

**Marion Gret & Yves Sintomer**

*Porto Alegre*  
*Hope for a different democracy*

Translated from the French by Stephen Wright

## Contents

### Introduction

1. Porto Alegre, a “Red city”  
*The political setting*  
*A different democracy*
2. The participatory budget: a democratic innovation  
*Four spheres*  
*The participatory pyramid*  
*The three parameters of budgetary decision-making*  
*Ongoing innovation*
3. The challenges of efficiency and participation  
*The challenge of efficiency*  
*The participatory challenge*
4. The challenges of institutionalization and scale  
*The institutional challenge*  
*The challenge of scale*

Conclusion. Toward a different democracy

### Bibliography

## Foreword to the English edition

Lula's victory at the last presidential elections represents a turning point in the history of Brazil. This event has a very strong symbolic meaning. A former unionist with a poor family background has won the most important political office: this is a lesson that goes much beyond the person of Lula. With the title of President, he has got his first diploma – and a certificate of dignity for these millions of Brazilians who, like him, have been educated at the school of life and have not had the opportunity to take advantage of the formal education that is a monopoly of the traditional elite. The Workers Party's administration includes a lot of people who have been active in the unions, who have been in jail or in exile during the dark years of the dictatorship. The circles of those who used to exercise power have been largely marginalised. This is a sign which shows that history is not over: the ideals of justice and democracy still give to the many enough energy and hope to move the borders of the possible. The victory of the Brazilian Left objectively puts on the agenda a change of direction in the development of this huge country. It makes it possible to foresee another repartition of wealth and power. Brazil is one of the first ten economies in the world, but the poor have got no more than the crumbs of the affluence. Hunger is still a real problem, both in the poor countryside of the Nordeste and in the cities' favelas. Only an incredible contempt for the poor can explain such a sharp inequality and, in turn, this inequality reinforces this social scorn because of its concrete effects: no good education for the majority, health problems, higher rates of crime that affect mostly the working class neighborhoods... Lula's election is a break in this vicious circle. It makes everybody look differently on the social world, understand that what had been considered as fate is only a historical contingency that can be changed. Brazil has a central position in Latin America and this turning point should have regional consequences. The victory of the Left in Ecuador a few weeks after the Brazilian elections was a step in the same direction.

This new situation makes the Porto Alegre experience even more fascinating. Three ministers come from the capital of the Rio Grande do Sul: Olivio Dutra, the first Left-wing Mayor, is now Minister of the Cities; Tarso Genro, his successor, is Minister of Economic and Social Development; Miguel Rossetto, the former pillar of Rio Grande do Sul administration, is Minister of Agriculture. Participatory democracy has indirectly been a positive factor in Lula's victory. The Left has strongly relied upon participatory procedures in order to reorient and to activate the local public management in the towns and cities it has governed. The real impact of these participatory procedures has been different from one place to another but they have been a key element in the demonstration that a good government is compatible with a change of priority in favor of the truly disadvantaged. They also have proved that such a mutation should be democratic, break from corruption and clientelism and go beyond the limits of representative democracy. The credibility that has been won at the local level has been decisive in order to convince a large majority of the people that the Left is now able to exercise power at the federal level.

Conversely, the victory of the Left at the national level should contribute to a further deepening of participatory democracy. The participatory budgeting is not going to be introduced on a federal scale. Lula has rejected this hypothesis and this methodology of participatory budgeting would hardly be efficient on this scale. However, other forms of participation could develop at the national level, enabling for example a true dialogue between government and social movements. In addition, the victory of the Workers Party is going to reinforce a previous tendency: the ideal of participatory democracy has become more and more legitimate in the last years. It is mentioned in the Constitution of 1988 and has also been recently explicitly included in the new status of towns and cities, where participatory budgeting is positively mentioned. In the coming years, the legal frame is going to go further in this direction. This will contribute to the legitimizing and facilitating of hundreds of experiences that have begun in the country and to the stimulating of new ones.

The deepest parallel between Lula's election and the Porto Alegre participatory budget is a similar attempt at combining the energy of social movements, often very radical, together with a progressive administration working towards more democracy and social justice. Traditionally, the Left had always been in trouble because it was split between a technocratic vision of public administration and a spontaneist and naïve conception of participation. The participatory budget has shown a way that can overcome this dichotomy. The margin of action on a municipal scale is limited; but, at the same time, the local scale is well suited for concrete actions and the citizens may easily perceive the results of their mobilization. Moreover, deep changes in the urban infrastructures and in the civic culture of the people can take place. The Brazilian federal government will have to face draconian constraints. The weight of the national debt; the economic dependency of Brazil on international capital, markets and technologies; a world political context in which the United States, governed by an ultra-conservative team, are hegemonic; an economic international situation which is even more depressed by the second Gulf war: all these factors constitute fairly difficult handicaps for the new experience. Within the country, the force of the traditional oligarchy has not vanished and it will probably mobilize its resources to make the change only apparent and preserve a fundamental continuity. The necessity for the Workers Party to make political alliances to build a majority coalition in the Legislative will strengthen these pressures.

Nonetheless, if a revolution is impossible in such a context, important reforms are on the agenda, which could deeply transform the face of Brazil. The excess of the social problems that affect this country could paradoxically make it possible to move forward notwithstanding small margins of action. When the richest 10% of the people earn sixty times more than the poorest 10%, to redistribute one sixtieth of the formers' wealth to the benefit of the latter would be sufficient to double the income of the poorest – and an economic growth of 2% would be enough to make this redistribution financially neutral

for the most well-off, who could balance their loss through new earnings. The perspectives which are put on the agenda by the new Brazilian government should therefore be credible: to break with corruption and clientelism; to reform and modernize the state in order to improve the quality of public administration; to introduce a tax reform with the aim of rationalizing the tax system, increasing its redistributive logic and limiting tax evasion; to offer to the most disadvantaged a true range of protection, especially enabling hunger to be eradicated, but also to extend the services of the Welfare state that are matched for everybody, most notably the middle class; to initiate a real agrarian reform in order to reduce inequality in the countryside; to reorient economic growth towards a more sustainable development; to adopt a legislative framework facilitating equality between men and women; to move quickly towards regional integration with other Latin-American countries, with the Mercosur and beyond. Such measures should be legitimate for a large majority of Brazilians and could initiate a dialectic of deep cultural, political and economic mutations.

The challenges are not much different from those that the Porto Alegre participatory budget had to face on another scale. The first one is to develop a public policy that really differs from the past but at the same time remains or becomes efficient. This is not to be underestimated. European social democratic parties have managed to administrate relatively efficiently the states in the last decades, but most have renounced any attempt to really transform society – and this has led to grave disappointment among the Left electors as well as among citizens in general. Conversely, Latin American populism has often tried to change society but has collapsed due to chaotic public management – the situation in Venezuela has something to do with this problem.

The capacity to face this challenge largely depends on the ability to solve a second challenge, the articulation between governmental action and social mobilization in order to structurally transform power relationships and the sense of justice of the majority of citizens. The European Left has completely lost this challenge in the last years. The strength of the World Social Forum, which met three times in Porto Alegre, is precisely that a true dialogue has been initiated between radical movements that politicize civil society, NGO's that foster a more social and more sustainable development, and public authorities, mostly local, that have begun to transform public administration and public policies. To some extent, the peace movement that has developed all over the world is also a product of this dynamic. The World Social Forum tries to combine the people of Seattle, of Genoa, of Florence, of Porto Alegre with the institutional Left that proclaims its desire for another globalization, different from the neoliberal globalization. This is why it is a symbol for the planet, but also for Lula's government. The Workers Party has been active in a movement that has propelled it from the struggle against dictatorship to federal political power. Will it be able to keep the spirit that has provided its appeal in the past decades? This will depend upon the international context; upon the capacity of building a hegemonic coalition for social change; upon the mobilization of the lower class and its capacity to face the pressures that the privileged class will make.

**Last but not least, this will depend upon the government's ability to open, at all levels, channels for democratic participation in order to increase communication with citizens and to promote a social control over the state. In this direction, the Porto Alegre example, although not mechanically reproducible on a federal scale, is truly inspiring.**

**Yves Sintomer, Berlin, March 2003.**

## Introduction

The parliamentary regime lives by discussion; how shall it forbid discussion? (...) The debating club in parliament is necessarily supplemented by debating clubs in the salons and the pothouses; the representatives, who constantly appeal to public opinion, give public opinion the right to speak its real mind in petitions. The parliamentary regime leaves everything to the decision of majorities. How shall the great majorities outside parliament not want to decide? When you play the fiddle at the top of the state, what else is to be expected but that those down below dance?

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

In the 1988 municipal elections, a leftwing coalition dominated by the Workers' Party (PT) known as the "Popular Front" was swept almost by surprise into the Porto Alegre city hall. After some initial birth pains, the city's new government launched an innovative endeavor which, over the coming years, was to take on unforeseen proportions, eventually becoming a veritable institution: the participation of the city's residents in the elaboration of the municipal budget. Twelve years on, the experiment has caught on in some hundred Brazilian municipalities as well as elsewhere in Latin America. It has been commented on all over the world and has played a decisive role in ensuring the subsequent reelection of the PT and its allies as the municipal government: the mayor Tarso Genro was elected on the second ballot with more than 60% of the vote. In January 2002, Porto Alegre hosted for the second time the World Social Forum – the summit for the opponents of neo-liberal globalization built around the economic forum in Davos, Switzerland. The city looks as though it may have become the center of that "other world" and proudly proclaims itself the "capital of democracy."

The reasons for this fascination are not hard to understand. Virtually everywhere, the gap between the ruling class and the citizenry is widening, bringing with it a latent legitimacy crisis within the political system. Yet long-standing elitist prejudice against the people is increasingly difficult to justify. Just as it is no longer possible to publicly defend the idea that women have to be kept out of positions of responsibility, it is no longer acceptable that mere citizens be declared incapable of directly taking political decisions on the grounds that they do not understand the global problems of the polis. Has historical experience not indeed shown that "the world has suffered more from its leaders than from the masses?"<sup>1</sup> Relying exclusively on elected officials and technocrats alone does not seem particularly reasonable: the "progress" whose meaning they alone defined, has on some occasions led to catastrophes and, more often still, to two-tiered societies.

In this context, the perspective of a participatory democracy seems increasingly appealing. At the local level, it has been implemented in Europe through two mechanisms. Firstly, consultative neighborhood councils open to all residents or composed in a more formal way (the cooptation of local activists, elections, and so on) enable ordinary citizens' voices to be heard on local topics or specific problems related to municipal public policy. Such councils were implemented by law in 2002 in all French cities with more than 80.000 residents.

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1954, p. 208.

Secondly, “citizen’s juries” selected by lot –following a principle widely known in ancient Athens and still used for criminal juries in many modern countries- have been introduced again in politics for a few decades. Dozens of such experiments have been carried out in different European countries, such as Great Britain, Germany and Spain<sup>2</sup>. Most often, these juries have only a consultative role. Local democracy does, of course, promise “governing with” rather than from above, liberating popular initiative by providing it with institutional access, and making it possible for elected officials to be called to task by citizens. Very often, however, the viewpoint expressed by the inhabitants is of purely consultative value; participants thus soon grow weary and give up, for nothing is really at stake. Generally speaking, participatory initiatives are neglected by young people, the least privileged sectors of society, and the immigrant population. Their structures tend to be monopolized by middle-class sectors, relatively unrepresentative of the population as a whole. Moreover, “local democracy” deals almost entirely with microlocal issues, and politics tends to come down to a question of the modernization of public management while power relations remain unquestioned. Porto Alegre, by contrast, seems to be way ahead: Tarso Genro proclaims that the Brazilian municipality is in the throws of “radically democratizing democracy.”<sup>3</sup> This utopian horizon appears henceforth to be an embodied reality. Stimulated in this way, the idea of a truly participatory democracy is spreading progressively in Europe. Some elected representatives in Germany, Spain, France or Italy have stated that they intend to apply the mechanisms of the participatory budget in different contexts. Others have implemented still other participatory schemes, which seem equally promising.

The capital of Rio Grande do Sul hosted the first three gatherings of the partisans of a different form of globalization, because the participatory democracy which is developing there appears so exemplary. By giving power back to the citizenry, the experiment has rehabilitated politics in a context where neo-liberal globalization appeared to have condemned it to wane. On the municipal scale, Porto Alegre’s participatory budget is an instrument for “reversing the priorities” of public policy in favor of the poor. According to the United Nations, in 1960, the wealthiest 20% of the population divvied up 70.2% of the income on the world scale, the poorest 20% having to make do with 2.3%. In 1997, this inequality had grown deeper still, the figures standing respectively at 86% and 1%! Porto Alegre shows this process to be less inexorable than it seems, suggesting that it is possible to fight for a different globalization. Are we not, in effect, entitled to draw a universal lesson from the experience? Is it not precisely because politics has been brought closer to the citizenry and has become genuinely participatory that it is in a position to muster the energy required to at least partially reverse the formidable movement toward the concentration of wealth that goes hand in hand with neo-liberal globalization? Are the stakes in the World Social Forum – the “Anti-Davos” Forum – not to flesh out planetary-scale alternatives, making it possible to foster social justice, the democratization of societies and sustainable development?

It is important, however, to base judgment on actual evidence. History has taught us to be wary of radiant myths which are subsequently liable to disclose a far less radiant reality. The

---

<sup>2</sup> FONT, J. (ed.) *Ciudadanos y decisiones públicas*. Ariel, Barcelona, 2001; Smith, G., and Wales, C., “The Theory and Practice of citizen’s juries”, *Policy & Politics*, 27/3.

<sup>3</sup> GENRO, Tarso e SOUZA, Ubiratan de. *Orçamento Participativo. A experiência de Porto Alegre*. Fundação Perseu Abramo, São Paulo, 1997.

experience has to be closely examined; its underpinnings, like the challenges it faces and the answers it has provided, all have to be understood. Can the inhabitants taking part in public management really strengthen its efficiency? Can they avoid backsliding into populism? Is genuine participation possible without small groups or the middle classes essentially monopolizing power? Can the activity of movements stemming from civil society be institutionalized without bureaucratizing them and cutting them off from their roots? Can neighborhood mobilization play a role in the construction of the common good and go beyond mere parochialism? The mechanism that goes by the name of the “participatory budget” is sufficiently complex to require a detailed description. How is it justified by its supporters? Does actual practice correspond to theory? What exactly are the mechanisms it is based upon? What are the dynamics that characterize such a radical attempt to establish a participatory democracy? What are its strengths and its limits? What is the reality of political participation, and how many people actually participate? Who are they? How is a representative system to coexist in conjunction with the participatory pyramid? Is the municipal budget as a whole truly decided within the framework of popular participation? Is there any comparison between Porto Alegre’s participatory budget and participatory mechanisms in Europe? How are context-specific factors to be distinguished from those which, conversely, can be generalized? In short, is the Porto Alegre experience really as exemplary as it first appears – exemplary not in the sense of a model to be imitated mechanically, but as a thought-fostering attempt, on the basis of which it is possible to build projects in other places?

## Conclusion

---

### Toward a different democracy

*Herald:*

How are the masses, who misgovern their own thoughts, to give right guidance to the city?

*Theseus:*

When the laws are published, poor and rich have the same recourse to justice. The weak man can speak back to the great man assailing him, and if he is right, win against him. Freedom prevails in those cities where the herald calls out: "What man has good advice to give the city, and wishes to make it known before the assembly?" He who wishes to speak, gains prominence; he who has nothing to say holds his peace. For the city, what can be more fair than that?"

Euripides, *The Suppliant Women*, 417-442

Porto Alegre is in the throws of inventing a new pattern for the division of powers. For two centuries now, universal suffrage, opinion polls and the new communications media have utterly transformed how politics are done. Social upheavals, including the shifting gender relationship, the construction of the welfare state, the massive increase in schooling and the ever increasing integration of science into production, have utterly transformed the political agenda and the role played by the public sphere. And yet, we still live under that classic triptych made up of executive, legislature, and judiciary, implemented in the late eighteenth century. The institutional imagination of Western democracies is, when one gets right down to it, pretty confined. The ongoing process in the capital of Rio Grande do Sul is acting as something of stimulant.

In the modern world, the role of the people remains, institutionally speaking, fairly evanescent. For many years, they were blocked at the doors to parliament by a system of suffrage based on the payment of a poll-tax, which prevailed throughout the nineteenth century. When the people were progressively invited to partake in the rejoicing, it was exclusively in electoral form, and decades were to pass before women were admitted in the same capacity as men. For a long time, rulers allowed popular participation only during elections, the masses being required to retreat back into passivity once they had slipped their ballot into the box. It was only scarcely legitimate for them to become agitated on exceptional historical occasions. In France, for instance, demonstrations themselves were only legalized

after the Second World War. Even today, in Europe as in the United States, they are often suspected of being under the sway of active minorities who impose themselves on the silent majority. Though public opinion plays an increasingly important role, it is filtered by the media and opinion polls – to such an extent that the events they announce are sometimes the pure invention of television. Beyond choosing their representatives, the most that citizens can do is give an opinion: decisions are made by *other people* – experts, elected officials, managers or bureaucrats – and often by small groups of them, in the absence of any publicity. The possibility of replacing one team by another is often a merely formal exercise given the extent to which the programs and profiles of the major parties tend to resemble one another.

With its participatory budget, Porto Alegre has created a fourth power – that of the citizenry, when it directly assumes decision-making power. The experience is fascinating, even though it provides no consummate model. Against all those who postulate that freedom and democracy can manage very nicely without participation, the Porto Alegre experience confirms that the latter is the very heart of democracy, whose arteries extend throughout modern societies.

To gain the full measure of this, there is a persistent ambiguity that needs to be dispelled. Are the dynamics of direct democracy, made possible by the participatory budget, intended to *counterbalance* representative democracy, or is its vocation rather to develop *beyond* representative democracy, as postulated by the traditional Marxist vision? In the late 1980s, the PT was profoundly marked by the idea of a duality of power, aimed at “carrying out a sort of ‘transfer’ of power in favor of the organized working class,” which would enable the progressive “replacement” of representative democracy by direct democracy. Tarso Genro, Porto Alegre’s former mayor, now argues that this vision was “simplistic.”<sup>1</sup> Ubiratan de Souza, one of the inventors of the participatory budget, has written that the budget “combines direct democracy and representative democracy, which is one of the great conquests of humanity and must be preserved and enhanced.”<sup>2</sup> In fact, the participatory budget is a joint-governance involving both the executive and the participatory pyramid. The mechanism’s overall balance has not been established once and for all, but this form of participatory democracy has already profoundly changed the way the political system operates: civil society has kept its independence and can continue to play the role of an opposition force; communication between elected officials, civil servants and the rest of the citizenry has intensified considerably; political fetishism (whereby delegates monopolize the power they obtain from the rank and file) and the marginalizing of individuals belonging to groups that are dominated on the political scene have considerably declined. The participatory ideal is fairly hegemonic at the local level, to such an extent in fact that some of the criticism leveled by the opposition against the municipal majority openly embraces the principle and disputes only its application.

In Europe as in the USA, local democracy has been hard pressed to get beyond a parochial level because it gets bogged down in microlocal issues and because it is socially exclusive. Thus fettered, it is the object of suspicion on the part of elected officials, who argue that it is liable to foster any number of corporatist tendencies. The Porto Alegre experience points to a different way of posing the question: it is representative democracy itself which needs to be questioned, shaking up the borderlines of public decision-making and relativizing the division

of labor between representative democracy and direct democracy. Of course, the expression of microlocal interests entails the risk of NIMBY dynamics and “neighborhood populism.” But the way to parry this risk is not to cloister residents on the local and community scale and leave elected officials the monopoly on more all-encompassing visions and the common good. Residents have to be enabled to link their particular demands to the common good by discussing problems which concern the city as a whole. It is, for instance, necessary to go beyond the right to fair housing and to claim the right to the city. The moment citizens are able to partake directly in defining the common good through public debate, it becomes perfectly legitimate that their elected representatives should give them the opportunity to speak out and share their power with them.

It is not particularly surprising that popular mobilization is often found to be wanting in participatory experiments in Europe: is it not, indeed, paradoxical to ask people to become involved in a process, the workings of which permanently reminds them just how secondary their role actually is? By contrast, the Porto Alegre experience has released impressive energy. Elitist theorists have claimed that the participation of ordinary citizens could only be brought about at the expense of the weight of expert knowledge in deliberation, and thus to the detriment of the latter. The effectiveness of the participatory budget disproves this static line of reasoning: for though it is true that informed public deliberation requires that citizens be truly informed, this level of information is stimulated by participation which functions like a school of democracy. Through the institutionalization of procedures organizing public deliberation, citizens can contribute to defining and to improving public policy. It is an accumulative process: like in classical Athens, or to a lesser extent, in Western societies, taking part in public deliberation contributes to the education of the citizenry, which in turn increases the quality of deliberation and the subjective feeling of being able to participate usefully. It thus fosters participation. The circle of political activity broadens very palpably in comparison to classical representative democracy.

It must nonetheless be emphasized that the Porto Alegre experiment has come about in a highly specific context. The participatory budget, moreover, has run up against a whole series of difficulties which have not yet been resolved. Participation remains quantitatively limited to a politically active fraction of the population. The risks of institutionalization have not been entirely averted in the intermediate term. There remains the still thornier problem of scale, which assembly-based democracy has yet to resolve. This solution has been adopted in exclusive fashion in the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, where referendums and selection by lot of political office— the two other instruments of direct democracy – have not been made use of. Deliberation loses in quality when the assemblies become too crowded. Beyond the local or municipal scale, the delegates risk being torn between an imperative mandate (which tends to reduce the impact of deliberation at the top of the participatory pyramid) and a logic leading them to keeping their distance from the grassroots (which is all the more dangerous in that the political under-representation of the dominated groups has a tendency to grow as one climbs higher in the echelons of participatory power). The solution Porto Alegre has come up with consists of multiplying the micro-meetings alongside the general assemblies, and reintroducing deliberation on a broad scale through such mechanisms as thematic forums and city congresses. These steps, however, only partially resolve the problem.

The Brazilian experience does not constitute a miracle solution and runs up against real difficulties. It is nevertheless extremely interesting. Right to its very limits, it confirms the need to invent mechanisms breaking with classical schemas, in order for citizens to be able to truly participate in political deliberation and to exercise their critical faculties. The city of Porto Alegre is today a real laboratory for democracy.

In light of this experience, it is possible to derive more general lessons. For one thing, there are stakes at play in participatory democracy if it is not reduced to a mere “democracy of proximity” and if the local and the community are a springboard rather than a shackle. Moreover, the participatory dynamic becomes all the more promising in that the deliberation upon which it is founded actually culminates in true decision-making power. Thirdly, participation cannot remain a spontaneous and informal dynamic. To function, it has to be based upon clear rules and procedures fostering both deliberation and decision-making. Fourthly, the institutionalization of participatory democracy, though it may be a bottom-up process, can also be fostered by a top-down dynamic. The associative culture was strong in Porto Alegre, and so was the demand for more participation. However, it was the PT local government that made a decisive step forward and initiated a dynamic which is now driven by its own logic. A combination of a strong political culture in civil society and a strong political will in government represents the best context for initiating such an experiment. A process of also requires a large measure of pragmatism in how it is implemented, for in this domain there is no ready-made schema that one need merely put into action. Fifthly, it is crucial that the construction of the common good not be carried out “behind the backs” of dominated groups (whomever they may be). In that respect, formal political equality is not sufficient, for the relationships of domination systematically deform apparently neutral procedures. True political will is required, founded upon affirmative-action mechanisms, if equality is to be made a reality. That implies understanding that deliberation does not abolish social conflicts, but rather gives them another form and other opportunities, which can exist only on the basis of their public expression. It is on this condition that participatory democracy can be said to represent a step forward for democracy in the etymological sense of the term, as the “power of the people.” The “people” must be understood both as citizens as a whole, and the “common people.” For indeed, have not all the great democratic moments in history been marked by the popular classes suddenly bursting onto the political stage?

The experience is all the more fascinating in that it cannot be reduced to some sort of institutional contraption, but actually has robust social content. This is due to the actors who have gained prominence in the participatory process, to the reorientation of local public policies in favor of the poor. Municipal action alone cannot hope to modify the relationship between social classes, but it does show that public powers do have genuine scope for action, which can moreover include support for the third sector that the economy of “solidarity” constitutes. It is thus only fitting that the city hosted the World Social Forum’s first three sessions. In this regard, as well, one further ambiguity needs to be dispelled. The dynamic established in Porto Alegre cannot be understood using the rhetoric of rupture which was so widespread in PT ranks in the 1980s. The reality has more to do with an attempt to regulate capitalism, to compensate for the imbalances created by the market and to assert the power of political action in the face of profit-oriented logic. This initiative should not be

underestimated. Its echo can even be heard within those organizations which had hitherto been bastions of neoliberalism. Today, the World Bank is not satisfied with merely helping Porto Alegre to obtain low-interest loans; it distributes brochures boasting up the city's participatory budget in other countries in the third world. Whatever the ulterior motives behind this publicity, it constitutes a revealing symptom. Another logic is possible and necessary on the international scale, two principles of which have been sketched out in the capital of Rio Grande do Sul: justice and democracy. Still others need to be added to the list, including sustainable development. Working toward tangible forms of this alternative, launching pragmatic experiments enabling progress in this direction – such indeed are the issues that should bring together all those in favor of a different form of globalization.

1. T. Genro, U. de Souza, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-07.