



Civil Society and Participatory Governance: Municipal Councils and Social Housing Programs in Brazil (Routledge Studies in Latin American Politics)

Maureen M. Donaghy

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Democratic institutions should promote accountability of government officials to the needs of citizens. Civil society plays a role in exposing corruption as well as in communicating the needs of low-income residents to officials. Neither the institutions of representative democracy nor the presence of civil society, however, appears to automatically guarantee adoption of social benefits for the poor. Can democratic institutions be created to address social challenges?

Scholars, development practitioners, donors, and activists propose participatory governance institutions as mechanisms to create accountability and responsiveness through a public forum incorporating civil society. To date, however, little comparative research exists to confirm whether these institutions do influence adoption of social policies. Maureen M. Donaghy remedies this gap by combining data from Brazil's 5,564 municipalities with extensive fieldwork from five Brazilian cities to test whether participatory municipal housing councils are associated with an increase in adoption of social housing programs to benefit the poor. Housing represents an issue of critical importance in Brazil and other developing countries where large populations reside in informal settlements in unsafe and insecure conditions.

Civil Society and Participatory Governance is the first book of its kind to move the conversation beyond budgeting to other social policy areas, providing fresh theoretical and empirical insights to demonstrate that participatory governance institutions are effective mechanisms to coordinate government officials and civil society to alter policy-making.

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