Participatory budgeting in 2020: participation without democracy?

Workshop
23 November 2020, Paris, France

Call for papers

Since the 2010s, participatory budgeting processes have not been the subject of many updated empirical studies, despite their multiplication. The present call invites to highlight and put into perspective the specificities of the most recent participatory budgets; in particular since 2014 in France, and more generally since the years 2010. We aim to gather papers that will allow us to renew the understanding of case studies, and the related general questions about the objectives of the organizers, the effects on participants, on public policies and democracy.

1. What has become of participatory budgeting?

Objective: Renewing contextual analyses of participatory budgets (PB) case studies in 2020.

- Which processes can be labelled as "PB"? What are the main differences and similarities between new cases and the older ones?
- What methods, procedures and technologies have been put in place to run PB? To what extent do these new participatory budgets transform practices and update our definition of PB?
- Can some actors resist the adoption of participatory budgeting? Which territories seem immune? For what reasons?
- What has happened to PB experiences in Brazil since 1990? Do the original experiences still influence, as a reference, the current diffusion?
- How stakeholders conceive PB? Are promoters of a stronger participatory democracy always enthusiastic to implement PB?
- Do we discern more and more PB cases and less and less room for manoeuvre on budget choices? To which extent PB becomes merely a consolation prize when local authorities face spending reductions?
- Are implemented projects very similar from a place to another? What is their social impact?

2. Current effects of participatory budgeting

Objective: Grasping the effects on public policies and public sector

- How can PB make some influence on local budgets, and vice versa? What happens to the redistributive claim in the last generation of PBs?
- Is there a renewal of clientelism or co-optation patterns?
- To what extent are civil service and local public policies disrupted by PB? What are the resistances from actors who feel deprived?
What are the impacts on private actors and civil servants, as public participation professionals?

How are the projects really implemented? What happens to citizen involvement once the project is funded? Is there any form of citizen oversight?

Which public policies can benefit or, on the contrary, are harmed by participatory budgeting? Which companies and firms can benefit from PB exercises? To what extent is urban planning impacted by the proposals?

3. Participatory games without political stakes?

Objective: Analyzing forms of participation and democratic outcomes of PB.

To what extent do the recent participatory budgets allow the inclusion of new categories of population in participatory democracy? Do new participatory budgets support active and critical citizenship?

Does the gamification of participatory budgeting reduce its political relevance, or does it help to empower citizens?

To what extent do digital platforms influence participation and deliberation? Do these platforms favor individual demands, at the cost of collective deliberation?

Does PB lead to narrow down participatory democracy to local urban planning issues?

What kind of goals do the managers set for participation? To what extent do the participants make them their own? Is voting a real participatory climax within participatory budgeting? Is this involvement renewed over time and in other settings?

Is there any room within these PB processes for contention and radical critique? Do debates related to PB lead to the discussion of public policies?

Expected contributions

We invite papers exploring original empirical evidence, covering recent PB cases (since 2010). They can be monographs or comparisons. This workshop aims at embracing the three areas of inquiry, but the call remains open to any approach that would help to shed light on the subject of “participatory budgeting”.

Abstract proposals (500 words, with name and affiliation of the author-s) have to be emailed to journee2020@budgetparticipatif.info by June 26th 2020.

The best contributions will be translated for an edited book presenting cutting-edge research about participatory budgeting. A special issue in an international journal is also being considered.

Schedule

- 26.06.20: Deadline for abstract proposal
- 20.07.20: Feedback to selected speakers
- 01.11.20: Deadline for final papers
- 23.11.20: International workshop in Paris (MSH, Paris-Nord)
- Early 2021: First submission to a scientific publisher
Scientific Committee

- Françoise Montambeault, Assistant Professor of political science, CERIUM, University of Montreal, Canada
- Giovanni Allegretti, Senior researcher in urban planning, CCS, Coimbra University, Portugal
- Julien Talpin, Senior researcher in political science, CERAPS, CNRS, Lille University, France
- Loïc Blondiaux, Professor of political science, CESSP, Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne University, France
- Stéphanie Tawa Lama-Rewal, Senior researcher in political science, CEIAS, CNRS, EHESS, Paris, France
- Yves Cabannes, Emeritus Professor in development planning, University College London, UK

Conveners

- Gilles Pradeau, PhD candidate in Politics (University of Westminster, Centre for the Study of Democracy)
- Guillaume Petit, Dr., researcher in political science (UCLouvain, IspoLe / VUB, POLI)
- William Arhip-Paterson, PhD researcher in political science (CESSP, Université Paris 1)