

Making Democracy Real:  
Participatory Governance in Urban Latin America

By

Gabriel Bodin Hetland

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Committee in charge:

Professor Michael B Burawoy, Chair

Professor Peter B Evans

Professor Laura J Enriquez

Professor Dylan J Riley

Professor Michael J Watts

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## Abstract

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A growing body of literature shows that experiments with participatory governance, which most often occur at the urban level, can help make democracy more real by establishing institutional mechanisms that effectively link what citizens want and what governments deliver. Within this literature there is broad agreement that successful participatory governance is most likely when two conditions are present: a left-of-center party with an ideological commitment to participatory democracy is in local office and local civil society is strong and autonomous. This dissertation shows that neither of these conditions is necessary for successful participatory governance by demonstrating that participatory reform can succeed in making democracy more real in cities run by right-of-center parties and when local civil society lacks autonomy vis-à-vis the national state and ruling party. These claims are based on nineteen months of ethnographic fieldwork comparing participatory reform in four cities in Venezuela and Bolivia, with research conducted on a city governed by a Left and a Right party in each country.

To explain the unexpected findings generated by this research I develop a novel framework for understanding participatory governance centered on the concept of an urban political regime, which refers to the overall pattern of state-society relations prevailing in a given city. Data from the four cities researched shows that the importance and effectiveness of participatory decision-making varies markedly across different urban political regimes: in some regimes participatory decision-making is central and effective, in others it is practically non-existent and ineffective and in still others it is in-between. To explain the emergence of particular urban political regimes in particular cities, and transitions from one regime to another within a given city, this study examines the interaction between socioeconomic structure, historical legacies of past regimes and national political change. This framework facilitates analysis of participatory governance that goes beyond binary distinctions between success and failure. It also draws attention to two sets of relationships that have received little attention from other scholars of participation: between the past and present, and between local and national politics. Finally it highlights the mutability and dynamic nature of political processes. In so doing this study shows that democracy is not a finished product but an ongoing process.

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## Preface

This dissertation examines efforts to make democracy real in urban Latin America. The impetus behind the project is twofold. First there is mounting evidence that democracy, as it currently practiced in my home country, the United States, and much of the world, has become increasingly unreal. The central institutions of modern democracy – periodic elections leading to representative governments – seem increasingly incapable of fulfilling the basic purpose of democracy, allowing the many to have a say in how they are ruled. On innumerable issues, relating to healthcare, housing, unemployment benefits, education, infrastructure, bank regulation, foreign policy and more, there is often a significant gap between the preferences expressed by ordinary citizens and the policies pursued by political elites.<sup>1</sup> One of the main reasons for this gap is the pernicious and growing influence of money in politics, which highlights the increasing subordination of political institutions to corporate interests. It is sad, but hardly surprising, that in the face of the commodification of democracy (in which the guiding principle is not one person, one vote but rather one dollar, one vote) millions of ordinary citizens, who lack the resources needed to buy political influence, turn away from politics entirely. Witness the dismal turnout in the November 2014 midterm elections in the US when barely a third of eligible voters (36.6%) turned out to vote, the lowest rate in seven decades.

While leading some citizens to disavow politics, the failings of actually existing democracy have led others to seek to transform democracy by creating participatory institutions that provide a more effective link between what citizens want and what governments deliver. The second motivation behind this study is the hope that these efforts will succeed in making democracy more real by providing ordinary people tools to affect the decisions that affect their lives.

This study focuses on Latin America because over the last twenty-five years the region has experienced a remarkable transformation, from a textbook example of unreal democracy to a pioneer of democratic experiments, such as participatory budgeting. Most of these experiments have taken place in cities run by left-of-center parties. Participatory reform has also occurred in cities governed by centrist and right-of-center parties. Yet there has been little research examining such cases. This is partly due to the fact that such cases are less common, though growing in number. It may also be due to the plausible assumption that participatory reform implemented by non-left, and particularly conservative, parties is likely to be less successful in terms of allowing citizens to exercise genuine control over political decision-making. (This assumption is plausible in light of the historical record of centrist and conservative parties in Latin America. Until the late twentieth century centrist and, particularly, rightwing political forces regularly undermined democracy in Latin America. By the 1990s these forces had largely, and often reluctantly, accepted democracy, but the version of democracy promoted by the Center and Right was of liberal, representative democracy, not participatory democracy.) Scholars' tendency to focus on cases of participatory success may (unconsciously) steer them away from studying participation implemented by centrist and conservative parties.

The assumption that participatory reform is more likely to succeed in cities governed by the Left rather than the Right (or Center) has not, to my knowledge, been

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<sup>1</sup> A separate but related issue is the ability of elites to influence ordinary citizens' views in ways inimical to democratic principles by spreading misleading and outright false information through corporate media.

systematically examined. This study seeks to do this. To gain traction on this issue I conducted nineteen months of ethnographic research on participatory reform in cities governed by Left and Right parties in Venezuela and Bolivia. I chose Venezuela and Bolivia for two reasons. First, within Latin America these are the two countries where participatory democracy has been most central in recent years. Following the elections of Hugo Chávez in 1998 and Evo Morales in 2005, participatory democracy was enshrined in both countries' new constitutions and was (and in the case of Morales and Chávez's successor, Nicolás Maduro, still is) a key facet of both leaders' political discourse. Second, the similarities between Venezuela and Bolivia – e.g. Chávez's and Morales' fiery critiques of capitalism and imperialism and embrace of state-led development and, in a more rhetorical and uneven fashion, popular power and socialism – have led many commentators to lump the countries together as part of Latin America's "radical", "populist" or "bad" Left. Yet, there is a key difference in the two countries' processes of transformation: Venezuela's has been more top-down and state-led, while Bolivia's has been more bottom-up and society-led. Comparing the two countries provides a way to test whether and how this difference matters to local-level participatory reform.

My research design, which combines cross- and sub-national comparison, allows participatory reform to be compared along two axes: a Left-Right axis, in terms of the party in local office, and a state-versus-society-led-change axis, in terms of national context. There is a strong consensus amongst scholars that participatory reform is most likely to succeed when two factors are present: a pro-participation Left party is in local office and there is a strong and autonomous civil society. This led me to formulate two hypotheses about the likely findings of my research. The first was that I would find greater success, defined as participatory institutions that allow ordinary citizens to effectively control local political decisions (particularly those related to the municipal budget), in the two cities run by Left parties. The second was that I would find relatively greater success in the two Bolivian cities.

The results of my research differed from both hypotheses. I found relatively successful participatory reform in the *Left and Right* Venezuelan cases and relatively unsuccessful participation in both Bolivian cases. The main argument of this dissertation is that this doubly unexpected finding is best explained by the interaction between socioeconomic development, historical legacies of local state-society relations and national political change. To make this argument I introduce the concept of "urban political regime". This refers to the relatively stable pattern of state-society relations prevailing in a city at a given time. This pattern can be measured along two axes, the balance of forces between the local state and civil society and the mode of mediation through which the state and society relate.

Participatory reform occurs within the broader pattern of state-society relations established by a given urban political regime. To understand participatory reform in the four cities included in this study I examine the urban political regime that exists in each city. Multiple processes shape urban political regimes. My analysis focuses on socioeconomic processes associated with capitalist development, in particular the uneven transformation of feudalistic agrarian relations, urbanization and integration into the national and global economy, and political processes of democratization and de-democratization. Since these are historical processes I pay attention to the historical succession of urban political regimes found in each city. Historical legacies of prior urban

regimes play an important role in shaping current urban regimes. The past does not, however, fully determine the present. Urban regimes change over time due to the intersection between internal contradictions within a regime, socioeconomic development and national political change. For each of the four cities I thus pay attention to the dynamic relationship between socioeconomic forces operating at the local, national and global level; local historical legacies of past regimes, with particular attention given to the development of internal contradictions within regimes; and national political change.

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I am grateful to numerous people in the cities of Torres, Sucre, Santa Cruz and El Alto for their trust, generosity and willingness to let a nosy *gringo* ask innumerable questions about their work and lives. I am especially grateful to Myriam Gimenez and her family for allowing me to live with them during my first month in Torres, to Johnny Murphy for his warmth, stories and willingness to facilitate my access to officials in Torres and to Julio Chávez for his time. In Sucre I thank everyone from Fundasucre, who showed me such generosity and warmth. In El Alto I thank officials, leaders and members from Fejuve and City Hall for their openness. And in Santa Cruz I thank leaders and members from district associations, neighborhood councils and the MAS throughout the city. For help making my fieldwork in Venezuela possible and enjoyable I thank Lisa Sullivan, Kendra Fehrer, Alejandro Velasco, David Smilde, Sujatha Fernandes, the *compañeros y compañeras* of the Antimano hostel, Mariya Ivancheva and Carlos Martinez. In Bolivia I am grateful for the support and camaraderie of Sinclair Thomson, Luis Gomez, Noah and Jean Friedman-Rudovsky, Susan Ellison, Jorge Derpic, Sara Shariari, Lesli Huey, Sarah Hines, Ana Arendar and Adriana Soto.

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## Introduction

On Thursday November 26, 2009, sixty community leaders from the Las Mercedes parish of Torres, a municipality in the western Venezuelan state of Lara, gathered for a public assembly. Over the next several hours, these citizens, who work in non-elite occupations as small farmers, agricultural laborers, students, teachers and housewives, and were elected by their communities to serve as *voceros* (spokespeople), engaged in a vigorous discussion about the 850,340 *Bolivares* (approximately 400,000 US dollars) allocated to their parish. A number of projects – for a cultural center, road paving, electric lighting, water purification, water tanks, an aqueduct and a tractor (to be used as a school bus, an ambulance, and for road leveling and agriculture) – were discussed and approved during the assembly. Before each project was approved there was dialogue, at times heated, about the project's relative merits and the wisdom of spending the parish's limited budget funds on one project versus another.

Towards the beginning of the assembly there was a discussion of whether to fund two projects, for street lighting and drinking water, which were approved last year but not executed due to budget cuts. One vocero argued against funding the street lighting project, pointing to the fact that Venezuela was in the midst of a severe drought that had caused frequent electricity blackouts throughout the country. He said, "I think that given the current situation with electricity, the street lighting project is not all that urgent and should not be funded". Another man concurred, saying he felt that drinking water was more urgent. A woman from the community where the street lighting would go spoke in favor of the project, saying, "Not having this street light is a security issue for these communities. If you arrive later, after 10 PM or so, it's totally dark and unsafe". A man also spoke in favor of completing the street lighting project, which he said would "raise the community's self esteem". The assembly facilitator, also a man, urged that the project be approved, saying, "It was a commitment from the previous year, so we should make a decision about this in the assembly". In the end both projects were approved.

Since 2005, discussions like this have taken place in assemblies held throughout Torres as part of a Participatory Budget that gives residents control over the municipal budget. The basic features of Torres' Participatory Budget are as follows. Ordinary citizens, rather than elected officials, party leaders or technical experts, are given binding decision-making control over 100% of the investment budget. Decision-making takes place through deliberation, where competing views are expressed and justified through reason-based arguments. As the description of the Las Mercedes parish assembly shows, deliberation touches on both mundane issues (a specific street light) and questions of broader import (drought, energy policy, citizen/women's security). The process is inclusive, meaning any citizen (over the age of sixteen) can participate irrespective of race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender or political views; most participants identify as Chavistas (supporters of Hugo Chávez) but non-Chavistas also participate. Turnout has been high, with thousands (and likely tens of thousands) of citizens, most from the popular classes, participating in the process each year. Finally, there is an effective link between decisions and actions, with approved projects funded by Torres' municipal government and implemented by the municipality or citizens themselves.

Beyond its obvious importance to the citizens involved, Torres' Participatory Budget is significant for thinking about democracy. In the United States and much of the

world democracy is usually seen as being synonymous with elections and representative government. Political participation is equated with voting and, in some accounts, citizens' efforts to influence political representatives outside of elections, through lobbying, petitions, letter writing, protest, etc. In addition to regular, free and fair elections, and freedoms of expression and assembly, a fundamental, taken-for-granted assumption is that democracy entails a clear separation between rulers and ruled. In the words of Adam Przeworski (2010: 166), "[T]he people cannot rule. It can only be ruled by others".

One of the goals of this dissertation is to show that this view is mistaken. Torres' Participatory Budget shows that participatory democracy, in which ordinary people (the ruled) have a direct and consequential say in political decisions affecting their lives, is not a utopian fantasy, contrary to the views of Przeworski and other prominent scholars (Schumpeter 1942; Huntington 1993; Weber 1978; Michels 1960). Torres' Participatory Budget stands out as a particularly successful example of participatory democracy, but it is far from unique. There are thousands of examples of participatory decision-making in Latin America and throughout the world (Sintomer et al. 2010).

This dissertation examines efforts to foster participatory democracy in four cities in Venezuela and Bolivia, comparing cities governed by Left and Right parties in each country. The dissertation seeks to contribute to the study of participatory democracy in five main ways, which relate to the study's title. First, evidence is presented that the creation of participatory institutions, which allow ordinary citizens to exercise control over political decision-making in a relatively direct and consequential manner, can help make democracy more *real*, in the sense of effectively linking what citizens want to what governments deliver. This finding, which supports a growing body of research showing that participatory democracy can succeed (Baiocchi 2005; Wampler 2007; Avritzer 2009; Goldfrank 2011a; Baiocchi, Heller and Silva 2011), is important, and not only for academic reasons. This is because many scholars, journalists, politicians and citizens, while they may acknowledge and lament the shortcomings of actually existing representative democracy, see participatory democracy as romantic and impractical.

The dissertation makes three contributions relating to the questions of *how* and *under what conditions* democracy can be made more real. First, the findings presented herein suggest that the conditions needed for successful participatory reform may be considerably broader than existing studies suggest. Most scholars agree that participatory reform is most likely to succeed when a pro-participation Left party is in local office and there is a strong and autonomous civil society (cf. Avritzer 2009). This study shows that neither of these conditions is necessary to successful participatory democracy by demonstrating that participatory reform can succeed in cities run by *Right* parties and in contexts where civil society lacks full autonomy from the national state and ruling party. The study also shows that participatory reform can fail even when there is a pro-participation left party in local office and a strong and autonomous civil society.

Second, to explain these unexpected outcomes I develop a novel explanation for participatory success and failure. This explanation centers on the concept of an *urban political regime*, which refers to the broader pattern of state-society relations within a given city as measured along two axes: the balance of forces and mode of mediation between the local state and society. Participation is one facet of an urban regime; the importance, character and effectiveness of participation differ considerably in different regimes. I explain differences between regimes, and transitions from one regime to

another within cities, by examining the interaction between socioeconomic structure, historical legacies of prior urban regimes and national political change. This approach, which highlights the dynamic relationship between national socioeconomic and political forces and local politics, and between the past and present, differs from most explanations of participatory success and failure, which tend to emphasize local factors, such as the level of resources, character of local political and civil society and institutional design. Much less attention has been paid to national processes, the interaction between national and local politics or the relationship between the past and present.<sup>2</sup>

Third, my analysis challenges preconceived notions of the relationship between “top-down” and “bottom-up” processes (and of contemporary Venezuela and Bolivia as well). Participatory democracy is usually seen as a “bottom-up” process (Avritzer 2009). Yet, contrary to what one would have expected based on existing scholarship on participatory democracy and on Venezuela and Bolivia, my findings suggest that Venezuela’s attempt to foster participatory democracy “from above” has enhanced the prospects for successful local participatory democracy, including in cities run by the anti-Chavista Right, while the lack of this type of effort in Bolivia has inhibited the prospects for successful participation in cities governed by the Left and Right.

Finally, this study takes the idea of *making* democracy real seriously, by seeing participatory reform as a relational and historical process. This has three consequences for how the cities included in this study are analyzed. First, as mentioned participatory reform is viewed as one facet of the broader relationship between the state and civil society established by a particular urban political regime. Second, I pay attention to how regimes come into being and change as a result of the interaction between internal contradictions within a regime and factors external to the regime, in particular national political change. Finally, I analyze the future potential trajectories of regimes.

## MAKING, UNMAKING AND REMAKING DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

Over the course of the twentieth century Latin America experienced two waves of democratization punctuated by a wave of de-democratization (Tilly 2007). The first wave of democratization occurred between the 1910s and 1950s, with most countries democratizing during the 1930s and 1940s. This generated a wave of de-democratization, which commenced in the 1940s and lasted through the 1980s, with most countries experiencing authoritarian rule for extended periods during the 1950s, 1960s and/or 1970s. A second wave of (re)democratization occurred in the 1980s. This set the stage for the wave of participatory experiments in the region over the last twenty-five years.

### *Making Democracy: The First Wave of Democratization*

Through the early twentieth century Latin America was ruled in an oligarchic manner, with landowning and industrial elites controlling political decision-making at the national and local level.<sup>3</sup> This form of rule came into crisis as a result of the region’s

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<sup>2</sup> There are a few exceptions to this. Goldfrank (2011a) discusses how national decentralization affects local participation. Van Cott (2008) links differences in national institutional design to local participation efforts. And Baiocchi (2005), Baiocchi, Heller and Silva (2011) and Canel (2010) pay attention to how historical legacies shape the present. The analyses provided in these works cannot, however, account for my findings.

<sup>3</sup> This account draws extensively on Collier and Collier (1991).

growing links to the global economy, with Latin America experiencing a twenty-fivefold increase in world trade between the mid-nineteenth century and the start of World War I (Collier and Collier 1991: 59). Commercialization and industrialization generated rising social discontent from displaced peasants and the growing number of workers and middle-class professionals concentrated in rapidly growing cities. Workers' initial efforts to unionize, improve their living conditions and organize politically were met with repression. Between the 1910s and 1930s reformist political parties were formed in countries throughout the region. These parties, many of which were linked to workers' movements, agitated for greater political and social freedoms.

During the 1930s and 1940s (and in some cases earlier) reformist parties utilized mass mobilization to gain office through revolution, elections and military coups. Once in power these parties expanded the electorate and implemented reforms providing greater civil, political and social rights, including the right to unionize and organize politically. This process was most extensive in cases of "labor" populism, such as Argentina and Peru, where the reformist party was linked to the urban labor movement, and "radical" populism, such as Venezuela, Mexico and Bolivia, where the reformist party was linked to, and engaged in extensive organization and mobilization of, workers and peasants, and implemented comparatively far-reaching redistributive policies that benefitted the popular classes and directly impinged upon elite sources of wealth and power.

Democratization went hand in hand with a shift from free market capitalism to state-led regulated capitalism. Philosophically this was a shift from economic liberalism to economic nationalism. Through nationalization of key industries and import-substitution industrialization (ISI) the role of the state in the economy expanded considerably. This was, on the whole, favorable to the popular classes, who benefited from greater state support for (or at least tolerance of) unionization and redistributive policies. Domestic business interests benefitted from ISI as well, although over time, particularly following the end of the "easy" phase of ISI, involving domestic production of consumer goods, industrial elites increasingly turned against these regimes (Collier 1979).

### *Unmaking Democracy*

Democratization was threatening to economic elites, particularly when populist or socialist parties came to power, which raised the specter of radical redistribution. Military leaders, Catholic Church officials, conservative parties and members of the middle class also feared the socially and politically destabilizing nature of mass democracy. Between the 1940s and 1970s most Latin American countries experienced de-democratization, with civilian rule suspended and military regimes installed. Economic elites, military generals, foreign governments (particularly the US), conservative political forces and transnational business interests led the authoritarian backlash, with centrist parties, the middle class and the Church usually offering support as well. Political and social rights granted during the wave of democratization were reversed. And the organized working class, the peasantry and leftist parties and organizations faced repression and state violence during this period, which in many countries was extremely brutal.

State-led development and military rule were not incompatible, with ISI policies continuing in most countries in the region during this time. Military regimes, however, proved more open to free-market ideas and foreign capital. This was particularly true in

Chile during the Pinochet years. Milton Friedman and other economists from the University of Chicago, which had been training Chilean economics students since the 1950s, traveled to Chile during this time, helping to engineer the country's radical embrace of neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation and liberalization. Other regimes in Latin America, particularly other "bureaucratic authoritarian" regimes in the southern cone, also opened up to increased foreign investment in the 1960s and 1970s (Collier 1979).

*Remaking Democracy: Re-democratization and Participatory Experimentation*

In most of Latin America democracy was re-established during the 1980s. Collective mobilization by the popular classes was crucial to ending military rule, although political elites, the middle class, the Church (particularly its progressive wing, which had been openly critical of authoritarianism) and even business and the US government also provided support for re-democratization (Collier and Mahoney 1997; Weyland 2004). This second wave of democratization coincided with another momentous shift within the region: from state-led to market-driven development. This process occurred at the behest of international financial institutions and was led by center and center-right parties, which in a number of cases were historically left or center-left parties that shifted to the right over the course of the late twentieth century.

Latin America's second wave of democratization facilitated the emergence of a wave of participatory experiments within the region beginning in the 1980s and continuing through the present. During this time hundreds of Latin American cities have implemented innovative participatory reforms that allow ordinary people to have a direct say regarding political decisions affecting their lives. During the region's ongoing "Left Turn", which began in the late 1990s, participatory democracy has become increasingly central to national-level politics in several countries in the region.

Re-democratization facilitated this wave of participatory experimentation in a direct and an indirect way. The political freedoms restored by re-democratization – the right to vote, campaign and run for office, and openly engage in political speech and organization – created space that allowed civic associations and leftist parties that were banned and repressed in previous decades to regroup and engage in collective mobilization. This, in turn, allowed leftist parties, such as the Workers' Party in Brazil, the Broad Front in Uruguay and La Causa R in Venezuela, to gain office in important cities throughout the region. Once in office, these parties implemented participatory budgeting and other novel forms of participatory reform (Goldfrank 2011a).

The indirect link between re-democratization and participatory experimentation is due to the fact that re-democratization coincided with neoliberalism. As a result the *limits* of representative democracy were particularly pronounced during the 1980s and 1990s. The restoration of democracy raised citizens' hopes that governments would be more responsive to popular demands that had been ignored and/or repressed for decades. Latin America's debt crisis, however, forced governments to be responsive to international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which provided them emergency loans. In exchange for these loans, governments were forced to implement harsh austerity policies that were painful, deeply unpopular, and in many cases provoked significant popular resistance.

Advocates of these policies promised that neoliberalism would usher in an era of

unprecedented growth and help reduce poverty. These promises, however, went unfulfilled. In almost every Latin American country annual growth was lower in the 1980s and 1990s, the era of market reform, than during the 1960s and 1970s, the final decades of state-led development. In many Latin American countries, growth was negative or close to zero during the 1980s and 1990s. In all but a few, it was less than 1% during these decades. For the region as a whole, growth in the 1980s and 1990s was *one-sixth* what it had been during the 1960s and 1970s (Solimano and Soto 2005: 10). Poverty increased in the region as a whole during this period, going from 15.3% of the region's population in 1987 to 15.6% in 1998 (Stiglitz 2003). Inequality also increased in a majority of Latin American countries during this time (Portes and Hoffman 2003).

The contrast between promise and reality generated critiques of neoliberalism and electoral democracy. This fueled Latin America's Left Turn, with parties critical of neoliberalism and supportive of participatory democracy, both to varying degrees, taking office in cities and subsequently at the national level throughout the region. Between 1998 and 2014, Left and center-left parties took office, and in many cases stayed in office through multiple subsequent elections, in fifteen countries in the region.<sup>4</sup> As Goldfrank (2011a) notes, Latin America's Left Turn occurred first at the local level, with Left parties winning office, and implementing participatory reform in a number of important cities in the 1980s and 1990s, including Lima (1984), Porto Alegre, (1988), São Paulo (1988), Montevideo (1990), Caracas (1992), Belo Horizonte (1992) and Mexico City (1997).

The most well-known and successful case of participatory democracy occurred in Porto Alegre, Brazil where the Workers' Party implemented participatory budgeting (Baiocchi 2005). Porto Alegre's success led hundreds of cities in Brazil and throughout Latin America to introduce participatory budgeting in the 1990s and 2000s. The practice has continued to spread to countries around the world. The most recent estimate is that participatory budgeting is practiced in at least 1500 cities around the world, including several in the US (Sintomer et al. 2010; Baiocchi and Ganuza 2014: 30).

## STUDYING PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Since the late 1990s there has been an explosion of studies of participatory democracy. Early scholarship provided evidence that, in contrast to skeptics' views, participatory democracy was possible (Sousa Santos 1998; Abers 2000). These and other studies document the benefits of successful participatory reform, which include increasing the transparency and responsiveness of state institutions (Wampler 2007; Goldfrank 2011a), spurring the growth of civil society and transforming associational practices (Abers 2000; Baiocchi 2005), and expanding the "cognitive horizons" of the poor by transforming how citizens interact with the state (Baiocchi, Heller and Silva 2011: 156).

As participatory institutions spread to more and more cities within Latin America and beyond scholars were confronted with the reality that there is considerable variation in the outcome of efforts to implement participatory reform. This realization pushed scholars to ask why some participatory experiments succeed while others fail. To answer this question researchers have pointed to a number of factors, including: the nature and

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<sup>4</sup> In order of when the Left Turn occurred these are Venezuela, Haiti, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, El Salvador, Peru and Costa Rica.

actions of incumbent and opposition parties (Baiocchi 2003, 2005; Williams 2008; Goldfrank 2011a); the character of civil society (Baiocchi, Heller and Silva 2011); the design of participatory institutions (Fung and Wright 2003; Wampler 2007; Avritzer 2009); the level of national decentralization (Goldfrank 2011a); and political “leadership” (Van Cott 2008; McNulty 2011). There is a consensus amongst most scholars studying participation that participatory success is most likely when a left-of-center party committed to participation is in local office and local civil society is strong and autonomous (Heller 2001; Wampler 2007; Williams 2008; Avritzer 2009; Goldfrank 2011a; Baiocchi, Heller and Silva 2011).

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This study compares participatory reform in cities run by Left and Right parties in Venezuela and Bolivia. This research design provides a way to test the assumptions that participatory reform is more likely to succeed when a (pro-participation) Left rather than a Right party is in local office and when civil society is strong and autonomous, as opposed to being weak and/or dependent vis-à-vis the state and ruling party. By examining cities run by Left and Right parties in two countries this research design is novel in two ways. Most studies of participation focus exclusively on cities governed by the Left (cf. Abers 2000; Baiocchi 2003, 2005; Wampler 2007; Avritzer 2009; Goldfrank 2011a). And most studies (including all those listed above apart from Goldfrank 2011a) focus on one or more cities within a single country, most often Brazil.

As discussed in the preface, I chose to research participatory reform in cities in Venezuela and Bolivia because of the two countries’ similarities and differences. Both countries are seen as part of Latin America’s “radical Left” due to Hugo Chávez’s and Evo Morales’ comparatively radical rhetoric and policies, including their advocacy of participatory democracy. There are, however, important differences between the two countries, in terms of political economy, culture, history and state-society relations. For the purpose of this study the key difference between the two (which is related to the differences just mentioned) is the distinct character of the countries’ recent processes of national political change. Scholars argue that Venezuela’s more top-down, state-led process has fostered a “dependent civil society” (Hawkins and Hansen 2006). Bolivia’s process of change, by contrast, has been much more bottom up, with strong and fiercely autonomous social movements leading the way (Hylton and Thomson 2007: 9).<sup>5</sup>

## STUDY FINDINGS: EXPECTED VERSUS OBSERVED OUTCOMES

Based on existing literature on participatory democracy and on Venezuela and Bolivia I had two expectations about the outcomes I would find through my research:<sup>6</sup> I expected to find greater success in the two Left cases and relatively more success in the two Bolivian cases. To compare the relative degree of success across the four cities studied I looked at the following four indicators in each city:

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<sup>5</sup> According to Hylton and Thomson (2007: 9, emphasis added): “In Venezuela, political transformation has occurred at the level of *the state* and then worked from the *top down* to channel the existing energies of grassroots organizations... In Bolivia, by contrast, impressive *popular power* has flowed from the *bottom up*, setting the parameters for national political and economic debate and putting in place authorities at the national as well as regional and local levels. In no other Latin American country have popular forces achieved so much through *their own initiative*.”

<sup>6</sup> My research process is discussed in detail in the methodological appendix.



- *Extent of popular control* over local political decision-making. This is measured by examining the percent of the investment budget subject to participatory budgeting, whether non-budgetary issues are subject to popular control, and turnout for participatory processes such as participatory budgeting.
- *Quality of popular control* over decision-making. This is measured by looking at whether decision-making approximates a norm of deliberation, in which competing perspectives are put forth and justified through reason-based arguments (with this understood in a straightforward manner, as in “We should do a because of x, y and/or z” vs. “We should do b because of e, f and/or g”, etc.). I also look at whether officials or participants have final say over decisions and finally at the inclusivity of decision-making venues and the distribution of state resources in terms of race/ethnicity, class, gender and political views.
- *Institutional effectiveness*, meaning the degree to which inputs into decision-making (provided through participatory institutions, protest or other channels) are effectively translated into government output. This can be measured in a more “objective” fashion, by looking at the rate of budgetary execution (the percent of the budget spent in a given year) or project implementation, and in a more “subjective” manner, by examining citizens’ perceptions of effectiveness.
- *Political effectiveness*, which refers to the political fortunes of the incumbent party. This can be measured by whether the incumbent party secures re-election, whether this occurs even when a new mayoral candidate (from the same party) runs for office, the party’s margin of victory or defeat, and by the party’s success establishing a non-conflictual relationship with civil society.

There are three reasons for thinking participatory reform is more likely to succeed – meaning there is extensive, high-quality popular control over decision-making and institutional and political effectiveness – in cities governed by Left rather than Right parties. First, in Latin America and globally political forces on the Left, and the social groups most closely linked to the Left historically, the organized working class and the subordinate classes in general, have played a key role in efforts to establish and reestablish electoral democracy. The political Right, and the social groups traditionally linked to the Right, agrarian and industrial elites, the military, the Church and foreign capital, have, by contrast, resisted democratization and led efforts to de-democratize (Reuschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992). Second, those on the Left and Right tend to view democracy in distinct ways. For the Left democracy is linked to popular power, social justice and socioeconomic equality. In recent decades, following the Latin American Left’s general acceptance of electoral democracy (as more than just a bourgeois sham), the Left embraced the idea of deepening democracy (Goldfrank 2011a). The Right historically viewed democracy with great suspicion; in recent decades the Right has, by and large, come to accept democracy but it is viewed in formal, “institutional” terms, as elections and representative government, with participatory democracy viewed with suspicion or outright hostility (ibid.). It is the case that mainstream development institutions such as the World Bank, which have often promoted ideas championed by the Right, such as market reform and fiscal austerity, embraced participation during the 1990s and 2000s and have worked to promote the spread of participatory budgeting. Centrist parties in certain countries, e.g. Brazil, have

also implemented participatory budgeting. There are reasons to think, however, that participatory experiments promoted by the World Bank and/or centrist (or center-right) parties will not generate the type of popular control over decision-making found in cities like Porto Alegre under the Workers Party. This is because the World Bank and centrist parties view participation as a means of fostering “good governance” rather than a tool for radical empowerment (Wampler and Avritzer 2005). Finally, there is evidence that Left parties have implemented a significant majority of cases of participatory budgeting in Brazil (initially over 90%, and subsequently around 60%), with Right parties implementing participatory budgeting quite rarely (Wampler and Avritzer 2005: 41). The reason for thinking participatory reform is more likely to succeed in Bolivia than in Venezuela is based on the greater strength and autonomy of Bolivian civil society.

*An Empirical Puzzle*

Figure 1 shows the difference between the expected and observed outcomes of this study. As this figure shows, contrary to what was expected there was relatively successful participation in the *Left and Right* Venezuelan cases and relatively unsuccessful participation in both Bolivian cases. The specific outcomes were as follows. Torres was the most successful, achieving extensive, high-quality popular control over decision-making and institutional and political effectiveness. Sucre was the second most successful, achieving significant but more limited and mixed quality popular control and institutional and political effectiveness. El Alto achieved a low degree of popular control but was institutionally and politically ineffective. Santa Cruz achieved essentially no popular control and had limited institutional and political effectiveness.

**Figure 1 Expected and Observed Results of Research**

	EXPECTED OUTCOME			OBSERVED OUTCOME	
	Left	Right		Left	Right
Venezuela	Torres	Sucre	Venezuela	Torres	Sucre
Bolivia	El Alto	Santa Cruz	Bolivia	El Alto	Santa Cruz

(Shaded cells indicate success)

**EXPLAINING THE PUZZLE**

How can this doubly unexpected finding be explained? Before presenting my argument, it is worth examining whether existing explanations of participatory success and failure might explain this puzzle.

*Evaluating Existing Explanations of Participatory Success and Failure*

This section will assess four local-level factors and two national-level factors that scholars commonly point to in seeking to explain participatory success and failure. The

local-level factors are: character of incumbent party; character of civil society; character of opposition parties; and level of resources. The national-level factors are: degree of decentralization; and national institutional framework for local-level participation.

*Character of Incumbent Party.* “Political will”, defined as an incumbent party and/or mayor supportive of participatory reform, is arguably the most basic prerequisite for participatory success (Goldfrank 2007: 98). The fact that nearly all scholarship on urban participation in Latin America focuses on cities run by Left parties (cf. Abers 2000; Heller 2001; Baiocchi 2003, 2005; Chavez and Goldfrank 2004; Goldfrank 2011a) suggests that, whether or not it is explicitly stated, there is a strong presumption amongst scholars that a Left party is a necessary (if not sufficient) condition of political will.<sup>7</sup> The rare examples of scholarship examining participatory reform in cities governed by conservative parties seem to confirm this presumption; Wampler (2007: 228), for example, discusses how participatory budgeting was continued but greatly diminished by the conservative mayor of Recife, Brazil, whose administration implemented only 18.3% of approved participatory budgeting projects between 1997 and 1999.

The findings of this study confirm the general argument that political will is necessary to successful participatory reform, but challenge the idea that political will is impossible if a Right party is in office. Data from El Alto also show that having a Left party with a history of supporting participatory reform in local office will not necessarily lead to participatory success. The character, and specifically the political orientation, of the local incumbent party is thus of limited use in explaining the outcomes presented above. This study also tries to go beyond simply assessing whether political will is “present” or “absent” by examining the local and national political conditions that make the formation of political will more or less likely in a given instance.

*Character of Civil Society.* Most scholars see the character of local civil society as quite important in terms of the potential for participatory success, which is seen as much more likely when civic associations possess a high degree of self-organizational and mobilizational capacity prior to the implementation of participatory reform (Heller 2001; Baiocchi, Heller and Silva 2011). If civil society is weak, politically dependent or both, meaning there are few civic associations and/or existing associations lack the capacity for autonomous organization and mobilization, scholars argue that it is much harder to create the balance of cooperation and contestation between the state and society found in the most successful cases of participatory reform, such as Porto Alegre (Wampler 2007).

The four cities analyzed in this study vary in terms of the strength and autonomy of civil society. Of the four El Alto has by far the strongest and most autonomous civil society. There are thousands of civic associations in the city. Protest has been critical throughout the city’s history. Clientelism has also been prevalent but civic associations tend to be “mercenary” vis-à-vis parties, giving parties strategic support during elections and breaking ties if it suits their interest. The city’s most important civic associations, the

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<sup>7</sup> Goldfrank (2011a: 265-66) discusses the spread of participatory budgeting (PB) to cities governed by non-left parties, writing, “It remains to be seen whether or not political forces that do not have an ideological commitment to deepening democracy through expanding citizen participation can make PB work, and do so in contexts for which it was not initially designed. My expectation is that PB will not successfully serve as a politically neutral “tool” for democracy and development, as many international donors are advertising. My fear is that as it spreads, participatory budgeting will continue in many cases to be designed in such a way as to restrict its potential”. It seems likely most scholars of participation share this view.

Federation of Neighborhood Councils, Regional Workers' Central, and hundreds of grassroots neighborhood councils, demonstrated their tremendous autonomous mobilizational capacity during the historically momentous 2003 and 2005 "Gas Wars", with citizens and neighborhood councils also mobilizing en masse during the 2010 "gasolinazo" (see discussion of these events in chapter 6). Torres and Sucre are both mixed cases. In both cases civil society has historically been dependent on parties and the national state, although in both cities there is also a tradition of more autonomous organizing dating back decades (and in Torres much longer). In both cities, civil society's capacity for mobilization has increased since 2000, during the Chavista era, but civic associations have remained closely tied to either the national ruling party or opposition parties. Santa Cruz has the weakest and most dependent civil society, with civic associations highly dependent on elite patrons and possessing little capacity for autonomous mobilization. This factor helps explain the lack of participatory success in Santa Cruz. But overall, the character of local civil society is of limited use in explaining the findings of this study.

*Character of Opposition Parties.* Goldfrank (2011a) argues that the degree to which local opposition parties are institutionalized shapes the prospects for participatory success. The argument is that well-institutionalized opposition parties are more likely and capable of successfully disrupting an incumbent party's efforts to implement participatory reform. Thus participatory reform is most likely to succeed when opposition parties are weakly institutionalized; operationally this means that there are weak links between opposition parties and grassroots civic associations.

This factor does not appear to hold much explanatory power for understanding the outcomes of this study. In Torres and Sucre, where participatory reform succeeded, the main local opposition party was (initially in Torres and throughout in Sucre) the national ruling party, the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) and from 2007 on the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). In terms of its links to civil society the MVR and particularly the PSUV is comparatively highly institutionalized. In both cases the MVR/PSUV mounted opposition to efforts to implement participatory reform. In Torres this took place through municipal council, which the MVR (and then PSUV) controlled, and in Sucre through grassroots opposition from PSUV militants. This opposition did not, however, succeed in destroying participatory reform in either city. And in fact, in both cases, the incumbent party was eventually able to mobilize considerable turnout for participatory institutions from grassroots supporters and civic associations linked to the MVR/PSUV. In El Alto, the local opposition was not well organized at the grassroots level and did not seek to disrupt participatory reform; thus the lack of participatory success here cannot be attributed to a highly institutionalized opposition party. In Santa Cruz the nationally ruling Movement to Socialism (MAS) was in the local opposition. Within Santa Cruz the MAS is the most organized and institutionalized party, yet its links to civil society are uneven and not fully developed. The MAS' *lack* of a higher degree of institutionalization in Santa Cruz (and nationally) likely contributed, in a certain "negative" sense (see below), to the lack of participatory success in Santa Cruz.

*Level of Resources.* Scholars view the level of resources available for new capital spending, i.e. the municipal investment budget, as important to the success or failure of participatory institutions, such as participatory budgeting, which give citizens control over the use of these resources (Goldfrank 2007: 99; Wampler 2007: 41). The main

argument is that cities with limited resources are less likely to achieve participatory success because participatory institutions will be unable to meet citizens' (most pressing) needs. (A secondary argument is that there tends to be a correlation between cities with more resources and voting for the Left.) As Table 1 shows, the relationship between level of resources and participatory success in the four cities of this study is the exact reverse of what existing literature suggests should be the case. Torres had the most success but has the least resources. Santa Cruz has the most resources but achieved the least success.

**Table 1 Level of Resources in the Four Cities**

	Total Investment Budget (USD)	Population	Per Capita Investment Budget
Torres (2006)	\$6.8 million	185,000	\$36.8
Sucre (2012)	\$88.4 million	600,000-1.5 million <sup>8</sup>	\$60 - \$147.4
Santa Cruz (2013)	\$313.7 million	1.6 million	\$196.1
El Alto (2010)	\$73.8 million	850,000	\$86.9

Sources: Municipal data (Torres); Giusti and De Viveiros 2012: 57 (Sucre); Desafío 2013 (Santa Cruz); Municipal data (El Alto).

*Degree of National Decentralization.* Goldfrank (2011a) argues that the level of national decentralization affects the prospects for local participatory success. The argument is that in countries that have decentralized more, in terms of the resources and responsibilities accorded to municipalities, the chances of successful participation should be higher than in countries with less decentralization. Like many Latin American countries Venezuela and Bolivia both decentralized during the 1990s, instituting direct elections for mayors and implementing reforms affecting local resources and responsibilities (Grindle 2000). Bolivia's decentralization went much further than Venezuela's. In Bolivia 20% of the national budget was provided to municipal governments by the 1994 Law of Popular Participation (LPP). Municipal governments were responsible for a range of functions previously assigned to national or regional bodies, relating to local sanitation, schools, health clinics, sports facilities and secondary roads. The LPP also established mechanisms for citizen involvement in local decision-making, by establishing Oversight Committees, tasked with providing social control over local decision-making by the mayor and city council, and giving grassroots territorial organizations (in cities, neighborhood councils) a chance to have direct say over a portion of spending on city budgets, through a form of participatory budgeting. Venezuela decentralized to a much lesser extent, and implemented decentralization in an uneven way. Direct elections of mayors was established in 1989. Between 1989 and 1993, municipalities share of total revenues increased from 4.19% to 5.68% (Goldfrank 2011a: 67). Cities were granted more responsibilities but, "[t]he national government still intervened in the provision of major public services in most cities, as municipal governments took on few of the share responsibilities" (ibid: 68).

After taking office Evo Morales and Hugo Chávez both made moves to transform their countries' systems of decentralization. In Bolivia, this process moved slowly and through 2011, when fieldwork for this study concluded, the mechanisms of the LPP were

<sup>8</sup> There are widely varying estimates of Sucre's population. The range given for Sucre's per capita investment budget reflects this.

still in place in Bolivian cities. In Venezuela greater changes occurred of a contradictory nature. The Chávez administration implemented a flurry of participatory initiatives that constituted a form of participatory decentralization, giving citizens more direct control over resources and responsibilities at the local level. At the same, however, there was a re-centralization of power within the presidency (Wilpert 2007; Goldfrank 2011a). Thus the results of decentralization during the Chávez era are ambiguous. The direct resources going to municipal governments appears to have decreased under Chávez, while resources going to citizen participatory initiatives have increased, although these initiatives are criticized for being subject to central control and political machinations.

The confusing nature of Venezuela's recent efforts to decentralize make it challenging to draw a clear-cut distinction between the respective degree of decentralization in Venezuela versus Bolivia through the present. Decentralization was much greater in Bolivia through the early 2000s and it appears that there is still a significantly higher level of decentralization in Bolivia in terms of the resources and responsibilities given to local governments. It thus appears that the level of decentralization cannot explain the outcomes of this study, since the two more successful cases were both in Venezuela, which has a lower level of decentralization and has experienced an ambiguous mix of decentralization and recentralization in recent years.

*National Institutional Framework for Local Participation.* Scholars have also pointing to differences in national institutional frameworks in assessing the success and failure of local-level participatory reform. Van Cott (2008: 211) argues that a national framework that favors "bottom-driven decentralization and allows local actors some flexibility to design their own institutions" is most conducive to local success. She finds that Bolivia's Law of Popular Participation, discussed above, is too rigid and thus stifles the ability of local actors to innovate. Studies of the LPP suggest that it has produced limited success, particularly in large cities, but that its implementation has varied considerably throughout the country (Medeiros 2001; Kohl 2003). One of the factors that has inhibited the success of the LPP, as a tool for fostering popular control over decision-making and improving municipalities' institutional effectiveness, is resistance from municipal officials, who have worked to establish political control over the institutional mechanisms of the LPP, such as local Oversight Committees (Altman 2003).

In 2002 Venezuela established nationwide participatory budgeting by creating local public planning councils (CLPPs) in every municipality. The CLPPs were modeled after Porto Alegre's Participatory Budget (Wilpert 2007: 56) and the "parish governments" established in Libertador municipality (Caracas) by the radical Left party La Causa R in the mid-1990s (Goldfrank 2011a: 263). In principle, this model was quite promising. However, in practice it ran into many of the same problems found in Bolivia, with mayors working to control local planning councils, limiting the councils' effectiveness as a tool for participatory governance (ibid; Wilpert 2007: 57). Instead of effective participation, Goldfrank (2011b: 169) argues that the CLPPs, and subsequent participatory initiatives in the mid-to-late 2000s, resulted in "participatory clientelism", in which collective mobilization and deliberation was combined with a politically discretionary distribution of state resources, going only to government supporters. Data presented below from Torres and Sucre shows that this analysis appears correct but that participatory clientelism can serve as a vehicle for establishing effective participation in

certain contexts.

The similar challenges faced in implementing Bolivia's Law of Popular Participation and Venezuela's Law of Public Planning Councils suggests that national institutional frameworks cannot explain the outcomes of this study.

### *My Argument*

I argue that the doubly puzzling outcome presented in Figure 1 can be explained by examining how the interaction between socioeconomic structure, historical legacies of local state-society relations and national political change has generated distinct urban political regimes in the four cities. This argument is developed in the following chapter.

### OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

In Chapter 1 I elaborate the concept of urban political regime. I present brief summaries of the outcomes in my four cases. I then survey alternative explanations for these outcomes, before explicating my own argument. The following four chapters focus on my four cases. To situate my case studies in each country an introductory section, discussing key national political developments during the twentieth century, precedes the two chapters on each country. Each of the case studies follows the same layout, beginning with a brief overview of the city, focused on socioeconomic development over the course of the twentieth century. I then present the historical succession of urban political regimes in each case. Finally, I close with a more detailed discussion of the current regime found in each case. To facilitate comparisons between the cases each of the four current urban regimes is examined in terms of the extent and quality of popular control over local political decision-making and the regime's institutional and political effectiveness. The four case studies close with a discussion of the dynamic trajectory of the current regime. In the conclusion I discuss the broader theoretical and political implications of my findings.

CHAPTER 1  
**URBAN POLITICAL REGIMES**

To understand the double puzzle posed by the findings of this study – why participatory reform succeeded in cities governed by Left and Right parties in Venezuela and was relatively unsuccessful in cities run by Left and Right parties in Bolivia – requires examining the distinct urban political regimes of the four cities. The term urban political regime refers to the relationship between the local state and civil society as measured along two axes. The first is the balance of forces between the state and society. Regimes can be characterized as either state-led or society-led depending on whether the local state or civil society is the driving force that establishes the regime’s overall logic. The second axis is the mode of mediation between the local state and civil society. I distinguish between democratic and clientelistic modes of mediation. Democratic mediation is characterized by transparent, universalistic rules that provide citizens and civic associations equal access to state resources and decision-making structures irrespective of political views or personal connections. In clientelistic mediation access to state resources and decision-making structures is politically discretionary and depends on citizens’ and civic associations’ political support for and/or personal connections to specific state officials and politicians.

Urban political regimes can combine a balance of force and mode of mediation in four ways, yielding four types of regime, as shown in Figure 2.1. These four types of regime correspond to the outcomes found in the four cities of this study.

**Figure 2 Types and Dimensions of Urban Political Regimes**

		<i>Balance of Forces</i>	
		<b>State-Led</b>	<b>Society-Led</b>
<i>Mode of Mediation</i>	<b>Democratic</b>	Administered Democracy (Sucre)	Participatory Democracy (Torres)
	<b>Clientelistic</b>	Technocratic Clientelism (Santa Cruz)	Anarcho-Clientelism (El Alto)

*Four Types of Urban Political Regime*

**Participatory democracy** is a society-led regime with democratic mediation between the state and society. Civil society is the driving force of the regime, meaning decisions made by ordinary citizens within democratically controlled civic associations and/or participatory institutions established by the local state provide the basis for the actions taken by the local state. The local state is thus institutionally subordinate to civil



society. In ideal-typical participatory democracy this subordination is complete, meaning all decisions that are the purview of the local state are subject to direct or indirect control by civil society (apart from mundane issues). Having a democratic mode of mediation means that interactions between the local state and civil society should be fully transparent, with decision-making processes and the distribution of resources (which results from participatory decision-making) accessible without regard for political views or social characteristics such as race/ethnicity, class, gender and religion. In terms of the four indicators discussed above participatory democratic regimes provide extensive, high-quality popular control and institutional effectiveness, which should also translate into political effectiveness. The goal of participatory democracy is an expansion of popular control over decision-making. This can generate pressure to extend popular control from political to economic decision-making, which entails a shift from participatory democracy to socialism.

The following features characterize Torre's participatory democratic regime. There is extensive popular control: 100% of the investment budget is subject to participatory budgeting; non-budgetary issues are also subject to popular control; and turnout for participatory processes is high in a sustained manner. There is high-quality popular control: decision-making within Torres' Participatory Budget is deliberative; citizens have binding control over decisions; and there is a high degree of inclusion in terms of class, race/ethnicity, gender, religion and political views. There is institutional effectiveness: projects decided upon via participatory budgeting (in Torres this is all projects) are effectively implemented in a (generally) timely fashion. There is also political effectiveness: the incumbent party secured re-election with a new, less charismatic candidate, who was subsequently re-elected himself, ensuring that participatory budgeting continued without significant changes in terms of popular control or institutional effectiveness; this party has also established a cooperative relationship with civic associations, including associations not aligned with the incumbent party. Torres' participatory democracy is linked to a concrete struggle for socialism.

**Administered democracy** is a state-led regime with democratic mediation between the state and society. This regime is subject to a persistent tension in which the local state seeks to foster a genuine but limited degree of popular control over decision-making. Some but not all decisions within the local state's purview are subject to popular control, with the state maintaining a certain limited degree of control even over decisions subject to popular control. The local state is thus partially but not fully subordinate to civil society. In a sense it is as if the local state says to citizens, "We'll give you *some* control over decision-making but not *too much*". Similarly to participatory democracy, in administered democracy the relationship between the state and society follows transparent, universalistic rules that pertain equally to citizens and civic associations regardless of political views or social characteristics. Administered democracy provides limited (but genuine) popular control, which is of mixed quality; the regime is institutionally effective, and thus should be politically effective as well. The tension within administered democracy can generate contradictory pressures: citizens and civic leaders may push for an expansion of popular control, which would entail a shift from administered to participatory democracy; certain staff officials, who view administered democracy as too participatory may seek to limit or eliminate popular control, entailing a shift from administered to technocratic democracy.

The following features characterize Sucre's administered democratic regime. There is limited popular control: 40% of the investment budget is subject to participatory budgeting; non-budgetary issues are, with limited exceptions, not subject to popular control; and turnout for participatory processes is modest but growing. There is mixed-quality popular control: decision-making within Sucre's Participatory Budget takes place through deliberation and command-and-control; citizens have near-binding control over decisions (officials have veto power over decisions but rarely exercise this in practice); and there is a high degree of inclusion in terms of class, race/ethnicity, gender and political views. There is institutional effectiveness: projects decided upon through participatory budgeting and "normal" procedures are effectively implemented in a timely manner. This regime has also been politically effective: the incumbent mayor secured re-election and his administration succeeded in establishing a cooperative relationship with civic associations linked to the national ruling party (PSUV) following a hostile initial reception of the mayor from grassroots Chavistas in Sucre. Grassroots Chavistas who have participated in Sucre's administered democracy have pushed for more popular control, seeking participatory democracy. There are some officials who are critical of participatory decision-making, though they see it as politically necessary in Sucre.

**Technocratic clientelism** is a state-led regime with clientelistic mediation between the state and society. The local state is the driving force of this regime, which is guided by a technocratic logic, in which the goal is to provide technical experts full scope over decision-making by insulating them from all popular and political influence (which officials view as unproductive "interference"). The state is linked to civil society through clientelistic politics, which can be seen as a way of insulating technocratic decision-making from the threat of democratic politics. Technocratic clientelism is characterized by virtually no popular control and the appearance (but not necessarily the reality) of institutional effectiveness. This appearance may generate some political effectiveness but it is likely to be limited. This is because the regime's doubly exclusive character – from the combination of technocratic decision-making and clientelistic politics – is likely to generate persistent, though not necessarily effective, popular protest.

The following features characterize Santa Cruz's technocratic clientelistic regime. There is no genuine popular control: technical experts, who are insulated from popular and political pressures, control major decisions and political operatives control minor street-level decisions; a very small portion of Santa Cruz's budget is subject to pseudo participatory institutions; non-budgetary issues are not subject to popular control; turnout for pseudo participatory institutions is modest but limited because there is systematic exclusion of certain groups. The quality of popular control in pseudo participatory institutions is very low: there is some deliberation, over quite minor issues, such as where projects decreed from above should go; citizen decisions over these issues, however, are regularly flouted by political operatives; and these institutions are open only to citizens affiliated with the mayor, resulting in the exclusion of indigenous highland migrants who are identified as MAS supporters (regardless of whether this is true) and tend to be amongst the poorest residents of the city. There is an appearance of institutional effectiveness: the city's budgetary execution rate has been amongst the highest in the country (especially amongst large cities), but there is no effective link between popular demands and outputs. The regime has limited political effectiveness: the mayor has been re-elected twice, but with a decreasing margin of victory; and his administration is

subject to fervent critiques and persistent protests from citizens excluded from decision-making and access to state resources.

**Anarcho-clientelism** is a society-led regime with clientelistic mediation between the state and society. Civil society is the driving force of this regime, but the relationship between the state and society is less institutionalized and more antagonistic compared to participatory or administered democracy. Citizens and civic associations exert influence over state decision-making and gain access to state resources through protest, clientelism and (poorly functioning) participatory institutions. Thus the local state is subordinate to civil society in a de facto and contested way, rather than an institutionalized way. One of the consequences of this subordination, which is unwanted from the perspective of technically-oriented officials within the local state, is a state-led push to subordinate and discipline civil society, as a means of establishing “order” and state control of society.

The following features characterize El Alto’s anarcho-clientelistic regime. There is a low degree of popular control: 20% (and in some years a slightly higher percentage) of the investment budget is decided through participatory budgeting, but due to problems of weak implementation this is not an indicator of effective popular control over even this portion of the budget; non-budgetary issues are subject to popular control through protest, as well as clientelism (which serves as a weak mechanism of popular control in El Alto); there is high turnout for participatory processes and for protest, due to robust enforcement of collective discipline at the neighborhood level. The quality of popular control is uneven and overall low: there is deliberative decision-making in base-level participatory budget assemblies; citizens control decisions, but in practice these decisions are often flouted due to corruption between neighborhood and district leaders and state officials; decision-making venues are inclusive in terms of class, race/ethnicity (with the vast majority of El Alto’s population poor and self-identifying as indigenous), and political views, although youth, women and those with radical politics are very poorly represented within civic leadership positions. El Alto’s anarcho-clientelistic regime is very ineffective institutionally and politically: there is a very weak link between popular (and other) inputs into decision-making and outputs, with a large backlog of approved but unimplemented projects; neither of the two incumbent parties that have overseen this regime in El Alto have been re-elected, with the first incumbent mayor opting not to seek re-election due to his low popularity and the second incumbent mayor (from a different party, the ruling MAS) losing his re-election bid by a very large margin. The state’s inability to control civil society led top officials within the last municipal administration to push for greater control vis-à-vis civil society, a surprising outcome given that the mayor was with an apparently pro-participation Left party, the MAS.

## EXPLAINING URBAN POLITICAL REGIMES

I argue that the interaction between three factors – socioeconomic structure, local historical legacies of state-society relations (from previous urban regimes) and national political change – explains why different regimes come into being in particular cities and how and why an existing regime is transformed into a new regime.

### *Socioeconomic Structure*

Socioeconomic structure, the system of class relations governing the production and distribution of economic resources (the mode of production in Marxist terminology),

provides the material foundation on which urban political regimes are established and transformed. In contrast to certain (mis)readings of classical Marxism, socioeconomic structure does not determine political and social forms in a mechanistic fashion. Rather it constitutes a set of limits within which political and social change is possible. These limits are not immutable but can be altered through class struggle or forces that are exogenous (to a given system). As discussed below, I view national political change as particularly crucial to the transformation of urban political regimes. Transformations of local socioeconomic structure, which occur due to changes in the national or global economy or the dynamic unfolding of internal contradictions within the local class structure, can also play a role in the transformation of urban political regimes.

In Venezuela and Bolivia (and much of Latin America) feudalistic class relations prevailed in the countryside through the mid-twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this study two characteristics of feudalistic class relations are key: the fusion of economic and political power and repressive control over labor. In contexts marked by this type of socioeconomic structure urban political regimes will be oligarchic, with the economic-political elite (which is one and the same) dominating local political decision-making.

The transformation of feudalistic class relations into capitalist class relations is a necessary though not sufficient condition for moving from an oligarchic regime to a democratic regime, in which subordinate classes (direct producers) have some ability to shape political decision-making. (The nature of this ability, of course, varies considerably depending on the type of democratic regime.) The establishment of capitalist relations does not guarantee that an oligarchic regime will be transformed into a democratic regime, but it makes this possible because of two ways capitalism differs from feudalism: in capitalism there is a formal differentiation between economic and political power and within capitalism labor is formally free in a way that it is not in feudalism (although there can be more and less repressive forms of labor control within capitalism; see Burawoy 1985). Democracy (of any form) is possible only when these two conditions (the non-fusion of economic and political power and formally free labor) exist. For a socialist urban regime to be established, in a sustainable manner, requires a transformation of the local (and almost surely also national) class structure such that there is no longer a distinction between owning and producing classes. The continuance of capitalist class relations does not, however, preclude a local political and class struggle that seeks to construct a socialist urban political regime (as has occurred in Torres).

In addition to paying attention to changes from one socioeconomic structure (or mode of production) to another, it is important to be attentive to changes that occur within, or a result of the development of, a socioeconomic structure. Two processes associated with capitalist development are particularly important for understanding the urban political regimes discussed in this dissertation. The first is urbanization, which tends to have a destabilizing effect on existing political forms, particularly if it occurs in a rapid fashion. The second is the process of integrating the local economy into the national and global economy; the more this occurs, the more the local economy (and political regime) is subject to external forces. It is difficult to predict, in the abstract, the affect these forces will have on local class relations and political forms. Concrete analysis of specific contexts is necessary to determine what, if any, chances take place.

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<sup>9</sup> I use the term feudalistic rather than feudal to avoid getting entangled in debates about whether a particular set of class relations is “really” feudal or not. The term’s usefulness is analytical.

### *Historical Legacies of Local State-Society Relations*

Once an urban political regime is established it is likely to persist in the absence of significant socioeconomic change (i.e. a transition from one socioeconomic structure to another or a major shift within the socioeconomic structure) or national political change. When an urban political regime changes, as a result of socioeconomic or national political change, these changes occur on the basis of the existing urban regime. To understand the structure of an urban political regime it is thus necessary to pay attention to the historical legacies of local state-society relations established by past regimes.

### *National Political Change*

National political change occurs when there is a shift or crisis within a national political regime or a transition to a new national political regime. Multiple factors shape national political change including socioeconomic structure and change (within the national and/or global economy), regional and global politics, historical legacies of national state-society relations, the level of political organization amongst different social classes and the dynamic unfolding of contradictions within the existing national political regime. I view national political change as the main driver of transformation of urban political regimes. National political change does not mechanistically determine changes in urban political regimes; rather, urban change occurs as a result of how national political change interacts with an existing urban regime, which is shaped by historical legacies of local state-society relations and socioeconomic structure. National political change does not lead to uniform urban change but to different outcomes in different cities. It is thus important to pay attention to how national political change interacts with a given city's historical legacies of state-society relations and socioeconomic structure.

The following chapters discuss the urban political regimes found in the four cities included in this study. The focus is on understanding the current regime in each city. To do this requires examining each city's socioeconomic structure (with attention to transitions between and changes within socioeconomic structures) and the interaction between historical legacies of previous regimes and national political change. To facilitate the analysis, introductory sections examining national political change in Venezuela and Bolivia in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries precede the two chapters devoted to the two Venezuelan and Bolivian cities.

## **Introduction to Venezuelan Cases: National Political Change in Venezuela**

There are a number of striking parallels between the political trajectories of Venezuela and Bolivia during the twentieth and early twenty-first century. There are also some crucial differences, rooted in the two countries' distinct political economies, historical patterns of state-society relations, culture and recent political histories. To facilitate comparison between Venezuela and Bolivia it is useful to begin by briefly enumerating the countries' similar political trajectories and similar yet distinct outcomes.

### *Similar Political Trajectories of Venezuela and Bolivia (20<sup>th</sup> – Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century)*

Like most of Latin America, at the beginning of the twentieth century Venezuela and Bolivia both had oligarchic national political regimes. Within these regimes decision-making was highly concentrated in the hands of a small group of economic-cum-political elites, with wealthy landowners and large capitalists dominating. Oligarchic rule persisted through the middle of the twentieth century. Social and political discontent mounted in the 1930s, due to the Great Depression and contingent events (e.g. Bolivia's loss in the Chaco War and the 1935 death of Venezuelan dictator Juan Vicente Gómez). In both countries radical populism brought oligarchic rule to an end, ushering in an initial period of democratization marked by mobilization of the popular classes and redistributive reform. Radical populism lasted just three years in Venezuela and twelve in Bolivia. In both cases the radical populist regime was overthrown in a military coup supported by economic elites, conservative parties and (sectors of) the US government. This led to a period of military rule that lasted ten years in Venezuela (1948-1958) and eighteen years in Bolivia (1964-1982). Popular mobilization and intra-elite bargaining led to the restoration of democracy in both cases, with formerly radical populist parties, which had grown more conservative during the years of authoritarian rule, coming to office soon after the return of democracy. This led to several decades of reformist social democratic rule in Venezuela, lasting from the 1960s through 1980s, and a chaotic three-year period of center-left democratic reformism in Bolivia, lasting from 1982 to 1985.

Venezuela and Bolivia experienced a strikingly similar sequence of events between the 1980s and 2000s resulting in similar but contrasting outcomes. In both cases, ex-populist-turned-center-right parties implemented neoliberal reform in the 1980s and 1990s. Neoliberalism generated negative economic and social effects, which precipitated political crises, in which support for traditional parties disappeared. In both countries this led to the election of a relatively radical leftist political outsider, Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia. Once in office, both leaders faced intense resistance from elites threatened by their rise. Critically, Chávez and Morales responded to elite destabilization with distinct strategies, of mobilization and demobilization. These contrasting responses are a consequence, most immediately, of the distinct nature of popular resistance to neoliberalism and the distinct type of political crisis that displaced traditional parties in each country; these differences can, in turn, be traced to Venezuela and Bolivia's distinct political economies, historical patterns of state-society relations, cultures and recent political histories. Chávez and Morales' distinct governance strategies while in office are important to this study because these strategies played an important role in shaping the urban political regimes found in the four cities of this study.

*National Political Regimes in Venezuela in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*<sup>10</sup>

**Oligarchic Rule.** Venezuela had an oligarchic regime from the beginning of the twentieth century until 1945. During most of this period this regime was led by two military strongmen (*caudillos*), Cipriano Castro, who governed from 1899 until 1908, and Juan Vicente Gómez, who overthrew Castro and ruled until dying in 1935. Traditional historians of Venezuela criticize Castro and Gómez for their politically repressive rule. As Ellner (2008) notes, revisions historians argue that the two leaders helped to unify and modernize Venezuela by creating a national standing army, engaging in infrastructural development, establishing a modern state bureaucracy and, under Gómez, opening Venezuela up to significant foreign investment, particularly in oil.

For the purposes of this study, the key features of Venezuela's oligarchic regime are the following. While Castro and Gómez dominated national political decision-making, landowning elites dominated local and regional political decision-making. Yarrington (2003) shows that the landowning elite's economic and political power increased significantly during the Gómez era. This was a period of substantial accumulation by dispossession, with landlords working in cahoots with local, regional and national authorities to illegally enclose public lands, which had been occupied by yeoman farmers during the second half of the nineteenth century. Peasant dispossession led to a more repressive form of labor control through debt peonage (Yarrington 1997). As discussed in the next chapter this had important social and political consequences for local governance in Venezuela.

In 1928 and again in 1936, following the death of Gómez, there were two waves of pro-democracy organizing. Middle-class students led the first, with the second involving peasants and urban workers, who engaged in widespread mobilization, as well. The 1936 uprising was put down by 1937, but the next decade saw on-again-off-again political reform, marked by greater tolerance of political and union organizing than had been the case in the past; repression of parties and unions did not, however, end. During the late 1920s and 1930s several important parties, in particular the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV) and the Venezuelan Democratic Party, the precursor to the radical populist party Acción Democrática (AD).

**Radical Populism.** AD took power in an October 1945 coup, which led to the three-year Trienio. During this period AD engaged in widespread mobilization of workers and peasants, leading to a tremendous increase in urban and rural unions throughout Venezuela. During the Trienio, the total number of unions jumped from 215 to 1047. The increase in peasant unions was particularly pronounced: in October 1945, 53 unions represented 3,959 peasants; by November 1948, there were 515 unions (half of all unions) representing 43,302 peasants (Powell 1971: 79). AD's base amongst workers and peasants allowed it to win three national elections and one local election between 1946 and 1948 with over 70% of the vote each time (ibid: 68). AD fulfilled peasants' demands for an extensive nationwide land reform while in office, distributing 54,437 hectares in 1946 and 1947 and passing a radical Agrarian Reform Law in October 1948 that would have empowered local peasant unions to a quite significant extent (ibid: 80).

**Authoritarian Rule.** AD was overthrown in a November 1948 military coup supported by conservative parties, the Church and the US department of defense. This coup was a reaction to the reforms AD implemented and, even more, to elite fears of

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<sup>10</sup> This section relies extensively on Ellner (2008).

increasing radicalization under AD, prompted in large part by the high degree of popular mobilization during the Trienio. The 1948 coup led to ten years of military rule, initially under a military junta and from 1952-58 under the dictatorship of General Marcos Pérez Jiménez. AD and the Communist Party were outlawed during this period. Unions were also banned and land reform was reversed, with lands distributed to peasants during the Trienio returned to landlords.

**Social Democratic Reformism.** During the late 1950s a strong pro-democracy movement emerged, led by underground cadres from the Communist Party and AD. An upsurge in popular mobilization in January 1958, culminating in a general strike on January 21, 1958, led to Pérez Jiménez's overthrow in a military coup on January 23 1958. This led to the formation of a social democratic regime led by AD and COPEI, a center-right Christian Democratic party that had opposed AD during the Trienio and supported the 1948 military coup but joined the anti-Pérez Jiménez movement. This regime is often referred to as a "pacted democracy", or as "Punto Fijo democracy", because the re-establishment of democratic elections occurred through an inter-party pact signed in the city of Punto Fijo by AD, COPEI and URD (another center-right party). This pact excluded the Communist Party and demonstrated AD's conservative turn in other ways as well: the pact recognized private property rights, granted the Church autonomy with respect to Church-related affairs, promoted private enterprise and granted special privileges to certain elites (Ellner 2008: 60). These measures were included as a way of assuring business elites, the military, the Church and other parties that AD would not repeat the radical populism of the Trienio.

The exclusion of the Communist Party from the Punto Fijo pact and AD's attempts to isolate radical youth within the party and adoption of pro-US positions (e.g. opposing Cuba following the 1959 revolution) precipitated a series of political splits that led to significant turmoil, included a protracted guerrilla conflict, throughout the 1960s. By the end of the decade, with COPEI in office, the government had managed to pacify the guerrilla struggle through a combination of brutal repression and subsequently the granting of political amnesty.

AD and COPEI alternated in national office from 1960 until 1994. Both parties were committed to a social democratic framework emphasizing class compromise between labor and capital, with the state providing support for capitalist development and policies benefitting the popular classes, including the right to organize unions. AD and COPEI were both multi-class parties, with COPEI following AD and establishing links to workers' and peasants' unions (Powell 1971). AD and COPEI secured widespread popular support, thoroughly dominating Venezuelan politics in the 1970s and 1980s, by providing workers and peasants significant material benefits and access to the state and the upper echelons of party structures. Land reform was passed in 1960, leading to the distribution of tens of thousands of hectares over the next decade (ibid.). During the 1970s and early 1980s, AD and COPEI enacted a series of measures benefitting the popular classes, establishing a minimum wage, mandating increased income for non-unionized workers, and establishing price controls on basic goods (Morgan 2011: 80-81). Both parties supported unions, including union representatives on tripartite commissions and reserving leadership positions within the party structure and the state for leaders from the national peasant and workers' federations (Morgan 2011: 82-84; Powell 1971).

Oil revenue, which increased dramatically over the course of the 1970s, provided



the basis for AD-COPEI hegemony, which lasted from the early 1970s through mid-1980s. During this period the state and parties enjoyed robust links to the popular classes. In contrast to Bolivia, this generated a more quiescent civil society, with the Venezuelan labor movement particularly intertwined with (and controlled by) AD, a pattern that continued through the early 2000s, even after Hugo Chávez took office. Over the course of the 1980s the price of oil declined, leading to a worsening economic situation in the country and setting the stage for the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s.

**Neoliberalism and Political Crisis.** Karl Polanyi's (1944) concept of the "double movement", in which the negative economic and social consequences of marketization (specifically the effects of attempts to commodify the three fictitious commodities: labor, money and land/nature) generate a countermovement for social protection, provides a useful way to understand the changes that occurred in Venezuela (as well as Bolivia and many other Latin American countries) between the 1980s and 1990s. (This section will focus on Venezuela, with a few references to Bolivia. The similarities and differences between Venezuela and Bolivia are discussed in more detail in the introduction to Part III on Bolivia). Like other countries in the region, Venezuela implemented market reform in the 1980s and 1990s, under pressure from international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank. Venezuela introduced some neoliberal policies in the mid-1980s, and in 1989 adopted an orthodox neoliberal package involving fiscal austerity, deregulation and liberalization (Cicariello-Maher 2013: 91). On-again, off-again market reform continued through the 1990s, with the privatization of telecommunications, steel and social security companies (Webber 2010). In the mid-1990s Venezuela's state oil company, PDVSA, was opened up to private investment for the first time since the 1970s (Kelly and Palma 2004: 216).

Throughout Latin America the economic and social consequences of neoliberalism were a far cry from the lofty promises made by advocates of market reform. The negative economic and social consequences of neoliberal policies were particularly pronounced in Venezuela (and Bolivia). Venezuela's average annual rate of economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s was -1.3%, amongst the lowest in Latin America (Solimano and Soto 2005: 10). Poverty in Venezuela nearly doubled during this period, going from 36% of the population in 1984 to 66% in 1995 (Dunning 2008: 169). Inequality also increased, with the United Nations (2009: 29) reporting that Venezuela and Bolivia "saw...increases in income disparity [between 1990 and 2005] that were amongst the highest in the world".

These economic and social effects led to full-blown political crises in both Venezuela and Bolivia, with support for traditional parties vanishing. The magnitude of these crises makes them examples of what Gramsci (1971: 210) calls organic crises, or crises of hegemony, which are characterized by a sharp and sudden erosion of the traditional relationship between political representatives and the represented, with the latter no longer giving their consent to the former.<sup>11</sup> As Table 2 shows, during the 1970s and 1980s, AD and COPEI thoroughly dominated Venezuelan electoral politics; the two parties collectively received between 85% and 93% of the vote in each presidential

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<sup>11</sup> Gramsci (1971: 210) writes, "At a certain point in their historical lives, social classes become detached from their traditional parties. In other words, the traditional parties in that particular organisational form, with the particular men who constitute, represent and lead them, are no longer recognised by their class (or fraction of a class) as its expression."

election during this period. Between 1988 and 1998 support for AD and COPEI fell precipitously, with the parties collectively receiving just 46% of the vote in 1993 and less than 3% of the vote in 1998, when Hugo Chávez was elected. Table 2 shows a second dimension of Venezuela’s crisis as well: a huge drop in voter turnout, of nearly 40%, between the 1970s and 1990s.

**Table 2 Support for Traditional Parties and Turnout in Venezuela, 1973-1998**

	<b>Vote % AD + COPEI</b>	<b>Turnout</b>
<b>1973</b>	85	97
<b>1978</b>	90	88
<b>1983</b>	92	87
<b>1988</b>	93	82
<b>1993</b>	46	60
<b>1998</b>	3	64

In classic Polanyian fashion, the negative impact of neoliberal marketization, viz. the interlocking economic, social and political crises just described, generated a push for social protection in Venezuela. As discussed below this also occurred in Bolivia. The nature of the countermovement differed in Venezuela and Bolivia, as did the type of organic crisis that occurred in each. These differences help explain the contrasting governance strategies Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales adopted after coming to office.

Venezuela’s countermovement was diffuse, involving multiple episodes of protest and expressions of popular discontent that were temporally and organizationally disconnected. The most significant anti-neoliberal protest in Venezuela occurred in February 1989 after Venezuelan president Carlos Andrés Pérez secretly signed an austerity agreement with the International Monetary Fund months after campaigning against neoliberalism. This led to the *Caracazo*, a largely spontaneous explosion of popular anger, which was triggered by a sudden increase in bus fares (linked to the state ending fuel subsidies) and involved days of protest and looting in Caracas and cities across Venezuela. Military repression of these protests left hundreds dead. Three years later Venezuela was shaken by two coup attempts, led by junior military officers, including Hugo Chávez, who sought to overthrow what they viewed as a corrupt, out-of-touch political system and expressed disgust that political leaders had sent the military to crush the *Caracazo*, which despite widespread looting of stores was a non-violent civilian protest. The 1992 coups enjoyed significant, but largely unorganized, popular support. Popular discontent continued to mount through the 1990s, as poverty rose and incomes fell. AD and COPEI continued to support market reform, a stance that cost the parties dearly in 1998, when Hugo Chávez’s anti-neoliberal, anti-party campaign succeeded.

Chávez’s election, with 56% of the vote, marked the culmination of Venezuela’s organic crisis. Gramsci distinguishes between two types of organic crisis. The first, which can be labeled elite involution, is a top-down disintegration of a political system from within that “occurs because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses” (Gramsci 1971: 210). The second is a revolutionary crisis, which occurs “because huge masses (especially of peasants and petit-bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly

from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution” (ibid.). Some scholars view the 1989 Caracazo as a revolutionary event (cf. Cicariello-Maher 2013). Several facts, however, suggest that it is more appropriate to view Venezuela’s organic crisis as a process of elite involution. This is because Chávez took office nearly a decade after the Caracazo, following a regularly scheduled election. Additionally, during the 1990s there was hardly revolutionary-scale popular mobilization in Venezuela. (Bolivia, by contrast, experienced a revolutionary crisis; the countermovement in Bolivia was also distinct from Venezuela, being much more organized; see Introduction to Part III.)

**Participatory Populism.** After Chávez took office (and even before being elected) he faced intense resistance domestic political and economic elites and the US government. This resistance was rooted in political-ideological, economic, geostrategic and racial concerns. Displaced political elites were anxious to regain their lost control over the state. Domestic economic elites, particularly large landholders and those connected to oil, expressed concern over the heterodox, but relatively moderate, economic policies Chávez pursued during his initial years in office. Chávez’s economic policies became more radical and threatening to elites in late 2001, through laws establishing land reform and exerting greater state control over the oil industry (Ellner 2008: 113). Chávez’s fiery redistributionist and anti-imperialist rhetoric and more independent foreign policy (aimed at generating intra-regional independence from the US and building support for a more multi-polar world; Wilpert 2007) alarmed domestic political and economic elites and the US government, which as in the past was concerned about losing control over its “backyard”. As in Bolivia, Chávez, and his supporters, who tended to be darker skinned and poor, also faced racism. Chávez and the urban poor constituting his most fervent support base were denigrated for their dark skin and “vulgar” manners (Duno Gottberg 2011).

Between 2001 and 2005 Chávez faced extremely intense elite resistance. This resistance took the form of repeated street mobilizations; a 2002 coup that was condoned, and according to Gollinger (2006) encouraged, by the US government and succeeded in removing Chávez from office for 48 hours; a management-led oil strike in 2002-2003, which had a crippling effect on Venezuela’s economy; a 2004 recall referendum; and an opposition boycott of the 2005 legislative elections.

Chávez responded to the resistance his administration faced by establishing a participatory populist regime, characterized by the state’s efforts to mobilize and organize the popular classes. This strategy stemmed from the particular nature of Venezuela’s organic crisis and countermovement. The Chávez administration’s first attempts to organize the popular sectors occurred in 2001, when Chávez pushed for the creation of Bolivarian circles and the state provided support to community water boards, providing residents greater control over access to water (McMillan and Spronk 2013). The Chávez administration’s organization and mobilization of the popular sectors increased in 2002, following the April coup, and really took off from 2003 on, in the aftermath of the 2002-2003 oil strike and the lead-up to the 2004 recall referendum. Numerous state-sponsored civic associations were created during this time, and in the years that followed the most important being urban land and health committees, communal councils and communes. In 2007, Chávez replaced the ruling party, the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR), with the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, which was meant to be more organizationally and

ideologically cohesive.

It is important to highlight two aspects of Chávez's mobilization of the popular sectors. The first is the fact that it was done in the name of participatory democracy, which was enshrined in the 1999 constitution, and various subsequent laws, such as a 2002 law establishing nationwide participatory budgeting through the creation of local public planning councils. Participatory democracy and popular power were a key part of the state and ruling party's ideology. Second, the state's mobilization and organization of the popular sectors was linked to the distribution of state resources (Handlin 2013). As a result, participatory democracy came to be discursively and institutionally central in Venezuela. This institutional and discursive centrality of participatory democracy distinguishes participatory populist regimes from other populist regimes (e.g. radical populism, with which it bears significant affinities, specifically the large-scale state-led mobilization and organization of the popular sectors). This also differentiates the Chávez administration from the Morales administration in Bolivia.

The impetus for this mobilization was the threat Chávez faced from domestic elites and the US government and the organizational weakness of the Venezuelan popular sectors, which led to Venezuela's diffuse countermovement and the elite involution character of its organic crisis. From 2001 on Chávez faced a series of attempts to remove him from office, with these attempts initially escalating in their intensity and apparent likelihood of succeeding. Chávez survived the 2002 coup to a massive, and largely spontaneous upsurge of popular mobilization, similar in certain ways to what had occurred during the 1989 Caracazo (Cicariello-Maher 2013). To survive in the face of continuing elite resistance, Chávez sought to construct a popular bulwark, which would have a greater degree of organizational cohesion. Additionally, once Chávez committed to organizing and mobilizing the popular sectors on a widespread scale a certain momentum was established, at least in the eyes of grassroots Chavistas, which put additional pressure on the state to continue organizing and mobilizing the popular sectors.

Chávez's creation of a participatory populist regime is important for understanding the establishment of participatory democracy in Torres and administered democracy in Sucre. Both of these urban regimes emerged as a response to, and as a result of, the contradictory processes generated by participatory populism.

## CHAPTER 2

### TORRES: PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Torres is a case of participatory democracy, a society-led regime in which ordinary citizens, drawn primarily from the popular classes and organized into democratically controlled civic associations, exercise a high degree of control over a wide range of decisions that affect their lives. Torres' participatory democracy is notable because of its encompassing nature, its institutional and political effectiveness, and its link to a broader struggle to construct socialism, which entails extending popular control from local political decision-making to local and extra-local economic decision-making.

Torres' participatory democracy is the result of the interaction between Torres' socioeconomic structure, historical legacies of local state-society relations (as expressed in a series of earlier urban regimes) and national political change.

#### SOCIOECONOMIC STRUCTURE

Torres is a geographically sprawling municipality of 185,275 located in the western Venezuelan state of Lara.<sup>12</sup> Over a third (37.4%) of Torres' population lives in rural areas, making Torres considerably more rural than Venezuela as a whole, which has a 94% urban population.<sup>13</sup> Torres' economy centers on agricultural production, with sugar cane, cattle ranching and goat farming constituting the three most important economic activities. The difference between these activities – sugar cane and cattle ranching are dominated by wealthy landowners, while goat farming is the province of poor farmers – is indicative of the highly inegalitarian class structure that has prevailed in Torres since the late nineteenth century (and to a lesser extent since the colonial era) and persists to this day. Smaller-scale fruit and vegetable production, a growing local wine industry, services and public-sector work provide additional sources of employment in Torres, with services and public-sector work centered in Carora, Torres' capital city, which has a population of 89,417.<sup>14</sup>

Torres faces a host of social and economic challenges. Industry is scarce, with Torres having only a handful of agro-industrial firms, the largest being two sugar processing plants employing 1000 workers, with an additional 8600 jobs in the sugar cane fields.<sup>15</sup> Torres' wine industry, an industrial slaughterhouse and a milk processing plant provide additional employment, likely amounting to a few hundred jobs. Approximately 300,000 head of cattle and 540,000 goats provide income to large ranchers and small farmers, but cattle ranching and goat farming provide relatively few jobs.<sup>16</sup> Torres' lack of industry has resulted in limited tax revenue for the local state, which operates largely through central government transfers funded by oil rents, and limited jobs for local residents, who mention unemployment and crime as significant problems (Harnecker 2008). Unemployment reached nearly 20% in the state of Lara in 2003, after which it steadily declined through 2009 (Fudeco 2010: 70). More than a third of Torres' residents lived in poverty in 2001 (ibid: 56), with this percentage dropping

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<sup>12</sup> Torres' population figure comes from Venezuela's 2011 census, available at [www.ine.gov.ve](http://www.ine.gov.ve)

<sup>13</sup> This according to 2012 World Bank data: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS>

<sup>14</sup> This figure and Torres' rural population are from Alcaldía de Torres (2011: 28-29).

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.encarora.com/agricultura.htm>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.encarora.com/agricultura.htm>

from 2004 on (ibid: 52). Inadequate housing has also been a problem; as of 2001, 65% of Torres' housing stock was in need of "improvement" (53%) or "substitution" (12%) (ibid: 50). In 2001, over 40% of Torres' residents lived in areas lacking sewage treatment and garbage collection (ibid: 51). Some of these challenges have been successfully tackled in recent years through national and local political action. For instance, in 2006 and 2007, 4000 housing units were constructed by communal councils in Torres, using federal money (Alcaldía de Torres 2011: 29), with many communal councils stretching the funds they were allocated to construct a third or almost twice as many houses, compared to what authorities estimated could be done with the funds (Harnecker 2008).<sup>17</sup>

## INTERACTION OF HISTORICAL LEGACIES AND NATIONAL POLITICAL CHANGE: FROM OLIGARCHIC RULE TO PARTCIATPROY DEMOCRACY

Between the late nineteenth century and the present, Torres has had four distinct political regimes, which differ in their class base, presence/absence of elections, degree of electoral competition and character of state-society relations. National political change and local class struggle has driven the transition between regimes, with new regimes partially transforming the patterns and structures inherited from past regimes.

### *Oligarchic Rule*

From roughly 1900 to the 1950s Torres had an oligarchic regime, with a handful of wealthy landowning families, known as *la Godarria Caroreña*, thoroughly dominating local political, economic, social, cultural and religious activities (Cortés Riera 2007).<sup>18</sup> The distinguishing features of Torres' oligarchic regime are its highly exclusionary character, the tight link between economic, political, social, cultural and religious power, and the regular use of repression for purposes of labor, social and political control.

The material basis of the Godarria's power came from its control over large tracts of land devoted to cattle ranching and, from the early 1950s on, sugar cane. This land was acquired through a centuries-long process of accumulation by dispossession, whereby communal and public lands were illegally taken over by a small group of interconnected families through fraud and violence backed by the state. The first victims of this process were indigenous communities violently displaced from their lands, and resettled on public reserves, during the sixteenth and seventeenth century.<sup>19</sup>

Large haciendas were established in Torres during the colonial period, which lasted from the sixteenth through early nineteenth century, with indigenous and African slaves providing labor. However, through the late nineteenth century (and likely into the early twentieth century) most land in Torres was public. Thousands of peasants occupied small farms on these lands, producing subsistence food crops such as potatoes, beans and corn, and cash crops such as cereal grains and coffee destined for local and international markets. Torres was known as a breadbasket for the region and to a lesser extent Venezuela during this period. Writing in the 1940s, Cecilio Zubillaga Perrera, a local writer and social reformer who championed peasant rights (and enjoys considerable respect within Torres today), described this period as follows: "You could boast that the

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<sup>17</sup> This was done by employing community labor and altering house designs; e.g. instead of building 2 or 3 bathrooms per house, many houses had just 1 or 2, allowing for the construction of more houses.

<sup>18</sup> The term Godarria references Spain's Gothic region, where Torres' leading families trace their ancestry.

<sup>19</sup> The following account draws on Garcia Ponce (1986), Cortés Riera (1997) and Salazar (2007).

district of Torres was, within Venezuela, a democratic region of more or less happy small property owners” (cited in Salazar 2007: 166). Zubillaga’s claims regarding the efficiency of small farms and the happiness of small farmers have been questioned (cf. Garcia Ponce 1986: 51-4), but there appears to be a consensus amongst scholars and contemporary observers that Torres was relatively egalitarian during this period (ibid.).

This changed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Between the 1870s and 1930s Torres experienced an intense process of land concentration, with hundreds, and likely thousands, of peasant families displaced from small farms located on public lands through illegal encroachment, fraud and violence backed by the local, regional and national state.<sup>20</sup> These lands were converted to pasture for cattle through barbed wire fencing, a new technology that facilitated the privatization of public lands and was despised by the peasantry in Torres and elsewhere. Peasant farmers who had enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy (notwithstanding the challenges associated with poor harvests, market fluctuations, and a lack of technology and credit; Yarrington 1997) were transformed into highly dependent laborers on large haciendas. Instead of paying low or no rents on public lands, as they had in the past, peasants were forced to pay much higher rents. Loans were provided to peasants at higher interest rates than in the past. This led to the contraction of significant debts, facilitating the establishment of a harsh system of labor control known as debt peonage, with indebted peasants forced to perform backbreaking labor for up to 16 hours a day for low or no pay. Payment was frequently made through tickets that could only be redeemed at general stores owned by landlords, which offered low-quality goods (e.g. rotting vegetables and meat) at exorbitant prices.

Debt peonage, which combines aspects of capitalist and feudal relations of production (Yarrington 1997: 158-9), became increasingly prevalent between the 1910s and 1930s (not coincidentally the highpoint of accumulation by dispossession in Torres) and lasted into the 1950s and 1960s. Tenants on large farms were required to carry identity cards, which had to be produced on demand, listing their personal effects, property occupied, rental agreement, debts and specific crops farmed. These cards also specifically indicated tenants’ commitment to “the strict submission to the provisions of the present regulation” (Garcia Ponce 1986: 35). Tenants needed landlord permission to sublet property and to build and hunt on the land. Tenants were also required to provide landlords free labor for property maintenance, supervision and security (ibid.). Tenants were tied to large haciendas through hereditary debt, with the police keeping indebted tenants from escaping lands they “belonged” to. Eladio “Lalo” Paez, a social movement leader from a rural town in Torres (who was the director of Torres’ Office of Citizenship Participation from 2005-2010), describes the control exercised by landlords through the 1950s and 1960s: “The oligarchs owned the houses, they gave permission regarding who could move where, they even owned the families. When a peasant couple got married in any of the towns in these zones, and it was on one of the haciendas, the bride was given to the hacienda owner on her wedding night” (quoted in Harnecker 2008: 21).

In addition to its direct control over hacienda life, the Godarria exercised near-total control over the local state and other important institutions in Torres during this period. For instance, in 1921 (with accounts indicating that this was true in previous and

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<sup>20</sup> Salazar (2007) discusses a variety of mechanisms used to displace peasants. One of these was the drafting of peasants into the army or work gangs, with wealthy elites taking absent peasants’ lands (222-23).

subsequent decades as well) a small number of wealthy landowning families held all the seats on Torres' municipal council. The Godarria also controlled the position of local governor (*jefe civil*) in Carora and other districts of Torres (Garcia Ponce 1986: 17). The Godarria's influence was such that these appointed positions appear to have been consistently held by members of the local elite during this period, unlike neighboring municipalities where central state authorities were able to impose outsiders as local administrators (Yarrington 1997). A 1940 editorial in *Cantaclara*, a radical opposition newspaper, speaks to the Godarria's all-encompassing control over local politics: "They [the Godarria] hold all three powers here, the legislative, executive and judicial. And more: all other offices, from the simplest bureaucratic position, remain trapped between their hairy hooves" (cited in Salazar 2007: 227-28). The Godarria also controlled Torres' other key institutions, including the medical profession, local finance, two local newspapers (both founded and owned by members of the Godarria), the Catholic Church,<sup>21</sup> the local electric utility company, local charities, and the powerful and exclusive "Club Torres", a center of elite recreation and business and social planning founded in 1898 that was male only through the 1940s and closed to the public until the early 2000s (Garcia Ponce 1986: 17-18; Cortés Riera 2007; Hernández 2008: 66).

The Godarria's power was enhanced by the high degree of intermarriage amongst Torres' leading families. Anxious to maintain its racial "purity", the Godarria married within its own ranks, a process that accelerated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>22</sup> This generated a rigid racial and class hierarchy in Torres: at the top was the Godarria, a white "caste" that traced its roots to Spain, followed by pardos and mestizos (based on intermixing between Europeans, the indigenous and Africans), with Afro-Venezuelan (descendants of African slaves) and the indigenous at the bottom.

The "astonishing crosslinking" (Garcia Ponce 1986: 51) amongst Torres' leading families facilitated an extreme concentration of land and wealth. As of 1922, 9 property owners possessed nearly half the wealth generated by cattle ranching (Garcia Ponce 1986: 14). By the early 1940s, 17 families owned *all* of Torres' large cattle ranches. Due to the intermixing just discussed, *four families* controlled nearly all of this wealth (Garcia Ponce 1986: 50-51). This wealth, further, grew considerably during the 1930s. Through the 1920s Torres' economy was relatively diversified, with cattle ranching superseded in economic importance by the production of agricultural and artisanal manufactured export goods, specifically cacao, coffee, cane sugar, hats, fiber sacks, hammocks, sandals and tanned goatskins and cowhides. The 1929 global economic crisis decimated the European market for these goods, leading to the destruction of these industries. By the late 1930s

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<sup>21</sup> Members of the Godarria served in key positions within the Church. 5 Godarria descendants became Bishops. Torres' leading families also enjoyed special privileges within the Church (Riera 2007).

<sup>22</sup> The Godarria, known for its local, inward-looking focus, married within its own ranks for centuries; allegedly, members of the Godarria would marry only those directly descended from Spain, eschewing relations not only with pardos and mestizos but with white creoles as well (Ponce Garcia 1986: 17). This led the Godarria to see itself, and be seen, as a distinct caste (Riera 2007). Members of Torres' leading families are said to have borne (and still bear) a strikingly close physical resemblance to one another referred to as the *cara colorá* or blush face. The small number of Torres' leading families, and tight interconnections between them, further entrenched the Godarria's power. Intermarriage also, predictably, led to genetic diseases amongst descendants of the Godarria (Garcia Ponce 1986: 17; Riera 2007).



cattle ranching was Torres' indisputably most important economic activity.<sup>23</sup>

Cattle ranchers used a variety of techniques to increase their landholdings and establish and deepen their power over peasant farmers. A common strategy was to claim that property lines extended considerably beyond existing boundaries. These lines were used in new titles, which despite being fraudulent were accepted as legitimate by local authorities, whom ranchers were frequently related to. Ranchers also allowed their cattle to cross onto peasant farms, destroying peasant crops. After illegally enclosing newly privatized lands with barbed wire fence, landlords would charge peasant tenants rents to remain on land peasants knew and had been told was public and that peasant families had, in cases, occupied for generations. Peasants resisted these actions, by refusing to move and refusing to pay rent on land they felt no one had a right to charge them to occupy. This led to complaints to the local authorities and court cases, which existing evidence suggests peasants were almost sure to lose, with district judges, who were often related to the landlords in question and/or susceptible to bribes, siding with landlords.<sup>24</sup>

Peasant resistance became more organized and collective in the 1930s. The 1935 death of Venezuela's dictator, Juan Vicente Gómez, who had ruled the country since 1908, with Gómez's brother ruling Lara in a highly repressive manner from 1929-1935 (Yarrington 1997: 181), led to a brief lessening of repression in Lara and throughout Venezuela in early 1936. Peasants in Torres, and workers and peasants across the country, took advantage of this political opening to engage in unprecedented organization and mobilization. In Torres, and the nearby municipalities of Morán and Crespo, peasants organized unions and engaged in direct actions, taking over lands they felt had been illegally expropriated (Yarrington 1997: 181-85; Powell 1971: 56). Romulo Betancourt, Venezuela's future president and the leader of Acción Democrática, a radical populist party formed in the 1930s (and officially founded in 1941), noted the "serious disturbances of the campesinos of Carora and Quibas [located near Torres], which began in early 1936" (quoted in Powell 1971:55). One of the peasant unions formed in Torres in early 1936, the Union of Small Agricultural Producers of Montes de Oca Municipality (which is now a parish of Torres), attracted over 1000 members. This union was successful in obtaining an agreement through the Ministry of Agriculture and Breeding whereby large landholders in the region agreed that "peasants may cultivate their plots, build their houses and use the forest and water, while the Nation goes about definitively resolving the property relationship of these lands" (Garcia Ponce 1986: 51-52).

Peasant organizing in Torres (and throughout rural Venezuela) was supported by several political parties, including Acción Democrática (AD) and the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV). Both parties have roots in Torres and the surrounding area. One of the founders of ORVE, a forerunner to AD, was from Torres (Cortés Riera 2007). The PCV was founded in 1931 in El Tocuyo, a city close to Torres (in Morán), and the first Communist Party cell in Venezuela was established in the mountainous region linking Torres and Morán (areas known as "scenes of resistance for more than four centuries") in

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<sup>23</sup> This would not change until 1950, when Torres became one of Venezuela's leading producers of refined sugar. Sugar cane is grown on 77% of Torres' agricultural land, with Torres' production amounting to 11.2% of national production (Fudeco 2010: 78). The Godarria controls this industry, owning Torres' two sugar processing plants. Members of the Godarria are closely linked to most other important economic activities in Torres, founding private schools, a hospital, a baseball team, an industrial slaughterhouse, and a regional bank (Riera 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Salazar (2007: 205-231) documents numerous legal cases of peasants fighting their displacement.

1926 (Linárez 2006: 14). A Communist Party cell was established in Torres in 1942.

Torres' peasant movement also enjoyed support from a number of local radical intellectuals, such as Cecilio Zubillaga, who championed land reform and peasants' rights and railed against the Godarria and the system of latifundismo in *Cantaclaro*, a radical newsweekly established in Carora in the 1930s, and other local and regional newspapers. The local elite did not look kindly on *Cantaclaro's* challenge to its authority, with the editors of the newspaper locked up for six months for "advocating the abolition of private property" (Salazar 2007: 229).<sup>25</sup> In 1945, when peasant organization and mobilization again increased, leaders of local peasant unions were threatened, beaten and dismissed from their jobs (Salazar 2007: 181-82). These examples indicate the central role that repression played in maintaining Torres' oligarchic regime.

The most significant threat to oligarchic rule occurred during the 1945-1948 Trienio. As in other Venezuelan municipalities, AD was in office in Torres during this time.<sup>26</sup> The limited evidence available suggests that the impact of AD rule in Torres during this period was mixed. Torres' AD-led municipal council instituted an extensive educational reform during its time in office, amounting to an "educational revolution" against Torres' "semi-aristocratic" educational system, which had privileged the elite (Cortés Riera 1997). Given the extensive level of peasant organization and mobilization in Torres since the 1930s, and the tight links between AD and peasant unions, it seems likely that peasants enjoyed greater benefits, in terms of access to land and credit and state support instead of repression, during the Trienio. In a 1947 article in *El Impulso*, a local newspaper, Cecilio Zubillaga, however, makes reference to the local Communist Party cell's view that "the local regime led by Acción Democrática has created a paradise for the rich and a purgatory for the poor" (cited in Salazar 2007: 199). Salazar (ibid.) is quite critical of AD's role in Torres during this time, arguing that the party failed to provide poor farmers sufficient assistance in the form of access to credit. Evidence of the continuation of semi-feudal relations through the 1950s and 1960s (Harnecker 2008: 21) suggests that any gains achieved by the popular classes in Torres during the Trienio were reversed when authoritarian rule was re-established from 1948 to 1958.

### *Social Democracy*

In 1958 democracy was restored in Venezuela. This did not end the Godarria's economic power; in addition to retaining control over cattle ranching, Torres' leading families controlled the growing sugar industry, which is currently Torres' largest source of income and employment. The transition to democracy did, however, result in a shift from an oligarchic to a social democratic regime, which lasted from the 1960s to 1990s.

Social democratic regimes differ from oligarchic regimes in several key ways. Although social democracy does not do away with economic inequality and class distinctions, there is a loosening of the link between economic and political power. This loosening is the result of the growing importance of capitalist labor and property relations and local class struggle against the remnant of feudal structures. In social (and other formally) democratic regimes, elections rather than socioeconomic status determine who holds office. In Venezuela there were local elections for municipal council but not for

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<sup>25</sup> This occurred in the late 1930s or early 1940s. Unfortunately Salazar (2007) does not give an exact date.

<sup>26</sup> Carora's official historian, Luis Cortés Riera, references this fact in the following article:  
<http://luiscortesriera.blogspot.com/2013/02/14-de-febrero-de-1936.html>

mayors until the end of the 1980s; however, through the 1980s voters could not split their vote, meaning that the party that won within a state would also rule locally. The introduction of elections means that social democratic regimes are multi-class rather than being based exclusively on economic elites. Social democracy is also characterized by some degree of state support for popular sector organizing (although this is likely to be much less than in radical populist regimes), as well as support for business. Venezuela's national social democratic regime relied on popular organization and electoral mobilization more in the 1960s and 1970s and became increasingly reliant on clientelistic links to voters during the 1980s and into the 1990s, when the system entered into crisis.

Torres' social democratic regime was alternately led by AD, which by the 1960s was ideologically center-left, and the center-right COPEI, depending on which party controlled national and state government at the time. Consent predominated during most of this period, the era of AD-COPEI hegemony. Force was nonetheless present as well. But unlike Torres' oligarchic regime, where force was a regular, constitutive feature, in Torres' social democratic regime the use of force was limited and occurred mostly during exceptional periods. The early 1960s was one such period due to the presence of a sizeable guerrilla movement in Lara and neighboring states (Linárez 2006). Guerrilla activity in Lara was concentrated in the mountainous region linking Torres, Morán and adjacent municipalities, an area that was the center of indigenous resistance from the sixteenth century and of communist and peasant organizing from the 1930s on (Linárez 2006: 14). Guerrilla activity occurred in Torres and nearby areas between 1961 and 1966 through several guerrilla fronts, including the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Front (ibid: 15). Guerrilla forces received concrete assistance from peasants in the mountains of Torres and Morán. In 1963 a guerrilla leader declared that four guerrilla detachments operating in this area "exerted influence over a population of 125 small towns, a population of some 75,000" (quoted in Linárez 2004: 47).

This existential challenge to the state's authority called forth a brutal response, with national security forces ruthlessly crushing the guerrilla struggle in Lara in 1965 and 1966. During this period peasants and students suspected of guerrilla activity were arrested, tortured and assassinated. Bodies of suspected guerrillas were mutilated and publically displayed. Security forces also burned the lands, terrorized the families and raped the wives of male peasants suspected of guerrilla activity (ibid: 118-21).

By the late 1960s the guerrilla struggle was effectively crushed. From this point forward consent generally predominated over force. This claim can be demonstrated by examining the relationship between the state and civil society, paying particular attention to how the local and national state interacted with popular associations and responded to protest in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. In the 1930s, 1940s (with the exception of 1945-1948) and 1950s, popular associations were proscribed and repressed by the state (see above). In the 1960s (apart from the guerrilla struggle), 1970s and 1980s, the state and parties linked to the state were connected to unions and, in the 1980s and 1990s, neighborhood associations. Additionally, the local state tolerated the emergence of a strong cooperative movement in Torres and other areas of Lara from 1966 on, despite the fact that this movement was closely linked to the Communist Party (Gimenez 2008: 79).

Non-violent protest during this period was generally tolerated and frequently led to concessions from the local and national state and local elites. During the 1970s and 1980s, cooperatives led successful "massive mobilizations of the people against increases

in the price of water and gas” (ibid: 81). Another important mobilization occurred in the early 1970s, when 186 peasant families occupied unused land on a large sugar plantation, establishing a cooperative farm on the land, located in the parish of Montaña Verde. This action was supported by a municipal councilor from Torres (from COPEI), and the leaders of the land takeover justified their actions by making reference to the 1960 agrarian reform. In May 1972, Venezuela’s Supreme Court recognized the peasants’ right to occupy the land. The Montaña Verde cooperative survives to this day. 2000 people now live and work on the cooperative, which produces sugar cane (for a nearby sugar processing center) and a variety of food crops.<sup>27</sup> The fact that these mobilizations were tolerated and sometimes supported by local and national authorities (with the Montaña Verde land takeover actively supported by a municipal councilor) and succeeded in achieving their objectives indicates the markedly different relationship between the state and society during this period, and specifically the predominance of consent over force.

Oil revenue, which increased dramatically during the 1970s, provided the material basis for social democracy and AD-COPEI hegemony, making it possible for the parties to command significant popular support without antagonizing elites (Dunning 2008). In the early 1980s the price of oil fell sharply, a process that continued (with some ups and downs) through the early 2000s. This led to a major drop in state revenues, the imposition of austerity policies and a decline in formal employment, all of which undermined the union-party nexus linking AD and COPEI to the popular classes (Morgan 2011).

During the 1980s and 1990s neighborhood associations stepped in to fill this void. In the 1980s there were 100 neighborhood associations in Torres (Alcaldía de Torres 2011: 47). The neighborhood association movement originated as an attempt by citizens to organize outside the increasingly ineffective and clientelistic union-party nexus. AD and COPEI, however, managed to coopt most neighborhood associations in Torres. Myriam Gimenez, a radical activist who moved to Torres with her husband in the 1960s, playing a key role in the cooperative and neighborhood association movement, describes the clientelistic nature of the link between neighborhood associations and parties in Torres in the 1980s and 1990s: “When the *Adeccos* [followers of AD] ruled, everything went to the *Adeccos*; when the *Copeyanos* [followers of COPEI] ruled, everything went to the *Copeyanos*”. A report issued by Torres’ City Hall paints a similar picture:

The participation of citizens through these social organizations is described as geared towards activism and protest, with citizens having no access to decision-making. Demands were made through written or verbal requests, aimed at solving problems of access to basic services such as water, electricity and roads, among others. *Solutions* [to these problems] *had a strong discretionary bias in accord with the political-party interests of the government then in office.* (Alcaldía de Torres 2011: 47, emphasis added).

Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s the contradictions of oil-fueled social democracy mounted. As economic growth stalled, poverty, inequality and unemployment increased. AD-COPEI hegemony was fatally undermined. Support for the parties, and the political-economic model they embodied, fell precipitously. Protest and repression increased. Myriam Gimenez recounts the tension that engulfed Torres in the wake of the 1989 Caracazo and 1992 military coups, which she was actively involved in. Following the Caracazo, Gimenez, a popular and provocative radio host, went underground to avoid

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<sup>27</sup> Information about this story is available here: <http://www.pueblodelapastora.8m.com/custom.html>

being captured by the police. Other radical activists in Torres, including Julio Chávez, a student leader elected Torres' mayor in 2004, participated in these activities as well.

### *Participatory Populism*

The implosion of AD-COPEI hegemony opened up space for alternative parties. One of the most dynamic and interesting new parties was *Causa R*, a radical Left party that embraced participatory democracy. In 1989 Causa R won the election for governor of Bolivar state and mayor of Ciudad Guyana in Bolivar, an important center of industrial production, and in Causa R 1992 won the mayoral election in Caracas. This led to interesting experiments with participatory institutions, which succeeded in Ciudad Guyana but failed in Caracas (Goldfrank 2011). In 1997, Causa R split, with its more pro-participatory faction forming a new party, Patria Para Todos (Fatherland for All, PPT), which would come to play an important role in Torres.<sup>28</sup>

The biggest beneficiary of the end of AD-COPEI hegemony was Hugo Chávez's Fifth Republic Movement (MVR). Chávez's successful 1998 presidential campaign enjoyed support from the PPT, and several PPT leaders, including Aristóbulo Istúriz (who was mayor of Caracas with Causa R from 1992-1995), played an important role in the MVR and Chávez's administration, which embraced participatory democracy as a central goal. In the years following Chávez's 1998 election, Chavismo consolidated itself as a national movement. In 2000, the MVR won the gubernatorial election in Lara (and many other states) and the mayoral election in Torres (and many other municipalities).

Chavismo is a form of participatory populism, which is similar to other forms of populism in combining electoral competition, a multi-class base, state and party-led mobilization of the popular sectors and the clientelistic distribution of state resources. Participatory populism differs from traditional populism in three ways. First, like radical populism (e.g. AD during the Trienio), the state and ruling party engage in extensive organization and mobilization of the popular sectors, who play a central role in the conflict between the old and new political elite. Second, this mobilization is combined with a rhetoric of participatory democracy, which as discussed was central to Chavismo, particularly during its early years. Third, this leads to a unique form of "participatory clientelism", which combines collective mobilization and deliberation, which are characteristic of participatory democracy, and the politically discretionary distribution of state resources that characterizes traditional clientelism (Goldfrank 2011: 167-8).

The MVR's 2000 victory in Torres led to a participatory populist regime, which was led by Javier Oropeza, who defeated Julio Chávez (who ran with support from the PPT) to become Torres' mayor from 2000-2004. The Oropeza administration exemplifies the class and political-ideological contradictions of Chavismo. Like AD and other populist parties, the MVR, which was replaced by the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) in 2007, was a multi-class party supported by the urban poor and (sectors of) the working class, the middle class and business (Gates 2011), with business, middle-class professionals and the Venezuelan Workers Confederation (CTV), which

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<sup>28</sup> Interest in participatory democracy grew during the 1980s and 1990s as ordinary Venezuelans increasingly questioned the effectiveness of Venezuela's representative institutions, which had not been able to address the crises of this period. Interest in participatory democracy in Venezuela, however, dates to the 1960s and 1970s, with COPEI and the progressive Catholic Church playing an important role promoting participatory democracy during this time (Lopez Maya 2014).

allied with AD, moving to the opposition from 2001 on. The MVR brought together multiple, conflicting ideological currents, including moderate and radical social democrats, revolutionary socialists, autonomist social movements, participatory democrats and opportunistic ex-supporters of AD and COPEI. As a lifelong Copeyano from one of Torres' wealthiest landowning families who was elected with support from the popular and middle sectors, Javier Oropeza fully encapsulated these contradictions.

Oropeza's election brought the "Bolivarian Revolution" to Torres, but ironically also marked the return of the Godarria to political power. The two mayors who preceded Oropeza, a father-son duo, both supported by AD, were from a relatively modest middle-class background. Both Oropeza's grandfathers engaged in extensive land grabbing during the early twentieth century, which resulted in their ownership of immense tracts of land in Torres (Chávez 2010: 18). Oropeza's director of government was the president of the local Society of Cattle Ranchers and his cousin was the head of the conservative local Catholic Church (Harnecker 2008: 20).

Notwithstanding his status as a member of Torres' landowning elite, Oropeza was subject to pressures that led him to establish pseudo participatory institutions in Torres. Oropeza appointed Myriam Gimenez, a lifelong organizer and revolutionary, his director of social development due to pressure from leftists within the MVR. In 2002, Oropeza established a local public planning council (CLPP) in accord with a national law mandating participatory budgeting in all municipalities. Oropeza gave Gimenez the task of organizing Torres' CLPP, but made it clear he was doing this merely to comply with the law and not because of a desire to expand popular control over decision-making. Gimenez says that after the 2002 CLPP law passed, "Javier called a meeting and told us, 'Look, we have to form a planning council. If you don't I'll be fined 14,000 *Bolívares* [approximately 1000 USD at the 2002 exchange rate] and I don't have the funds, so just go ahead and do it. But *make sure you put our people in there*'" (emphasis added).

With a truck and resources provided by Oropeza, over the course of several months Gimenez assembled a team that "traveled to every corner of the municipality", according to Zoila Vasquez, who worked with Gimenez and was the CLPP secretary general from 2004 to 2011. Gimenez's team held popular assemblies throughout Torres, where delegates for the CLPP were elected. Defying Oropeza's directive to "put our people in there", Gimenez's team put together a planning council composed of delegates with multiple political views, and made sure that the majority of the CLPP were community members, and not elected officials, as the law mandated. Gimenez says Oropeza tried to control this process, by "having people from his ex-party, COPEI, go to assemblies to try to make sure they could run things", according to Gimenez.

The assemblies were also used to put together Torres' first participatory budget, based on the priorities of local residents and not politicians and experts in City Hall. Oropeza refused to recognize the results of the participatory budget (which his own staff had helped put together), leading Gimenez to offer her letter of resignation. The mayor refused to accept this, but over the next year his relationship with the MVR deteriorated. During this period the class and political-ideological contradictions of Chavismo came to a head. After Hugo Chávez issued a set of comparatively radical decrees in November 2001, several of which touched on property rights, opposition to his government hardened, with elites, middle-class professionals, trade union leaders and sectors of the military joining forces in a series of marches and the April 2002 coup. Gimenez says,

“There were rumors that the mayor and his friends celebrated [President] Chávez’s fall” in the April 2002 coup. In 2003, Oropeza left the MVR and joined the opposition, leading Gimenez to resign from Oropeza’s administration for good.

Oropeza’s defection from the MVR, and allegations of systematic corruption during his administration, opened up the 2004 mayoral race in Torres. The election was a three-way contest pitting Oropeza, who was supported by the agrarian elite and local commercial media, against Walter Cattivelli, a local contractor supported by the MVR, and Julio Chávez, a former student leader supported by multiple left parties (including the PPT, the Communist Party and the Socialist League), municipal unions, peasant unions, cooperatives and the student and cultural movement. Chávez (who is not related to Hugo Chávez) overcame fierce resistance from the agrarian elite, local commercial media, the Catholic Church and the MVR to win the election by a razor-thin margin with 35.6% of the vote. Julio Chávez’s campaign, his second against the MVR in four years, succeeded, in part, because of a grassroots backlash by grassroots Chavistas who chose to support Julio Chávez (at a higher enough level to ensure his victory) due to their disgust with Oropeza, due to his betrayal of the MVR, and their wariness towards Cattivelli, whom Chavista activists in Torres say “was an Adecco his whole life”.

### *Participatory Democracy*

Julio Chávez’s election led to the establishment of a participatory democracy in Torres. Participatory democratic regimes are similar to social democratic regimes in that there is electoral competition, an institutionalized relationship between the state and society and a multi-class base, with consent predominating over force. Participatory democratic regimes differ from social democratic regimes in three ways. In social democratic regimes the state is likely to control civil society, resources are distributed through clientelistic networks, and the popular classes occupy a subordinate position vis-à-vis political and economic elites. In participatory democratic regimes the state is subordinated to civil society, resources are distributed through democratic channels (which are transparent and politically inclusive) and the popular classes play a leading role in decision-making.

Table 3 (see below) summarizes the similarities and differences of the four types of political regime that have existed in Torres between the 1900s and 2010s. When seen in historical perspective, Torres’ participatory democracy appears as the latest phase in a centuries-long struggle in which the popular classes have successfully wrested increasing control over political and economic decision-making from the hands of the landowning elite. Torres’ transformation between the 1900s and 2010s appears “progressive” in the sense that there has been a clear increase in the popular classes’ power over this time. This increase has not, however, occurred in a linear manner: e.g. the increase in popular power between 1945-1948 was followed by a steep reversal from 1948-1958; popular power increased in the 1960s and 1970s in an uneven manner but declined in the 1980s and 1990s; since 2000 it has again increased in an uneven and non-linear manner. The analysis presented above shows that the popular classes have consistently struggled for greater control over the economic and political forces shaping their lives. Increases in

popular power have been most likely to occur when there is a national political opening<sup>29</sup> – as occurred in 1936, 1945-1948, 1958, the late 1960s and the late 1990s – which spurs heightened local popular class mobilization and helps generate shifts from one political regime to another.

**Table 3 Political Regimes in Torres, 1900s-2010s**

<b>Regime Type</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Class Base</b>	<b>Elections</b>	<b>Institutionalized State-Society Relationship</b>	<b>State-Society Relations</b>
<b>Oligarchic</b>	1900-1950s*	Landowning Elite	No	No	Repression Protest
<b>Social Democratic</b>	1960s-1990s	Middle Classes Popular Sectors Business	Yes**	Yes	Union-Party Nexus Clientelism Protest Repression (secondary)
<b>Participatory Populist</b>	2000-2004	Middle Classes Popular Sectors Business (secondary)	Yes	Yes	Participatory Clientelism
<b>Participatory Democratic</b>	2005-?	Popular Sectors Middle Classes (secondary)	Yes	Yes	Participatory Institutions

\*During the 1945-1948 Trienio, Torres had a radical populist regime, which combines features of participatory populist and participatory democratic regimes.

\*\*There were not direct elections for mayor in Venezuela until 1992. Prior to this, mayors and other local officials were selected through voting for statewide party lists.

Torres’ participatory democracy represents an attempt to come to terms with the contradictions that have developed under Torres’ previous political regimes. Two central contradictions, which date from Torres’ oligarchic period, are the concentration of economic wealth and power and the link between economic and political power. Torres’ social democratic regime made relatively little progress addressing the concentration of economic wealth and power (though some progress appears to have been made through land reform and the formation of cooperatives), but loosened the link between economic and political power. Participatory populism generated a new contradiction, based on the gap between the ruling party’s participatory democratic ideology and the reality of participatory clientelism and corruption; ironically, however, in some ways the link between economic and political power was reinstated, with Javier Oropeza, a member of the “Godarria”, becoming mayor. Torres’ participatory democratic regime has sought to address each of these contradictions by empowering the popular classes politically through the establishment of effective participatory institutions and fostering a(n ongoing) struggle for popular control over economic decision-making.

<sup>29</sup> Changing national and international economic conditions have often preceded subsequent periods of major national political change; e.g. the 1929 global economic crisis facilitated the opening that occurred post-1935; the fall in the price of oil in the 1980s set the stage for the emergence of Chavismo.

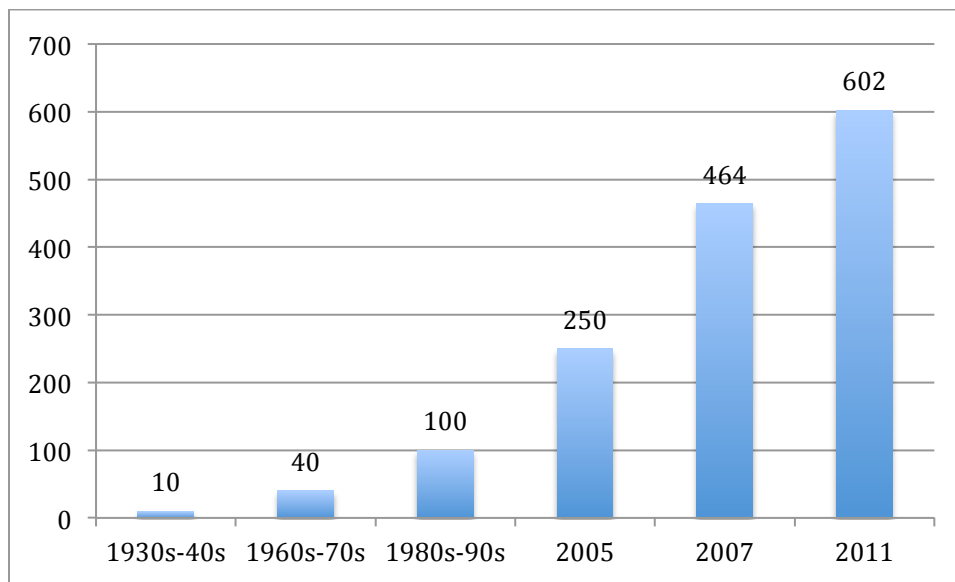


There is a clear, albeit contradictory, connection between the national political opening created by Chavismo and Torres' participatory democratic regime. Participatory democracy is an attempt to realize the unfulfilled promise of Chavismo. During his campaign and his term as mayor, Julio Chávez faced considerable resistance from local and regional MVR leaders, with Lara's MVR governor providing considerable funds to a municipal councilor opposed to Julio Chávez in an attempt to create what Miguel "Chicho" Medina (a social movement leader who supported Julio Chávez and worked in his administration) called "a parallel City Hall". Torres' municipal council, which was initially controlled by hostile MVR leaders, also opposed the mayor's participatory initiatives. The mayor, however, received symbolic support from President Chávez, who named Julio Chávez the only mayor on a presidential commission on popular power in 2006 and other prominent Chavistas, including the renowned scholar-activist Marta Harnecker, who published a book praising the mayor in 2008 (Harnecker 2008). Julio Chávez consistently identified himself as a supporter of the president and the "Bolivarian Revolution" and he made extensive use of Chavista rhetoric, laws and institutional forms, such as Torres' local public planning council and communal councils. According to Chávez, "My only campaign promise [in 2004] was to build popular power". Chávez's first move as mayor was the convocation of a municipal constituent assembly, which was modeled after Venezuela's 1999 national constituent assembly. In 2007, Chávez responded to a call from the president and joined the newly formed PSUV, although he continued to clash with regional party leaders in the coming years.

#### TORRES' PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRATIC REGIME

The rest of this chapter provides an in-depth look at Torres' participatory democratic regime, which is characterized by three central features. The first is the regime's society-led nature. Julio Chávez and many key officials in his administration have a social movement background, with decades of collective experience with the student movement, a cultural movement (that served as an umbrella for cultural activity, sports and economic/political organizing), unions, peasant leagues and radical left and revolutionary politics. In addition to the social movement origins of leading local state officials, two mechanisms reinforced the society-led nature of Torres' participatory democratic regime during Chávez's tenure as mayor: participatory institutions that privilege civic associations, and stimulate ongoing civic organization and mobilization; and the conflictual nature of governance in Torres, with the mayor regularly mobilizing support from popular movements in clashes with local and regional political elites. Figure 3 charts the increase in the number of civic associations in Torres between the 1930s and 2011, showing the sharp increase in recent years. This increase, which is linked to the establishment of participatory budgeting in Torres in 2005 (which incentivized civic associationalism), is an indicator of the increasing centrality of civil society in Torres.

**Table 4 Number of Civic Associations in Torres, 1930s-2011**



Sources: Harnecker (2008: 58); Alcaldía de Torres (2011: 47, 49). Note: There is very limited data on the number of peasant unions and other civic associations in Torres in the 1930s and 1940s; 10 is a rough estimate based on information provided in Garcia Ponce (1986: 51), Salazar (2007: 181) and Powell (1971: 55). The same is true regarding the number of civic associations (unions, cooperatives and other types) in the 1960s and 1970s, with 40 being a rough estimate based on information in Gimenez (2008) and Alcaldía de Torres (2011).

Ethnographic data also supports the claim that Torres’ movement democratic regime has led to a significant increase in the power of civil society. Following a participatory budget assembly in Torres (see below), I asked a participant, ‘Why not just leave the budget to the mayor?’ He responded, ‘Why not? I’m equal to the president of the United States. If he can make decisions, why can’t I?’ Another man chimed in, ‘In the past, government officials would stay in their air conditioned offices all day and make decisions there. They never even set foot in our communities. So who do you think can make a better decision about what we need, an official in his air conditioned office who has never even come to our community, or someone who is from the community?’

It is worth noting that there was a struggle within and outside the local state to constitute social control of the state. Lalo Paez, the head of Torres’ Office of Citizenship Participation, recounts how when he started his post, employees were used to 9-5 schedules. According to Paez, these employees bristled at his suggestion that they needed to be available during hours that working people were not working, meaning evenings and weekends. Paez faced resistance from within this office, although by the time I spent time in the office, several years after it was established (in late 2009 through mid 2011) social workers in the office worked irregular hours to be available for assemblies in communities. There is also a struggle, which continues through the present, between a vision of *social* control over the state and *party* control. The second vision is one that says that Chavistas alone should be allowed to access state decision-making fora. This harkens back to the traditional and participatory clientelism of the past. This position seemed to be a minority one in Torres, although it was present.

The second key feature of Torres’ current regime is its encompassing nature, with local officials seeking to establish self-government, or *autogobierno*, in which ordinary

citizens, drawn principally from the popular classes, will control *all* of the important decisions that affect their lives. There are several indicators suggesting the increased centrality, and power, of the popular classes in Torres' participatory democratic regime. As mayor, Julio Chávez regularly clashed with the Godarria and the "rancid oligarchy", as he calls the local agrarian elite. Chávez criticized the local commercial media, which was highly critical of his administration, and linked to the agrarian elite, with Javier Oropeza owning Torres' only daily newspaper, *El Caroreño*. After taking office, Chávez confronted the local Catholic Church, which is closely linked to the agrarian elite, by rescinding the lifetime pension City Hall had provided the local bishop and "giving this money to indigent old men". As mayor, Chávez pushed the National Land Institute, which he says was less cooperative than he would have liked, to expropriate five haciendas in Torres, with 15,000 hectares of land distributed to peasant farmers (Harnecker 2008: 37). Additionally, Chávez and his successor, Edgar Carrasco, worked to reverse past administrations' bias towards large farmers, pledging "unconditional support to small and medium-size [agricultural] producers" (Alcaldía de Torres 2011: 9).

Third, Torres' participatory democracy is connected to a broader struggle, which is both local and national, to establish socialism, which is seen as entailing popular control over economic decisions that affect local workers and communities. The following quote from Julio Chávez, in response to a question from the author regarding what "socialism of the twenty-first century" is, indicates Chávez's view that participation and socialism are linked. The quote also encapsulates the other two features of participatory democracy.

We say that all expressions of socialism should be based on the people's participation, a participation that impedes bureaucratism...socialism should start with the idea of constructing popular power...[and be based on] projects that make visible the process of governing *with* the people, not *for* the people, so that decisions, big decisions, are taken by the people, in a pedagogic and liberating process.... We say that the people should make all the decisions. We'd rather err with the people than be right without the people.

To see whether the administrations of Julio Chávez and Edgar Carrasco, Torres' mayor since 2009, have put this vision – of having "the people make all the decisions", with local state leaders preferring to "err with the people than be right without the people" – into practice, four sets of indicators are examined: the extent and quality of popular control over political decision-making and the institutional and political effectiveness of Torres' participatory democratic regime. The chapter ends by examining the trajectory of participatory democracy, focusing on efforts to expand popular control from local political to local and extra-local economic decision-making.

### *Extent of Popular Control*

Torres has made substantial progress towards the goal of *autogobierno*, in which "the people make all the decisions", as measured by the percent of the investment budget subject to popular control, whether non-budgetary issues are subject to popular control and turnout for Torres' participatory institutions.

100% of Torres' investment budget, which in 2006 equaled 14,625,564,113 *Bolivares* (6,802,588 US dollars),<sup>30</sup> is subject to participatory budgeting, which works as

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.salasituacional.org/1/alcaldetorreslara.htm>. The USD amount listed was converted at the official rate of 2150 *Bolivares*:1 USD. At the black market rate of 2700:1 this figure would be \$5,416,876.

follows. The first phase consists of “participatory diagnoses”, where residents from Torres’ 560 communal councils map out their communities’ resources and needs. In the second phase, community assemblies are held where residents discuss and vote on their priorities and elect a delegate to serve as the community’s spokesperson (vocero) for the third phase. This phase consists of two rounds of parish assemblies, held in each of Torres’ seventeen parishes where voceros from all of the parish’s communal councils discuss and vote on projects. Decisions made in parish assemblies are binding, with Julio Chávez commenting that, “The mayor can’t even veto these decisions”.

The final phase of Torres’ participatory budget is project implementation. Julio Chávez explained that participatory budgeting has increased the number of projects implemented each year, and changed how, and by whom, projects are implemented: “In the past we had 100 projects a year and they were all done by private enterprises and this year [2010] for example, we had 350 projects, with 200 [57%] done by Funpeces, a municipal foundation, 135 [39%] by communal councils, and only 14 [4%] by private contractors, which shows that we’ve reversed the relationship that existed”. The goal in Torres is to increase the percentage of projects implemented by communal councils, a process referred to as “direct administration”. There are several reasons for this goal. The first is to keep money spent on projects within communities themselves, instead of having this money enrich private enterprises. The second is that having communities administer their own resources is seen as a critical to establishing *autogobierno*.

Non-budgetary issues are also subject to popular control in Torres. The most important example of this was Torres’ Municipal Constituent Assembly, known as the *constituyente*, which occurred in the months after Julio Chávez took office.<sup>31</sup> In the first stage of this process, a small team, including the mayor, Fernando Soto Rojas (a former guerilla leader and ex-secretary general of the Socialist League), leaders from the municipal union, the teachers’ union, the peasant movement, Fatherland for All (PPT) and the Communist Party, put together a draft document setting out the methodology of the *constituyente* and putting forward a set of issues to be discussed. Over the next three months this proposal was discussed in hundreds of popular assemblies held in 55 districts in Torres. Two types of assemblies were held: neighborhood and village assemblies, which were open to the public at large, and meetings of delegates to the Municipal Constituent Assembly, with delegates elected in the neighborhood and village assemblies. To ensure that delegates were ordinary citizens, the rules prohibited participation from politicians currently in office or who had previously held office. According to Julio Chávez, this “guaranteed that voceros would be a person from the community, and this person would be the one to bring proposals from the neighborhood assembly into the heart of the Municipal Constituent Assembly” (Harnecker 2008: 28).

Participation in this process was politically pluralistic, with members of the opposition, whom Julio Chávez and others call “the oligarchy”, participating alongside self-declared Chavistas. The mayor sought to have the process submitted to a popular referendum in Torres, but officials from the National Electoral Council (CNE) refused to allow this to occur, citing the expense and lack of precedence. The *constituyente* concluded in June 2005 and was approved by delegates in a large assembly. Torres’ municipal council, however, refused to approve the new ordinance. This led to a

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<sup>31</sup> This discussion relies on interviews with Julio Chávez and Miguel “Chicho” Medina, a social movement leader and delegate in the *constituyente*, and Harnecker’s (2008: 24-35) interview with Julio Chávez.

mobilization of citizens and officials in favor of the measure, who physically occupied City Hall, in an attempt to force approval of the measure. In the end the measure was approved, but not until the end of 2005, following the installation of new council members elected in August 2005.

The *constituyente* is not the only example of popular control over non-budgetary issues. One example of this is a public assembly I attended in March 2010. The assembly was convened by the Trinidad Samuel Parish Council (Trinidad Samuel is the parish where Carora is located) and in addition to the Parish Board representative and a few other parish officials, was attended by around 60 communal council activists (who seemed, by and large to be grassroots members and not communal council leaders) and a half dozen transportation union officials. At the beginning of the discussion, which focused on a proposal to increase bus fares, the assembly elected a director of debate. The discussion centered on union officials proposal to increase bus fares by 100%. A number of citizens offered proposals for a lesser increase, of 50 to 60%, saying “100% is too much” and “we’re a socialist country, not a capitalist country”. The union officials responded by enumerating their increased vehicle and labor costs, with automobile parts costing more since they were imported using a less-preferential exchange rate (in Venezuela’s two-tier exchange system of the time). The assembly converged on a proposal to increase regular fares by 50% and rapid bus fares by 60%. The head of Torres’ Parish Board suggested that the transport union officials might want to accept this proposal rather than submitting the matter to a vote, since there had been proposals for much lesser increases, of just 25% for example. A transport union official, who appeared to speak on behalf of all the union officials present, agreed to this, noting that “we’re clearly a minority here and you’re the majority”, in reference to the union officials being significantly outnumbered by communal council members. The official did, however, ask that the assembly agree to higher rates during holiday seasons, with this proposal agreed to.

Another example of popular control over non-budgetary issues in Torres occurred in the working-class neighborhood of La Guzmaná. One of the main issues discussed by La Guzmaná’s communal council (one of several in the neighborhood) in early 2010 was selecting a new director for the local school. During a citizens’ assembly held in January 2010, the Lara state director of education explained how this process would work: “The teachers, the community, and the workers will decide on the new director...this will be a model for the entire state... This will be the first time in the history of education in the state that all of these groups participate”. Over the next several months La Guzmaná’s communal council met and discussed the criteria and process for selecting the new director. A vote for the new director was to be held in April 2010.<sup>32</sup>

A third indicator of the significant degree of popular control over political decision-making in Torres is the high turnout for Torres’ Participatory Budget. While municipal officials lack an official count, a conservative estimate suggests upwards of 15,000 people (8% of Torres’ population) have annually participated in PB in some way (e.g. attending a PB-related communal council or parish assembly) in recent years.<sup>33</sup> It is

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<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, I left Torres before this occurred, but the process up to that point had been very participatory and deliberative, indicating a high degree of popular control over the decision.

<sup>33</sup> This estimate comes from multiplying the number of communal councils by the number of people likely to have attended a PB community assembly in a given year. Using conservative estimates of 500 communal

not an accident that a significant percentage of citizens in Torres have participated in the Participatory Budget. Torres' Office of Citizenship Participation has played a key role in making this happen, by helping to organize communal councils, the numbers of which increased substantially between 2005 and 2009: there were 250 in 2005, 464 in 2007, and 560 by 2009 (Harnecker 2008: 58; Alcaldía de Torres 2011: 48).

### *Quality of Popular Control*

To assess the quality of popular control in Torres three indicators relating to Torres' Participatory Budget are examined: first, the extent to which decision-making approximates a norm of deliberation, in which competing views are aired and justified through reason-based arguments; second, whether participants or officials have final say over decisions; and third, inclusivity in decision-making venues and the distribution of state resources in terms of race, class, gender and political views.

Deliberative decision-making is the norm in Torres' Participatory Budget. This assessment is based on participant observation in twelve of the seventeen parish assemblies that took place in Torres in November and December 2009. High quality deliberation took place in the eleven parish assemblies I attended in primarily rural parishes (of which there are sixteen in Torres). The parish assembly for Trinidad Samuel, which includes Carora and a number of rural communities, was broken into an urban and rural circle, given the distinct priorities of these two groups. The rural circle was highly deliberative. The urban assembly, which included over 150 voceros from different communal councils in Carora, was much less deliberative. In fact, this assembly resembled a rugby match more than a Habermasian public sphere, with participants at one point elbowing each other out of the way to get close to the moderator, who was writing down which communities would get projects. The reason for this assembly being less deliberative likely relates to three factors: its significantly greater size, with rural assemblies in Torres having between 20 and 60 participants, while this one had 150 plus; poor facilitation; and, more speculatively, the greater level of "individualism" of city residents. This final factor is one that local state officials, and some residents in Carora, felt to be quite important, although my data do not allow it to be systematically assessed.

The vignette that opens this dissertation provides an example of the type of deliberative decision-making that prevailed in most parish assemblies in Torres. For ease of reference I have repeated the vignette here, which is a description of the parish assembly in Las Mercedes, which included urban and rural residents (suggesting that urban residents can engage in deliberative decision-making under the right conditions). Over the course of three hours, sixty community leaders – who work as small farmers, agricultural laborers, students, teachers and housewives – who had been elected by their communities to serve as voceros, engaged in a vigorous discussion about the 850,340 *Bolivares* (approximately 400,000 US dollars) allocated to their parish. A number of projects – for a cultural center, road paving, electric lighting, water purification, water tanks, an aqueduct and a tractor (to be used as a school bus, an ambulance, and for road leveling and agriculture) – were discussed and approved during the assembly. Before

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councils and 30 participants/assembly = 15,000. The actual figure is likely higher since (1) in the many non-PB communal council meetings I attended the minimum number of attendees was 30 and the max was 200-300, (2) attendance at PB-related community assemblies, which are likely seen as more important than 'normal' meetings, was likely >30; and (3) Torres' Alcaldía reports 560 (>500) active communal councils.

each project was approved there was dialogue, at times heated, about the project's relative merits and the wisdom of spending the parish's limited budget funds on one project versus another.

Towards the beginning of the assembly there was a discussion of whether to fund two projects, for street lighting and drinking water, which were approved last year but not executed due to budget cuts. One of the voceros argued against funding the street lighting project, pointing to the fact that Venezuela was in the midst of a severe drought that had caused frequent electricity blackouts throughout the country. He said, "I think that given the current situation with electricity, the street lighting project is not all that urgent and should not be funded". Another vocero concurred, saying he felt that drinking water was more urgent. A female vocero, from the community where the street lighting will go, spoke in favor of the project, saying, "Not having this street light is a security issue for these communities. If you arrive later, after 10 PM or so, it's totally dark and unsafe". A male vocero also spoke in favor of completing the street lighting project, which he said would "raise the community's self esteem". The assembly facilitator urged that the project be approved, saying, "It was a commitment from the previous year, so we should make a decision about this in the assembly". In the end both projects were approved.

The near-universality of deliberative decision-making in Torres' Participatory Budget is not accidental, but a result of conscious efforts by local officials, who see deliberation as necessary to autogobierno. Lalo Paez, the director of Torres' Office of Citizenship Participation from 2005-2010, played an important role in this. Paez's ultimate goal, which he felt would take time to reach, was autogobierno, in which "the people are the government". For this to happen, Paez felt that there must be widespread discussion during meetings. He mentioned his concern that in some meetings he attended, "sometimes only 4 or 5 people will speak...and then people raise their hands and vote, but just for what one of these people has put forward". Paez wanted to establish a methodology that would facilitate widespread discussion in assemblies, "To make sure that there is input from every family at least". Paez's goal of universal participation (on a familial level) in discussions was not achieved in the assemblies I attended. These assemblies did, however, feature discussions in which many more than 4 or 5 people participated, and in which, crucially, different points of view were aired and discussed.

A critical feature of Torres' Participatory Budget is the fact that ordinary citizens are given *binding* control over decisions. Officials, such as Julio Chávez, mention this fact, with Chávez noting how he himself must go along with decisions made in the Participatory Budget. Observations from parish assemblies confirm that ordinary citizens, rather than party leaders or local state officials, have control over final decisions in Torres' Participatory Budget. Decisions made in parish assemblies do, however, pass through Torres' local public planning council (CLPP) in a year-end meeting. I attended the 2009 year-end CLPP meeting in Torres, with all of the decisions made in parish assemblies approved without much fuss; a few words were added to various projects, to clarify, for instance, that one project was the "culmination" of an earlier project.

Over the course of my research I heard a few stories of projects that had been approved and then altered by the mayor. I asked Lalo Paez about this in an interview. Paez confirmed that this had taken place, but he said that it was uncommon and occurred more in the beginning of Julio Chávez's time in office, and was now much less common. This indicates, however, that practices inherited from the past are not easily overcome.

An important indicator of the seemingly high degree of citizen control over decisions in Torres is the fact that amongst residents throughout Torres, both those who had participated in the Participatory Budget (via parish assemblies) and those who had not, there was a widespread sense that ordinary citizens were given control over decisions.

Scholars writing about Chávez-era Venezuela have asserted that regardless of whether there are participatory institutions in existence, these institutions are not fully democratic because there is exclusion of citizens who are not Chavista or “with the process of change” in local parlance (cf. Hawkins and Hansen 2006). The final indicator of the quality of popular control, inclusivity of participants, is thus quite important in terms of assessing the extent to which Torres’ Participatory Budget is fully democratic.

Torres’ Participatory Budget is quite inclusive in terms of gender, class, race and political views. Given that distribution of resources in Torres is tied to participation in the Participatory Budget, this discussion will focus on inclusion in parish assemblies. There is significant participation of men and women, with the majority of participants in many assemblies being women. [Put in quote from Julio Chávez about women in Torres’ municipal constituent assembly] Most participants are from the popular classes, with small farmers, agricultural laborers, informal workers, students, teachers and the unemployed present in significant numbers. Officials say that members of the elite, often referred to as the Godarria or “the oligarchy”, have also participated in the process by organizing their own communal councils and seeking and winning money for projects to maintain and improve Carora’s colonial district, which is home to many local elites. Parish assemblies were racially diverse. In most assemblies, *morenos* (the term used most frequently by people in Torres, which translates as brown people) were the majority, with whites and Afro-Venezuelans present as well, generally in smaller numbers.

Torres’ Participatory Budget is also inclusive in terms of political views. The majority of participants in parish assemblies were Chavistas. Non-Chavistas (who identified with neither Chavismo nor the opposition) were present as well, with anti-Chavistas also present, although in lesser numbers. There was no apparent relationship between political allegiance and people’s willingness to speak or ability to obtain projects for their communities. At least part of the reason for the significant degree of political pluralism is that most officials in Torres are adamant that meetings must be open to everyone regardless of political views. In several communal council meetings Lalo Paez said, “You can’t divide communal councils based on political beliefs...everyone has to be welcome or it won’t work”. Communal council members told me that, “We don’t discuss politics [meaning party politics] in communal councils”. Following a parish assembly, a vocero told me, ‘It doesn’t matter what party or color you have, if you’re blue or green or what’.

During my research I did interact with one official in the Office of Citizenship Participation who was less adamant about the need to include non-Chavistas, feeling that their opposition to Hugo Chávez and the “process of change” meant that they did not need to be, and should not be, included in local processes. Lalo Paez also mentioned that he had encountered other officials with less-than-fully inclusionary attitudes. Most officials and residents I encountered in Torres, however, felt that it was very important to be politically inclusive, and observations of parish assemblies and non-budget-related communal council meetings suggests there was in fact a high degree of inclusion.



### *Institutional Effectiveness*

Effective governance institutions must link inputs into decision-making (whether popular or otherwise) to concrete projects. Institutional effectiveness can be measured in two ways. First, comparatively objective indicators can be measured, relating to the rate of project implementation, meaning the percentage of approved projects that are completed within a given timeframe (e.g. 1-2 years) or the overall budgetary execution rate, which measures the percent of the budget that is spent within a given year. Second, more subjective indicators can be looked at, such as whether most local residents express confidence that projects that are approved are (and have been) completed. In practice, it can be difficult to obtain reliable data on objective measures, which are often jealously guarded by politically astute officials, given that these measures have electoral-political implications. Indicators that are available cannot necessarily be trusted for this reason.

I have been unable to find fully reliable objective data relating to Torres' rates of project implementation and budget execution. A 2012 City Hall report lists 1204 projects executed between 2009 and 2012, with 76% executed by communal councils.<sup>34</sup> This report does not, unfortunately, indicate the total number of projects approved during this time. Interview data suggests that somewhere between 300 and 350 projects occur in Torres per year. If this is the case, then Torres' project implementation rate between 2009-2012 is between 86% (assuming 350 projects per year) and 100% (assuming 300 projects).

Subjective evidence also suggests that Torres' Participatory Budget is institutionally effective. On visits throughout Torres I asked numerous residents their views on the Julio Chávez administration. Almost all expressed a high degree of confidence. Several recounted how they had initially viewed Chávez's promises with suspicion but came to trust the mayor after seeing concrete results year after year. On the subjective level, Torres thus scores well in terms of institutional effectiveness. Another indicator that speaks to this issue is the fact that officials in Torres' technical departments are professionally qualified (with numerous officials holding graduate degrees in engineering and administration). Additionally, heads of Torres' technical departments, such as engineering and an office called "The Situation Room" (which focuses on project implementation), say they felt fully supported by the mayor and had never felt the need to compromise technical standards for "political" reasons.

### *Political Effectiveness*

Torres' participatory democratic regime has been very effective from a political standpoint. As noted, Julio Chávez won the 2004 mayoral election with just 35.6% of the vote, with less than a thousand votes separating Chávez from Javier Oropeza, who came in second, and less than three thousand votes separating him from Walter Cattivelli, the third-place finisher.<sup>35</sup> At the time Julio Chávez was a member of the PPT (Fatherland for All). In 2007, Chávez and most of his supporters joined the PSUV. Edgar Carrasco, who was Julio Chávez's director of governor, succeeded Chávez as mayor in 2008, winning (as a PSUV candidate) 48.3% of the vote. In 2013, Carrasco was re-elected with 54.7% of the vote. Julio Chávez, meanwhile was elected a state senator in 2008, with the PSUV, and in 2010 was elected a national assembly representative with 55.6%, one of the

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<sup>34</sup> <http://notasdetorresycarora.blogspot.com/2013/03/alcalde-de-torres-edgar-carrasco.html>

<sup>35</sup> These and other vote totals can be accessed via <http://www.cne.gob.ve/>

highest totals obtained by any PSUV candidate in that election.

## REGIME TRAJECTORY: FROM PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY TO SOCIALISM?

Torres' participatory democratic regime has made considerable progress in resolving several contradictions generated, or left unresolved, by previous regimes. The establishment of participatory democracy has given the popular classes unprecedented political power, effectively dismantling the link between economic and political power that was established during Torres' oligarchic regime and persisted, in an attenuated form, through Torres' social democratic and participatory populist regimes. By constructing effective participatory institutions, Torres' participatory democracy has also largely resolved the central contradiction of participatory populism, the gap between the ruling party's participatory democratic rhetoric and the reality of participatory clientelism.

By empowering the popular classes politically, Torres' participatory democratic regime has drawn attention to, and created conditions for addressing, the concentration of economic wealth and power in Torres, which dates from the late nineteenth century (and in fact extends back to the colonial era). The gap between the popular classes' effective control over *political* decision-making and their relative lack of control over *economic* decision-making now appears as a contradiction. Resolving this contradiction requires moving beyond participatory democracy and establishing a new socialist political regime. This has not yet occurred in Torres. And the challenges of establishing socialism, which requires constructing popular control over local and *extra-local* economic decision-making, are such that it cannot be done in a single municipality.

The establishment of participatory democracy in Torres has, however, generated increased popular support for the goal of constructing socialism,<sup>36</sup> which in Venezuela is understood to mean worker and community control over decisions about economic production and distribution. This has occurred through two mechanisms: the construction of local socialist "real utopias" (Wright 2010), where socialist ideas are put into practice in concrete institutions; and the ideological labor of organic intellectuals (Gramsci 1971), who connect these socialist real utopias to broader discussions of socialism.

Torres' Participatory Budget has functioned as a socialist real utopia. As discussed above, it serves as a space within which ordinary citizens engage in consequential discussions concerning the distribution of an important economic resource: the municipal investment budget. According to data from Torres' City Hall, communal councils constructed 76% of the 1204 projects completed with funds from participatory budgeting between 2008 and 2012. This represents an advance towards socialism since these funds are not being given to private companies but remain in the hands of local communities.

The claim that Torres' Participatory Budget qualifies as a socialist real utopia is bolstered by the fact that many participants in Torres seem to understand participatory budgeting, and processes associated with it (e.g. meetings of communal councils and communes) in this manner. Participants in Torres' Participatory Budget assemblies often referred to themselves as "socialist", an identity that seemed to be associated with generosity and community-mindedness. Prior to the Las Mercedes parish assembly

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<sup>36</sup> I discuss this process at length in Hetland (2014), where I refer to it as emergent socialist hegemony.

described above, a vocero introduced himself as a socialist. I asked him what socialism meant, and he responded, “It’s if I have something and I share it with you”. Later, during the meeting, a vocero asked the assembly, “If we’re not doing socialism, what are we doing?”, with this comment used to criticize others for acting in what the speaker felt to be a selfish, as opposed to “socialist”, manner. As these quotes make clear, socialism served as a point of reference in Torres’ Participatory Budget, with participants using the term to engage in deliberation about concrete matters like whether to fund a sewer, a road or a cultural center.

A second example of a socialist real utopia in Torres is a socialist electric meter factory established in May 2009 through an agreement between Torres’ City Hall and PDVSA (Venezuela’s national oil company) using technology from China.<sup>37</sup> In the months following the factory’s opening, in mid-2010, a struggle took place pitting factory workers, in alliance with local communal councils, against the Ministry of Electric Energy, the official owner of the factory. With support from the local community, the workers sought to have the factory designated a “social property”, which would allow the workers, rather than the state, determine how to use the factory’s profits. The workers had submitted a proposal for profits to be given to local communal councils and communes. Communal councils and communes would then hold public assemblies where community members would discuss and vote on projects funded by the factory’s profits. These project ideas would then be submitted to the factory’s Workers Assembly, which would have final say. This proposal, if approved, would effectively establish worker and community control over the factory (and specifically its profits). The Ministry of Electric Energy, however, fought the proposal, with the factory’s ownership status unresolved in December 2010 (when I conducted research at the factory).

There has been more progress in establishing worker control over the production process, another issue critical to establishing socialism. The factory’s 113 workers are organized in a Workers’ Assembly, which is entrusted with decisions on day-to-day management, such as work hours. A factory supervisor explained how workers’ control over their own hours distinguished the plant from a capitalist firm: “This isn’t like a private firm where if your boss says that you have to show up at such and such a time, you have to. It doesn’t matter if you live far away, or anything. Here, this is decided by consensus”. There is also a Workers’ Council, composed of 18 workers, elected by the Workers’ Assembly, who sit on 9 committees, which make decisions on themes such as health, discipline and other issues. In December 2010 the workers were discussing a proposal, to be decided upon in the Workers’ Assembly, to equalize pay amongst all of the factory’s employees, including the plant director. The proposal would first, however, have to be considered by the factory’s Board of Directors, composed of workers and representatives from the Ministry of Electrical Energy. (At the time of research, however, the board had not yet met and workers were frustrated by the state’s slowness.) Workers were proud of the democratic system by which they had been hired. One worker explained that apart from a handful of employees chosen by Torres’ mayor, almost all of the 113 employees “were chosen by assemblies, who took the person’s situation into account, what their economic situation was, if they really needed this job, if they had kids”. The aforementioned supervisor (who overheard this) noted how this differed from

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<sup>37</sup> The official name of the factory is Planta Socialista de Ensamblaje de Contadores de Energía Eléctrica. Information about its origins is available here: <http://metrocontadores.blogspot.com/>

a capitalist firm, where “they don’t care who you are”.

If Torres’ Participatory Budget and Socialist Electric Meter Factory were isolated projects their impact would be limited. This has not been the case due to the efforts of organic intellectuals, such as Julio Chávez, Miguel Medina, Lalo Paez and others, who have worked to connect these concrete examples to broader ideas about what socialism is. Julio Chávez, for instance, regularly attended meetings of the local PSUV branch in Torres. At these meetings, he and grassroots party members would engage in discussions about a range of local, national and international issues, such as Venezuela’s electrical crisis of 2010, climate change, energy efficient light bulbs and more. Julio Chávez would connect these issues to broader discussions about capitalism and socialism. Party members, in turn, would use ideas about socialism – as put forward by Julio Chávez, Hugo Chávez (in radio and television addresses) and others – to discuss local processes, often in quite critical ways. For instance, during PSUV meetings in winter of 2010, party members regularly criticized various so-called socialist factories (though not the electric meter factory, which had not yet opened) for engaging in mistreatment of workers. One PSUV member complained that certain socialist factories had not been paying workers on time, saying, “They treat their workers worse than capitalists”. This indicates that Torres has a long way to go in terms of establishing socialism, but shows that socialism is already a live horizon of struggle.

Given the impossibility of establishing socialism in a single municipality, the struggle for socialism in Torres must be seen in relation to the larger struggle that has been taking place in Venezuela over the last fifteen years. For Torres’ struggle to move forward it must be connected to national struggles that have targeted corruption and bureaucratism in the state apparatus, which many grassroots Chavistas and seasoned social movement activists consider the chief obstacles to establishing popular control over political and economic decisions on a wider scale. Broader economic issues are also key. Given the economic crisis that Venezuela has been in since 2013 it seems that attempts to construct popular power have faced mounting challenges. The struggle to establish a socialist political regime in Torres must be viewed in relation to these broader national and international processes.

## CHAPTER 3 SUCRE ADMINISTERED DEMOCRACY

Sucre is a case of administered democracy, a state-led regime that provides ordinary citizens a significant degree of control over local political decision-making. Sucre's administered democracy is notable for three reasons. First, it is decidedly multi-class: the regime is led by, and enjoys robust support from, middle-class professionals but has engaged in extensive and relatively successful outreach to the popular classes. Second, a center-right mayor established the regime, making Sucre a quite rare example of successful participatory reform implemented by the Right. Third, the regime embodies a tension between expanding citizens' decision-making power while keeping that power within certain bounds. The genuine but limited power exercised by the popular classes in Sucre has generated a struggle for a more expansive form of participatory democracy that would allow citizens to exercise decision-making power in a less constrained manner.

Sucre's administered democracy is a product of the interaction between Sucre's socioeconomic structure, historical legacies of past regimes and national political change.

**Figure 3 La Urbina and Petare**



Source: El Nacional.

### SOCIOECONOMIC STRUCTURE

The photograph above documents the striking inequality that marks Sucre, a municipality of between 600,000 and 1.2 million inhabitants<sup>38</sup> that occupies the eastern

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<sup>38</sup> The INE's 2011 census lists 600,351 inhabitants in Sucre. A government official in Sucre told me there were 1.5 million residents as of 2010-11. Wilpert (2007: 57) cites a figure of 1.2 million residents.

end of the Caracas metropolitan area, which has a population of 4 to 6 million, roughly a fifth of Venezuela's overall population.<sup>39</sup> On the left side of the photograph is La Urbina, a wealthy section of Sucre made up of middle and upper-middle-class apartment complexes known as *urbanizaciones*. On the right is Petare, a poor and working-class area made up of self-constructed *ranchos* that is often referred to as the largest barrio in Latin America. In addition to highways (e.g. the one dividing La Urbina and Petare), Sucre's wealthier residents have sought protection from the perceived dangers of the barrios by enclosing their urbanizaciones in concrete walls topped with barbed wire and hiring armed guards to control the entry and exit to their gated communities.

Data on crime in Sucre suggest that elite fears of insecurity (which conversations with middle and upper-middle-class residents in Sucre show to be near-universal) are partially justified but also misplaced. Between 2000 and 2007 there were reportedly 3,871 murders in Sucre, an average of 484 per year.<sup>40</sup> 90% of these murders took place in the barrios of Petare, which gives Petare a murder rate of 117 murders per 100,000 residents (using Petare's official population in the 2011 census).<sup>41</sup> This makes Petare more dangerous than Honduras, which had the world's highest murder rate, of 90 per 100,000 residents, as of 2012.<sup>42</sup> The concentration of violence in Sucre's poorest areas means, however, that it is the poor, and not the rich, who have the most to fear from violence.

The walls surrounding Sucre's urbanizaciones do more than keep crime out. They also serve to protect the privilege of Sucre's wealthiest residents. Housing data reveal that there are significant differences in the quality of life in Sucre's rich and poor areas.<sup>43</sup> In Filas de Mariches, the poorest of Sucre's five parishes, more than 25% of housing is inadequate, with one or more basic service, e.g. running water or electricity, lacking. In Caucagüita and La Dolorita, Sucre's second and third poorest parishes, 10% and 5% of housing is inadequate. In Petare, where there are many urbanizaciones and barrios, just 2% of housing is inadequate, but there are significant pockets of poverty. In Petare North, with a mix of comparatively well off and very poor barrios, as of the late 1990s 40% of residents work in the informal sector and the bottom 20% of families earn just \$125/month (World Bank 1998: 11-12). In Leonicio Martínez, Sucre's wealthiest parish, *less than one-tenth of one percent* of housing is inadequate. The vast majority of Leonicio Martínez's residents are middle and upper-middle-class professionals who earn comparatively high incomes working in the public and formal private sector. There is also a racial divide separating Sucre's rich and poor areas. Residents of wealthy areas tend to have lighter skin and to self-identify as white, while most residents in the barrios have darker skin and often self-identify as brown (*moreno*) or black (Afro-Venezuelan). This class and racial inequality has shaped Sucre's politics in quite important ways, as discussed below.

Unemployment and underemployment are significant problems in Sucre, with a large portion of the population working in the informal sector. Petare is home to a

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<sup>39</sup> Four other municipalities make up the Caracas metropolitan area: Libertador, also known as the federal or capital district, Chacao, Baruta and El Hatillo. Most barrios in Caracas are in Libertador and Sucre.

<sup>40</sup> <http://pjcarlosocariz.blogspot.com/2007/05/cada-tres-das-matan-cuatro-personas-en.html>

<sup>41</sup> If Petare's population is estimated at double its murder rate would be half this, or 58 per 100,000.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2014/04/10/world/un-world-murder-rates/>

<sup>43</sup> Housing data comes from Venezuela's 2011 census (<http://www.ine.gob.ve/>), accessed May 1, 2015.

bustling open-air market where thousands of street vendors hawk their wares. Sucre is also an important center of industrial and large-scale (formal-sector) commercial activity. One consequence of this is that unlike Torres, where just 10-20% of municipal revenue comes from local taxes (with the rest coming from central government transfers), in Sucre over 80% of municipal revenue comes from local taxes paid by industrial and commercial establishments (Vallmitjana 1993: 137). This has given Sucre a margin of fiscal autonomy vis-à-vis the national state and the vagaries of the global oil market.

Sucre's transformation into a center of industry and commerce took place between the 1940s and 1960s. Through the mid-1940s Sucre was a sparsely populated agricultural zone of relatively large sugar and coffee haciendas and small holding farms (Baptista et al. 1993: 35). Over the next several decades textile, auto parts and clothing factories, as well as new banking and shopping centers, were established in Sucre (Baptista et al. 1993: 41-42). This process took place throughout Caracas. Through 1945, 90% of Venezuela's industrial infrastructure was concentrated in Caracas, and the Caracas metropolitan area continued to attract the vast majority of new manufacturing plants through the late 1960s, after which other areas of Venezuela (e.g. Ciudad Guyana) experienced significant industrialization (Ellner and Myer 2002: 106).

Sucre's population experienced a dramatic increase during these years, doubling in the 1940s, tripling during the 1950s and doubling again during the 1960s (Ellner and Myers 2002: 108). Sucre's growth mirrored the overall pattern found in the Caracas metropolitan area, which experienced tremendous growth during these years as hundreds of thousands of migrants from the countryside and smaller cities streamed into the capital seeking jobs, education and opportunity (ibid.). Wealthier residents settled in middle-class apartment complexes, while poorer migrants invaded marginal lands on hillsides, where they constructed ranchos out of cardboard and tin, later upgrading to brick and mortar (Ray 1969). In subsequent decades, barrio residents struggled for access to basic services, title to the land they occupied, employment opportunities and rights to public goods such as education, security and recreation (e.g. cultural activity, sports).

#### INTERACTION OF HISTORICAL LEGACIES AND NATIONAL POLITICAL CHANGE: FROM SOCIAL DEMOCRACY TO ADMINISTERED DEMOCRACY

Sucre's political history since the 1960s has been shaped by barrio dwellers' efforts to establish themselves economically and politically, middle and upper-middle-class residents' efforts to protect their privilege, and the local state's efforts to mediate between these competing groups. Between the 1960s and 2010s there have been three political regimes in Sucre. These regimes are similar in that each has been multi-class and based on elections. The regimes differ in the nature of state-society relations and the degree of power accorded to the popular sectors. As in Torres, the transition between regimes has been driven by the growth of internal contradictions within the existing regime, national-level political change and the dynamics of local class relations.

##### *Social Democracy*

From the 1960s through 1990s Sucre had a social democratic regime. As in Torres, this regime was characterized by a multi-class base, the presence of elections, the limited mobilization and organization of the popular classes by the state and parties and the clientelistic distribution of state resources. Sucre's social democratic regime was

marked by three phases: the tumultuous consolidation of the regime during the 1960s, a period marked by guerrilla activity and strong support for leftist parties in the barrios and the use of force by the state; AD-COPEI “partyarchy” (rule by the parties) during the 1970s and early 1980s, a period in which consent predominated over force; and the deterioration of the regime in the late 1980s and 1990s, a period marked by increased protest and the at-times extreme use of violence by the state.

The 1950s and 1960s were a tumultuous period in Sucre and Caracas as a whole, particularly in the rapidly expanding barrios of the western and eastern ends of the city, with Petare located on the far eastern end of the city. During the 1950s the underground opposition to the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship was concentrated in the barrios, with youth from Acción Democrática and the Venezuelan Communist Party (both of which were illegal) playing a key role. Popular mobilization by the urban poor in Caracas played a key role in ending Venezuela’s dictatorship (Ellner and Myers 2002: 105). Urban and rural mobilization continued during the first years of Venezuelan democracy (ibid; Powell 1971). The 1959 Cuban Revolution and the marginalization of the PCV and the revolutionary youth of AD by the leaders of AD, COPEI and URD (the three parties that signed the 1958 Pact of Punto Fijo) fueled the emergence of a guerrilla struggle in Venezuela that took place not only in the mountains of Lara and elsewhere, as recounted in the previous chapter, but in the barrios of Caracas as well, particularly during the mid-to-late 1960s (Cicariello-Maher 2013). Leftist parties were popular in the barrios of Sucre (and Caracas as a whole) during this period. “It was ten years [from 1958] before Punto Fijo democrats controlled the Caracas *ranchos*” (Ellner and Myer 2002: 105).

AD and COPEI managed to increase their influence in the barrios over the course of the 1960s. This occurred, in part, because of the successful “pacification” of the guerilla movement, a strategy employed by president Rafael Caldera of COPEI, who incorporated the radical Left into the Venezuelan political system from 1968 on. As the threat from the radical Left faded, AD and COPEI managed to penetrate the *Juntas Pro-Mejoras* (neighborhood betterment associations) established by newly arrived migrants to press for access to services from the municipal and national government (Ray 1969). AD and COPEI also benefitted from the 1970s oil boom, which gave the parties significant resources, which reports suggest were frequently distributed in a clientelistic manner.

The following account of Alto Lebrún, a working-class neighborhood of Petare that was settled during the 1940s and 1950s, indicates how this process worked during the 1960s and 1970s:

As time passed, and with the resulting deepening of the process of community consolidation, the inhabitants of Lebrún channeled their struggles to improve their conditions of life through specific organizations of various types: political-protest, religious, sports, cultural, etc., thus *these same organizations were converted into a propitious terrain for clientelism and the demagogy of the parties.* (Baptista et al. 1993: 49, emphasis added)

Baptista et al. (ibid.) indicate that the first Juntas in the zone were affiliated with COPEI and leftist parties, with Alto Lebrún referred to as a “red zone”. Other sources indicate that by the late 1960s AD and COPEI had succeeded in gaining a solid hold over Juntas and other forms of civic associations in barrios throughout Caracas by providing barrio residents access to employment and services (Ray 1969; Karst et al. 1973).

AD-COPEI hegemony weakened during the 1980s, as the price of oil fell and



austerity policies were imposed, which meant the parties had less resources to distribute to their bases. In February 1989 the semblance of popular consent to AD-COPEI rule was shattered during the Caracazo. In Petare, as in other barrios in Caracas, residents had grown impatient with the rising prices of basic goods in early 1989. This set the stage for the popular explosion that occurred on February 27 and for several days after, with poor residents throughout Caracas (and in cities across the country) engaging in widespread looting of basic necessities as well as luxury goods (Cicariello-Maher 2013: 94). Petare was a flashpoint of protest and looting. It also became one of the main targets of the brutal repression that followed. George Cicariello-Maher (2013) reports that, “up to twenty were killed in a single incident [in Petare] when, on March 1, the army infamously opened fire on the Mesuca staircase” (97).

A March 1990 article in SIC Semanal the weekly newsletter of Centro Gumilla, a Caracas- (and Barquisimeto-) based Jesuit human rights and social justice organization, entitled “A Year of Pain and Rage” documents the brutal treatment that the poor of Petare suffered at the hands of police and military forces not only during the Caracazo itself but also in the year after. The article characterizes the Caracazo as:

...the experience that we'll never forget, the scenes of plunder and death, of hunger and protest, of massacre and curfew, of the Army and tanks in the streets...it resembled the forever persecution of Haiti, the Plaza de las Tres Culturas and the massacre of students in Mexico, the periodic repression in the Dominican Republic. It resembled the times of Somoza, and the fury of Pinochet against the whole people. (Camuñas 1990: 74).

The article goes on to document soldiers entering a “humble dwelling” in Petare without a warrant and seizing the owner’s 6 children, including a baby of 18 months, all of whom were taken to a “dark site”. It also documents how neighborhood leaders were afraid to show their faces for weeks after the Caracazo, for fear of being detained by the police. It documents police torture of young black men in Petare, with officers forcing a young man’s head into a toilet bowl and beating another with a tube. The men are not told why they were detained and only released after paying a bribe for a “little lunch” for the officers. Racism is present during the encounter, with an officer screaming, “You little blackie with bad hair [Negrito del malo pelo] who lives in Barrio Bolívar” (ibid.).

In addition to the increase in state violence there are other indications that Sucre’s traditional populist regime was in crisis by the late 1980s and early 1990s. As the state’s resources dwindled and population growth in the barrios continued, the quality of services decreased. This led residents to become critical of existing forms of interest intermediation, such as the neighborhood associations that surged in the 1980s. Heiskel León, a 47 year-old community activist from Maca, a barrio in Petare, describes how the deterioration of water services led to her involvement in activism: “Organization and participation are always fostered by a problem, a need. And this need was the fact that the water service was totally deteriorated because the community had grown a lot and the services were the same as when the barrio was formed” (Murga 2013). León describes how, “The first thing we did was to fiercely criticize the Neighbor Associations. The people who were part of these organizations didn’t inform the neighbors about what they were doing, they didn’t meet with the neighborhood, in reality they did very little work”.

Activists like León voiced critiques of unresponsive civic associations and the limitations of new forms of community participation, such as open “Town Hall” style

meetings (*Cabildos Abiertos*), which become common in Venezuela in the 1990s (Vallmitjana 1993). According to León, these meetings functioned as follows:

All the Neighbors' Associations from the parish went there [to the Town Hall]. City Hall convoked them with the corresponding municipal offices. They worked through letters, requests were made through residents' signatures and if they [City Hall] approved it, then that's what the work would be. They came up with the project and they executed it. It was really a very assistance-based [asistencial] system, the role of the community was just to show up, listen and that's it. (Murga 2013)

The Town Hall meetings León is critical of were part of an effort to increase citizen participation, in accord with the broader process of decentralization initiated in Venezuela in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This participation, however, was of a purely consultative nature, meaning that it was not binding on state decisions. León's remarks indicate the frustration this generated amongst community activists. This limited participation and the frustration it generated amongst some citizens is worth noting since it reveals the history of relatively unsuccessful participatory reform in Sucre (and elsewhere) dating to the 1980s and 1990s.

During this period, Venezuela's traditional parties lost influence in Sucre. According to Fernando Giuliani, a social psychologist who has worked with Centro Gumilla in Petare for years, "In the 1950s and 1960s political parties played an important part in what was a new democracy, and they occupied all the spaces, neighborhood organizing, unions... people believed in them". Giuliani says that 'the parties had prestige' in this period due to their role in opposing the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship. "The problem was that the parties didn't open, the parties didn't give space to the base, there was bad administration, and there was corruption ... the worst sin of all was the oligarchization" of the leadership of the parties. This created a vacuum, because "there was a period, in the 1990s, when there was less of a strong identification with parties, since they didn't have any proposals". As discussed below Chavismo would come to fill this vacuum in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

It is important to note that, despite the tremendous influence of AD and COPEI during the 1970s and early 1980s, there is a history of alternative organizing in Petare by groups that contested the parties' influence and hegemony. This history begins in the 1940s and 1950s when peasants with a history of independent organizing in the countryside migrated to Sucre. As mentioned, during the 1960s there was significant support for guerillas and leftist parties in the barrios of Caracas. In the 1970s, Christian Base Organizations, inspired by liberation theology and linked to Centro Gumilla, became quite strong in Petare. According to Fernando Giuliani these organizations "provided a base for future popular organization". There were also popular libraries, a cultural movement, environmental, popular health and popular pharmacy organizations. This history is important to note because subsequent organizing, by grassroots Chavistas and others, built on it.

During the 1970s and 1980s Neighborhood Associations became important throughout Venezuela but particularly in Caracas. The neighborhood association movement was initially strongest amongst the middle class, although in time its spread to the popular sectors as well. Neighborhood Associations were also initially very anti-party, but in time were absorbed by AD and COPEI. The Neighborhood Association movement was couched in the language of participatory democracy and inclusion. At

times, however, this movement ended up reinforcing and exacerbating elite privilege.

The clearest example of this comes from Chacao, the wealthiest zone of Caracas. During the 1970s and 1980s residents in Chacao, which was then a municipality within the special district of Sucre (which until the early 1990s encompassed the present-day municipalities of Chacao, El Hatillo, Baruta and Sucre) pressed for their own autonomous municipality. This movement was couched in the language of decentralization and citizenship participation. Naked class interest, however, was the true motivation, as Chacao's residents were unhappy that their tax dollars were going to the barrios of Petare. In the early 1990s Chacao became an autonomous municipality, allegedly the wealthiest municipality in all of Latin America (Cicariello-Maher 2007). This deprived Sucre of a very significant source of revenue (Ellner and Meyers 2002). Chacao had thus "solved" its own "barrio problem" by cutting itself off entirely from the barrios. The larger issue of what to do about the barrios, however, became increasingly pressing as the urban poor showed their unwillingness to vote for AD and COPEI.

### *Participatory Populism*

Chavismo stepped into the vacuum created by the collapse of AD and COPEI during the 1990s. From 1989, the first year Venezuela held direct elections for mayors and governors, through 2000, COPEI governed both Sucre (which as discussed was reduced in size during this time) and the state of Miranda (which COPEI controlled through 2004). In 2000 the MVR won the election for Sucre's mayor, with Jose Vicente Rangel Avalos becoming mayor. Avalos is the son of Jose Vicente Rangel, a prominent leftist journalist who served as Hugo Chávez's minister of foreign affairs, minister of defense and vice president between 1999 and 2007.

Chavismo appealed strongly to the urban poor. As Canache (2004: 47) notes, "This sector provided Hugo Chávez with his earliest base of support, and the urban poor were Chávez's most lost constituency in 1998 and 2000". This support extended to the barrios of Petare, which until recently was considered a Chavista stronghold. In addition to placing the urban poor front and center, Chavismo also sought to distinguish itself from Punto Fijo democracy through its commitment to "participatory and protagonistic democracy". In accord with this commitment, the Avalos administration instituted several participatory reforms during the mayor's two terms in office, from 2000 to 2008.

The Avalos administration's first effort to implement participatory reform was led by Carlos Molina, a committed participatory democracy whom leftist MVR leaders convinced Avalos to hire as the director of Fundasucre, the municipal agency in charge of social development in Sucre. Between 2000 and 2002 Molina established fifteen Community Development Councils (CDCs) to facilitate participatory planning in the areas of health and education. Molina describes the goals of the CDCs as follows: "We were intermediaries between communities and many national government institutions that we helped communities approach to get resources...this generated a process amongst the people that was not directed from above, but was horizontal...this was not a tutelage process, but generated self-capacity in the communities".

As this quote shows, the CDCs were explicitly conceived as a way to go beyond what citizens and leftist activists felt were the limitations of earlier efforts to "deepen democracy" through neighbors' associations, for instance, which were seen as vertical and clientelistic and the town-hall meetings, which were seen as ineffective. Griselda, a

community activist who worked with Molina on the CDCs says, “the goal was to work with communities and eliminate the neighbors’ associations, to put something that was horizontal”. Griselda also comments that the CDCs were very inclusive, with “no distinction made on the basis of political colors”.

Avalos had a sharply different view of what the CDCs should be used for. According to Molina, the mayor was upset because of the political pluralism of the CDCs. “In the barrios, there were Copeyanos, Adecos and we worked with all of them”, Molina recounts. “But Jose Vicente didn’t accept that they were there. He said, ‘Carlos Molina is putting Copeyanos into the CDCs’. He [Avalos] wanted to have only people from the MVR in the CDCs”.

According to Molina, the mayor initially paid little attention to the CDCs. This changed when Hugo Chávez praised the CDCs on his weekly television show *Aló Presidente*. After this Avalos became jealous of Molina. According to a former aide to Molina, “The mayor was scared that Molina was becoming more popular than he was and that he would run for mayor himself”. (Molina did, in fact, launch a mayoral campaign in 2008, although Avalos was not running that year.) In 2002, Molina and several CDC leaders introduced a municipal ordinance, which would have expanded the CDCs from just a few neighborhoods to the whole of Sucre.<sup>44</sup> Avalos opposed this move and took the next step by forcing Molina to resign. The conflict between Avalos and Molina illustrates the difference (found in Torres as well) between participatory democracy, which Molina favored, and participatory clientelism, which Avalos favored. With Molina’s departure in 2002, participatory clientelism held the day during Avalos’ remaining time in office.

Avalos embarked on a second major participatory initiative in 2005 by implementing participatory budgeting. Officials who worked under Avalos say that yearly public assemblies were held in each of Sucre’s five parishes for the next several years. These officials showed me photographs of the assemblies, which hundreds and likely thousands of citizens attended. It appears, however, that the assemblies did not in fact lead to citizen control over budget decisions. According to the officials who organized the assemblies, Sucre’s department of public works processed the demands generated by the participatory budget. To find out what happened to these demands I spoke to several officials who had worked in the public works department during the Avalos years and had detailed knowledge of how the department worked during this time. When I asked these officials about participatory budgeting under Avalos they looked puzzled and said, “What participatory budget? There was no participatory budget under Avalos”. Griselda, the community activist mentioned above (regarding the CDCs) told me the same thing: “There was no participatory budget in which we could decide on projects”.

Like his opposition to the Community Development Councils, Avalos’ implementation of a pseudo participatory budget highlights the contradictory position of the urban poor within Sucre’s participatory populist regime. Symbolically, the urban poor occupied a central role within the regime. This contrasts with the past, when the urban poor were politically and symbolically marginalized (Canache 2004). In terms of consequential decision-making processes, however, the urban poor remained peripheral, as they had in the past. The main beneficiaries of Sucre’s participatory populist regime appear to have been business elites with illicit connections to the Avalos administration.

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<sup>44</sup> For another account of the CDCs see <http://www.cibersociedad.net/congreso/comms/c08este-et-al.htm>.

In addition to widespread rumors of corruption and clientelism, in 2009 Sucre's current mayor filed a lawsuit alleging that Avalos and members of his administration engaged in widespread corruption.<sup>45</sup> Chavistas in Sucre appear to be quite critical of Avalos, who left office in 2008. During my fieldwork there in 2010 and 2011 nearly all residents I spoke with who identified as Chavista were critical of Avalos and refused to defend him. Upon hearing the mayor's name, many Chavistas grimaced and recounted rumors that Avalos' wife had illicitly enriched herself. A few Chavistas mentioned that Avalos had distributed goods, such as refrigerators, in poor barrios; critics of this practice, however, said that these goods were only distributed to Avalos' "friends".

### *Administered Democracy*

The PSUV lost the 2008 mayoral election in Sucre, which Carlos Ocariz, from the center-right opposition party *Primero Justicia*, won with 55.6% of the vote. Several factors contributed to the PSUV's loss, which was quite surprising because of the widespread view (held by Chavistas and most of the opposition) that Petare was a Chavista stronghold, as it had been through 2008. The discontent Avalos generated amongst grassroots Chavistas appears to have been a critical factor. On several occasions during my fieldwork Chavistas in Sucre referred to Ocariz's victory as, "The price we pay for Avalos' mistakes". Ocariz also likely benefitted from what Chavistas in Sucre describe as the lackluster campaign of the PSUV's candidate, Jesse Chacon (with Avalos prevented from running for re-election due to term limits). Chacon, a close confidante of Hugo Chávez, became the PSUV's candidate after defeating Carlos Molina in the PSUV's June 2008 primary.<sup>46</sup> (This defeat foreclosed the possibility of Sucre moving further to the left and establishing a movement democratic regime as occurred in Torres.) Chacon struggled to excite grassroots Chavistas. In Maca, a barrio in Petare that is a PSUV stronghold, Chavistas active with the Sala de Batalla (literally 'Battle Room', a coordinating body linking local communal councils, communes and the PSUV) expressed frustration that Chacon "didn't come to the barrios" during the 2008 campaign. Electoral data suggest Ocariz's victory was due to Chavistas staying home rather than choosing to vote for Ocariz. There was a 27% decline in the Chavista vote in 2008 compared to the 2006 presidential election, with the opposition vote increasing by a relatively modest 6.7%; this 20% gap in turnout accounts for Ocariz's clear victory.<sup>47</sup>

Ocariz's victory led to the establishment of an administered democratic regime, in which the state has empowered the popular classes to a significant extent but has kept the popular classes' power within circumscribed limits. Like Torres' participatory democracy, Sucre's administered democracy has fostered popular empowerment by establishing participatory institutions, the key institution being a participatory budget that gives ordinary citizens near-binding control over 40% of Sucre's investment budget. Participation in Sucre's administered democracy is more constrained than in Torres' participatory democracy. Participation in Sucre is not, however, pure manipulation or just window dressing. Rather there is a tension that runs through Sucre's administered democracy in which participation is encouraged but kept within certain bounds. It is as though the local state says to citizens: "We'll give you *some* control but not *too much*".

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<sup>45</sup> For information on this allegation see <http://www.talcualdigital.com/movil/visor.aspx?id=88375>.

<sup>46</sup> [http://www.cne.gov.ve/divulgacion\\_psu2008/resultado\\_nacional.php?e=13&m=09&p=&c=&me=&ca=3](http://www.cne.gov.ve/divulgacion_psu2008/resultado_nacional.php?e=13&m=09&p=&c=&me=&ca=3)

<sup>47</sup> Electoral data available at [www.ine.gov.ve](http://www.ine.gov.ve)

Why has a center-right anti-Chavista opposition party led by middle-class professionals facilitated the genuine, if limited, empowerment of the popular classes, who remain broadly supportive of Chavismo? The answer relates to how Sucre's socioeconomic structure, historical legacies of the past and national political change have shaped local politics in Sucre over the last fifteen years.

From 2001 until 2005, the opposition adopted a virulently anti-government position, viewing Hugo Chávez as a dictator and relentlessly pursuing the goal of regime change. This strategy led to numerous anti-government street mobilizations between 2001 and 2004, the 2002 coup that removed Chávez from office, the 2002-2003 oil strike, the 2004 recall referendum and an opposition boycott of the 2005 National Assembly election. By late 2005 it was clear to all but the most die-hard opposition activists that this strategy had failed miserably. Chávez was entrenched in power more firmly than ever and many Venezuelans, particularly those living in the barrios, viewed the opposition as an elite-led anti-democratic force (cf. Cicariello-Maher 2013; Fernandes 2010).

The consolidation of Chavismo and clear failure of the opposition's strategy of intransigent opposition led to an important shift within the opposition from 2005 on. *Primero Justicia*, which advocated a strategy of adaptation rather than frontal confrontation vis-à-vis Chavismo, benefitted from this shift, and by 2012 had become the leading force within the opposition. *Primero Justicia*'s strategy, first tested in Sucre, has been to make use of Chavista rhetoric, laws and institutional forms to reach out to the popular classes. *Primero Justicia* has encouraged its members to form communal councils. And party leaders have conspicuously utilized Chavista language. For instance, during a 2011 participatory budgeting assembly held in a barrio in Caucagüita (Sucre's second poorest parish), Carlos Ocariz said, "This is popular power. We don't just *believe* in popular power. We're *doing* popular power".

The socioeconomic and political-electoral geography of Sucre helps explain *Primero Justicia*'s decision to use the tools of Chavismo to reach out to the popular classes. As Figure 3 (see above) shows, Sucre contains both middle and upper-middle-class and poor and working-class areas. The latter predominate as 80% of Sucre's population comes from the popular sectors.<sup>48</sup> *Primero Justicia*'s core support comes from the middle and upper-middle-classes. Electoral data from the 2008 and 2013 municipal elections, and the 2010 National Assembly election in Petare, show that *Primero Justicia* has won 80-90% of the vote in Sucre's wealthiest areas and received roughly a third, and often much less, of the vote in poor and working-class barrios.<sup>49</sup> A *Primero Justicia* official frankly acknowledged that in 2008 Ocariz "lost in the popular zones and won on the basis of high turnout in middle-class communities". Implementing participatory budgeting gave Ocariz a way to reach out to the popular classes in Sucre and show them he was serious about "doing popular power". Ocariz's direct of public works, who has expressed dislike for participatory budgeting, said that Ocariz implemented participatory

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<sup>48</sup> This is according to Luis Comella, Sucre's director of government since 2009. See p. 42 of [http://www.enfoquelocal.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Carlos-Ocariz\\_El-mandato-de-la-calle\\_Una-gesti%C3%B3n-municipal-exitosa.pdf](http://www.enfoquelocal.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Carlos-Ocariz_El-mandato-de-la-calle_Una-gesti%C3%B3n-municipal-exitosa.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> CNE results show that support for *Primero Justicia* doubled in some popular barrios during this period, and in many other barrios, Ocariz substantially increased his support from 2008 to 2013. A look at electoral results from these elections shows, however, that the PSUV received over 60% of the vote in many popular barrios, with Ocariz winning in just a few barrios, while taking 80-90% of the vote in wealthier areas of Sucre. For unclear reasons, Ocariz's support amongst elites appears to have dropped in December 2013.

budgeting in Sucre “because its politically necessary”. A participatory budgeting facilitator in Sucre also said, “I have no doubt he’s doing it because of the context”. As discussed below, it appears that participatory budgeting, which has been a centerpiece of Ocariz’s administration, has been an effective tool for reaching out to the popular classes.

In addition to the shifting terrain of national politics and local electoral considerations, an additional factor shaped the establishment of administered democracy in Sucre. This is Carlos Ocariz’s longstanding interest in participatory democracy, which dates to the late 1990s when Ocariz promoted participation as president of the Foundation of Social Development of the State of Miranda during the administration of Enrique Mendoza of COPEI.<sup>50</sup>

**Table 5 Political Regimes in Sucre, 1960s - 2010s**

<b>Regime Type</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Class Base</b>	<b>Elections</b>	<b>Institutionalized State-Society Relationship</b>	<b>State-Society Relations</b>
<b>Social Democratic</b>	1960s-1990s	Middle Classes Popular Sectors Business	Yes	Yes	Clientelism Protest Repression (secondary)
<b>Participatory Populism</b>	2000-2004	Middle Classes Popular Sectors Business (secondary)	Yes	Yes	Participatory Clientelism
<b>Administered Democracy</b>	2008-	Middle Classes Popular Sectors Elites	Yes	Yes	Participatory Institutions

Sucre’s political history between the 1960s and the present shows that there has been an increase in the popular classes’ power over time. During Sucre’s social democratic regime the urban poor were politically incorporated but in a subordinate position. Over time, the urban poor became the target of increasing state repression. This provided an opening for participatory populism, which made the urban poor symbolically and politically central but continued to marginalize them in terms of political decisions. In administered democracy, the urban poor play an important role in decision-making, although this falls short of what exists in Torres’ movement democratic regime, which is a case of full participatory democracy.

#### SUCRE’S ADMINISTERED DEMOCRATIC REGIME

As mentioned, three features characterize Sucre’s administered democratic regime: its multi-class character; the fact that it is led by a center-right party; and the tension between empowering and seeking to contain the popular classes.

In contrast to Torres’ participatory democratic regime, which is led by (former) social movement leaders, Sucre’s administered democracy is led by middle-class

<sup>50</sup> Mendoza, a lifelong Copeyano, was a municipal councilor in Sucre from 1979-1989, mayor of Sucre from 1989 to 1995, and governor of the state of Miranda from 1995 to 2004.

professionals. Prior to becoming mayor, Carlos Ocariz studied engineering at the Universidad Metropolitana. He then pursued graduate studies in Montreal, Canada and worked for several years in Washington DC at the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Development Bank before returning to Venezuela to work in Enrique Mendoza's state governorship in Miranda (Giusti and De Viveiros 2012: 13-15).<sup>51</sup> A number of high-ranking officials within Ocariz's have degrees from universities in the US: Ocariz's economic development director has a planning PhD from MIT and several staff have degrees from Columbia University. Other staff attended the Universidad Central de Venezuela, considered Venezuela's best university, and other well-regarded Venezuelan universities. As discussed, Primero Justicia's core base is middle-class professionals based in Caracas (in the wealthier sections of Sucre, Chacao and other wealthy areas of the city). The party also has strong support from business elites. In 2009 Ocariz held a meeting with local business leaders that over 200 people attended by. This generated a number of public-private partnerships, with private industry "helping" the municipality on a number of projects. For example, private industry cooperated to guarantee the on-time opening of Sucre's 45 municipal schools (Giusti and De Viveiros 2012: 44). The support that Ocariz enjoys amongst local business owners (who very much want the administration to succeed, since like others they see it as a way to prove the opposition's ability to govern well, a prerequisite to retaking national office) allowed Sucre to boost its local tax revenue by 50% during its first year in office (ibid.).

Unlike other opposition parties, however, Primero Justicia has effectively reached out to the popular classes, who as noted constituted 80% of Sucre's population, as well. The Ocariz administration's promise "to govern with and for *all* interest groups, functionaries, parties and residents of this municipality" (ibid: 7; emphasis added) rings true to a certain extent. It is worth noting how this universalistic promise, which elides and subsumes class differences and class conflict, is quite distinct from Julio Chávez's explicit commitment to govern with and for the popular classes and against elites.

A second key difference compared to Torres is that Sucre's administered democratic regime is led by a center-right party. Notwithstanding Primero Justicia's attempt to paint itself as "center-left" and claim the mantle of Brazil's Lula (a claim that Lula, who was a consistent supporter of Hugo Chávez, vehemently rejected), the party is clearly on the right side of the Venezuelan political spectrum. Ocariz, like other Primero Justicia leaders, is very committed to the idea of the free market. And unlike Julio Chávez, who views participatory budgeting as a means of moving towards socialism, Ocariz frames participatory budgeting in neoliberal terms. For example, in September 2010, while inaugurating a community-run daycare that was funded through Sucre's Participatory Budget, Ocariz said, "We believe the state should be smaller and civil society should be bigger, that's why we're handing this over to the community to run". It is true that Primero Justicia has supported participation and promises to continue the popular social welfare programs initiated by Hugo Chávez, known as the "missions". These commitments cannot, however, be seen outside of Venezuela's current context of a clearly leftist radical populist national state with socialist pretensions. The opposition's brief period in national office during the 2002 coup provides clues as to the policies that might be implemented should the opposition come to national office: during this period

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<sup>51</sup> [http://www.enfoquelocal.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Carlos-Ocariz\\_El-mandato-de-la-calle\\_Una-gesti%C3%B3n-municipal-exitosa.pdf](http://www.enfoquelocal.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Carlos-Ocariz_El-mandato-de-la-calle_Una-gesti%C3%B3n-municipal-exitosa.pdf). Ocariz's biography is on pp. 13-15.



constitutional liberties were suspended and moves were made to move Venezuela towards a free market economy that openly favored elite interests, with the state openly embracing foreign capital and the Bush administration in the US (citation?). All this underscores the importance of viewing Primero Justicia, and the Ocariz administration in particular, in relation to the particular national and local context it finds itself in.

A final key difference compared to Torres is that Sucre's administered democratic regime provides ordinary citizens *some but not full* control over local political decisions. This point will be fleshed out in the sections focused on the extent and quality of popular control that follow.

### *Extent of Popular Control*

As in Torres, the extent of popular control over political decision-making is assessed by examining three indicators: the percentage of the budget subject to popular control through participatory budgeting, whether non-budgetary issues are subject to popular control, and turnout for Sucre's Participatory Budget.

After taking office in early 2009, Carlos Ocariz initiated a Participatory Budget that covered 20% of Sucre's investment budget. The percentage of the investment budget covered by the Participatory Budget increased to 30% and then to 40% in 2011, where it has remained. In 2012 this amounted to 152 million *Bolivares Fuertes* (35.3 million US dollars) (Giusti and De Viveiros 2012: 56).<sup>52</sup> During my fieldwork, I asked officials in Sucre why they did not give 100% of the investment budget to participatory budgeting, explaining that this was done in Torres. An official from Fundasucre, the agency that administers Sucre's Participatory Budget, told me it wasn't possible to give 100% of the budget because "the mayor has certain strategic priorities and giving 100% would tie his hands". There was talk of increasing the amount to 50%. Some officials approved of doing this. Others, however, felt that Sucre's citizens "aren't ready for that". This provides an indication of the fact that officials in Sucre felt that citizens could be entrusted to make *some* decisions but not *all* the decisions. In assessing the extent of popular control in Sucre it is important to note the less encompassing control that participants have decisions in Sucre's Participatory Budget (see next section).

Fundasucre coordinates Sucre's Participatory Budget, which works as follows. The process begins with zonal assemblies (known as Community Encounters), which are held in 41 zones throughout Sucre and bring together officials, civic leaders, residents and a zonal coordinator. In the 5 zonal assemblies I attended in 2010 and 2011 there were usually 30-80 participants and 10-20 municipal officials.<sup>53</sup> After officials outline the process, participants self-select into thematic worktables relating to security, infrastructure, culture, sports, etc. Each worktable produces a list of 10-20 projects. Technical Assistance sessions are held the following Monday through Thursday nights. In each of the 16 Technical Assistance sessions I attended in 2010 and 2011, around 3-6 officials and 20-30 citizens transformed proposals into structured projects listing technical details, budget estimates, and social benefits.<sup>54</sup> Completed projects are submitted to Fundasucre, which has final approval over projects. Fundasucre officials and participants say projects approved in technical assistance sessions are rarely rejected.

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<sup>52</sup> In 2012 4.3 VEF were equal to 1 USD (at the official rate).

<sup>53</sup> In a make-up assembly I attended there was only 1 official, but usually 10 or more officials were present.

<sup>54</sup> A few Technical Assistance sessions I attended had less officials and/or participants.

A few non-budgetary issues are subject to a form of popular control in Sucre, although the extent of this is much less than in Torres. According to Carlos Ocariz, “By the end of 2011 100% of the outpatient wards [neighborhood medical clinics] were run by the communities” (Giusti and De Viveiros 2012: 35). The maintenance of municipal schools has also been turned over to parents through a plan where the municipality and parents split the costs 50-50 (ibid.). This latter example, however, could be criticized on two grounds. First, that the local state is abdicating its responsibility of maintaining public schools and passing the program off as a form of “community control”. Second, the local state is using parents’ own resources for maintenance, a process that can only occur in wealthier schools where parents have resources to contribute. To adequately evaluate these two programs would require additional research.

Turnout for Sucre’s Participatory Budget has been modest, particularly compared to Torres, although it appears to have grown over time. 1200 people participated in Sucre’s PB in 2009. 1750 participants were reported through June 2010 (halfway through the 2010 Participatory Budget cycle).<sup>55</sup> At an April 2011 Participatory Budget assembly Ocariz said, “More than 2500 neighborhood leaders have represented their neighbors in these discussions”.<sup>56</sup> Attendance at zonal assemblies I observed in early 2011 was considerably higher than it had been in late 2010 (70-80 participants in 2011 vs. 20-30 in 2010), suggesting an upward trend in attendance. The main reason for this trend, which stems from increased Chavista participation over time, is discussed below.

The modest turnout in Sucre’s Participatory Budget stems, in part, from design: unlike Torres’ Participatory Budget, which begins with community assemblies, Sucre’s Participatory Budget lacks a community-level phase. In addition to involving less residents in participatory budgeting, this has generated quality control issues. Prior to a 2010 zonal assembly in Caucagüita, Maribel, a lead Participatory Budget facilitator with Fundasucre, told me why she thought this was important: “If we’re having a meeting on a Saturday, the community should get together beforehand and decide about the needs they have, and their priorities... The need that I might put forward is not the same as the need that you’ll put forward... I might, for instance, say that I want to have handrails on the sidewalk stairs in my neighborhood, owing to my physical disability [Maribel has a noticeable limp due to a problem with her left foot], but this might not be what the whole community wants, which might be a road”. Maribel said that as a result of the lack of a community diagnosis phase, the priorities put forward by some would not necessarily represent what others want: “If you don’t talk to anyone else, then you’ll just think that they agree with you” even though this is not necessarily the case. According to Maribel, Fundasucre tried to get communities to do diagnoses during the first several meetings of the 2010 Participatory Budget cycle but abandoned this plan because communities failed to do this. This difference in institutional design provides another illustration of the difference between movement and administered democracy. Leaders in Torres and Sucre both sought high turnout for participatory budgeting. In Torres this was linked to the political-ideological goals of establishing autogobierno and socialism. Officials in Sucre were not committed to these goals; increasing turnout for them was consciously linked to

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<sup>55</sup> These figures come from a 2010 Transparencia Venezuela report: [http://transparencia.org.ve.previewdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Transparencia\\_Presupuesto\\_Participativo\\_i-1-Alca.pdf](http://transparencia.org.ve.previewdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Transparencia_Presupuesto_Participativo_i-1-Alca.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> [http://www.alcaldiamunicipiosucre.gob.ve/contenido/2011/04/30/7816\\_arranco-en-sucre-el-presupuesto-participativo-2012/](http://www.alcaldiamunicipiosucre.gob.ve/contenido/2011/04/30/7816_arranco-en-sucre-el-presupuesto-participativo-2012/). Ocariz likely meant annual, not cumulative, turnout, though this is not clear.

the goal of increasing Chavista participation, which was seen as important for political reasons (i.e. to show the Ocariz administration as politically pluralistic) and for electoral ones (increased turnout amongst Chavistas could lead to greater votes in the barrios).

### *Quality of Popular Control*

The quality of popular control over decision-making is assessed by examining the type of decision-making that predominates in Sucre's Participatory Budget, the degree to which participants exercise control over decisions and the inclusivity of the process in terms of participants' race, class, gender and political views.

Decision-making in Sucre's Participatory Budget consists of a mixture of deliberation and command-and-control, illustrating the tension between empowering and controlling ordinary citizens that characterizes administered democracy. The mixed quality of decision-making can be illustrated by comparing the markedly different nature of two worktables I observed during a May 2011 zonal assembly (which was similar to other assemblies I attended). Oscar, a Fundasucre official who appeared to have little experience with facilitating community meetings and little interest in fostering deliberation, facilitated the Social Equipment worktable.<sup>57</sup> Oscar struggled to keep order during the process of choosing 10 of 21 proposals. After a period of confusion and indecision, another Fundasucre official, who had been observing, took charge. This official decided which projects would be included, saying, "I was here last year and I know that these communities [the ones she had written on a list] didn't receive anything". A scramble ensued as participants sought to get on the list. Several participants protested that the selection process was unfair. One participant shook his head and said, "I don't agree with this". These disgruntled participants, all of whom were Chavista (with the assembly itself including many Chavistas and opposition members), subsequently met with a high-level Fundasucre official who respectfully listened to their complaint and said that he would look into the matter (which knowing this official, who was quite committed to working closely with communities, most likely occurred).

Maribel, a Fundasucre official who had worked for the Hugo Chávez administration for several years (before growing frustrated and joining the opposition) and who has a great deal of respect for and interest in popular participation, facilitated the second worktable I attended during this assembly. Maribel's worktable ran quite smoothly: each participant was given the opportunity to present a proposal; there was discussion of the merits of different proposals; and participants decided which proposals to include. The contrast between these two worktables is indicative of the inconsistent quality of facilitation in Sucre: officials like Maribel fostered deliberation and popular control over decision-making, while officials like Oscar did not. Maribel and Oscar represent the extremes (of pro- vs. anti-deliberative/popular control facilitation) of Fundasucre's participatory budgeting team. Most of the twenty-odd Fundasucre officials I had contact with during my fieldwork were in-between these extremes, having more interest, and generally more experience with, community engagement and participatory decision-making compared to Oscar but less than Maribel. A critical difference between Torres and Sucre (and by extension between movement and administered democracy) is that Maribel stood out in Sucre while in Torres nearly all officials involved with participatory budgeting, and other community outreach processes, resembled Maribel, in

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<sup>57</sup> This assessment is based on conversations with and observations of Oscar at several zonal assemblies.

the sense of consistently fostering deliberation and popular control over decision-making.

Participants have near-binding control over decisions in Sucre: officials have final say over projects but usually respect participants' decisions. An important difference with Torres is that in Sucre officials, rather than participants, set the amount of money given to thematic areas such as infrastructure, culture, etc. Before the start of a Technical Assistance session in Guaicoco, a barrio high in the hills of Petare, I asked Victoria, the lead facilitator of the session why these decisions (regarding the specific amount going to different thematic areas) were not given to participants themselves. Our conversation went as follows (emphases are added).

GH: Why not let the communities decide the specific amounts?

Victoria: If you let the people decide the amounts, it's just me, me, me...they don't look at the needs of others...an example of this is the woman at the security worktable, who had the attitude that security is the most important thing, without thinking about everything else...People are very particular, they forget that others may have greater needs, *it's dangerous to give this job* [of deciding the specific amounts] *to the people...there's not the maturity to assume these great responsibilities...*we've always had a very paternalistic political [culture] in Venezuela....This [immaturity] comes from years and years of paternalism, which has prevented people from having more maturity...in my opinion we haven't reached this level of maturity, *it would be very dangerous*, no.

GH: So what would happen if you gave people the right to decide the specific amounts?

V: Total anarchy...there's no maturity in the Venezuelan people.

Victoria's attitude, that it would be "very dangerous" to let participants themselves decide how much funds to allocate to specific thematic areas due to their "immaturity", was shared by many (though not all) officials in Sucre. Even Maribel, the Fundasucre official most committed to fostering deliberation and popular control over decisions, argued against increasing the percentage of the investment budget covered by participatory budgeting from 40 to 50%, saying she did not think people were ready for this. This attitude is obviously different from the "it's better to err with the people than be right without them" attitude found in Torres and perfectly highlights the core tension within administered democracy of giving the people *some* control but not *full* control.

As in Torres, Sucre's Participatory Budget is highly inclusive in terms of participants' race, class, gender and political views. In zonal assemblies and technical assistance sessions I attended between August 2010 and May 2011 there was significant participation of men and women and substantial class and racial diversity. Well-attended assemblies occur in barrios, with poor and working-class residents who are predominantly Moreno and Afro-Venezuelan (with Sucre having a much higher percentage of Afro-Venezuelans than Torres). Well-attended assemblies also occur in middle-class apartment complexes (urbanizaciones) where residents are middle and upper-middle-class professionals and predominantly white.

Sucre's Participatory Budget is also politically diverse, with significant numbers of Chavista and opposition participants. When the process started in 2009, however, it was much less diverse due to the fact that Chavistas, by and large, boycotted the process. 12 of the 38 community assemblies programmed for 2009 had to be rescheduled because of active opposition from Chavistas, whom Fundasucre officials say "sabotaged" the

assemblies. According to José Luis López Noriega, the president of Fundasucre, there were physical confrontations in a number of assemblies this year. In 2010, Chavista “sabotages” occurred in only 2 of 38 assemblies (Giusti and De Viveiros 2012: 55). By 2011 Chavistas constituted the *majority* of participants in 6 assemblies I attended or collected participant data about. In each of these assemblies Chavistas constituted 50 to 80% of all participants. (Since these assemblies were not exceptional in any way there is no reason to think that this shift is limited to these 6 cases.) Two factors explain the shift in Chavista attendance (which is also likely the factor that accounts for the increase in turnout between 2009 and 2011). First, high-ranking Ocariz officials, such as José Luis López, have worked hard to ensure that Chavistas participate. This is due to the fact that increasing Chavista participation is politically and electorally beneficial as discussed above. Second, Chavistas themselves say they realized that their communities could obtain needed resources by participating in Sucre’s Participatory Budget.

It is important to note two additional factors that have limited Sucre’s inclusivity in terms of political views to some extent. First, officials from national institutions have made statements that Chavistas who cooperate with Carlos Ocariz (e.g. by participating in the Participatory Budget) will not be able to receive benefits from national state institutions such as Fundacomunal, which distributes significant resources directly to communal councils. The impact of this, however, has been much less in practice due to the challenge of enforcing it. This, it seems, has led most Chavistas to ignore the prohibition. President Chávez also made statements supporting the right of all citizens, including Chavistas, to receive resources in opposition-controlled political units. Second, nearly a third of the dozen zonal assembly coordinators (out of 38 in 2011 and now 41) I met during my research held the view that Chavistas should not be allowed to participate in the Participatory Budget or receive resources controlled by the Ocariz administration. Fundasucre officials said they were aware of these attitudes and had worked to change these coordinators’ views or at least force them to allow Chavistas to participate. The evidence cited above, of majority Chavista participation in the 2011 Participatory Budget cycle, suggests that this was largely effective in reducing exclusion of Chavistas.

### *Institutional Effectiveness*

Both “objective” and “subjective” indicators suggest that Sucre’s Participatory Budget has been highly effective in terms of linking popular inputs into decision-making to concrete outputs. José Luis López, the president of Fundasucre, reports that 85% of projects approved through Sucre’s Participatory Budget have been executed within the time period stipulated (Giusti and De Viveiros 2012: 56). Internal documents produced by the Ocariz administration also report a high rate of execution. For example, in its 2011 year-end review, the Ocariz administration reported that 95% of projects approved in 2011 were executed (55%) or in progress (40%), and that all projects approved but not completed in 2010 were finished in 2011.<sup>58</sup> José Luis López also reports that 70% of projects are executed by communities themselves (Giusti and De Viveiros 2012: 57), a percentage that is similar to Torres (where City Hall reports 76% community execution).

There appears to be widespread, though not universal, satisfaction with the Ocariz administration’s overall performance in office amongst Sucre residents. This is true not only amongst wealthier residents predisposed to view Ocariz favorably for ideological

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<sup>58</sup> <http://www.alcaldiamunicipiosucre.gob.ve/contenido/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Rendicion-de-Cuentas-2011.pdf>

reasons (although see below regarding evidence suggesting a potential drop in support for Ocariz amongst elites in Sucre) but amongst many Chavistas living in the barrios as well. The dramatic increase in Chavista participation in the Participatory Budget provides evidence that many Chavistas view Ocariz as someone they can work with. There is also direct evidence that some Chavistas feel Ocariz has done a good job in office. In September 2010 I accompanied Ocariz and a number of officials on a “Mayoral Walk” in Petare North, a mostly poor and working-class area. Ocariz officials explained to me that a few years ago they could not enter areas like this because Chavistas would throw tomatoes at the mayor. During this visit there were some Chavistas who made their opposition to Ocariz clear. Others, however, expressed approval for the mayor: in response to a question about how she felt about Ocariz, one woman in the barrio told me, “I’m Chavista, but I recognize that this mayor is doing a good job”. I asked if she felt Ocariz had done a better job than Avalos. The woman scornfully laughed and asked, “What did José Vicente do?” Her exasperated tone indicated that she felt Avalos had done little or nothing worthwhile in office.

### *Political Effectiveness*

Electoral data from the 2010 National Assembly election and the 2008 and 2013 municipal elections in Sucre suggest that participatory budgeting has been somewhat helpful to Primero Justicia politically. Between 2008 and 2010 Primero Justicia significantly expanded its base in poor and working-class barrios, which are concentrated in the parishes of Caucagüita, Filas de Mariches and La Dolorita. In each of these parishes, Primero Justicia’s vote increased by over 10%, as shown in Table 6. This increase is consistent with the view that participatory budgeting, which Primero Justicia used as a strategy of reaching out to these communities, helped the party politically in this period. It is of course hard to “prove” that participatory budgeting, as opposed to Ocariz’s security, education or sanitation policies, explains these electoral results. Ocariz did not himself run in the 2010 election but the PSUV and Primero Justicia viewed this election as a referendum on Ocariz.<sup>59</sup>

In 2013 Primero Justicia’s vote fell throughout Sucre. Ocariz, however, did better in 2013 than he had in 2008 in Caucagüita and Filas de Mariches. The fact that Ocariz fared better in 2013 compared to 2008 in Sucre’s two poorest parishes and that his vote declined the most in Sucre’s two wealthiest parishes (Leoncio Martínez and Petare) is interesting. Analysis of precinct-level electoral data also shows that Ocariz increased his vote in a few important traditionally Chavista barrios.

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.psuve.org.ve/portada/jorge-amorin-27-septiembre-referendum-revocatorio-carlos-ocariz/>

**Table 6 Primero Justicia Vote (%) in Sucre, 2008 – 2013**

Parish	2008	2010	2013
Caucagüita	34.8	44.31	35.56
Filas de Mariches	22.32	37.07	26.05
La Dolorita	27.51	38.57	26.1
Leonicio Martinez	81.65	81.83	79.96
<u>Petare</u>	55.8	59.73	52.69
Total	55.6	59.89	52.79

Source: CNE

**2008 and 2013 are mayoral elections; 2010 is a national assembly election.**

The 2013 election results are, on the whole, ambiguous. In comparing Torres and Sucre it would seem that administered democracy has been less helpful than movement democracy politically. In Torres, the incumbent party that established a movement democratic regime has seen a steady increase in its vote, even under a less charismatic successor to the original mayor who established participatory budgeting. In Sucre, the incumbent party has managed to retain office and increase its vote moderately in some popular sectors, while declining moderately in higher-income sectors. Given that there are a number of factors involved in these electoral results, particularly in Sucre, which suffers from very high levels of violence and is considered strategically important by the PSUV and the opposition, any attempt to link participatory policies to electoral results must be treated with caution.

#### REGIME TRAJECTORY: FROM ADMINISTERED TO PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY?

Sucre's administered democratic regime is not static, but changed in some important ways during its first several years of existence. This section will evaluate the possibility that administered democracy could give rise to participatory democracy, in which ordinary citizens enjoy significantly more control over local political decision-making than is the case in Sucre at present. Particular attention will be paid to how the tension inherent to administered democracy, between giving ordinary citizens some but not full control over decision-making, has generated a bottom-up pushback from citizens seeking a more robust and extensive form of popular control.

Before evaluating this evidence it is worth noting that Sucre's administered democracy shifted in the direction of participatory democracy during its first several years. The most important shift concerns the percent of the investment budget covered by participatory budgeting, which doubled between 2009 and 2011, going from 20% to 40%. As mentioned, there has been talk of increasing the percent to 50%, although thus far this has not happened.

A second indicator of a partial shift from administered to participatory democracy relates to the increased participation of Chavistas over time. This is important in three

ways. First, it has brought more residents into the process, and in particular more residents of the barrios. Second, as a result the process has become more inclusive over time, both in terms of the class and racial diversity of participants and in terms of political views. Third, Chavista participants from the barrios have brought considerable organizational skills and a set of critical demands with them, which has likely made Sucre's Participatory Budget more deliberative, fairer and more bottom-up.

As mentioned above, Chavista participants were critical of paternalistic practices that occurred during Sucre's Participatory Budget, questioning decisions that they felt to be arbitrary and pushing for greater popular control over the process. This suggests something quite interesting about administered democracy: if the state gives ordinary citizens a chance to participate in political decision-making, and respects and shows the capacity to implement their decisions (for the most part), citizens are likely to participate. The experience of Sucre's administered democracy suggests that this participation may, however, break out beyond the carefully circumscribed boundaries that the state sets up, with citizens demanding more decision-making power than the state (or at least certain state officials) are willing to concede. Whether this will lead to full participatory democracy in Sucre remains to be seen.



## Introduction to Bolivian Cases: National Political Change in Bolivia

As discussed above Bolivia's political trajectory over the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is similar to Venezuela's in a number of important ways, although there are also a number of key differences. These differences are related to the two countries' distinct political economies, historical patterns of state-society relations, cultures and recent political histories (in particular the different timing of authoritarianism and re-democratization). These differences shaped the distinct way that popular resistance to neoliberalism played out in Bolivia, leading to the similar but distinct left turn in Bolivia from 2005 on.

### *National Political Regimes in Bolivia in the Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Century*

**Oligarchic Rule.** Like Venezuela, at the beginning of the twentieth century Bolivia had an oligarchic national political regime. During most of the nineteenth century silver mining interests controlled the national state. Silver declined in the late nineteenth century and tin became Bolivia's leading export (which remained the case until the 1980s). This led to a change, with the tin mining oligarchy (known as *la rosca*) controlling the Bolivian state through the 1940s. Bolivia's indigenous majority was excluded from citizenship and access to political decision-making. Bolivia's defeat in the Chaco War in the 1930s led to a political crisis of the oligarchic regime, which lasted through the 1940s, as labor and peasant militancy and party organizing increased.

**Radical Populism.** Bolivia's oligarchic regime was challenged under the nationalist regimes of two reformist generals in the late 1930s, and during the Villaroel regime of the mid 1940s. Oligarchic rule was destroyed during the April 1952 National Revolution, which was led by a radical populist party, the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR, *Movimiento Revolucionario Nacional*). The MNR was a multi-class party: middle-class intellectuals led the party, which enjoyed support from workers, in particular the militant miners' union, peasants and the urban-popular sectors. Ideologically the MNR embraced revolutionary nationalism and *mestizaje*, a universalizing project that made Bolivia's indigenous majority into citizens, through universal suffrage and access to rural education, but demanded the erasure of indigenous identity. In practice, revolutionary nationalism translated into support for state-led development, with an internal struggle occurring within the MNR between middle-class leaders who favored state-led capitalism and working-class radicals who unsuccessfully pushed for socialism and worker control of production (Webber 2011b: 65-74).

State-society relations during this period, which lasted from 1952 until 1964, were characterized by mobilization from below and above with the MNR attempting to incorporate, and control, workers and peasants through state patronage and clientelism. Miners and urban workers played a key role in the April 1952 Revolution. The Bolivian Workers' Central (COB) was established immediately after the revolution, with the COB enjoying significant, but not controlling, influence over the MNR regime: union leaders were in charge of the ministries of mines and labor, with a peasant leader leading the ministry of peasant affairs (Webber 2011b: 66). By the early 1960s the COB's influence had declined within the party. Autonomous peasant mobilization in late 1952, after the April Revolution, forced the MNR to enact a major land reform in 1953 that led to a significant redistribution of land and power in the altiplano. The MNR succeeded in

exercising a high degree of control over the peasantry following the agrarian reform through the party's ability to control peasant unions and coopt peasant leaders through patronage and clientelism (Webber 2011b: 73-74).

As discussed in greater length in chapter 4, during this period the Bolivian state embarked on an intensive effort to develop its eastern lowlands, building a road connecting the city of Santa Cruz to Cochabamba and providing a nascent agrarian bourgeoisie access to essentially free land and very cheap state credit. This had important consequences for Santa Cruz and Bolivia as a whole (see chapter 4).

**Authoritarian Rule.** Bolivia's radical populist regime came to an abrupt end in 1964 through a military coup supported by the nascent Cruceño agrarian bourgeoisie. The radical phase of the National Revolution, however, ended by 1956, with the MNR veering right over the next eight years, in part due to difficult economic circumstances that forced the government to accept conditional aid from the IMF and US government (Webber 2011b: 68-70). Military rule lasted from 1964 until 1978, with a democratic opening occurring in 1970-71, under two leftist generals, and Bolivia's on-and-off transition to democracy happening from 1978 to 1982. During the years of military rule popular organization was heavily circumscribed and repressed, although the military established a military-peasant pact in 1966, which unraveled following a state massacre of peasants in 1974 (Webber 2011b: 101). Repression of the working class was constant during this period (with the exception of the 1970-71 opening), but the COB survived and emerged as the key defender of democracy in the late 1970s.

An important consequence of authoritarian rule, which has continued to shape Bolivian state-society relations through the present, is the way it reinforced the autonomy of the labor movement, and Bolivian civil society more generally, vis-à-vis the national state and parties. Throughout Bolivia's history, the state had exercised relatively weak, and in much of the country's territory non-existent, authority. The state's authority increased during the radical populist period, but it was always uneven and incomplete. The state's weakness vis-à-vis civil society is indicated by the autonomy and militancy of the COB through the 1980s, and the increased autonomy and militancy of the peasantry during the 1970s. As discussed, the military-peasant pact unraveled after 1974. Over the course of the 1970s peasant unions increased came under the sway of leaders ascribing to the radical indigenista ideology of Katarismo, a movement seeing indigenous self-determination that was inspired by and took its name from Tupac Katari, the leader of the 1781 anti-colonial uprising (Thomson 2003).

As discussed in the next chapter, the Cruceño agrarian bourgeoisie benefitted tremendously from authoritarian rule. During this period the state absorbed millions of dollars of loans to agrarian elites in Santa Cruz, leading to a mounting national debt that exploded in the 1980s.

**Re-democratization, Neoliberalism and Crisis.** Between 1978 and 1982 the COB led a struggle for the restoration of democracy, which was supported by the peasant federation, leftist parties, middle-class intellectuals and sectors of the business class. In 1982, a center-left coalition, known as the Unidad Democrática Popular (UDP), took office, three years after winning a national election held in 1979. This led to a tumultuous three-year period. Saddled by debt contracted during the 1970s, and confronted from opposite sides by the COB, which pushed the UDP to radicalize, and business elites, some of whom favored a return to authoritarian rule, the UDP government struggled to

maintain order. In 1984 and 1985 Bolivia experienced hyperinflation. This led the UDP to call elections in 1985, a year ahead of schedule, and brought the MNR and Victor Paz Estenssoro, who led the party during the 1950s, back to national office.

Over the next eighteen years, from 1985 until 2003, Bolivia engaged in one of Latin America’s most thoroughgoing neoliberal experiments. This started under Paz Estenssoro who implemented a “New Economic Policy”, which reversed decades of import-substitution industrialization, with the government privatizing state-owned enterprises, letting the currency float against the US dollar, opening the country to foreign direct investment and ending protectionist policies (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 61). This went hand-in-hand with a successful effort to debilitate Bolivia’s previously powerful labor movement, in particular the radical miners’ union (ibid: 75-77). In 1993, Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, a Bolivian mine owner who oversaw the implementation of the New Economic Policy as Paz Estenssoro’s minister of planning, became president and embarked on even more ambitious neoliberal reforms: the privatization of numerous state-owned enterprises, trade and price liberalization and fiscal austerity (ibid: 66-7).

As in Venezuela, neoliberal reform in Bolivia had pronounced negative economic and social consequences. The New Economic Policy did manage to get hyperinflation under control, but this came at the cost of economic growth. Bolivia posted low growth throughout the 1980s and 1990s, with an average annual growth rate of -0.3% during this period (Solimano and Soto 2005: 10). Like Venezuela poverty increased in Bolivia, going from 53% of the population in 1989 to 61% in 1999 (CEPAL 2004: 36). As discussed in the Introduction to Part III, inequality increased in Bolivia as well, with the United Nations (2009: 29) reporting that Venezuela and Bolivia “saw...increases in income disparity [between 1990 and 2005] that were amongst the highest in the world”.

Like Venezuela, the negative economic and social effects generated by neoliberalism led to an organic crisis in Bolivia. As Table 7 shows, three parties – the MNR, MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria), and ADN (Acción Democrática Nacionalista), dominated Bolivian politics in the 1980s, collectively winning over 70% of the vote in each election. Support for these parties, which oversaw the implementation of neoliberalism, gradually declined during the 1990s, the most intense period of neoliberal reform. In 2005, when Evo Morales was elected on an anti-neoliberal platform, Bolivia’s traditional parties collectively received just 6% of the vote.

**Table 7 Support for Traditional Parties in Bolivia, 1980-2005**

	<b>Vote % MNR + MIR + ADN</b>
<b>1980</b>	72
<b>1985</b>	73
<b>1989</b>	73
<b>1993</b>	56
<b>1997</b>	57
<b>2002</b>	42
<b>2005</b>	6

As Polanyi would predict, and as occurred in Venezuela as well, the negative effects of neoliberal marketization generated a push for social protection in Bolivia. An important difference between Bolivia and Venezuela is the nature of the countermovement and the organic crisis that occurred in each.

In contrast to Venezuela, where the anti-neoliberal countermovement was diffuse, Bolivia's countermovement was organized, with the popular classes demonstrating a capacity for self-organization and mobilization that far surpassed that found in Venezuela and, for that matter, the rest of Latin America and the world. Between 2000 and 2005 Bolivia experienced a cycle of protest involving multiple episodes of protest that gathered increasing momentum and organizational-ideological cohesion over time. This cycle started with the 2000 "Water War", with urban workers, students, neighborhood associations, peasant unions, and middle-class professionals coming together to protest the privatization of Cochabamba's water supply. This was followed by more protests in the Andean highlands, over land and tax policy, between 2001 and 2003. In October 2003, the "Gas War" erupted in El Alto, with multiple issues coalescing into three powerful collective demands: a halt to the sale of Bolivia's natural gas to Chile and a demand for the nationalization of gas, a Constitutional Assembly, and the resignation of Bolivian president Gonzalez Sanchez de Lozada, whom protesters held responsible for state violence that left 70 protesters dead during the Gas War. This final demand was swiftly met, with Sanchez de Lozada, who was a key architect of neoliberal reform in the 1980s and 1990s (first as a minister of planning and then as president), resigning in October 2003. A second Gas War erupted in June 2005, leading to the resignation of a second consecutive president. As a result a special election was held in December 2005. The winner was Evo Morales, the leader of Bolivia's powerful coca growers' union, which played a key role in the 2000 Water War and (to a lesser extent) the 2003 and 2005 Gas Wars. Morales, who promised to "bury neoliberalism", was the first indigenous person, and first social movement leader, elected president of Bolivia.

Bolivia's organic crisis differed from Venezuela's. While Venezuela experienced a process of elite involution, in Bolivia there was a revolutionary crisis. This term is applicable because of the fact that Bolivia's political system did not crumble from within, as in Venezuela, but succumbed to unrelenting bottom-up mobilization involving broad swathes of the population: urban workers and residents, peasants, students and eventually the middle classes. Additionally, the nature of the changes sought by Bolivia's powerful social movements – the nationalization of gas and a Constitutional Assembly – were far-reaching. Some protesters' demands went considerably further, involving what Jeffery Webber (2011b) refers to as a combined struggle for socialism and indigenous liberation.

The distinct nature of the countermovements and organic crises that occurred in Venezuela and Bolivia during this period stem from distinct patterns of state-society relations, specifically the greater strength and autonomy of social movements in Bolivia compared to Venezuela. This difference is rooted in the countries' differing political economies, patterns of historical development and racial-ethnic formations. Venezuela's oil-based economy made the state a central actor, economically and politically. From the time of its emergence in the 1930s and 1940s the Venezuelan labor movement was closely linked to Acción Democrática. The labor movement retained its links to AD as the party moved to the right in the 1960s. The 1970s oil boom reinforced the centrality of the state and the weakness of civil society in Venezuela. Afloat in oil dollars, Venezuela

constructed a relatively advanced welfare state. Importantly this did not occur in response to vigorous working-class mobilization. The oil boom fostered increased prosperity for Venezuela's large middle-class and the smaller formal working class, which remained weak and politically subordinate. The collapse of Venezuela's party system in the 1980s and 1990s generated greater autonomy for civil society; the atomization that accompanied neoliberal policies was not, however, conducive to the formation of a vigorous civil society. Unions were weakened during this period. The urban poor became increasingly restless, as their living conditions deteriorated; Chávez would later exploit these grievances, but Venezuelan civil society remained weak and inchoate throughout the 1990s, particularly compared to Bolivia during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Bolivia's trajectory over the course of the second half of the twentieth century was quite distinct. While the Bolivian state expanded exponentially in the wake of the 1952 Revolution, it was never as important, economically or politically, as the Venezuelan state. The nationalization of mining post-1952 strengthened the Bolivian labor movement, which is considered to have been one of the strongest within Latin America over the course of the mid-to-late twentieth century. Labor played a key role during the twelve years of rule by the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR) and continued to exert its force during two decades of authoritarian rule, with unions helping to lead the struggle for democracy in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Another key factor that influenced the strength and autonomy of Bolivian civil society is the country's large indigenous population, which was never effectively incorporated politically until very recently (under Evo Morales). Bolivian civil society was reconstituted during the 1980s and 1990s: the labor movement was severely weakened, and new actors, particularly indigenous organizations and peasants in the lowlands and highlands and urban-popular sectors, emerged as formidable movements by the early 2000s.

**Left Developmentalism.** Bolivia's cycle of protest came to an end with Evo Morales' 2005 election. This marked the first time since 1982 that a Left party was in national office. The memory of the UDP years hung over the MAS government, and may be one of the factors that influenced the government's adoption of a governing strategy that was more moderate than Venezuela's. Bolivian elites, however, were extremely afraid of what the MAS would do in power. As in Venezuela, Morales faced intense elite resistance after coming to office. Economic elites in the northern and eastern lowlands were alarmed by Morales' nationalization of hydrocarbons in March 2006 (Webber 2011b: 80) and a land reform law passed later that year (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 120-21). This resistance took on a particularly racist cast in Bolivia, with indigenous supporters of the MAS facing racist violence from white vigilante groups operating in Santa Cruz, Sucre, Pando and elsewhere (Webber 2011b: 127-8).

From 2006 to 2008 Morales faced intense elite resistance from an elite-led regional autonomy movement centered in the lowland department of Santa Cruz and the four other departments of the northern and eastern lowlands, referred to as the "media luna" or half-moon. In addition to racism, the regional autonomy movement was fueled by political and economic grievances, with the lowland elite seeking greater control over valuable natural resources, e.g. natural gas, located in their departments, and violently opposing the government's attempts to implement land reform. After Morales took office, pro-autonomy referenda were held in Santa Cruz and other media luna departments. The autonomy movement also mounted violent street opposition to the

Constituent Assembly from the time it initiated in mid-2006, with violent street protests in Sucre forcing the assembly's relocation in 2007. In September 2008, the leaders of the media luna departments, and pro-autonomy street forces, engaged in a coordinated effort to destabilize Morales through attacks on government property and a massacre that left over a dozen government supporters dead in the department of Pando. Morales viewed these actions as a coup attempt. Following this, the president removed the US ambassador from Bolivia, due to the government's view that the US had supported efforts to destabilize and overthrow Morales.

Morales' response to the elite resistance he faced (which was of a similar magnitude of what Chávez faced in Venezuela, with an important difference being that Morales was never removed from office through a successful coup) was quite distinct from Chávez's. While Chávez had engaged in extensive organization and mobilization of the popular sectors, Morales responded to the elite resistance he faced by demobilizing the popular sectors. This strategy has not been absolute, with the ruling Movement to Socialism (MAS) engaging in limited episodes of popular mobilization, for example in October 2008 in support of the newly written constitution. But since Morales took office in 2006 the Bolivian state's main strategy vis-à-vis the popular sectors has been that of demobilization. Webber (2011b) argues that this strategy predates the MAS' arrival to office, with the party increasingly engaging in an electoral-parliamentary strategy, rather than an extra-parliamentary mobilization strategy, since 2002, when Morales came close to winning the presidency. Webber's view seems to have been borne out by the evidence. On a number of occasions, particularly during negotiations over the Constituent Assembly, the MAS opted for compromise with the autonomist Right rather than what may have been a riskier strategy of confrontation, which would have entailed popular mobilization. For instance, the rules of the constituent assembly, in which only parties and party-like citizen groups and not social movements participated, were those favored by the autonomist Right as opposed to demands from social movements.

The reason for this strategy is rooted in the particular character of Bolivia's countermovement and organic crisis. By virtue of the fact that the popular classes have been highly mobilized and organized, which led to Bolivia's organized countermovement and the revolutionary crisis of 2000-2005, Morales did not have to engage in widespread organization or mobilization of the popular sectors. He enjoyed robust support from below and on the occasions when the state chose to mobilize popular support it was able to do so. Unlike Chávez, Morales did not need to construct a popular movement to support him. Morales' fear, in fact, was that too much mobilization from below would provoke a civil war. The contrasting levels of self-organization and mobilization within civil society in Venezuela and Bolivia appears to be a key factor that helps account for the distinct governance strategies that Chávez and Morales adopted.

Two features of Morales' demobilizing strategy should be highlighted. The first is the fact that participatory democracy has been an important part of the Bolivian state's rhetoric, although it has been less central in Venezuela. The key difference is that participatory democracy has not been embedded in a set of state-sponsored institutions in Bolivia, nor has the MAS actively promoted participatory democracy at the national or local level. Secondly, Morales has not linked the distribution of state resources to collective organization and mobilization, as Chávez did. Instead, Morales' administration has distributed state resources in a more individualistic manner through scholarships

(known as “bonos”) to school children, mothers and the elderly. All of this means that participatory democracy has been relatively less central in Bolivia, particularly at the institutional level and in terms of the state and ruling party’s governance strategy.

The consequences of this difference, for the prospects of local-level participatory reform and the type of urban political regime found in different Bolivian cities (specifically Santa Cruz and El Alto), are explored in the following two chapters.

## CHAPTER 4

### SANTA CRUZ: TECHNOCRATIC CLIENTELISM

Santa Cruz is a case of technocratic clientelism, a state-led regime in which technocratic decision-making is combined with clientelistic politics. In this regime technical experts control major political decisions and political operatives control minor political decisions, with ordinary citizens reduced to passive consumers of government policy and/or relatively powerless clients of political patrons. Santa Cruz's technocratic clientelistic regime combines the following features: the appearance of institutional effectiveness, very little scope for popular control of political decision-making, a disavowal but simultaneous reliance on "dirty" (i.e. clientelistic) politics, and the production of recurrent popular protest against the regime's exclusionary character.

The idea that technocracy and clientelism could be combined is less than straightforward. Technocracy refers to a system in which apolitical experts have control over decisions that have been rendered "purely technical" by insulating these decisions from popular and political interference. Clientelism, by contrast, is inherently political and "impure", with political patrons and brokers distributing resources to clients in exchange for their political support. The operating logic of technocracy and clientelism is obviously distinct. In Santa Cruz technocracy and clientelism have nonetheless been combined. Further, this chapter will seek to show that technocratic decision-making occurs in Santa Cruz not *in spite* but *because of* clientelistic politics. This is because the real threat to technocracy is not clientelism but democracy, which is based on the principle that all decisions are "political" and should be subject to public contestation. By channeling popular and political energies into clientelism the threat of democracy can be kept at bay. Evidence from Santa Cruz suggests, however, that this threat cannot be eliminated. The systematic exclusion generated by technocratic clientelism has stimulated repeated attempts to construct democratic politics in Santa Cruz.

At first glance, Santa Cruz's technocratic clientelistic regime appears to be a straightforward result of several interrelated factors. Since 2005 a center-right mayor who sees himself as a non-ideological pragmatist, who "doesn't just think about and meditate on things, but also gets them done," has governed Santa Cruz.<sup>60</sup> During his current period in office this mayor has aligned himself with Santa Cruz's dominant classes, who have historically been, and remain, economically and politically powerful and are closely linked to the Right. The mayor has fostered technocratic control over decision-making within his administration and used clientelistic politics to control the popular classes, who have been and remain weak and poorly organized in Santa Cruz.

Looking at Santa Cruz in comparison to Sucre, however, makes the existence of technocratic clientelism in Santa Cruz appear less obvious because the two municipalities are similar in several important respects. As in Sucre, Santa Cruz has a large and growing population of informal poor, who tend to support the Left (Chavismo in Sucre and the MAS in Santa Cruz). Like Carlos Ocariz in Sucre, Santa Cruz's mayor, Percy Fernandez, was supportive of popular participation in the 1990s. Finally, like Ocariz, Fernandez is an opposition mayor within a country governed by a Left party officially committed to participatory democracy. These similarities raise the question of why Santa Cruz does not

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<sup>60</sup> This is how Percy Fernandez, Santa Cruz's mayor from 2005-present, is characterized in his biography on the municipality's official website: <http://www.gmsantacruz.gob.bo/alcalde/0002.html>



look more like Sucre in terms of having a regime that fosters some degree of popular control over local political decision-making?

The critical difference between Santa Cruz and Sucre relates to the distinct political strategy adopted by the ruling party in Venezuela and Bolivia. As discussed in previous chapters, in Venezuela the ruling MVR/PSUV pursued participatory populism, engaging in widespread mobilization and organization of the popular sectors and linking this to participatory rhetoric. This put significant pressure on opposition parties to engage the popular sectors using participatory tools, particularly in municipalities like Sucre with a predominantly poor and working-class population. In Bolivia, by contrast, the ruling MAS has done much less to organize and mobilize the popular sectors and at times has demobilized the popular sectors. The MAS' participatory rhetoric has remained largely disconnected from practice. In Santa Cruz and other Bolivian cities, the MAS has focused less on mobilizing its popular base and organizing within civil society and has instead pursued backroom deals with local political elites as a means of enhancing the party's electoral and parliamentary prowess. One of the consequences of the MAS' strategy is that opposition parties in Bolivia have not faced the same pressure as their Venezuelan counterparts to reach out to the popular classes using participatory tools. A second important difference between Sucre and Santa Cruz is that in Sucre the MVR/PSUV was in office for eight years prior to Carlos Ocariz's surprising 2008 victory, and the PSUV remains a formidable force within Sucre. The MAS, by contrast, has never been in office in Santa Cruz; nor, for that matter, has a Left party ever controlled the city.

In addition to looking at how the interaction of national and local politics in the contemporary period has fostered Santa Cruz's technocratic clientelistic regime, this chapter will situate this regime historically by comparing it with three earlier regimes that existed in Santa Cruz between the 1950s and mid-2000s: an oligarchic regime, a democratic reformist regime and a non-technocratic clientelistic regime. As in previous chapters attention is given to how Santa Cruz's current regime has emerged as a result of the interaction of its socioeconomic structure, historical legacies of past regimes and national political change.

## SOCIOECONOMIC STRUCTURE

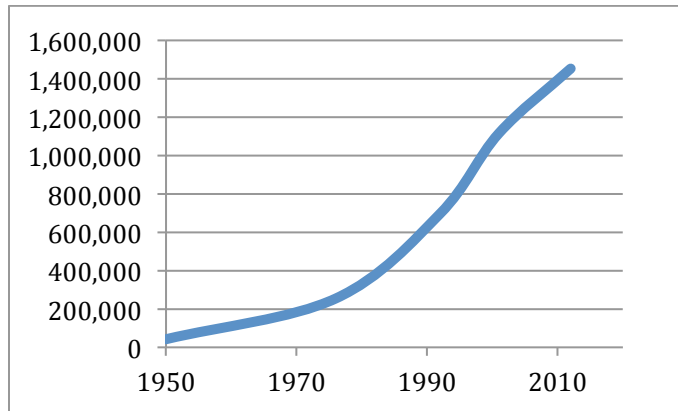
Santa Cruz (officially known as Santa Cruz de la Sierra), the capital of the eastern lowland department of Santa Cruz, has experienced tremendous changes over the last sixty years as a result of the intertwined processes of rapid urbanization and economic growth. In 1950 Santa Cruz was an isolated, economically and politically unimportant frontier town with a population of just 41,461. The city experienced dizzying population growth, averaging 6% per year, between 1950 and the present (see Figure 5), making it the fourteenth fastest-growing city (over a million) in the world (Kirshner 2013: 549). Santa Cruz is now Bolivia's largest city, with a current population (as of 2012) of 1.5 million.<sup>61</sup> In addition to being Bolivia's largest city, Santa Cruz is also the center of the country's most economically dynamic region. As Kirshner (2013: 549) notes, "By 2004 the city and its immediate environs produced 42% of the nation's marketed agricultural output and 34% of its industrial gross national product." Santa Cruz's economy is based

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<sup>61</sup> According to the 2012 census, Santa Cruz de la Sierra (the city's official name) had a population of 1,453, 549. The province of Andrés Ibáñez, which Santa Cruz is in the center of, had a population of 1,653,001.

on export agriculture (the principal crops are soy, sugarcane, cotton and wheat), cattle ranching, forestry, financial and banking services, agro-industry (focused on processing soy, sugarcane, cotton and coca leaves, the basis of cocaine) and hydrocarbons (Prado 2007: 162-69). From the 1970s to late 1990s the Santa Cruz agrarian bourgeoisie exerted considerable influence over national politics. When this influence declined in the early 2000s, the Cruceño elite spearheaded the powerful regional autonomy movement that constituted a grave threat to Evo Morales during his first four years in office.

**Figure 4 Population of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 1950-2012**



Source: Kirshner (2013)

Like Torres and Sucre, Santa Cruz is a highly unequal city marked by a stark divide along lines of race, class, politics and geography. The city’s white and mestizo elite – large landowners, agro-industrialists, bankers, traders, owners and managers of construction, transport and service firms and professionals – live in the central areas of Santa Cruz, a city composed of a series of concentric rings (*anillos*). There is relatively little poverty (less than 10% of the population) in these zones, which lie in the city’s districts 1-4 and 11, all within Santa Cruz’s fourth ring (Kirshner 2013: 550). Residents within these areas often identify as *campesinos*, a loaded term used to refer to lowlanders who trace their ancestry to Spain, while selectively incorporating aspects of lowland indigenous culture, have lived (or claim to have lived) in Santa Cruz or other lowland areas of Bolivia for generations and self-identify as white, western and modern.

*Campesinos* differentiate themselves from *collas*, an equally loaded and (in Santa Cruz) often derogatory term used to refer to indigenous migrants from the highlands and central valleys (although the term is more often directed against highlanders), who tend to be darker-skinned and are portrayed as being anti-modern, anti-western, “backward” supporters of the MAS. Highland migrants to Santa Cruz, who have come to the region en masse since the 1960s in search of employment and opportunity, have faced racist discrimination from the city’s white-mestizo elite. On multiple occasions since 2000 this racism has taken the form of extreme violence. Some highland migrants are professionals who hold formal jobs and live in the more affluent central areas of the city. Most highlanders, however, are formal or informal workers who live in the peripheral zones of Santa Cruz, in districts 6-10 and 12, which lie beyond the city’s fourth ring. Poverty rates in these districts range from 30% to over 50% of the population (Kirshner 2013: 550). Two thirds of Santa Cruz’s workforce is engaged in the informal sector, working as street

vendors, domestic workers and in micro-enterprises, with the majority living and working in peripheral zones (ibid.). The *camba-colla* split manifests politically as a division between citizens who favor regional autonomy, and particularly the radical version of regional autonomy promoted by the Cruceño elite, and those who support the MAS and the central government. Many highland migrants who support the MAS favor less radical or alternative forms of autonomy, such as indigenous autonomy (Kirshner 2010).

#### INTERACTION OF HISTORICAL LEGACIES AND NATIONAL POLITICAL CHANGE: FROM OLIGARCHIC RULE TO TECHNOCRATIC CLIENTELISM

Between the 1950s and the present Santa Cruz has had four political regimes, which differ in their class base, presence of elections, character of state-society relations and overall effectiveness. National political change and local class struggle and political maneuvering have driven the transitions between regimes.

##### *Oligarchic Rule*

During the colonial and republican eras, lasting from the sixteenth through the mid-twentieth century, Santa Cruz was governed in an oligarchic manner. Due to the near-total absence of the colonial and then national state in Santa Cruz, local landholding families exercised relatively unconstrained and often despotic power over indigenous labor, which was scarce and often unfree, on their estates (Peña 2007). In the early 1950s Santa Cruz was integrated with the rest of Bolivia when a highway was constructed connecting Santa Cruz to Cochabamba. Over the next several decades the national government, led by the MNR, encouraged migration to Santa Cruz and invested significant resources in the region, most directed to the region's agrarian bourgeoisie, as part of a "March to the East". Despite the benefits it received from the national government, the Cruceño elite politically opposed the MNR, supporting the 1964 coup that ended the MNR's rule and led to nearly two decades of authoritarian rule.

Oligarchic rule, in which the dominant classes govern on behalf of their own interests, with the popular sectors' interests ignored or suppressed, continued in Santa Cruz during most of this time, lasting through the early 1980s. During this period state-society relations were generally characterized by repression and popular quiescence. This was particularly the case during periods of military rule, lasting from 1964 to 1970 and 1971 through 1982, with an on-and-off political opening occurring from 1978 on. Intense repression of the popular classes occurring during the 1971 coup that installed General Hugo Banzer, a Cruceño rancher strongly supported by the Cruceño agrarian bourgeoisie, when paramilitaries killed workers and leaders from the Santa Cruz Departmental Workers Federation (COD) and the Local University Federation (Peña 2007: 119).

Despite their opposition to the MNR, the Cruceño elite benefitted immensely from the policies the MNR pursued during its time in office. In addition to integrating Santa Cruz with the rest of Bolivia, the MNR provided migrants to the region access to land and credit, practically free of charge. The 1953 agrarian reform, which transformed property relations in Bolivia's highlands and central valleys, was not applied in Santa Cruz, leaving wealthy farmers in control of immense tracts of land. As a result, the economic and political power of the Cruceño agrarian bourgeoisie was greatly strengthened during these years (Gill 1987).

The Cruceño elite portrays the region's economic takeoff in the 1970s and 1980s

as a story of self-made, market-driven development. The reality is that this takeoff was made possible by decades of government policies favoring the region. In addition to the policies already discussed, in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s the state provided landholders access to government credit and facilitated increased access to commercial loans as well, which allowed the agrarian bourgeoisie to establish large sugar and cotton estates (Peña 2007: 114). When landholders proved unable or unwilling to repay commercial loans, the national state absorbed the loans, setting the stage for Bolivia's debt crisis of the early 1980s (Gill 1987). The relationship between the national state and the Cruceño agrarian bourgeoisie was particularly close during the Banzer dictatorship from 1971 to 1978. The Cruceño elite provided Banzer unstinting support during this time, and they were rewarded with unimpeded access to land and credit. The upper echelons of the military and the Cruceño elite were closely tied to the burgeoning cocaine trade, which took off in the late 1970s, as sugar and cotton (Santa Cruz's key commercial crops at the time) experienced debilitating cycles of boom and bust (Gill 1987: 183-93).

The popular classes remained weak throughout this period but enjoyed relatively greater freedom during democratic periods in the late 1950s and early 1960s and the 1970-71 presidency of Juan José Torres, a leftist general who oversaw a period of democratic opening and radical political and economic change, which prompted the 1971 coup. Mutual associations and trade unions had existed in Santa Cruz since the late nineteenth century. In 1953 the Santa Cruz Regional Workers Federation was founded. During the late 1950s, a local MNR leader, Luís Sandoval Morón mobilized the popular sectors in Santa Cruz against the city's landholding elite, promising to distribute 100,000 lots of land to the poor (Prado 2005: 45). This constituted a direct attack against the city's elite, although Morón's motives have been questioned by scholars who view him as less of a genuine reformer than a power-hungry regional political operative (*ibid.*).

During this period the Cruceño elite occasionally acted in ways that led to benefits for subaltern sectors of society. The clearest example occurred in the late 1950s when the Pro-Santa Cruz Committee (referred to locally as the "Civic Committee"), a civic organization founded in 1950, led a successful struggle that forced the national government to provide Santa Cruz and other departments 11% of the revenue generated by oil and natural gas produced within their territory (Prado 2005: 43). During the early 1960s these funds were used to establish three cooperatives in Santa Cruz providing residents electricity, water and telephone service. Sources suggest that these services were run fairly and efficiently for several decades. By the early 1980s, however, Santa Cruz's utility cooperatives were taken over by middle-class professionals from Santa Cruz who established secret societies known as "lodges" as a way to maintain their control over local institutions, which they feared professionals from La Paz would take over. Percy Fernandez, Santa Cruz's mayor from 1990-1995 (and 2005 on), denounced Santa Cruz's lodges as "classist groups of the Right. They recruit their members only amongst sectors of the middle and upper class, and above all amongst people belonging to rightwing parties and careerists of all stripes" (quoted in Ferreira 2010a: 6).

### *Democratic Reformism*

From 1990 to 1995 Santa Cruz had a democratic reformist regime. This electoral regime enjoyed significant support from the popular classes and was marked by consultative participation, relative autonomy from the dominant classes, direct

confrontation with middle-class professionals (entrenched in the lodges), a high degree of institutional effectiveness and, for several years, significant political effectiveness.

Santa Cruz's democratic reformist regime was made possible by Bolivia's 1982 transition to democracy. This transition led to the direct election of municipal councilors and the mayor in Santa Cruz and other large cities in 1987; however, if the winning mayoral candidate's party failed to win an outright majority, which occurred (and continues to occur) frequently in Santa Cruz and other cities, municipal councilors select the mayor from amongst their ranks, a process that often involves alliance formation amongst different parties. In addition to giving citizens the vote, the transition to democracy opened up space for the popular sectors to organize and press their views at the national and local level. Bolivia's transition to neoliberalism in 1985, however, undercut the popular classes' ability to effectively organize; this was particularly true amongst traditional unions, which were devastated by the transition to neoliberalism.

As discussed above, the economic and political power of the Cruceño elite grew substantially during military rule in the 1960s and 1970s. It is thus hardly surprising that the Cruceño elite felt threatened by Bolivia's transition to democracy and sought ways to maintain their power and privilege. Middle-class professionals in Santa Cruz, a subordinate sector of the Cruceño elite, felt particularly threatened by the growing number of professionals from La Paz who were moving to Santa Cruz. Fernando Prado, a city planner and architect from Santa Cruz, explains that, "The middle classes organized the lodges because they were afraid that *Paceños* [those from La Paz] would take all the professional jobs" (Interview with Author). Prado says that to mobilize support from the broader society, the lodges "worked up the idea of Cruceño identity and the fear of a Colla invasion". Prado also insists that, "All the important members of the lodges are middle-class professionals...the upper class is content to leave the institutions [such as the utility cooperatives, the Civic Committee and other local institutions] in the hands of the lodges". In addition to expressing a fear of a "Colla invasion" the lodges' discourse also played up the fear of "the communists of the UDP". The entire Cruceño elite (the agrarian and agro-industrial bourgeoisie and middle-class professionals) was threatened not only by UDP's center-left agenda, but even more by the fact that the still-strong Bolivian Workers' Federation (COB) and the far left were aggressively pushing the government to pursue more radical change (Webber 2011b: 109). These fears prompted the Right, backed by the Cruceño elite, to push for early elections in 1985, which led to eighteen years of neoliberal reform (which as discussed below benefitted the Cruceño elite economically and politically.)

Through the 1980s the Cruceño elite retained effective control over Santa Cruz's key regional and local institutions. This was possible, in part, because Santa Cruz's two lodges – Caballeros del Oriente (Gentlemen of the West) and Toborochoi – succeeded in controlling the following key institutions: the Pro-Santa Cruz Committee (the Civic Committee), the Federation of Private Entrepreneurs, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, CORDECRUZ (which functioned as a form of regional government), Santa Cruz's three utilities cooperatives (CRE-electricity, COTA-telephone, and SAGUAPAC-water), the Federation of Fraternities, the Federation of Professionals, the College of Architects, the Society of Engineers, the College of Lawyers and the 24 de Septiembre Social Club (Ferreira 2010a: 174-75). The first three institutions (the Civic Committee, the Federation of Private Entrepreneurs and the Chamber of Industry and Commerce)

subsequently played a key role in the regional autonomy movement (Eaton 2007).

In 1989, Percy Fernandez “appeared as an alternative candidate to those promoted by regional groups of power and pressure” in Santa Cruz’s mayoral election (Mayorga 1997: 29). Fernandez, an engineer with extensive experience in local and regional affairs (as director of Santa Cruz’s three utilities cooperatives before they were taken over by the lodges, and president of the city’s Committee of Public Works, the Civic Committee and the Santa Cruz Regional Development Corporation, CORDECRUZ), who also served as a minister in the UDP government (which was a political liability in Santa Cruz), ran with support from the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR). In a marked shift from its previous history as a radical populist party, the MNR oversaw Bolivia’s transition to neoliberalism while in national office from 1985-1989 and 1993-1997. In 1989 Percy Fernandez came in second with 29.4% of the vote but became mayor due to an accord between the MNR and the Unión Cívica Solidaridad (UCS), which came in third in the race.<sup>62</sup> Fernandez was re-elected in 1991, with 42.2% of the vote, and 1993, with 57.1% of the vote, and served as mayor until 1995, when he lost a close election to the UCS.

In the 1989 election, Fernandez performed well in popular zones of the city, winning the most votes in districts 5-10, located on the city’s periphery (Mayorga 1997: 34-35). The candidate of ADN, a Right party established by former dictator Hugo Banzer, won in Santa Cruz’s most affluent district (ibid.). In 1991, Fernandez obtained the most votes throughout the city, performing best (with a ten-point margin over his nearest rival) in the city’s middle and low-income zones (Mayorga 1997: 39-40). In his commanding victory in 1993, Fernandez again won throughout the city, but performed particularly well in the barrios, winning some districts outside the fourth ring by a 45% margin. Fernandez’s margin was considerably lower in the more affluent central zones of the city (Mayorga 1997: 52).

During his time in office, Fernandez reached out to the popular classes through a program called “City Hall in the Barrios” (La Alcaldía a los Barrios). Through this program Fernandez traveled to barrios located in the city’s popular zones to talk to residents and inspect works in progress. Neighborhood Participation Committees were established “to gather [residents’] aspirations for neighborhood improvement and transmit them to the municipal government through the respective district coordinator” (Mayorga 1997: 59). This program amounts to a form of consultative participation, which differs from the participatory programs found in Torres and Sucre (see discussion in previous chapters) because citizen influence over political decision-making is limited to citizens providing input, with municipal officials still in charge of final decisions. Fernando Prado was hired by the mayor to coordinate the “City Hall in the Barrios” program. According to Prado, the program was quite ambitious, “and went further than the Law of Popular Participation” of 1994 in terms of giving residents control over decisions regarding the use of local resources. Unfortunately the program was effectively implemented for just 6 months in 1993. Prado says, “It didn’t go anywhere because the MNR used it instrumentally, and ended up by just giving resources to their people” (Interview with Author). “The problem was that the MNR Neighborhood Councils [meaning neighborhood councils controlled by the MNR] thought that they owned the mayor’s office. They didn’t want to share with anyone else”. Prado thinks that this experienced soured Percy Fernandez on participation: “I think that was how the mayor

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<sup>62</sup> The following draws on Mayorga (1997:1-125) and Kriedler Flores (2010).

began to distance himself more and more from participation, saying ‘That’s just for the dogs, I don’t want to know anything about it’. This likely accounts, in part, for Fernandez’s lack of interest in participation during his second period as mayor from 2005 on (see discussion below).

In 1992 and 1993 Fernandez confronted Santa Cruz’s lodges, calling “directly on the people to unite and struggle ‘against these antidemocratic groups that have supplanted popular power’” (Mayorga 1997: 47-48). The mayor “denounced that the majority of Santa Cruz’s cooperative, business and even cultural institutions were run by these secret groups” (ibid.). The head of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (CAINCO) responded that neither he nor CAINCO had anything to do with the lodges, and the president of the Civic Committee denounced Fernandez for wasting time, saying, “It’s ridiculous that he wants to fight the lodges, there are other problems that are more serious and need to be resolved” (ibid.).

Fernandez was not alone in condemning the lodges. In the late 1980s and early 1990s a number of articles critical of the lodges appeared in *Revista*, a local magazine. In March 1988, Carlos Hugo Molina, the principal architect of Bolivia’s Law of Popular Participation, who was appointed prefect of Santa Cruz from 2003 to 2005, wrote, “Lodges are incompatible with democracy. The reason is very simple: if democracy establishes a system of participation, equality of opportunity, public debate and discussion, and citizen oversight, lodges, by contrast, develop as secret and reserved structures, which are oligarchical, protective of secretive interests, based on institutional takeover [by the lodges], designation by favoritism and finally, subterranean struggles that escape public discussion because they don’t need to be diffused” (quoted in Ferreira 2010a: 169). Fernando Prado also criticized the lodges in *Revista* (ibid: 170). But Prado argues that Fernandez’s campaign to dismantle the lodges was not a radical attempt to disrupt elite power in Santa Cruz, but rather an attempt by the mayor to assert the local state’s control: “It [Fernandez’s campaign against the lodges] didn’t have anything to do with class relations...it was because he wanted to control everything...the [utility] cooperatives are totally at the margins of the municipality, which doesn’t have control over them. Percy couldn’t control them” (Interview with Author).

Fernandez’s confrontation with Santa Cruz’s lodges was cut short when he unexpectedly lost the 1995 election. Fernandez’s loss was unexpected because he had fared so well in 1993 and in addition to his successful outreach amongst the popular sectors, Fernandez performed quite well in office. During his first two years in office, Fernandez increased municipal revenues by 8% and 17.6%, and reduced expenses considerably by cutting the size of the bloated municipal bureaucracy from 2150 to just 600 employees (Mayorga 1997: 60). Revenues continued to increase in subsequent years, with the mayor boosting tax collection by 59% between 1989 and 1993 (ibid: 69). As a result Fernandez had more money to invest in road paving, sewage treatment, health, education and other projects than had ever been the case. The Fernandez administration’s record of implementation was stellar: in 1990 the administration achieved a 95% budgetary execution rate, and this rate stayed very high in subsequent years (ibid: 60-85).

Two factors appear to account for the mayor’s unexpected loss in the 1995 election. The first was a campaign waged against Fernandez by Guido Náyay, a municipal councilor from the rightwing ADN, who was a member of the lodge Caballeros del Oriente and who repeatedly accused the mayor of acts of corruption over the course of

1994 and 1995 (Mayorga 1997: 89-92; Ferreira 2010b: 17-18). These allegations were never proven but they were widely reported on in the media and appear to have hurt Fernandez amongst some voters in the 1995 election. The second factor was the surprisingly strong campaign of Johnny Fernandez, who ran as the mayoral candidate of UCS, which his father Max Fernandez, the owner of Bolivia's largest brewery (the Cervecería Boliviana Nacional), founded. Max Fernandez established a reputation as a benefactor of the poor by traveling throughout Bolivia in the late 1980s and early 1990s distributing goods and completing projects in barrios (Mayorga 2002). Johnny Fernandez (who is unrelated to Percy Fernandez) "waged an intense campaign amongst the popular sectors, with help from the groups of power, who saw in the UCS' populism a way to stop the mayor's re-election" (Ferreira 2010b: 18). In the months prior to the 1995 election Johnny Fernandez's campaign succeeded in chipping away at Percy Fernandez's once-formidable lead. Johnny Fernandez received an unexpected boost when his father died in a plane crash a week before the election, with Johnny Fernandez capitalizing on the outpouring of grief amongst the popular sectors, who favored him over Percy Fernandez by 20% in Santa Cruz's poorest districts, providing the margin of victory needed for Johnny Fernandez to become Santa Cruz's mayor (Mayorga 1997: 97).

### *Neopopulism*

From 1996 to 2002, the period in which Johnny Fernandez was mayor, Santa Cruz had a neopopulist regime. This regime was characterized by multi-class support, a clientelistic relationship between the local state and the popular classes, widespread corruption that benefitted elite interests and its institutional and political ineffectiveness.

Johnny Fernandez's 1995 and 1999 campaigns for mayor, both of which UCS won (in the latter case by a very thin margin), reveal the clientelistic nature of the regime Johnny Fernandez presided over. Prior to the 1995 election, Johnny Fernandez (with political and financial backing from his father Max Fernandez) made large contributions of equipment and tools to schools and health clinics in Santa Cruz, "leaving the impression of a generous candidate, with a social sensibility and a populist style" (Kreidler 2010: 197). In Santa Cruz's barrios Johnny Fernandez held large, expensive rallies, giving would-be supporters "gifts of chicken, hats, headbands [and] plastic bags of groceries" (ibid.). For his 1999 re-election campaign, Johnny Fernandez "hired a foreign marketing firm and immediately launched his campaign with acts in the barrios in the style of UCS, giving away sweaters, headbands, hats, flags, groceries, with paid operatives in all the different districts of the city" (Kreidler 2010: 245-46).

As discussed above, Johnny Fernandez did very well amongst the popular sectors in the 1995 campaign. Santa Cruz's dominant classes also supported Johnny Fernandez in this campaign and the Johnny Fernandez administration had a close relationship with the leading institutions of the Cruceño elites. Ferreira (2010b: 70) reports that, "The lodges openly supported Johnny Fernandez against Percy Fernandez [in the 1995 election]." According to Ferreira this support continued during Johnny Fernandez's time in office, with the lodges remaining in control of Santa Cruz's utility cooperatives and other important institutions. Santa Cruz's telephone cooperative, COTAS (run by members of Caballeros del Oriente), became embroiled in a major scandal in 1996 and 1997 due to a series of alleged improprieties by the telephone utility's directorship, including transferring a million US dollars to a "phantom institution" (Ferreira 2010b: 25),



purchasing a newspaper operating with an annual deficit of 70,000 US dollars (ibid: 26) and spending 850,000 US dollars to purchase 20,000 telephones without opening the process to public bidding as the law stipulates (ibid: 27). These scandals led to a multi-class movement to oust COTAS' director Luis Del Río Chávez in 1997. Johnny Fernandez came to Río Chávez's defense, with his party UCS mobilizing supporters to publicly defend Río Chávez in a special COTAS assembly in September 1997 (Ferreira 2010b: 70). Río Chávez survived due to this support, although he was forced to resign his post in 1998. FEJUVE-Santa Cruz (the city's Federation of Neighborhood Associations) was also implicated in the COTAS scandal, with the organization allegedly receiving money from the COTAS directorship to defend them in the September 1997 assembly (Ferreira 2010b: 59). This demonstrates the continuing weakness of the popular sectors in Santa Cruz, with popular organizations dominated by and subservient to elite interests.

Fernando Prado, an architect and city planner from Santa Cruz, describes Johnny Fernandez's period in office as a "disaster". According to Prado, the mayor "wanted to become a millionaire" and led an administration marked by inefficiency, corruption and a lack of commitment to participation or planning. Prado says that Johnny Fernandez, who resigned from office in 2002, left the city with a huge debt and a "non-existent technical team" within City Hall. Prado's highly negative assessment of the Johnny Fernandez administration is supported by others. José Mirtenbaum, a leftist sociologist in Santa Cruz, criticized Johnny Fernandez for being overly interested in attaining status amongst the Cruceño elite (Ferreira 2010b: 74). Kreidler (2010: 273) reports a series of unfulfilled campaign promises made by Johnny Fernandez.

Johnny Fernandez secured re-election in 1999 in a campaign marked by 42% abstention (Kreidler 2010: 269). In this election, Johnny Fernandez received 5,000 votes less than he had in 1995 (Kreidler 2010: 213, 269), and won with just 34.85% of the vote. Percy Fernandez came in an extremely close second, with 34.02% of the vote, winning just 2,000 votes less than Johnny Fernandez. In July 2001, a year and a half into his second term as mayor, Johnny Fernandez resigned. This decision stemmed from the difficulties Johnny Fernandez had faced as mayor, in large part due to the fact that he was simultaneously in charge of the Cervecería Boliviana Nacional and the national head of UCS, positions the young mayor (who was just 31 when he entered office) inherited upon his father's untimely death in 1995 (Kreidler 2010: 283).

### *Democratic Reformist Redux*

Johnny Fernandez's brother Roberto Fernandez replaced him as mayor from 2002 through 2004. Roberto Fernandez established a democratic reformist regime similar to the regime established by Percy Fernandez from 1990 to 1995. Roberto Fernandez consciously sought to distinguish himself from his brother. Upon taking office, he proclaimed, "We're going to realize a change in direction, City Hall will be run with transparency and residents' participation" (quoted in Kreidler 2010: 301). Roberto Fernandez's administration garnered positive assessments from observers. According to Fernando Prado, who worked in Roberto Fernandez's administration, "Roberto was distinct" from his brother, and had a genuine commitment to planning and participation.

Roberto Fernandez pursued participatory planning with more vigor than had been the case in the past, including during the 1990-1995 Percy Fernandez administration. Roberto Fernandez implemented a number of participatory initiatives, with "resident

demands collected in Participatory Planning Workshops that contributed to the plans followed by the municipal government” (Kreidler 2010: 303). Roberto Fernandez also established stronger links with civil society, through participatory planning workshops, a series of urban public fora and the creation of an Urban Planning Board (ibid.). Roberto Fernandez also supported a municipal ordinance that established direct election, via Neighborhood Association presidents, of district sub-mayors, a longstanding demand of civic associations. In addition to participatory planning and decentralization, Roberto Fernandez implemented a number of projects considered successful, in areas such as paving, drainage, security, the creation of new green spaces, cultural activities, sports and more (Kreidler 2010: 304-311).

Roberto Fernandez ran for re-election in 2004. To continue distinguishing himself from his brother Johnny, Roberto Fernandez created a new Citizens’ Group (a political form that became popular in Santa Cruz in the late 1990s and 2000s due to the loss of prestige of traditional parties). In doing this, Roberto Fernandez remarked on his desire to govern in an honest and transparent fashion, and criticized UCS for being uncritically supportive of Johnny Fernandez and not holding internal elections (Kreidler 2010: 322-23). Roberto Fernandez finished first amongst a sprawling field of 22 candidates, garnering 23.34% of the vote. Percy Fernandez, who formed a citizens’ group of his own to run, finished second with 21.22% of the vote. The MAS, which also ran a candidate for mayor in Santa Cruz in 1999, achieved its best result to date, winning fourth place with 9.51% of the vote (Kreidler 2010: 349). Despite finishing first, Roberto Fernandez did not remain mayor due to a deal struck between Percy Fernandez and Oscar Vargas, the third-place finisher in the campaign, in which Percy Fernandez became mayor but the two agreed to re-evaluate the issue halfway through the mayor’s term, with the expectation that Vargas would become mayor for the second half of the term (Kreidler 2010: 353-56). Fernandez, however, refused to step down from office and, by striking a new alliance, was able to remain as mayor for the full term. Fernandez then won re-election in 2010 and again in 2015, positing to serve through 2020.

### *Technocratic Clientelism*

Percy Fernandez’s second period in office, from 2005 through the present, has been quite distinct from his first period. Instead of re-establishing a democratic reformist regime, Fernandez established a technocratic clientelistic regime. This regime is marked by a close relationship between the local state and the dominant classes; expert and elite control over major political decision-making, with a sharp turn away from participatory planning; and the political subordination of the popular sectors to the local political elite via clientelistic control of civic associations. An interesting and unintended aspect of the regime is the recurrent waves of popular protest that it has fostered. The local state has responded to protest with occasional and usually short-lived concessions and, more frequently, repression, including the use of extra-institutional violence against protesters.

Three factors help account for the markedly different character of the regime established by Percy Fernandez in his first and second periods in office. First, Fernandez appears to have learned two lessons from his first period in office: the difficulties of participatory planning (see discussion above of Fernandez’s apparently negative assessment of the “City Hall in the Barrios” program), and the challenge of frontally confronting local elites. As discussed below, upon resuming office as mayor, Fernandez

almost entirely abandoned participatory planning. To facilitate his return to office, Fernandez also abandoned his confrontational attitude towards Santa Cruz's lodges, adopting a more conciliatory attitude towards Santa Cruz's "groups of power" (Ferreira 2010b: 133). According to Fernando Prado, "To return to City Hall he [Fernandez] had to promise to not go after the lodges, and he did" (Interview with Author).

Second, the Cruceño elite's position towards the national government was quite distinct in the early-to-mid 1990s (Fernandez's first period as mayor) and the mid-to-late 2000s (his second period as mayor). The Cruceño elite economically benefitted from, and was strongly supportive of, the neoliberal policies implemented by a series of national governments between 1985 and 2000. Through several regional trade accords (the Andean Community of Nations and MERCOSUR), Santa Cruz's economy was further integrated into the global economy during this period, with significant international investment occurring in Santa Cruz's soy and hydrocarbons industries (Peña 2007; Kirshner 2013: 549). Santa Cruz's economy grew robustly during this period: between 1989 and 2001 Santa Cruz's growth rate exceeded Bolivia's in all but two years and in 9 of these 13 years it was above 5% (Prado 2005: 67). Given these benefits, it is unsurprising that the Cruceño elite acted (and had continued to act) as the leading proponent of a neoliberal model of growth emphasizing free markets, competitiveness and global integration (Webber 2011a: 89). The Cruceño elite was critical of MNR president Sanchez de Lozada's decentralization program in the mid-1990s which enhanced local political power while limiting the power of regional political elites (Eaton 2007: 80). But the Cruceño elite was strongly supportive of the economic policies Sanchez de Lozada and other presidents implemented during this period (Eaton 2007: 82).

From 2000 on, the Cruceño elite became increasingly alarmed at the trend of national politics, with the 2000-2005 protest cycle and Evo Morales' surprisingly strong second-place finish in the 2002 presidential election highlighting the increasing political clout of Bolivia's indigenous majority. Sanchez de Lozada's resignation following the 2003 Gas War was particularly troubling to the Cruceño elite. The MAS established an alliance with Sanchez de Lozada's successor, Carlos Mesa and under Mesa for the first time since the re-establishment of democracy in 1982 a member of the Cruceño agrarian bourgeoisie was not included within the presidential cabinet (Eaton 2007: 83). Between 2004 and 2009 (and to a lesser extent in subsequent years) the Cruceño elite pushed for a radical form of regional autonomy that would protect their economic interests by giving the department of Santa Cruz, which the Cruceño elite was confident of its ability to control (as they have), control over natural resources based in the department such as land, timber, natural gas and oil, two thirds of the tax revenue generated in the department and authority in all policy matters apart from defense, currency, tariffs and foreign relations (Eaton 2007: 74).

The regional autonomy movement is clearly linked to elite class interests, specifically the interests of the Cruceño agrarian bourgeoisie. To gain greater traction, however, the leaders of the regional autonomy movement, acting within the Civic Committee in particular, sought and to a significant extent managed to elicit support for regional autonomy from nonelites within Santa Cruz. To do this, autonomistas (i.e. those supporting autonomy) portrayed themselves as the defenders of a supposedly beleaguered Cruceño identity. The movement also advocated for "common sense" reforms favored by

a majority of residents in Santa Cruz; for instance, bureaucratic reform that would allow simple administrative forms to be processed locally, obviating the need for lengthy and expensive trips to La Paz. Finally, and in a much more ambiguous and “symbolic” fashion, the Civic Committee sought to open itself up by reaching out to indigenous and workers’ organizations, at the same time as the Civic Committee’s youth wing, the Union Juvenil Cruceñista, has violently attacked nonelites aligned with the MAS (Eaton 2007: 89-92). The Civic Committee has succeeded in coopting a number of popular organizations within Santa Cruz, leading to splits within the Departmental Workers’ Federation (COD) and Federation of Neighborhood Councils (FEDJUVE), both of which split into pro-autonomy and (relatively more) pro-MAS factions, with the same thing occurring at the neighborhood level with parallel pro-autonomy and pro-MAS Neighborhood Councils competing to represent residents’ interests at the neighborhood level.

After resuming office in 2005, Percy Fernandez initially kept his distance from the autonomy movement. Fernando Prado recounts that, “He [Fernandez] went to the [pro-autonomy] marches, but he was in the last row”. When Fernandez decided he wanted to stay on as mayor in 2007 (the point at which Oscar Vargas should have become mayor according to the deal Fernandez and he struck in 2004), however, he needed the support of the Civic Committee, and the municipal councilors aligned with it. To obtain this support, Fernandez aligned himself firmly with the autonomy movement. Speaking about a large pro-autonomy “Town Hall” rally held in 2007, Prado commented, “At the last Town Hall he [Fernandez] was one of the key speakers. At this point, Percy accepted becoming part of the Verdes group”, with Verdes (Greens) referring to supporters of Santa Cruz prefect Ruben Costas, a wealthy landowner and past president of the Civic Committee who was one of the key leaders of the autonomy movement.

The third factor that explains why Fernandez established a technocratic clientelistic regime, in which popular participation has been suppressed rather than fostered, is the fact that, in contrast to the MVR/PSUV in Sucre, Venezuela, the strategy of the MAS in Santa Cruz has not put pressure on Fernandez to embrace participatory politics in any way. As detailed below, the MAS has pursued an electoralist strategy in Santa Cruz, with the party focused on deal-making with local political elites as a way to increase its political clout, eschewing the organization and mobilization of the popular sectors.

**Table 8 Political Regimes in Santa Cruz, 1950 – 2015**

Regime Type	Period	Class Base	Elections	Institutionalized	
				State-Society Relationship	State-Society Relations
<b>Oligarchic</b>	1950s-1980s	Elites Professionals	No	No	Repression Protest (Weak)
<b>Democratic Reformist</b>	1990-1995, 2002-2004	Middle Classes Popular Sectors Business	Yes	Yes	Consultative Participation Clientelism
<b>Neopopulist</b>	1996-2001	Middle Classes Business Popular Sectors	Yes	Yes	Clientelism
<b>Technocratic Clientelism</b>	2005-	Middle Classes Business Popular Sectors	Yes	Yes	Clientelism Repression Protest (Weak)

#### SANTA CRUZ’S TECHNOCRATIC CLIENTELISTIC REGIME

The first important feature of Santa Cruz’s technocratic clientelistic regime is the technocratic nature of decision-making, meaning that technical experts are given control over decisions viewed as purely technical, with these officials largely insulated from both popular and political pressures. Interviews with high-level officials within the (current) Percy Fernandez administration demonstrate the technocratic viewpoint that prevails within Santa Cruz’s municipal government, with expert-led decision-making praised while participatory planning is viewed as foolish or unworkable. To illustrate this I will quote from interviews with two officials in Santa Cruz. Interviews and conversations with a number of other high-, mid- and low-level officials, and with residents, activists and intellectuals in Santa Cruz suggest that these views are illustrative of the overall attitude of the Fernandez administration and not particular to these two officials.

Juan Carlos Gonzalez, an engineer from the department of public works in charge of control and follow-up, spoke of why he felt experts like himself should be in charge of decision-making: “We analyze the city as a whole...It doesn’t work to leave all the planning in the hands of residents because they don’t look at how the city is growing” (Interview with author). Gonzalez expressed the view, prevalent amongst officials in Santa Cruz, that experts know what citizens need much more than citizens themselves do. Gonzalez recounted the last participatory planning session he had attended, four or five years before, recalling, “Residents’ priorities were health, education, paving and drainage, in that order”. Gonzalez said the Fernandez administration ignored citizens’ prioritization, spending its budget in the reverse order of what citizens had asked for, with the most spent on paving and drainage and the least spend on education and health. Gonzalez justified this clear disjuncture between the priorities expressed by local residents in public meetings (which as discussed below are no longer held) and the projects implemented by Santa Cruz’s municipal government by commenting, “There’s a difference between what residents *say they want* and *what they actually need*” (emphasis added). In other words, residents themselves do not know “what they actually need”; only

officials like Gonzalez do.

Gonzalez's preference for expert-led decision-making over participatory planning was further underscored by his description of how the department of public works determines where paving, one of its two main priorities, should happen. He explained that the department uses a technical formula that takes account of four criteria: population, the age of a neighborhood, the amount and condition of existing pavement and the tax that has been paid by this neighborhood (or the district for larger projects). According to Gonzalez, "This is the formula for equity". After the department figures out a plan a session is held with the Oversight Committee representative, the sub-mayor and "a small group of representatives from the neighborhoods", with Gonzalez emphasizing that, "You don't want to have too many people in the room". In this session a negotiation takes place between city officials and neighborhood representatives to determine a final plan for paving projects for the upcoming year. Gonzalez was very critical of the projects put forward by residents in these sessions, which he felt were based on personal and/or political, rather than technical reasons. Drawing a map of the city, Gonzalez said, "*We view things from the technical angle, and we want to finish important streets, to finish off the rings [the major concentric roads circling the city], or complete a certain corner*" (emphasis added). Residents, by contrast, "want a street here and here and here...[because] your grandma lives on this street", he said, pointing to random places on the map he was drawing. In Gonzalez's mind it was clear that, "If the process were more technical the city's needs would be better met", though he worried that if the public were entirely excluded from decisions, "the social perception wouldn't be favorable". This preference for "purely technical" decision-making likely explains why the year before the department of public works had determined the paving plan entirely on its own, without bothering to hold even the minimal negotiation session just described.

Juan Pablo Rollano, Santa Cruz's director of institutional planning, held a similar view about the superiority of expert-led decision-making over participatory planning. During an interview, Rollano referred repeatedly to the "whims" (caprichos) of people in the barrios, whom he said "lack long and medium-term vision". Rollano gave a seemingly hypothetical example of people not wanting to have a school built in their neighborhood because it would be constructed on a sight where they play soccer. This example illustrated Rollano's view of the shortsightedness of ordinary citizens: "They don't realize that the school would benefit everyone in the neighborhood". Rollano was also critical of neighborhood leaders, whom he felt were corrupt and guided not by a vision of the common good but by personal and political interests. According to Rollano, "leaders use the projects to destabilize [things]...to do politics". In another interview, Rollano remarked, "The problem [with participatory planning] is the neighborhood leaders. Since there is parallelism, there might be one recognized leader, a second leader who is recognized by others, and third waiting to rise...this leads to the outsourcing of demands, which are based on personal and political interests...they [leaders] don't even respond to representativeness, much less to technical criteria". Given residents' shortsightedness and neighborhood leaders' political interests, Rollano thought participatory planning should be avoided: "Residents don't see the technical needs...so why even enter that arena [of participatory planning]...it doesn't even respond to representative criteria...they [leaders] have other interests".

Rollano's comments about neighborhood leaders who "don't even respond to

representativeness” point to the second important feature of Santa Cruz’s technocratic clientelistic regime: its clientelistic character. Clientelism in Santa Cruz operates through three sets of actors. At the top are political patrons, elected officials such as the mayor and municipal councilors, who control access to local state resources and top-level decision-making affecting the use of these resources, with access and/or resources provided to those below in exchange for political support. In the middle are political brokers (usually district leaders, such as the sub-mayor, the district Oversight Committee representative and the president of the district federation of neighborhood councils) who answer to (and are generally officially or unofficially paid by) top-level patrons and serve as the primary conduit for citizens and neighborhood leaders seeking access to resources and mid- and low-level decision-making. At the bottom are clients, neighborhood residents and neighborhood leaders (e.g. presidents of Neighborhood Councils) who in exchange for access to resources and decision-making fora must demonstrate their political allegiance to political patrons and brokers.

Data collected in four peripheral districts of Santa Cruz – 8 and 12, which are the two poorest districts in the city, and 6 and 9, which are poor but slightly less than 8 and 12 – through participant observation at neighborhood and district meetings and interviews and informal conversations with residents and neighborhood and district leaders reveal that clientelism is systematically practiced in Santa Cruz. In each of these districts residents and leaders were able to access resources and decision-making fora (with decisions made here often altered later or ignored) only if they remained loyal to the mayor and mid-level brokers. Presidents of the district federation of neighborhood councils and Oversight Committee representatives played a key role in this system, as the front-line providing or blocking residents and NC presidents’ access to resources and decision-making. In each of the four districts mentioned above (with anecdotes suggesting that these practices existed in other districts as well, particular in peripheral ones, where neighborhood politics is more active) mid-level brokers worked to make sure that NC presidents were elected who were loyal to the mayor. When this did not occur, residents and activists say that parallel Neighborhood Councils were formed. This often occurred through meetings in which only residents perceived or known to be loyal to the mayor were invited, with others kept in the dark. These meetings are said to have often involved lavish barbecues, allegedly financed by the mayor or City Hall. Other means of greasing the wheels of clientelism included supporters of the mayor, and certain municipal councilors, such as Desiree Bravo from District 6, being provided with pocket change as well as free food and transportation to attend rallies in support of these political figures. When it came to distribute resources, only Neighborhood Councils led by loyal presidents would be able to access them.

Officials like Juan Pablo Rollano acknowledge the existence, and pervasiveness, of clientelism in Santa Cruz but see no connection between this world of “dirty politics” and their world of “technical” decision-making. In one sense these officials are correct: available evidence suggests that officials like Juan Pablo Rollano, Juan Carlos Gonzalez and others operate in a largely technical arena in which their decisions are effectively sealed off from popular and political influence and based largely on technical criteria alone. These officials do not, however, seem to realize that the technical autonomy they enjoy is possible, in part, because of the clientelistic politics they find so disagreeable.

Percy Fernandez, whom Juan Pablo Rollano praised for “creating credibility in

the municipality's finances", constructing schools, parks and a hospital and doing "lots of paving", has played a key role in establishing a sphere of (largely) autonomous technical decision-making *and* in (re)producing clientelism in Santa Cruz. Fernando Prado, who served in both of Percy Fernandez's administrations (in the early 1990s and from 2005-2007), provides insight into how the technocratic and clientelistic aspects of Santa Cruz's technocratic clientelistic regime fit together. Speaking of Percy Fernandez's current period in office, Prado commented, "This is not an administration that is at all interested in popular participation". Prado says that during his time as director of Santa Cruz's Office of Planning (a post he held from 2005-2007), the mayor made it clear he had no interest in letting citizens decide how to spend the city's money: "He [the mayor] would tell us, 'These little projects [meaning projects chosen by citizens through participatory planning mechanisms] only hurt the municipality. I want to do big projects'".

To do "big projects", led by technical officials free to operate more or less as they saw fit, the mayor needed to insulate his administration from popular input. Clientelism provided a way to do this. Fernandez has worked hard to gain and maintain control over Neighborhood Councils and Santa Cruz's Oversight Committee. According to the 1994 Law of Popular Participation these are the primary institutions through which participatory planning should take place. To Fernandez, however, these institutions are potential obstacles to his ability to control decision-making. Prado says that, "If the MAS got two-thirds control of [the Oversight Committee] it could make things much harder for the mayor". To prevent this from happening, Fernandez finances candidates loyal to him in Neighborhood Council elections. Prado says, "These candidates have more money and are therefore able to make more promises". As a result they usually win, "and when they don't win there are problems. There are charges of fraud and sometimes even physical force is used to take over the Neighborhood Council." Prado noted that, "There are also parallel Neighborhood Councils, which are formed in the same neighborhood unit", a practice mentioned by Juan Pablo Rollano as well. In Prado's view, all of this is a means to "keep a lid on participation".

The third important feature of Santa Cruz's technocratic clientelistic regime is that it has generated a series of recurrent struggles for democracy, led by residents and neighborhood and district leaders excluded from resources and decision-making. The existence of these struggles (which are detailed below) reveals an interesting feature of Santa Cruz's technocratic clientelistic regime: the gap between the regime's apparent institutional effectiveness, with the Fernandez administration proud of consistently having one of the highest budgetary implementation rates amongst large Bolivian cities, and the reality of the regime's ineffectiveness in terms of actually meeting citizens' needs. This gap is likely one reason the regime has been less politically effective.

To substantiate the arguments just put forward I will now discuss how Santa Cruz's technocratic clientelistic regime fares in terms of the extent of popular control, quality of popular control and institutional and political effectiveness. The chapter concludes by analyzing several struggles for democracy. The failures of these struggles point to the important way in which the MAS' political strategy has shaped politics in Santa Cruz, by perpetuating rather than challenging technocratic clientelism.

### *Extent of Popular Control*

Since 2008 residents of Santa Cruz have had no effective control over the local



budget or over non-budgetary issues. From 2005 through 2007 the Percy Fernandez administration implemented a limited form of participatory planning known as “Neighbor Demand”. This was done to comply with the 1994 Law of Popular Participation, which mandates that residents be able to provide input on a portion of the local budget in all Bolivian municipalities. The most extensive Neighbor Demand process occurred in 2006, when the municipality contracted a non-governmental organization, Fundación PAP (Fundación para la Participación Ciudadana y Alivio a la Pobreza; Foundation for Citizen Participation and Poverty Alleviation), to do a thorough participatory planning process throughout the city. To reach all of Santa Cruz’s 680 neighborhood units PAP contracted 17 partners, including other NGOs and local universities. Over the course of more than three months each partner traveled to a number of neighborhood units to gather residents’ input about their priorities. According to Omar Andrade, a sociologist and urban planner with PAP, his organization deliberately sought to avoid allowing the process to be taken over by Neighborhood Councils, which from past experience PAP viewed as corrupt and subordinate to political parties and elite interests. Thus, “In order to evade the cooptation [of the process] by Neighborhood Councils we included all of the functional organizations in the neighborhoods, the sports clubs, mother’s clubs, the Church, the school boards” and more (Interview with author). According to Andrade and Martha Elcuaz, an architect from PAP who also worked on the 2006 participatory planning project, this process generated great expectations within communities. In the end, however, nothing came of the process, since City Hall took the results but never implemented them, leading to considerable criticism from residents and PAP staff.

The last Neighbor Demand session was held in 2007. A report from Desafío, a local community empowerment organization, states that, “Until 2008 we saw that a small percentage of the funds included within the rubric of Municipal Deconcentration was destined to this end [participatory planning], but now no amount is specified” (Desafío 2013: 9). During my fieldwork I spent a number of weeks attempting to track down officials with knowledge of the city’s Neighbor Demand program, which I had been led to believe was still operative. After numerous false leads (which indicates officials’ overall lack of knowledge regarding participatory planning) I was directed to the Parks and Garden department, which several officials told me was the department most directly involved with Neighbor Demand. After arriving to the office I was granted an interview with Richard Iturralde, a senior official with knowledge of Neighbor Demand. After a few minutes, Iturralde acknowledged that he did not know of any Neighbor Demand sessions having occurred since 2006. He thought this was a good thing, since, “Neighbor Demand was a disaster”. With no irony Iturralde said, “Participation works best when it’s based on the *imposition* of the executive” (emphasis added). Continuing he said, “We [officials] try to learn from experiences in other countries...[take] traffic...a traffic solution doesn’t come from a resident...he’s just in his car and knows he doesn’t want traffic, but he doesn’t know how to make that happen”. In Iturralde’s view, this example demonstrated that for citizens to get what they want they should leave decision-making to experts. Iturralde’s experts-know-best attitude is essentially the same as the attitude of Juan Carlos Gonzalez and Juan Pablo Rollano (see above).

A non-budgetary issue that residents of Santa Cruz have sought greater control over is the selection of district sub-mayors, an important position since sub-mayors attend to day-to-day solicitations of residents living in a given district. During his term as mayor

Roberto Fernandez oversaw passage of an ordinance providing for the direct election of district sub-mayors by Neighborhood Council presidents. Percy Fernandez ignored this ordinance when he again became mayor. According to Fernando Prado, “Percy just ignored this, and said ‘They [sub-mayors] are just like any other functionary and so I’ll name them myself’”. By naming sub-mayors Percy Fernandez has been able to ensure their loyalty to him. As discussed below, the mayor’s refusal to allow the election of sub-mayors has generated significant and recurrent protests in Santa Cruz.

The issue of turnout in participatory fora is addressed in the next section, which discusses the pseudo participation that continues to exist in Santa Cruz.

### *Quality of Popular Control*

There is no genuine participatory planning in Santa Cruz. There is, however, pseudo participation. This section describes and analyzes this pseudo participation, paying attention to three issues. The first is whether decision-making approximates a norm of deliberation. The second is the question of who has control over final decisions. The third is the inclusivity of the process, and more broadly the distribution of local state resources to Santa Cruz residents, in terms of race, class, gender and political views.

While Neighbor Demand sessions no longer occur, budget-planning sessions are held in Santa Cruz’s district sub-mayoral offices. In March 2011 I attended the budget planning session held in District 9, a low-income district with between 25 and 40% of the population living in poverty (placing it just above Santa Cruz’s two poorest districts, 8 and 12, where poverty reaches 50%; Kirshner 2013: 550). The district 9 sub-mayor facilitated the session, which included the district Oversight Committee representative, the president of the district’s Federation of Neighborhood Councils, 40 Neighborhood Council (hereafter NC) presidents and officials from several municipal departments.<sup>63</sup>

An engineer from the Parks and Gardens department opened the session, writing down the amounts of money the district had for plazas and an urban park. He commented, “This is the money that they have assigned us. We’re here to tell you about your plazas”. This led to a brief discussion and vote on which neighborhood would receive a plaza. A longer discussion then took place regarding walkways, with lots of back and forth questions and answers between the NC presidents and municipal technicians. This led to a (seemingly) non-conflictual decision to build walkways in four barrios. Next an engineer spoke about school buildings, explaining, “The decision about where to do this is yours...we’ll just tell you how much [money] you have”.

The most interesting discussion occurred at the end of the assembly regarding sports fields. This discussion was by far the most conflictual and the most deliberative. An architect from City Hall presented to the NC presidents, who frequently interrupted her and posed questions, many about projects from past years that had not been completed. The discussion centered on a debate about where, and what, the money allocated to the district should be spent on. A female NC president said that she didn’t have a field in her barrio since the existing field had been turning into the marketplace leaving local kids nowhere to play. Another NC president, also a woman, asked for money to install a protective net on one side of the field in her barrio. She explained that

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<sup>63</sup> Based on interviews and conversations with residents and officials it seems that budget-planning sessions occur throughout Santa Cruz. However, this was the only session I was able to attend during my fieldwork. Additional research is thus required to confirm whether or not other districts have these sessions.

the field was next to a busy road and that an automobile speeding by had struck a child playing in the field. A few other NC presidents, all woman, though a few men spoke during the discussion, made pleas to have fields built in their barrios. Ever Romero, the district's Oversight Committee representative, told everyone that a particular company had been contracted to build fields in the past in their district and several others and then gone under, leaving the projects half finished. He suggested that the assembly should be sure to avoid contracting with this company again. Eventually the discussion (which involved numerous complaints voiced against the city by NC presidents) moved to a vote on whether to fund 2 new fields or lighting for existing fields needing repairs. Several votes were taken, and it appeared that a majority wanted to give the money to fund two new fields. This outcome appeared to be unsatisfying to the president of the district Federation of Neighborhood Councils, and in the end it was decided (in a manner that was not entirely transparent to me) to fund all three fields.

This example shows that deliberation does occur in Santa Cruz's budget-planning sessions, with NC presidents discussing projects and then voting on them. There are, however, a few important limitations. First, as mentioned, a district leader (the president of the district Federation of Neighborhood Councils) appeared set on a particular outcome for the final vote (funding three fields instead of just two) and repeated votes were held until this outcome was reached. This shows that there is not an airtight link between deliberation and decision-making and raises questions about who decides on projects, an issue discussed at greater length below. Second, NC presidents are limited to deciding *where* relatively small projects will go, with officials deciding *what* projects will occur and how much money can be spent in particular areas. Major problems relating to political operatives' ability to alter decisions they disagree with and major problems of exclusion are further limitations of the process.

In the assembly just described residents, acting in their role as NC presidents, had control over decisions, a point that was emphasized by district-level leaders present at the assembly. Subsequent discussions with NC presidents in District 9 suggest, however, that district leaders are able to later alter decisions. Several autonomista NC presidents in district 9 said their district Oversight Committee representative, Ever Romero, regularly overruled decisions they made in budget meetings like the one described above. One NC president said Ever forced them to campaign for the mayor in the 2010 election and punished those who refused: "Ever tried to force us to change our politics, and to work for Percy's campaign...[after the campaign] Ever came to our barrio and told people, 'I didn't see your president in the campaign so you won't be getting machinery'". Another group of NC presidents, who were excluded from attending meetings due to the fact that they weren't part of Romero's pro-mayor in-group, said that Romero had altered a paving project on an avenue connecting the fifth and sixth rings. The group drew a line for me and said, "It was supposed to be a straight road". Drawing several zigs and zags they told me the road had not been paved in a straight manner. Instead it was paved up to a certain point, and then went off course for several blocks, before continuing from a subsequent point. The unplanned section of road that was paved (via the zigs and zags) passed by two condominium buildings. The group told me that Romero had accepted money, though they did not know how much, to alter the project to follow the unplanned route. They said they did not have hard proof of this, but Omar, one of the NC presidents present, said, "The proof is the fact that the road is paved like this". As he said this he

used fingers in the air to draw a decidedly crooked road.

Another significant limitation on the quality of popular control in Santa Cruz is the fact that many residents in peripheral zones are excluded from participating in decision-making and having access to resources due to their (perceived) race/ethnicity and political views. All (or almost all) of the presidents present in the District 9 budget-planning assembly described above were supporters of Percy Fernandez. This was not coincidental. When I asked if there were any MASista (MAS-supporting) NC presidents at this assembly, an NC president from the district told me, “We’re all *autonomistas* here”. In this context, being autonomista connoted support the regional autonomy movement as well as for Percy Fernandez. I asked why this was the case and was told, “There were some troublemakers affiliated with the government [i.e. MAS] who used to come and criticize everything...but we got rid of them”. I asked how. He responded, “We didn’t stop them from coming, but we ignored them whenever they tried to speak. Then they stopped coming”. District’s 9 Oversight Committee representative, an autonomista himself, confirmed that MASistas no longer came to district meetings. In interviews, a number of MASista NC presidents in District 9 said they were not invited to participatory planning sessions, or other district meetings, and said many of the NC presidents who did attend these meetings were not legitimate civic leaders but had been elected in illegal “parallel” gatherings open only to autonomista residents within neighborhoods.

Similar practices occurred in districts 6, 8 and 12. In each case, NC presidents identified as being MASista were prevented from being recognized as the legitimate president of their Neighborhood Council and/or from attending meetings in the district in which resource distribution was discussed and decided upon. This political discrimination was deeply racialized as well, with anyone perceived to be a “Colla” also called a MASista. NC presidents in peripheral districts recounted being referred to as Collas in meetings. In September 2008 highland migrants in Santa Cruz faced racist violence throughout the city, with this violence particularly pronounced in the central square of the city and District 8 (Plan Tres Mil), which is home to the most highland migrants in the city, and also the strongest support base for the MAS.

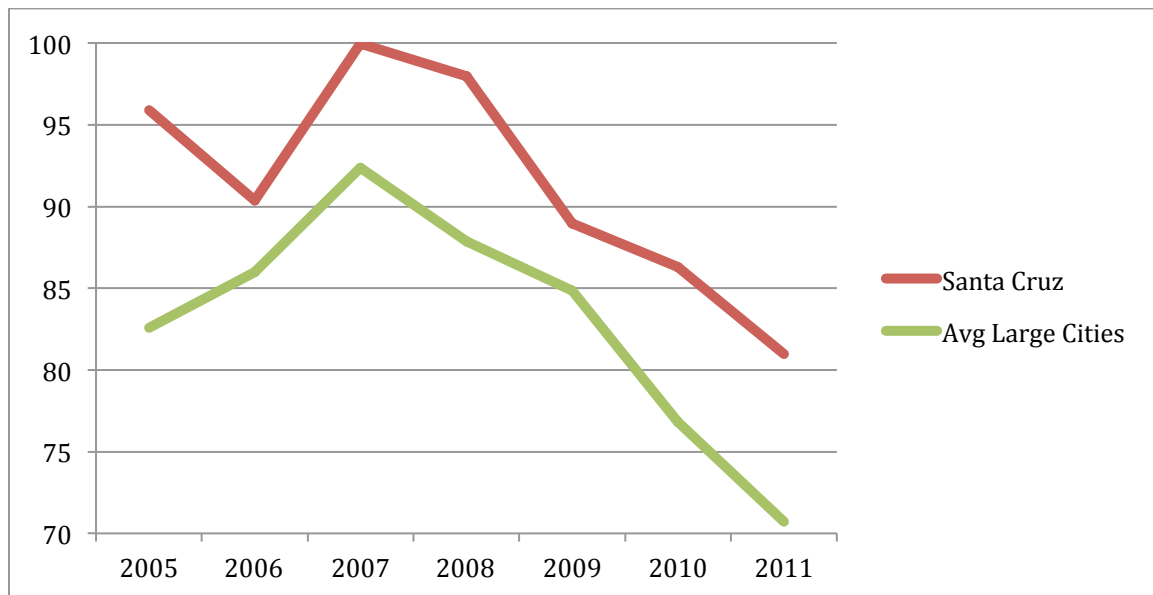
In terms of gender the district meetings I attended in Districts 8, 9 and 12 were inclusive, with both men and women present. In fact, there was much greater inclusion of women within the ranks of NC presidents, and district leaders (e.g. several presidents of district federations of NCs and sub-mayors were women) compared to El Alto. There was no overt exclusion based on class, and many NC presidents present in meetings I attended were from poor neighborhoods. However the exclusions based on race and political views contribute to a degree of class-based exclusion, since within Santa Cruz migrants from the highlands tend to be amongst the poorest residents.

Given the exclusions discussed it is difficult to make an assessment of turnout for the meetings just described, since so many residents are prevented from attending these meetings for racial and political reasons. However, in the budget-planning sessions I attended there appeared to be significant turnout of between 40-50 NC presidents per district. I was told that there was generally good attendance at Neighborhood Council meetings themselves. But as with district-level meetings, these neighborhood meetings were not inclusive.

### *Institutional Effectiveness*

Santa Cruz's technocratic clientelistic regime has generated an appearance of institutional effectiveness. As Figure 6 shows, Santa Cruz's budgetary execution rate from 2005 to 2011 was consistently above the average of all large Bolivian cities. From 2005-2008 the rate was above 90%, reaching nearly 100% in 2007. This rate slipped to 64% in 2012 (La Razón 2013) and was 70% in 2013 (El Deber 2014). But in both years this was the highest of any large Bolivian city. One of the ways that the Fernandez administration has achieved this impressive budgetary execution rate is by limiting popular input into decision-making, which prevents the inclusion of numerous projects that remain incomplete for years. As discussed in the following chapter, this has occurred in El Alto, and is a major problem. By carefully limiting, and in recent years virtually eliminating, popular input into the budget, the Fernandez administration has been able to effectively deliver on projects included within the budget.

**Figure 5 Budgetary Execution in Santa Cruz and Average of Large Bolivian Cities 2005-2011**



(Average is of Bolivia's 6 largest cities: Cochabamba, El Alto, La Paz, Oruro, Potosi, Sucre and Santa Cruz)

Source: <http://vmpe.economiayfinanzas.gob.bo/EjecucionPresupuestariaVarios.asp?t=GM>

This institutional effectiveness is more apparent than real, however, due to the fact that, by not taking account of what citizens want the Fernandez administration has performed very poorly in terms of meeting its citizens' needs. As discussed already the administration has opted to entirely ignore citizens' expressed preferences, guaranteeing that the projects executed by the municipal government will not correspond to the priorities of neighborhood residents. A second problem is corruption, which is related to the clientelism discussed above. Because the mayor is focused on maintaining loyalty of subordinates, a significant degree of mid-level corruption has flourished in Santa Cruz. Residents say that Oversight Committee representatives regularly turn in false or doctored receipts, in this manner obtaining thousands of dollars not meant for them.

Additionally, there are numerous phantom projects and phantom employees in Santa Cruz, which serve to maintain key individuals' loyalty to the mayor. These projects do not appear on official documents, and thus do not affect the official budgetary execution rate of the city. However, they do impact citizens' perceptions of the Fernandez administration's effectiveness. Residents throughout Santa Cruz's peripheral districts say the municipal government has repeatedly failed to follow through on promises made. Carmen Alvarez, a community leader from District 8, criticized the process by which her district's priorities were determined, saying, it "occurs within 4 walls and behind closed doors, involving only the Oversight Committee, the sub-mayoral office and the district union [of Neighborhood Councils]". The behind-closed-door and exclusionary nature of planning has allowed corruption to flourish, with Alvarez estimating that 50% of the projects approved for the district in recent years have not been executed. She also estimated that there were at least 60 phantom projects. Other residents in the district said that this occurred as well, and showed me numerous photographs of empty fields where projects that according to official records had been completed. Alvarez also showed me receipts of inflated costs submitted by her district's Oversight Committee representative.

Similar stories were common in other districts as well. For instance, during a weekly meeting of NC presidents and district leaders in District 9, Ever Romero, the Oversight Committee representative took out a book of photographs and started to recount projects in the district that had been completed according to official records. As he showed the photographs, Romero commented, "The pictures don't lie". He then proceeded to read off a number of projects that had supposedly been finished. Monica, an NC president taking notes during the meeting, came over to Romero when he mentioned a finished project in her barrio. She looked concerned and took a look at the photo and shook her head, indicating that while the book might say the project was done, it was not in fact completed. After this a number of NC presidents commented that projects supposedly finished were not in fact done. The president of the district federation of neighborhood councils promised to submit a formal denunciation based on this information. A few women sitting near me in the meeting commented that, "Those [photos] could've been taken in another neighborhood". By the end of the meeting, Romero has done an about face, pointing out that several photos were taken from such a great distance that it was impossible to tell if the projects were complete or not.

### *Political Effectiveness*

Santa Cruz's technocratic clientelistic regime appears to have been initially politically effective and then become much less so. Percy Fernandez won re-election in 2010 and 2015, demonstrating the overall political effectiveness of technocratic clientelism. In his 2010 victory, Fernandez won 52% of the vote,<sup>64</sup> a major increase from his second-place finish with 20.4% in 2004.<sup>65</sup> Percy Fernandez won re-election again in 2015, but his vote total this year was just 42.4% of the vote, a 10% drop compared to 2010.<sup>66</sup> When compared to Torres' movement democracy and Sucre's administered democracy – which have produced longer-lasting and more robust political gains, particularly in the case of movement democracy – Santa Cruz's technocratic clientelism

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<sup>64</sup> <http://www.lostiempos.com/resultados-elecciones-municipales-departamentales-bolivia-2010.php>

<sup>65</sup> [http://www.bolivia.com/Especiales/2004/Elecciones\\_Municipales/resultados/Santacruz.asp](http://www.bolivia.com/Especiales/2004/Elecciones_Municipales/resultados/Santacruz.asp)

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.oep.org.bo/Resultados/Formularios/wfrmResultados.aspx?Dep=7>

appears less effective. Without additional information (including district-level electoral data, which is not available at the moment) it is difficult to fully parse this latest result. A plausible hypothesis, however, is that it reflects residents' pent up frustration with the exclusionary character of technocratic clientelism. This interpretation is more plausible in light of the recurrent protests Fernandez has faced in Santa Cruz's peripheral districts, which are recounted in the following section.

#### REGIME TRAJECTORY: THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

Technocratic clientelism is a fundamentally anti-democratic form of governance, which excludes citizens in two ways: technocratic decision-making excludes citizens from political decision-making, while clientelistic politics excludes citizens from access to resources, which are provided in a politically and racially discriminatory fashion. Both forms of exclusion are most pronounced in Santa Cruz's peripheral districts (6-10 and 12), the fastest-growing areas of the city, with the lowest human development indices of literacy, education, life expectancy and income (Prado 2005: 233-43). It is not coincidental that these districts have been the focal points of a struggle for democracy, in which the excluded seek unconditional access to decision-making and resources.

Fieldwork in districts 6, 8, 9 and 12 reveals a similar pattern of exclusion with darker-skinned highland migrants, labeled "MASistas" and/or "Collas" prevented from serving as NC presidents and thus from gaining access to district-level decision-making fora and resources. In each of these districts, this exclusion has generated a similar pattern of protest, with excluded NC presidents and residents (usually but not always labeled MASistas) coming together to unseat an unpopular district sub-mayor appointed by the mayor and/or an Oversight Committee representative viewed as illegitimate and/or corrupt. During the course of my fieldwork (which started in 2010 and ended in 2011), protests targeting sub-mayors and/or Oversight Committee representatives viewed as arbitrary and illegitimate took place in districts 8 and 12. Interviews with residents and district leaders revealed that similar protests occurred in previous, recent years in districts 6 and 9. In all of these districts there were protests in which residents and NC presidents sought to directly chose their own sub-mayor. In district 8 there was also a struggle to replace the Oversight Committee representative and backup representative.

In June 2010 an initially successful struggle for a new sub-mayor occurred in District 8. The background is that for years the district had been run by a small group loyal to the mayor, with this group managing to secure control over the Oversight Committee and the sub-mayoral office. When a new sub-mayor was appointed in June 2010, NC presidents in the district, most affiliated with or sympathetic to the MAS (which is quite strong in District 8), along with some autonomista residents and leaders frustrated with clientelism and corruption, came together to demand their right to elect a sub-mayor of their choosing. Through a weeklong vigil outside the District 8 sub-mayoral office, with 100-300 residents present each day, and a multi-day blockade of the municipal dump, which is located in District 8, the mayor agreed to allow the district's NC presidents elect a sub-mayor. They elected Eduardo Correa, a MASista who was an NC president in his barrio from 2004-2006 and 2009-2010. During an interview in April 2011, Correa commented, "The mayor has the competency, according to the law, to designate sub mayors. I'm the only sub mayor [in Santa Cruz] who was designated due to pressure" (Interview with Author).

According to Correa, “The other sub-mayor before me [who was appointed by the mayor] only received people from her group...residents who came from faraway barrios had no chance to meet with her...It was just arbitrary how things happened”. Correa also commented that, “The [previous] sub-mayor only attended to people of her political line...she would never meet with a MASista...In order to meet with her I had to come with 300 neighbors, Alteño style [meaning the way things are done in El Alto], bring placards and marching...that was the only way she’d meet with us.” Correa, who like many residents in District 8 is from the Andean highlands and has brown skin, also commented that the previous sub-mayor, “wouldn’t meet with a *morenito*” (with this term literally meaning a small brown man).

Correa says that during his years as an NC president, “There was never, never any convocation for the elaboration of the POA...never”, with POA referring to the Annual Operating Plan, which according to the Law of Popular Participation grassroots organizations are supposed to be consulted for. Speaking of the process of planning the 2011 Annual Operating Plan, which took place in 2010, the year before he became sub-mayor, Correa commented, “There is very little participation...the leaders weren’t take into account for the POA 2011...for 2012 I’m going to convoke everyone, regardless of if they are with the Right...I’ll consider everyone, and we’ll prioritize everything...I’m not just the sub mayor for the MASistas but for all”. As proof of his commitment to be “sub-mayor for all”, Correa said that he had attended residents regardless of their political affiliation, including those he knew where supportive of the mayor and opposed to the MAS. Correa also met with MASista NC presidents, who called Correa, “one of ours” and said they could schedule meetings with him and get him to hear their demands, a marked contrast from previous sub-mayors, who had refused to attend to them.

The struggle to democratize the sub-mayor’s office in District 8 was possible because of three factors. The first was mobilization by residents and dissident (MASista) leaders in the district, referred to above. Second, was the degree of unity forged between MASista and autonomista NC presidents in the district through a concurrent campaign to wrest control of the Oversight Committee representative position away from a longtime supporter of the mayor, who had held the post for years and acted in a highly discriminatory fashion, only meeting with NC presidents loyal to him (and the mayor). A campaign led by an autonomista white man and a MASista indigenous woman, both of them NC presidents, succeeded in uniting 60 NC representatives, who elected the pair Oversight Committee representative and backup (although the municipality refused to recognize the election). A third factor was the support of the MAS: district leaders and the city’s four MASista municipal councilors all supported the effort to “take the sub-mayor’s office”.

This victory, however, proved to be short-lived and incomplete due to the resistance that Correa faced in office, and the MAS’ inability or unwillingness to continue offering support to the effort to keep Correa as sub-mayor. In April 2011, after being sub-mayor for 8 months, Correa said he regularly thought about quitting, because, “I don’t have the personnel I need to attend residents’ demands...I can’t contract anyone, that all happens in the central office...and they deprive me of things...they have meetings, and they only let me know 30 minutes in advance, and so I get there late and look bad, they are trying to crush me”. Correa’s inability to attend to demands generated frustration amongst NC presidents and residents, including MASistas who had supported



him in the past, but who now said “the sub-mayor isn’t doing anything”. Correa said he did not feel he was in a position to mobilize people, due to the fact that he was in office (a position that clearly differs from Julio Chávez in Torres, who regularly mobilized his supporters while he was in office), though he was frustrated that MASista NC presidents were not mobilizing on his behalf. In May 2011, after serving less than a year, Correa was told in a letter from the mayor that he had been replaced by Jesus Alvarez, a man reviled by MASistas in District 8 due to his years of discriminating against them. Correa’s dismissal generated protests, but they were markedly smaller than the large protests that had forced the mayor to agree to Correa as sub-mayor the year before. After a few weeks the protests subsided, with Jesus Alvarez remaining as the new sub-mayor.

In contrast to its support for “taking the sub-mayor’s office”, the MAS provided little support for the protests against Correa’s dismissal. One reason for this appears to have been the party’s strategy at the time to gain control of Santa Cruz’s municipal council. Percy Fernandez had fallen out with some of the municipal councilors he was allied with. Sensing an opportunity, the MAS leadership initiated negotiations with rightwing municipal councilors to gain control of the municipal council. Local MAS leaders said that this strategy had come from Evo Morales himself, although I could not confirm this as a fact. One result, however, was that the party seemed decidedly less willing to support confrontational tactics at the grassroots level. Additionally, its alliance with a rightwing municipal councilor, Desiree Bravo, said to be an ally of Jesus Alvarez, likely precluded the MAS from going after Alvarez in District 8.

The same day that Eduardo Correa was replaced as the District 8 sub-mayor, Percy Fernandez also replaced the sub-mayor of District 12. This occurred because this sub-mayor, who had been appointed by the mayor a number of years before and had previously been loyal to the mayor, joined with dissident NC presidents in the district and opposed the mayor. This led to a similar struggle to what had occurred the year before in District 8, with NC presidents from District 12 mobilizing a large protest, with over a hundred people the first several days, in front of City Hall, demanding that the mayor revoke his decision to replace their sub-mayor. This struggle differs from what occurred in District 8, however, because it was led by former supporters of the mayor.

Lorenzo Justiniano, a MASista former NC president from District 12 and the district’s Oversight Committee representative during the first several years of Percy Fernandez’s second period in office, explained the unusual alliance that had formed in the current struggle. According to Justiniano, in years past “we [MASistas] couldn’t even enter the sub mayor’s office for meetings before. They would physically remove me from the meetings. [He shows himself holding onto a bench]. Women would come and pick me up, as I held on. And Fidel and Iver threatened me on the phone, telling me not to come to the meetings”. At the time we spoke, Fidel and Iver, two district leaders, were leading the mobilization to reverse the mayor’s decision to replace the sub-mayor. Previously, however, Fidel and Iver “were with the mayor”, said Justiniano, a fact confirmed by Fidel and Iver themselves as well. Justiniano explained that, “Until last year we [MASistas] were in permanent opposition and they [those loyal to the mayor] controlled the [district] Union of Neighborhood Councils...but then they came over to our side, and we form the majority now...the other side now only has 15 Neighborhood Councils at most, out of 80, and we now have more than 50” (Interview with Author).

This struggle lasted several weeks but was ultimately unsuccessful. The protest

started on a Monday morning in front of City Hall. On Tuesday afternoon, municipal police and security forces arrived, telling those present to disband or face arrest. Justiniano said, "People are somewhat fearful and say 'they're going to injure us'". Due to this, the protest at City Hall was disbanded, but a smaller protest continued for several weeks outside the District 12 sub-mayor's office. After several weeks this protest had petered out considerably. During one of the final meetings before the protest ended, an NC president commented that he thought they should give up, saying, "We need a new patron". This statement indicates the limited horizon of possibility the protesters felt existed at this time. They did not see a possibility of democratizing their district in a meaningful way. Instead, they simply hoped for a new patron whom they could support and gain benefits from.

An important factor in the failure of the protest in District 12 was the lack of support provided by the MAS. Those leading the protest were not MASistas, at least initially. As discussed already, they were former supporters of the mayor. After the protest started, however, they were regularly referred to as MASistas. Perhaps in the spirit of making a virtue of necessity, the protesters decided to ask the MAS for help. These requests, however, went unheeded.

These struggles for democracy show the instability of technocratic clientelism. As discussed throughout this chapter, this regime serves to keep democracy at bay, with citizens excluded from decision-making power and from resources. This exclusion, however, generates the struggles for democracy just recounted. A critical factor for understanding the different outcomes of the two struggles just discussed (in District 8 and 12) is the support of the MAS. In District 8 in 2010 the MAS provided critical support, which helped lead to the district's first democratically chosen sub-mayor, who promised and attempted to govern not on behalf of one faction but for all residents in the district. The MAS' diminished support over time allowed this victory to be reversed. The MAS' lack of support for the struggle in District 12 was one of the factors that doomed the struggle to failure. This suggests that while technocratic clientelism may generate struggles for democracy, unless these struggles enjoy political support they are unlikely to succeed. This support is particularly critical in a context like Santa Cruz, where the dominant classes have historically been quite strong and well organized, while the popular classes have been weak and disorganized. The MAS' lack of robust support in these cases reflects the party's local and national political strategy of demobilization in favor of parliamentary politics (including insider horse trading).

## CHAPTER 5

### EL ALTO: ANARCHO-CLIENTELISM

El Alto is a case of anarcho-clientelism, a society-led regime that combines an anarchic system of governance and clientelistic politics. This regime is characterized by robust social mobilization, multiple, conflicting sources of popular input into decision-making, and institutional and political ineffectiveness. The disorderly nature of this regime has generated a top-down attempt to impose order.

El Alto's anarcho-clientelistic regime is a product of long and short-term socioeconomic and political processes. El Alto's rapid urbanization since the 1960s – and the chronic poverty and infrastructural challenges accompanying the city's rapid, unplanned growth – is an underlying source of the mix of protest, clientelism and poor administration that has characterized El Alto for decades and persists through the present. The specific configuration of protest, clientelism and administrative ineptitude that has prevailed in El Alto since 2006, when anarcho-clientelism came into being, is due to the confluence between the city's historical pattern of development and the uneven effects of the October 2003 revolutionary uprising (which was repeated on a lesser scale in May-June 2005). The 2003 uprising demonstrated the formidable strength of El Alto's civil society, and helped lead to Evo Morales' 2005 election as president, but it did not lead to the creation of an effective system of institutionalized participatory planning in El Alto. This is because the insurgent mobilization of October 2003 and May-June 2005 was not translated into electoral support for a Left (or Right) pro-participation party. As a result the clientelistic links between civic associations, parties and the local state were reconstituted and have remained largely intact. Anarcho-clientelism is the result of combining this clientelistic system with El Alto's increasingly mobilized civil society.

From 2010 to 2015 the MAS, a Left party that rhetorically supports participatory democracy and effectively implemented local-level participatory reform in the Chapare in the 1990s, governed El Alto. Surprisingly the combination of a (seemingly) pro-participation Left party in office and a mobilized civil society did not lead to effective participatory reform in El Alto, with anarcho-clientelism persisting. Notably El Alto's MAS administration focused not on expanding but on *restricting* popular participation in decision-making as part of its effort to establish "order" vis-à-vis civil society, which administration officials viewed as too powerful. This highlights how the interaction of national and local politics shapes parties' local governance strategies. While the MAS' strategy in El Alto appears surprising in light of the party's participatory rhetoric and historical support of participation, this strategy follows the party's national-level shift from 2002 on, away from extra-parliamentary popular mobilization and robust participatory governance and towards electoral and parliamentary politics.

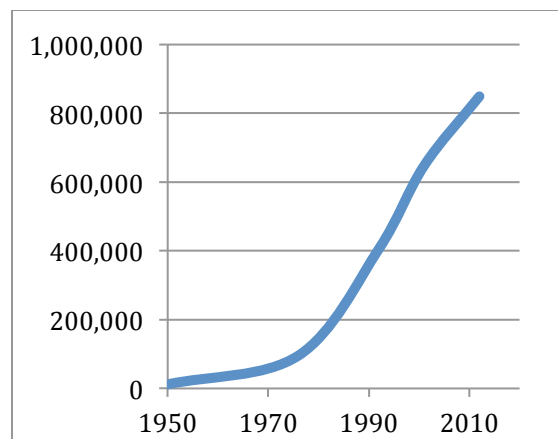
To situate the discussion of anarcho-clientelism, this chapter will also analyze El Alto's previous four political regimes between 1950 and the mid-2000s: a radical populist regime, an authoritarian regime, a neopopulist regime and an anarchic (non) regime.

#### SOCIOECONOMIC STRUCTURE

Like Santa Cruz, El Alto has been profoundly transformed over the last half century through rapid urbanization and economic and political change. In 1950 El Alto was a politically marginal outlying neighborhood of La Paz, Bolivia's capital (which lies

in the basin beneath El Alto), with a population of just 11,000. Between 1950 and 2002 El Alto experienced phenomenal population growth of 8.2% per year, making it the fastest-growing city in Bolivia (see Figure 6). Most of this growth occurred from the 1970s on, when hundreds of thousands of peasants from the surrounding countryside and thousands of ex-miners moved to the city. El Alto became an autonomous municipality in 1988, and held direct elections for mayor and municipal councilors in 1989. This gave residents greater control over local political decision-making and significantly enhanced El Alto's importance in the eyes of regional and national political party leaders. El Alto's limited resources, however, which stems both from its residents' poverty and its political-fiscal subordination to La Paz (in terms of tax collection; see below), has posed a major challenge to the city's ability to meet its daunting, ever-growing needs. Since 2003 El Alto has assumed critical importance in terms of national-level politics. This is due to the city's highly developed civil society and its strategic location. All major highways leading out of La Paz pass through El Alto. This has facilitated its residents' ability to shut down La Paz through road blockades, a tactic that has been used to great effect on multiple occasions (since 1781) to pressure the national (and previously colonial) state.

**Figure 6 Population of El Alto, 1950 - 2012**



Sources: Arbona and Kohl (2003); 2012 Bolivian census data.

El Alto's geography – its proximity to and position vis-à-vis La Paz, and the ease of extending the city's borders outward, since El Alto is perched on the edge of the immense plateau of the Andean highlands (the *altiplano*) – has also made it an important commercial and industrial center. On a daily basis high quantities of commodities pass through El Alto, which serves as a conduit to the Chilean Pacific coast, the Peruvian *altiplano* and internal destinations (the Bolivian *altiplano*, valleys and lowlands). El Alto boasts an immense open-air market, held on Thursdays and Sundays in the *16 de Julio* neighborhood, and a smaller but still quite large daily market in the bustling southern zone of *La Ceja* (the eyebrow) just above La Paz; in these markets everything from produce and clothing to technological goods, auto parts, cars and more are bought and sold. El Alto is one of Bolivia's main centers of industrial manufacturing, boasting over 5,000 production units (Webber 2011b: 189). There are a few large industries in El Alto, including a Coca-Cola bottling plant, a tannery and factories producing wooden doors, plastics and woven goods (ibid: 191). 98% of El Alto's production units, employing 59%

of the city's industrial workforce, however, are small or micro enterprises (ibid: 189).

Commerce (including hotels and restaurants) and industrial manufacturing are the largest sources of employment in El Alto. Other significant sources of employment are construction, transport and communications, and social and community services (ibid: 190). Construction and transport and communications employ very few women, and manufacturing is a predominantly male activity, while commerce employs more than twice as many women as men. In addition to working in El Alto, thousands of *Alteños* (residents of El Alto) work in La Paz as day laborers, domestic workers, street vendors and workers in the bustling inter-city transportation industry (Arbona and Kohl 2004: 261). The vast majority (with estimates suggesting approximately 70%) of employment in El Alto is in the informal sector (Webber 2011b: 191), which provides the lowest pay, longest hours and no benefits (healthcare, pension, unemployment) or job security. As in the rest of Bolivia, the prevalence of informal employment in El Alto grew during Bolivia's neoliberal period (ibid.). Webber (2011b: 191) categorizes 93% of El Alto's economically active population as working class, a figure that includes self-employed workers (41% of the EAP), manual laborers (22%), non-manual laborers (21%), as well as domestic workers and non-remunerated family laborers (9% together). Owners, bosses and independent professionals make up the remaining 7% of the city's EAP (ibid.).

In addition to holding precarious forms of employment, most *Alteños* live in precarious housing. As of 2001, 93% of *Alteños* lived in substandard housing lacking one or more basic necessity such as gas, water or electricity; 77% lived in simple adobe housing; 37% lacked access to toilets; and 70% lived in poverty (Webber 2011b: 188-89). These figures make clear that El Alto is an overwhelmingly poor city and a relatively egalitarian city, although scholars note an incipient process of bourgeois class formation as a result of the city's growing trade in used clothing from the US (Gill 2000: 43, cited in Webber 2011b: 191). The structure of El Alto's economy, in terms of the poverty of its residents and the predominance of informal employment, has resulted in a limited tax base for the municipal government. Attempts to generate more revenue by increasing residents' taxes have been met with fierce and violent resistance on multiple occasions (e.g. 1997, February and September 2003). In 2003, El Alto's tax revenue was one-third that of neighboring La Paz (Arbona and Kohl 2004: 263), despite the two cities' relatively equal populations (with El Alto surpassing La Paz in population in the mid-2000s). The difference between El Alto and La Paz is particularly stark in terms of taxes generated from local revenue, with El Alto collecting one-sixth the amount collected in La Paz, and investment, with El Alto earning a quarter what La Paz earns (ibid.). One of the main reasons for El Alto's lack of local tax revenue is because "Bolivian law requires businesses to pay taxes where they are incorporated and have their administrative offices, regardless of where they do business. Remarkably, most factories located in El Alto pay their share of corporate municipal and value added taxes only in La Paz" (ibid.).

El Alto is not only Bolivia's poorest and most contentious city, but also the country's most indigenous city. In 2001, 81% of El Alto's residents self-identified as indigenous, with 74% identifying as Aymara, 6% as Quechua and one percent as other indigenous or Afro-Bolivian (Webber 2011b: 188). The salience of indigenous identity is visible in politics and everyday life in El Alto. During the 1990s, the neopopulist party CONDEPA appealed directly to *Alteños'* Aymara identity, a strategy that allowed the party to stay in power throughout the decade, despite a less-than-spectacular

administrative record in office (see below). During the October 2003 uprising indigenous liberation and class struggle (towards socialism) were interwoven in protesters' "combined oppositional consciousness" (Webber 2011b: 260). Alteños also express their indigenous identities through architecture, clothing, food and language, with Aymara and (to a lesser extent) Quechua spoken in many neighborhoods. The salience of indigenous identity in El Alto is due to multiple factors: perhaps above all the racism that Bolivia's indigenous majority has faced for centuries, and the political and cultural resistance this has generated; another important factor is the strong links between El Alto and surrounding rural communities, where indigenous practices and traditions have played a vital role in everyday life and in political and social movements.

#### INTERACTION OF HISTORICAL LEGACIES AND NATIONAL POLITICAL CHANGE: FROM RADICAL POPULISM TO ANARCHO-CLIENTELISM

Between the 1950s and the present, El Alto has had five political regimes, which differ in class base, political-ideological project and state-society relations. The transition between regimes is due to national political change and local politics and class struggle.

##### *Radical Populism*

From 1952 to 1964, El Alto, still a marginal neighborhood of La Paz, was incorporated within La Paz's radical populist regime. This urban regime was closely linked to (and can be seen as an expression of) the national radical populist regime led by the MNR. In addition to the MNR's far-reaching links to workers and peasants, the party exerted effective control over the urban-popular sectors. In El Alto the MNR established what Quisbert (2003) refers to as "single party clientelism". This system was used by the MNR to establish control over neighborhood councils in El Alto, the first of which were formed in the 1940s and 1950s. Alteños had played a key role in the April 1952 Revolution, alongside miners and factory workers, and following the revolution El Alto's importance increased considerably (Quisbert 2003: 42). During this time, neighborhood councils assumed importance as intermediaries linking residents to the state. The pattern of protest and clientelism that shaped El Alto over the next half century (and continues through the present) took form during this time. Protests led by neighborhood councils succeeded in extracting a number of small concessions from the state in the early 1950s, such as the installation of public lighting, construction of school modules and small-scale social works (ibid.). The MNR established control over the councils, which facilitated the distribution of food provided by the state during periods of scarcity, and also provided residents access to the rapidly expanding public sectors, with Webber (2011b: 66) noting reports suggesting there was a fourfold increase in civil service jobs between 1952 and 1956. A key feature of this period was the establishment of a relatively extensive welfare state in Bolivia, known as the "State of '52", which lasted through the 1980s, when it was actively dismantled during the neoliberal period.

##### *Authoritarian Rule*

In El Alto military rule transformed the nature of state-society relations. Single party clientelism continued but in a transformed and weakened form as neighborhood councils were cut off from direct access to the state. In the face of state repression protest declined (Quisbert 2003: 43). The combination of a rapidly growing population and the

challenge of securing access to resources through either protest or clientelism led to a substantial build-up of unfulfilled demands in El Alto by the end of the 1970s (ibid.).

These demands exploded in the late 1970s, with mobilization – for democracy and basic goods – increasing as military rule unraveled. El Alto’s neighborhood councils joined with workers and peasants unions in calling for an end to dictatorship. In 1979, a Federation of Neighborhood Councils (FEJUVE) was formed in El Alto. This occurred because of “the growth of the population and basic needs associated with this growth” (Quisbert 2003: 45). FEJUVE played a key role in the pro-democracy struggle and also articulated the needs of the city’s residents. The organization possessed a significant mobilizational capacity, which was expressed through marches, mass rallies, hunger strikes, road blockades and other tactics (ibid: 46). According to Quisbert, “The neighborhood organization apparently developed at the margins of any political influence because the state was not perceived as a legitimate authority” (ibid.).

### *The Struggle for Municipal Autonomy*

The 1982 restoration of democracy did not lead to a lessening of popular mobilization. The COB, wary of its experience with the MNR following the 1952 Revolution, demanded the right to co-govern with the UDP and pushed the government to implement a radical agenda that would move the country towards socialism. There was also extensive mobilization by the urban-popular sectors in La Paz and El Alto centered on an economic crisis that originated in the late 1970s (in large part due to the cronyism of the Banzer dictatorship, and the tremendous state debt this led to) and worsened in the early 1980s. El Alto’s neighborhood movement engaged in more than 80 instances of collective action during the three years of UDP rule (1982-1985) against the lack of goods and rising prices (Quisbert 2003: 46). FEJUVE also led a series of escalating collective actions pushing for municipal autonomy. In 1984, FEJUVE scored a partial victory when its president was named El Alto’s district mayor (ibid.). In 1985 El Alto was granted city status (having been a district of La Paz prior to this) and in 1988, following mobilizations led by FEJUVE, El Alto became an autonomous municipality, with “El Alto’s autonomy [being] the most important political demand of the 1980s” (Quisbert 2003: 62). In addition to social mobilization by residents this victory was made possible because of the political calculations of La Paz-based political elites, who worried about the strain that El Alto’s growing population would present for La Paz’s fiscal resources and the electoral threat El Alto’s residents could pose (Arbona and Kohl 2004: 262).

### *Neopopulism*

Between 1989 and 2003 El Alto had a neopopulist regime, characterized by populist discourse extolling the downtrodden and valorizing indigenous (and specifically Aymara/Andean) culture and identity, multi-party clientelism (which differs from single-party clientelism in several important respects), limited protest, political effectiveness and institutional ineffectiveness. Neopopulism is similar and different from classical (and radical) populism. The similarity is that, like classical populism, neopopulism involves personalistic leadership and populist rhetoric that appeals directly to the “people” and specifically the popular sectors, as a marginal group (though often not as a class). The difference, which the use of “neo” signifies, is that unlike classical and radical populism

neopopulism is characterized by less of an attempt to organize and mobilize the popular classes through the construction of new, more or less durable, institutional forms, such as party structures or civic associations (linked to parties and the state) (see Roberts 2006). Roberts (1995) and Weyland (1996) use the term neopopulist to refer to Latin American parties (and political leaders) in the 1990s that combined populist rhetoric and style (i.e. personalistic leadership) with support for neoliberal economic policies. This use does not accurately describe neopopulism in Bolivia in the 1990s, given that one of Bolivia's two neopopulist parties, CONDEPA, was rhetorically strongly opposed to neoliberalism, with the other, UCS, expressing ambivalence towards neoliberalism (Mayorga 2002). El Alto's neopopulist regime was established and led, through the 1990s, by CONDEPA (*Conciencia de Patria*) a neopopulist party founded and led by Carlos Palenque, a popular radio and television host, who died suddenly in 1997.

CONDEPA's electoral rise and success was made possible by local and national political shifts. An essential precondition was the establishment of local democracy in the late 1980s. CONDEPA's rise and performance in office was also closely linked, in a largely negative way, to Bolivia's transition to neoliberalism. Bolivia's transition to neoliberal was, somewhat paradoxically, led by the three traditional parties associated with state-led developmentalism (in its democratic and authoritarian incarnations): MNR and MIR, both of which were traditionally center-left and the rightwing (and over time more center-right) ADN, which was established by former dictator Hugo Banzer in the 1980s. The social discontent generated by neoliberalism, which achieved its most notable success, ending hyperinflation in 1986, by plunging Bolivia into a recession, with unemployment and poverty increasing substantially (Webber 2011b: 118), translated into decreasing support for traditional parties in Bolivia. As shown in Chapter 1 (see above), support for MNR, MIR and ADN declined precipitously during the 1990s.

The rise of CONDEPA and another neopopulist party, UCS (which was strong in Santa Cruz but less so in El Alto and La Paz), in the late 1980s and 1990s underscores the fragility of the neoliberal project, which produced limited growth, while increasing poverty, precarity (of employment and everyday life) and generating rising social discontent. Neoliberalism also severely, and quite intentionally, weakened the traditional means of resistance of the working class, in particularly the formerly mighty COB, which was decimated in the late 1980s through the privatization of Bolivia's state-owned mines, the dismissal of tens of thousands of miners and repression of working-class resistance (e.g. the defeat of the 1986 COB-led "March for Life" and the jailing of union leaders). The decline of traditional parties and working-class organizational forms facilitated the rise of neopopulist parties, which were able to successfully articulate popular discontent with neoliberalism in a way that, while quite challenging to the increasingly-discredited political elite, posed relatively little challenge to economic structures of domination.

CONDEPA was intimately bound up with the fortunes of its leader, Carlos Palenque, who rose to fame in the 1970s and 1980s as the immensely popular host of several radio and television programs that catered to working-class Aymara migrants in La Paz and El Alto (Mayorga 2002: 98), with Palenque acting the role of the godfather (*compadre*) who would come to the rescue of the needy. Palenque's entrance to politics came after the national government temporarily closed his media outlets (which Palenque owned) in 1988, provoking massive popular protests. Palenque launched his political career after this, coming fourth in the 1989 presidential election and third in 1993,



“constituting the principal reference point for opposition to the government and structural adjustment” (ibid: 99). Despite his anti-establishment and anti-neoliberal rhetoric, Palenque was not beyond supporting traditional parties when it was politically expedient; e.g. after the 1989 election, Palenque offered his support to Jaime Paz Zamora of the MIR (ibid.).

Palenque’s discourse was squarely aimed at the popular classes, as the following quotes make clear: “There has almost always been a lack of appreciation of the poor classes. So that these sectors have been seen as marginal not only by the governments but also by the press itself.” (quoted in Mayorga 2002: 113). Palenque spoke of establishing an “alternative [means of] communication...open to all” (ibid.). Speaking of his role as a godfather, Palenque said, “[The godfather is] a person identified with the popular sectors, who knows their anxieties and concerns, who knows their problems... This is the miracle of Tribuna Libre [his radio program]. In addition to being a therapy of venting for the people, it was a means of analyzing everyday problems that arose... If you like, the godfather is converted into a priest” (ibid: 114). Palenque also appealed specifically to indigenous identity, saying, “We’ve brought a communitarian conversation of Quechuas and Aymaras to electronic media communication” (ibid.). Palenque also expressed his opposition to “any form of colonialism or neocolonialism, including cultural and ideological” (Mayorga 2002: 225). This critique of colonialism, and racism towards the indigenous, was connected to a critique of neoliberalism. Palenque argued that “neoliberal policies...are characterized by scorn for the value of human life, of health, nutrition, education and employment” (ibid: 226). It is important to note that Palenque’s valorization of Aymara and indigenous culture and symbols was made possible by the Katarista movement of the 1970s within rural unions. This movement, which takes its name from Tupac Katari, the leader of the 1781 uprising, marked an attempt to revalorize indigenous culture and assert rank-and-file control over peasant unions: it was specifically aimed against the racist mestizaje project of the MNR in the 1950s and 1960s (Mayorga 2002; Rivera 2003).

CONDEPA’s success was built on its ability to successfully interpellate Aymara migrants in El Alto by valuing their indigenous identity, which mainstream parties had denied or denigrated, providing immediate solutions to small problems of everyday life, and identifying with the struggles and difficulties generated by neoliberalism. From 1989 until 1999, CONDEPA dominated political life in El Alto. It won each mayoral election from 1989 until 1999 with the following percent of vote: 57.7 (1989); 32.9 (1991); 57.7 (1993); and 49.2 (1995). In 1999, it lost with just 19.6% of the vote, finishing in second (Mayorga 2002: 341). CONDEPA also retained control of El Alto municipal council during these years. In 1989 it won 7 of 11 council seats with 65% of the vote (Quisbert 2003: 64). In 1991 its vote total declined to 36%, with UCS coming in second with 27%: this gave CONDEPA 5 of 11 seats (ibid: 65). In 1993, CONDEPA won a huge majority, securing 9 of 11 seats (ibid: 66), and in 1995 it won 6 of 11 seats with 69% (ibid: 67).

During its time in office, CONDEPA made a concerted effort to exert control over civil society, directing its efforts towards the two most important civic umbrella groups in El Alto, the Federation of Neighborhood Councils (FEJUVE) and Regional Workers Central (COR), as well as the *Asamblea de la Alteñidad* (Assembly of Alteño-ness) a civic grouping that formed in 1992 and was never fully institutionalized but played an important role in the city during the 1990s (Quisbert 2003). One of the key consequences

of CONDEPA and other parties' penetration of civil society – a strategy developed with an eye to winning elections, as well as controlling the population – was the loss of autonomous mobilization capacity on the part of these organizations. According to Quisbert (2003: 69): “For a considerable length of time FEJUVE lost its capacity to maintain its function as an organic civic structure, and the effects of this were felt in a context of splitting of the political space”. The “splitting” referred to is the loyalties that specific civic leaders, Neighborhood Councils, unions and federations gave to different political parties. At times this led to the formation of multiple, competing leaderships of the same organization: for example in 1994 the Federation of Small Merchants had two directorships: one loyal to CONDEPA and one to UCS (Quisbert 2003: 69).

Despite CONDEPA's popularity and electoral success, the party was unable to recreate the single-party clientelism that existed in the 1950s and 1960s under the MNR. There are two reasons for this. First, at a national and regional level multiple parties enjoyed significant followings in the 1980s and 1990s, with no party winning a presidential election by a majority during this time. In El Alto, other parties continuously sought to increase their influence within civic associations, with some success. Secondly, the material basis for single-party clientelism was destroyed by neoliberalism: while the MNR was able to offer followers access to state employment, this was not possible for CONDEPA or other parties in the 1980s and 1990s due to the reduction of state employment. The most important consequence of these differences was that multi-party clientelism was much less stable. Quisbert (2003: 76) discusses this difference: “The most general characteristic of prebendal entourages [meaning citizens connected to parties and seeking benefits] was their instability: in every campaign they can change their political affiliation if they don't receive the minimum satisfactory benefits”. The benefits provided were also much less than in single-party clientelism: rather than stable jobs, party followers might be given small articles of food or clothing. The instability of state-society relations, and specifically civic associations' ephemeral links to multiple parties, would prove to be a lasting characteristic in El Alto.

CONDEPA included support for “participatory democracy” as one of its three pillars (Mayorga 2002: 226), but the party was run in a highly undemocratic fashion, with Palenque selecting party candidates for office and switching out any leaders who he felt might challenge his leadership, a practice that led to regular turnover of mayors and councilors in El Alto, despite the party's continuous hold on municipal office for ten years. In 1996, at the party's first and only internal congress, Palenque's wife, the mayor of La Paz and a rising political star, challenged Palenque's authoritarian leadership, with her supporters calling for party democracy. Palenque responded directly to this challenge by saying, “We won't permit chaos, much less anarchy. Here there are no consultations, here there are instructions, Condepistas must be like soldiers, you give them a responsibility and they have to fulfill it. You all have seen that CONDEPA is an organization that is almost military” (quoted in Mayorga 2002: 135).

Palenque's personalistic, authoritarian leadership of CONDEPA appears to have contributed to the party's poor administrative record in office in El Alto. The party's focus followed Palenque's style as a “godfather”, aiming to provide immediate solutions to “friends” and followers, in exchange for loyalty, without touching upon the broader issues causing these problems. This political style, with its focus on reciprocity, directly appealed to Aymara cultural practices. Judging by the electoral success of CONDEPA it

was successful in one sense. But studies of the CONDEPA years are very critical. A 2002 study of El Alto concludes that “CONDEPA [was able to stay in office] despite the fact that its administrative management was characterized by a high level of improvisation, completely disordered administration, misuse of resources and scant attention given to the needs of the population” (Aliendre 2002: 14). The study continues: “Mayors and councilors were switched [on Palenque’s orders] even as CONDEPA remained in control of the municipal government. The comptroller initiated charges but the Condepista municipal councilors [who as discussed controlled a majority of the council] did not implement the corresponding penalties. To this date, all of the ex-Condepista mayors have active judicial cases against them. The administrative machinery operated according to partisan, and in many cases familial, criteria” (ibid: 14-15).

CONDEPA experienced a severe crisis following Palenque’s death from a heart attack in 1997, losing the 1999 election in El Alto and disappearing as a political force following a poor showing in the 2002 presidential election. CONDEPA was replaced by the MIR, which won the race for mayor and 7 of 11 municipal council seats. The MIR’s mayoral candidate was Jose Luis Paredes, who was similar to Carlos Palenque in owning a television station and hosting a popular show. Paredes spoke of modeling himself after Palenque and Max Fernandez of UCS; his style of politics closely followed both leaders’, with Paredes valorizing ordinary people on his show and preparing El Alto for his eventual mayoral run by making donations of public works across the city all through the 1990s, a practice previously employed by UCS on a nationwide basis (Lazar 2007: 103). Paredes also ran in 1999 on an anti-neoliberal platform, despite eventually supporting neoliberal policies of increasing taxes on the poorest and free trade.

Despite drawing on Palenque’s style and paying public homage to him, Paredes drew a contrast between his administration, which (according to him) was efficient and modern, and the corruption and inefficiency of the CONDEPA years (Lazar 2007). It seems, however, that Paredes continued many of the practices that had taken place during the CONDEPA years. Paredes “initiated his administration with technical and innovative criteria” (Aliendre 2002: 15) but ran the administration in a personalistic and politicized manner. An example, provided by Aliendre (2002: 15) is that only 2 of 25 employees hired by Paredes in the administrative and financial departments were professionals and 23 of the 25 were brand-new to administrative work. Between 1999 and 2002 Paredes made four consecutive shifts to his head personnel due to public and party pressure and the inability of these officials to get along with the mayor, who was seen as autocratic (ibid.). Paredes established a reputation for getting works done, in particular highly visible public works throughout the city (Revilla 2009). However, as of 2002 (more than halfway through his first term in office) his administration had “meager levels of budgetary execution” and poor coordination between different administrative levels within the government, all leading to an inability to properly attend to the needs of the population (Aliendre 2002). Like CONDEPA, MIR leaders were rumored to have engaged in corruption while in office (Lazar 2007).

The multi-party clientelism established during the 1980s and 1990s continued during the Paredes years, with communities that had previously supported CONDEPA (via a system of corporate clientelism, where entire communities would support the same party or candidate) switching their allegiance to MIR in the 1999 election (Lazar 2007). As with CONDEPA, very minor goods (e.g. t-shirts, hats, food items) were given out

during campaign rallies; communities also mobilized in support of certain candidates in the hopes of receiving projects if that candidate took office (ibid.).

### *Anarchic Self-Rule*

In October 2003 El Alto was the epicenter of a revolutionary uprising that transformed El Alto and Bolivia. During the height of the uprising, El Alto experienced a period of anarchic self-rule, in which communities were self-governed through assembly-style participatory democracy, which took place in “neighborhood micro-governments” established throughout the city (Mamani 2005). During an October 2010 event commemorating the seventh anniversary of October 2003, held in FEJUVE, Carlos Arce, a Marxist economist who participated in the uprising, described what occurred: “The neighbors were the police, the mayors, they were the power, and they decided who could go where...this was the [people] governing themselves, surpassing the vision of the leaders...in El Alto a true revolution was taking place, in which the workers, who toil daily [...] they didn’t feel capable of governing, but they were doing it...they organized themselves, and they didn’t need doctors or lawyers...to govern”. The uprising ended with the resignation of Bolivia’s president, Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, who was held responsible for the death of 67 protestors and the injury of 400 (Webber 2011b: 225), and set the stage for Evo Morales’ 2005 election on an anti-neoliberal platform.

October 2003 (as the uprising is referred to by participants and scholars) occurred in response to the imposition of neoliberal policies at the national and local level, with the uprising made possible by political shifts that took place, both nationally and locally, between 2000 and 2003. The 1990s was a comparatively quiet decade in El Alto and across Bolivia in terms of social mobilization due to the disarticulation of trade unions (in particular the miners’ union) and the cooptation of emerging movements, e.g. the neighborhood movement, through clientelistic networks and “neoliberal multicultural” state reforms which promoted limited forms of popular participation (e.g. the 1994 Law of Popular Participation) and indigenous inclusion (Postero 2006). The erosion of traditional forms of class-based resistance was partially offset by the emergence of new forms of identity-, territorial- and class-based resistance in the 1990s, such as the cocalero movement based in the Chapare, a lowland indigenous movement, and, towards the end of the 1990s, the re-emergence of militant peasant unionism in the altiplano.

The 2000 Water War in Cochabamba marked the emergence of a national protest cycle that lasted through 2005. At the same time as the Water War, protests erupted in the altiplano over a similar measure to privatize water in the region (Webber 2011b: 168). In May 2000 El Alto was the sight of significant protests as well, with residents marching for the creation of a public university in the city and attacking and setting fire to City Hall (Mamani 2005: 36). More protests occurred in El Alto in April 2001 over a plan to privatize water in the city (ibid: 37). These episodes of collective action set the stage for an even bigger mobilization in February 2003, when residents in El Alto and La Paz rejected the national government’s imposition of new tax measures (ibid: 41). El Alto’s City Hall was attacked for a second time, with Mamani (2005: 41) reporting that, “The people argued that the administration of the mayor of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (MIR), José Luís Paredes, had not been good up to this point”. The February 2003 mobilization left 33 dead in El Alto and La Paz and is significant because it reveals the extent to which the link connecting civic associations and ordinary citizens

to political parties had fractured. During the mobilization, protesters burned the El Alto offices of *all* the major governing parties: the MNR, MIR, ADN and UCS (ibid: 41-42).

The destruction of this link between civil and political society, which underpinned the system of clientelism in operation in El Alto during the 1990s and early 2000s, was an essential precondition for the October 2003 uprising. This is because the clientelistic links between parties and civic associations – FEJUVE, COR and other federations and individual neighborhood councils and functional unions – was one of the main causes of the intra- and inter-organizational divisions that plagued El Alto prior to this (and subsequently as well; Mamani 2005: 38) and had inhibited collective action (Quisbert 2003). The (temporary) erosion of clientelistic state-society relations allowed for the intra- and inter-organizational unity that underpinned October 2003 (Mamani 2005).

In September 2003 mobilization grew in El Alto and throughout the altiplano in response to a series of specific and general grievances. In August El Alto's mayor, José Luís Paredes, introduced measures (known as *Maya y Paya*) designed to increase taxation on house ownership and construction. FEJUVE and COR organized two civic strikes against this measure, the first on September 8, and the second on September 15-16. This led to its abrogation by the mayor. Simultaneously, there was organizing in the altiplano, by the national peasant union federation (Confederación Sindical Unica de Trabajadores del Campo Bolivia, CSUTCB), against a government plan to ship Bolivia's natural gas to the US via Chile and for the release of a peasant accused of murder (unjustly in the eyes of his many supporters). Protest throughout the altiplano escalated following a state massacre of protestors on September 20 in the town of Warisata. CSTUCB leaders in El Alto continued a hunger strike in effect since early September. FEJUVE and COR launched a third civic strike on October 8. This generated significant state repression in El Alto, which became the center of conflict over the next week and a half, with the city invaded by military troops and defended by its residents. This is the period in which the neighborhood micro-governments discussed above were established.<sup>67</sup>

There are several indicators of the anarchic character of the October 2003 uprising, with anarchic self-rule (or anarchy) understood not as chaos but a system of decentralized direct democracy that is not coordinated "from above" through political parties, umbrella civic organizations or state institutions. During the uprising El Alto's neighborhood micro-governments served two basic functions: a military function of territorial defense and a political function of coordinating non-military decision-making relating to the provision of basic goods, in particular food and first aid. Military-type activities included the construction of road blockades and the control of movement within neighborhoods, with residents detaining anyone unknown within a neighborhood to protect against police infiltration; during the uprising neighborhood leaders were often sought out by military and police forces. Neighborhood micro-governments also exercised control over hours in which stores and pharmacies could be open. Pablo Mamani (2005: 102) quotes a neighborhood council president on how this worked:

In these days we were converted into a small government (like) we we're saying: what we did to close all the stores, how we put out orders that they should only attend people during certain hours. That alcoholic beverages not be sold; that the people we're really united, that the stores, and the pharmacies too, attend to the people. Because of all this, I think that in this moment yes we we're a government in the zone. We had

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<sup>67</sup> This account draws on Webber (2011b) and Mamani (2005).

to care for children and the elderly. And I think that we we're a government, unexpectedly revolutionary, in this moment, right? And the leadership of the neighborhood councils didn't decide everything. The leadership didn't do everything, but rather it was the people ourselves who demanded that we hold meetings and it was us who carried out what was planned; because there [in meetings] we came to conclusions, we made determinations and finally we evaluated what we had done.

This quote highlights a point emphasized in nearly all accounts of October 2003: that ordinary residents of El Alto played a crucial role in decision-making during the uprising, alongside and at times instead of established leaders.

This decision-making occurred throughout the city in a highly decentralized manner. FEJUVE and COR played an important role in the uprising in terms of setting the overall agenda – the demands for the halt to the sale of natural gas to Chile, for a constitutional assembly and from mid-October on for the resignation of Sanchez de Lozada – and calling for the three civic strikes. During the uprising itself, however, “FEJUVE, COR and the leadership of the street vendors’ union were not authorized to meet with the government. As a result the leaders had to follow and comply with the mechanisms of action and collective decisions of the neighborhoods and residents” (Mamani 2005: 100). During the uprising Jesús Juárez, a priest in El Alto, was asked by the government to intervene with the leaders but was unable to do so. The reason, according to Juárez, was that, “There’s not even anyone to speak with in El Alto, every head of a neighborhood is a little king [reyezuelo], everyone is demanding Goni’s head” (Mamani 2005: 105). The lack of party influence over El Alto’s residents and civic associations has already been discussed. Additionally, as should be clear, the government lacked any influence whatsoever during the uprising itself, having lost all legitimacy as a result of the escalating state violence that led to dozens of deaths in the city.

The entire city was involved in the uprising, with different groups playing different roles. Youth, and in particular young men, a group that had, until this time, played relatively little role in civic associationalism and/or (formal) politics in El Alto, played a key role, especially in military-type territorial defense. Youth had been active in the struggle of preceding years to create an autonomous public university in El Alto. Neighborhood leaders – presidents of neighborhood councils and zone/block leaders – also played a key role, though due to the heavy military presence many residents without previous leadership experienced were heavily involved in decision-making. Ex-miners, rural and urban indigenous activists (especially those connected to the Katarista movement), students, the unemployed and street vendors also played important roles (Mamani 2005: 110). The assembly-style participatory democracy through which decision-making occurred during the uprising drew on two traditions: indigenous ayllus, a form of collective decision-making practiced in the altiplano since the eighteenth century (Thomson 2003) and the assembly meetings of the miners’ unions (Mamani 2005). This highlights how the uprising drew on the strong connection between El Alto and surrounding rural areas (where most residents were from and maintained links to) as well as Bolivia’s tradition of militant trade unionism.

### *Anarcho-Clientelism*

The profound shift in power relations within El Alto that occurred during October 2003 had important, but uneven, effects on El Alto’s subsequent development. During the uprising the balance of power within El Alto shifted decisively from the local and

national state (both of which had maintained a tenuous but important form of control in the past) to civil society, and in particular to ordinary citizens and grassroots leaders, who controlled decision-making and pushed the established leadership forward. This dynamic, of the grassroots pushing ahead of the leadership, which Alteños refer to as “the bases overtaking the leaders” (los bases rebasan los líderes), has been repeated on several occasions since October 2003: most notably during the May-June 2005 uprising, which closely resembled October 2003 (and led to a similar outcome: the resignation of Bolivia’s president), and the December 2010 “gasolinazo”, in which tens of thousands of residents in El Alto, La Paz and other cities took to the streets and forced the Morales administration to reverse its sudden decision to rescind fuel subsidies.

There have also been countless small- and medium-scale mobilizations in El Alto since 2003. Neighborhood councils, street vendors’ unions, parents’ associations, transportation unions, the student federation, FEJUVE, COR and other unions and federations have marched, blockaded, struck and used other protest techniques to press local and national authorities to meet their demands. These demands are for more resources (for particular neighborhoods, districts or the city as a whole), the right to name officials to specific local government offices (e.g. the parents’ federation has mobilized to have one of their members control educational affairs in El Alto, and other associations have done so with respect to other local positions), higher bus fares and (in opposition to this) the maintenance of low bus fares, and other issues of concern to local citizens.

These protests are frequently effective, in the sense of getting local or national authorities to agree to some or all of the protestors’ demands, or pushing the local state to act as a mediator between competing demands (see discussion of the conflict over bus fares below). As discussed below, in the aftermath of October 2003 FEJUVE and neighborhood councils succeeded in forcing the local state to create a more transparent system of participatory planning, in accord with the 1994 Law of Popular Participation. All of this demonstrates the strength of civil society in El Alto, leading to the characterization of its current (anarcho-clientelistic) regime as society-led. Yet, while civic associations and ordinary citizens have been effective in providing *input* into the local state (i.e. they have forced the local state to listen to their demands and agree to meet many of these demands), they have been unable to create an effective system whereby the local state actually meets these demands in its *output*. As in the past, there is thus a major and persistent gap in El Alto between popular demands and what the local state delivers. There are at least three reasons for this gap: El Alto’s lack of revenue and the persistence of corruption and clientelism, which leads to a pervasive “leakage” of state resources, severely inhibiting the ability of the local state to meet residents’ needs.

The concept of anarcho-clientelism provides a way to make sense of how politics and state-society relations in El Alto shifted and, in crucial ways, remained the same in the wake of October 2003. The clientelistic system linking civil society to political society and the local state was reconstituted in the wake of the uprising. In this sense there is continuity with the past. Since 2003, however, civil society’s ability to influence decision-making appears to have grown in El Alto. This influence can be considered anarchic for several reasons. First, as in October 2003 (albeit to a lesser extent), ordinary citizens and civic associations (operating at the neighborhood, district and citywide level) are able to exert significant influence, and in certain areas of decision-making outright control, over political decision-making. Second, this influence occurs in a decentralized

manner, through protest, participatory planning that reaches down to the neighborhood level, clientelism and corruption. Third, there is a lack of effective coordination between the multiple, competing sources of popular input (via protest, participatory planning, clientelism and corruption) and between popular input and government output. Finally, there is a significant degree of political and civic instability due to infighting within and between civil society, political society and the local state. El Alto's political regime can be considered anarchic in both senses of the term: as a system of decentralized direct democracy that is not (effectively) controlled or coordinated from above and as chaotic.

El Alto's anarcho-clientelistic regime came into being between 2003 and 2006 and has remained in effect through 2015. Given that clientelism was thoroughly undermined in October 2003, with the parties underpinning El Alto's system of clientelism suffering a major blow (in terms of lost legitimacy) from which they never recovered, what explains the fact that clientelism was reconstituted following the October 2003 uprising and has persisted through the present? This question can be broken into two more specific questions. First, what explains why José Luis Paredes, whose action as mayor of El Alto (the imposition of the *Maya y Paya* forms) was one of the sparks that led by the October 2003 uprising, was re-elected in the December 2004 mayoral election by an absolute majority? Second, what explains the persistence of clientelism from 2010-2015 when the MAS (a left party that supported the October 2003 uprising, albeit in a limited capacity, and pursued the "October Agenda" of nationalizing hydrocarbons and holding a constitutional assembly while in national office) governed El Alto?

Paredes' re-election as mayor in December 2004, with 53% of the vote, a 7% increase from the 46% he received in 1999, reveals a key limitation of the October 2003 uprising: the failure to channel the radical energy that fueled the uprising into a viable political project aimed at institutionalizing the assembly-style participatory democracy that occurred in the neighborhood micro-governments. One reason this did not occur is that youth, who played a key role in October 2003, have been unable to move into civic leadership positions within El Alto. Abraham Delgado is a young man who is a *Katarista* (in favor of the radical decolonization of the state), participated in October 2003 and stayed active in a radical *Katarista* group called *Jovenes de Octubre* (Youth of October). According to Delgado, after the uprising corrupt older leaders, who became leaders not for reasons of social justice but "as a means of social advancement", remained in control over neighborhood councils. These leaders "closed the door" on youth like Delgado. As a result there was a continuation of the corruption and clientelism that characterized neighborhood councils in El Alto in the period before October 2003 (e.g. 1990s and early 2000s). According to Delgado, civic associations – specifically FEJUVE, COR, the street vendors' union, El Alto's public university and the federation of urban peasants [campesinos urbanos] – control the selection of candidates for political office in El Alto. Delgado said that it is impossible to be elected or even become a serious candidate for office in El Alto for anyone who is not in the leadership of one of these organizations. Youth, and in particular radical youth (who pose the greatest threat to established, older corrupt leaders) are thus sidelined from electoral politics in El Alto.

Delgado's analysis, which is consistent with the views of many neighborhood leaders and activists in El Alto, helps explain the lack of a radical left party in El Alto. This lack can be seen as one of the factors that facilitated Paredes' 2004 reelection. Paredes' victory was also made possible by the mayor's actions during and after October



2003.<sup>68</sup> At the height of the uprising, when it became clear that President Sanchez de Lozada would likely be forced from office, Paredes offered support to the mobilization, with members of his party (which at the time was very unpopular in El Alto) participating in strike picket lines in the city. After the uprising Paredes dissociated himself from MIR, which lost legitimacy due to its association with neoliberalism and the government, and formed a new party, Movimiento Plan Progreso (Plan Progress Movement). Over the course of 2004, with an eye to the December election, Paredes completed a number of highly visible public works (e.g. parks, gardens, plazas, bridges) throughout the city and spent a significant amount of money on publicity (with the municipal advertising budget quadrupling from 2000 to 2005). In this publicity Paredes claimed credit for “giving” these works to residents; publicity also included expressions of gratitude by residents towards the mayor for these “gifts”. Finally, Paredes coopted discourse and symbols of “resistance” associated with October 2003. His administration erected billboards proclaiming that, “El Alto is not a problem for Bolivia, it’s a solution”, and, “We’ve already warned you, the Aymara man is better than the System”. Paredes also constructed a Che Guevara monument and used images of the Andean cross (Chakana) and flag (Wiphala) as a way of associating his administration with October 2003.

Paredes left office in January 2006 to become La Paz’s prefect (a position similar to a US state governor), with Fanor Nava, a municipal councilor with Paredes’ Movimiento Plan Progreso, elected by municipal council (which Paredes’ MPP controlled) to take over as mayor. It was under Nava that anarcho-clientelism was consolidated as a regime. According to neighborhood leaders, municipal officials and scholars in El Alto Nava, who came to office with less legitimacy as a result of being selected by municipal council rather than winning a popular election, worked hard to consolidate control over neighborhood councils after taking office, and was able to do this through the establishment of clientelistic links. However, Nava faced a high degree of protest in office, with reports that he was regularly “kidnapped” by residents involved in protests, who would release the mayor after he agreed to meet their demands. Neighborhood leaders also say the system of participatory planning described below came into being in 2006, when Nava was in office.

Anarcho-clientelism continued during the MAS administration of Edgar Patana, a former street vendor and leader of the COR who was mayor of El Alto from 2010 through 2015. The Patana administration’s focus on restricting, rather than expanding, participation, as a means of trying to establish order vis-à-vis civil society, lays bear the contradiction between the MAS’ participatory rhetoric and governing practice. This underscores an important difference between Venezuela under Hugo Chávez and Bolivia under Evo Morales, with the MAS engaging in comparatively little non-electoral mobilization of the popular sectors, and for most of its time in office actively demobilizing and disorganizing civil society as a means of (1) avoiding the escalation of confrontation with the Right and (2) gaining greater control over civic associations. Webber (2011a) traces the MAS’ shift to the period following the 2002 election, which Evo Morales came close to winning. Between 2002 and 2005 the MAS moved away from its more radical rhetoric of the past in an effort to court middle-class urban voters. The party also sought to steer the dramatic mobilizations occurring in Bolivia during this time towards electoral politics, with the party providing little key leadership in the 2003 or

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<sup>68</sup> This account draws on Revilla (2009).

2005 gas wars. The consequences of this strategic shift for El Alto are discussed below.

**Table 9 Political Regimes in El Alto, 1950 – 2015**

<b>Regime Type</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Class Base</b>	<b>Elections</b>	<b>Institutionalized State-Society Relationship</b>	<b>State-Society Relations</b>
<b>Radical Populist</b>	1952-1964	Middle Classes Workers (EA) Peasants Urban-popular classes (EA)	Yes	Yes	Mobilization from above and below Single-party Clientelism
<b>Authoritarian Rule</b>	1964-1982	Military Business Agrarian Elite	No	No (very minimal in cities)	Repression Clientelism (secondary)
<b>Neopopulism</b>	1989-2003	Popular sectors Professionals (marginal)	Yes	Yes	Multi-party Clientelism Protest
<b>Anarchic Self-Rule</b>	Oct 2003 Jun 2005	Popular sectors (youth, grass-roots leaders)	No	No	Decentralized Direct Democracy
<b>Anarcho-clientelism</b>	2006-2015	Popular Sectors Professionals (marginal)	Yes	Yes	Clientelism Protest Ineffective Participation

#### EL ALTO'S ANARCHO-CLIENTELISTIC REGIME

Four main features characterize El Alto's anarcho-clientelistic regime. The first is the high degree of organizational and mobilizational capacity within civil society. There are well over a thousand civic associations in El Alto, and likely several thousand if cultural and religious organizations are included as well. The two most important associations are FEJUVE and COR. FEJUVE is the umbrella organization that represents El Alto's 600-plus neighborhood councils. FEJUVE's purpose is to help El Alto's residents, a mix of homeowners and renters (with both groups being very poor), obtain greater access to basic needs, relating above all to infrastructure. Samuel Rios, a former FEJUVE secretary of youth and the director of Radio FEJUVE, explains that, "FEJUVE has always fought to have more projects in El Alto. This is its only struggle... and why it fights the government and City Hall." COR represents more than 250 trade unions in the city: street vendors, bakers, factory workers, butchers, etc. Historically, its agenda has focused on work-related issues, though COR has regularly acted in support of a broad agenda, which overlaps to a considerable degree with that of FEJUVE. There are many other associations in El Alto as well, with some of the most important being the University Student Federation (FUL) and the parents' association, which wage struggles focused on public education. Additionally there are numerous neighborhood, district and union-linked cultural, dance, musical and religious associations. Civic parades in El Alto are a major event lasting from morning to evening, with a countless stream of civic

associations parading down the city's main thoroughfare. As discussed below, El Alto's civic associations engage in regular collective action. The direct and indirect influence these associations have over formal and informal politics and decision-making in El Alto is what leads anarcho-clientelism to be classified as a society-led regime.

The second is the multiple, conflicting sources of popular input into decision-making in El Alto. As detailed below, popular input occurs in four different ways: protest, participatory planning, clientelism and corruption. From residents and neighborhood leaders' accounts it appears that the same individuals and organizations engage in all these forms of input at different times, depending on which is most effective. This multiplicity of sources of popular input leads to problems. For instance, officials confronted by protest may agree to new demands, leading demands made through other channels (e.g. participatory planning) to be postponed. Clientelism and corruption, in turn, may lead to a further reshuffling of administrative priorities.

The third feature is institutional ineffectiveness, in particular the lack of an effective link between popular inputs and government outputs. Data presented below on El Alto's poor record of budgetary execution substantiates this point. The reason for this relates to the persistent gap between ever-increasing social demands and the limited resources to meet these demands. El Alto's poor record of implementation cannot, however, simply be chalked up to the lack of fiscal resources. This is, of course, a contributing factor. But what matters is not El Alto's overall amount of resources, but the city's ability to link its resources to its demands. A more effective system for coordinating demands and less "leakage" through clientelism and corruption would help lead to a more effective link between popular inputs and government outputs, even with El Alto's limited resources. Additionally, protests against tax increases are one reason that El Alto has struggled to increase its tax revenue. This highlights the need to take a holistic "systems" (or regime) view as opposed to seeing particular features in isolation.

Finally, anarcho-clientelism has proven to be politically ineffective. There are several indicators of this. First, neither of the two mayors who presided over El Alto's anarcho-clientelistic regime was re-elected. Second, there is persistent conflict in El Alto within and between civil society, political society and the local state. As discussed below, there are major conflicts in FEJUVE, rivalry between FEJUVE and COR, and conflict between the MAS and FEJUVE and the MAS and the municipal government.

### *Extent of Popular Control*

There is greater popular control over political decision-making in El Alto compared to Santa Cruz but less than in Torres and Sucre. Twenty percent of El Alto's total annual budget is decided through participatory planning, which accounts suggest has existed in its present form since 2006. In 2011 84% of El Alto's budget of 616 million *Bolivianos* (87.9 million US dollars) was programmed for investment (totaling 518.4 million *Bs*), with participatory planning covering 24% of El Alto's investment budget.

El Alto's participatory planning system begins with a "Pre-summit", which takes place before district summits and is attended by the mayor, municipal staff, municipal councilors and leaders from El Alto's key civic associations (FEJUVE, COR and a few others). The 2010 Pre-summit, which I attended, was a two-day event held at a resort-style hotel in the Yungas, a semi-tropical region four hours outside of El Alto. A municipal official told me this far-away location was selected "so the mayor won't get

kidnapped”, with this referring to a tactic (mayoral kidnapping) where residents refuse to let the mayor leave a gathering (thus “kidnapping” him) until their demands are agreed to. The Pre-Summit determines rules for district summits, held in El Alto’s 14 districts, where the mayor and officials present their budget and inform neighborhood council (hereafter NC) presidents how much money their zone will receive that year, the amount depending on census population. During the four 2010 district summits I attended, El Alto’s Director of Planning made a point of telling NC presidents they would receive limited funds because Patana faced a nearly 600 million *Bolivianos* deficit (attributed to kidnappings of ex-mayor Fanor Nava), almost equaling the city’s 2011 budget of 616 million *Bolivianos*. In the four district summits I attended another planning official admonished NC presidents to “follow the rules” and not bribe officials, which municipal staff say residents regularly did to ensure timely project approval and implementation. Following the district summits, neighborhood assemblies are held, convoked by NCs, in which residents discuss and then vote on priorities for their zone. Once these projects have been approved, construction companies (which residents and neighborhood leaders say are often owned by district leaders, from the Oversight Committee or the Sub-mayor’s office) are given contracts to implement them.

Non-budgetary issues are also subject to a degree of popular control in El Alto. This occurs in three ways. The first is protest, which as discussed has historically been one of the main ways residents in El Alto have obtained access to basic needs (Sostres and Sandoval 1989; Quisbert 2003). In El Alto protest occurs through marches, street blockades and “mayoral kidnapping”. [Need data on whether there’s been an increase in the number of protests since 2003] Officials from El Alto mayor, Edgar Patana’s administration say that mayoral kidnapping was regularly used against Patana’s predecessor, Fanor Nava. According to these officials this was one of the factors that led to the large fiscal deficit Patana inherited when he took office. Interviews with others in El Alto suggest that protests against Nava increased significantly during his final year in office. During Patana’s first months in office, neighborhood leaders said that they would limit their use of protest, or refrain from it entirely, in a “honeymoon” period to give Patana a chance to prove himself. If, however, the mayor was unsuccessful in terms of meeting their needs, these leaders promised to resume protests. Even during the honeymoon period Patana faced a number of protests; for instance, in his first month in office, there were protests by neighborhood councils in three of the city’s fourteen districts with residents and neighborhood leaders upset by the sub-mayor that Patana had chosen. The election of district sub-mayors is a second form of popular control over non-budgetary issues. This is limited, however, in two ways. First NC presidents, and not residents, are involved in this process. And second, they do not directly choose a sub-mayor but instead vote for three candidates, with the mayor choosing amongst these three. Observers of El Alto say that in practice mayors of the city almost always chose a sub-mayor they feel they can control, regardless if whether this sub-mayor received the most votes from NC presidents. The third form of popular control over non-budgetary issues is tripartite bargaining in which the local state mediates in disputes involving more than one civic association. An example of this occurred in early 2011 (during my fieldwork) when El Alto was shut down by competing protests by FEJUVE and transport unions over a proposed bus fare increase. This led to negotiations involving City Hall, FEJUVE and transport union leaders over whether and how much to increase fares.

Turnout for El Alto's system of participatory planning has been consistently high. In October 2010 I attended 4 out of the 14 district summits: 2 for urban and 2 for rural districts. Each of the summits was well attended and it appeared likely (based on counts of the number of neighborhood council presidents in attendance) that attendance was close to 100% in each of the summits. I attended a neighborhood assembly in 2010 as well, which was attended by 30 residents of a zone occupying a few blocks. According to residents, NC presidents and municipal officials these base-level assemblies are generally quite well attended and deliberative (see discussion below).

### *Quality of Popular Control*

Decisions regarding projects to be included in El Alto's budget, on the basis of the city's system of participatory planning, occur in neighborhood assemblies. As mentioned above, residents, officials and NC presidents concurred in the view that these assemblies are deliberative, and that decision-making is done by residents participating in the assemblies, rather than neighborhood or district leaders or municipal officials. This was the case (i.e. decision-making was deliberative and residents were the ones who made the decisions) in a 2010 neighborhood assembly I attended in District 4 of El Alto. During the assembly there was discussion amongst the 30 residents (and NC president) present, with a debate about whether to use the zone's modest allocation of budget funds to pave a small section of road or install a sidewalk in the zone. I arrived as this discussion was ending but was told it had lasted an hour. Beatrice, a resident I spoke with just after the assembly, said that several residents favoring street paving had argued that it would reduce problems related to rain and dust. She said that those favoring the sidewalk countered that paving the road was too costly and that they could not do a good job since with the funding they had they would be unable to use asphalt, which lasts longer. Beatrice herself had argued that, "We need the sidewalk because when it rains the water gets into the houses". Beatrice and the NC president both said that the pro-sidewalk arguments had carried the day, and by the end of the assembly there was unanimous support to pave the sidewalk rather than the road section.

District summits, which occur prior to neighborhood assemblies, do not involve decision-making. There is, however, discussion in these assemblies between NC presidents and municipal officials. Since the content of the discussions that took place in the district summits I attended in 2010 relates to the issue of political effectiveness it will be discussed in the section on that below.

El Alto's participatory planning system is highly inclusive in terms of race and class. As mentioned the vast majority of Alteños are indigenous and from the popular classes. This is particularly true of newer, more peripheral districts, where neighborhood councils tend to be most active. Nearly all participants in neighborhood assemblies and district summits are indigenous and from the popular classes. There is less inclusivity in terms of gender at the level of leadership. In district assemblies less than 10% of the NC presidents were women, and discussions with numerous NC presidents and residents suggests that this pattern holds within FEJUVE and neighborhood councils overall. Interestingly, a woman was elected FEJUVE president at a biannual congress in June 2010. This indicates a degree of openness within the organization. However, this president, Fanny Nina, was ousted from office four months later, due to political conflicts with the MAS. During her time in office she faced opposition from men. For instance,

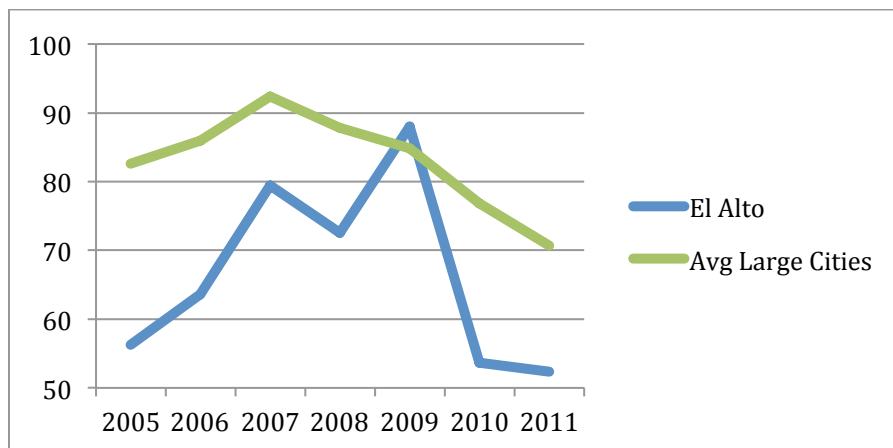
following a visit to the hospital, men in an assembly (discussing the possibility of removing Nina from office) laughed when it was reported that she was in the hospital due to “menstrual problems”. A number of men commented that she should not be in office. There is greater participation of women at the neighborhood level. In the neighborhood assembly I attended there were women and men present, with women speaking during the assembly, seemingly at the same rate as men. Additionally, within El Alto indigenous traditions relating to joint leadership by husbands and wives, considered complementary and equal, is an important feature. However, the evidence suggests that women in El Alto face barriers to full participation in decision-making due to their inability to access leadership positions.

Access to decision-making in El Alto’s system of participatory planning appears to be relatively inclusive in terms of political views. NC presidents, who play an important role within this system, express a range of political views. Residents’ views are also quite pluralistic and there is no evidence to suggest that residents holding particular views are prevented from attending neighborhood assemblies. Youth and residents holding more radical, overtly ideological views (e.g. Katarismo, Indianismo, Marxism, socialism) appear to face hurdles in terms of becoming neighborhood (and thus higher-level) leaders. In part this is due to the fear that overly radical views will lead to antagonism between a neighborhood councils and City Hall; Revilla (2009) reports that this fear led residents to replace an NC president whose views were seen as being “too radical” and contestatory, with this president refusing to allow colors associated with the mayor’s political party to be prominently displayed in a ceremony held for a resource transfer to the zone from City Hall.

During the 1990s and early 2000s access to resources was tied to political views, and specifically to partisanship through clientelism. As other authors have discussed (see e.g. Quisbert 2003; Lazar 2007) prior to elections communities would “bet” (in the sense of making a speculative collective judgment) on the party they thought would win the election. If this bet was correct – meaning the community supported the winning candidate – they would receive preferential access to resources. If they chose the wrong party, they would have difficulties obtaining resources. Evidence suggests that this practice has continued into the present. In January 2011 I spoke with Elias Segara who, the first time I met him a few months before (in November 2010) was the district 4 Oversight Committee representative. This was no longer the case in January, with Segara explaining that he had been removed by people affiliated with the MAS, commenting, “They [the MAS] want to dominate everything”. Segara says he was seen as too close to a sub-mayor whom the mayor had replaced. According to Segara, “The sub-mayors say that they have to be with the mayor, or they won’t get projects from him”. As discussed in the section on political effectiveness below, there is strong evidence that the MAS in El Alto did “want to dominate everything” within civil society, as Segara contended.

### *Institutional Effectiveness*

**Figure 7 Budgetary Execution in El Alto and Large Bolivian Cities (avg.), 2005-2011**



(Average is of Bolivia's 6 largest cities: Cochabamba, El Alto, La Paz, Oruro, Potosi, Sucre and Santa Cruz)

Source: <http://vmpec.economiayfinanzas.gob.bo/EjecucionPresupuestariaVarios.asp?t=GM>

The most significant weakness of El Alto's anarcho-clientelistic regime is likely the weak relationship between popular inputs and government outputs. As in the other municipalities, this can be measured more objectively, using El Alto's budgetary execution rate, and subjectively, based on residents' and leaders' perceptions. As Figure 7 shows, from 2005-2011 El Alto had a below-average record of budgetary execution, compared to other large Bolivian cities. El Alto's budgetary execution rate plunged in 2010, and has remained weak since, lowering even further according to the most recent data available. As the discussion of El Alto's neopopulist regime shows the challenge of linking popular inputs to government outputs is not new in El Alto.

After taking office in June 2010, Edgar Patana promised to tackle the problem of budgetary implementation and reduce El Alto's significant backlog of unimplemented projects. Patana struggled to do this during his first year in office. In 2011, El Alto's budgetary rate fell slightly to 52%. El Alto's budgetary execution rate improved to 59% in 2012, which was the fourth highest rate of Bolivia's ten largest cities (La Razón 2013). But in 2013, El Alto's rate fell to 40%, suggesting that its problems have continued and in fact grown worse under Patana.

El Alto's difficulties with budgetary execution have to do with multiple factors. One is the municipality's limited fiscal resources. El Alto's 2010 budget was a third that of Santa Cruz's in absolute terms (616 million *Bs* vs. 1.9 billion *Bs*), with El Alto's per capita budget (726 *Bs*/person) roughly half Santa's Cruz's (1,296 *Bs*/person) and a third its neighbor La Paz (1,996 *Bs*/person).<sup>69</sup> As mentioned El Alto's lack of resources is partially due to the fact that businesses located in El Alto are physically registered, and thus pay taxes, in La Paz (Kohl and Arbona 2004). There have also been numerous successful protests against tax hikes: e.g. in December 1997 (Kohl and Farthing 2006: 138) and February and September 2003 (Hylton and Thomson 2007: 108-109). Another factor is the lack of administrative capacity in El Alto, a problem that dates back to the 1990s (and earlier) and has continued through the present; this problem is exacerbated by

<sup>69</sup> La Paz's population in the 2012 census was 764,617; its 2010 budget was 1,526 million *Bs*.

the fact that social organizations are usually strong enough to impose their own representatives for municipal offices. This means that a number of officials lack technical qualifications and have loyalties to their organization (which put them in office) more than the administration itself. Edgar Patana says that his predecessor, Fanor Nava “hired new functionaries without experience or commitment, which generated bureaucracy and corruption, which we have fought against with success” (*La Razón* 2012). Patana claimed that he had reduced this practice. But according to Patana’s own top advisors, the mayor remained close to the street vendors’ union, which he was a former leader of, and the problem of a lack of administrative capacity has continued.

The (apparent) prevalence of clientelism and corruption, with corruption defined as the private use of public resources, have also contributed to institutional ineffectiveness by generating significant leakage of state resources. Hard data on corruption is (by nature) difficult to obtain, but nearly everyone I spoke with at some length in El Alto (approximately 100 people including residents, neighborhood leaders, district leaders, academics, party officials and members and city officials) indicated that corruption was a significant problem in El Alto. Neighborhood Council presidents I spoke with estimated that between 50% (the minimum figure given) and 90% (the maximum estimate) of other NC presidents engaged in corrupt practices, such as retaining bags of cement meant for neighborhood projects. I was also told by residents, NC presidents and officials that it was common for district leaders (the sub-mayor, Oversight Committee representative and district leaders connected to FEJUVE) to obtain bribes of at least 10% from construction companies eager to be given contracts. Many said that these companies were often owned by the district leaders (or close relatives), further contributing to corruption and lowering the quality of infrastructural projects completed.

Just prior to the March 29, 2015 mayoral election a video surfaced of El Alto’s current mayor, Edgar Patana, receiving a stuffed envelope (which almost everyone believed contained a significant sum of money) from Fanor Nava, El Alto’s previous mayor.<sup>70</sup> The video was from 2008 when Nava was mayor and Patana was leader of COR. This video does not provide evidence that Patana was corrupt as mayor himself, but for many *Alteños* it appeared to give that impression, as the results of the 2015 election (see below) indicate.

### *Political Effectiveness*

Evidence from El Alto suggests that anarcho-clientelism is not a recipe for political success. El Alto’s anarcho-clientelistic regime was established during the administration of Fanor Nava, who was not elected directly but not took office in 2006 after winning a vote from his colleagues in El Alto’s municipal council after El Alto’s mayor, Paredes, was elected prefect of La Paz. Nava decided not to run in the 2010 mayoral race due to the challenge he experienced in his final year of office, when protest in El Alto led to a severe crisis of governability. Edgar Patana of MAS won the April 2010 election with 39% of the vote, a marked drop from the 84% that Evo Morales had achieved less than 6 months before in the December 2009 presidential election.

Patana’s time in office was marked by a high degree of conflict, which took place

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<sup>70</sup> The video is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETmHnv2WYfU> (accessed July 4, 2015)



on multiple fronts. Patana's relationship to his own party, the MAS, was itself subject to significant conflict, in part because of anger from "organic" party members (meaning those who had been members for many years) at the fact that Evo Morales selected Patana to be the party's 2010 candidate, despite the fact that Patana had not been a member of the MAS prior to this. There are several additional indicators of the strained relationship between the MAS and the Patana administration. In December 2010, during the "gasolinazo" (a protest over Evo Morales' decision to triple the price of gasoline), the offices of the MAS, FEJUVE, COR and City Hall were attacked by protestors. The leadership of the MAS in El Alto did not, however, come to the aid of City Hall, but instead attacked the gas increase. This angered Patana administration officials, who felt as though local party leaders should defend the city's MAS administration.

Patana administration officials said, "The MAS [in El Alto] are a bunch of *buscapegas*". "Pegas" are government jobs that are obtained through political patronage, with the derogatory term 'buscapega' meaning a patronage jobs seeker. To assess the validity of this charge I spent a month conducting daily participant observation with the MAS-El Alto. During this time I shadowed Pascual Arellano, the head of the MAS-El Alto. Nearly every day a group of party supporters would meet Arellano in the morning and then travel to municipal or regional government offices to enquire about the availability of "pegas", a term that was openly used by Arellano and others in the MAS. Arellano in fact carried a hierarchical list of party militants whom he was searching for jobs for. One of the reasons Arellano spent time doing this was that his leadership was challenged by several other MAS leaders in El Alto. To the extent that Arellano could deliver pegas to followers his leadership would be more secure. Over the course of several months I attended more than a dozen district and citywide MAS meetings in El Alto. In nearly every meeting the bulk of discussion focused on the search for "pegas". In March 2011 Arellano revealed, during a lunch with party members, a plan to, "break the [municipal] union". He said that if this occurred it would open up hundreds of pegas. This indicates that the image of the MAS-El Alto as a group of "buscapegas" appears to have been accurate during this period, and substantiates the claim that there was significant conflict between the MAS and the Patana administration.

The MAS' relationship with local civic associations in El Alto was also confrontational. From June to November 2010 the MAS orchestrated a campaign to change the leadership of FEJUVE. This occurred because in the June 2010 FEJUVE congress Fanny Nina, who was not a supporter of the MAS, was elected president, becoming FEJUVE's first woman president. Nina was critical of Evo Morales and led a series of marches demanding more resources for El Alto. According to a number of MAS members, the party worked hard to remove Nina from office. This campaign succeeded in November 2010, when a new president, who was less critical of the MAS (and City Hall), became FEJUVE president.

This conflict, however, took a toll on FEJUVE as an organization. Between September and November FEJUVE was split between supporters and opponents of "Fanny", as Nina was referred to. After she was removed from office, with a locksmith hired to change the lock on her office door, Nina continued to mobilize her supporters. Claudio Luna, the new president, only lasted in office until January 2011, when he was removed due to his perceived reluctance and slowness in criticizing the MAS and Morales during the gasolinazo. This led to a new president of FEJUVE, the third in as

many months, with the organization remaining mired in conflict.

During this period there was increasing criticism of Evo Morales and the MAS national government due to rising food costs. This led to marches by both FEJUVE and COR in a single week. Ongoing rivalry between the two organizations, with FEJUVE leaders upset at the fact that a COR leader (Patana) had been named the MAS' 2010 mayoral candidate rather than a FEJUVE leader, may explain why the two organizations did not coordinate their marches. Both organizations were trying to regain credibility in El Alto in the wake of the gasolinazo, which had led their offices to be attacked.

Patana's relationship with neighborhood leaders deteriorated over the course of 2011, due to their perception that his administration was performing poorly in terms of project implementation. In June 2011 Patana admitted that he deserved a "low grade" for his first year in office since at this point (midway through the year) his administration had executed just 16% of the 4,478 projects included in its 2011 annual operating plan. According to *La Razón* (2011), one of Bolivia's leading newspapers, during a June 2011 interview, Patana "acknowledged that the 2011 Annual Operating Plan (POA) was inflated, with a deficit of nearly 600 million *Bolivianos*, but he attributed this to resident pressure demanding 'their money' and 'their district projects', which are included in the budget despite the lack of funds". In July 2011 Carlos Lima, one of Patana's closest advisors, said the mayor felt "there could be serious problems if we don't have everything in order by next March". At this time, Patana was facing mounting criticism from FEJUVE and other civic associations. In July 2011, a FEJUVE executive council member said, "The mayor is still very weak because of the lack of project execution. In District 14 [his own], we've asked to hold a revocation referendum on the mayor".

Even at the beginning of his administration Patana faced dissent from neighborhood leaders in El Alto, due to their frustration with the backlog of unfinished projects left from the Fanor Nava years. During the 2010 district summits neighborhood leaders let Patana, and officials in his administration, know of their frustration, as the following comments from NC presidents at the District 4 summit show: "We work voluntarily, without pay...but the forms [required for projects] cost money to complete... we're creating more bureaucracy...I'd like an easier, more direct way to start projects"; "We should decrease bureaucracy...I ask that zones with no resources be given more"; "I have an avenue, and the paperwork, but don't have anywhere to go to get help...for 3 years this has gone on...when will it be approved? Never. When will we see improvements in the zones? Never...these resources are nothing...give us more"; "I'm a bit indignant with this proposal, where we have to have zonification [legally registering a new zone]...this means we won't be doing projects...if we're not doing projects, where are we going?"; "Unfortunately, we're worried...there is more paperwork, more bureaucracy...we [from] small zones ask that you help us Mr. Mayor...the big zones have [money] and can complete projects...With 4 to 5,000 [Bs] what can we do?" As these comments show, NC presidents were particularly critical of the limited resources and (in their view) burdensome bureaucratic procedures of participatory planning.

Despite facing criticism from many within El Alto, the MAS' strong showing in the October 2014 presidential election, with Evo Morales winning El Alto by a landslide, convinced civic leaders in the city that Patana could win the April 2015 mayoral election, and he became the MAS' candidate. Patana struggled throughout the campaign against Soledad Chapeton of the center-right Unidad Nacional. Following the revelation of the

video discussed above (showing Patana accepting an envelope that seems to be stuffed with cash from El Alto's then-mayor Nava) Patana's chances in the election diminished considerably. Chapeton defeated Patana by a wide margin – 55.5% to 31.6% - thus ending El Alto's first leftist government.

#### REGIME TRAJECTORY: THE PUSH FOR ORDER

In January 2011 posters appeared in El Alto and throughout the country showing Evo Morales in various poses (e.g. riding a tractor, meeting with people) with the MAS' slogan "Rule by Obeying the People" (Mandar Obediendo El Pueblo). The timing of these posters was not coincidental. In the wake of the December 2010 gasolinazo, which led Evo Morales to rescind the government's decision to raise the price of gasoline, the Morales administration was struggling to regain the confidence of civic associations, base-level MASistas and ordinary citizens. Large mobilizations over the next several months – by FEJUVE, COR and other associations protesting the rising price of food and the COB seeking increased wages for workers – would further test the government's relationship with civic associations and ordinary citizens in Bolivia.

One of the many "Ruling by Obeying" billboards was located just outside the mayor's office in El Alto. This poster underscored the irony of the fact that the city's MASista mayor, Edgar Patana (who like Evo Morales is a former social movement leader) was *not* governing in a participatory "ruling by obeying" manner. Participant observation and interviews with top Patana advisers revealed that the Patana administration was focused on finding ways to restrict rather than expand participation. In July 2011, Carlos Lima, a top Patana official, said the 2012 district summits "won't be so free as in the past. This year we're going to go in more prepared and have our own proposals, and not just let [neighborhood council presidents] come in [with their own proposals]". Other officials displayed similar views. For instance, in response to a question I posed about the Patana administration's plans for participatory planning, an official from the department of planning, the department responsible for facilitating district summits and participatory planning in El Alto, replied that, "Participation is important but right now the most important thing is to make sure that rules are put in place". Another official in the department spoke of the administration's need to "put our house in order", which in her view had to precede any new initiatives related to participatory planning (of which, to my knowledge, there were none).

The underlying reason for this view (viz. the need to restrict rather than expand participation) was the view, which seemed to be universal amongst Patana's top advisers, that civil society in El Alto had too much power. This led to what several advisers called "the thesis of the dictatorship of the social organizations", which held that El Alto's municipal government was subordinated by civic associations. The way to overcome this was by imposing order in the city.

## Conclusion

In much of the world democracy remains painfully unreal. Greece, the birthplace of democracy, provides a powerful recent example of this. In January 2015, Greeks elected a radical Left party, Syriza, to office. Syriza's goal of ending (or at the least softening) austerity enjoys overwhelming support from Greek citizens. Yet, in July 2015, in the face of tremendous pressure from its creditors in the European Union, Syriza opted to accept a harsh bailout that not only continued but increased austerity, in direct opposition to the repeatedly-stated preferences of the Greek people.

Many commentators have noted the parallels between the stringent conditions Greece has been forced to accept in order to unlock international funding and the situation faced by Latin American countries in the 1980s. At the time numerous Latin American countries were in desperate need of loans, to avoid defaulting on immense debts amassed in the 1970s (in large part due to Wall Street's eagerness to find profitable, but not necessarily sound, ways to recycle petrodollars; Gowan 1999). Like Greece today many Latin American nations faced a painful choice: default and become a global financial pariah or accept loans with strict conditions that effectively strip countries of a substantial degree of national sovereignty.

The results of this choice are well known. Latin American governments, including those led by (formerly) left-populist parties such as Venezuela's *Acción Democrática* and Bolivia's *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario*, were forced (as a condition of accessing much-needed international aid) to implement harsh austerity policies and adopt market reforms that opened their countries to foreign capital. Far from restoring growth and lifting up the poor, these policies condemned the region to a second "lost decade" in the 1990s (with the 1980s "lost" to the debt crisis) marked by low and in some cases negative growth and rising poverty and inequality. It is little wonder that support for democracy, which millions of Latin Americans had courageously fought for in the 1970s and 1980s (pitting themselves against repressive military regimes backed by the most powerful government in the world, the US), fell in many Latin American countries in the 1990s.

Neoliberal marketization fueled a countermovement for social protection (in line with Karl Polanyi's theory of the double movement) throughout Latin America. Over the last fifteen-plus years the region has experienced an unprecedented political Left Turn, in which Left and center-left parties committed to social justice, equitable development and deepening democracy (to varying degrees) took office in countries across Latin America. This generated hopes that democracy would become more real in the sense of generating a more egalitarian model of development and providing citizens more opportunities to directly affect the decisions affecting their lives through participatory institutions.

This dissertation examines the extent to which democracy has been made more real in the second sense, of providing citizens opportunities to directly influence political decision-making through participatory institutions, in cities in Venezuela and Bolivia. As such it offers a glimpse into whether and how one of the main goals of the Left Turn, deepening democracy, has been realized in two countries that have garnered a great deal of attention from scholars, activists and policymakers around the world. Theoretically the dissertation offers novel insights into participatory democracy and urban politics.

These insights stem from this study's unique research design, which is novel in two ways. First, this is one of the very few studies examining participatory reform in

cities governed by right-of-center parties. To my knowledge it is the first study that explicitly compares participatory reform in cities run by Left and Right parties. Second, this is one of a handful of studies examining urban participation in more than country. Venezuela and Bolivia were chosen because of their similarities and differences. Participatory democracy has been central in both countries, which are often treated as similar cases of Latin America's "radical Left". The character of political change in the two countries, however, has been quite distinct: in Venezuela it has been more top-down and state-led, while in Bolivia it has been more bottom-up and society-led.

By combining cross- and sub-national comparison this study's research design allows participatory reform to be compared along two axes: a Left-Right party-in-local-office axis and a state- vs. society-led national-political-change axis. This approach proved to be very fruitful, from a theory-generating perspective, since it yielded a doubly unexpected finding. Existing literature on participatory democracy and on Venezuela and Bolivia led to two hypotheses going into this research: first that participatory reform would be more successful in the two Left cases, and second that participatory reform would be relatively more successful in the two Bolivian cases. The results of my research differed from both of these hypotheses: participatory reform was relatively successful in the Left and Right Venezuelan cases and relatively unsuccessful in both Bolivian cases.

This doubly unexpected finding is theoretically generative because it cannot be adequately explained by existing theories of participatory success and failure. Existing scholarship suggests that two factors are particularly important to participatory success and failure: the character of local political society and of local civil society. According to the prevailing wisdom participatory success is most likely when a pro-participation party is in local office (for ease of exposition I will refer to this condition as political will), in a context marked by poorly institutionalized opposition parties, and vigorous, but not unconditional, support from a strong and autonomous civil society. In modular form, this can be expressed as follows: political will plus poorly institutionalized opposition plus strong and autonomous civil society greatly increases likelihood of participatory success.

The data presented above confirm the basic premise that participatory success requires political will. In Torres and Sucre the local incumbent party provided robust support for participatory budgeting. In Santa Cruz the local incumbent provided no support, and in fact inhibited, participatory planning. In El Alto the local incumbent provided limited support for participatory planning and openly speculated about finding ways to restrict popular input into decision-making.

My results, however, challenge three views that appear to be quite widespread amongst scholars of participation. The first is that political will requires having a *Left* party in local office. This assumption appears to be implicit in much scholarship on participation, and occasionally it is made more explicit (cf. Goldfrank 2011a: 265-66). The second is that political will can be explained by assessing purely *local* factors, in particular the character of the local incumbent party. The third is that political will is something that is either *present* or *absent*. These assumptions frequently go together, with many scholars arguing (implicitly or explicitly) that successful participation requires or is much more likely when a social movement Left party with an ideological commitment to participation (e.g. the Brazilian Workers' Party during the 1990s) comes to local office. When this factor is absent the chances for successful participation appear much less (Wampler 2007; Avritzer 2009; Baiocchi, Heller and Silva 2011).

My findings challenge each of these three views. This is particularly clear in Sucre, which is the most surprising of the four cases. In Sucre, a Right party implemented participatory budgeting in a robust manner, with citizens given near-binding control over thirty-five million US dollars, nearly half of Sucre's investment budget. This outcome is obviously not due to the presence of a pro-participation Left party in local office. To explain why Primero Justicia, the center-right local incumbent party in Sucre, provided such vigorous support for participatory budgeting requires looking at how the party's strategy was shaped by extra-local processes, specifically national political change. It also requires thinking about political will not as a dichotomous variable, which is present or absent, but as a dynamic process that comes into being (or does not) in particular circumstances. To fully understand the surprising outcome in Sucre requires looking at the dynamic interaction between Sucre's socioeconomic structure (as it has developed over the past fifty years), historical legacies of local state-society relations and national political change.

The second most surprising outcome of the study is in El Alto. Here the three factors that most scholars assume are likely to generate participatory success – a pro-participation Left party in local office, a weakly institutionalized opposition, and a strong and autonomous local civil society – appear to be present. Yet, the result was not robust participatory success, but weak, ineffective participation and a local state-led effort to further restrict popular input into decision-making. As in Sucre, to understand this outcome requires looking at how the local incumbent party's strategy has been shaped by extra-local and historical processes. The local governance strategy of the MAS, the Left local incumbent party in El Alto, was shaped by the party's national governance strategy, which shifted away from support for participatory democracy and popular mobilization starting in 2002, long before the MAS came to office in El Alto in 2010. The party's strategy in El Alto, which differs greatly from the robust participatory reform that occurred in MAS-run cities in the Chapare in the mid-1990s and early 2000s, appears quite surprising unless viewed in relationship to Bolivia's shifting national political context. To fully grasp the MAS's strategy in El Alto also requires paying attention to how national political change interacted with El Alto's socioeconomic structure and historical legacies of local state-society relations.

Torres and Santa Cruz appear, at first glance, to be less surprising outcomes. In Torres, a social movement Left party took office (in 2005) and implemented participatory budgeting in a very robust and thoroughgoing manner. In two ways, however, Torres departs from established wisdom about what leads to participatory success. First, prior to the implementation of participatory budgeting Torres' civil society was quite enmeshed in clientelistic relations, notwithstanding the existence of more autonomous social movements. In light of this, the vigorous success of Torres' participatory budget is not entirely expected, given that scholars have argued that the pre-existing character of civil society, in particular civic associations' capacity for autonomous mobilization, is a key determinant of how successful participatory reform will be (Baiocchi, Heller and Silva 2011; Wampler 2007). Second, the local incumbent party in Torres drew heavily on the ideology and institutional forms of Venezuela's national ruling party. In a sense Julio Chávez, Torres' mayor from 2005-2008, was merely fulfilling the MVR's program of participatory reform. In fact, this is precisely how Julio Chávez himself portrayed his actions, as the fulfillment of the ideals of Hugo Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution. Thus in

Torres, as in Sucre and El Alto, it is key to examine how national political change interacts with local factors (e.g. socioeconomic structure and historical legacies).

The failure of participatory reform in Santa Cruz is, in many ways, the least surprising outcome. Existing theory would predict this based on the fact that Santa Cruz was governed by a center-right party and has a weak and dependent civil society. This provides confirmation that participatory reform is, as other scholars have argued, quite unlikely to succeed when civil society is weak and dependent. The actions of the incumbent local party in Santa Cruz are, however, surprising in a few ways. First, Santa Cruz's mayor, Percy Fernandez, pursued participatory planning during his first period in office in the early 1990s. His failure to do so when he returned to office in 2004 can be explained based on the intersection between historical legacies, in particular the lessons Fernandez himself appears to have drawn from his first period in office (regarding the futility of participatory reform) and the changed national, and regional, political context from 2004 on. When Fernandez returned to office Santa Cruz elites had been displaced from their previous place of privilege within the national state. This was a major impetus for the regional autonomy movement, which shaped not only regional but also local politics. Thus, after returning to office in 2004 Fernandez allied himself with local and regional elites whom he had confronted (unsuccessfully) during his first period in office.

Santa Cruz also highlights an important feature found in all four cities: the surprising dynamics unleashed by different urban political regimes. The highly exclusionary character of decision-making in Santa Cruz fueled a weak but persistent struggle for democracy, led by citizens excluded from decision-making and benefits. The weakness of this struggle is, in large part, due to Santa Cruz's socioeconomic structure and historical legacies of the past, with elites occupying positions of economic and political authority. Civil society's weakness in Santa Cruz has also, however, been exacerbated by the actions of the MAS, which has opted to focus on parliamentary and electoral politics, rather than mobilizing and organizing civil society. Thus, as in the other three cases, national political change (in interaction with socioeconomic structure and historical legacies) has shaped the outcome found in Santa Cruz.

A second important argument made in this dissertation concerns the character of local civil society. As discussed, a weak and dependent civil society is likely to inhibit successful participatory reform. My findings, however, highlight the malleability of local civil society, in line with Baiocchi, Heller and Silva (2011). The findings also suggest that civic autonomy may be less important than previously thought. In the two most successful cases, civil society was far from autonomous vis-à-vis the national state and national ruling party. This did not inhibit successful participatory reform so long as the local incumbent party *did* enjoy a degree of autonomy from the national state and ruling party. Specifically, my findings suggest that the likelihood of participatory success is enhanced when the local incumbent party is institutionally autonomous vis-à-vis the national ruling party. Generally this means the local incumbent party is in opposition to the ruling party. This does not, however, preclude an incumbent party utilizing the ruling party's rhetoric and institutional forms. Additionally, in Torres, robust participation continued even when the local incumbent party was absorbed within the national ruling party. This is because this absorption complicated but did not end the local incumbent party's institutional autonomy vis-à-vis the national ruling party, with this autonomy built into local mobilizational practices honed over the previous four years.

The finding that participatory reform was more successful in the Venezuelan than the Bolivian cases challenges the view that participatory reform is more likely in contexts marked by bottom-up, society-led change (Bolivia) than top-down, state-led change (Venezuela). The findings do not suggest that top-down attempts to implement participatory democracy will always succeed. Nor do I argue that such attempts are likely to directly lead to successful local participatory democracy. Rather the findings suggest that in certain contexts, in particular countries with a legacy of clientelistic relations and a historically weak civil society, top-down support for participatory democracy appears to be a useful, and perhaps even necessary (though not sufficient) factor for local participatory success. Further, the findings suggest that when the national state shies away from promoting participatory institutions (as has occurred in Bolivia since Evo Morales took office) this can inhibit the likelihood of local participatory reform.

## PARTICIPATION AND URBAN POLITICAL REGIMES

One of the major contributions of this dissertation is to view participatory reform as part of the broader pattern of state-society relations established by urban political regimes. This helps broaden the discussion of participation, allowing for more interesting assessments of outcomes that go beyond simplistic distinctions between success and failure. Viewing participation as one aspect of an urban political regime draws attention to questions such as how important participation is within a regime and how participation fits with other aspects of the regime, in particular a regime's institutional and political effectiveness.

The four regimes described at length in the chapters above vary in terms of how central participation is and how participation relates to institutional and political effectiveness. It is difficult to draw sweeping generalizations from a study of four cities, but a few observations are in order. First, participation is clearly of much greater importance in Torres and Sucre than in El Alto and Santa Cruz. This is a strong indication that to understand urban political regimes they must be viewed in relation to national context. Venezuela's national context has made participation matter everywhere in the country, while Bolivia's national context has lessened the importance of participation.

My findings also suggest that successful participation is linked to institutional and political effectiveness. In Torres and Sucre there was significant popular control over decision-making, of a relatively extensive nature and high quality in both cases, and there was institutional and political effectiveness. This does not seem to be a coincidence. The link between successful participation and institutional effectiveness is likely due, at least in part, to the fact that successful participation brings many more citizens into the decision-making arena. Thus there are many more eyes on the local state, making it more difficult for political leaders and state officials to get away with corruption. The activation of citizens also makes it harder for political leaders to establish or re-establish clientelistic networks. Citizens involved in robust participatory institutions are likely to resist this effort. They are also likely to press for increased institutional effectiveness, as has occurred in Sucre.

In El Alto and Santa Cruz, where there is not successful participation this is less institutional effectiveness. In Santa Cruz this is likely due to the weakness of civil society, with citizens unable to mobilize against the state in a way that holds state



officials and political elites accountable. In El Alto there is much greater mobilizational capacity within civil society. This has not, however, led to institutional effectiveness. In fact, it seems to have undermined it, with protest leading a gridlock situation in which the local state, political society and civil society fight each other rather than cooperating. At least one reason for this is the vicious circle of protest-weak participation-institutional ineffectiveness. This has created a logic of confrontation, which further inhibits effectiveness. To break out of this loop would require a local party willing to try establishing a new logic. Torres and Sucre suggest that this is possible, but that it is less likely unless there is a major shift in Bolivia's national context, such that the MAS prioritizes the organization and mobilization of civil society.

There also appears to be an important link between successful participation and political effectiveness. The most successful case, in terms of participation, is Torres. This case is also the most impressive in terms of political effectiveness. The local incumbent party has survived two re-elections. And most impressively, it has survived a change in mayor, with Julio Chávez leaving office and his much less charismatic successor winning election and then winning re-election. Further, in each election the margin of victory has been greater. This is not definitive proof but it is strongly suggestive that this is a positive and non-coincidental relationship between robust participation and political effectiveness.

Sucre provides support for this argument, albeit in a more equivocal manner. As in Torres the incumbent party secured reelection, demonstrating what would seem to be a positive relationship between successful participation and political effectiveness. However, unlike in Torres this occurred with the same mayor. Further, the mayor's margin of victory decreased in his re-election. Precinct-level electoral data, however, suggests that the incumbent party has managed to increase its support in a number of popular class neighborhoods, where Chavismo has traditionally dominated and continues to prevail. Electoral data also suggest that participation may have hurt the party slightly in upper class neighborhoods. These data suggest that as in Torres there is a link between participation and political effectiveness but that it is class-specific. Participation helps parties gain votes amongst the popular sectors but may hurt the vote amongst elites. A further complicating factor is that in elections that are higher profile the incumbent party in Sucre has fared more poorly. Thus other dynamics, apart from the party's success in implementing participatory reform, are clearly at play.

In El Alto and Santa Cruz the lack of participatory success appears to be related to the lack of political effectiveness, although this is speculative since other factors are clearly at work. In El Alto the mayor was trounced in his re-election bid. Most likely this is due to the regime's institutional ineffectiveness, which I would suggest is related to the broader pattern of state-society relations. In Santa Cruz, the mayor has been re-elected several times, showing that participation is certainly not necessary to political effectiveness. In the most recent election, however, the mayor's margin of victory declined significantly. One possible explanation for this is the dissatisfaction that Santa Cruz's exclusionary political regime has caused amongst voters particularly in working-class neighborhoods.

## LOOKING BEYOND THE CASES

The findings presented are, of course, specific to the particular cases that were researched. However, the unlikely outcomes uncovered suggest that the theoretical

conclusions drawn from this study should not be seen as limited to these cases. The fact that participatory reform succeeded in both Torres and Sucre, despite the cities marked differences, points to the broader argument made about national context influencing local political processes. The same is true regarding Santa Cruz and El Alto.

Throughout Latin America, and in many other regions of the world, the processes discussed in these pages – marketization, political crisis, countermovements for social protection, local and national struggles in favor of and against deepening democracy, and efforts to push democracy beyond the political sphere to encompass socioeconomic structures as well – are present. To understand how these processes play out will require, amongst other things, paying attention to how socioeconomic structures, historical legacies of the and political change (at the local, national and global levels) play out.

### MAKING DEMOCRACY: AN ONGOING PROCESS

A final important point of this dissertation is the need to see democracy as an ongoing process, as something that is made, and can be unmade and remade. In each of the four cities, the urban regime in place is related to historical legacies of the past, and contains dynamic possibilities. It is thus useful to avoid thinking of these four cases as frozen objects that cannot change. In each case there are active, ongoing struggles. These struggles appear to be particularly shaped by the interaction between socioeconomic structure, legacies from the past and national political change. Additionally, the internal dynamics of regimes appear to play an important role in terms of generating contradictions and tensions within each regime. Thus in Torres, participatory democracy is linked to a struggle for socialism, which can be seen as a logical next step in the process of making democracy real (which does not, of course, make it an inevitable or even likely development). In Sucre, the limits of administered democracy have generated a push for participatory democracy. In Santa Cruz, the exclusions that are embedded within technocratic clientelism generate a struggle for democracy. And in El Alto, the contradictions of anarcho-clientelism have generated a push for control from above and weaker impulses seeking a more robust form of participatory democracy.

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## Appendix: Methods and Data

Ethnography facilitates understanding complex and/or counterintuitive social processes (Baiocchi 2005) and was my primary method of data collection. I spent five months in Torres, three in Sucre, three in Santa Cruz, and four in El Alto on multiple visits between 2007 and 2011. I also spent about a month in each country traveling to other cities and engaging in national-level research in the capital.

In all four cases a primary focus was on understanding how participation fit, or did not, into the local budget process. To do this I sought to trace the entire “chain of sovereignty” (Baiocchi, Heller and Silva 2011) from the first articulation of demands to binding budgetary allocations. I examined the actions and interactions of four sets of actors: the municipal executive, focusing on municipal institutions involved with participatory processes (especially participatory budgeting, or PB) and community-state relations more broadly; citizens involved, and not, with PB; leaders and members of civic associations, especially communal councils and neighborhood associations; and leaders and members of incumbent and opposition parties. I also collected data from national government institutions, NGOs, academics and local journalists.

In all four cities, I attended many civic meetings where neighbors discussed collective priorities. I also observed numerous district and citywide assemblies where municipal officials and ordinary citizens discussed and voted on PB proposals. In Torres I attended 12 of 17 parish assemblies during the 2009 PB cycle. I spent a month shadowing social workers from Torres’ Office of Citizenship Participation, which helps form communal councils and provides technical assistance for PB and non-PB activities. I attended Local Public Planning Council meetings during several phases of Torres’ PB, including a year-end meeting where the budget was approved (without significant changes). In Sucre, I observed 21 PB assemblies and PB-related meetings during the 2010 and 2011 PB cycles, a weekend PB reflection retreat with over 100 citizens, civic leaders, and officials, and various non-PB-related community meetings and trainings. I also spent several weeks shadowing zonal coordinators from Sucre’s Office of Community Affairs, which supports communal councils, neighborhood associations, and other civic groups. I met officials from Fundacomunal and other national institutions in both cities, and attended communal council and commune workshops.

In El Alto and Santa Cruz, I closely researched the activities of Neighborhood Councils (NCs) and the citywide Federation of Neighborhood Councils (FEJUVE), the key bodies empowered by the Law of Popular Participation to facilitate popular input into local decision-making. Additionally, Neighborhood Councils and FEJUVE play a key role in protest, a crucial, informal means through which citizens provide input into the state (particularly in El Alto). In both El Alto and Santa Cruz, I attended numerous Neighborhood Council and FEJUVE meetings and assemblies, and spoke with many Neighborhood Council and FEJUVE leaders and members, including a number of members of the FEJUVE-El Alto executive council. I also spoke to leaders and members of other civic associations in both cities, including street vendors’ unions, the secondary students’ association, and the Regional Workers’ Central (COR), the second most important civic association in both cities (after FEJUVE).

In El Alto and Santa Cruz I spent considerable time with officials from the planning and public works departments. In El Alto I established a close relationship with

several top aides to the mayor, whom I interviewed on repeated occasions during the mayor's first year in office (June 2010-July 2011) about issues such as budgetary execution, participatory planning and state-society relations. I attended participatory planning sessions in both cities, which were more extensive and organized in El Alto, where the city's fourteen districts hold annual district summits involving the mayor, municipal staff and the district's leaders and neighborhood council presidents. In 2010 I attended four district summits and a two-day pre-summit retreat with the mayor, staff, city councilors and FEJUVE, COR and other civic associations. In Santa Cruz, I attended several budget-related district-level meetings. I also interviewed members of both cities' Oversight Committees, a body composed of civic leaders, set up by the LPP to monitor local state actions, especially regarding participatory planning.

In all four cities, I observed numerous political party activities. In Torres, I attended weekly PSUV meetings for several months, and many party mobilizations, parades, and other events. I also observed assemblies bringing officials, activists and civic leaders together (e.g., a 2010 assembly on raising bus fares). I met a number of opposition leaders, activists and opposition-identified journalists.<sup>71</sup> In Sucre, I attended Primero Justicia and PSUV meetings and events in Chavista Salas de Batalla<sup>72</sup> and at a Chavista radio in Petare. I also participated in Chavista and opposition campaign events during the 2010 National Assembly election in Petare. In El Alto, my research focused on the MAS, which controlled the municipal executive and a majority of city council from April 2010 through March 2015. For a month I shadowed the MAS-El Alto regional director, attending meetings and accompanying party leaders and members on visits to local and governmental agencies, which were visited frequently in a search for patronage jobs for MAS activists. For two months I attended weekly MAS meetings in several districts. In Santa Cruz, I attended weekly meetings of the MAS, the largest opposition party in the city (and region), for three months and spoke to numerous party leaders and members. I interviewed leaders and members of right and center-right citizen groups', an important form of political organization in the region.

My observational data is supplemented with 180 interviews (roughly half of which were informal) with residents, local and national officials, leaders and members of parties and civic associations, and academics in the four cities. I also use primary documents, such as newspapers and government reports and data (electoral and demographic), and secondary sources.

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<sup>71</sup> Journalists play an important political role in Torres since local opposition parties are weakly organized.

<sup>72</sup> Literally 'battle rooms', the Salas are Chavista spaces bringing together multiple communal councils.