MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE PROCESSES – CITIZENS & LOCAL BUDGETING: COMPARING BRAZIL, CHINA, & THE UNITED STATES

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Modifications to policymaking processes and actors are crucial when transitioning to multilevel governance. Civic engagement in budgeting processes, where crucial policy decisions are determined, is an important component of shared governance. Understanding the new roles for citizens in the budget process, then, can extend our knowledge of multilevel governance. This research explores the ways in which the budget process incorporates citizen participation to foster an ideal of civil society in the United States, Brazil, and China. The comparative case analysis probes the extent to which institutional changes have occurred, why they have occurred, and the degree to which municipal budget processes are characterized by multilevel governance.

Key Words: Citizen Participation, Governance, Local Budget Process.
INTRODUCTION

Contemporary transitions in governance manifest themselves in “interconnected arenas” featuring diverse actors collaborating on policymaking to leverage interdependent resources. These transitions represent “reconfiguration of state, market, and civil society around certain values, processes, and institutions” (Clarke 2007, 58). Collective academic realization of shifts in governance activities was evident as early as thirty years ago when Musolf and Seidman (1980) documented the “blurred boundaries” of public administration. The boundaries of government decision making increasingly feature third-party (Salamon 1981) and private actors (Kooiman 1993). Scholars around the world have identified similar causes for these blurring boundaries, including increased complexity and turbulence in how societal decisions are made, fragmentation of activities and authority, higher levels of uncertainty and risk, declining capacity of political and administrative systems, fiscal crisis of the welfare state, market failure, challenges to the hierarchical model of public management, growing demands for more accountability and transparency in policymaking, and the impact of globalization (see e.g., Salamon and Lund 1989; Mayntz 1991; Kjaer 2004; Abramson, Breul, and Kamensky 2006; Clarke 2007).

The growing interpenetration of what were viewed previously as distinct realms of action created increased levels of interconnectedness, and shared power arrangements supplemented, and increasingly supplanted, decision making and administration solely by public officials (Bryson and Einsweiler 1991, 3–10). The interpenetration of sectors necessitates conceptual clarity. Governing is now defined as “all those activities of social, political, and administrative actors that can be seen as purposeful efforts to guide, steer, control or manage (sectors or facets of) societies” (Kooiman 1993, 2). Governance, according to Bellamy and Palumbo (2010) is

a move away from traditional hierarchical forms of organization and the adoption of network forms. It also entails a revision of the relationship between the state and civil society in a more participatory direction.[…] The state is thus claimed to be superseded by a “networked polity” where authority is devolved to task-specific institutions with unlimited jurisdictions and intersecting memberships operating at sub- and supra-national levels. (As quoted in Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011, 21–22.)

One of the most powerful institutional transformations in government that have led to new patterns of governance has been the concomitant movement of political authority upward from central governments to international entities and downward to subnational ones (Fosler 1999). Multilevel governance (MLG) “describes the simultaneous activation of governmental and nongovernmental actors at various jurisdictional levels” (Piattoni 2010, 159), which is distinctly different from the Westminster model of a centralized,