

Participatory Democracy? Exploring Peru's Efforts to Engage Civil Society in Local Governance

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ABSTRACT

As institutions are created to engage citizens and civil society organizations more directly, who participates, and what effect does participation have? This article explores two of Peru's participatory institutions, the Regional Coordination Councils and the participatory budgets, created in 2002. Specifically it asks, once these institutions are set up, do organizations participate in them? and what effect does this participation have on the organizations? The data show that the participatory processes in Peru are including new voices in decisionmaking, but this inclusion has limits. Limited inclusion has, in turn, led to limited changes specifically in nongovernmental organizations. As a result, the democratizing potential of the participatory institutions is evident yet not fully realized.

As institutions are created around Latin America to engage citizens and civil society organizations directly, who participates? What effect does this participation have? Increasingly, local, regional, and national governments around Latin America are designing new institutions that allow citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs) to participate directly in policy decisionmaking with voice and vote. Participatory institutions (or PIs), such as development councils, participatory performance monitoring, and participatory budgets, have been implemented around the region in countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Peru.¹ Often, these institutions are created to complement existing representative democratic institutions that are failing to meet the needs and demands of citizens. Reformers hope to increase transparency and accountability, as well as to encourage a more active and engaged civil society. However, we do not yet know how “participatory” these institutions really are.

As a result of this trend, there is a growing scholarly literature on participatory governance. Yet the nature of participation remains understudied, and several questions remain unanswered. Who is invited and who comes to the meetings? Do design decisions about what kinds of actors are invited to participate—civil society organizations or individual citizens—affect the nature of participation? Do participants represent the same powerful groups that dominate political decisions, or are

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new actors engaged in these processes? How does participation change the actors involved?

This article explores the nature and impact of one particular design option: the decision to invite representatives from CSOs, and not individual citizens, to participate in subnational decisionmaking. CSOs are part of the organizational sphere that is distinct from both market and state and includes a range of associational actors, such as religious groups, grassroots organizations, professional associations, social movements, labor unions, and nongovernmental organizations. This article discusses two subnational institutions in Peru, Regional Coordination Councils and the participatory budget process, and applies those questions to these two settings.

By documenting the case of Peru, the article adds a new case to the literature on participation and pushes us to think about the voices that are truly represented in participatory democratic experiments in Latin America.

Examining these issues allows us to increase our understanding of the effect of participatory institutions on democratizing political systems. Can they help bridge the gap between weak or broken representative institutions, such as political parties, elections, and different branches of government, and the disenfranchised public? Can PIs engage those who have been excluded from the political system? Or do they give more power to the actors who already have political power in subnational politics? Does the decision to invite CSOs change the nature of participation? Does participation, in turn, change the agents who commit to attending meetings and workshops year after year? These questions are important to explore because if PIs do effectively engage previously disempowered actors, and if that engagement leads to changes in the participants, then we have an indicator that PIs do affect some aspects of democratic governance at the subnational level.

PERU'S CORPORATE PARTICIPATORY INSTITUTIONS

In 2002, Peru's Congress passed a sweeping constitutional reform (Law 27680) that strengthened regional (or state), provincial (or county), and district (or municipal) governments and created several institutions that directly engage civil society. The reform emerged due to a general consensus among political elites that drastic measures were needed to attack the problems that had plagued the country in the second half of the twentieth century and were exacerbated by the decadelong rule of Alberto Fujimori. These problems included centralized rule, widespread corruption, lack of political accountability, manipulation of subnational authorities, lack of transparency of public budgets, and distant relations between the state and society. The reform stressed and even mandated participation, setting up several institutions that formalized civil society participation at the regional and local levels, including a mandatory participatory budget process and councils that engaged civil society.²

Generally, policymakers can design participatory institutions based on one of two models: the individual model, which opens up spaces for individual citizens to participate; and the corporate model, in which participants represent civil society organizations (World Bank 2008). This aspect of the design is codified in national legislation

or local ordinances. Peru opted for the corporate model. Although this model is relatively common, little has been written about its inclusiveness.

The design decision to engage civil society, as opposed to an open call to all citizens, was not entirely new to Peruvians. During Peru's very brief experience with decentralization in the late 1980s (cut short by Fujimori's self-coup in 1992), regional assemblies (akin to state legislatures) included elected members from civil society.³ The regional assembly design, in turn, had been influenced by the corporatist structures that had been implemented in Peru during its military regime (1973–89) and had gained popularity in other Latin American countries during the 1970s.⁴ Thus, the decision to invite CSOs to participate in PIs as part of the 2002 reform was based on an organizational logic that can be traced back to the 1970s in this country.

Experiments with participatory institutions were not new in Peru, either. During the early 1990s, several cities had experimented with new ways to directly engage citizens in local planning. For example, in Ilo, a port town in the south of Peru, with the direction of CSOs and local leftist leaders, participatory planning and budgeting took off in the late 1990s.⁵ In Villa El Salvador, a shantytown outside of Lima, elected leaders from the left began to undertake participatory planning in the early 1980s.⁶ Thus, by the time the decentralization reform was passed, several Peruvian cities had experience with participatory planning instruments.

What kinds of organizations might participate in these institutions? In Peru, three types of organizations are typically active in subnational politics: social organizations, professional organizations, and nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs (Beaumont 2005). These organizations would be expected to participate in PIs like the participatory budget and the Regional Coordination Councils. The NGOs are not-for-profit organizations with a regional presence. While they generally have economic and technical ties to national, Lima-based NGOs, they also receive their own funding and implement their own projects. Professional organizations are generally regional consortiums of professionals (e.g., lawyers, accountants, engineers).

The social organizations tend to represent the sectors that are most active at the regional level, such as laborers, farmers, campesinos, and citizen defense patrols. They have a regional structure and hierarchy (with members and offices at the provincial and district levels) and formal channels through which they consult members (such as regular meetings and elections). Several kinds of women's organizations exist also, such as those that help with family nutrition—the “glass of milk” organizations and soup kitchens—as well as those that work in the area of human rights.

While these are the most common kinds of organizations at the subnational level, it is impossible to know how strong their ties are to their members or to the more general population. In other words, we do not know if they are acting as true “representatives” of a broader number of constituents. The underlying assumption behind the decision to engage civil society and not individuals is that these CSOs act as intermediaries between government and the broader population. Yet data are not available about the representative nature of Peruvian CSOs. At this point, with the data that exist, we can study only who attends meetings, what kinds of organizations are represented, and the impact of participation on organizations.⁷

Participatory Budgets and Regional Coordination Councils

The two institutions explored in this article empower civil society organizations to participate formally in several decisionmaking processes in the regional governments. Both processes are codified in national law. The Participatory Budget Law (Law 28056), passed in 2004, dictates that the capital investment costs of each regional, provincial, and local budget must be developed with civil society input.⁸ Following a series of steps developed by the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), subnational governments must demonstrate that they have complied with this process in order to receive their annual budgets. A recent report by the World Bank (2010, 8) estimates that in 2007, 36 percent of subnational budgets (an estimated US\$393 million) was debated in the participatory budget process.

The original participatory budget law outlined eight phases that occurred over the course of the year, including a call for participation; registration of participants; a training period for participants, called “participatory agents” or PAs; the formation of a technical team; and several meetings during which participating agents would prioritize and vote on actual regional investment projects. The final phase consisted of setting up an oversight committee, made up of civil society organizations, to monitor regional spending and progress on prioritized projects. In 2009, the Peruvian government reformed the original Participatory Budget Law to reduce these eight steps to four.⁹ Law 29298 outlines the phases:

1. Preparation, or identifying, registering, and training participating agents.
2. Concertation. During this phase, the participating agents meet to discuss the region’s development plan and prioritize the “themes” of projects that should be funded in the new budget. This discussion should be based on a formal development plan. The technical team then evaluates each proposed project and, based on the agreed-on priorities, recommends the projects that should be funded.¹⁰
3. Coordination among the different levels of government, which consists of meetings between the regional president and the local mayors to make sure that spending is coordinated, sustainable, and has regional impact.
4. Formalization of investment projects, a list of which is then presented to the Regional Coordination Council and Regional Council for approval.

The participatory budget process gives formal voice and vote to participating agents from civil society organizations. In practice, civil society actors, as participatory agents, vote on a list of projects to fund through subnational governments at budget meetings, which are led by the regional president. Votes are generally taken through a show of hands or a simple written ballot. Once a list is approved in the final participatory budget meeting, the subnational executive (the regional president or local mayor) sends the list of projects to his or her Regional (or Local) Council, similar to a legislative body, to approve. The final list is then sent to the Ministry of Economy and Finance, which evaluates technical viability. The MEF sends a final budget to Congress to approve as part of the national budget process.¹¹ While civil society participation is an important part of the process, it is only one part of a long and complicated budget process that involves elected regional authorities and cen-

tral government officials, all of whom can legally change the final list of projects that leaves the final participatory budget meeting.¹²

Who can participate in this process at the subnational level? Participating agents are defined as representatives from civil society, members of the Regional Coordination Council, and government officials. Organizations should register for the process in advance, assuming that they meet certain criteria. The national law allows each regional, provincial, or district government to determine the registration process for civil society organizations and codify it in a local ordinance. As such, registration criteria vary around the country. Generally it is common to mandate that an agent representing a CSO should have legal status and work in the entire region, province, or district, not merely representing one city or town.¹³ Some governments are relatively flexible about the criteria in order to allow interested parties to participate.

Regional Coordination Councils (*Consejos de Coordinación Regional*, or CCRs) have opened up a different kind of formal space for civil society organizations to participate in regional politics.¹⁴ They are made up of the popularly elected mayors from the provinces of each region (60 percent of the CCR membership) and representatives from registered civil society organizations (40 percent of the membership), who are elected in a special election open to qualified civil society organizations.¹⁵ The civil society representatives for the CCRs are elected every two years. CSOs must register in advance to participate in the CCR election and, unlike the participatory budget, registration criteria are set in national law. Only civil society organizations that have legal status and can demonstrate a minimum of three years' existence can participate. Law 27902, the national law that set up the CCRs, states that the following kinds of organizations should participate in the elections: agricultural organizations, business and professional associations, labor unions, neighborhood groups, universities, churches, indigenous or campesino organizations, roundtables, and womens' and youth groups.

The head of the region, the regional president, must consult with the Regional Coordination Council about regional strategic development plans and the annual budget. Thus, the council usually meets twice a year to formally approve documents. Because the official role of this institution is consultative—meaning that its decisions are not binding—the CCRs have not emerged as very powerful actors at the subnational level. One problem is that many mayors do not believe that the councils are important, due to their weak powers, and fail to attend meetings. Although they do not play a very active role in regional politics, the CCRs do engage in the participatory budget process, and in some regions they are consulted more regularly. Thus, many civil society actors do register for the CCR elections. For that reason, civil society participation in the CCRs also provides an opportunity to explore inclusion in Peruvian PIs.

Many aspects of the decentralization reform have been criticized.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the participatory aspects, especially the participatory budget, have been singled out as quite successful.¹⁷ In a 2010 evaluation, a USAID-funded project that works to strengthen subnational governments, called PRODES, cites interviewees as saying, “without participation, there is no decentralization” (PRODES 2010, 50). In

my own interviews, experts on decentralization often referred to the PIs as institutions that they fully expect to continue. Although documents and interviewees note several problems with the PIs, these are most often posed as challenges that need to be addressed; few would argue that Peru should shut down these new channels of participation.¹⁸

Furthermore, to date, no national politician has questioned the participatory aspects of the decentralization reform. Since the 2002 reform was passed, three presidents have led the country: Alejandro Toledo, Alan García, and currently Ollanta Humala. Although the three presidents differ in many ways, they have not tried to dismantle the regional and local institutions discussed in this article or reverse the decentralization efforts. Given the current president's stated desire to mix representative and participatory democracy as well as to continue decentralization efforts, we should expect some national commitment to these institutions to continue.

BRIDGING THE GAP? THE ROLE OF INTERMEDIATE ACTORS

A growing group of scholars and policymakers stress the need for new channels of participation, like Peru's CCRs and participatory budget, in places where representative democratic institutions are failing to meet citizen demands (Avritzer 2002, 2007; Barber 1984; Fung and Wright 2003b; Pateman 1970). Donor agencies are also advocating new venues for citizen participation, arguing that governments need to be accountable to constituents beyond elections.¹⁹ In response to this call, there is a large and growing body of literature about the emergence of participatory experiments around the world. This article contributes to two strands of this research.

Who Participates?

The question of who actually participates in these meetings, workshops, and other forums is an important one. As Enrique Peruzzotti and Andrew Selee argue in their work on innovative institutions in Latin America, one way that PIs can "improve representative democracy" is to "level the playing field and ensure the inclusion of previously excluded" actors (2009, 5). Archon Fung notes that the success of these efforts "depend[s] upon the character of actual participation.... Outcomes depend not only upon the presence of citizens in the aggregate, but also on the representativeness of those who choose to participate" (2004, 28).²⁰ In other words, who is invited and who attends matters.

Several studies document the actual participants in similar institutions, the majority of which focus on Brazil. Brazil's experience with participatory budgeting began in Porto Alegre in 1989 when the Workers' Party decided to allow citizens to participate in discussions about how to spend scarce municipal resources. The experience proved successful, and over time, participatory budgeting spread to several other cities in Brazil. The Brazilian design invites individual citizens to participate

on the basis of territorial criteria (e.g., neighborhood groups), and these citizens then elect delegates to represent them in PB meetings.²¹

A clear finding from the Porto Alegre case is that when measured in quantitative terms, participation in the budget process is significant and relatively inclusive. The World Bank estimates that “19.8 percent of Porto Alegre residents had participated in the [participatory budget] at some point of their lives” from 1990 to 2006 (2008, 22–23). Additional Brazilian cities, such as Belo Horizonte and São Paulo, also attract large numbers of participants annually (see Wampler and Avritzer 2004; Wampler 2007c). In Belo Horizonte, 15,216 participants attended budget meetings in 1994; this number almost doubled by 2000, when 31,369 participated (Wampler and Avritzer 2004, 302). In São Paulo, 34,000 participants attended meetings in 2001 (the first year of the budget process), a number that increased to 80,000 by 2003 (Wampler 2007c: 33).

Documentation on Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte, and Betim demonstrates that women are participating in both meetings and leadership positions in the same numbers as men (Abers 2000; Goldfrank 2011; Nylen 2002; Wampler 2007a).²² Married women participate in fewer numbers than their single counterparts, probably due to “the late evening time of the meetings, childcare obligations, and the perception that the participatory budget does not provide a space for the discussion of gender issues” (World Bank 2008, 24). The data also suggest that the poor are well represented in the Brazilian participatory budget but the extremely poor are not (Abers 2000; Nylen 2002). According to the World Bank (2008, 23), “[participatory budget] participants tend to come from lower-income households, be older, and have low to medium levels of education.” Very little is known about other aspects of participants, such as race or ethnicity; however, Baiocchi (2003b, 53) notes that “there is no real evidence of lack of parity on racial grounds.” Because of the participatory budget’s success in attracting low-income participants around Brazil, Brian Wampler notes that it is successfully including actors “who have long been marginalized from policymaking venues” (Wampler 2007a, 74; see also Baiocchi et al. 2011, chap. 4).

A second case that has been documented in terms of actual participants, albeit to a lesser extent, is the participatory village councils, called *gram panchayats*, in the villages of India. One study of village meetings in four Indian states finds that while a “tiny fraction of the village population” attends, citizens who are illiterate, landless, poor, or from the lowest castes are “more likely to attend” (Rao and Sanyal 2010, 155). Women make up about one-third of the attendees in the 20 meetings that the authors document. Isaac and Heller document the case of Kerala, India, where the Left Democratic Front took the process further and began to engage citizens in development planning in 1996. The first year, “over two million people participated ... representing 11.4 percent of the voting population” (2003, 102). It is not clear if women or the extreme poor participated in equal numbers, but Heller argues that “subordinate group engagement has certainly increased” (2001, 142). Thus, in India, the process, also open to all citizens, has engaged a diverse and numerous group of actors. In contrast to that of Brazil, the Indian experience has

not achieved gender parity or engaged the most disadvantaged groups, such as the lowest castes.

Beyond these two cases, which invite individuals, we know very little about inclusion. The corporate model of PIs is rarely documented. Two potentially interesting cases of participatory institutions that invite civil society actors, in addition to the Peruvian case, are the participatory decentralization program in Montevideo, Uruguay, and health councils in Brazil (see Goldfrank 2011; Avritzer 2009, respectively).²³ We do not yet have comprehensive data on the number and background of the participants in these institutions, which would allow us to determine how inclusive they actually are. Thus, an important question remains: when civil society actors are invited to the forum, who benefits and who is left out?

Effects of Participation

Another question that is garnering scholarly attention is whether PI participation changes the participants or the sociopolitical context around them. While much of the early literature on PIs posited several, mostly beneficial effects, ranging from an increase in accountability to strengthened democratic governance, few studies could link these assertions to sound empirics. This is changing, and research has identified at least two kinds of outcomes.

The first is changes in individual participants, captured mostly through participant surveys. For example, PI participation has been shown to change respondents' attitudes about their political efficacy (Wampler 2007b), strengthen participants' debate and mobilization skills (Baiocchi 2005), and increase citizens' interest and trust in government institutions (Moehler 2008). World Bank research on the participatory budget experience in Porto Alegre suggests that PIs can positively affect citizens' perceptions about democratic governance as well (World Bank 2008).

The second kind of outcome, broader sociopolitical changes, has also been attributed to PIs.²⁴ In Brazil, some studies have credited PIs with changing the nature of associationalism. According to Rebecca Abers (1998, 529), participatory budgeting "led to mobilization in poor neighborhoods where previously residents had little or no experience with collective action." Gianpaolo Baiocchi shows that the number of neighborhood associations almost doubled from 1990 to 2000 and that the participatory budget "deeply altered the fabric of associational life in Porto Alegre" (Baiocchi 2005, 42). Others argue that PIs improve deliberation, which can then improve democracy (Avritzer 2002; Baiocchi 2003a). Baiocchi's ethnographic data show that in two Brazilian districts, the participatory budget fostered the kind of debate and discussion that can promote consensus and empowerment (2003a). The participatory budget process has also been accompanied by a "decline in contentious activity, such as protests, petitions, and land occupations" (Baiocchi 2005, 44).

Scholars are careful to point out that not all effects of PIs are beneficial. In Uganda, if negative information was disseminated to participants in constitution-making forums, distrust in the process and institutions in general ensued. Selee

(2009) documents strengthened clientelistic networks between citizens and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Chilpancingo, Mexico. And some have argued that participatory institutions have increased social conflict in Bolivia (Laserna 2009; Laserna et al. 2005).

While the literature to date suggests that PIs have the potential to accomplish these changes, very little is known about the effect that participation might have on organizations and not just individuals. Studying Peru helps us better to understand this kind of effect because Peruvians designed the PIs to engage civil society organizations and not citizens.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This article presents quantitative and qualitative data on the nature of participation in Peru's participatory budget and Regional Coordination Councils. It focuses on these two institutions because they were the first to be set up around the country and thus have been up and running for the longest period of time.²⁵ Much of the analysis is narrowed to the regional level because this level has the most accurate data for the longest period of time. Data were gathered during visits to Peru in 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2010, as well as through published documents and reports.

The quantitative data on regional participation in the participatory budget come from the Peruvian government's online database, hosted by the MEF, which includes data on the participatory budgetmaking processes that contributed to the national budgets from 2008 to 2012.²⁶ This study documents the number and kind of participants in the participatory budgets in 24 of Peru's 25 regions.²⁷ Qualitative data about the effects of participation on organizations were gathered in interviews with representatives from NGOs, professional associations, and social organizations who attended the participatory budget process and Regional Coordination Council meetings in 2004 and 2005 in six regions of Peru.²⁸

EXPLORING PARTICIPATION

Are civil society organizations engaged in these two Peruvian participatory institutions? Scholars frequently lament that historically, elite actors have dominated Peruvian politics. Women, the rural poor, the indigenous, youth, and Afro-Peruvians tend to have less powerful voices in the political system. Do these new means of channeling participation effectively engage these traditionally disempowered voices? To better understand participation, we can explore three indicators: the number of participating agents that attend meetings; the kind of organizations they represent; and the demographic background of participants.

Number of Participants

By documenting the number of participants, we can better determine if the PIs effectively engage civil society in decisionmaking. The information we have on PI participation in Peru suggests that participation is increasing and significant. While information is limited on CCRs, my own research on six regions from 2003 to 2007 documents a total of 225 organizations registering for regional CCR elections in 2003.²⁹ That number increased to 380 for the 2005 CCR elections (McNulty 2011). It is not possible to know what kinds of organizations participated in all of these elections or if these organizations are representative of regional civil society. We can merely state that the number of organizations that registered to participate did increase in these six regions from 2003 to 2005.

The participatory budget process provides much richer data on the nature of participation over time. The World Bank, which has done the most recent and most reputable study of the process at all levels of government, estimates that 150,000 people participate in the nationwide process on an annual basis (2010, 6). The bank's studies find that from 2005 to 2009, the average number of participants in a given municipal, provincial, or regional process has increased. The average number of participants in a meeting in 2005 was 41; it grew to 82 in 2009 (World Bank 2010, 42–43). My interviewees consistently responded that “hundreds of thousands” have participated in the process around the country since 2004.

Culled from the government's database, table 1 provides disaggregated data on the number of PAs that participated in making regional budgets from 2008 to 2012 and the percentage of those PAs that represented civil society organizations and not government officials. Due to the sheer number of provinces (195) and districts (1,838), and also because data are often missing for these levels of government in the database, the regional level provides the most reliable data. At this level, agent participation increased from 2,592 in 2008 to 3,596 in the 2009 process. Participation then declined to 3,129 in 2010 and 2,818 during the 2011 process. More recently, in 2012, it increased again to 3,213. It is interesting that while the actual number of agents has increased and declined over the years, the percentage that represents civil society organizations has remained in a similar range (57–59 percent) since 2009. This suggests that CSOs and government representatives are deciding not to attend at equal rates.

The decline in the number of participants in 2010 and 2011 garnered attention in Peru. Some observers argued that PAs were frustrated with the process and lost interest in it. For example, in its rapid evaluation, PRODES writes that “while the relevance of the participatory budget is undeniable, it is the mechanism that probably generates the highest expectations in participants, and at the same time produces more frustration” (PRODES 2010, 38). This is especially true when regional authorities do not actually fund the projects that are sent to them after the participatory budget process is finalized. However, the finding that CSOs and government officials are not attending at equal rates leads one to view the decline more skeptically. Something else could be at work.

Table 1. Regional Data on Participating Agents

Budget year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of PAs	2,592	3,596	3,129	2,818	3,213
Percent of PAs representing CSOs (percentage of total PAs)	63	59	59	58	57

Notes: 2008 budget data are available for 21 regions; the remaining years include data for all 24 regions. The increase in numbers from 2008 and 2009 is not the result of the addition of the 24th region. The number of participants in each region increases over time.

Source: Author's analysis of data from MEF n.d.

Comparing the numbers with the successful case of Porto Alegre is instructive. Household survey data from Porto Alegre document that

participation grew from 628 people in 1990 to over 6,000 in 1992.... From 1993 to 1996, the number of participants stabilized at around 7,000, before a new wave of expansion started in 1997, reaching an apex of 17,000 in 2002. Since 2002, participation has fallen to the levels of 1997, declining to 11,500 in 2006. (World Bank 2008, 23)

As of 2008, the number of participants in this annual process had “stabilized at around 11,000 participants per year” (World Bank 2008, 22). Thus, participation in Porto Alegre increased, then slowly settled into a relatively fixed number. With more time, we might see the number of participants in Peru settling into a stable pattern as well.

We should also consider the levels of participation in light of what scholars of participatory institutions call “costs of participation.” These costs include (but are not limited to) transportation, lodging, and meals, as well as time lost from other activities. An average meeting or workshop can take several hours or even a day, which takes time away from work and other duties, such as caring for children or other family members. CSOs face these costs disproportionately in the regional budget process because the government does not pay for their travel or a daily honorarium for attending meetings (unlike the government employees). CSOs from cities outside the capital, where most meetings are held, face steeper costs of travel, which can take days.

The World Bank has quantified the actual costs for a Peruvian rural dweller who participates in the entire budget process as approximately US\$195, or 95 percent of a monthly salary at minimum wage (World Bank 2010, 47). Furthermore, individual representatives of an organization may not attend, as Goldfrank (2011, 30) notes, due to “fear of public speaking” or “doubts about the usefulness of their input.” In Peru, nevertheless, CSOs are still going to meetings in large numbers in spite of these challenges.

Another aspect of this process to explore is CSO representation on the technical team. As noted earlier, each year the government selects a technical team, made up of

government officials and CSOs, to provide assistance as the process unfolds. According to a national organization that monitors the PB process, the *Mesa de Concertación para la Lucha Contra la Pobreza* (Roundtable Against Poverty, or MCLCP), “the technical team is the actor in charge of providing technical support to the actual participatory budget activities...and is made up of actors with a certain level of experience in planning” (MCLCP 2010, 9). Since the legal changes in the process in 2009, the technical team’s role has taken on greater importance, as it now recommends a short list of projects to be debated in the more open forum (whereas it used to simply review project proposals to make sure they were complete enough to be debated).

Our best data on this part of the process suggest that CSOs are underrepresented in this step of the process. When analyzing the make-up of the teams in 15 regions in both 2007 and 2009, the MCLCP finds that regional government officials made up 70 percent of the technical team members in 2007 and 79.19 percent in 2009 (MCLCP 2010, 4). Thus, fewer CSOs are invited to participate in this aspect of the process than in others.

In sum, CSO participation in regional, district, and provincial participatory processes is significant when measured in terms of number of participants. For example, available data on the CCRs show that more CSOs participated in the CCR election process in 2005 than in 2003. Furthermore, the number of organizations attending the participatory budget meetings at the regional level is large, and could be rising again after a three-year decline. The percentage of CSOs participating every year has stayed relatively stable, thereby demonstrating a commitment on behalf of regional civil society actors to become part of the process. On the other hand, CSOs are underrepresented on the technical team. This is an important void because this team currently makes decisions about the projects that will be debated in the larger forums.

Kinds of Organizations

What kinds of organizations are sending their representatives to these meetings? Are the PIs including marginalized voices? While we do not have good national data for CCR meetings and elections, the World Bank and the MCLCP have documented the kinds of organizations that participate in the participatory budget. In an evaluation of the 2009 participatory budget process in 15 regions, the MCLCP documents that the majority, 61 percent, of the CSOs that attended PB meetings represent social organizations, such as youth, neighborhood, and campesino groups (MCLCP 2010, 16).³⁰ The World Bank report echoes this finding: “it is possible to determine that the majority of participants represent social organizations, those that are closest to the poor and represent their interests” (2010, 8). These social organizations present 56 percent of the projects to be debated as well (World Bank 2010, 43). This has led the World Bank to conclude that “the participatory processes are socially inclusive, meaning they include the groups that are traditionally poor and excluded” (2010, 42). Furthermore, “participating agents in the participatory budget prioritize investment projects in social infrastructure and those that are oriented to serve the needs of the poorest” (World Bank 2010, 8).

When we look more carefully at the kinds of organizations that make up the two teams that are involved in the process, the technical teams (made up of government and civil society representatives) and oversight committees (made up solely of CSOs), slightly more nuanced findings emerge. On the one hand, the oversight committee—elected by PAs each year at the regional workshop and tasked with monitoring the implementation of the budget that is passed during that year—has a large percentage of social organizations, much like the general meetings discussed above. According to the MCLCP study of 15 regions, 44 percent of the organizations on the technical teams represent social organizations (MCLCP 2010, 26).

On the other hand, the majority of the CSOs that participate in the technical teams in these same regions are nongovernmental organizations (MCLCP 2010, 5). These organizations are probably invited due to their technical expertise; most are staffed by educated professionals with some technical background in local development. The large number of NGOs, combined with the finding noted earlier about the lack of CSOs in general, points to one limitation in the nature of participation in the PB process. The technical expertise and some of the most important decisions are concentrated primarily in the hands of NGO professionals and government officials. More important, NGOs are not membership-based organizations. Therefore, they do not need to report to or represent a specific constituency. While this does not indicate that the PBs are captured by regional elites, this limited participation of the broader CSO population constrains the nature of participation.

In sum, social organizations do seem to be participating in strong numbers in general meetings and the oversight committees. This has led some observers to conclude that “the process tends toward inclusion” (World Bank 2010, 44; see also Arroyo and Irigoyen 2005). However, participation of CSOs, particularly social organizations, on the technical team is more limited. This ultimately restricts the decisionmaking power of membership-based organizations.

Limited Inclusion

Do individual actors who tend to be less represented in politics, such as women, youth, the rural poor, and other minority groups, participate in Peruvian PIs? Most aspects of the participants’ demographics in Peru are not well documented. The best data document the participants’ gender, which can be used as a proxy indicator for the extent to which other less powerful actors are effectively engaged in these new institutions.

When documenting the participation by women at the 2009 regional, provincial, and district levels, the World Bank (2010, 47) finds that “women represent only 32 percent of the participating agents, 26 percent of the members of the oversight committees, and merely 20 percent of the technical teams.” Table 2 shows a very slow increase of the percentage of women who attend regional PB meetings, peaking at 30 percent in 2011 and declining to 22 percent in the 2012 process.

Furthermore, only 2 to 3 percent of the PAs that come to meetings officially represent women’s organizations. Women are also not equally represented on the

Table 2. Regional Data on Women's Participation

Budget year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of PAs	2,592	3,596	3,129	2,818	3,213
Percent female	27	28	29	30	22
Percent of CSOs that represent women's organizations ^a	N/A	3	3	2	3
Percent females on technical team ^b	N/A	25	25	24	29
Percent females on oversight committee ^c	N/A	35	23	32	29

^a Data for the 2008–11 budgets were compiled from 16 regions. 2012 is the first year with information on all 24 regions. They included organizations called “women’s organizations,” “mothers clubs” (*clubes de madres*), “glass of milk” (*vaso de leche*), and “soup kitchens” (*comedores populares*).

^b Data exist for 24 regions in 2009, 22 regions in 2010 and 2011, and 23 regions in 2012.

^c Data are available for 21 regions for 2009, 2010, and 2012, and 20 regions for 2011.

Source: Author’s analysis of data from MEF n.d.

technical teams, making up between 25 percent and 29 percent of the members. They have become slightly more active in the regional oversight committees over time, making up about one-third of the members in 2011 and 2012.

Similar findings emerge about women’s participation in the Regional Coordination Councils. The Peruvian Ombudsman’s Good Governance office gathered data on the number of women elected to the CCR in the 25 regions for the 2003–5 and 2005–7 councils. In 2003, women made up 21.2 percent of the CCR members from civil society; by 2005, that number had risen to 40 percent (Defensoría del Pueblo 2006, 11). The only published source of information on the 2007–9 CCRs is the regional reports published by Vigila Perú, a Lima-based watchdog group that monitors regional government functioning. In 2007, it published reports that included information on the CCR composition in seven regions.³¹ In these seven regions, women made up 23 percent of the civil society representatives in the 2007–9 CCRs.

One clear finding that emerges is that seven years after the establishment of PIs in Peru, women are not attending participatory budget meetings or participating in the CCRs in numbers equal to their male counterparts. From this finding, we would suspect that other less empowered constituencies are not attending these meetings either. Thus, the limited participation of individuals who are marginalized in politics in Peru, combined with social organizations’ important but ultimately restricted role, leads to the conclusion that the PIs in Peru have achieved “limited inclusion.”

THE EFFECT OF PARTICIPATION ON CSOs: MODERATE

The second issue addressed in this article is the effect of participation on CSOs. In Peru, changes are occurring at the organizational level, and they vary by the kind of organization that is participating. When asked to describe how participation changed their organization, leaders of social organizations almost always responded that there were no discernable changes at the organizational level. As one labor leader from Moquegua stated, "Has the organization changed? Not really. We try to get jobs for our members. But our power is really limited." Another activist in Ayacucho noted, "our members do not feel the effect of these new institutions. There is a long way to go before it can affect the most isolated populations."

Professional associations also did not report organizational changes. When asked, representatives mentioned vague changes, such as "allowing them to get more involved in regional issues" or that the PIs "opened up new horizons" for their group. However, no interviewee mentioned specific organizational changes.

Nongovernmental organizations, on the other hand, have experienced tangible organizational changes since the creation of the PIs. Most of the NGOs that I interviewed undertake projects related to regional development, empowerment, and local government strengthening. The NGO professionals noted that the reform had brought about opportunities for new business at the local and regional levels. Several NGOs worked in areas of local governance, advocacy, and transparency before the reform. As a result of participating in the CCR and the budget, they are starting to create more partnerships with local governments. And as one NGO professional in Cajamarca noted, "We had already started monitoring governments, and the reform gives us the chance to do even more." Other NGOs are increasingly working with regional and local governments to implement the budget process. While regional and local governments do not pay NGOs for their participation, this experience often opens up new areas for outside funding by international donors. Thus, these organizations are strengthened in terms of external financing and technical expertise.

It is interesting that this outcome has been an unintended result of the reform. Strengthening NGOs was never a goal of Peruvian reformers. Indeed, several members of Congress from different political parties expressed doubt during the original design debates about even allowing NGOs to participate. This skepticism persists. When interviewed by PRODES (2010, 61), two members of Congress asked, "whom do they represent, from where does their mandate come?"

Thus, NGOs are the one type of organization that has been visibly strengthened in technical and financial ways since the reform. Exploring why this is happening is beyond the parameters of this research, but we can start to posit potential factors that merit attention. First, because NGOs tend to be more professionalized and financially secure (especially compared to social organizations), they could quickly respond to new opportunities offered by the PIs. It also suggests that the technical team may be an important way to create organizational changes. Does working more closely with the government officials and having more decisionmak-

ing power create more tangible changes? It would appear that the answer is yes. Furthermore, the finding could be a result of the relatively short time that the participatory processes have been in place. We may start to see more concrete changes in other kinds of organizations as the process continues.

CONCLUSIONS

The Peru case adds an important new dimension to existing scholarship on participatory institutions. In an effort to engage a weak civil society sector, reformers decided to mandate CSO participation in institutions such as Regional Coordination Councils and participatory budgeting processes. The national-level analysis of the nature and impact of participation suggests two conclusions.

First, the Peru case shows that participatory processes are engaging new actors. The data show that CSOs are demonstrating strong interest in the PIs, when we gauge this interest in terms of numbers of participants in the participatory budget and CCR processes. Data on six regions in Peru demonstrate that the number of CSOs participating in the CCR election increased from 2003 to 2005. An estimated 150,000 participating agents elect to engage in the participatory budget process around the country every year. At the regional level—a level of government where CSOs have almost no previous political experience—CSOs are coming out in relatively large numbers to attend participatory budget meetings.

More specifically, social organizations, that is, those organizations that tend to represent labor, farmers, and campesinos, for example, have been given a new voice in political decisions at the subnational level in Peru. They are participating actively in participatory budget meetings and oversight committees. Monitors have concluded that these kinds of organizations have voted for “pro-poor” projects. Thus, many new actors have used their voice in local political decisionmaking.

Yet this participation is limited. There is one aspect of the participatory budget process that has not engaged social organizations as effectively: the technical team. CSOs do not make up 50 percent of the technical team, and those CSOs that do participate on this team tend to be NGOs. Furthermore, the data suggest that some traditionally marginalized groups are less represented in these decisionmaking forums. While we know almost nothing about the participation of the indigenous and Afro-Latinos, we do know that women are not participating in numbers equal to their male counterparts in either the CCR or the participatory budget process. If we consider the presence of women as a proxy indicator for ethnic and racial minority inclusion, we can surmise that the PIs are not engaging all constituencies. Thus, when we start to dig deeper into the numbers, we see the shortcomings of these new channels of engagement. They do include new voices in subnational governance, but this inclusion has limits.

Regarding the second conclusion, interviews with representatives from the organizations that participate suggest that participation also can change the nature of an organization. Specifically, representatives from NGOs noted that their organizations have found new program opportunities and formed new partnerships

through the process. Organizational development scholars might argue that increased technical experience and funding opportunities for NGOs are a sign of strengthened organizations. This is an important and unintended effect of the reform. It shows that PIs can produce change at the organizational level—a change that has not been widely documented.

Thus, PIs in Peru have led to limited inclusion with moderate impact. Some new actors are participating in subnational politics in ways that were not possible before the reform. Still, other actors remain less involved. It is important to note that this limited inclusion is not necessarily indicative of continued elite rule or elite co-optation of the process. Instead, it signals that deeper structural issues, such as racism, sexism, and economic exclusion, are probably impossible to overcome through these kinds of institutions. Peru has a long history of political exclusion that PIs cannot necessarily overcome.

What does the Peru case tell us about the decision to invite civil society instead of citizens more broadly? Do design choices about whom to invite—CSOs or individuals—matter? While participation is significant in Peru, it is certainly not as quantitatively significant as the Brazilian experience, where, for example, almost 20 percent of the entire population of Porto Alegre is thought to have attended at least one meeting. This comparison suggests that the corporate design lends itself to smaller numbers of actual participants in the process. The gender comparison also suggests that the corporate design may lend itself to a less diverse group of decisionmakers. Representatives from groups that have fewer resources or are traditionally absent from public decisionmaking, such as women, indigenous, and Afro-Latinos, may have more hurdles to overcome when organizations are invited and not individuals.

This does not mean that the corporate design is not useful or appropriate. Fewer participants might mean more meaningful engagement by participants and a more manageable process for resource-challenged governments. Still, there is an inherent trade-off in the design decision between the corporate and individual models. It is important for reformers to be aware of and address the trade-offs inherent in both design options.

The smaller numbers and the tendency toward less inclusion do mean that reformers need to be aware of the potential limitations of the corporate design and take steps to overcome them. Andrea Cornwall and Vera Shattan Coelho note that several design principles must be followed in order to promote inclusiveness, such as “popular education and mobilization that can enhance the skills and confidence of marginalized and excluded groups” and ensuring that these spaces allow “an active part in crafting and monitoring policies” (2007, 8–9). These suggestions can be incorporated into both design options.

For Peruvian reformers, including Congress and the executive, it is important to make additional changes to the PIs so they can truly help improve the nature of participation around the country. The participatory budget process is probably the most important institution to improve because it is considered the most successful and institutionalized of the PIs. Three kinds of reforms are particularly important.

First, if decisionmaking power continues to reside in the technical teams, these teams need to include more CSOs in general, and social organizations, women, and minority groups more specifically. The national instructions put out by the MEF every year should insist that the majority of members hail from civil society and should also stipulate quotas for women and the indigenous.

Second, subnational governments need to find ways to increase participation by these same groups in the entire process. To be effective in the long term and to offer the same benefits in terms of funding and technical know-how, organizations that represent the traditionally excluded voices must be present. One concrete way to do this is to minimize the legal requirements for organizations to participate. Many less formal organizations exist in regions and cannot meet the stricter requirements. Furthermore, the MEF needs to improve data collection for all levels of government. Although the MEF database does provide reliable aggregate numbers of PAs, it reveals almost nothing about the kinds of organizations participating over time and space because each region reports with different categories of organizations. Additional information about the socioeconomic background of participants would also help evaluate the process. Better information would both improve the PB and help us compare the process to other PI experiences around the world.

While imperfect, the PIs in Peru are starting to bridge the gap between several broken representative institutions and a weakened civil society after years of authoritarian rule and decades of exclusion. Peru's experiment with participatory democracy has effectively engaged some new actors. Many marginalized actors, however, are not yet participating as actively. While this finding does not suggest that elite actors have captured the processes, it does mean that bias in these political institutions continues to exist. Organizations that have stronger bases, like social organizations, and more solid financial footing, like NGOs, will tend to send representatives. Organizations that are less formal, like women's organizations, will not. Limited inclusion with moderate impact is a step in the right direction, but ultimately falls short. With some reforms that promote inclusion, these new channels of participation could engage even more actors who have been excluded over time from the political decisionmaking process. Peruvians will need to push for additional measures that ensure that all citizens are effectively given a more equal voice in subnational politics.

NOTES

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1. Brian Wampler (2007b, 1) defines participatory institutions as institutions that "provide citizens with the opportunity to work directly with government officials and their fellow citizens in formal, state-sanctioned public venues, allowing them to exercise voice and vote in decisionmaking processes to produce public policy solutions." See also Avritzer 2009.

2. See Defensoría del Pueblo 2003; McNulty 2011; and Zas Friz Burga 2004 for more detailed discussions of this reform.

3. For more on decentralization before Fujimori, as well as his self-coup, see, e.g., Conaghan 2005; Kenney 2004; McClintock 1993; McNulty 2011; Remy 2005; Zas Friz Burga 2004.

4. Philippe Schmitter (1974, 93–94) defines the corporatist model as

a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of ... categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands.

5. For more on Ilo's experience, see López Follega et al. 1995.

6. For more on the Villa El Salvador experience, see Portocarrero et al. 2002; Remy 2005.

7. This is an important question in light of the increase in participatory institutions around the world, and it merits more data collection and theorizing. There is an emerging literature on "citizen representation"; i.e., the nature of democratic representation when citizens represent other citizens. For more on this see, e.g., Castiglione and Warren 2006; Stephan 2004. For an interesting study of civil society organizations in Brazil and their notions of representation, see Gurza Lavalle et al. 2006.

8. The remainder of the subnational budget is made up of fixed (or operational) costs, which are not debated.

9. See Instructivo 001-2010-EF-76.01 (MEF 2010) for a more detailed explication of the new process. See also Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana 2009 for an overview of the process.

10. *Concertation* is a term that stems from the Spanish term *concertar*, a difficult concept to translate. Generally it means discussing issues and coming to agreement or consensus about them.

11. See Shack 2006 for a detailed description of Peru's national budget process.

12. Although we do not know the exact number of projects that are changed, the MCLCP studied the list of agreed-on projects in the regions in 2007 and found that 14 of 24 regional governments funded over 50 percent of the approved projects during the 2007 fiscal year (MCLCP 2007). When compliance was low, the MCLCP went back to the regional teams and asked why. Most reported that it resulted from the change in government after the 2007 elections (MCLCP 2007).

13. While regulations vary, to become legal, most CSOs must demonstrate that they have a governing board, a constitution, a list of members, and some sort of legal representative. There is also usually a fee. For more on these regulations, see, e.g., Ramírez Huaroto 2009.

14. The decentralization framework also sets up Local Coordination Councils at the provincial and district levels. This article does not report on these because they are extremely weak, and in some places do not even exist.

15. See Law 27680 and Law 27902.

16. See, e.g., MCLCP 2007 for a discussion of the weaknesses. Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana and Vigila Perú produce annual reports on the decentralization process in the regions, which are available online at <http://www.descentralizacion.org.pe/vigilaperu-gobiernosregionales.shtml>.

17. For example, the World Bank (2010, 38–39) writes, "there is a general recognition that the participatory budget is the most valid mechanism in the decentralization framework."

Another national watchdog group, Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana (2009, 5), writes that “the participatory budget is the most important participatory mechanism that has been established since the return of democracy and decentralization in our country.” See Márquez Calvo and Castillo Távora 2010 for more on the importance of participation in the decentralization reform.

18. Analysts have criticized several aspects of the PIs, including the complexity of the budgetmaking process, which makes it hard for new actors to participate effectively; the CCRs’ legal framework; the nonbinding nature of CCR decisions; the lack of CCR meeting attendance; and strict regulations for CSO participation in both institutions (such as having formal status in a country that has a culture of informal institutions). Furthermore, fixed costs in the budget are not debated in the participatory budget process; subnational budgets are small compared to the national budget; the CCRs tend to fund mostly infrastructure projects and not projects that are more “socially” oriented; and several subnational officials fail to comply with the legally mandated process. For more on the problems facing the PIs in Peru, see Arroyo and Irigoyen 2005; McNulty 2011; PRODES 2010.

19. For example, the World Bank has a Participation and Civic Engagement Group that promotes several new forms of participation, including participatory budgets, participatory planning, public oversight, and participatory service delivery (World Bank n.d.). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has defined governance as one of its main strategic objectives and has promoted transparency and democratic local governance in Honduras, Peru, and Bolivia. See USAID 2000 and its website.

20. See Goldfrank 2011 and Moehler 2008 for similar arguments.

21. For more information on this experience, see Abers 2000; Avritzer 2002, 2009, 2010; Baiocchi 2003b, 2005; Coehlo and Nobre 2004; Grazia and Ribeiro 2002; Nylen 2003; Wampler 2007a, b, 2008.

22. In Porto Alegre, women first participated in general meetings but failed to hold leadership positions. This has changed with time, and “women have reversed the trend of underrepresentation at higher levels of representation” (World Bank 2008, 23).

23. Another interesting case of civil society participation in policymaking, albeit slightly different from the national-level participatory institutions discussed in this article, are the participatory processes taking place around the development of the World Bank’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. See, e.g., Driscoll and Evans 2004; Lazarus 2008; Dewachter and Molenaers 2011; World Bank 2002.

24. There is a general consensus that PIs need to work well in order to actually create these changes; thus, there is a large literature that compares experiences within or across countries to understand the conditions that enable success. See, e.g., Avritzer 2009; Fung and Wright 2003b; Goldfrank 2011, 2007a, b; McNulty 2011; Van Cott 2008; Wampler 2007a.

25. For example, participatory health and education councils are also mandated by law, but these have yet to be established nationwide. See Márquez Calvo and Castillo Távora 2010.

26. The government reports data based on the budget year, not the year it is debated (i.e., 2008 data presented in table 1 pertain to the process that unfolded around the country in 2007).

27. The database hosts data on 25 regions and the Lima metropolitan area. One region, Callao, is given special status in the constitution and is not a typical region. As such, the cases of Callao and the Lima metropolitan area are not analyzed here.

28. In 2004 and 2005 I conducted open-ended interviews with representatives from 38 civil society organizations that had participated in the two PIs in Ayacucho, Moquegua, Cusco, Cajamarca, Iquitos, and Lambayeque. These regions were chosen to represent Peru’s three main geographic areas (coast, jungle, and Andes).

29. The lists of organizations that register for CCR elections are not easily available to the public and are frequently lost when governments turn over to newly elected officials. Therefore, the only way to get reliable information is to request lists from regional governments immediately after a CCR election.

30. These organizations are also called *organizaciones de base*.

31. The 2007 final reports are available for the following regions: Arequipa, Cajamarca, Cusco, Huancavélica, Ica, La Libertad, and Piura. See Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana 2007.

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