city Parliament to see how they wrote the amendments. I understood nothing... but I attended, to try to understand”* (Councilor 2). Councilor 2 considers her first step as a selfish and intuitive act that led her street to be rebuilt, and brings her 800 reais (more than two minimum wages) per month from the cabinet of a city councilor, as a financial compensation for her political involvement as a PT activist. For those with no political experience, exit phenomena increase when their demands are not satisfied. Councilor 11, after four years of participation, including one as a councilor, during which she didn’t get satisfaction to a demand states: *“The same things will continue existing [...] I mean lessons will continue, the health center will be there as usual... it won’t be improved... no, we are not the ones who decide you know. There is a moment when you realize that we are not deciding at all. We come here just to fight between us.”*

People adopt the official goals of collective action within the PBPOA, become a militant of participatory democracy and qualify themselves as *“participativos”*, i.e. they interiorize the *illusio* of the field, when they incorporate material and symbolic retributions into the logics of collective action. In the interiorization of the *illusio*, the satisfaction of demands is an important factor. Councilor 15 explains us his experience in this respect: *“Participation is motivated when you get a return. The most important satisfactions that I got from participatory budgeting have happened when I was a delegate – a delegate, not a councilor! – and I proposed to tarmac a street, distrustful, but I proposed to tarmac our street. Then the street was asphalted. Well, for me it was great, isn’t? Then I realized I have improved my self-esteem because I participate in the decision to tarmac the street. When the government complies with commitments acquired in the PBPOA, the level of dignity and conscience of the people increases.”*

Therefore, following Gaxie, we suggest that *“commitment to the cause it is not an independent and distinct element from militant interests (...) but an important element usually intrinsically attached to all that makes militancy worth”* (Gaxie 2005, p.174).

4.5 Social trajectories of councilors in the professional and political spaces

Through the acquisition of militant and political capitals, councilors succeed in transforming their professional activities. Many of those who used to have a job without public purposes now work for public, private or political organizations with public purposes. Yet, militant and political capitals have a different yield, depending on the social position occupied by the agent before his/her participation. An analysis of some councilors' social trajectories in the professional and political spaces will help us in this demonstration.

Several examples of Councilors show that the access to representative positions opened the doors for a change in professions. In 2006, Councilor 2 was 40 years old. After having been a councilor and previously militant in charities, she got a position as the group leader of a cellule of the famous *Fome Zero* program in Porto Alegre. With an incomplete high school, she wants to get the high school degree and pursue with university training. Councilor 10 used to work as a mechanical engineer with an important career in the metallurgic industry, but without any devotion experience. While being a councilor, she created a computer support company and started a computer training program for a deprived community in the city. This commitment process ended up in the creation of a NGO where she holds the Executive Director position, which helps homeless people, promotes culture and defends feminist positions in politics. Councilor 14 is a mason; he has become an employee of the Lasallian Brothers, who enable him to earn an income as a community leader. He does not want to engage for the PT, because according to him, "*O PT nao paga nada*" ('the PT does not pay enough!'). Moreover, political parties tend to hire people with, at least, a high school degree, whereas Councilor 14 never went to high school. Councilor 9, former sales representative, was 50 years old in 2006. He studied engineering at the University but he never graduated. After a heart attack, he lost his job and decided to commit himself with the disability rights movement. Participatory budgeting was the arena for his first commitment and he became the leader of this movement. He founded a company promoting investment in technologies for special traffic lights for deaf and blind pedestrians and which is supported by the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul. In 2006, Councilor 9 worked for a right-wing political party and he was planning to start a formal political career. From these experiences, we suggest that the yield of militant capital has to be understood from the initial social position of the agent. Possibilities for transformation of this capital depend on previous capitals. The transformation of the militant capital into a political one is a more complex process and chances to succeed are very limited.

Among our interviewees, only one had been city councilor (Councilor 18) and two others (Councilors 13 and 15) had the project of running for this prestigious position. In the PBPOA, participants acquire the necessary political and social capitals to compete for elected positions. Running for elected positions requires the ability to mobilize an important quantity of persons on the election day, to get support from other political leaders and of course raise funds. Moreover, in Porto Alegre, whereas 500 votes are needed to be elected as a participatory councilor, 5,000 are necessary to be elected as a city councilor and 50 000 as a State Deputy. In order to run for these positions, one must get support from strong institutions such as political parties, the church or important economic actors. The possession or the creation of an important amount of political and social capital is compulsory in order to succeed in this operation. Councilor 18 is one of those who succeeded in this operation. Being 72 years old in 2006, he is an old and historical militant from the PT in the State of Rio Grande Do Sul, who suffered from political persecution under the dictatorship. He is also a former unionist, and a friend of President Lula, as well as of the former PT mayors Olivio Dutra and Tarso Genro. He ran without success for a position as a State Deputy in 1986 and became a PBPOA councilor after he had been appointed as a street sales controller. Through his activities as a councilor, he was designated as a regional coordinator for the PBPOA and he used this remunerated position in favor of his political aspirations. This example, both as an isolated and symptomatic case, shows that the conversion of the capitals acquired in the PBPOA field into political capitals in the broader political space of the city is most of all reserved for an elite of the PBPOA.

In this part, we have shown that in spite of a very egalitarian discourse – the *illusio* of the field – most PBPOA councilors are characterized by shared dispositions and the possession of militant and political capitals: if all the participants are supposed to be equal, “some are more equal than others” (Orwell 1946) in their chances of accessing representative position. The commitment into the PBPOA has been triggered, in many cases, by an experience of social demotion and has been maintained because of the perceived retributions associated with commitment into the PBPOA. Lastly, for some of the councilors, PBPOA participation started a change in the social trajectory, which leads us to nuance the idea that the *illusio* may merely be an “*opiate*” of the people (Cooper & Johnston 2012).

5. Discussion

Accountability and participatory mechanisms always embody a promise behind their technical purposes. In the case of participatory and democratic devices, such as the PBPOA, the promise is explicit: anybody can participate and have an influence in the decision process of the *res publica*. Taking seriously a Bourdieusian perspective about the social division of political work means deconstructing this promise and apprehending the social processes which influence the possibilities for people to participate and to demand “reasons for conduct” (Roberts & Scapens 1985, p.447).

Our results show that an active participation in the Participative Budget in Porto Alegre depends on initial social dispositions; people without education, social and economic resources have little chances to become an active participant or a representative. Nevertheless, the study of social trajectories allows us to have a more complete and complex understanding of what is at stake in this participatory and accountability device. Indeed, through the examination of councilors’ social trajectories, other dimensions of accountability devices become visible. Public and political accountability mechanisms are arenas of political socialization where agents, through the dispute for power, may access militant retributions and, in the mid and long term, may acquire militant and political capitals. The constitution of those capitals enables some agents to change their social destinies and to professionalize their militant activities. Consequently, the PBPOA has been for some participants a mechanism of social mobility where they could eventually change their position in the social space. For these persons, the emergence of a new participatory field reshuffled the cards.

The emergence of a new participatory field belonging to the political field of the city may be associated with a change in the domination logics, which will favor new comers, *i.e.* agents with no initial chances to become professional activists or politicians. In this perspective, a participatory accountability mechanism may bring some transformations in the distribution of capitals among the different agents in conflict in a given field (Neu 2006) but also in the social composition of the field. If we want to know “*how accounting and accountability can better facilitate democracy*” this is an essential result. Indeed, among the different fields that compose the social space, the political field appears as the region of the social space where are formulated the representations of society determining the formulation of problems and programs for its solution (Bourdieu 1981, p.4). Therefore, the different rules determining the possibility to enter into the field and the distribution of power among agents are particularly important in order to understand the possibility of a given political discourse to exist.

At this stage of the analysis, we cannot say whether this promotion of new comers will bring change in the *doxa* of the political field of the city or whether these councilors will be the trees hiding the forest of the unequal participation to decision-making processes. Nevertheless, our findings raise the following question: to what extent does a participative budget open the political field to marginalized people and contributes to a real democratization of our societies?

Conclusion.

In this article, we brought an accountability and accounting device in social studies of accounting. The Participative Budget of Porto Alegre, which is supposed to have increased the efficiency and accountability of the Porto Alegre municipality, is recognized as one of the most successful accountability initiatives in Latin America in the last 30 years.

Our research has shown that on the contrary to what is often taken for granted, participants to this accountability mechanism are not equal in their chances to have a legitimate voice. The PBPOA did not offer the democracy of all but rather an illusion of it. Successful participation requires the acquisition of militant and political capital, which depends on the initial capital structure of the agents. The identification of the PBPOA domination logics should open new perspectives. Keeping our Bourdieusian standpoint, we think that knowing these domination logics is a first step towards emancipation. This in turn may “*empower certain strands of radical participatory democracy*” (Shenkin & Coulson 2007, p.297). Moreover, let us not forget that for a small number of participants, the PBPOA changed social trajectories. That is why we will not throw the baby of accountability with the bathwater of social inequalities. Accountability may not always be an “*opiate*” (Cooper & Johnston 2012) : it can also change for real the social trajectories of some individuals.

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¹Our statistics mostly come from the work of the Porto Alegre NGO CIDADE (CIDADE 2003a; CIDADE 2003b) and are completed with the data available in “Observando o Orçamento Participativo” (Fedozzi 2007). The statistics are based on 1,593 questionnaires, which were distributed on a random basis to participants to the plenary assemblies of the PBPOA in 2002. Questionnaires had also been distributed between 1995 and 2002, which allows statistical comparisons upon PBPOA participants. These statistics are completed by a study of 46 questionnaires given to a sample of 92 councilors, which were answered between March and May 2003. The rigor of the NGO CIDADE is such that we think we can use its statistics. Of course, we deplore that we could not use more recent data. Yet, we do believe that the social determinants to become a councilor have remained the same over the years, all the more than the proportion of reelected councilors has become more and more important.

² Our ethnography and interviews took place in 2006, during an important election year for Brazil: the presidential elections as well as the partial elections of deputies and senators were taking place. Our interviews were run with past or present participatory councilors, who are the ones who succeeded in the difficult social operation of having a legitimate voice in the PBPOA. In their own words “*they participate more than other participants*”. The PT had been defeated 2 years before the interviews at the head of Porto Alegre and councilors were in a moment of reflexivity.

³ An extended table about the social profile of each of this councilors is available in (Cuenca Botey 2007, p.170 - 187). In order to depersonalize our interviewees, we name them as Councilor 1, 2, ..., 18

⁴ According to the International American Development Bank (2005, p.30-31) : « From the viewpoint of lower income citizens, the cost of attendance is significant in terms of both direct expenses : transport and opportunity costs. Participation rates understate the population reached. For every participant, there are at least five other persons among the family, neighbors, friends, fellow workers and association members, who cannot attend on that particular day. It is common practice for families and associations to send one or two members to represent the group at meetings and to take turns in attending. Hence, the High degree of coordinated action at the community level resulting in group representatives attending all the meetings to ensure that their concerns are heard and their demands included in the list of funding requests (...). Furthermore, those who get their projects funded in any one year do not show up the following year, figuring that the needs of others who did not get any funding will be given priority over whatever additional demand they may have. »

Graph 1 - The PBPOA cycle

