

A project from the Marc Bloch Center with the financial support of the Hans Böckler foundation

“Participatory Budgets in an European Comparative Approach. Perspectives and Chances of the Cooperative State at the Municipal Level in Germany”

In the framework of the field of research “The Cooperative State in the Service Society”, the Hans-Böckler Foundation (HBS) is active in the discussion concerning the development of the “New Model of Public Management” (Neues Steuerungsmodell) to foster the opening of the “political-administrative institutions to their social context”. The municipal level, place where “problems as well as solutions come together”, needs a special attention, as the HBS underlines in its research proposals. A concrete and especially innovative application of the Cooperative State lies in the Participatory Budget. In the last years, a growing number of citizen participation devices concerning the municipal budget have been experimented in Europe. Until today has there however neither been a transnational exchange of experiences nor a scientific analysis of the models, which would allow a process of mutual understanding.

In the framework of the research project “European Participatory Budgets” (short title), eleven European Participatory Budgets / participatory experiments with an important financial dimension (three in France, Spain and Germany, one in Great Britain, Finland and the Netherlands) will be investigated according to the context, the aims, the procedures and results. The purpose is to elaborate a systematic analysis which should permit to propose appropriate methods or to ameliorate existing ones according to the context and the interests of the actors (citizens, mayor, municipal council and administration). In addition, we will analyze the ways in which the participation can contribute to the modernization of administration and other aims, most notably the equality between men and women. A central goal of the Participatory Budget is an efficient administration, which improves in cooperation with the citizens, the mayor and the municipal council the efficiency of the municipal production of services and increases the competitive capacities of the municipalities. Besides the modernization of administration, we will investigate the democratization process which concerns the internal structures of administration as well as its relationships with civil society. In this context, the possible social effects of the Participatory Budgets will finally be scrutinized.

The research project focusses on Germany, France and Spain: The experiences of the Participatory Budgets are quite advanced in these countries, so that it is possible to base the analysis on already existing devices. As far as the dimension of administrative modernization is concerned, it is however interesting and necessary to include as well examples of Finland, Great Britain and the Netherlands, countries where the New Public Management plays an important role. Municipalities of different scale and social structure have been selected for the project. Every municipality provides a different model-example of participation and of administrative modernization research. The aim is to describe the procedures, to construct conceptual typologies and to elaborate indicators of comparison for defining “Best Practices”- examples in the end of the project. The possible transmission of these models is discussed in relation with the political, social and cultural context.

The material will be obtained essentially by qualitative methods: Semi-directive interviews, observation of key-moments of social interactions and analysis of the collected materials will form the core of our methods. Quantitative and statistical indicators will be elaborated when possible.

Cities

Emsdetten (D)
Esslingen (D)
Rheinstetten (D)
Bobigny (F)
St. Denis (F)
Albacete (E)
Cordoba (E)
Puente Genil (E)
Hämeenlinna (FIN)
Salford (GB)
Utrecht (NL)

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