

## **Putting participation in context: An evaluation of urban sanitation in Brazil**

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### **Abstract**

In this dissertation, I examined the performance of condominium sewer projects in two Brazilian cities. My research objectives were to investigate the impact of participation on condominium sewer project performance, and to identify the key factors that enabled good performance. I used qualitative research methods and analyzed six condominium sewer projects as case studies. Primary data were obtained during a ten-month period of fieldwork in the capital cities of Natal and Recife, Brazil. The dissertation produced two sets of results. In the first set of results, project performance was: (1) positively associated with the participation of beneficiaries in project mobilizing and project decisions; and (2) not positively associated with participation in project construction and maintenance work. Although beneficiaries did participate in project construction and maintenance work, these categories of participation were not positively associated with project performance. These results, which are contrary to what was anticipated based on the literature, suggested that other variables were more significant in influencing project outcomes.

In the second set of results, two other factors were associated with project performance: (1) the alignment of interests among elected officials and implementing agencies in support of the project; and (2) the ability of communities to influence elected officials and implementing agencies to support the project (e.g., by delivering large blocks of votes). In Recife, good project performance was more likely when elected officials and sewer agencies provided consistent support for a particular project, when communities organized in order to exert influence on the officials and agencies who controlled sewer services, and when residents participated in project mobilizing and decisions. In Natal, good project performance was associated with the alignment of interests and with participation in project mobilizing and project decisions. Given Brazil's continuing efforts to decentralize its sanitation sector, and given the country's historic use of infrastructure projects as elements of political patronage, the proposed framework provides an appropriate basis for understanding what factors enable good performance in the urban sanitation sector.

### **Full reference:**

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