Investigating the causes of participatory governance in U.S. cities

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, city governments across the United States have conducted a number of experiments in which citizens are engaging directly with city officials and public managers to determine local policies. City residents are doing this in a deliberative fashion, engaging with one another as they also engage with the powers that be. Experiments have included a series of deliberative discussions that produced a citywide master plan in Grand Rapids, Michigan (Quick and Feldman 2011). They include discussions in Chicago between residents and police officials that result in new strategies for keeping communities safe (Fung 2001). This paper will refer to such participative experiments as *local, participatory governance*, forms of governance in which citizen participation is both deliberative and meaningful. The paper's central question is a very basic one: *why are experiments in local, participatory governance occurring?*

For several reasons, the question is an important one. It is important for intellectual reasons, because to the extent that these participative reforms constitute a trend in politics and governance, that trend warrants explanation. The question is also important specifically for researchers of participatory governance. Much scholarship has been devoted to the theory behind and design of local governance that promotes deliberative citizen participation in decision-making (Barber 1984; Fung 2004; Bryson et al. 2012). Much less has been said about the roots of these approaches to governance, which is a shortcoming since such analysis would improve our understanding of their present dynamics (Cornwall 2002). Finally, the answers to the question are important for public managers and community organizers alike. For those among them who believe direct, deliberative citizen participation in government is a good thing, a "road map" of how it was achieved in other locations could transform their idealistic visions into realistic strategies for reform. It would offer suggestions on potential allies in their endeavors, stumbling blocks to change, and the potential interests of various actors integral to the process.

This paper will begin building an explanation as to why these reforms are occurring in a way that should be helpful to both academics and practitioners. It will do so with the approach of theoretical development. Answering the question "Why are experiments in local, participatory governance occurring?" in its entirety would require extensive empirical analysis, including case studies, multivariate techniques, and so forth. Careful data gathering in this regard has yet to be done, so empirical work of that nature is beyond the scope of this paper. What this paper provides instead is an analysis of larger trends in civil society and governmental reform that can plausibly be connected with movements towards local, participatory governance. The trends explored, it will be argued, make participative reforms in U.S. cities more likely. They therefore provide a historical context that helps explain why these experiments are unfolding.

The basic argument outlined in the paper is that certain developments in civil society and governance over the past several decades have created the political conditions that make local, participatory governance more likely. The investigation suggests that recent innovations in civil society—such as neighborhood organizations, new developments in the practices of community organizing, and civic dialogues—have played an especially crucial part in the development of local, participatory governance. These innovations, and the institutions that support them, organize citizens into active political bodies, push local governments towards participative reforms, and support such reforms once they are in place. Government reforms in recent decades, on the other hand, are found to be less decisive. Although the recent turn towards a "new governance" model suggests that government bodies might willingly collaborate with citizens, evidence of theirs being a leading role is mixed. So even though both civil society actors and government officials bear some responsibility for creating conditions conducive to participatory governance, a likely scenario is that the former are leading the way.

The paper then discusses some additional factors that seem to increase the likelihood of participative reforms, including pressing public problems and a lack of trust towards government institutions. The concluding sections discuss the limitations of this “movement” and, despite these limitations, the study’s intellectual and practical implications. Although much more empirical evidence is needed to verify the claims made, the investigation positions local, participatory governance as a grassroots-led movement with an eye towards governmental responsiveness.

Defining “local, participatory governance”

Before proceeding to the causes of local, participatory governance in U.S. cities, it is important to clearly state what is being investigated. Most basically, the government institutions under observation are U.S. city governments and the departments that comprise them. The participative reforms could be occurring when the city as a whole creates a new master plan, or when its environmental arm is formulating policy. The key distinction here is simply that the reforms are local, as opposed to state or federal. Participative reforms at these other levels are important, to be sure, but they are not part of this study. The reasons for this are pragmatic, since it is necessary to set boundaries. But it also has to do with the fact that many prominent documented cases of participative reforms in recent years have focused on city governments (e.g. Chicago, Grand Rapids, Portland, Los Angeles). So too will this paper.

Also, the study will focus on reforms occurring over the past two decades, from 1990 to the present. The aim is to study a family of changes that have taken place in recent years. Indeed, many participative reforms in local government happened throughout the 1970s and 1980s, from Berkeley to Hartford to Cleveland. They were studied extensively by Pierre Clavel in the form of two books (1986; 2010), in which he posited some broad ideas as to why these developments were occurring. The purpose of this paper is to study the cohort of reforms that have taken place after this era. It will thus have to break new ground and build new theory.

Finally, it is important to spell out exactly what is meant by *local, participatory governance*. For the purposes of this study, *local, participatory governance* has the following characteristics. It:

1) invites local citizens to engage with the policymaking or public planning process directly;
2) has a deliberative element, meaning it also asks citizens to engage with one another;
3) ensures that decisions made by citizens in the collective have a binding effect upon policy and planning outcomes.

The characteristics enumerated were not chosen arbitrarily. In fact, they have considerable grounding in the literature on political participation and citizen input on government decisions. The first characteristic—"invites local citizens to engage with the policymaking or public planning process directly"—is a reference to theories on participatory democracy, whereby citizens engage directly and multifariously in the political process. As Carmen and Sirianni (2001) note, the American tradition of political participation dates back at least to Alexis de Tocqueville, who praised participation in town hall meetings and voluntary associations because of its beneficial results: good citizenship and a collective sense of responsibility. They also note the persistence of the ethos, as it was picked up in the late 20th century by Carole Pateman, Benjamin Barber and others (Carmen and Sirianni 2001). While this tradition often stresses the intrinsic benefits of political participation (Mansbridge 1999), Fung (2004) underscores the increased benefits that accrue from participation that is directly tied to decision-making processes, as citizens are able to see the direct, substantive results of their input. Additionally, participatory theories of democracy differ from theories of democratic governance in which citizens are dependent on either elected representatives or the "administrative state" for policymaking (Kathi and Cooper 2005).

The second characteristic—"has a deliberative element"—of local, participatory governance has also been written about extensively. Young (2000, 22) states that citizens in a deliberative democracy "offer proposals for how best to solve problems or meet legitimate needs, and so on, and they present arguments through which they aim to persuade others to accept their proposals." In other words, people come to public decisions through dialogue, rather than simply voting. Young thus juxtaposes a deliberative model with one that is aggregative. In the latter, people's preferences are basically taken as a given and not subject to much change, despite your neighbor's skills at persuasion. Deliberation provides opportunities for compromise, consensus-building, and shifting positions (Young 2000). Similarly, Delli Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs (2004) distinguish "discursive participation" (a somewhat broader category that includes public deliberation) from forms of political participation such as attending rallies, working for a political party, or lobbying. With the latter, again, discussion across differences is given little consideration; whereas with the former, individuals "develop and express their views, learn the positions of others, identify shared concerns and preferences, and come to understand and reach judgments about matters of public concern" (Delli Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs 2004, 319). Using the deliberative process as a criterion for local, participatory governance thus ensures that citizens will not only be talking directly with government officials, but also with one another.

Finally, the third characteristic—"decisions made by citizens in the collective have a binding effect upon policy and planning outcomes"—ensures that these gestures towards citizen participation are not merely symbolic, but actual instances of citizen empowerment. As Kathi and Cooper (2005, 561) have noted of historical reforms towards citizen participation, the "Administrative Procedures Act (APA) provides for substantial citizen input in rulemaking. However, despite more than 50 years of the APA's provisions on the citizens' right to participation, the practical situation is far from satisfactory." The governmental case studies observed here go beyond meeting the basic legal requirements for citizen participation. In fact, there exists a clear line between the collective decisions of citizens made through participative mechanisms and the policies implemented by government officials.

In addition to the definition just elucidated, some case studies of local, participatory governance can bring the concept into greater relief. One example is Grand Rapids, Michigan, which initiated a citywide public engagement process that led to the completion of the city's Master Plan in 2002. Each phase of the process began with a citywide forum that determined next steps, while particular plans and land use policies were decided through a series of small group meetings throughout the city. City planners and consultants facilitated the engagement, allowing for revisions even to the process itself when it was requested by the community. The end result of all this work was Grand Rapids' first master plan in four decades. This process of creating a master plan departed substantially from previous strategies, which typically involved politicians and planners working by themselves (Quick and Feldman 2011).

In the 1990s, Chicago also undertook participatory governance strategies to create policies for its schools and law enforcement agencies. For both areas, governmental authority was devolved to local groups who were granted the freedom to determine the priorities and trajectories of their respective policy areas. Local School Councils (LSCs), comprised of parents, community members, teachers, and principles, were to govern the policies of each school. In the area of law enforcement, neighborhood police officers in each of the city's 279 police beats led community discussions on public safety priorities and strategies to reduce crime. Both areas promoted deliberation among local leaders, government officials, and neighborhood residents. The results of their deliberation lead to real changes in policy and planning, such as changes to school budgets or alterations to police strategies for crime reduction (Fung 2001).

Finally, in Minneapolis, the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) was made law by the Minnesota state legislature in 1990. The program gave the city's neighborhoods $400 million to spend over 20 years on revitalization projects, with requirements for substantial citizen participation. Neighborhood associations were central to the development process, as they determined the priorities in their respective neighborhood. These associations were accountable in two directions, however. "Participation Agreements" required the facilitation of citizen engagement processes, while associations were also required to report to city agencies (Fagotto and Fung 2006).

In all three cases just described, local, participatory governance was embodied through A) direct citizen interaction with city officials and policymakers, B) deliberation with both officials and other citizens, and C) substantive impact on city policies and plans. In many ways, these approaches to governance represent political responses to governance practices of the past. As the reader might have already noted in the previous sections, the research which undergirds and justifies the criteria of participatory democracy, deliberation, and substantive participation carries with it a substantial body of research with different, if not opposing, viewpoints. To reiterate, participatory democrats are arguing against a style of democracy that is lead by elected representatives and the "administrative state" (Kathi and Cooper 2005). Deliberation is a response to aggregative democracy (Young 2000). And citizen participation that is meaningful can be juxtaposed with engagement that is more symbolic (Kathi and Cooper 2005). Such opposing viewpoints imbue local, participatory governance with a conscientiousness that implies a political movement. Moreover, aspects of this nascent movement seem to fly in the face of the empirical evidence on both governmental openness to direct participation and the willingness of citizens to participate in the first place. Regarding the former, in a 1993 study of large U.S. cities (populations over 100,000), Scavo found that only 16% of cities involve citizens in strategic planning processes, such as those used in Grand Rapids. And while neighborhood groups in Chicago and Minneapolis received millions of dollars in support of the efforts described above, only 38% of cities in 1993 made funds available to neighborhood councils (Scavo 1993). Regarding political participation, the active citizenship of the cases described acts as a counterweight to evidence in recent years that political participation and social capital are on the decline (Putnam 2000; Skocpol 2003).

In short, this new form of governance deserves our attention. Indeed, it has received attention, as was previously noted, in the form of the theory and design of participatory governance. Investigating *why local, participatory governance is occurring* will only add to our understanding of this recent phenomenon. Now that its contours have been discussed, the paper will turn to the question at hand: *why* is this happening?

Previous research on the factors explaining local, participatory governance

The literature that explains why cities are engaged in participatory governance is underdeveloped compared to the substantial research on the theory behind and practice of citizen participation in local governance. Case studies only briefly allude to the history preceding the participatory experiments. Broader studies also spend very little time on history and explanations of why local, participatory governance occurs. The following review of the literature will discuss the explanations that have been given so far and will be built upon in the present study. The findings show that, although research has alluded to the citizens pushing for local government reforms, as well as the motivations of political actors and government officials, this literature has yet to organize these factors into a more comprehensive framework. Nor has it examined how these factors might interact to result in participative reforms at the local level.

To begin with, some research suggests that citizen activism is the primary culprit behind recent moves to local, participatory governance. In her article, "Public Deliberation in an Age of Direct Citizen Participation," Nancy Roberts (2004) traces the seeds of citizen activism to the social movements of the 1960s. She highlights the decade's various groups—civil rights activists, the National Service Corps, and others—who pushed for greater citizen input in policymaking and planning. Requirements in the Johnson administration's Community Action Partnerships for "maximum feasible participation," however controversial, were attributable to citizen pressures, as were a number of other legal requirements for direct citizen participation. She continues into the present era—the 1990s and beyond—to highlight other citizen groups pushing for a greater say in government decision-making. Students, environmentalists, union members, and many others have been pushing for more direct participation in settling various public issues. According to Roberts (2004), much of this activism is due to suspicions of bigger government, experts, and technology.

Leighninger (2006) also asserts the importance of grassroots efforts in spurring innovations in "democratic governance," a term he uses to describe governance that is more widely dispersed outside of central administrations. He positions the citizen-led dialogues initiated in the 1990s as precursors to the more recent experiments in participatory democracy at the local level. Starting with the dialogues on race relations that took place in the aftermath of the Rodney King trial, he asserts that these public discussions eventually led to the demand from citizens for a greater say in the actions of their government. Feeling as though talk was not enough, people were demanding action on these crucial issues. They were also too skeptical and already too involved to leave action steps to government alone. Government officials, on the other hand, were interested in building greater trust with a distrustful public. They also acknowledged the realities of limited governmental capacity that could use a boost from volunteer efforts (Leighninger 2006).

While the motivations and actions of citizens are likely explanations for local, participatory governance, research also highlights the role of governments in pushing for reform. Indeed, Roberts (2004) points to members of the Kennedy administration who pushed for greater participation in 1960s social programs among marginalized groups. Leighninger (2006) also says that public officials have a growing interest in citizen participation, as it increases the legitimacy of institutions and leads to more efficient, effective decisions in a time of scarce resources. Fung and Wright (2001) continue the narrative of "government reformers" by viewing the experiments in "Empowered Participatory Governance" (EPG) as conducive to the needs of a new era. Their explanation, however, seems to be more of an aspiration. Their contention is that, as the "affirmative state" loses credibility and conservative demands for privatization gain momentum, the Left could find a new way forward by creating governance strategies that include more room for citizen participation (Fung and Wright 2001). Their assessment of the political moment implies there are larger economic and structural forces demanding an innovative response from government, and that response could be EPG. This is not just an imperative for the Left, it should be noted, as the traditional forms of representative democracy and bureaucratic administration “seem increasingly ill suited to the novel problems we face in the twenty-first century” (Fung and Wright 2001, 5). The literature on government reform thus suggests that governments may find participatory governance to be in their best interests, whether for reasons of effectiveness, efficiency, or trust building.

Pierre Clavel (1986) combines many of the theories stated above—citizen action, pressing issues, government reformers—in his study of “progressive cities” in the 1970s and 1980s, as he provides detailed case studies on Hartford, Cleveland, Berkeley, Santa Monica, and Burlington. While his theories are not of the more contemporary “progressive cities” under investigation in this paper, the similarities between these cases and those of the present era make them relevant. For Clavel’s cases, local governments included varying degrees of increased participation in their decision-making processes, and he attributes such reforms to several factors. To begin with, the 1970s saw major economic and demographic shifts. Industries that had powered U.S. cities in previous decades began to move overseas, leaving urban areas that lacked strong economic bases. Additionally, large influxes of African-American and Hispanic populations began moving northward into metropolitan areas in the 1940s, while white populations were moving into the suburbs around the same time, with the result being cities of increasing ethnic diversity. The economic disparities between these respective populations also led to declines in cities’ median incomes, as well as a city tax base that generated fewer revenues (Clavel 1986).

A groundswell of neighborhood organizations and activists responded to this “new reality” by challenging city hall and working for better living conditions. They demanded more affordable housing and other redistributive policies, and, in many cases, they demanded a greater say in government. In Berkeley, for instance, too many episodes of police brutality led to a push for reforms such as the control of police departments by neighborhoods. Moreover, Clavel notes that progressive coalitions seeking political office channeled this demand for participation into policy reforms and an organizing strategy for themselves and their political allies. He explains that progressive city governments used mass participation as a means of generating commitment to and support for their agenda. With increased ways to participate in politics and policies that met their demands, citizens lent their support to the new form of local progressive coalitions (Clavel 1986).

In terms of explaining why local, participatory governance has been occurring in U.S. cities over the past two decades, the literature cited above intimates some conclusions. Roberts (2004), Leighninger (2006), and others, in both comprehensive studies and case study form, allude to the vital role of citizens in pushing for participative reforms. Moreover, these grassroots efforts seem be motivated by both pressing social issues and a lack of trust in government institutions to address such issues. For their part, governmental actors are seemingly coerced into the role of "civic engagement" facilitator. In some cases, this push has been very clear, as evidenced by Leighninger's (2006) observations. In other instances, the coercion has been more subtle, as citizens have shown distrust in government that leads the latter to strategies that could mitigate that distrust.

Overall, the literature just outlined provides a foundation on which to build a theory as to why local governments are choosing participatory practices. The discussions of citizen activity, government reformers, neighborhood institutions, and the 1960s all clearly play a role in this recent development. Their shortcoming is not that they are inaccurate portrayals; they are just incomplete. They have not yet been put into a comprehensive framework that can explain the various factors that likely have produced the participative reforms at the center of this study. Furthermore, it has not been shown how these various factors interact with one another.

The investigation that follows will begin to build such a framework and explain how its components interact. To do so, it will utilize the starting points given by the literature above. The case studies cited by Clavel (1986) provide a relatively comprehensive framework, yet they are situated in a somewhat earlier period. Thus, they can act as a comparative political situation that can shed light on the current one. They can also corroborate, or disconfirm, the theory presented here. If the political conditions cited below as forces pushing for participative reforms jibe with similar conditions existing in Clavel's (1986) case studies, their importance would be bolstered.

Creating the conditions for local, participatory governance

The basic argument presented here is that certain developments in civil society and governance over the past several decades have created the political conditions that make local, participatory governance in U.S. cities more likely. These developments include innovations in citizen organizations and, to a lesser extent, the collaborative approach to governance among public officials in a "network" society (Salamon 2000). The conditions for participative reforms are then accelerated by motivating factors among the public such as distrust of government and pressing social issues. The combination of macro developments in civil society and governance on the one hand, and the factors that move citizens to action on the other, create a framework that helps us understand why local, participatory governance is occurring.

These factors were chosen as worthy of examination for a couple of reasons. First of all, it makes sense to explore changes in civil society and government because local, participatory governance requires two basic sets of actors: the people and government officials. Abers (2003), in her study of participative reforms in Porto Alegre, Brazil, agrees with this basic dichotomy. She suggests explaining why these reforms occurred requires looking at the motivations for residents and officials alike. Most basically, residents found greater power in policy creation to be in their best interest, while officials found an opportunity to be more effective at their job (Abers 2003). While a lack of empirical data precludes a study of individual motivating factors in this paper, the exploration of civil societal and governmental trends helps explain why both sets of actors might be more *open* to participative reforms. In addition, the particular innovations discussed below—neighborhood organizations, deliberative dialogues, and new governance changes—are targeted because of their empirical and theoretical connection to local, participatory governance. The following review of the literature and examples takes each of these innovations in turn and concludes with a proposition regarding its contribution to the rise of local, participatory governance. The subsequent section puts them together into a single argument.

Innovations in civil society at the neighborhood level

Neighborhood-level citizen organizations are one trend that helps explain why participative reforms are occurring in U.S. cities in recent years. Clavel (1986, 4-5) noted their importance in the development of 1970s and 1980s participatory experiments, describing the "neighborhood movement" as a political force that "formed around grass-roots concerns, fought city halls, and took positions on housing, environmental, and many other issues." This movement is comprised of a set of organizers, networks, and institutions that continue to this day, galvanizing the public and pushing for governmental reforms. They thus constitute a trend that elucidates changes in both citizen participation and local governance.

The literature on neighborhood organizations is extensive, but a few examples should sufficiently demonstrate their importance in the development of local, participatory governance. First of all, there are the innovations in community development and community building that unfolded since the 1960s. Many of these developments were in response to the depletion of community resources stemming from disinvestment by both private and public sector institutions (Saegert 2006). Organizations focused on building capacity, fostering development, and creating opportunities for engagement tried to fill the voids in economic development and social capital. Community development corporations (CDCs), for example, arose to rebuild a vanishing affordable housing stock and revive local communities (Carmen and Sirianni 2001). Over the years, however, they have also turned to the development of civic capacities by engaging in community organizing efforts and other asset-based approaches to development. Indeed, much of their original focus on housing affordability had an additional goal of preserving social capital by giving residents some semblance of stability (Carmen and Sirianni 2001). Other capacity building efforts have also taken root in neighborhoods, with the expressed goal of building social capital through enhanced internal and external relationships (Saegert 2006).

Despite the more recent disinvestment in these institutions by government, many of them did originate through legislative action. CDCs received their start in this way, as did Community Action Partnerships (CAP) during the time of the War on Poverty legislation (Carmen and Sirianni 2001). These organizations have not only acted as institutions for resource distribution, but also ones that encourage active participation among residents (i.e. “maximum feasible participation” in the case of CAPs). Much controversy has arisen over the participative nature of these institutions, to be sure, and the extent to which federally-administered programs such as these allow for substantive participation might be limited in some locations (Bingham et al.

2005). Still, their roots in 1960s social movements give them legitimacy as a manifestation of a more participatory democracy. They have also grown more ubiquitous over the years. CDCs, for example, grew throughout the 1990s to 3,600 distinct organizations (Carmen and Sirianni 2001). In short, the number of neighborhood-level organizations emphasizing civic engagement has shot up over the decades, likely resulting in populations more committed to political participation.

Neighborhood councils are another important development in relation to local, participatory governance. They act as intermediaries between neighborhood residents and city government, activating the former and putting pressure on the latter. Although their power varies greatly from city to city, many of them are given a wide amount of discretion over real issues, such as zoning decisions (Portney and Berry 2007). They also vary widely in terms of the support they receive from central government, as evidenced both by official designation and funding support (Scavo 1993; Portney and Berry 2007). Finally, they vary in terms of the amount of citizen participation allowed in their decision-making processes, as some tend to be highly professionalized (Leighninger 2006).

But the fact remains that the councils act as an important participatory institution at the local level. Research by Portney and Berry (2007) showed that neighborhood councils increased residents' social capital, as well as enhanced their feelings of political efficacy. These changes are accomplished through direct contact with public officials and fellow residents, whether the city is Portland, Saint Paul, or Dayton. Neighborhood council settings allow people to deliberate on issues and reach consensus on pressing community problems. Moreover, they are an easy opportunity for citizens to get directly involved in government by running for an official position. The development of neighborhood councils seems deeply intertwined with the development of local, participatory governance. Their connection is multifarious, as the councils act variously as catalysts, enforcers, and even manifestations of participatory governance at the local level.

A third important set of neighborhood-level institutions are the nonprofit community organizing entities that have been a force at the local level for decades. Examples include the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), an organization created by the notorious community organizer Saul Alinsky and others in 1940, whose work seeks to "to build broad-based organizing projects, which create new capacity in a community for leadership development, citizen-led action and relationships across the lines that often divide our communities" (www.industrialareasfoundation.org, retrieved 5-20-2013). They also include the Gamaliel Foundation, which trained a young Barack Obama in community organizing. Gamaliel seeks to "empower ordinary people to effectively participate in the political, environmental, social and economic decisions affecting their lives" (http://www.gamaliel.org/AboutUs.aspx, retrieved 5-20-2013). Organizations like IAF and Gamaliel refer to themselves as networks—of people, organizations, communities, and countries—who believe that working across differences can lead to an increased capacity to foster grassroots change. Over the years, their networks have grown, as IAF is now in 65 cities across four countries and Gamaliel works in 17 U.S. states plus South Africa and the United Kingdom. The extensiveness of these networks is even greater when taking into account similarly constituted networks. IAF and Gamaliel are but a couple examples.

Community organizing's reason for existence has been to work with marginalized communities in an effort to rectify the vast inequalities afflicting them. Historically, the approach to solving these issues is confrontation with the existing power structure (Saegert 2006). A clear line is drawn between the "haves" and the "have-nots," and struggle between the two sides thus ensures. A classic example of this position is the tactic employed by the IAF when confronting officials in public meetings and forcing them to commit to very specific demands of the organization. As Stephen Smith (2009) notes, it is important in these situations for organizers to ask for an official's response to a yes or no question (e.g. will you meet with our group to discuss the crime ridden park in our neighborhood?), and then wait patiently for answer as the pressure of a public setting weighs over said official.

Over time, however, confrontational stances, while not abandoned, have given over to strategies more collaborative in nature. As Leighninger (2006, 156) has noted, some community organizers "now use a broader definition of 'us'" in the "us vs. them" calculus. Consequently, negotiations with public managers and business leaders are more frequent, for example in places like San Antonio and Chicago (Leighninger 2006). This does not mean that organizers, in these cases, are forgetting about core issues of power and inequality; they have simply adopted a different approach to fostering change (Leighninger 2006). These kinds of community organizing networks have always relied upon a participatory model for their operating structure (Carmen and Sirianni 2001). They encourage an active citizenry through leadership development, citizen activism, and an engagement with issues affecting people's daily lives (Smith 2009). The difference now is that many of them have created opportunities for citizens to engage directly with public officials on matters of public importance, utilizing the resources of the latter to further their agenda.

The neighborhood level innovations in civil society—manifested community development entities, neighborhood councils, organizing networks, and various other groups—paint a picture of local civic organizing that can has been quite vibrant in recent times, despite suggestions of civic decline. Their development acts as a plausible explanation for experiments in local, participatory governance in a few ways. First of all, they get citizen politically active.

Hence, they are more likely to participate in governmental decision-making should the opportunities arise. Ernesto Cortes (2006) underscores the importance of "mediating institutions" that encourage public skills through engagement with local politics. Such bodies acted as a counterweight to individual proclivities towards narcissism and domination. Instead, they encourage active citizenship and the give-and-take of politics. The neighborhood organizations just described fit this description of "mediating institutions," as their focus on building civic capacity prepares people to be active citizens.

Secondly, these "mediating institutions" may not stop at encouraging community involvement, but may ultimately push local institutions for greater responsiveness to local needs. Many of those involved with community development corporations, for instance, had their roots in previous protest movements (Carmen and Sirianni 2001). Their willingness to demand things of local government should thus not be underestimated. In addition, the changing nature of community organizing just discussed opens up possibilities not only for confrontation with government, but constructive engagement. And once that engagement is initiated, neighborhood organizations can continue to put pressure on city administrators to maintain participative mechanisms. After all, it is one thing to institute the reform initially; it is an entirely different action to maintain it. Finally, it should be clear from the discussion of neighborhood councils that local mediating institutions can both increase the changes of participative reforms and *be* those reforms. Neighborhood councils in places like Saint Paul and Dayton provide ready access to government institutions with substantial powers.

The theoretical connection between the "neighborhood movement" and local, participatory governance is corroborated by some empirical evidence. First of all, the assertion agrees with the suggestions of Roberts (2004) and Leighninger (2006), cited above, who also give much weight to local activists in explaining the moves towards direct democracy in recent years. Secondly, the three cases of local, participatory governance discussed above—Chicago, Minneapolis, and Grand Rapids—all provide hints of the importance of neighborhood activists. In Chicago, it was a neighborhood organizing group, the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety (CANS), that pushed for community policing reforms (Fung 2001). In the case of the Minneapolis NRP, Fagotto and Fung (2006) note briefly the importance of neighborhood residents in the push for participative reforms. They suggest that forces organized at the neighborhood level spurred action by mobilizing for policies more beneficial to Minneapolis neighborhoods, which is what they received when the Neighborhood Revitalization Program was instituted. And in Grand Rapids, residents and neighborhood groups had gotten a taste of participatory governance with the development of the city's master plan. When the city attempted a participatory process that was less deliberative and robust to solve budgetary issues, neighborhood groups cried foul and organized their own public forums (Quick and Feldman 2011).

The comparative case studies of Clavel also support the claimed connection between a vibrant neighborhood movement and participative reforms at the local level. While many in local governments in the 1970s and 1980s were tempted to relinquish policymaking authority and the local economy to downtown developers, neighborhood activists pushed back, demanding progressive policies and a say in government policy (Clavel 1986). They protested city hall, became active in neighborhood councils and committees, and, sometimes, they even ran for political office (Clavel 2010).

The theoretical and empirical evidence presented gives credence to the following claim and proposition:

> **Neighborhood level civic groups have contributed to the development of local, participatory governance in U.S. cities over the past two decades. As these groups increase in a certain city, the likelihood that the city will utilize participative mechanisms for decision-making will also increase.**

Deliberative dialogues

Deliberative dialogues, on the rise over the past two decades, could also be fostering the political conditions that make local, participatory governance possible. These dialogues take many different forms and use a variety of facilitation techniques, but, at their core, they are about engaging citizens in deliberative discussions about politics and policies that affect their lives. Typically, they consist of groups of people (usually divided into small groups when numbers grow) talking about issues ranging from race relations, to immigration, to healthcare. A trained facilitator is also helpful to the conversation, as they can help ensure a conversation that is equitable and civil. The point is to have a dialogue in which people can learn more about a topic, learn about varying viewpoints, and potentially reach some common ground on the issue. Supported by a network of organizations committed to political deliberation, these face-to-face discussions form another set of "mediating institutions" that cultivate citizenship and provide local governments with a more active constituency (Leighninger 2006; Jacobs et al 2009).

Despite criticisms that dialogues such as these are infrequent and attended merely by the "usual suspects," recent studies have shown engagement in them to be more extensive than previously thought. Jacobs et al. (2009) found that approximately 25% of Americans engage in face-to-face deliberation each year. Moreover, their study found that many more people (81%) engaged in more informal practices of deliberation (what they refer to as "discursive participation"). Again, these forms of engagement do not arise spontaneously, but are cultivated by a network of hundreds of supporting organizations, from local civic organizations to national deliberative organizations to international umbrella groups (Jacobs et al 2009). Some of the more prominent ones include the Kettering Foundation, the National Issues Forum network (NIF), and the Study Circles Network. National organizations like these promote dialogue through outreach activities, the creation of citizen workbooks that summarize issues, and the publication of articles on the theory and design of public deliberation.

Although national organizations like Kettering have become salient in the deliberative movement, the primary organizers of dialogues are located at the local level, as they respond to the demands of citizens wanting to address local issues (Jacobs et al 2009). As Leighninger notes, local organizers were integral to many of the community dialogues that took place in the early 1990s following the Rodney King trial and its chaotic aftermath. They facilitated intense, emotional discussions on race relations in the United States, providing people with an outlet to discuss issues that had been simmering for a long time. Walsh (2006) also highlights the use of "civic intergroup dialogues," by civic groups and governments alike, to address longstanding issues of racial inequality. In addition to public issues of race, dialogues were then taken up on a number of other political issues such as education and crime, and in these conversations, dialogue networks found partners in local officials (Leighninger 2006).

The work of organizations like Kettering, as well as their local collaborators, demonstrates the willingness of citizens to engage in political discussions, as well as the willingness of public officials to accommodate those desires by providing a space where public issues can be discussed. Along with a set of political organizers like NIF and their affiliates, the dialogues just described appear to have the ingredients of a movement in our democratic landscape (Jacobs et al 2009). And though it has been forcefully argued that the "movement" is not much of one (Eliasoph 1998), its traces appear in a variety of local government innovations across the country. Quick and Feldman (2011) have documented the large-scale deliberative process that unfolded in Grand Rapids, Michigan in the early 2000s. The process consisted of a series of public meetings in a number of neighborhoods throughout the city, with stages of dialogue progressing from priority setting to the eventual adoption of a citywide Master Plan (Quick and Feldman 2011). Furthermore, several cities in recent years have undertaken “visioning” processes with their citizens, such as Kansas City and Chattanooga (Leighninger 2006). These plans, like the one in Grand Rapids, prove a comprehensive, integrated plan for their respective city that guides governance for years to come.

Theoretically speaking, initiatives like these indicate that the deliberative “movement” could contribute to instances of participatory governance at the local level. They may do so in a couple of ways. On the one hand, the deliberative movement is also acting as a network of mediating institutions among the populace, by activating citizens and, as Leighninger (2006) contends, spurring government action. By engaging people in the process of deliberation on pressing issues, they are teaching citizens the skills of listening, compromise, and consensus building. They also catalyze other political activities among the population (Jacobs et al. 2009). Consequently, local governments have on their hands a constituency that is more engaged in the political process and ready to contribute directly to public decision-making.

On the other hand, deliberation provides a method of public decision-making that can be utilized by local governments. Several authors (Bingham et al. 2005; Hager and Wagenaar 2003) have stressed the importance of deliberation as a viable method of decision-making in the era of “new governance.” They cite the presence of collaborative networks of actors, all of whom have and want a say in final decisions. Due to the complex nature of public problems, answers cannot be easily deciphered through previous frames of positivism, which relied on a more scientific approach to problem solving. Alternatively, deliberative methods can be used to build bridges between parties and arrive at answers that most can agree upon (Hager and Wagenaar 2003). Deliberative experiments like those conducted by NIF, Study Circles, and others thus provide guidance to local governments choosing to use dialogue as a method of resolving public issues. Visioning processes demonstrate that they have already employed these strategies.

What the deliberative movement does not have, like the "neighborhood movement" does (Clavel 1986), is more empirical data on its direct connection to instances of local, participatory governance. While it is true that Leighninger (2006) has suggested innovations in participatory governance are a direct outgrowth of citizen-led dialogues, the overall evidence is perhaps less convincing. The case studies from Chicago, Minneapolis, and Grand Rapids do not mention these dialogues as precursors to participative reforms in governance. Clavel's case studies also do not mention robust citizen dialogues as part of the local, progressive movements he studies. Part of the reason might be the nascence of deliberation. As Jacobs et al (2009) have highlighted, the majority of institutions comprising this network have come into existence only in the 1990s. It is thus difficult to posit them as causal factors behind cases that occurred in the late 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s. Nevertheless, their presence does have a theoretical connection to local, participatory governance. This theoretical connection might receive greater empirical verification in the years ahead, as the deliberative movement becomes more institutionalized.

The theoretical and empirical evidence presented gives credence to the following claim and proposition, though they are somewhat less substantiated than the claim and proposition submitted for the neighborhood movement:

> **The "deliberative movement" has contributed to the development of local, participatory governance in U.S. cities over the past two decades, by way of both an active citizenry and a set of deliberative strategies. As these dialogues increase in a**

certain city, the likelihood that the city will utilize participative mechanisms for decision-making will also increase.

The "new governance"

Everything cited so far as a possible explanation for the development of local, participatory governance has been on the side of civil society. Innovations at the grassroots level—from neighborhood councils to deliberative discussions—have garnered attention due to their role as mediating institutions encouraging an active citizenry. This is as it should be, since, when discussing reforms in government that seem to take power away from central authorities, we can easily turn to Frederick Douglass who told us that "power concedes nothing without a fight." That said, many of the "progressive cities" discussed by Clavel (1986) had public officials who willingly conceded some authority through participative reforms. Moreover, contemporary examples show public officials who instituted participative reforms without much prompting (Leighninger 2006; Quick and Feldman 2011). Thus, it is worth exploring whether or not local, participatory governance in the present time might be initiated by "progressive" public officials.

An argument can be made that the era of "new governance" could open doors to increased citizen participation in the functioning of government at the local level. Salamon (2000) characterizes the new governance model as more "collaborative" in nature, whereby a network of institutions, actors, and tools are responsible for public problem-solving. It departs from previous forms of "old public administration," since it depends not just on governmental authorities for public decision-making, but rather on governments in collaboration with various private, nonprofit, and community institutions and actors (Denhardt and Denhardt 2000; Salamon 2000; Bingham et al 2005). Furthermore, public managers, in order to be effective, need skills of negotiation and persuasion, versus command and control, and enablement skills versus management skills (Salamon 2000). This is simply a function of their new reality, as they are working not within a traditional hierarchical agency, but a network of political actors. To be effective, they must develop the skills needed in a less hierarchical structure.

The forces that created this new form of governance are complex and beyond the scope of this paper. But, to highlight the key points, a torrent of political voices in recent decades have called upon government to change it ways, to become more efficient and effective, and to de-centralize and streamline operations to achieve these ends (Salamon 2000; Fung 2004). These calls have resulted in new theories of public administration, from new public management approaches to the privatization of government functions (Denhardt and Denhardt 2000; Fung 2004). Unbeknownst to these political forces is the extent to which some of these changes have already occurred. The proliferation of tools, actors, and processes that are needed to carry out contemporary public policy demonstrates that a new model of governance has already arrived (Bingham et al 2005; Salamon 2000). The demise of "old-school" bureaucracies is no longer the aspiration of some, but the reality of all.

In theoretical terms, the development of the "new governance" might open doors for increased citizen participation in a few different ways. First of all, it may be creating new structures of government in which citizens can be viewed as key stakeholders in the decision-making process. The core of new governance—which deals with networks, collaborative work, and non-hierarchical structures—could very well make room for citizen participation (Hager and Wagenaar 2003; Bingham et al. 2005). These new structures also bear similarities to the structures depicted in the literature on participatory governance. Certainly, in the case of Chicago's public schools and police force in the 1990s, school administrators and city police chiefs needed to enable leaders at the local level and govern the city in a collaborative fashion.

Indeed, Fung's concept of "accountable autonomy" is a shared-power system of governance not dissimilar from the new governance model (Fung 2001). Additionally, researchers of both new governance and local participatory democracy highlight the same pressures that are encouraging a shift from previous ways of governing. Both highlight citizen frustrations with the efficiency and effectiveness of governments that have led to a pattern of devolution (Salamon 2001; Fung 2004). It seems possible this popular anger could result in a new pattern of governance allowing for greater citizen voice.

Laws promoting citizen participation in government also create legal openings for the practice. The laws generated by the 1960s social movements—"maximum feasible participation" and the like—have already been mentioned. In addition, Bingham et al (2005) note the updates to such laws in recent years, making way for even more participative reforms. They highlight the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) which was revised in 1996 to enable more negotiation in agency rulemaking, a change that resulted in a dramatic growth in collaboration with nongovernmental actors. They underscore the special use of collaborative decision-making in environmental regulation and also discuss the various participative legal reforms at the state and local level (e.g. Model State Administrative Procedures Act) that mirror reforms at the federal level. These developments carry with them not only legal justification for greater citizen participation, but an underlying "public policy for democracy" ethos that could enhance participation well into the future (Carmen and Sirianni 2001).

With the political and legal structures of new governance in place, heightened use of citizen participation would also require enterprising public servants to take advantage of the new structures. In many ways, the structures themselves likely generate such servants. The tools needed to activate stakeholders, facilitate collaboration, and forge consensus on public issues is part of the required repertoire of public servants in the era of new governance (Salamon 2000). It follows that, if these tools can be used to forge successful collaborations with private and nonprofit stakeholders, they can also forge successful collaborations that are more broadly participatory. In other words, the skills needed for new governance are similar to the skills needed for the "new public service" (Denhardt and Denhardt 2000). Moreover, a bevy of "progressive" public officials might willingly use these skills to cultivate more grassroots participation in the operations of government. After all, this occurred in many of the "progressive cities" examined by Clavel (1986; 2010). Carmen and Sirianni (2001) discuss such a cohort of participatory-minded officials. They describe public policies "for democracy"—designed to "empower, enlighten, and engage citizens"—that reside in networks of nonprofits, foundations, social movement organizations, and even government agencies that nourish them. Just as these policies have persisted and developed since their formative years in the 1960s, so too have the governmental actors that supported them (Carmen and Sirianni 2001).

The structures, policies, and actors of new governance suggest theoretically that the conditions are ripe for local, participatory governance. Empirical evidence from the case studies of Chicago, Minneapolis, and Grand Rapids says little about new governance, but they do intimate a willingness on the part of public officials to entertain more citizen input. (Quick and Feldman 2011; Fung 2001) However, evidence of the participatory promise of new governance—whether theoretical or empirical—must be tempered by evidence to the contrary, as other trends in public administration suggest greater ambivalence towards participative reforms. Kathi and Cooper (2005, 560) underline the intransigence of an "administrative state" ethos in which "responsiveness to citizens was deemed a necessary evil that could inhibit effective performance by professional administrators." From this perspective, participative reforms could not only inhibit the expertise of administrators, but even usurp power from the representative form of government (Kathi and Cooper 2005). Despite calls in recent years for cultural changes, many have noted that this ethos still prevails (Kathi and Cooper 2005; Denhardt and Denhardt 2000). Furthermore, even many of the reforms called for in recent years, such as "new public management," have allowed little room for citizen participation (Kathi and Cooper 2005). In fact, Salamon's (2000) discussion of the new governance model includes little on the role of citizens as stakeholders. Thus it seems that calls for a new, more grassroots form of public administration might be stymied by more traditional, dominant views.

In sum, the theoretical and empirical evidence presented gives modest credence to the following claim and proposition:

> **New governance shifts have contributed somewhat to the development of local, participatory governance in U.S. cities over the past two decades. As new governance methods (i.e. non-hierarchical) increase in a certain city, the likelihood that the city will utilize participative mechanisms for decision-making will also increase. The contribution to local, participatory governance, however, is likely to be less pronounced than the contributions made by civil society.**

Why does local, participatory governance occur? Putting the pieces together

The developments in civil society and governance discussed throughout this paper provide a context that helps explain why participative reforms have taken root at the local level over the past two decades. To put it simply, the central claim of this paper is as follows:

> **The presence of A) neighborhood organizations, such as neighborhood councils and community organizing entities, B) organizations convening deliberative dialogues, and C) "new governance" practices in local government create political conditions that increase the likelihood that local, participatory governance will occur.**

These claims are based on their theoretical connection to participative reforms and the empirical (albeit anecdotal) evidence supporting those connections. The case studies of Pierre Clavel

(1986; 2010) also provide corroborating evidence. To be sure, these claims are only theory, and their general accuracy will tend to break down as one focuses on specific cases. Nevertheless, they form a general framework for understanding local, participatory governance that can be utilized in future empirical research.

To take the investigation a bit further, however, can we speculate as to which of these "political conditions" carries more weight? Further, can we gain a better understanding of how they interact? First of all, the investigation suggests that recent innovations in civil society—such as neighborhood organizations, new developments in the practices of community organizing, and civic dialogues—have played a crucial part in the development of local, participatory governance. These innovations, and the institutions that support them, organize citizens into active political bodies, push local governments towards participative reforms, and support such reforms once they are in place. They act as mediating institutions that increase the likelihood of participatory governance at the local level. Both theoretical and empirical evidence support this assertion. Cortes (2006) emphasizes the importance of mediating institutions, as they encourage active citizenship and collective decision-making. They act, in other words, as incubators of a deliberative model of democracy, with its method of give-and-taking dialogue (Young 2000; Jacobs et al. 2009). Furthermore, scholars have noted the potential for nonprofit organizations—such as the Industrial Areas Foundation, Gamaliel, and National Issues Forums—to act as organizers of democracy, encouraging a citizenry that is active in politics (Skocpol 1999; Clemens 2006). All of this suggests that active citizenship does not happen spontaneously, but is cultivated over time. The innovations in neighborhood groups and deliberative dialogue networks have provided this kind of cultivation over recent decades. The case studies of Chicago and Minneapolis suggest that mediating institutions have made a difference. Their ability to get people involved in politics has increased the strength of grassroots political forces that make demands on local governments for participative reforms, as neighborhood activists worked for a greater voice in the public decision-making (Fagotto and Fung 2006; Fung 2001). The comparative cases of Clavel (1986) also show the ability of neighborhood activists to push for reform, suggesting the importance of civil society in fomenting political change is nothing new.

Government reforms in recent decades, on the other hand, are possibly less decisive. Although recent moves towards the “new governance” model suggest that government bodies might willingly collaborate with citizens, evidence of their catalytic role is mixed. As was discussed previously, aspirations of citizen governance are mitigated by “old public administration” norms that prioritize professional expertise and even by reforms that do not include much of a place for citizens (Kathi and Cooper 2005; Denhardt and Denhardt 2000; Fung 2004). Additionally, anecdotal evidence shows reluctance towards participative reforms among public administrators (Leighninger 2006; Fagotto and Fung 2006). Even in the case of Grand Rapids, where city planners played a vital role in the engagement process for a city master plan, the city thereafter reverted to policymaking decisions that lacked such engagement (Quick and Feldman 2011). Government reformers thus appear to be less of a factor in shifts towards local, participatory governance. A plausible scenario—in many of the cases of local, participatory governance—is that a network of local organizers, cultivated over time, lobbied and protested for a greater voice in local public policy until open-minded, yet reluctant, officials conceded to their demands. Grassroots efforts “tipped the scale” towards more public participation in government.

But it remains unclear why these grassroots efforts would demand collaboration with government. Clearly, a mediating institution will galvanize more political participation among the community. It is possible, however, that such participation could remain outside the purview of government functions. Indeed, many organizers have raised fears that partnerships with government could lead to co-optation and, thus, enervation (Leighninger 2006; Walsh 2006). Why would civic groups demand to engage with officials “from the inside”?

That question is also beyond the scope of this paper, but preliminary evidence suggests a few responses. First of all, as it has been noted, transformations in the strategies of organizing groups (e.g. IAF) have made such groups more open to government collaboration than they were in the past. Undoubtedly, access to government resources is part of their calculation (Walsh 2006; Fung 2004). Change-making organizations might simply see access to government resources as a better method of achieving results. Their need for resources can be especially acute when the issues at hand are urgent and pressing. The case studies highlighted in this paper demonstrate the importance of social needs in spurring action. Residents of Minneapolis become active in response to issues of urban blight (Fagotto and Fung 2006). Residents in Chicago become active in response to issues of crime and education (Fung 2004). Research on deliberative dialogues also highlights the importance of collective issues in motivating participation. Whether it is race relations in the 1990s or the immigration debates of the 2000s, pressing public needs at the local level seem to be a key factor in getting people to dialogues (Leighninger 2006; Jacobs et al 2009; Walsh 2006). Finally, people apparently need a certain level of distrust of government officials in order to become participants in the formation of policy. They might be ready to act because of their experience with local, mediating institutions. They might actually act because of a pressing social need. And they might see the government as a partner because of their access to public resources. But an era of enhanced distrust of institutions might cause them to be skeptical of public administrators going it alone (Kathi and Cooper 2005). Much of the literature on participative governance suggests that it was precipitated by citizens who were skeptical that government could do the job on its own (Leighninger 2006; Fung 2004). Rather paradoxically, it seems as though it is *skepticism* of government that compels people to seek collaboration with government.

Again, this is all speculative and risky, considering the vast number of factors inherent to the circumstances of local politics. But this educated speculation helps make sense of exactly how the transition towards participative reforms can ultimately play out. Furthermore, the scenario of an active, embedded citizenry, motivated by pressing issues and a general distrust of government, pushing somewhat open, but rather reluctant, officials towards participative reforms is paralleled by the cases of Pierre Clavel (1986). In Berkeley, Boston, Cleveland, and other places, it was a strong network of neighborhood organizers who pushed for many of these reforms. In many cases, they even became the public officials themselves, and then instituted a more participatory form of governance. The issues of the day were urban blight and increasing social inequalities, while a general distrust of government resulted from an insular bureaucracy and the special attention received by "downtown interests" (Clavel 1986; Clavel 2010). Thus, the claims above cannot be dismissed as completely arbitrary.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the 1960s as another factor that ultimately explains local, participatory governance. The 1960s, as it has been noted, wrote new laws and set regulatory guidelines that encouraged more political participation in the workings of government (Roberts 2004). And although the authenticity of these reforms has been brought into question, they have been enhanced in recent decades to incorporate even greater capacity for citizen participation (Bingham et al. 2005). Moreover, the decade produced a generation of activists dedicated to the ideals of grassroots democracy and power who formed organizations that would prove to be mainstays for citizen participation into the future, as is attested by community development corporations, Community Action Partnerships, and other neighborhood associations discussed previously (Carmen and Sirianni 2001).

It might seem unlikely that rules and actions set in motion in the 1960s would have an impact on local government several decades later, but indeed that seems to be the case. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a series of "progressive" cities, whose activists and sometimes even elected officials had their roots in the 1960s social movements (Clavel 2010). Deliberative practitioners and organizers were also very active in this previous era of social movements and grassroots democracy (Carmen and Sirianni 2001). Carmen and Sirianni (2001, 20) refer to this drawn out process of realizing participatory democracy's ideals as "social learning," an "ongoing process of search, experimentation, and adaptation motivated by the desire to realize core policy beliefs…including normative beliefs about power and justice." In other words, the policies and actors originating in a previous decade do not simply fade away. They play themselves out over time, albeit in different venues and often with different tactics. Many political activists, for instance, eventually traded their previous confrontational tactics with governments for more collaborative approaches (Leighninger 2006; Carmen and Sirianni 2001). The social movements of the 1960s, therefore, serve as another potential explanation for recent democratic reforms at the local level. They have fed the neighborhood and deliberative "movements" of recent decades, movements that have, in turn, influenced experiments of local, participatory governance. If the neighborhood and deliberative movements have created the political conditions that make contemporary participative reforms possible, then it seems as though the 1960s policy reforms, actors, and institutions created the political conditions to make those movements possible.

The extent and limitations of local, participatory governance

As a fuller explanation of the drivers behind local, participatory governance is given, the extent and limitations of this phenomenon begins to take shape. To begin with, many of the well-documented reforms are quite recent. Reforms in Chicago (Fung 2001), Minneapolis (Fagotto and Fung 2006), and Grand Rapids (Quick and Feldman 2011) occurred during the past two decades. In other words, they occurred during the time period studied here. This time period makes sense given the timelines of the trends identified in previous sections (a fact, it should be noted, adding further evidence of their veracity). The 1960s appear to be a starting point for the organizations, actors, and laws that ultimately lead to participative reforms contemporarily. This stream then joined with innovations in citizenship and governance in subsequent eras. The neighborhood movement unfolded throughout the 1970s and 1980s, while deliberative dialogues gained momentum in the 1990s (Clavel 1986; Carmen and Sirianni 2001; Jacobs et al. 2009). Finally, new governance models have also come into fruition in the last few decades, as public administration is becoming increasingly fragmented (Bingham et al. 2005).

In addition, the salient trends identified as explanations for local, participatory governance also underscore the select number of places in which it is likely to occur. As an overall rule, scholars have noted the positive correlation between city size and the robustness of their participatory mechanisms. One theory underpinning this observation is that the populations of larger cities feel alienated from a distant city hall, and the latter thus feels compelled to build more bridges between citizens and the government. Another theory is one simply of resources: bigger cities have more resources to be used for participative mechanisms (Scavo 1993). When looking at some of the prominent case studies of citizen participation (e.g. Chicago and Minneapolis) there does appear to be validity to this theory. And certainly many of the actors and institutions highlighted in this paper—neighborhood councils, community development corporations, community organizing networks among marginalized communities—are more likely to be present in major metropolitan areas. Clearly, there are important exceptions (e.g. Grand Rapids has fewer than 200,000 people), but the point is that participative reforms are not just happening anywhere. They appear to require a complex set of ingredients.

The major point here is that, as the times and places in which participative reforms can take place begin to narrow, and as the conditions under which they are likely to occur are compounded, the limitations of local, participatory governance also become apparent. After all, much research has lamented the political apathy of the American citizenry (Eliasoph 1998; Putnam 2000), while this study has also noted the stubbornness of public administration practices that create barriers to citizen input (Kathi and Cooper 2005). This sobering assessment of participatory democracy can be coupled with the fact that political conditions cited for their importance in this paper also have their limitations. Jacobs et al. (2009) note that the flip side of 25% of the population participating in public dialogues means that 75% of people do not. The small numbers of truly democratic, robust neighborhood councils is also acknowledged by their proponents (Portney and Berry 2007). Thus, though the changes to local governance studied here are worthy of our attention, their prevalence should not be overstated.

Conclusion

This study has provided a framework for understanding why local, participatory governance is occurring in U.S. cities over approximately the past two decades. The historical causes it delineates surely inform the present practices and strategies of, and reasons for, the implementation of participatory governance at the local level. Said differently, knowing the history behind participative reforms tells us what these reforms "are all about." In her investigation into the "generative pasts" of participatory international development, Andrea Cornwall (2002, 7) also discusses the importance of understanding the history of governance practices:

> Assessing the potential of new spaces for citizen participation requires that we make sense of the dynamics of participation within these spaces. To do so, these spaces need to be located on a broader terrain, both with regard to their 'generative past(s)' and broader shifts in participation and development discourse.

She then goes on to discuss the widely divergent reasons behind participatory practices used at different times throughout history. On the one hand, civil society organizations in the 1990s convened new spaces for participation in which "excluded individuals could find a collective presence and voice, and organise from the margins to affect mainstream policies and institutions." (Cornwall 2002, 5) On the other hand, she recalls the participatory methods of colonial regimes, whose purpose was to pacify restive populations and delegitimize forms of participation outside the purview of government.

These stark examples from the international arena highlight the different purposes that might undergird participatory governance. Could it be that participative reforms are merely a ruse to pacify a restive population and maintain a power structure? Some might suggest governmentality is an underlying motivation, whereby "active citizenship is regarded as a strategy of government that provides an efficient means for regulating the population" (Marinetto 2003, 110). Many of the case studies highlighted previously discuss the desire of government officials to gain the trust of skeptical citizens, to restore social order in times of crisis, and utilize volunteer labor in times of limited resources (Leighninger 2006; Salamon 2000). The hope, according to the concept of governmentality, would be that political involvement would instill in citizens the attitudes of self-responsibility and self-rule that makes political control easier and cheaper for those in power (Marinetto 2003). Participatory local governance, with this kind of history and rationale, becomes much less about social justice and more about the tools and technologies of control. Additional evidence of this possibility can be found in interviews with community organizers, some of whom have not easily adapted to the conventions of "collaborative governance" and who view such structures as a continuation of existing power structures (Levine and Nierras 2007).

The evidence presented here suggests the process is not a ruse. It suggests that civil society actors, motivated by collective problems and demands for governmental responsiveness, pushed local governments to institute participative reforms. The reforms thus seem to be the outgrowth of a grassroots movement for change. Moreover, even if the actions of citizens were co-opted by officials who were intent on pacification and control, citizens still largely received what they set out to achieve. In Minneapolis $400 million was devoted to neighborhood redevelopment efforts. In Chicago, new police strategies were implemented that reduced crime in previously problematic spots. Thus, even if citizens in such examples were still under the guidance of the powerful, it begs the question: so what? Even in cases where city officials tried to keep people in bounded areas of activity, such as Grand Rapids, people continually pushed the bounds of what was permissible (Quick and Feldman 2011). In sum, while the power of institutions might have been maintained through these reforms, the power of citizens within those halls was concomitantly strengthened. The question of "who benefits" is thus a false one, as both parties seem to gain something.

Questioning the underlying motivation behind participative reforms is intellectually interesting, but also useful to the practitioners of local governance. It gives them a better understanding of the forces with which they are dealing. Greater comprehension of the forces pushing these reforms, moreover, can enhance the ability of local actors to negotiate with others and generate strategies that advance participatory governance. For public managers, they may learn that it was neighborhood activists and deliberative-minded foundations that pushed for participatory governance in the past. Thus, if they wish to enhance citizen participation in their own endeavors, they know who to approach to make that goal a reality. Alternatively, an activist may learn that local governments have been influenced in recent years by models of "new governance." She can thus approach government officials with proposals for increased public participation with the knowledge that cutting costs and increasing effectiveness is in the interests of governments. In sum, knowing the "generative pasts" of participatory governance can increase actors' effectiveness, just as knowledge of theory and "best practices" do.

This study is also important for researchers, as it lays out a framework for understanding the history and factors that have compelled local governments to incorporate participatory practices in recent years. It has done so by listing some of the key trends—on the citizen side, as well as the government side—that make sense of these reforms, while identifying a main factor on which to focus: civil society. Further research is needed to help explain these phenomena. To begin with, while the present study has illuminated some of the historical trends behind recent reforms, it has not sufficiently dealt with the larger structural conditions compelling local, participatory governance. Further investigation of the "pre-conditions" of participatory reforms is warranted. A starting point could be to identify the major conditions prompting the trends identified in this study, and then investigating their impact on recent examples of local, participatory governance.

Additional empirical research on participatory governance at the local level is also needed. Comparative case studies examining the histories of such experiments can yield insights into the common factors that make participatory governance likely. Indeed, some of the “independent variables” examined in this paper can serve as a starting point for investigation. Researchers can look for manifestations of the “neighborhood movement” or the “new governance” model to see if they are having an effect on the likelihood of participatory reforms.

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