



## **Participatory Budgeting in Brazil: The Current Situation June 2008**

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The 2006 elections brought a transition from left wing to right wing parties in most states in Brazil. Cities such as Porto Alegre and Sao Paulo which were traditionally PT administrations switched to opposition parties. On the other hand President Lula won a second term giving the PT power at the national level. However this change has not affected the popularity of participatory processes in the country and the PB continues to expand even under right wing governments.

In Porto Alegre, Governor Yeda Crusius tried to suspend the PB for 2 to 3 years in 2007. The state of Rio Grande do Sul was facing an alarming deficit at the time and the governor wanted to use the PB resources to pay the debt. Since the previous governor made PB a law in 2003, Yeda would have to get the approval of the local council in order to suspend it. Civil society organized intensive lobbying and the Porto Alegre PB remained intact. However there have been problems. The right wing parties ruling at both state and city level have not been participating actively in the process. The population states that the administration is not implementing most of the PB projects. As a result participation at the neighborhood level has decreased although attendance in larger assemblies has gone up.

Unlike most states in Brazil the state of Bahia elected a PT governor for the first time in 16 years. Governor Jacques Wagner implemented in 2007 one of the first PB initiatives at the state level. The PPA is a 4 year plan for the capital budget. The state was divided into 26 territories and assemblies were held to identify priorities for the plan's 2 main areas: social development and employment and economic growth. The process involved over 12000 people. Each territory also elected representatives to form the commission responsible for monitoring the implementation of the PPA.

President Lula has also been working to strengthen the PB in Brazil. The government has created strategies to include a participatory process in the federal budget. In 2007 public assemblies were held in the country's 5 regions to discuss priorities for 9% of the budget. Two thousand civil society organizations took part in the process. The government has also created monitoring mechanisms in order to increase transparency. Citizens' can find out on line how much was allocated to each program or project, the deadlines for completion and the ministry responsible for them. For the first time in history society can

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access the government management systems and find out how public money is being spent.

The challenges associated with popular participation have not stopped the PB from growing in Brazil. This is evidenced by the increasing numbers of PB initiatives in the country. There are now around 180 municipalities with a PB model implemented. The expansion of the PB from local to state level, as well as strategies to include it in the national budget also show that PB processes have gained strength over time.

### References:

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<http://www.folha.uol.com.br/>

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