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Book Review of “Participação e Deliberação.  
Teoria Democrática e Experiências  
Institucionais no Brasil Contemporâneo” -  
English Version

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*Participação e Deliberação. Teoria Democrática e Experiências Institucionais no Brasil Contemporâneo.* By Vera Schattan P. Coelho e Marcos Nobre (Orgs.). São Paulo: Editora 34, 2004.

The editors of this volume present a series of essays on citizen participation and deliberation. The volume is divided in two parts. In the first, we find some theoretical approaches to the complex question of the importance of citizen engagement, participation and deliberation in democratic theory. In the second, there is a group of essays that describe and analyze a number of actual participative and deliberative experiences, predominantly in Brazil. Among them, is the *Orçamento Participativo* (deliberative local budget), started in Porto Alegre in 1989 and now with similar initiatives in more than 100 Brazilian municipalities; the local councils for the management of social policies, established by the constitution of 1988, and participatory experiences in the environment management and in economic and social regulation.

Despite the fact that several chapters are not original to the collection (something which is not always fully acknowledged), this book gathers and makes available in Portuguese a very informative set of experiences and approaches to the subject. Actually, the second part results in a more interesting read than the abstractions and references to authors like Habermas and Rawls in the first part of this book. The theories are good, but the angel is in the details.

Some of the essays presented here are already published in English, such as "Legitimacy and Economy in Deliberative Democracy", from John S. Dryzek (Political Theory, Vol. 29, No. 5, 2001); "Recipes for Public Spheres: Eight Institutional Design Choices and Their Consequences", by Archon Fung (Journal of Political Philosophy, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2003); and "Participatory Publics: Civil Society and New Institutions in Democratic Brazil", by Brian Wampler and Leonardo Avritzer (Comparative Politics, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2004).

The editors, as well as some of its authors, are researchers at the *Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento – CEBRAP* (Brazilian Centre for Analysis and Planning) ([www.cebrap.org.br](http://www.cebrap.org.br)), a partner of the Citizenship Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability, at the University of Sussex ([www.drc-citizenship.org](http://www.drc-citizenship.org)). Although this anthology has a decided regional focus, it maintains a sense of its place within a growing global consciousness of similar experiments and debates being held on the general subject of deliberative democracy.

This book should especially be read by anyone who wants to learn more about deliberative experiences within a fresh institutional approach, as Brazil has been able to develop in these past two decades. In this sense, other Portuguese speaking countries (from Timor, recognised as a state in 2002, to Portugal, with more than 850 years of history), have undoubtedly a great deal to learn with the path Brazil has been following. It would also be good if someone would publish this volume in English, so that the rest of the world would come to see Brazil's original and leading role in democratic philosophy and practice.

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