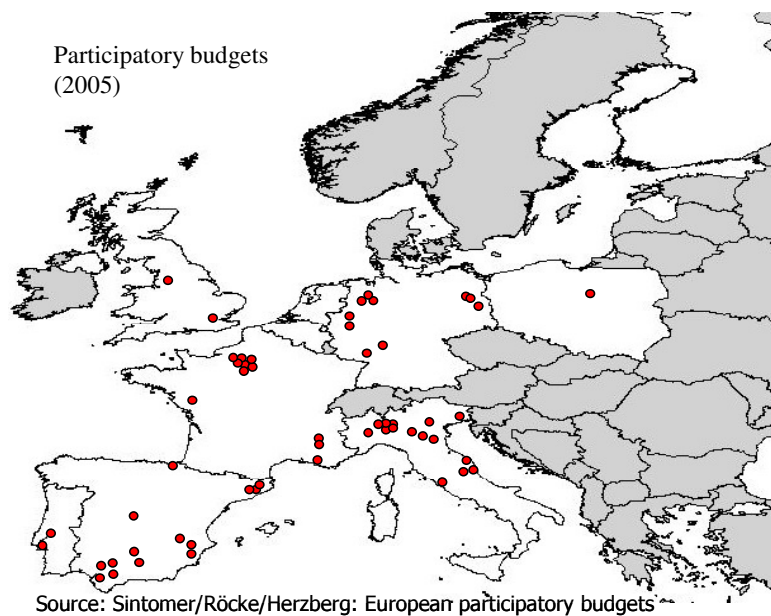


From Porto Alegre to Europe: Potentials and Limitations of Participatory Budgeting¹

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Participatory budgets have been one of the most successful participatory instruments of the past 15 years. Ever since it was invented in Latin America, it spread over the entire globe.² In Europe, participatory budgets emerged simultaneously in seven, mainly Western European countries. Procedures are currently underway or are at a preliminary stage in four further countries. Altogether, at the end of 2005, there are more than 50 European cities with a

participatory budget. Among them are large cities, such as Sevilla in Spain with more than seven hundred thousand residents or districts of the capital cities London, Paris, Rome and Berlin.³ However, there are also medium-sized cities, such as Hilden and Emsdetten in Germany and small communes, such as Grottamare or Altidona in Italy.⁴

The research about participatory budgeting is situated in a larger field of democratic innovations, both theoretically and practically. One finds there a wide range of participatory devices (consensus conferences, deliberative polls, citizen juries, etc.), of various concepts (governance, empowerment, countervailing power, etc.), and of different democratic theories (participatory and deliberative theories of democracy, etc.).⁵ The analysis of the various practical experiments has followed three steps. At first, monographic analyses have been conducted on various cities and different procedures, sometimes comparing two or three cases. A second step has allowed comparing more experiments, through conferences and collective books, but on the basis of field research that has been conducted with different methodologies and theoretical categories (e.g. Bacqué/Rey/Sintomer 2005). Our present article would like to explain part of the results of an integrated study which would like to

¹ This article was offered to the review „IJUPR“

² Experiments of participatory budgets exist primarily in Latin American countries and, to a lesser extent, in Europe. However, there is a sporadic occurrence in Africa and Asia.

³ London-Harrow: 211,000 residents; Paris-XX: 180,000 residents, Rome-XI: 140,000 residents, Berlin-Lichtenberg: 252,000 residents.

⁴ Hilden: 56,000 residents, Emsdetten: 35,000 residents, Grottammare: 14,700; Altidona 2,600 residents.

⁵ We will refer to some of these concepts and theories in the following pages, an encompassing presentation being out of scope of a single article.

begin a third step: we have conducted an integrated research in more than 20 cities, relying on the same methodology and the same concepts⁶.

Participatory budgeting has been invented in Porto Alegre (Brazil). Once imported and adapted in such different contexts such as Sevilla (Spain), Berlin (Germany), or Plock (Poland), may one understand it as one complex dynamic, or is the name the only common link, labelling quite different realities? Is the expansion of participatory budgeting only a fashion, or a sustainable path towards a new type of public policy at the local level? What kinds of participatory budgets exist in Europe and to what extent and under which conditions can they contribute to the modernisation of the administration, the renewal of democracy and the strengthening of social justice? In the following, we will describe the origins of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and its path to Europe. We want to demonstrate that participatory budgeting is not limited to *one* model. Rather, it may assume different forms. We will present a typology of the various procedures that are used and discuss potential effects and limits of participatory budgeting thereafter.⁷ In addition, we will refer to the implementation of different procedures in several parts of the text.

The idea of Porto Alegre

Participatory budgeting was invented in Brazil at the end of the 1980s in a context which differs significantly from the situation in Western Europe. Most notably, Brazil is one of the world's countries with the greatest income gap, and in its "delegative democracy" (O'Donnell 1994), the constitutionally guaranteed democratic institutions do not operate as intended, because politics and the administration are characterised by corruption and clientelism. Especially at the local level, it is common that leading politicians are dependent on the economy and that they purchase votes with money and hollow promises. The city of Porto Alegre partly differs from this tradition. The living standard is above the average of other Brazilian cities, and the participatory budget has contributed to this circumstance. Moreover, it has provided for a reversal of priorities: primary health care was set up in the living areas of the poor, the number of schools and nursery schools was extended, and in the meantime most of the households have access to water supply and waste water systems. International scholars (see for example Abers 2000, Allegretti 2003, Avritzer 2002, Baiocchi 2005, Herzberg 2001, Sintomer/Gret 2005) as well as the World Bank and UN-Habitat (UNDP 2001) have analysed Porto Alegre participatory budget as an example of best practice with regard to local

⁶ The research "Participatory Budgets in Europe" has been conducted by the Centre Marc Bloch in Berlin, in cooperation with the Humboldt-University in Berlin and with funds from the Hans-Böckler-Foundation and from the CNRS (France). We have worked in ten different countries and extensive analyses have been conducted between 2002 and 2005 in 20 cities. Basic data have been collected in more than 30 additional cities. The following individuals participated in the project as associated researchers: Belgium: Ludivine Damay, Christine Schaut; France: Marion Ben-Hammo, Sandrina Geoffroy, Julien Talpin; Great Britain: Jeremy Hall; Italy: Giovanni Allegretti (Coordinator), Pier Paolo Fanesi, Lucilla Pezzetta, Michelangelo Secchi; The Netherlands: Hugo Swinnen; Poland: Elzbieta Plaszczyk; Portugal: Luis Guerreiro; Spain: Ernesto Ganuza. Further information on the project can be obtained at: www.buergerhaushalt-europa.de

⁷ We have also developed a general typology of citizen participation in Europe, which in addition to the concrete procedure integrates the following criteria: socio-political context, normative-ideological points of reference and aims, the dynamics of collective action, and the relationship between representative and participatory politics (see Sintomer/Herzberg/Röcke 2007).

administration. What were the conditions for this development, and in which way did participatory budgeting render possible a reallocation of resources?

Rebecca Abers (2000), one of the first observers of the participatory budget in Porto Alegre, explains that it emerged due to a “window of opportunity”, which opened in the aftermath of the electoral victory of the Labour Party, PT,⁸ in 1988. At the time the PT was at the beginning of its rise, and it had to prove that its style of government stood out from that of the other parties. It was a quest for a way of translating the grass-roots self-conception of the party into municipal politics. However, it was not only the new government which pushed the participatory budget. Civil society, in particular district initiatives, demanded more co-decision capacity, too. Therefore, the invention of this new device was the result of a conjunction of top-down and bottom-up processes. The fact that every new government in Brazil may exchange part of the administration for its own convinced and committed confidants proved to be supportive for the creation of this new space for citizen participation. It is important to underline that participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre only slowly evolved into a new form of participatory government. However, when the PT lost the office of mayor to the opposition in 2004 after 15 years of government, the participatory budget had been integrated to an extent that the new government did not dare to abolish the procedure.

Three underlying principles have been particularly important for the set-up and functioning of this procedure. (a) The first principle, grassroots democracy, is carried into effect via citizens’ assemblies in the 16 districts of the city. The aim of these assemblies is to determine priorities and to elect delegates and representatives who follow up on the development of the suggestions. In addition to investments political guidelines for the design of municipal policies are discussed, such as for the areas education, health, culture, etc. Priorities are elected on the basis of the principle “one man one vote”, according to which every citizen disposes of the same number of votes. (b) Social justice, the second principle, is realised via an allocation formula. The funds which are at disposal in each of the investment areas are distributed among the districts while taking into consideration the number of residents, the quality of the infrastructure available as well as the local list of priorities. These three criteria ensure e.g. that districts with a lacking infrastructure receive more funds than areas with a high quality of life. (c) Citizen control, the third principle, is realised by means of boards, such as the Council of the Participatory Budget, which convenes once a week for two hours. Its members are elected during the basic assemblies of the districts. It is their duty to ensure that the priorities of the districts are taken up in the budget to the largest extent possible. Independent NGOs train the representatives of the participatory budget in order to enable them to co-plan with the administration. In addition, the Council of the Participatory Budget is implicated in the allocation of public contracts.

⁸ The PT is a pluralist left-wing party which emerged from the 1970ies trade union movement, which, in particular in the industrial area surrounding Sao Paulo, fought with strikes against the then dictatorship. Middle-class intellectuals, supporters of liberation theology, members of former left-wing parties and extreme left groups as well as social movements in the cities and in the country joined it. In particular, the Landless Peasants Movement was for a long time considered to be the party’s supporter which was most apt to activism. While the main faction of the party can be described as leaning toward social democracy, the PT in the state of Rio Grande do Sul of which Porto Alegre constitutes the capital stands more to the left.

Overall, even though some serious challenges had to be faced and were not completely overcome (Sintomer/Gret 2005), these three principles lead to a real empowerment of civil society and, most notably, of the working class. The development of a “countervailing power” (Fung/Wright 2003) has been analysed (e.g. Avritzer 2002, Sousa Santos 2005). During a decade, civil society has been strengthened. Increasingly more citizens joined initiatives and associations in order to represent their suggestions successfully in the process of participatory budgeting. Clientilistic structures were largely overcome in these new organizations, because democratic and transparent rules replaced negotiations behind closed doors. In addition, participatory budgeting has led to a reorientation of public investments towards the most disadvantaged districts and has contributed to an improvement of public services and infrastructures.

Interestingly enough, in this very peculiar context, a procedural model has been invented that, years after years, has been considered as a source of inspiration by other cities. Four times, in 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2005, the World Social Forum has met in the Rio Grande do Sul capital, and this has been a strong factor for the diffusion of participatory budgeting. Since these years, Porto Alegre has become a symbol of a new type of a more participatory democracy. This point of view is shared by many “anti-globalization” movements, as well as by international organisations such as the United Nations and the World Bank, which are far from being “subversive”. Hundred of cities in Latin America use this procedure (Cabannes 2003, 2006), with different political, social and administrative outcomes (Avritzer 2005, Sousa Santos 2005).

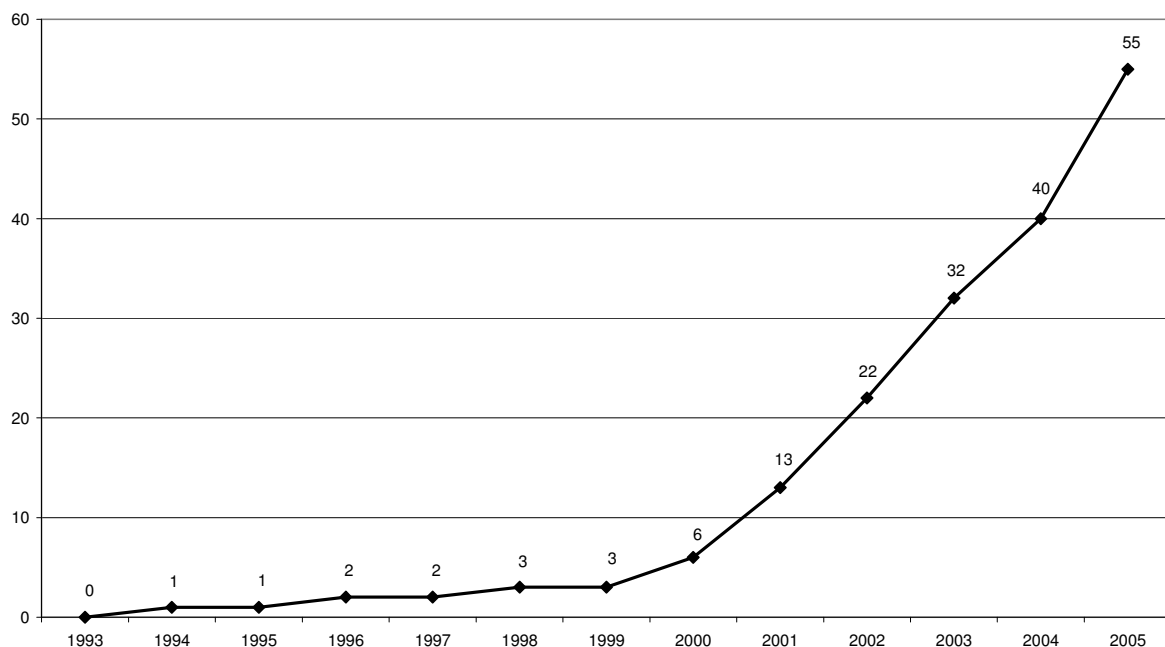
What is a participatory budget?

Any comparative research has to face a definition problem, which is even more difficult with participatory budgeting in Europe where, in contrast to Latin America, very different forms of citizen participation in the budget allocation procedure exist. In some cases, the term “participatory budget” refers to a mere information event on the budget without including a consultation with the citizens. Other examples, however, which are locally not referred to as “participatory budgets”, may feature an intensive participation procedure. This is why one cannot rely on a “nominalist” definition, based only on the denomination of the process as “participatory budgeting”, in order to make a comparison possible. An ontological definition that would aim to define what participatory budgeting should be, at any time and in any country, does not seem legitimate: both because this procedure is different in Latin America and Europe and because sociologists can hardly define the essence of a procedure or institution. A political (or normative) definition would be possible, but is not the aim of social science research. It is therefore necessary to develop a methodological definition, which includes a set of minimal requisites in order to clearly differentiate this participatory procedure from others (such as neighbourhood funds or community development) and which, at the same time, is comprehensive enough in order to give sufficient leeway to procedures with different specificities.

Broadly speaking, participatory budgeting allows the participation of non-elected citizens in the conception and/or allocation of public finances. In order to give a more precise definition of the process, five criteria need to be added (Sintomer/Herzberg/Röcke 2007): (1) The financial and/or budgetary dimension must be discussed; participatory budgeting is dealing with the problem of limited resources. (2) The city level has to be involved, or a (decentralised) district with an elected body and some power over administration (the neighbour-hood level is not enough). (3) It has to be a repeated process (one meeting or one referendum on financial issues are not examples of participatory budgeting). (4) The process must include some form of public deliberation within the framework of specific meetings/forums (the opening of administrative meetings or classical representative instances to “normal” citizens is not participatory budgeting). (5) Some accountability on the output is required.

Defined with these five criteria, participatory budgeting is a new and highly dynamic process in Europe. Within five years, the number of participatory budgets increased from 6 to 55. The population in cities with a participatory budget increased even more rapidly. Over the past two years alone it has doubled to nearly five million residents. 5,2% of the population in Spain already lives in cities with a participatory budget. In Germany it is however only 1,4%, the rate in Portugal and Italy is about 1%. Along with Spain, a particularly strong growth of cases is observable in Italy. While there were only very few examples in 2000-2001, there will presumably soon be more than 20.

Number of participatory budgets in Europe



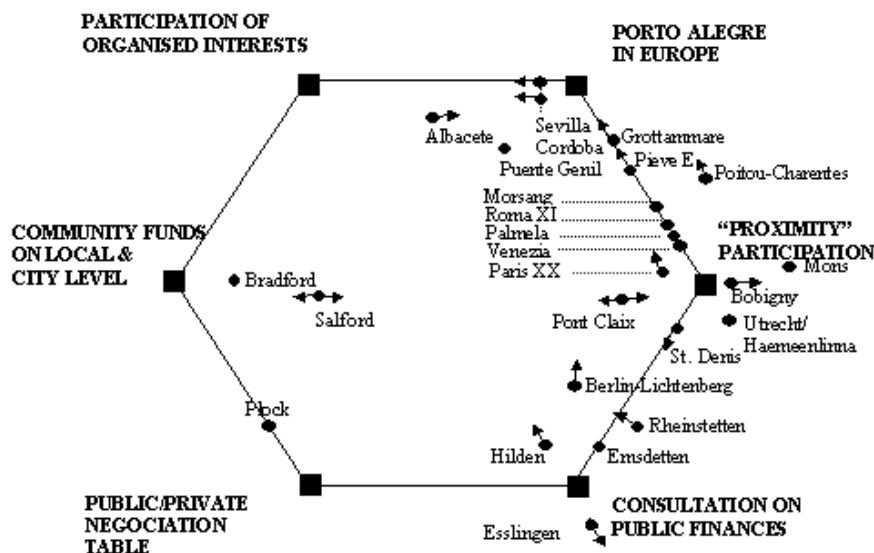
A procedural typology

With such a high number of experiments, any comparative research faces two opposite risks.

The first one is to explain the variety of the cases with a single, one-sided evaluation, stating for example that participatory budgeting in Europe is only a policy problem with

no political impact. The second one is to get lost in the diversity of the cases and to be unable to present a global panorama. In order to overcome these problems, we have created a typology which has to rely on ideal-typical models that are constructed in the process of the empirical study. It can give the various poles of a semi-conceptual map in which it is possible to place the concrete experiments (which never correspond exactly to one ideal-type). Based on a set of criteria, six models can be differentiated⁹: Porto Alegre adapted for Europe; Participation of organised interests; Community funds on local and city level; The public/private negotiation table; Proximity participation; Consultation on public finances. For the sake of a short presentation, we will analyse the ideal models in pairs and will expose some practical experiments.

Typology of procedures



⁹ The criteria are: 1. Origin of the process; 2. Organization of the meetings (neighbourhood, city and/or thematic assemblies; closed vs. public meetings, etc.); 3. Type of deliberation (topics of discussion; modalities of discussion, etc.); 4. Position of civil society in the procedure (type of participating citizens, co-elaboration of methodology, etc.).

Porto Alegre adapted for Europe and the participation of organised interests

In some European experiments where the influence of the anti-globalization movement has been particularly important, the procedural model of Porto Alegre has directly influenced the set-up of the procedure. In the Spanish town of Cordoba (320,000 residents) for example, the participatory budget that was introduced in 2001 can largely be understood with the ideal-type “Porto Alegre adapted for Europe”. However, in other cities, the impact of the Brazilian example has been less direct, such as in the cases in which participation is not directed towards individual citizens. In the first ideal-type for example associations, federations and other organised groups are the main actors. This model is based on a neo-corporatist logic and we call it “participation of organised interests”. Although there is so far no direct example of the model of organised interests in Europe, some experiments are moving in this direction. Moreover, the participatory budget in Albacete (150,000 residents) can be considered as a hybrid of both the “Porto Alegre” and the “organised interest” models.

The content of discussions constitutes a second difference between the two types. In the model “Porto Alegre adapted for Europe” discussions primarily deal with concrete investments and projects, whereas the discussion of broad political guidelines is in the centre of the “participation of organised interests”-process (i.e. general orientation of housing, education, environmental or local traffic policies). A further difference is the way suggestions are dealt with. In the model “Porto Alegre adapted for Europe” there is a high pressure to realise the proposals of the participatory budget because the local government is bound by its own commitment to accept the proposals which are made in the participatory process. Although the municipal council technically continues to be responsible for the final decision on the budget, citizens can be considered to have a *de facto* (co)decision-making capacity. Like in the Brazilian case, this model contains an allocation formula for investments. However, the criteria are not necessarily the same as in the Brazilian context. Other indicators, such as the number of welfare recipients in the district, participation in meetings or citizen participation during the realisation of projects are used, too. In the model “participation of organised interests”, rules may be more informal than in the Porto Alegre model and may lead to a mere consultative process. Furthermore, there are distributive criteria in this model, even if some rules for the promotion of certain target groups may exist.

One strength of these models rests in the potential of a good deliberative quality.¹⁰ In both models, participants not only discuss matters in a large plenum and may also do so in smaller fora, committees or on delegate boards. In these settings, an in-depth discussion, allowing the development of detailed suggestions to solve problems and the clarification of important matters, becomes possible. This may go so far that participants develop expert’s reports on the equipment of schools or on the improved integration of minorities. One challenge for both

¹⁰ Criteria for a “good” deliberative quality include, amongst others, the inclusiveness of the process, the mutual exchange of arguments, and the existence of clear rules. Various definitions of deliberation can be found in the literature about deliberative democracy that has exploded in the last couple of years. See, for example, James Bohman/William Rehg (1997), *Deliberative Democracy*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; Joshua Cohen (1989), “Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy”, in A. Hamlin/Philip Petit (eds.), *The good Polity: Normative Analysis of the State*, Cambridge: Blackwell; Jon Elster (1998), *Deliberative Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

models consists however in connecting the procedures with a comprehensive modernisation of the entire administration. A further challenge concerns the resolution of potential conflicts between individual citizen's participation and that of organised interest. In some experiments near with the Porto Alegre model, this has proved to be problematic, for instance when established associations and initiatives has feared disadvantages with regard to their promotion.

Community funds on local and city level and the public/private negotiation table

The model of the community funds and the model of the public/private negotiation table have only played a marginal role in Europe so far. Nevertheless, they represent a potentially strong pole for the future development of participatory budgeting, most of all in Great Britain and in Eastern Europe. The basic commonality between these two models is that there is a fund for investments or for projects in the social, environmental and cultural areas, respectively. Such a fund e.g. exists in the British city of Bradford (467,000 residents) and in the Polish town of Płock (128,000 residents). Another specificity of these models is that they are relatively independent of the municipal budget, because the money that is at stake does not or only in part come from the local administration. Therefore, the municipal council does not have the last say with regard to the acceptance of proposals. Rather, it is a committee, a commission or an assembly of delegates which generates the priorities. Organised groups, such as associations, initiatives, etc. constitute the participants in both procedures. The deliberative quality can be considered to be fair, since several meetings take place with a manageable group of participants.

In the case of the public/private negotiation table, private enterprises and possibly international organisations raise parts of the money. The oil company ORLEN S.A. for example contributes 50% to a fund in Płock of altogether approximately 300,000 Euro, in addition to the municipality and the UN development programme. This financial involvement enables the private sponsor to influence the design of the procedure, whereas citizens, who give no money but apply for it, only play a secondary role. This model may be developed when international actors try to open Public/Private Partnerships to citizen groups or NGOs and focus on budgetary and financial projects; the influence of Porto Alegre may be indirect or even inexistent. By contrast, the combination of local participatory traditions with the ideas of Porto Alegre has provoked the extension of a local, community fund model to the city level. In this model, participants decide upon the rules of the community fund autonomously, whilst the business is excluded. Funding is provided through a national programme, that in some cases may be coupled with a local government policy programme. In this model, the promotion of socially disadvantaged groups is a key feature. In 2004, for instance, a participatory budgeting fund in the British city of Bradford with more than 875,000 euro was reserved exclusively for groups from disadvantaged areas. Moreover, the participants in the "community fund" ideal-type realise the projects themselves. While this is possible with the public/private negotiation table, too, it is not a necessary requirement.

These two models have advantages and drawbacks. The link to the local political structure, for instance, is weak or non-existent, even though the municipal council retains a certain

influence since it raises parts of the money. In the Public/Private negotiation table, the influence of the private investor depends on the size of its contribution, but a radical shift towards more social justice is improbable. Likewise, the community fund model presents new possibilities for participatory budgeting. National and Europe-wide programmes for the promotion of cities and infrastructure could e.g. be linked locally with the participatory budget and promote disadvantaged neighbourhoods or groups of residents. Both models share the advantage that they provide for distinctive citizen involvement, because those who participate also implement the projects.

Proximity participation and consultation on public finances

While examples for the model “proximity participation” can be predominantly found in France, the model “consultation on public finances” is characteristic of participatory budgets in Germany. Both have in common that they are merely consultative. This means that the administration, as opposed to the citizens that participate, summarises the results of the discussion. Unlike the models presented so far, participants in these ideal-types do not vote or develop priorities for projects. Rather, it is a process of “selective listening”, i.e. the local government can freely (and arbitrarily) integrate some of the proposals to its public policy after the participatory process. Furthermore, civil society only has a weak influence with regard to the design of the procedure. It needs to be pointed out that these models do not pursue any social goals, and that no distributive criteria are present in the process. A further common feature is that associations barely play a role in shaping the procedure. Participation is carried out via open councils to which individual citizens have been summoned via announcements in the media, per letter or via personal address. In Germany, participants are (supplementary) mobilised on the basis of random selection from the inhabitant registry (Röcke 2005). These individuals receive a personal invitation by the mayor to attend the citizen’s forum. This method is, amongst others, applied in Emsdetten (35,000 residents), Hilden (56,000 residents), Vlotho (21,000 residents) and in the Berlin district Treptow-Köpenick (233,000 residents).

The two procedures differ by their origins. The “proximity” model usually relies on previous participatory devices such as neighbourhood funds or councils. The development of participatory budgeting takes place following the ideological influence of Porto Alegre, but the actual similarities remain very limited. The “consultation on public finances” model may retain some influence of Porto Alegre, but is de facto more derived from participative trends of New Public Management strategies. In Germany, it has been imported from the New Zealand city of Christchurch and not from Brazil. The “proximity” model mostly involves neighbourhoods and relates to investments at this level. At the level of the city as a whole this model no longer deals with investments, but with general (normative) goals. Generally speaking, the term “proximity” has two meanings. On the one hand it refers to the geographical proximity; on the other hand, the term stands for a close contact between municipal leadership or the administration and the citizens. According to this model, the mayor of Bobigny (45,000 residents) e.g. organises open meetings twice a year in order to respond to citizens’ concerns. The model “consultation on public finances” in turn first and foremost deals with rendering transparent the financial situation of the city. Information on

the overall budget is accorded via brochures, the internet and press releases. There are two versions of the model. In the most widespread variant, public services and areas of responsibility are presented. It deals with the revenues and expenditures of libraries, swimming pools, nursery schools and street-cleaning, waste water treatment or waste disposal, respectively, etc. Citizens may voice their suggestions in an open plenum or in specific fora. The second variant aims at balancing the budget deficit. In the North Rhine-Westphalian town of Emsdetten for example, the participatory budgeting process of the year 2002 was based upon five options for a balanced budget: cuts in personnel costs and operating expenses, the reduction of voluntary duties and responsibilities, a withdrawal from the reserve or an increase in taxes and fees. Using a questionnaire, every participant was asked to develop a suggestion of his or her own, based on the combination of the possibilities mentioned. At the end of the event an overall recommendation of the citizens' forum was calculated on the basis of the individual opinions. In general, the deliberative quality of the model is low, because in most cases there is barely any time for a more intensive discussion. With the model "proximity participation", by contrast, the quality of the debate may be better, because citizens sometimes work in small groups that meet repeatedly over a longer period of time.

The model "consultation on public finances" is interesting in the sense that it is linked to the process of the modernisation of the bureaucracy, even though a discussion limited to one or two meetings a year can hardly produce huge effects. A limitation of this model is that participation only constitutes an "appendage" of a comprehensive modernisation process, with no direct relation to social problems and to a renewal of politics. The model "proximity participation" may induce a discussion between citizens and the administration/council members, but hardly produce modernisation effects on the city level. In both models, accountability is low with regard to the realisation of proposals and the autonomy of civil society is weak.

Conclusions

It is difficult today to analyse systematically the effects of participatory budgeting in the European experiments. First, we are dealing with very recent procedures. Second, it is very difficult to study the precise impact of participatory budgets with regard to other, more general influences (e.g. concerning the impact on electoral turnout). Quantitative data which would allow this kind of analysis is not available today, and the main results of our study have been produced by qualitative methods and through an ethnographic knowledge of the different processes and contexts. Furthermore, the effects of participatory budgeting strongly differ from a model to another. Finally, the socio-economic and political, local context influence the outcomes of the procedure. However, what *can* be said today about the contribution of participatory budgets to administrative modernisation, the renewal of politics and a strengthening of social justice (Sintomer/Herzberg/Röcke 2005)?

A clear link can be found between participatory budgeting and the demand for more transparency. This applies to the overall budget as well as to the projects which are discussed of within the participatory budget. So far, however, transparency has not been sufficient to actually enable citizens to control the finances of the city. Beyond transparency, four other trends of administrative modernisation have been analysed in a variety of cases: an

improvement of public services based upon the citizens' proposals, a better collaboration between individual administrative departments, a speed-up of internal administrative operations and a better responsiveness of public administration, and a contribution of citizen knowledge to solve important aspects of public life. By contrast, a reduction of costs and a structural reform of the administration as a direct effect of participatory budgeting tend to be an exception. For instance, in some Spanish cities, the participatory budget exerted pressure on the administration to describe performances in straightforward products, to improve the co-ordination of departments as well as to present administrative activities in a transparent manner to the inside and the outside. Altogether, it seems highly plausible that one important criterion of success of participatory budgeting is the link between participation and a comprehensive modernisation process. However, if this pragmatic goal is more developed in the consultation on public finance model, it also requires a good deliberative quality. This feature, which is not much developed in this model, can be found in the Porto Alegre procedure. Concretely, modernisation effects mainly take place in those places where ample discussion has been possible in general assemblies and in participatory councils. Overall, the contribution to modernization appears to be one of the most interesting features of European participatory budgets, as it is much more developed than the political and social dimensions.

The potential political consequences of participatory budgeting are more contrasted. In many cases, participatory budgeting contributed to an improvement of communication between the administration, the local political elite and the citizens. If participatory budgeting will ever play the intermediate role that political parties had in the past, is an open question however. The widespread expectation that the turnout of voters increases with participatory budgeting is not supported by the empirical research. In a number of cases, even if better results for the governing party can be observed, this is probably not a direct result of the participatory budgeting process. It seems to be more adequate to understand this phenomenon as the result of more general participatory approach to politics of the local government. Second, participatory budgeting contributes to a process whereby the political culture of the participants improves. In some cases, the participatory budget induces a better co-ordination of civil society. This is particularly true for those procedures which entailed regular meetings over a longer period of time instead of one single annual event. However, the results of most processes in Europe (with a few exceptions in Spain and Italy) rarely served as a "compass" for the decisions of the municipal council. This is among other things due to the fact that central aspects of the budget are not part of the participatory budgeting. In any case, real political impacts of participatory budgeting in Europe will only be possible in a long-term process. Up to now, the political dimension is globally far less present in Europe than in Porto Alegre.

The contrast between the situation in Europe and Brazil is even sharper with regard to the aspect of social justice. In Europe, the connection between participatory budgeting and social justice is to this day weak. The Italian city Grotammare is the only example of fundamental social change. Nevertheless, at the town level, a series of experiments succeeded in integrating marginal groups. This applies for example to the Spanish city of Albacete. Here, the ethnic group of Sinti and Roma as well as migrants hold permanent seats on the delegate

board of the participatory budget and were able to achieve the construction of a community centre which meets their needs. In order to achieve more global effects of social justice, participatory budgeting must include the participation of different groups and of different social strata (e.g. through appropriate procedures and distributive criteria). This has been the case, although on a modest scale, in the experiments oriented towards the model “Porto Alegre adapted for Europe”.

In this article, we have demonstrated that the importation of Porto Alegre in Europe has been a highly differentiated process. In this continent, participatory budgeting does not rely on one procedure but rather on a multitude of devices. In a comparative research, it is therefore necessary to give a clear methodological definition of participatory budgeting and to construct ideal-types in order to present a global panorama of the variety of concrete experiments. The six models we proposed (Porto Alegre adapted in Europe, the representation of organised interests, community funds on the local and city level, the public/private negotiation table, the consultation on public finances and the proximity participation) show striking differences. At the same time, they probably delimitate a new space for politics and public policies, a space where participation becomes a new frame for action, but in which the question what this frame concretely means is highly debated. Participatory budgeting is only one participatory device among others, but it probably can be seen as one of the most innovative ones. Furthermore, it represents a good prism in order to better understand the different dynamics of democratic participation at the beginning of the new century.

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