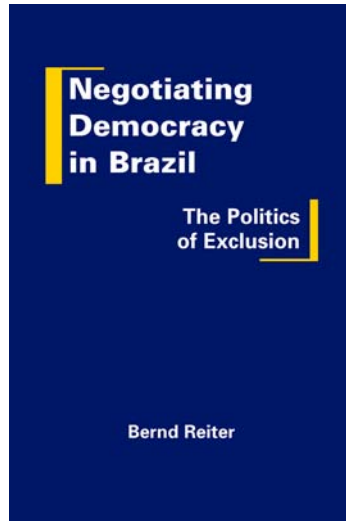


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# Negotiating Democracy in Brazil: The Politics of Exclusion

Bernd Reiter

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# 1

## Introduction

Societal inequalities undermine democracy. That is the main argument I seek to advance in this book. The country I chose as a case to demonstrate this relationship is Brazil – one of the most inequitable countries of the world. Over the last fifteen years I have spent much time in Brazil and conducted several research projects in different parts of the country. My work has focused on Brazilian civil society, education reform, and political participation. Reflecting on my research on different policy areas, I came to realize that one theme held them all together, that what I was seeing in different contexts were different manifestations of the same underlying pattern. Extreme inequality and the pervasive attempts of historically included sectors to perpetuate and defend their inherited privilege seemed to be responsible not only for a civil society that fell short of its democratizing potential but also for faltering school reform, and unsuccessful attempts of citizen participation in local governance. An analysis of the ways and strategies of defending privilege in Brazil promises to shed light on the social dynamics and causal mechanisms that impede democratic deepening. As such, my findings on Brazil are not confined to that country but pose general questions about societal inequality and democracy that are equally relevant for the study of democracy elsewhere.

My studies of different aspects of Brazilian democracy revealed two general insights. The first is that to understand the impacts of societal inequality on democracy, one must focus on those groups that benefit from this inequality. The second is that democracy cannot be adequately understood by focusing exclusively on the political system. I realized that any treatment of Brazilian democracy must include an analysis of Brazilian society, in which, after all, the political system is embedded. This cannot be achieved by simply including the variable of civil society (as done, e.g. by Linz and Stepan, 1996) or by focusing on democratic culture (following Almond and Verba, 1963).<sup>1</sup> To capture the shortcomings of democracy, one must analyze society and focus on the ways the societal system interacts with and indeed structures the political system.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 Negotiating Democracy in Brazil

Although states must be seen as important and partially autonomous actors, most authors following the path-breaking work of Evans, Skocpol, and Rueschemeyer (1985) have overestimated the state's autonomy and neglected the relationship between autonomous states and the society in which those states are embedded. Evans, Skocpol and Rueschemeyer were certainly right to point out that, "states conceived as organizations claiming control over territories and people may formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the demands or interests of social groups, classes, or society."<sup>3</sup> But while Brazil's democracy undoubtedly suffers from the shortcomings of Brazil's political system, the gravest impediments to consolidating democracy are not of a political nature, but of a social nature. Furthermore, it is not the failing state that causes Brazil's democracy to fall short of its promises, but, on the contrary, Brazil's extreme societal inequality that permits the Brazilian state too much autonomy from the will and needs of the majority population. In short, the extreme inequalities that characterize Brazilian society are ultimately responsible for its faltering political regime. Accordingly, my main argument is that a political system lacks legitimacy if the society in which it is embedded is extremely unequal. Inequality causes a great part of its population to be excluded from the active exercise of basic citizenship and civil rights. The flipside of exclusion is that included groups have long captured the state and used it to advance their own goals without feeling, and in effect without effectively being, accountable to the masses.

In other words, the Brazilian political system is disconnected from the majority of its population, while a relatively small minority of Brazilians uses the political system to advance its own ends. In the words of Teresa Caldeira and James Holston (1998), "The protections and immunities civil rights are intended to ensure as constitutional norms are generally perceived and experienced as privileges of elite social statuses and thus of limited access. They are not, in other words, appreciated as common rights of citizenship."<sup>4</sup> I agree with this analysis. In this book, I therefore propose to "bring society back in."

Accordingly, this book argues that although Brazil's political system is troubled, the division of its society is far more troublesome and much more consequential, not just at the societal level, but for the political system as well, because political systems are embedded in social systems. No matter how minimalist one wants to define democracy,<sup>5</sup> its legitimacy must ultimately reside in a democratic

society, where the core value of democracy, namely having access to basic citizenship rights, is guaranteed. A democratic political system embedded in an undemocratic society is an absurdity and those accounts that focus their attention exclusively on political systems are unable to capture the ultimate causes for faltering democratic regimes. Brazil provides a clear example and therefore an excellent case for studying the tension that results from a society where civil rights and liberties are not guaranteed to the majority of Brazilians, but where the political system continues to function smoothly, following the rules and procedures laid out for it by the Constitution.

My second insight is that an adequate understanding of Brazilian democracy and its shortcomings requires a detailed understanding of the dialectic ways exclusion and inclusion constitute each other and what mechanisms are used by Brazilians in their everyday lives to uphold the crucial distinction between who counts as a full citizen with full access the citizenship rights and who does not. In my research I found that upholding this distinction is of utmost importance to the historically privileged and included groups and it is of far reaching consequences for both sides of this equation because it provides the critical edge, or the competitive advantage, in the daily competition for goods in markets characterized by extreme scarcity. This book, then, pays much attention to the strategies used by historically included groups to defend their inherited privileges. My main argument therefore is that it is not inequality per se that renders Brazilian democracy problematic. It is the constant efforts of historically included groups to uphold inequality and protect their privileged access to citizenship rights that casts a deep shadow over Brazilian democracy.

To understand the dialectic relationship between exclusion and inclusion, it becomes necessary to step beyond the disciplinary limits of mainstream political science and integrate the work of other social sciences. Insights and theoretical frameworks borrowed from history and sociology have proven especially helpful for this endeavor.

Once a shift of focus toward societal phenomena is undertaken, another step is necessary. I argue that understanding the impact of societal inequality on democracy requires another shift of in point of view, this time away from the excluded and toward the included and the mechanisms they use to perpetuate their inclusion and the related exclusion of others. By examining again and again the excluded, researchers, sociologists and anthropologists in particular, have contributed to the problematization of the excluded and helped consolidate the erroneous idea that there is something wrong with the

poor, the indigenous, blacks, and other historically marginalized groups.<sup>6</sup> Instead of focusing solely on the excluded, we need to pay more attention to those benefiting from their exclusion. In the following, I shall propose the concept of “inclusion” for that purpose.

### Theorizing Inclusion

In the absence of specific literature on inclusion, the vast literature on exclusion, inequality, and injustice provides initial insights. Judith Butler (1998), for example, asks rhetorically, “is it possible to distinguish, even analytically, between a lack of cultural recognition and a material oppression, when the very definition of legal ‘personhood’ is rigorously circumscribed by cultural norms that are indissociable from their material effects?”<sup>7</sup> For Butler, the answer is no. In her essay she explains that the cultural and material are indeed intimately intertwined. She traces this insight back to Marx’s *German Ideology* (1846) and Engels’ *Origin of family, private property, and the state* (1884). Marx points to the connection of the mode of production that produces a certain and corresponding mode of cooperation and social organization.<sup>8</sup>

Much of Butler’s critique takes issue with Nancy Fraser’s distinction between injustices of distribution and injustices of recognition. Nancy Fraser (1998) argues that both kinds of injustices are equally serious, but that they operate differently. For Fraser, to be misrecognized means “to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and prevented from participating as a peer in social life – not as a consequence of a distributive inequity (such as failing to receive one’s fair share of resources or ‘primary goods’), but rather as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of interpretation and evaluation that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem.”<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, Fraser defines misrecognition as an “institutionalized social relation, not a psychological state.”<sup>10</sup> Fraser also points to the connection she makes between the symbolic and the material. For her, “The norms, significations, and constructions of personhood that impede women, racialized peoples, and/or gays and lesbians from parity of participation in social life are materially instantiated – in institutions and social practices, in social action and embodied habitus, and yes, in ideological state apparatuses. Far from occupying some wispy, ethereal realm, they are material in their existence and effects.”<sup>11</sup>

However the material and cultural relate, this discussion clearly demonstrates that exclusion *has* two dimensions and it necessary

follows that inclusion is equally constituted by material and symbolic or cultural variables. Among the symbolic variables, whiteness is extremely consequential. Whiteness, anything but a biological reality, is used as a symbolical indicator of civilizing potential.<sup>12</sup> Lesser (1999) demonstrated that what it meant to be “white” shifted in Brazil between 1850 and 1950, but whiteness remained a cultural category, signifying superiority and well-deserved privilege. Brazilian elites openly discussed and compared the different degrees of whiteness of such potential immigrants as Arabs, Japanese, and Southern Europeans, associating whiteness with aptitude.<sup>13</sup> The idea of whiteness was therefore constructed and used as a form of capital, strongly associated with merit and progressive, developmental potential.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of distinction provides an entrance point for conceptualizing whiteness as a highly effective form of capital, functioning in a social space that is constituted in relation to other social positions, where each one uses the other for reference. Although Bourdieu ignores ethnicity and race in his theory, his thoughts on gender point to a direction that allows further development. He argues that, “the volume and composition of capital give specific form and value to the determinations which the other factors (age, sex, place of residence etc.) impose on practices. Sexual properties are as inseparable from class practices as the yellowness of a lemon is from its acidity: a class is defined in an essential respect by the place and value it gives to the sexes and to their socially constituted dispositions.”<sup>14</sup>

In a similar way, whiteness constitutes capital in addition to the other types of capital, namely financial, social, and cultural. Their importance, however, does not follow a simple additive logic. One type of capital rather connects to the others and together they determine the social place an individual will hold in a society. This allows for some flexibility, as one form of capital can be used to partly compensate for the lack of another, although this flexibility is limited precisely by the lumped condition of the different capitals. In that way, as Bourdieu points out correctly, each single form of capital tends to over-determine the social position of its carrier, as the presence or absence of each single one is perceived as being indicative of the presence or absence of the others. It is in this sense that whiteness over-determines its carrier, bestowing him with a social position that might not be warranted. In other words, because of the composite character of the different forms of capital, whiteness signals the presence of other forms, even though they might not be

present. Blackness, at the same time, signifies the absence of other types of capital and equally over-determines its carrier.

The resulting social position then becomes a social expectation and reflects back on the carrying individual. In Bourdieu's own words, "the homogeneity of the disposition associated with a position and their seemingly miraculous adjustment to the demands inscribed in it result partly from the mechanisms which channel towards positions individuals who are already adjusted to them, either because they feel 'made' for jobs that are 'made' for them (...) or because they are seen in this light by the occupants of the posts (...) and partly from the dialectic which is established, throughout a lifetime, between dispositions and positions, aspirations and achievements."<sup>15</sup> In other words, individuals tend to conform to the social positions they hold and to internalize the role expectations associated with these positions.

In sum, what matters is not the objective position an individual holds in the social space, but the subjective experience of living with and through this position and rather having to uphold and defend it in daily interactions, or trying to change or mask it in order to escape the negative effects resulting from potential over-determination. Defending or challenging one's social place therefore is a daily struggle and bears very tangible consequences for one's capabilities to live life. Given its relational character, maintaining one's own inclusion requires maintaining the exclusion of others.<sup>16</sup>

In order to reproduce a social structure that secures privileges and advantages to one group and denies it to others, the maintenance of the border that marks inclusion and separates it from exclusion becomes extremely important. It comes to no surprise that Brazilian daily life is full of symbolic acts that fulfill this border-maintenance function. This is even more the case where racial capital is not clearly demarcated and therefore illusive for providing clear borders of belonging.

### **Some Words on Methodology**

Although I use statistical data, my main intention in this book is to better understand *how* and *why* inequality impacts democracy. Quantitative methods do not suffice to answer these questions, mainly because of their weakness in determining causality. The research method most suited for answering my questions regarding the relationship between inequality and democracy in Brazil, in my judgment, is the case study. By using a case study approach, I



broadly follow Alexander George and Andrew Bennett (2005) who define the case study approach as “the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events.”<sup>17</sup>

Within the broader field of case study analysis, process tracing is one of the most valuable tools. Process tracing “attempts to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable.”<sup>18</sup> Especially important in this method is the process tracing of deviant cases, extreme cases, most likely, and least likely cases. Process tracing can help to identify the chain of events that led to a certain outcome. By focusing on extreme cases, this method allows for an assessment of the most salient causes at work. By including deviant cases, it also allows for an assessment of the necessary or sufficient contribution of a causal variable in a certain outcome. Deviance can be caused by a previously overlooked variable. A deviant case might also lead to the specification of a theory.

I thus selected cases that I find particularly problematic and therefore especially telling, and this book focuses on some of the most extreme cases in which included Brazilians actively engage in defending their inherited privileged positions in social hierarchies. The causes and perceptions of urban violence are amongst the most telling in this respect, as violence has become a way to interpret Brazil and the interpretations of the causes for violence provide evidence for the worldview of the included. Another very telling case that allows for an analysis of the ways inclusions and exclusion constitute each other is provided by focusing on the daily interactions between maids and their employers. The employment of maids is very widespread in Brazil and it allows us to draw important conclusions about the mechanisms used by employers to constitute and justify their superiority over their employees. The very endemic persistence of clientelism and corruption in Brazilian politics raises important questions and an analysis of the underlying causes for this persistence promises to shed light on the ways state employment is used to perpetuate inclusion and to defend privilege. To better understand this endemic Brazilian problem, one needs to examine the history of how Brazilian elites have captured and used the state to perpetuate their own privilege.

But although these general treatments of Brazilian reality are extremely revealing and tell us much about how historically included groups operate to perpetuate their inclusion and to justify their

privilege, a true understanding of the causes and workings of defending privilege and upholding exclusion needs to zoom in even further and analyze the interactions between the included and the excluded in concrete and historically determined situations. To achieve this goal, this book presents case studies on education and political participation from one Brazilian city, Salvador. Salvador was chosen because it offered the richest and most promising environment for my analysis. Salvador is one of the poorest and most inequitable state capitals in Brazil, thus it provides us with a starker than average view of the mechanisms used to defend privilege. In addition, Salvador's population includes an above average percentage of black citizens, which provides us with the opportunity to examine the racialized character of upholding privilege with more clarity. Thus, Salvador represents an extreme case that elucidates the general functioning of defending privilege in Brazil and elsewhere, and the cases from Salvador allow us to gain a deeper understanding of the causes and mechanisms employed by the historically included to defend their privileged positions in social hierarchies. Salvador, then, constitutes an idealtype for the constitution of inclusion and exclusion and for the racialized nature of this process, but it is not an exception. The exclusion from the full exercise of citizenship rights and the role that education and the abuse of state power play in achieving this exclusion is characteristic of the whole country. The examples I am able to present in this book are intended to highlight some of the mechanisms used to achieve this exclusion. Adding more cases from different regions or even countries will not alter the logic I seek to unveil.

### **Definitions**

My hypothesis that social inequalities cause Brazilian democracy to fall short of its promises immediately necessitates clarification of the two central concepts involved in the argument, namely "social inequality" and "democracy." I rely on probably the most recognized voice in the field for the definition of social inequality. Amartya Sen (1992 and 1999) has proposed a "capability approach" to assessing inequality. According to Sen (1992), "capability is, thus, a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another. (...) This freedom, reflecting a person's opportunities of well-being must be valued at least for instrumental [*italics in original*] reasons, e.g. in judging how good a 'deal' a person has in the society. But in addition (...) freedom may be seen

as being intrinsically important for a good social structure.”<sup>19</sup> Sen proposes a new foundation for the study of individual behavior, away from individual utilities and toward individual capabilities. Analyzing individuals as having a certain range of capability of choice and action brings the focus to enlarge these capabilities in order to get a more aggregated welfare function. In other words, it is Sen’s insight that investing in an individual’s capabilities through spending in her education and health also has a positive effect on markets, as these freedoms will very likely be used to produce and trade. At the same time, Sen gets rid of the predominant approach of treating self-interested action as the necessary and sufficient basis to produce Pareto optimality. If freedom to “choose what one has good reason to choose” becomes the basic assumption and replaces individual utility, then there is no reason to assume that profit maximizing is the only motive available to guide - and analyze - human action. This treatment offers several advantages, but most importantly it highlights the criterion of the ability of individuals to choose the kind of life they themselves deem valuable. This approach is especially relevant for the analysis of countries with a colonial background, as we shall see later.<sup>20</sup>

Throughout his book, I provide several empirical examples of Brazilians with very unequal capabilities of living the kind of life they deem worth living and even of having a say in the collective decisions that impact their lives. The unequal distribution of the capability to live the life one values has not only important direct consequences on the democratic system. It also has important social consequences that impact democracy, as we shall see.

Defining the concept of “democracy” is more complicated and requires some more elaboration in order to justify the choice of one definition over another. I find the most useful framework to be Jürgen Habermas’ (1998) conceptualization of *discursive democracy*. His theoretical framework allows for the formulation of a coherent set of assumptions and hypotheses about democracy, democratic legitimacy, and the public sphere that I find helpful in assessing democracy’s quality.

Habermas’ model of discursive democracy operates in a space in-between normative models of democracy and sociological theories of society. That is it takes both the state and the society into account. From this perspective, inequality, misrecognition, and oppression are negatively related to democratic governance and they condition the very possibility of a democratic regime. According to Habermas, “only in an egalitarian public of citizens that has emerged from the

confines of class and thrown off the millennia-old shackles of social stratification and exploitation can the potential of an unleashed cultural pluralism fully develop.”<sup>21</sup>

This model of democracy is located in between traditional republican and liberal conceptions. From the republican view, it borrows the conception that democratic legitimacy ultimately rests on public will-formation. Against such communitarian approaches provided by Benjamin Barber (1985) or Michael Sandel (1996), it argues that participation in public affairs is not dependent on the cultivation of virtue, nor is it the citizens’ highest duty to participate in public affairs. In addition to the problems of feasibility that necessarily arise from republican conceptions of democracy in modern societies with millions of inhabitants, republican models of democracy also require substantive definitions of the public good, but what constitutes “the public good” has remained problematic. A discursive model of democracy argues that substantive definitions of the public good are desirable, but not fixed. They are instead open to review, because they are historically determined, and society must constantly engage in public deliberation about such substantive definitions.

Habermas finds that modern societies are too big, too decentered, and too multi-cultural to constitute homogeneous public spheres where all citizens can and must participate, and thus rejects most communitarian models and those classical republican conceptions of democracy that take their inspiration from Aristotle and the Greek *polis*. Deliberation, instead, occurs in several spheres, at several levels of institutionalized and non-institutionalized society, inside and outside the state. Republican views become less and less applicable as societies grow more diverse and multicultural and the drawing of borders of community necessarily excludes certain groups from a solidarity defined in ethnic or national terms.

Unlike the classical liberal conception of democracy, a discursive model of democracy recognizes the need for active citizen participation in democratic governance and remains skeptical of the idea that conflict and negotiations between private interests unfettered by government automatically produces public goods. It also takes issue with the liberal neutrality of the state towards different conceptions of the public good. From a deliberative perspective, it is not enough to ensure that everybody plays by the rules as certain substantive values of secular, modern societies are likely to come under attack by anti-democratic groups that play by the rules and use them to undermine the very basis on which modern,

secular societies stand. In Habermas' own words, "the discourse theory of democracy corresponds to the image of a decentered society, albeit a society in which the political public sphere has been differentiated as an arena for the perception, identification, and treatment of problems affecting the whole society."<sup>22</sup>

According to Habermas, it is through "mobilizing citizen's communicative freedom for the formation of political beliefs"<sup>23</sup> that the democratically achieved common will can be created upon which legitimate state power must ultimately rest. Habermas further argues that, "the success of deliberative politics depends not on a collectively acting citizenry but on the institutionalization of the corresponding procedures and conditions of communication, as well as on the interplay of institutionalized deliberative processes with informally developed public opinions."<sup>24</sup> Seyla Benhabib (1996), in turn, explains that such deliberative models of democracy share a model of "*plurality of modes of association* in which all affected can have the right to articulate their point of view. These can range from political parties, to citizens' initiatives, to social movements, to voluntary associations, to consciousness-raising groups, and the like."<sup>25</sup> For Benhabib, deliberative processes should happen in all these different forms of associations, allowing for an "interlocking" and the creation of "networks" of spaces for deliberative reasoning. She argues that "legitimacy in complex democratic societies must be thought to result from the free and unconstrained public deliberation of all about matters of common concern."<sup>26</sup> This definition comes closest to the model Cohen and Rogers (1995) have called "egalitarian pluralism," understood as a set of institutional designs allowing for secondary associations to influence legislative and administrative arenas.

Critics have argued that deliberations can easily be distorted and manipulated. But instead of undermining this approach, this critique rather points to the reasons why so many contemporary democracies are lacking in quality. Democracy, after all, cannot develop its full potential in societies that are characterized by extreme inequalities, powerful authorities that are able to manipulate or intimidate others, or traditions or religions that, prohibit discussion of particular topics or define certain norms as "God-given" and out of the realm of public deliberation. A discursive conception of democracy helps us see why most democracies are weak and why political processes are oftentimes distorted, leading to inequitable outcomes.

As stated above, no matter how minimalist one's definition of democracy, democratic legitimacy must ultimately rest on public

consent and democratic government must be embedded in a democratic society for this consent to form without excluding significant parts of the citizenry. A collective will must be achieved discursively and behavioral and moral standards must be formed, consolidated, and become institutionalized in the form of legal standards, as Emile Durkheim demonstrated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup> Democratic legitimacy therefore must rest on a democratic public sphere that is open to all citizens, where the public sphere is understood as an open (public) domain of political will formation and discussion.

By elevating the public sphere into the spotlight of democratic legitimacy, the discursive conception of democracy meets Amartya Sen's capability approach. According to Sen, in a democracy all citizens must have equal access to appear in the public sphere without shame and be able to influence it. This basic insight remains unchallenged by the fact that historically, most, if not all, public spheres in the West have remained exclusive and reserved to white males. It is also not invalidated by the fact that in most cases, a plurality of public spheres exists, competing with each other. To the contrary, these caveats allow us to understand why democracy has fallen short of its possibilities in so many places. Habermas and Sen thus point us to the variables we have to analyze if we are interested in the study of democracy.

## **Chapter Overview**

Chapter Two presents a very brief diagnosis of Brazilian democracy and its shortcomings. I propose that the main problem of Brazilian democracy is its inability to represent its weakest elements. Democratic legitimacy, in Brazil, does not rest on the entire population, but on a minority, and access to civil rights in Brazil is a privilege rather than a right. Behind this shortcoming lies the absolute division of Brazilian society into included and excluded groups.

Chapter Three elaborates the historical roots of inclusion in Brazil. Going back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, I demonstrate how a white minority was able to transform itself into the norm and render the black and indigenous majority into exotic others in their own country. This chapter ends with an analysis of how political elites were able to avoid a radical re-structuring of Brazilian society and thereby perpetuate their own privileged positions in the societal hierarchies.

Chapter Four presents research conducted between 2001 and 2005 in Salvador, Bahia on inequality and education. Through a comparison of public and private middle and high schools I demonstrate that public schools, even after a state-wide reform effort initiated in 1999, provide poor education for the poor, whereas private schools prepare the offspring of the historically privileged for their brilliant futures.

Chapter Five addresses the domestication of the excluded and demonstrates how the dichotomy of inclusion / exclusion is reproduced daily within the households of included Brazilians through the very widespread practice of employing domestic servants. I demonstrate that the domestication of the excluded constitutes the superiority of the included and that employing domestic servants is not a pre-modern practice, but part of Brazilian modernity.

Chapter Six, presents and discusses research conducted in 2001, an analysis of Bahian NGOs. Although civil society has the potential to create independent, democratic, and counter-hegemonic public spaces, I find that the NGOs in my sample did not live up to that possibility and instead reproduced the same paternalistic and racist practices that characterize the broader society.

Chapter Seven presents the findings of my research on popular participation in school management, participatory budgeting, and participatory planning, conducted in 2005 and 2006. Although several Brazilian cities created mechanisms to channel popular participation in various policy areas, I find that the deep societal inequalities and the division of Brazilian society into two factions ultimately render meaningful popular participation in any policy-making impossible.

Chapter Eight presents a historical analysis of the Brazilian “political class.” It traces the elite domination of the Brazilian state and its appropriation and indeed privatization by the historically included back to a tradition of “bacharelismo” – a Luso-Brazilian tradition responsible for creating a sense of superiority and lack of commitment and accountability among state officials and elected representatives. Bacharelism provides an important background for understanding the connection between personalistic leadership styles and the state apparatus. It also provides the background for the discussion of the limits of popular participation presented in chapter nine.

In Chapter Nine I recapitulate the main findings and conclusions reached throughout this book.

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<sup>1</sup> My approach also goes beyond the recent re-focusing on civil society to hold governments accountable, as proposed by Peruzzotti and Smulovitz (2006). Although I agree with Avritzer (2002) that democratic innovation must originate from the societal level, I am much less optimistic about the degree to which such innovation characterizes Brazilian society. In my opinion, it is sobering to realize that most accounts of innovative social practices rely on the cases of Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte, and the fact that Participatory Budgeting came to an end in Porto Alegre in 2004 further adds to my skepticism.

<sup>2</sup> In their treatment of Brazilian democracy, authors like Diamond (1999), Linz and Stepan (1996), Hagopian (2000), and Mainwaring (1995 and 1997) typically point to a weak party system and problems resulting from an unstable balance between parliamentary and presidential systems as the causes for unfinished consolidation in Brazil. Although this approach has improved our understanding of the importance of institutional settings to achieve certain outcomes, such analyses must remain unsatisfactory. The debate over which political institutional settings are more likely to improve the functioning of democratic systems runs the risk of confounding means with ends, because although institutions are important to provide incentives and channel expectations, they cannot guarantee a desired outcome, as recently pointed out by Avritzer (2002).

<sup>3</sup> Evans et.al. Skocpol 1985:9.

<sup>4</sup> Caldeira and Holston 1998:276, in Aguero and Stark (eds.).

<sup>5</sup> E.g. following Joseph Schumpeter in his minimalist treatment of democracy, where political elites compete for votes in regular and fair elections.

<sup>6</sup> To be exact, by focusing on the excluded, social scientists involuntarily help the included to escape analysis and they are at risk of becoming functional in the ongoing process of consolidating the idea that blacks, indigenous groups, women, homosexuals, and the poor are "Others," whereas they, the included, represent the norm. In my own empirical research I consistently found nothing to be wrong with the excluded and a lot to be wrong with the included. A shift of focus away from the excluded and onto the included necessitates a shift of optics, away from an anthropological gaze on those historically constructed as Others and a redirection of focus on the men and women who have the power to decide over what counts as right or wrong, normal and deviant, beautiful and ugly, worthy and unworthy of social esteem and over who is to be considered an equal participant in the public sphere and who is not. I am, of course, influenced by Foucault's analysis of "Discipline and Punish" and his analysis of the different ways power influences our societal relationships.

<sup>7</sup> Butler 1998:41.

<sup>8</sup> Engels wrote, "According to the materialist conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of immediate life. This, again, is of a twofold character: on the one side, the production of the means of existence, of food, clothing, and shelter and the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human



beings themselves, the propagation of the species.” (quoted from Butler 1998:41)

<sup>9</sup> Fraser 1998:141.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Fraser 1998:144.

<sup>12</sup> Harris (1993), studying race relations in the US, demonstrates how symbolical whiteness was constructed and used in the United States as a form of capital in order to justify undeserved.

<sup>13</sup> Lesser 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Bourdieu 1984:107.

<sup>15</sup> Bourdieu 1984:110.

<sup>16</sup> This insight goes back to Hegel’s discussion of the master and slave relationship. According to Tajfel (1986), groups constitute themselves in relation to other individuals and groups. A sense of identity is fostered through the drawing of borders that separate those inside from those outside. This drawing of borders not only permits the effective separation of one group into two or more, it also constitutes each group with reference to the others. Tajfel’s main dialectic insight was that one group can only exist by defining itself as different from another. Difference and identity are constituted together. In short, inclusion can only produce the desired effect if it is contrasted with exclusion.

<sup>17</sup> George and Bennett 2005:5.

<sup>18</sup> George and Bennett 2005:206.

<sup>19</sup> Sen 1992:40f.

<sup>20</sup> My adoption of Sen’s framework is thus similar to the use Guillermo O’Donnell (2004) makes of Sen’s analytical approach.

<sup>21</sup> Habermas 1998:308.

<sup>22</sup> Habermas 1998:301.

<sup>23</sup> Habermas 1998:147.

<sup>24</sup> Habermas 1998:298.

<sup>25</sup> Benhabib 1996:73.

<sup>26</sup> Benhabib 1996:68.

<sup>27</sup> The Division of Labor in Society, first published in 1893.