

The Squared Circle of Participatory Democracy: Scaling-up Deliberation to the National Level

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***Abstract:** Can participation scale-up to the national level? And if so, can large-scale participation be attained without forfeiting deliberation? This article addresses these two questions, providing empirical evidence that deliberation can scale-up together with participation, managing to impact on national-level policies. It argues that participation can be feasible at the national level and that deliberation can be effective in the large-scale, once the appropriate institutional design is in place. A theoretical framework composed of two overlapping dimensions (feasibility and effectiveness) is proposed to assess the scaling-up of participation and deliberation. As for the feasibility of large-scale participation, the article argues that the institutional design of participatory experiments should allow it to scale up accordingly to three criteria: actors, space and volume. As for the effectiveness of deliberation, it is argued that large participatory experiments should provide that the deliberative process follows criteria of transformation and impact in order to scale-up local preferences to the national level and make sure they affect policy outcomes. The theoretical framework is tested against the empirical background of the world's largest participatory and deliberative experiment known to date, the National Public Policy Conferences in Brazil.*

In a recent book, Adam Przeworski (2010) makes the strong statement that “participatory democracy is an oxymoron”, because it is “not feasible at the national scale”, and therefore “only a few can causally affect collective decisions”. In spite of valiant efforts of participatory democrats, he asserts, “the circle just cannot be squared”. This same opinion is shared by Robert Dahl (1994), who believes scale to respond for a trade-off between the ability of citizens to exercise democratic control over political decisions and the capacity of the system to respond satisfactorily to the collective preferences of its citizens. Dahl implies that on the small, local level “a citizen may be able to participate extensively in decisions that do not matter much but cannot participate much in decisions that really matter a great deal”. On the national level, therefore, one can assume “the opportunities for the citizen to participate in and greatly influence decisions are vastly reduced” (1994: 28). Participatory democrats themselves contend that scale is in itself no argument against participation, however they concede that participation matters most in specific decisions requiring conflict-solving (Warren 2002) or problem-solving (Fung 2004), besides only achieving to engage few who are supposed to represent the many (Urbinati and Warren 2008). Skepticism towards the feasibility of large-scale participation beyond the local level seems to disturb both detractors and supporters of democratic participation.

Deliberative democrats for their turn recognize the long-standing critique that effective deliberation can only take place among a small number of people (Shapiro 1999). James Fishkin has recently published a book in which he concedes that the success of deliberative pools is proportional to its failure in spreading participation. Deliberation would be a value unachievable along with mass participation, since the latter would have the effect of undermining the first (Fishkin 2009). John Dryzek also acknowledges that the larger the number of participants, “the harder it becomes for them to deliberate together” (Dryzek 2008). While the trade-off between participation and deliberation has long been discussed by

democratic theorists (Cohen and Fung 2004), it remains a normative question lacking empirical support. Deliberative democrats have so far produced no evidence of whether the scale of participation affects the effectiveness of deliberation.

Empirical studies on deliberation have over the years mostly relied on minipublics, which are “small enough to be genuinely deliberative, and representative enough to be genuinely democratic” (Goodin and Dryzek, 2006). Even the best attempts by deliberative democrats to overcome the problem of scale still rely on minipublics, as it is the case of Dryzek’s (2008) idea of “discursive representation” and Mansbridge’s (2010) and Niemeyer’s (2012) concepts of “deliberative system”. Assuming that the process of converting individual’s beliefs and desires into preferences “does appear to work at best during the kind of group deliberation that is found in minipublics”, Niemeyer claims that at least their impact can be scaled up the public sphere (Niemeyer 2012). No study has however pointed that the transformation of preferences that is characteristic of deliberation can be achieved in large-scale participatory settings, beyond the circumscribed space of minipublics.

Can participation scale-up to the national level? And if so, can large-scale participation be attained without forfeiting deliberation? This article answers positively these two questions, providing empirical evidence that deliberation can scale-up together with participation, managing to impact on national-level policies. I will argue that participation can be feasible at the national level and that deliberation can be effective in the large-scale, once the appropriate institutional design is in place. Such institutional design involves two overlapping dimensions of scaling-up, feasibility and effectiveness. As for the feasibility dimension, I will argue that large-scale experiments may allow participation to scale up conforming to three criteria: actors, space and volume. As for the effectiveness dimension, I will argue that large participatory experiments should provide that the deliberation follows two criteria – transformation and impact – in order to scale-up local preferences to the

national level and make sure they influence policy outcomes. Such theoretical framework will be tested against the empirical background of the world's largest participatory and deliberative experiment known to date, the National Public Policy Conferences in Brazil.

Two Dimensions of Scaling-up: Feasibility and Effectiveness

In what follows I will propose a theoretical framework consisting on institutional design criteria that seeks to simultaneously assure the feasibility of scaling-up participation, and provide an assessment of how preferences expressed in the local level may, through a sequential process of deliberation, effectively affect policies in the state/regional and national-level. In order to assess whether deliberation can be effective in large-scale participatory experiments, I must provide a working definition of deliberation. The latter is understood here as process of reasoning and openness to alternative arguments, and therefore of preference transformation (Goodin 2002, Niemeyer and Dryzek 2007, Niemeyer 2012). This is what a large-scale participatory experiment must assure, that is, a deliberative outcome that ensures that preferences were transformed through a process of reasoning and openness to alternative arguments.

In order to be feasible in large-scale and in the national level, participation should scale-up accordingly to three overlapping criteria: actors, space and volume.

The *actors* criterion implies devising a procedure able to assure that those affected by public policies and those entitled to formulate and enforce them do deliberate together. In other words, policymakers and citizens should be able to exchange arguments and allow themselves to have their preferences transformed by each other throughout the deliberation. That implies an equal involvement of State (public administrators and policymakers of all levels comprised by the deliberation) and civil society (individual citizens and representatives

of civil society organizations – CSOs) in all stages of the deliberation. This may also imply, if the State is responsible for convening and sponsoring the deliberative process (as usually happens in participatory assemblies but not so often in minipublics), that civil society has means to avoid power abuse, for example by having a majority of deliberators in the scaling stages of the deliberation.

The *volume* criterion implies devising a process apt to assure that the number of people involved in the deliberation and the outcomes generated by them increase accordingly and in proportion to the spatial scaling-up. That entails involving *simultaneous* participatory assemblies in each of the (spatial) levels and assuring that the deliberative outcomes of all of them converge to a final stage of deliberation in that same level. That also entails a process entirely open to participants (and to the preferences expressed by them) in its initial (local) stage, however dependent on delegative chains to the scaling stages of deliberation (intended to assure that local participants will also take part into the scaling (state/national) levels of deliberations).

The *space* criterion implies devising a procedure able to further the deliberation from the local to the national level. That entails involving *subsequent* participatory assemblies in the local, state and national levels in one same sequential deliberative process, making sure the risks of agency-loss throughout the process are minimized. The participatory procedure should link local to national deliberations, in such a way as to guarantee that preferences expressed in the local level will be deliberated in the national one. A national participatory assembly should then be the final stage of a process consisting in subsequent deliberations starting in the local level.

Table 1 summarizes all three criteria of feasibility, indicating their scope, main features and requirements.

Table 1: Feasibility Dimension

Criteria	Scope	Features	Requirements
Actors	Link State and Civil Society	Conjoint deliberation of policymakers and citizens/CSOs	Majority of Civil Society deliberators in order to avoid power abuse
Volume	Link volume of participation to the spatial scaling-up	Simultaneous participatory assemblies in the same (local/state) level	Delegative chains (election of delegates) to the scaling stages
Space	Link local to national level	Subsequent participatory assemblies in ascending (state/national) levels	Final stage of deliberation of the aggregated outcomes from previous stages

The three feasibility criteria of scaling-up overlap and all of them involve the scaling-up of both deliberators and deliberative outcomes (the result of the deliberations from the simultaneous and subsequent participatory assemblies). This framework offers a model of staged deliberation that has some resemblances with Robert Goodin’s (2005) model of “sequenced deliberation”, however the staged deliberative process I envisage here does not involve fragmenting the deliberative task into so many parts and agents with so distinct roles. In my institutional framework, the delegative chains that connect the local to the national level allow that the combination of wide participation with face-to-face deliberation to take place within a system of representation, and that’s why deliberators must ascend to the scaling levels of the deliberative process along with the outcomes of each of its stages.

These three criteria discussed so far show how scaling-up participation may be feasible, however they don’t assure that the deliberation is effective. In what concerns the effectiveness of deliberation in large-scale participatory settings, the institutional design should be assessed through two other criteria, transformation and impact.

The *transformation* criterion deals with the articulation of all subsequent and simultaneous participatory assemblies and the aggregation of their deliberative outcomes in such a way as to construct a final consensus that reflects the entire deliberative process, all stages comprised. Such consensus builds up on the replication, reconstruction or rejection of

local preferences in an intermediary (state/region) stage, and on the replication or reconstruction of local preferences in the final, national stage of deliberation. The aim of this criterion is making sure that enlarged participation does not undermine deliberation: the preferences expressed in the local level may be transformed (that is, changed as result of confrontation with other preferences) as the deliberation scales-up. In other words, the aggregation of the deliberative outcomes of all simultaneous and subsequent participatory assemblies or minipublics reflects a consensus composed of local preferences that were replicated, reconstructed or rejected – that is, deliberated – throughout the scaling-up process. Such a criterion allows one to assess (the quality of) deliberation by assessing its outcomes, and not its procedure. One can say deliberation took place, when one observes that preferences were transformed as a result of it.

The *impact* criterion seeks to ensure the replication or reconstruction of local preferences (accordingly to the transformative criterion, which assures a process of reasoning and openness to alternative preferences) on state/regional and national policies, making sure that large-scale participation and deliberation affect public policy.. The idea is that preferences expressed by citizens and CSOs in the local level may effectively transform the preferences expressed by policymakers in state/regional and national policies, by being replicated or reconstructed in the latter. This criterion ensures that outcomes of large-scale, national level participatory experiments are causally affected by preferences expressed in the local level and deliberated through the scaling-up process.

Table 2 summarizes the two criteria of the effectiveness dimension, indicating their aims and scopes.

Table 2: Effectiveness Dimension

Criteria	Aim	Scope
Transformation	Transformation of	Aggregate deliberative outcomes of all

	preferences throughout the simultaneous and subsequent stages of deliberation	stages in order to reach a final consensus Replication/Reconstruction/Rejection of local preferences in the intermediary (state/region) stage of deliberation, and Replication/Reconstruction of local preferences on final, national stages of deliberation
Impact	Transformation of preferences in the policymaking	Replication/Reconstruction of local preferences on state and national policies

The next two sections will each address the main arguments of this article, that is, the feasibility of large-scale participation and the effectiveness of deliberation in the latter. Both arguments will be tested against the background of the Brazilian National Public Policy Conferences (NPPC). The NPPCs consist in large-scale participatory and deliberative experiments that have been gathering together millions of people in all three levels of the Brazilian federation over the last years, with the main scope of providing societal inputs to the design and implementation of public policy. In the next section, I will deal with the feasibility dimension of the scaling-up problem, and describe how the NPPCs work in general, aiming at showing how they encompass all three feasibility criteria of scaling-up participation: actors, volume and space. The section after that will deal with the effectiveness dimension of the scaling-up problem, and rely on specific NPPC cases in order to show how scaled-up deliberation can also be effective, managing to transform preferences in all stages of a large-scale process and impact on national politics.

Feasibility Dimension

Actors

Rather than formulating policies from the top down through a formal procedure that might at best involve the aid of technical expertise, the Brazilian government have been over the last years providing civil society with an occasion to join it in the process of deliberating and designing public policies. It is Brazil's federal government that convenes a National Public Policy Conference, with the President's decree or ministerial act to initiate the process following either from governmental perception that a certain area demands new policymaking or from an external demand or pressure from civil society. In general, both actors – government and civil society – act together from the start in the task of organizing the national conferences process.

In its historical origin, the first NPCC was convened in 1941, during the first Getúlio Vargas government (1930-1945). That was doubtless an intricate time in world history, and also in Brazil. Despite the authoritarian taints charged against Vargas in that moment of his government (the so-called “New State”, 1937-1945), his strong social concerns seemed not to be blurred. Through a decree enacted in January 1941, President Vargas summoned to convene the I National Conference on Education and the I National Conference on Health.

Although arising from a political decision of the Presidency, one cannot say that the creation of the NPPCs was the result of a top-down process. Several of Vargas actions were attempts to respond to demands of the sanitarian movements, which have been very strong in the previous decades. Moreover, although both Education and Health conferences were held in 1941, only the latter kept being repeated in the next decades, what can be taken as a result of the mobilization of the health organizations, which have always been very organized in Brazil (Hochmann 1993). Brazil only had a National Conference on Education again almost 70 years later, in 2010, being preceded in 2008 by a National Conference on Basic Education.

The fact that the health NPPCs remained to take place over the years always within the legal framework and institutional design envisaged by Vargas, regardless of the government or party on power, and lasted even during the military dictatorship, must say something about the role of civil society in the development of such democratic experiment.

The interaction between State and civil society may also be located in the initial institutional design of the NPPCs – which despite being nowadays much developed and complexified still preserve some of its earliest and essential features. A 1937 law that determined the biannual occurrence of the Health and the Education NPPCs is the first document to define what they entail: the national conferences “should facilitate the federal Government to get to know the activities concerning health and education which are performed in the entire country, and should orientate it in the execution of the local education and health services, as well as in the concession of federal allowance and subvention” (Law 378, article 90). In its initial definition, the NPPC had therefore already the scope of providing policy inputs to the federal government, and of so doing taking into account the needs and demands of the local level. The claim for a national policy that could integrate the health system providing a centralized however state-disseminated service had been long voiced by the sanitary movements (Hochmann 1993). That is a design feature the NPPCs would never leave behind: the scope of feeding national policymaking with inputs from the local level.

One can therefore say that the NPPCs, however put forward by the State, are a conjoint endeavor with civil society since its earliest inception. And as the experiment is retaken in the 1990’s, and expanded in size and scope in the 2000’s (Pogrebinschi 2012a), civil society has its role further and further increased in the process of initiating, organizing and joining the NPPC. In the last years, as the policy areas extended to public deliberation have been broadened by Lula’s government (2003-2010), several NPPC took place due to

societal demands.¹ As the channels for participation have been enlarged, civil society organizations apparently become ever more motivated and strengthened. They not only are allowed to deliberate on policies during the process and to take part into its organization, they are also able to somehow set the government's policy agenda by defining some of the areas that should be object of democratic deliberation (Pogrebinschi 2012b).

The organization of the conference process is also a co-shared endeavor between government and civil society. Once a NPPC is summoned to convene, a committee is installed to define the procedures and oversight the entire process, which can last over a year until the national stage takes place. The organizing committee's members are usually half representatives of civil society and half of the government. In some cases civil society organizations have about 60% of the seats of the organizing committee. This committee is responsible for devising the methodology, the rules, and the logistics of the conference, which embraces all three levels of the federation. The parity rule is to be followed in the composition of the eventual state and municipal organizing committees (some local conferences are co-organized by a policy council, which seats are also shared by state and civil society members). The national committee is usually also responsible for supervising the transfer of federal resources (allocated in the respective ministry or secretary in charge of the conference) to the states and municipalities.

The allocation of delegates to be elected in the municipal and state stages of the conference process and to be appointed in all three levels also follows the parity rule. In general, the NPPC's procedural norms (as deliberated and enacted by the organizing committee) determine that the State's appointed delegates should be in some proportion

¹ The forty policy issues that have been object of NPPC so far are: Health, Oral health, Workers health, Health of indigenous peoples, Mental health, Environmental health, Science, technology, and innovation in health, Management of labor and education in health, Medication and pharmaceutical care, Rights of the Elderly, Rights of people with disabilities, Gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transvestites and transsexuals, Indigenous people, Public policies for women, Rights of children and adolescents, Youth, Promotion of Racial Equality, Brazilian Communities abroad, Environment, Solidary Economy, Aquaculture and fishing, Sustainable and solidary rural development, Food and nutritional Safety, Cities, Public Security, and Communications.

distributed among the three levels of the federation. The exact share of each government level in each conference stage varies, but most of them try to make sure that representatives from municipal and state government join the national conference, and representatives from federal government join the lower levels of the deliberative process. Civil society delegates are always elected among participants. Despite the open character of the local and initial stage, some NPCCs must require that citizens to be elected are members of a civil society organization entitled to elect delegates given its representativeness in the policy area under deliberation. The purpose of this rule is to make sure that most civil society organizations concerned with the policy issue to be deliberated will join the process. The same purpose applies for government delegates. Some NPCCs, as the I National Conference on Public Security (2009), make sure in its internal rules that certain public organs (in this case, all those involved with public security) will participate in the conference stages.² The result is that a vast plurality of civil society entities and state organs take part into the conference. Just to give one example, the Rio de Janeiro state stage of the III National Conference on Policy for Women (2011) had a total of 710 participants (399 civil society and 249 government) and 595 entities “represented”, what makes 1,2 participants per entity. That is a relevant aspect of the NPCC: it enhances a form of group participation and the representation of collective interests.

Albeit convened by the government, the setting up of some conferences may happen to depend on civil society. During the preparatory stages of the I National Conference on Social Communication in 2009, the governor of São Paulo, the country’s most populated state, refused to support the state’s conference. The conference took place anyway, thanks to collective efforts of civil society organizations, supported by some mayors and local

² BRASIL. Ministério da Justiça. *Regimento da I Conferência Nacional de Segurança Pública*. Brasília, 2007, p. 04, article 15; p.09, article 44. Available at http://www.ipea.gov.br/participacao/images/pdfs/conferencias/Seguranca_Publica/regimento_1_conferencia_seguranca_publica.pdf

deputies.³ To avoid the lack of governmental collaboration in the municipal and state levels, there have already been some NPPCs, such as the I National Conference on Public Security, which had among their organizational rules a provision assuring that if the corresponding conference were not summoned to convene by the local or state government until a certain date it should then be directly organized by civil society and the workers (Brasil 2007: 10).

Given their history and design, the NPPCs turn out to be simultaneously a bottom up and top down process. Although they depend on the political will of the federal government, civil society plays a crucial role on them since their first inception. Moreover, as the process start in the local level and scales up to the national, it also becomes more socially permeable and autonomous. The design and structure of the NPPC make of it much more than a simple procedure of social consultation put forward by the State. The power over the organizing rules is formally shared between State and civil society throughout all stages of the process, and both conjointly deliberate the policy proposals – which firstly arise in the local level in the course of the deliberation itself, and are thus not set by any eventual predefined governmental agenda. The institutional design of the NPPCs protects such democratic experiment against an eventual charge that they are to serve as a mere legitimization device through which the government would simply try and raise the social acceptability of its policies. That both State and civil society are the actors that conjointly organize the procedure since its inception and together take part into all stages of the deliberation is a criterion that assures the feasibility of this large-scale participatory experiment

Space

³ This information is available at http://www.cartamaior.com.br/templates/materiaMostrar.cfm?materia_id=16259. Last checked in December 10, 2012.

What is called a National Public Policy Conference is therefore a deliberative process that comprises several levels, in such a way that the national conference (or level) itself is the culmination of a procedure that starts at the local (municipal) level, and expectedly goes through all the country's states before reaching its final (national) stage. This process seeks to assure that the participatory practice is indeed national, that its deliberations represent the interests and demands of the entire country's population. That is necessary, since the main purpose of a NPPC is to provide guidelines for the formulation of national public policies.

The first stage of deliberation of the NPPCs is in the local (municipal) level. Often a group of cities reunite, and organize the local stage together. Such aggregation of municipalities' deliberations is usually called 'regional conference', but they still consist in the first or local level of the deliberative process. After the local conferences, in which proposals for local policies are deliberated alongside with the proposals for national policies, comes the second stage, or state conference. Before it takes place, the deliberative outcomes of all the municipal conferences are arranged in a single document, one for each of the country's states. The state conferences will then deliberate which of all the municipal proposals will move up to be deliberated in the national level. Several NPPCs allow that new proposals to be deliberated in the national stage are made in this level, alongside with the deliberation of state policies. After each of the country's federative state has made its own conference, then the last stage takes place: the so-called "national conference" itself. Figure 1 shows how deliberative outcomes scales-up from the local to the national stage.

The national conference is usually held in Brasília, the country's capitol. It deliberates policy proposals that come out of each of the 27 states' conferences, which are before on compiled and systematized in a document that serve the purpose of directing the deliberations. In this stage usually no new proposals are allowed: only those policy proposals

that are contained in the document which compile the proposals that came from the municipal and state levels are to be deliberated and voted. This procedure is envisaged to assure the scope of the final results of the process as being effectively national, that is representative of the interests of all the country's federative units.

Brazil has 5.565 cities (municipalities) and 27 states (federative units). Accordingly to recent data from the federal government, two national conferences that took place in 2011 taken together reached over than 90% of all the country's municipalities.⁴ Although most NPPCs do not cover such a high proportion of the country's cities, one can note that the scaling-up process seems to be successful, at least in what concerns the procedures that intend to assure that local demands from all states will potentially be deliberated in the national level, as well as that the local level's delegates will join the national stage and be able to deliberate on the policy proposals to be generated as the final outcome of the process, and therewith try to assure that the deliberations made in their municipality will be taken into consideration.

Parallel to the local and state levels, some NPPCs also rely on other deliberative stages, permitting the organization of the so-called free or virtual conferences.⁵ The 'free conferences' can be freely organized by civil society since certain rules and procedures are followed. The 'virtual conferences' add up contributions submitted usually over the Internet following a specific procedure indicated by the NPPC organization. The policy guidelines that come out of the free and virtual conferences are then usually included in the 'booklet of policy guidelines' (the aggregation of the deliberative outcomes of the local and the state levels) that will be deliberated in the national conference. Therefore, the policy guidelines

⁴ *Jornal em Questão*, published in 09.01.12 by the Secretary of Social Communication of the Presidency of the Republic.

⁵ Examples are the 2007 I NPPC on Public Security, the 2012 II NPPC on Education, and the II NPPC on Youth Policies. For the last two see, respectively:

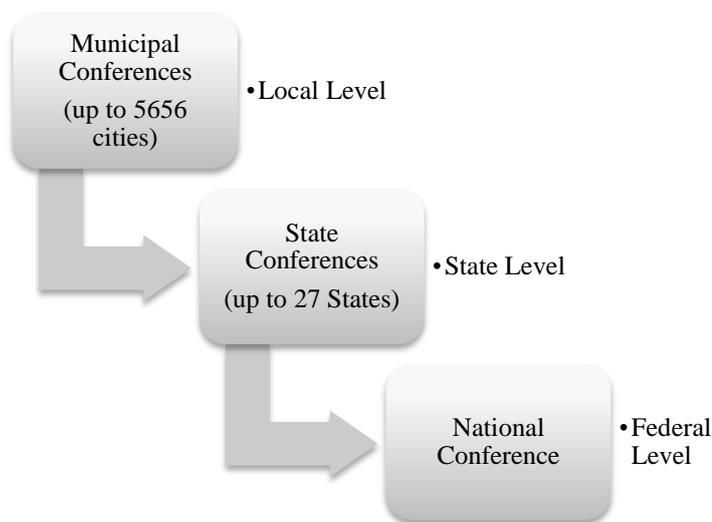
http://fne.mec.gov.br/images/pdf/regimentointernoconaeversao29_10_12_formatada.pdf and

<http://www.juventude.gov.br/conferencia/documentos/manuais-orientadores/manual-das-conferencias-livres> .

Last checked in March 19, 2013.

from the free and virtual conferences may be deliberated together with the deliberative outcomes from the local (or regional) and state conferences. But not all NPPCs permit the organization of free and virtual conferences, and within those that allow it, not all include their outcomes in the national stage's deliberation.

Figure 1: Scaling-up Deliberative Outcomes



Not only the deliberated policy proposals move up from bottom up. The citizens who participate in the local and state level's conferences have also the chance to participate in the national level as elected representatives from their respective municipality or state. A chain of delegation connects the initial stage of the deliberative process encompassed by the NPPCs (the municipal conferences) with its intermediate stage (the state conference), and the latter with the final stage (the national conference). The chains of delegation that connects the local level with the national one comprise a genuine structure of representation within the participatory and deliberative scheme of the NPPCs. The institutional design of the NPPCs, combining the space and volume criteria, and providing simultaneous and sequential

participatory assemblies, encompass a combination of participation, deliberation, and representation.

At the local level, no selective mechanism is used to choose who will participate in the process. The municipal conferences are entirely open to participation, and there has been over the past few years (especially during the second mandate of Lula's government, 2007-2010) extensive advertisement calling on people to come and engage in the NPPC. At the local stage, besides deliberating policy proposals, one of the main purposes is to elect the delegates that will take part into the upcoming (state) level. Given that anyone can show up at a municipal conference, anyone can therefore potentially be elected as a delegate and go to the subsequent stage. The participants themselves are responsible for this election, following certain rules envisaged to assure a proportionality of representation between civil society organizations and State officials.

At the state level the participation is no longer open and free; it is rather semi-open. Only the delegates elected in the local level can take part into the state conference of their respective federative unit. However, in this stage new participants will join the deliberation, since the state governments are allowed to appoint some representatives, as well as in most cases also the federal government. Although both the local and state governments may appoint representatives to take part into the municipal and state stages, they have no influence on who is elected among participants to be a delegate and ascend to the next level.

Although the process is open at the beginning, and semi-open in the middle, it closes at the end: only the delegates elected in the state levels conferences are allowed to participate into the national stage of the NPPC, along with appointed representatives from the government. In the state and national stages, therefore, among the delegates that don't belong to the civil society quota, there may be participants that have not been elected among themselves in the previous levels, but have been appointed by the (state or federal)

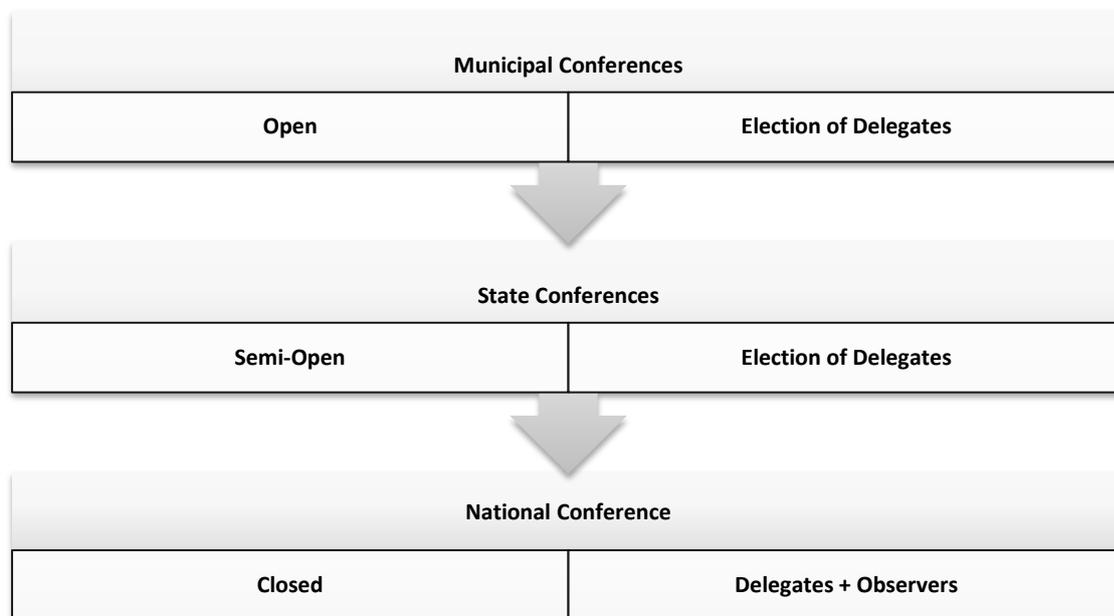
government. In some NPPCs, depending on the policy issue under deliberation, some workers' organizations or CSO can also appoint delegates.

Elected and appointed delegates eventually get together with a usually small number of other participants at the state and national levels. Those are usually external observers and invited guests, which must be always previously authorized by the organization committee to join the conference. Some NPPCs restrict the number of possible observers/guests to up to 10% of the total number of delegates. It is important to notice that, even if those external participants may in most conferences have a voice in the deliberations (being able to make and respond to arguments during the debates), only the delegates (elected and appointed) can take part into the decision making (that is, vote on the policy proposals deliberated). The observers/guests may have a right of voice, but only delegates have the right to decide. Elected and appointed delegates, along with simple "participants", compose the representative ecology of the NPPCs.

A difficulty linked to the space criterion is that since no selection mechanism is adopted in the local stage, it could happen that municipal conferences become dominated by partisans, lobbyists or certain other groups. There is yet no evidence of that, but in principle one can speculate that the freedom of participation in the local level can harm the freedom of deliberation in the upcoming levels. However, the participants themselves have a chance to correct an eventual bias as the process scales-up. The institutional design of the NPPC also prevents this to happen, given that, to scale up, participatory assemblies must not only be simultaneous, but also sequential. As in the state level delegates from dozens or hundreds of municipal conferences are reunited, it is very unlikely that an eventual participatory bias of the local stage could be reproduced in the state one: the delegates from an eventually biased municipal conference would be scattered and thus weakened in the state level among the delegates from the other many municipalities. A political party or interest group would have

to be enormously powerful (and count with a huge number of supporters and collaborators in a significant number of municipalities and states) in order to make a majority of delegates in a majority of municipal conferences. Given that the latter take place within the same timeframe, is even more unlikely. While ensuring the scaling up of both deliberation outcomes and deliberators, the openness at the initial stage and the chains of delegation in the upcoming ones, the spatial criterion contribute to the feasibility of this large-scale experiment, as illustrated by Figure 2.

Figure 2: Scaling-up Deliberators



Volume

Official data from the federal government of Brazil estimates that around 7 million people have participated in the 82 NPPCs that took place in Brazil between 2003 and 2011.⁶ Out of those, 2 million would have participated only in the 8 NPPC that took place in 2011,

⁶ *Jornal em Questão*, published in 09.01.12 by the Secretary of Social Communication of the Presidency of the Republic.

all levels comprised. The 8 national stages that took place in the capital, Brasília, encompassed 16.300 people only in 2011. Although each NPPC involves a varying number of participants, accordingly to this data the participation in 2011 would amount to an average of 250.000 people in each conference process. The NPPC is definitely a massive participatory experiment. It proves that participation is feasible not only in large territorial spaces, but also in large numbers of people involved.

The national stage of the NPPC counts with a varying number of participants. In 2011, the conference with the smaller number of participants in the final level was the II National Conference on Policy for LGBT (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transsexuals and Transvestites), which reunited 964 delegates in Brasília, after involving 7.000 people deliberating in the entire process. The largest 2011 NPPC was the XIV National Conference on Health, which had 3212 delegates, plus 15% of guest participants (not allowed to vote, only to deliberate), summing up 3694 people in the national stage. The XIV Health Conference was also responsible in 2011 for the higher number of participants in the municipal and stage levels, reaching around 600.000 people all over the country. The VIII National Conference of Social Assistance was the second with the largest number of participants in 2011, gathering together about 400.000 citizens in a vast array of municipalities.

However varied, the number of participants in the national level of the NPPC would range between around 1000 and 3000 delegates – that is, participants allowed to deliberate and vote. In average, a small national conference would have some 1000 participants, a middle-range would reach around 2000, and a large one would go over 3000 participants. Although the number of delegates that can be elected in the local and state stages should by rule be proportional to the population of each respective municipality, the number of participants in the national stage does not indicate the volume of participation in the local and

state stages. While the II National Conference on Policy for LGBT in 2011 had 964 delegates in the national level and around 7.000 in the entire process, the III National Conference on Policy for Women reunited in the same year 2781 delegates in the national stage, while the official data says that around 200.000 people (mostly women) took part in the entire process.

It is clear that what respond for the large human scale of the NPPC is its large geographical scale. Once the process embraces the entire country from the local to the national level, the massive participation number comes from the local level. The III National Conference on Policy for Women held in 2011 reached all the 27 of the country's states. In the state of Rio de Janeiro, local conferences took place in 52 out of the 92 municipalities. The local conference in the city of Rio de Janeiro gathered 357 participants, while in the state conference of Rio de Janeiro 710 delegates deliberated on policy proposals, and elected the 154 delegates that would join the national level deliberation. If one divides the total of 7915 participants from all local conferences of the State of Rio de Janeiro for the 52 municipalities where they were held, one finds an average of 152 participants for local conference (the smaller had 60 participants, the largest 400) in that state. When one has in mind that 2.160 municipalities in the entire country held a local conference on women policy, then one can have an idea of how scaling up means here both a matter of volume and space, and of how the participatory process interpenetrates the national territory while reuniting a massive number of people to deliberate on a specific public policy area.

However, as there are so far no definite standardized criteria towards NPPC organization, one finds cases in which the process was not so deeply spread throughout the territory, and nonetheless a higher level of participation was achieved. That is for example the case of the I National Conference on Public Security, which took place in 2009. Only 265 local conferences were held, however distributed in all the 27 states. This amounted to a total participation of 44.651 citizens in the local levels and 17.439 delegates in the state levels.

Nevertheless, the entire conference process convened 524.461 people. That is because this NPPC adopted the free and the virtual stages of deliberation. A total of 1.140 free conferences were organized by different sectors of civil society in 514 municipalities, bringing together a total of 66.847 citizens who did not participate at other stages. The Internet participation comprised 256.598 people deliberating proposals over the World Wide Web. Other parallel instances, embracing 135.866 participants, were also incorporated to the process: mobilization activities, thematic seminars, special projects, capacitation courses, and policemen consultations. At the end 3060 delegates decided in the national conference among policy guidelines that have been deliberated face-to-face by 225.395 people, and virtually by more 256.598.

Even if one were to reduce the analysis of the NPPC only to the small scale and look to the proportion of the municipal population that participates in the local conferences, one could not easily claim that the results of the deliberative process were more beneficial to those localities where a relatively higher proportion of the population participated in the deliberation. Not only would then several variables be at stake (whether the municipal policy proposal would reach the national level, whether any of them would be approved in the final stage, whether those would ever turn out to be enacted as a public policy, and so on), but even if all of those succeed nothing would assure that the higher the number of participants, the higher the proportion of the concerned population affected by the results of the deliberations. That's why the representativeness of the democratic experiments should be evaluated not only by the level of participation and the quality of deliberation involved, but also by the impact yielded by them on policymaking and lawmaking (Pogrebinschi and Santos 2011 and 2013). Having that premise in mind, and aiming at analyzing whether scaling up participation may not only feasible, but also scaling up deliberation may be effective, I will next examine the ability of a local (municipal) conference to have the

outcomes of its deliberations further deliberated in the state and the national levels, and the ability of a local conference to influence (by having impacts on) state and national policymaking.

Effectiveness Dimension

If scaling-up participation may be feasible by assuring both deliberators (deliberative subjects) and their deliberations (deliberative outcomes) scale-up in terms of actors, space and volume, it does not imply that it is effective in the sense of accomplishing the deliberative ideal, that is ensuring the transformation of preferences, and of doing so in a larger scale, therefore expanding the transformation of preferences. Can the outcomes of local-level deliberations be replicated in the state and national levels, achieving a broader consensus? Can the outcomes of local-level deliberations be transformed in the state and national level, reconstructing preferences and furthering initial consensus? And what seems to be most important: can the outcomes of large-scale deliberation impact on policy-making, by assuring that local deliberations are replicated in state and national public policies (and thus transform the preferences previously expressed by those policies or by their absence)?

When one moves from the question of the feasibility of scaling-up participation to the question of the effectiveness of deliberation in the large-scale, one moves from the question of scaling-up the deliberative procedure to the question of scaling-up deliberative outcomes – even though, as I argued earlier, the three intertwined criteria that concern the feasibility of scaling-up necessarily involve scaling-up deliberators and deliberative outcomes as a part of scaling-up the participatory experiment itself.

Scaling-up deliberative outcomes implies the possibility of replicating them more widely, for instance replicating in the public sphere the outcomes produced by deliberation in

minipublics (Niemeyer 2012). This entails not only assuming that the transformations of preferences occurred in minipublics can be extended to the public sphere by means of replicating a given content, but also by means of replicating the way in which positions are formed or reformed (Niemeyer and Dryzek 2007, Niemeyer 2012). In this regard, crucial to the scaling up of deliberative outcomes is whether it ensures a process of reasoning and openness to alternative arguments, and therefore of preference transformation (Goodin 2002, Niemeyer and Dryzek 2007, Niemeyer 2012).

In order to scale-up in all three dimensions of feasibility, the deliberative outcomes reached in the initial deliberative stage may be prone to transformation, since they will be subjected to further deliberation in simultaneous and subsequent stages, and therefore involve a crescent number of people throughout the process leading to the final outcome (consensus). Such transformation is the first of the two criteria of the effectiveness of scaling-up, and it implies the possibility of replicating, reconstructing or rejecting local preferences in the further stages of deliberation. The second criterion of effectiveness is the impact one, and it refers to the possibility of replicating local preferences on state and national policies, therefore transforming policymakers' preferences.

Assessing the transformative and impact dimensions of scaled-up deliberation requires looking at both supply and demand sides of deliberations. The supply side of deliberation refers to “the promulgation of claims, contentions, arguments and discourses in relation to political issues”, while the demand side refers to “the extent to which arguments are accepted” (Niemeyer 2012), assuming individuals not only as “deliberative makers” but also as “deliberative takers” (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2006, Niemeyer, 2012).

Especially the demand side of deliberation seems to be relevant when one assesses the effectiveness of scaling-up. As deliberation scales in space and volume, arguments urge even more to be accepted, and not only proclaimed. The space of transformation is expanded with

the scaling-up, and even if the chances of introducing new preferences decreases as the process moves up, the chances of confronting preferences coming from different levels (simultaneous and subsequent mini-publics) increases. Therefore, the behavior of individuals and collectivities (reunited in scaling mini-publics, epistemic or policy communities) as ‘deliberative takers’ is a good indicator of how effective scaling-up is in both its transformative and impact dimensions.

In the NPPC process, considering each of its three stages as collective subjectivities and in relation to one another, one can say that municipal conferences are mostly ‘deliberative makers’; while state conferences are simultaneously ‘deliberative makers’ and ‘deliberative takers’, and national conferences are mainly ‘deliberative takers’. Although in the municipal conferences a transformation of preferences takes place among the participants as they deliberate, in relation to the upcoming stages the local one activates only the supply side of deliberation. The municipal conferences are the major ‘deliberative makers’ of the entire process, and it is the ability of the preferences constructed in this stage to be replicated in the state and national conferences what allows one to assess the effectiveness of the scaling-up in its transformative dimension. Following the same rationale, it is the ability of the local preferences (those constructed in the municipal conferences) to be replicated in state and national policies what allows one to assess the effectiveness of the scaling-up in its impact dimension. Table 3 illustrates the deliberation’s sides and roles performed by each of the NPPC stages.

Table 3: NPPC’s stages as collective subjectivities

NPPC Level	Side of deliberation activated	Role performed
Municipal	Supply	Deliberative makers
State	Supply and demand	Deliberative makers and deliberative takers
National	Demand	Deliberative takers

An analysis of the effectiveness of scaling-up deliberation in single NPPCs will allow me to test the conceptual framework described above. In what follows, I will first examine the ability of a local (municipal) conference to have the outcomes of its deliberations further deliberated (and therefore transformed) in the state and the national levels (transformative dimension), and then assess the ability of a local conference to impact on state and national policymaking (impact dimension), therefore transforming their *status quo ante*.

Transformation

At least three seem to be the conditions for an effective scaling-up of deliberation in terms of providing an expansion of the transformation of preferences envisaged by deliberative democracy: first, the possibility of *replicating* deliberative outcomes in the upcoming sequential stages; second, the possibility of *reconstructing* deliberative outcomes in the upcoming sequential stages; and third, the possibility of *rejecting* deliberative outcomes in the upcoming sequential stages. These conditions draw on Niemeyer's (2012) typology of deliberative transformation (construction, reconstruction and confutation), although substantively adapted in order to make up for all three feasibility criteria (actors, space and volume) of scaling-up proposed in this article.

In what concerns the NPCCs, an outcome is *replicated* in an upcoming stage when a state or/and national conference yield a deliberative outcome with the precise same content (even if adapted to the state and national context) of that produced in the municipal stage. In other words, a local preference is replicated in the state or/and national stages when those – after new rounds of deliberation and thus confrontation of new preferences (those contained in the deliberative outcomes generated by other municipal conferences in the state stage, and

those contained in the deliberative outcomes generated by state conferences in the national stage) – decide for holding the same deliberative outcome, preserving the entirety of the policy preferences expressed by it. Differently, a municipal conference’s deliberative outcome is *reconstructed* in the state or national stages, when its content is somehow modified by new deliberation, however without substantial loss of the preferences contained on it. This modification implies not matching the preferences in full, but only partially. What is therefore sanctioned in the state or national level is a modified version of the municipal’s deliberative outcome in the sense of not contemplating all of the local preferences in the exact way they were expressed, but only part of them. Finally, a municipal conference’s deliberative outcome is *rejected* in the state or national level when it is discarded in the new stage of deliberation, therefore not being contemplated in the deliberative outcomes aroused in those stages of the process.

Table 4: Conditions of Transformation

	Scale-up of preferences to upper stages	Deliberative outcomes of upper stages	Change of Preferences
Replication	Full	Identical to the previous stage	Preferences do not change
Reconstruction	Partial	Modified in relation to the previous stage	Preferences change in part
Rejection	None	Totally different than in the previous stage	Preferences change in full

Note that a tension between criteria to assess the effectiveness of scaling-up deliberative outcomes and criteria to assess the quality of deliberation can arise here. The lower the preferences expressed in the local level change in the upper levels, the higher the effectiveness of scaling-up the outcomes of deliberations, given that higher is the impact of local preferences on the national level. However, when the preferences expressed in the local level are subjected to minimal or no changes in the upper levels, one can assume that less

deliberation took place. This is however a wrong assumption, since deliberation should ensure a process of reasoning and openness to arguments through which preferences can change, and not ensure that they will necessarily change.

The NPPCs are definitely a process that ensure reasoning and openness to arguments through which preferences can change. The fact that deliberation about the same policy issue takes place in simultaneous and sequential participatory assemblies and the fact that the latter are spread out in different cities and states (and therefore subjected to different social, political and cultural contexts) ensures that the process is open to all sorts of arguments and opportunities for deliberation. Since the deliberation process is composed by simultaneous and sequential stages, the probability that the final deliberative outcome is subjected to distortions (like power relations, discursive or institutional) must be very low. The procedure of the NPPC ensures therefore that deliberation takes place. Whether it is higher or lower in the different levels is an empirical question; however, if deliberation is to be assessed through amount of preference change, one can assume that the lower it is, the higher the chances that local-level preferences reach the national level, and therefore scale-up.

I will move now to the exam of the III National Conference of Women Policy (2011), in order to find out whether the scaling-up of deliberation has proved itself to be effective in what concerns the transformation criteria. I will conduct such assessment by analyzing the transformations (replication, reconstruction, rejection) of the deliberative outcome of a municipal conference in the upper stages, that is, the state and national conferences. The municipal conference to be scrutinized is that of Niterói, the sixth most populated city of the state of Rio de Janeiro, which for its turn is the second most populated state of Brazil.

The Niterói's Municipal Conference on Women Policy took place in July 2011 and gathered together 188 participants. They have deliberated for three days, in the end of which they voted and approved a "final report" containing 37 policy guidelines. Those policy

guidelines are the final deliberations of the local conference, therefore this document consists in its deliberative outcome. The deliberations or policy guidelines contained on it can be of various sorts. They can be specific in the sense of designing a local policy like the one that claimed “public kindergartens for all children in the city, full-time and on weekends, even in evening hours for parents who need it” (Niterói 2011:4). Or they can be specific in the sense of designing a federal policy, as the guideline that demands to “include in the [federal] government program "Minha Casa Minha Vida" ["My House, my Life"] a special credit line for women victims of domestic violence who do not have income and free housing for women in situations of economic vulnerability” (Niterói, 2011: 4). The policy guidelines can also be broad, and envisage a policy concerning all three stages of the federation, as the one that requested to “develop a non-discriminatory education system, that does not reproduce stereotypes of gender, race and ethnicity and sexual orientation” (Niterói 2011:4).

The deliberative outcome of the Niterói municipal conference (the 37 policy guidelines) was aggregated with the deliberative outcomes from other 47 municipal conferences held in the state of Rio de Janeiro, involving 52 municipalities. Such compilation of deliberations approved in all municipal conferences (which is supposed not to discard any guidelines, even conflictive ones) contains the propositions that would then be deliberated in the State Conference of Rio de Janeiro. In other words, the aggregate deliberative outcomes of all municipal conferences within a state provide the propositions to be deliberated in the respective state conference – although new propositions can also be introduced at this stage, as I have explained earlier. The Rio’s State Conference took place in October 2011 and gathered together 710 participants, who after four days of deliberation (the fourth one entirely devoted to a plenary discussion and voting of the policy guidelines deliberated in the previous

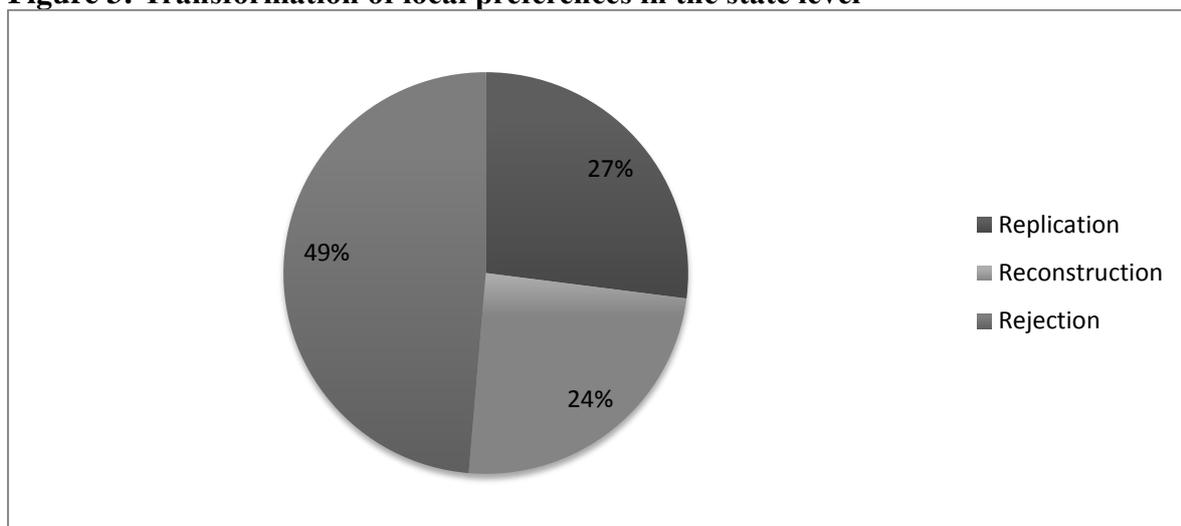
days in thematic working groups) came out with a consensus toward 20 general policy proposals (each of those actually unfolding in more than one policy proposal).

Once explained the deliberative process, we can move to the exam of the transformation criterion: how much of the local deliberative outcomes have managed to scale-up to the upper, state stage? More specifically, how many of the deliberative outcomes of the local-level stage of deliberation in Niterói have been incorporated into the deliberative outcome of the Rio de Janeiro state stage of the deliberation process? After juxtaposing and comparing all deliberations/policy guidelines contained in the final report from the Niterói's municipal conference with all deliberations/policy proposals contained in the final report from the Rio's state conference, I came to the following result: 51% of the local-level deliberative outcome can be said to have scaled-up to the state level. To put it another way, about half of the deliberative outcome of the Niterói's municipal conference were replicated or reconstructed in the Rio's state conference.

If 51% of the municipal deliberative outcome scaled-up to the state level, that means that 49% of it has been rejected, that is discarded after further deliberation. Discarding policy guidelines (and thus the arguments that support them) is a result of the deliberation: the state deliberators couldn't be persuaded by the Niterói ones in those standpoints, and possibly agreed on others proposed by other municipal conferences. Out of the municipal guidelines that managed to scale-up, 27% have been replicated and 24% reconstructed, as indicated in Figure 3. The reconstructed ones do not entail a substantive modification, but a partial consideration of the initial content. For example: a municipal guideline from Niterói claimed for "policies for vocational training (professional and technological training), and the first employment program for women, governed by specific legislation, working with nurseries in schools" (Niterói 2011: 4). The first part of this guideline ("policies for vocational training (professional and technological training), and the

first employment program for women”) has been contemplated in the state conference’s deliberative outcome, but not the second one (“governed by specific legislation, working with nurseries in schools”). The state conference’s proposal that considered the municipal conference one was in fact much broader, possibly also incorporating proposals from other municipal conferences. It asserts: “create affirmative action policies aimed at integrating women into the labor market, in an attempt to overcome the gender divide in the workplace and tackling inequalities in the labor, sexual exploitation of women and sex tourism through training professional programs with quality, without reproducing professions restricted to home or traditionally occupied by women, encouraging the empowerment of women in new technologies” (Rio de Janeiro 2011: 16). The deliberative outcome of the municipal conference has been reconstructed in the state conference; preferences have been changed in the sense of incorporating new issues deliberated and discarding previous ones. As one can notice, the agency-loss of the reconstructed outcomes is minimal, in the sense of preserving the preferences expressed in the local level.

Figure 3: Transformation of local preferences in the state level

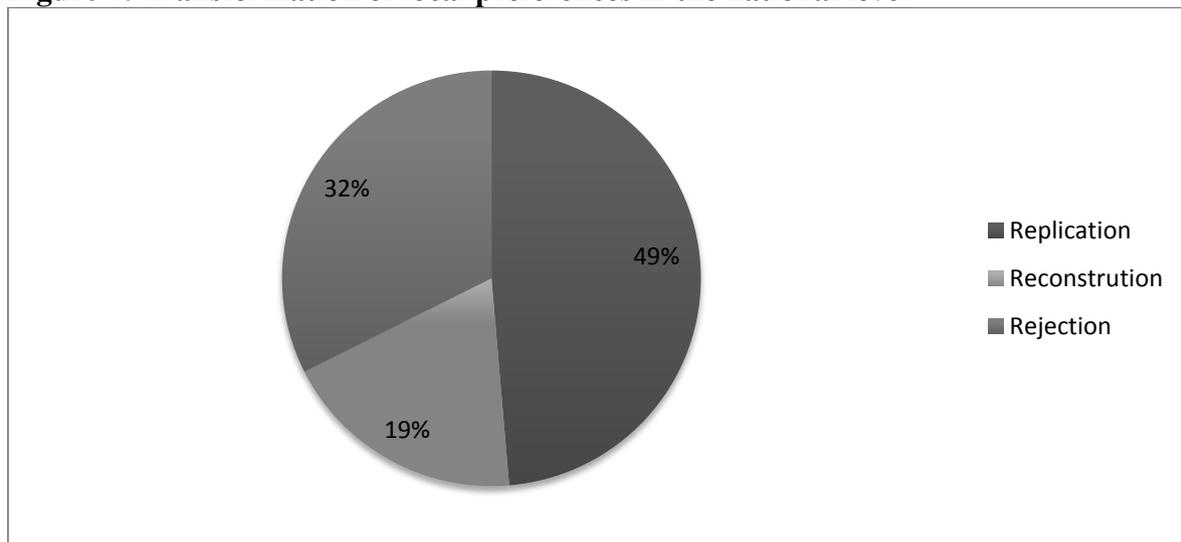


Let's now look at the national stage of the 2011 Conference on Women Policy. How much of the local deliberative outcomes from Niterói scaled-up to the national level? Surprisingly enough, more than those that scaled-up to the state level: 68%. How come municipal deliberations that have not been contemplated by the state deliberative outcome managed to be included in the national one? The answer is simple: other municipalitie(s) from other state(s) generated similar deliberative outcomes (similar policy guidelines) as those from Niterói (which were rejected in the Rio de Janeiro state conference) and managed to have them contemplated in their respective(s) state(s) deliberative outcome(s). In other words, municipal guidelines rejected in their respective state conference can still be either replicated or reconstructed in the national stage, provided that other municipal conferences in other states manage to have them included in the deliberative outcome of their respective state conferences. One example of a Niterói's municipal guideline that has been rejected in the state deliberation and replicated in the national one is: "promote access to basic and higher education among girls and women by ensuring generational interaction". There are also municipal guidelines that are reconstructed in the state level, but happen to be replicated in the national one. The explanation for this outcome is precisely the same: such Niterói's guideline is in fact a similar guideline from other(s) municipal conference(s) that happened to be replicated in their(s) state(s) deliberative outcomes, and subsequently in the national one. The fact that a municipal outcome that has been reconstructed in the state level turns out to be replicated in the national one indicates how the scaling-up is effective in the sense of enabling the transformation of preferences through further deliberation.

Out of the 68% of municipal policy guidelines that have been contemplated in the national deliberative outcome, 49% have been replicated and 19% reconstructed, as indicated in Figure 4. The high proportion of replicated guidelines (much higher than that found on the scaling-up to the state level) indicates how simultaneous participatory assemblies (municipal

conferences) deliberating on the same policy issue (women policy) reach very similar outcomes. One must note that the social, political and economic contexts of each of these participatory assemblies, as well as the deliberative capacity of those who participate in them are very diverse. Niterói, for example is the municipality with the highest Human Development Index (HDI) of the state of Rio de Janeiro and one of the highest of the entire country. Rio de Janeiro has the second highest economy of Brazil. Notwithstanding, other municipal conferences held in more underdeveloped and poorer states agreed on a same policy guideline and therefore reached a same deliberative outcome. And while Niterói has not managed to scale it up to the state level, (some) other municipality did. Scaling-up seems to be effective in what concerns the transformation of preferences through simultaneous and subsequent mini-publics.

Figure 4: Transformation of local preferences in the national level



Impact

The second criterion of the effectiveness dimension of scaling-up is the impact. Could deliberation in enlarged participatory practices be effective in the sense of influencing

policymaking in the national level? Could local preferences expressed in the initial stage of a scaled-up deliberative process be incorporated in state and national public policies? I will answer these questions by examining the case of the II National Conference on Women Policy, which took place in 2007. Once again, the method to be used here is to juxtapose and compare the final deliberations/policy guidelines from a local-level conference with state and national policies enacted by the government in a later period of time.

One year after the national stage of the II NPPC on Women Policy, in 2008, a presidential decree enacted Brazil's II National Plan for Policies for Women.⁷ This 237 pages legal document asserts in its introduction to consist in the "result of the mobilization of almost 200,000 Brazilian women, who participated throughout the country in the municipal and state conferences, and elected 2,700 delegates to the II NPPC on Women Policy" (Brasil 2008: 7). After that, several of the country's states also enacted comprehensive legal acts (policy plans) comprising policies for women. In what follows I will examine whether the deliberation outcome of the municipal conference of Salvador, the capitol of the state of Bahia in northeastern Brazil, scaled-up to the state and national policies, and to what extension the local preferences managed to be incorporated in both levels of policymaking.

After three days of intense deliberation in May 2007, the 420 participants of the municipal conference of Salvador approved 303 proposals comprising several topics and reaching policy areas as diverse as health and public security.⁸ Two years later, in 2009, the government of Bahia enacted the II *Bahia's State Plan of Women Policy*.⁹ It is asserted in the introduction of the 120 pages document that it has been elaborated "with the words of women from every part of Bahia, based on the demands presented at each municipal and regional

⁷ Available at <http://www.sepm.gov.br/pnpm/livreto-mulher.pdf> . Last checked in March 19, 2013.

⁸ *Propostas e Recomendações da II Conferência Municipal de Políticas para Mulheres*. Available at http://www.spm.salvador.ba.gov.br/images/stories/relatorio_cmpm.pdf . Last checked in March 19, 2013

⁹ Available at http://www.bibliotecafeminista.org.br/index.php?option=com_remository&Itemid=53&func=fileinfo&id=358 . Last checked in March 19, 2013.

conferences, as well as the State conference that took place in 2007” (Bahia 2008: 5). How many of the 303 deliberative outcomes of the municipal conference that took place in Bahia’s capitol, Salvador, managed to be included in such state policy? After juxtaposing and comparing the Salvador’s deliberative outcome with the Bahia’s state plan, the answer is: almost one half. Out of the 303 proposals, 44% (133) were somehow incorporated in the state policy. That is certainly a positive result, and one can say the outcomes of the deliberation that has taken place in the local conference in Salvador impacted significantly on the state policy.

How exactly the local preferences expressed in Salvador have been incorporated in the *Bahia’s Plan of Women Policy*? Out of the 133 policy guidelines from the Salvador’s deliberative outcome that were contemplated in the state policy, 62% (82) were reconstructed, while 38% (51) were replicated. I have considered as replicated deliberation/policy guideline those that have been reproduced in the state plan with the exact same content (even if adapted to the state context), validating the entirety of the preferences expressed in the local level deliberation. As reconstructed deliberations/policy guidelines I have considered those that are not reproduced in the state policy in their exactness and wholeness. They can either have been altered or fragmented, although in both cases they preserve the substance of the preferences expressed in the deliberation that took place in the local level. Some policy guidelines comprise more than one demand (some are actually drafted in such a complex way as to encompass several demands in one single proposal), and a reconstructed policy guideline is therefore one that may simply have fulfilled one or more demands, but not all of them. In any event, the results show that local preferences are indeed able to scale-up and shape state policies, impacting on government decisions.

Salvador was one between the country’s 600 municipalities that organized a local conference preceding the national stage of the 2007 NPPC on Women Policy. It elected 102

delegates to the state conference in Bahia and a reduced number of them were between the 2,559 delegates that made it to the national conference. How much of the Salvador's deliberative outcome managed to be included in the national policy; that is, how many of the preferences expressed in the local level can be said to have scaled up to the *II National Plan of Policy for Women* enacted by the Brazilian government in 2008? The juxtaposition and comparison between the Salvador municipal conference's final report and the II National Plan shows that about one third of the former deliberative outcome has been incorporated into the latter. More specifically 34% of the local deliberations/policy guidelines were considered, what is certainly a very high proportion, especially considering that Salvador's proposals that managed to ascend to the state conference and then to the national conference were certainly not so many. Notwithstanding, about 102 of the proposals approved in the Salvador municipal conference are somehow contemplated in the national policy. That means that other municipalities in the country achieved the same deliberative outcomes than Salvador's local conference. Once again, the analysis indicates that simultaneous participatory assemblies deliberating on the same issues throughout the country can achieve very similar outcomes, regardless of the specific context where the deliberation is held. That shows that local-level preferences expressed through deliberation can indeed be national in nature, and therefore an institutional design that is able to allow them to scale-up and be incorporated in national policies is an important democratic tool.

Another evidence that simultaneous participatory assemblies tend to produce similar deliberative outcomes is the fact that about two-thirds (61%) of the local deliberations/policy guidelines from the Salvador conference that were contemplated on the *II National Plan for Policies for Women* have been reconstructed. As reconstructed preferences are those that have been modified and not fulfilled in its entirety, one can assume that such changes have benefited from the process of preferences transformation allowed for the scaling-up process,

that is the simultaneous and subsequent assemblies organized all over the country. The proportion of fully replicated proposals is at any rate quite high; that 39% of the local deliberative outcomes that managed to be included in the national policy were fully reproduced is a very significant result, and indicates that preferences expressed in local level participatory assemblies can shape national politics and causally affect public decisions.

Squaring the Circle

Can the circle of participatory democracy be squared? That is, can participatory practices be feasible in the large-scale and national level, or are they by nature limited to the small-scale and local level? And if they are feasible in the large scale, can participatory practices also be effective, that is allow that the deliberations of a large number of citizens impacts on governmental decisions? This article provided positive answers to these two questions, and relied empirical evidence in order to suggest some institutional design criteria that should allow for the feasibility and the effectiveness of large-scale participation and deliberation in the national level. Once the appropriate institutional design is in place, large-scale participatory practices can bring thousands of people together to deliberate over issues concerning a vast territory and population. And what seems more important, the outcomes of such deliberations can impact on national politics.

The claim that scale is no argument against participatory democracy (Warren 2002) has so far remained a normative one. Scholarship on democratic participation has so far been limited to the exam of local participatory practices, and has mostly relied on studies of minipublics experiments. This is acceptable, given that to date the world seemed not to know a national level participatory and deliberative practice, or at least one able to engage a massive number of citizens deliberating on issues beyond their local interests. Moreover,

minipublics or local participatory assemblies seem to date to offer the most adequate institutional conditions for a deliberation to take place, allowing for the conversion of individuals beliefs into preferences, and allowing for the transformation of such preferences through the given and take of arguments. Not surprisingly the first known large-scale national level participatory and deliberative practice, the Brazilian National Public Policy Conferences, is based on a set of subsequent and simultaneous participatory assemblies that allow deliberation to scale-up along with participation.

And so the circle can be squared: large-scale participation is not only feasible, but it can also be attained without forfeiting deliberation. The concrete experience of the NPPCs, as demonstrated in this article, shows how the trade-off between participation and deliberation is a theoretical problem that can be empirically overcome. Deliberation can scale-up in space and volume through the use of subsequent and simultaneous participatory assemblies and the mandatory equal participation of State and civil society actors in the deliberative process. The finding that participatory assemblies spread throughout a national territory achieve similar deliberative outcomes, and that the latter make their way to be replicated or reconstructed in policymaking seems to be strong evidence that the geometry of politics is starting to create new democratic forms.

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