

Determinants of Successful Participatory Institutions in Brazil

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Abstract:

What enables civil society to sustain effective participatory institutions? Civil society is assumed to play an important role in enhancing social accountability in new democracies still lacking electoral accountability. Civil society in new democracies, however, has two divergent characteristics: actors controlled by the government and actors independent from the government. To examine the political outcomes produced by these two different aspects of civil society, I observe the workings of participatory institutions. I categorized strategies used by civil society as inside and outside strategies and examined the effectiveness of participatory institutions as a political outcome. Using original observational data collected in Brazil, I compared two National Public Policy Conferences, and attempted to identify the factors responsible for sustaining effective participatory institutions. In so doing, I demonstrate that social pressure produced by civil society serves to sustain effective participatory institutions based on social movement theories.

Introduction

I demonstrate that social pressure produced by civil society is crucial to sustain effective participatory institutions. Although civil society is assumed to play an important role in enhancing social accountability in new democracies, the assumption that civil society is always capable of criticizing government is not true. To define the main factor responsible for sustaining

effective participatory institutions, I examine the process of institutional change by using social movement theories as an analytical framework.

Despite the “Third Wave” of democratization that started in the late 1970s, maintaining the quality of democracy still remains a problem in new democracies. The most typical problem affecting the quality of democracy is the structural problem of social inequality. The role of civil society has attracted attention since the 1990’s, because political participation in civil society is capable of increasing social accountability (Peruzzotti and Smulovits 2006, Smulovitz and Peruzzotti 2000). Civil society is described as the realm of organized social life that is autonomous from the state (Diamond 1999: 221). In new democracies, however, civil society has divergent characteristics that are seen in the organizational structures of “controlled” civil society and social movements independent from the state. Although it is generally assumed that civil society is independent from government, this is not true in all cases. To clarify the political outcomes derived by these different organizational structures of civil society, I examined the interaction between institutions and actors by focusing on participatory institutions, which is one type of institution responsible for social accountability.

Participatory institutions were introduced in the late 1980s as a key facet of government in Brazil. They have increased social accountability by ensuring new channels for political participation. In this study, I compared two participatory institutions to examine how the strategies that civil society uses affected their political outcome. Specifically, this study addressed the following question: what enables civil society to sustain effective participatory institutions? To define the question, I divided the factors relating to civil society in the following way: influence of civil society inside the government, and influence of social pressure outside the government. I relied on social movement theories to examine the process of institutional change; I then analyzed how political opportunity structure, as well as social movement organizations, affected this institutional change. I argue that the role of civil society is to criticize governments and that this is crucial for enhancing social accountability in new democracies where civil

society has often been controlled by governments.

This paper is organized as follows. First, I define the problems facing new democracies, and demonstrate how civil society can overcome problems of representative democracy by reviewing theories of political accountability. Then, I illustrate this process of political accountability using the example of participatory institutions that developed in Brazil. In the following section, I examine the analytical framework that I employed, and I develop a hypothesis to address the research question. After this, I present the methodology I used to examine the hypothesis. Through a case study of two different participatory institutions in Brazil, I test my hypothesis by tracing the process of institutional change.

The Problems of Representative Democracy and Civil Society in Latin America

The “third wave” of democratization is said to have spread democratic regimes to countries all over the world (Huntington 1991). Many of these countries, however, have problems with the quality of their democracy. O’Donnell (1996, 1998) introduced the analytical framework of “accountability” that is helpful in understanding the problems of consolidating democracy. He argued that the state is required to increase its political accountability in order to establish a consolidated democracy from an authoritarian regime.

O’Donnell defined accountability as having two distinct dimensions. The first dimension is horizontal accountability, which ensures checks and balances between formal institutions of government. The second dimension is vertical accountability, which is a mechanism whereby citizens control the government through elections. Smulovitz and Peruzzotti (2000) further point out the existence of social accountability in vertical accountability, distinguishing it from electoral accountability. Social accountability works as a social control by civil society, which functions as a watchdog over governments. Based on these concepts of accountability, the problems in the electoral system found in new democracies prevent vertical accountability

by setting up personal relationships between candidates and regional bosses. Most citizens are isolated from these electoral relationships, and accordingly, cannot obtain political gains. As a consequence, the democratic system fails to increase electoral accountability. On the other hand, social accountability can enhance vertical accountability by setting up institutions composed of civil society actors. These alternative institutions, including an ombudsman system, a jury system, and participatory institutions, play an especially important role in deepening democracy in new democracies. In this sense, the role of civil society is to reinforce the democratic system.

Civil society, however, does not always behave as an actor independent from the state. As Hochstetler (2012) pointed out, democratization in Latin America brought about two contrasting effects: the emergence of cooperative professional NGOs that acted as functionaries of the state to deliver public service, and a strong social movement against the government through changes in the political opportunity structure. These opposing characteristics coexist in Latin America, because the process of developing civil society differed from that of western society, which was more bottom-up, and depended on a gradual accumulation of power through modernization that allowed citizens to acquire political and social rights. Civil society in Latin America, however, was legitimized by governments in a top-down process of democratization. Therefore, civil society remains fragmented and has been described as “controlled” civil society (Oxhorn 2003). With this seemingly controlled civil society, it is important to pay attention to the political outcomes that were brought about by these different characteristics. One of the direct political outcomes of “controlled” civil society is a reversal of their roles, which is to control the government through increased social accountability. Accordingly, I make an effort to observe the interaction between institutions and actors by looking at participatory institutions developed in Brazil.

Development of Participatory Institutions in Brazil

Brazil is one of the new democracies that arose from a preceding military

regime. When the 1988 constitution was ratified, it was expected that the introduction of the democratic system would increase the quality of the political culture. Despite these expectations, systematic changes did nothing to remove the problem of clientelism from the colonial era, because the electoral system allowed the political power of regional bosses to re-emerge (Ames 2002). On the other hand, the implementation of neo-liberal political reforms in dealing with the debt crisis in the early 1980s brought about serious inequality through heightened economic competition.¹ This resulted in an inequality of information due to differences in educational level, and resulted in underrepresentation in decision-making by the poor. Brazilian society became highly fragmented due to the problems of underrepresentation caused by clientelism and continued social inequality.

Despite these problems, Brazil experienced positive political development after the 1990s with the establishment of participatory institutions. These institutions, which developed along with the emergence of the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT) supported by grassroots social movements, changed the structure that was causing problems in vertical accountability. The party adopted a new system of governance, called participatory institutions, which enabled the inclusion of the low-income sector for political consideration. The first example of a participatory institution was participatory budgeting that was introduced in 1989 in Porto Alegre by the mayor of the city, who was from PT. In this system, citizens participated in the entire process of creating the city budget. Thus, institutions contributed to the better functioning of local governance by promoting social accountability.

Social changes in Brazil scaled up to the macro level when Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula, thereafter), one of the leaders of PT, won the presidency in 2003. The government promoted participatory governance at the national level. An example was the expansion of the National Public Policy Conferences (*Conferências Nacionais de Políticas Públicas*), which were created during the autocratic regime of Getúlio Dornelles Vargas (1930-45) to promote the quality of public policies. The conferences included representatives from the federal and local governments, the private sector,

and civil society. Representatives discussed specific issues and deliberation continued at the municipal, state, and national levels. Finally, they adopted public policy proposals, which the government was responsible for implementing. Although the system was restrained during the military regime, it improved dramatically under the PT government. The number of conferences increased to 82 with 40 themes, which include human rights, economy and development, social assistance, education, culture, and so on. The example of the National Conferences demonstrated the possibility for participatory institutions to be effective at the macro-scale (Pogrebinschi and Samuels 2014).

On the other hand, some studies of participatory institutions have pointed out limitations in their ability to affect the quality of democracy (e.g., Goldfrank 2011, Avritzer 2009). These studies demonstrated that the institutional design of participatory institutions was varied by political context; thus its establishment does not always offer an effective outcome. Participation can be top-down mobilization of citizens. The effectiveness of institutions includes two different aspects: the effects on the deliberation process and effects on the implementation process. The deliberation process is able to be measured by institutional design how much influence participants have in the deliberation process while the implementation process can be measured by how many proposals are realized in policies. I emphasize the importance of institutional design, because it varies in its ability to aggregate the voices of participants that defines the ability of civil society to control the government. In addition, previous studies evaluated institutional design as it was established; however the factor which may sustain effective institutions still needs to be clarified because institutional design may change over time. Accordingly, I examine institutional design as the dependent variable and investigate the factor which sustains effective participatory institutions.

Factors Explaining Changes of Participatory Institutions

I define the main factors that are accountable for maintaining effective

participatory institutions by relying on social movement theories, because the establishment of the institutions is an outcome of struggle over political power. How social movement groups attain political power has been examined by several scholars. The cause of social movements was formerly believed to be a division of social structure which promotes struggle between sectors. As Olson (1965) argues, however, these structural factors cannot explain how contentions existing in a society transformed to collective action. To define mobilization processes, approaches focusing on internal structure of actors as well as political opportunity structure emerged. In this study, I examine both political opportunity structure and the organizational structure of social movement groups, because the aim of this research is to define how different strategies of civil society influence participatory institutions.

Tarrow (1998: 76-77) defined the political opportunity structure as constant dimensions of the political environment, which is external to social movement organizations, based on whether it encouraged or discouraged people from using collective action. Political opportunity structure, however, does not offer sustainable resources for social movement to grow, because these external resources fluctuate and do not always empower them to move toward collective action (Tarrow 1998: 89). The opportunity structure easily shifts favor to the opposition sector over time. Although it is still necessary to take into account the opportunity structure to understand political context, the internal structure of social movement groups are the most important factors that sustain effective participatory institutions.

Alternative factors that may influence the effectiveness of participatory institutions are factors of civil society. Resource mobilizing approaches focus on the variety and sources of resources of social movement groups to explain the development of social movement (McCarthy and Zald 1977). On the other hand, framing theory focuses on the process of how social movement groups interpret and diffuse the meaning of the movement (Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford 1986). Based on these arguments, strategies that social movement groups use to obtain political power can be divided into two main categories: inside strategies and outside strategies (Levine, Fung

and Gastil 2005). For inside strategies, civil society mobilizes resources by cooperating with actors inside the government to access political power. Outside strategies require social pressure against the government that is so forceful that the government cannot ignore the demands of civil society. To do this, social movement groups need to frame the issue to attract strong attention from the society. For inside strategies to work, however, a coalitional relationship with a political party or influential politician is necessary. This is only possible when they and the social movement groups share a common objective. Therefore, the inside strategy depends strongly on the government and the influence offered by the inside strategy is not sustainable. Alternatively, the outside strategy depends only on the internal resources of social movement organizations, which catalyze civil society groups to politicize the issues and serve as a cause for collective action. Therefore, civil society acts autonomously and produces checks and balances with the state through strong social pressure. Accordingly, I formulate my hypothesis as follows:

H: The outside strategy that civil society employs determines the outcome of participatory institutions by sustaining the effectiveness of institutions.

In this analysis, by controlling other factors, I examined how an outside strategy affected the sustainability of effective participatory institutions.

Methodology

To examine my hypothesis, I used “the method of difference” by analyzing the National Cities Conference (*Conferência Nacional das Cidades*, CNC) and the National Environmental Conference (*Conferência Nacional do Meio Ambiente*, CNMA), which were both established in 2003. Strong political leaders, both ministers from PT, with deep connections to civil society groups that had a national network were instrumental in establishing these institutions. When the ministers were changed, however, the political opportunity structure that had been favorable to civil society shifted.

Accordingly, the National Cities Conference lost much of its effectiveness, while the National Environmental Conference sustained its effectiveness. In comparing these two cases, I controlled the following factors: political opportunity structure and the inside strategy of civil society. Through the analysis, I examined how an outside strategy sustained effective participatory institutions by tracing the process of institutional change. To do this, I conducted a qualitative analysis using data from interviews with relevant actors, official documents, and the conference data from the Institute of Applied Economic Research (*Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada*, IPEA) from 2003-2011.²

To examine the effectiveness of participatory institutions, I measured institutional design (dependent variable) in three ways. First, I categorized institutional design with two models based on the CLEAR model concept, a framework to evaluate participatory institutions.³ I categorized the institutional designs as a “policy-modifying model” and a “policy-building model”. A policy-modifying model is a system where participants at the conferences cannot create a new policy or system, but are only able to modify proposals offered by the government. A policy-building model enables them to create new plans for policy management. Accordingly, a policy-building model gives more authority to the participants over policy-making. To categorize institutional design, I observed the objective and the methodology employed in conferences. Second, I examined the number and the diversity of participants to define how inclusive the institutional design was. I assessed the effectiveness of institutions as high when the number and diversity of participants showed continued growth. Third, I regarded the management body of the institutions as an indicator to examine how much authority the institutions had over policy-making. I considered that if the management body came from the cabinet and, thus, was close to the central ministry, the institution held more influence than one that came from a section of a ministry.

To understand the change of political context over time, I set the political opportunity structure as the control variable. The indicators of this structure were political will and the influence of opposition parties. I

described political will as the motivation of ministers, and classified this will as strong when leaders had a leftist ideology and strong connections with civil society that encouraged civic engagement. I considered the influence of opposition parties to be strong when the number of seats that the opposition parties held in the national congress increased. Independent variables were measured as follows. The inside strategy was measured by the influence of civil society inside the government as an indicator. I considered this as strong when there were joint projects between the ministry and civil society, as well as influential posts held by representatives of civil society. The outside strategy was measured as social pressure. I considered it as strong when there were an increased number of demonstrations. I counted the number of news reports of demonstrations in the two leading Brazilian newspapers: *Folha de São Paulo* and *O Estado de São Paulo*.⁴

The Case of the National Cities Conference⁵

This section demonstrates how a lack of social pressure by civil society failed to sustain the effectiveness of a participatory institution in the case of the National Cities Conference. By comparing the effectiveness of the institution during three periods, I demonstrate how the declining influence of social pressure gradually eroded the effectiveness of the conference.

Background of Institutional Development (1980-2002)

In the background of the creation of the National Cities Conference, there was a cooperative relationship between the government and civil society. A key factor in understanding this cooperation was the emergence of the National Forum of Urban Reform (*Fórum Nacional de Reforma Urbana*, FNRU). FNRU is a platform of popular movements, NGOs, and specialists, which was established to promote urban reform in 1987. To realize their fundamental goal, which was to democratize city management, they engaged in activities that included increasing social pressure through demonstrations, and developing participatory management of cities. With their strong connections to PT, they encouraged joint projects, in which

both the government and the private sector were involved. This can be seen in the case of São Paulo, where the government established a policy for dwellings under the cooperative management of the government and forum members, from 1989 to 1992. This allowed participation of civil society in the political decision-making process. This alliance between the party and civil society expanded at the local level throughout Brazil (Serafim 2013). In addition to the cooperative relationship, there was also strong social pressure from civil society outside the government. This increase in social pressure led to the creation of legislative systems for managing cities at the national level in the decade that followed.

After democratization in 1986, the political opportunity structure was opened for challengers who attempted to enter the state. Social movement groups also benefited from this opportunity. Using a coalitional relationship with PT, as well as an increase of social pressure from outside against the government, participatory practice was introduced to democratize the political process for managing cities. In urban areas, which had influential political leaders such as mayors from PT, participatory institutions were implemented successfully. Accordingly, establishment of participatory institutions at the local level was one of the outcomes of a social movement to acquire political initiative over urban reform.

Establishment of the National Cities Conference (2003-2005)

The Ministry of Cities was established in 2003, when President Lula took office. The first Minister of Cities was Olívio Dutra, the former mayor of Porto Alegre, who was the first to introduce participatory budgeting. During the administration of Dutra, institutions for managing cities' policies greatly advanced with the cooperation of FNUR. The core strategy for this was participatory governance, which included the establishment of the National Cities Council (*Conselho Nacional das Cidades, ConCidade*) and the National Cities Conference. The primary aim of both institutions was to develop the National System for Urban Development (*Sistema Nacional de Desenvolvimento Urbano, SNDU*). Since then, management of cities has been open to the participation of civil society in the process of its

institutionalization. FNRU played a central role in this management, due to their strong connection with PT. In addition, the social movement that started in the 1990s achieved the establishment of the National System for Social Interest Housing (*Sistema Nacional de Habitação de Interesse Social*) with approval of the law No. 11. 124/2005.

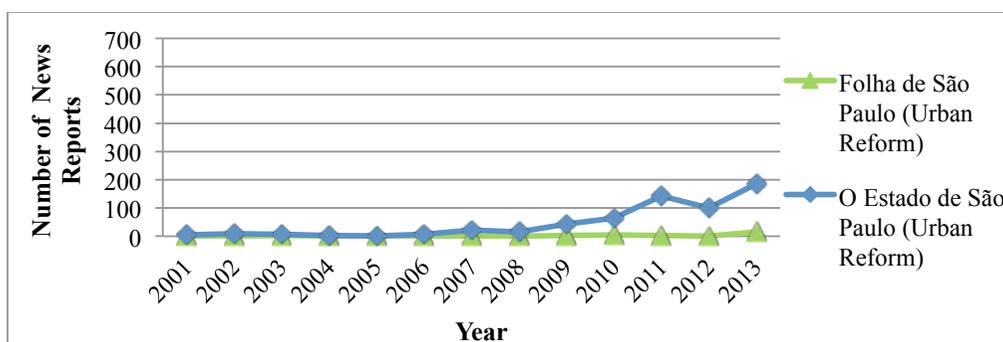
The objective of the first and second National Cities Conferences under Dutra was to develop national policies on management of cities. The conference was established to encourage popular discussion of cities' policies by holding discussions in public places. Accordingly, the ministry organized a number of smaller group discussions on the deliberation process. Therefore, I defined the institutional design in the first and second conferences as a policy-building model, which worked effectively to integrate the voice of participants. In addition, the management body of the conferences came from the Cabinet of the Ministry until the third conference. Thus, the institution had a strong influence on political decision-making. It is clear that the conference was effective from 2003 to 2005.

From a Policy-Building Model to a Policy-Modifying Model (2006-2013)

The political context changed dramatically in 2005, when news broke of a political scandal involving senators from PT, called the *Mensalão* scandal, a corruption case involving vote buying, which came to light on June 6, 2005. Subsequently, the leader of PT was discharged, and the performance of PT in congress declined significantly. After the election in 2006, the percentage of seats held by PT declined from a high of 17.7% in 2002 to 16%, and they became the second major party in the lower house.⁶ At about the same time, Dutra resigned his position for a gubernatorial run in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in 2006. Accordingly, Marcio Fortes from the Progressive Party (*Partido Progressista*, PP), one of the conservative parties in Brazil, took over as head of the Ministry of Cities. This transition brought radical change to the management of the ministry, as the minister prioritized economic development over democratic management. The participatory management encouraged under Dutra almost stopped, and the specialists from FNRU working on joint projects were laid off. Accordingly, the

influence of civil society diminished significantly. The importance of the participatory governance and the influence of civil society in the ministry also declined. Civil society groups were helpless to oppose these changes, because they depended for their resources on PT, and they were not able to develop collective action against the management of cities. Although the number of protests grew after 2009, this was not widely acknowledged by the mass media (Figure 1). Therefore, social pressure did not increase and they were unable to make changes to political management in the government.

Figure 1. Number of Protests for the Urban Reform (2001-2013)



Source: Author's own elaboration based on the number of news reports of protests on the website of *Folha de São Paulo*: <http://www.folha.uol.com.br/>. [Accessed: December 3, 2014] and *O Estado de São Paulo*: <http://www.estadao.com.br/>. [Accessed: December 3, 2014].

There were changes in the management of the conference. The objective of the conference was no longer stated clearly. Although the first and second conferences stated clearly that their objective was to construct the national cities' policies, the third to fifth conferences stressed only the process of dialogue between actors. Accordingly, the ministry became less accountable for the outcomes of the conferences. In addition, the methodology used in the conferences was merely to modify the proposals of the ministry. The ministry also started holding elections for members of ConCidade at the same time as the conference. Therefore, participants had to focus more on the result of the elections than on the deliberations. Thus, I classified the institutional design used after the third conference, as a policy-modifying

model. Furthermore, the management body responsible for the conference changed to ConCidade, merely a section of the ministry from the third conference onwards. Thus, the authority at the conferences was weakened. I concluded that the effectiveness of the participatory institutions declined after the third conference.

The Case of the National Environmental Conference

This section demonstrates how the social pressure produced by civil society sustained the effectiveness of a participatory institution in the case of the National Environmental Conference. By comparing the effectiveness of the conferences in three periods, I show how the increasing influence of social pressure sustained the effectiveness of the institutions.

Background of Institutional Development (1980-2002)

The background for development of participatory institutions over environmental issues included an open political opportunity structure due to growing democratization and international attention to environmental issues that strengthened after the Stockholm Conference in 1972. With this open opportunity structure, active environmental movements strongly encouraged the democratization and the institutionalization of environmental management by developing a network between the environmental activists, both inside and outside the government (Hochstetler and Keck 2007). This process was followed by the creation of a legislative system including the National System for the Environment (*Sistema Nacional do Meio Ambiente*, SISNAMA), and the National Environmental Council (*Conselho Nacional do Meio Ambiente*, CONAMA), both established in 1981. SISNAMA was the first national environmental policy and, in its institutional framework, it addressed a way to include a variety of sectors from the federal to the local level. On the other hand, CONAMA enabled non-state actors to participate in policy-making and the implementation process on environmental issues by holding discussions among various sectors. The environmental groups finally succeeded in

establishing the Ministry of Environment in 1995.

Environmental groups promoted democratization of the political process in environmental policies by empowering the government through participatory institutions, and through cooperative management in the local government. In this context, I concluded that establishment of these participatory institutions was an outcome of social movements to acquire political initiative over environmental issues.

Establishment of the National Environmental Conference (2003-2005)

When PT took over the government in 2003, Marina Silva, one of the most famous environmental activists in Brazil, became the Minister of Environment, and environmental management finally entered an advanced stage. Under Silva, the National Environmental Conference was established to extend the environmental discussion to all citizens. The objective for creating the conference was to encourage environmental discussion across all sectors, to advance SISNAMA by setting stricter guidelines, and to make proposals for additional environmental policies to consolidate environmental management throughout Brazil. When the conference was established, there was substantial political involvement stemming from the strong relationship between the government and civil society. These political ties became stronger when PT was voted in to lead the national government and when an influential environmental activist became the Minister of Environment. One of the direct consequences of this was the establishment of the National Environmental Conference.

The objective of the first and second National Environmental Conference under Silva stated clearly that their goal was to develop national environmental policy. On the other hand, the ministry organized a number of group discussions on formulating a deliberation process. Thus, I defined the institutional design of the first and second conferences as policy-building models where participants had a strong influence. In addition, the management body was the Cabinet of the Ministry in both the first and second conferences, which meant that the institution had a strong influence on political decision-making. Accordingly, the effectiveness of the National

Environmental Conference was high during 2003-2005.

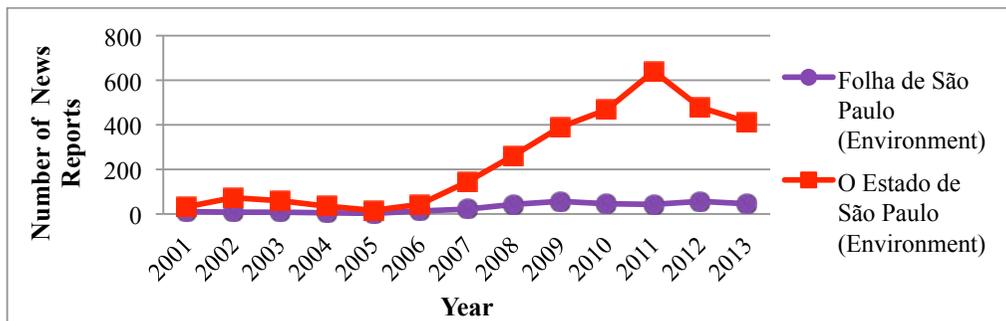
Sustaining a Policy-Building Model (2006-2013)

When Silva resigned as minister in 2008 and left PT to join the Green Party (*Partido Verde, PV*) in 2009, the political context of environmental issues changed. Carlos Minc one of the founders of the Green Party took over as the Minister of Environment. Thereafter, from when Dilma Rousseff came to power in 2010, Izabella Teixeira who was a bureaucrat and did not have a strong relationship with environmental groups as Silva, became the minister. At about the same time, due to the decline in the performance of PT in congress after the election in 2006, economic policies turned against environmentalists. When the Proposed Amendment to the Constitution No. 215 (*Proposta de Emenda à Constituição N° 215, PEC215*), which was an amendment to conservation areas, passed the senate in 2011, the conflict became clear. It was proposed that the borders of conservation areas that regulated the use of natural resources and protected the land of indigenous people be revised to expand the land available for use by industry. In addition, a license was granted in 2011 to construct the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Dam on the Xingu River, where a number of indigenous communities existed. Environmental groups and indigenous movements protested vehemently against these issues. In the background of these conflicts, there is a structural reform in the Ministry of Environment. Several environmental NGOs sent a manifest to criticize government's environmental management. By approving the Complementary law No. 140 in 2011, the authority of civil society over environmental management diminished in the process of reorganization of the executive branch of the ministry (Folha de São Paulo 2012). With the establishment of the National Tripartite Commission (*Comissão Tripartite Nacional*), only one of the members from CONAMA was allowed to participate in the decision-making process.

Reflecting this conflict, environmental groups, including the Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for Environment and Development (*Fórum Brasileiro de ONGs e Movimentos Sociais para o Meio Ambiente*

e o Desenvolvimento, FBOMS), announced plans to boycott the National Environmental Conference of 2013. Although some environmental NGOs did participate, the most influential groups with international connections refused to participate in protest against the way the conference was being managed. The reason behind their absence stemmed from the conflict between the environmental groups and the government.⁷In addition, social pressure against environmental policies continued to increase, because the environmental groups politicized issues over PEC215, and over Belo Monte. These protests caught the attention of society, because they effectively communicated the importance of these issues through the mass media. Their work culminated in wide-spread demonstrations throughout Brazil (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Number of Protests for the Environment (2001-2013)



Source: Author's own elaboration based on the number of news reports of protests on the website of *Folha de São Paulo*: <http://www.folha.uol.com.br/>. [Accessed: December 3, 2014] and *O Estado de São Paulo*: <http://www.estadao.com.br/>. [Accessed: December 3, 2014].

Despite these changes in political context, the effectiveness of institutions was sustained. The objective of the fourth conference was to implement and diffuse the National Policy for Solid Waste. The participants discussed how to implement the policy by proposing procedures (who and how to organize solid waste management) through a number of group discussions. Thus, I classified the institutional design to be a policy-building model, where participants had great influence over policy-making. In addition, the diversity of participants at the fourth conference was wider

than before, because the National Movement of Scavengers for Recyclable Materials (*Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis*) became one of the core actors. This enabled the conference to include many more participants from lower-income households. Thus, the number of participants kept increasing from the first to the fourth conference despite the refusal of NGOs with international connections to participate. The conference also retained its strong authority over environmental management, because the cabinet continued to be the management body. Therefore, I concluded that the effectiveness of the conference remained high until 2013.

Conclusion

In this study, I argued that social pressure produced by civil society in Brazil was crucial to sustain effective participatory institutions by observing the dynamic process of institutional change (Table1). As the case studies showed, participatory institutions do not always ensure increasing social accountability, because the effectiveness of institutions changes over time. This is because the political opportunity structure that is favorable to civil society shifts with changes in political context. This is especially true in new democracies where civil society is typically controlled by its government. Despite changes in political context, environmental groups succeeded in sustaining the effective participatory institutions in the case of the National Environmental Conference, because they were capable of politicizing the issues. Accordingly, the outside strategy of civil society was a key to sustain an effective institution. In this context, civil society played an important role in advancing political accountability by encouraging, establishing, and sustaining alternate channels for political participation. By becoming aware of these factors, I concluded that participatory institutions have the power to promote social accountability by producing checks and balances, only when civil society is strong enough and independent enough from the government. Otherwise, the effectiveness of institutions may be eroded easily with a change in political context.

Despite these findings, however, the following questions remain. First, because the focus of this study was on the sustainability of effective institutional design, further observation is necessary to see whether institutions will bring lasting, meaningful political implementation. Second, the question of how civil society groups that depends strongly on government can obtain resources remains unanswered. Third, additional details on the role of civil society are required due to the changes in political context on a larger scale with the emergence of continuous protests throughout Brazil, leading up to the Confederations Cup in 2013. This may indicate that political participation of civil society turned to an informal style rather than through participatory institutions (Abers 2013). The results of this study, however, imply that social pressure through wide-spread demonstrations is a factor that is responsible for sustaining the effective participatory institutions. To understand whether civil society in new democracies can enhance social accountability, further research is necessary.

Table 1. Summary of the Cases

	Variables	Indicators	CNC			CNMA		
			(1980-2002)	(2003-2005)	(2006-2013)	(1980-2002)	(2003-2005)	(2006-2013)
I V	Political Opportunity Structure	Political Will	Strong	Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong	Weak
		Influence of Opposition Parties	Relatively Weak	Relatively Weak	Relatively Strong	Relatively Weak	Relatively Weak	Relatively Strong
	Inside Strategy	Influence of Civil Society Inside the Government	Strong	Strong	Weak	Relatively Strong	Strong	Weak
	Outside Strategy	Social Pressure	Strong	Relatively Weak	Weak	Strong	Relatively Weak	Strong
D V	Effectiveness of Institution	Institutional Design	-	Policy-Building Model	Policy-Modifying Model	-	Policy-Building Model	Policy-Building Model
		Management Body	-	Cabinet	ConCidade	-	Cabinet	Cabinet
		Participants	-	N/D	N/D	-	Continued Growth	Continued Growth

Source: Author's own elaboration.

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NOTES

¹ Roberts (2002) described change in social structure by implementing neo-liberal policies as the “atomization” of society. This caused the emergence of neo-populism.

² Conference data and documents are available on the website of *IPEA*: <http://www.ipea.gov.br/participacao/>. [Accessed: December 3, 2014], *Conferência Nacional do Meio Ambiente*: <http://www.mma.gov.br/responsabilidade-socioambiental/conferencia-nacional-do-meio-ambiente>. [Accessed: June 12, 2014], and *Conselho das Cidades*: <http://www.cidades.gov.br/index.php/conferencia-das-cidades.html>. [Accessed: June 12, 2014].

³ C.L.E.A.R. are five criteria to evaluate institutions: C an do – that is, have the resources and knowledge to participate; L ike to – that is, have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation; E nabled to – that is, are provided with the opportunity for participation; A sked to – that is, are mobilized by official bodies or voluntary groups; R esponded to – that is, see evidence that their views have been considered (Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2006: 286).

⁴ *Folha de São Paulo* and *O Estado de São Paulo* are the most influential newspapers in Brazil. *Folha de São Paulo* is usually described as liberal, and *O Estado de São Paulo* is described as conservative. I counted the numbers of news reports that includes the words: “Manifestação (demonstration)” and “Reforma Urbana (Urban Reform)”, or “Meio Ambiente (Environment).”

⁵ These case studies are elaborated based on the information from a number of interviews conducted with the organizers and participants of the National Conferences.

⁶ Data of the elections are available on the website of *Câmara dos Deputados*: <http://www2.camara.leg.br/>. [Accessed: January 28, 2015].

⁷ From an interview with the chief executive of public policy department of the international NGO (Brasília, November 19, 2013).

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