

KEYS FOR CHILD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION: YOUTH PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

IOPD



Education is a pillar of our societies and must guarantee that future communities grow with a commitment to democracy. The IOPD therefore believes that youth participation from an early age is fundamental as an educational and inclusive element in our cities and communities. This document presents the conclusions of the working group on participatory budgeting for children and young people, as well as the reflections of several experts in this field.

International Observatory on Participatory
Democracy (IOPD)
Working group



Keys for child and youth participation: youth participatory budgeting

International Observatory on Participatory Democracy

Barcelona City Council

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Working group on youth participatory budgeting

Introduction

The International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD) is a network with over 800 members from around the world - local governments, entities, organisations and research centres - that are keen to develop, exchange and apply experiences of participatory democracy at a local level, in order to deepen democracy in city government.

Working groups are being set up as a means of achieving such goals as the exchange of opinions and experiences or the creation of content of interest on participatory democracy.

Several participants in the IOPD Members' Assembly held in Madrid in March 2015 highlighted the need to study and foster youth participation. The representative from Córdoba City Council (Argentina) proposed the creation of a working group on experiences of youth participatory budgeting. The group was approved and is coordinated by the Argentinian city in collaboration with the IOPD's Technical Secretariat.

In all, 29 entities (local governments, research centres and civil society organisations) signed up to this working group, which operated through an online discussion forum.

Definition

First, we need to define what we mean by **youth participatory budgeting**. Participatory budgets are a mechanism of participatory democracy, as they allow ordinary citizens to influence, have a say in or directly decide on public budgets, generally on part of the investment in the municipal budget, through public participation processes.

So it means involving young people in a community in defining and selecting budgetary investment items. This process may be focused on the young people of a municipality in general, though in some cases it may be aimed at a specific age group. The purpose is to ensure young people are involved in the city's public affairs through their participation, not just in identifying needs but also in searching for and discussing solutions, and in taking decisions on where and what a specific part of the municipal budget should be invested in. Monitoring and assessing the investments made is also an important part of the process.



What we understand by *youth participatory budgeting* is experiences led by local governments with their own resources, though we also find them in schools. In this case it is about involving students in the management of their schools, in the sense of having their say in part of the school's investment, for example, whether priority should be given to sports, cultural or academic facilities. The importance of the experience lies in training and awareness-raising regarding participation in communal affairs.

It enables young people to see local governments from a real, practical perspective as the basic bodies for the territorial organisation of the State, as well as a direct means of public participation in public affairs. It also increases the likelihood of young people being more interested in political issues as, through this type of participation, they will be able to influence public policies by expressing their needs, in other words, by putting forward demands, opinions and proposals for the municipality. This working group therefore underscores the importance of youth participation, as they are better able to express their everyday needs in the city as a result of their experiences. Municipal policies can then be improved, so the city functions in a better way.

Nine key points on youth participatory budgeting

1. **Strengthening youth participation in a formal decision-making space:** giving young people tools for influencing public policies will give them greater access to opportunities for exercising their rights as citizens.
2. **Establishing relations between young civil society and the municipality:** such relations will help to improve the quality of life of all citizens, both young and old.
3. **Promoting and publicising the participatory budget and its goals among the city's young people:** one of the main aims of the process is to satisfy young people's expectations when it comes to meeting their needs.
4. **Preparing a thorough assessment:** before deciding on where the budget is to be allocated, an in-depth study needs to be carried out, to prepare a thorough assessment of the situation, prior to its presentation.
5. **Establishing discussion and debating spaces:** debating and discussion spaces will throw light on the problems relating to participatory democracy, citizen rights and management control over municipal issues.
6. **Continuity over time:** this must be an ongoing process if it is to achieve the goals set at the outset, and not something that can get into a rut or come to a standstill.
7. **Education:** it is important for young people to have the basic knowledge for planning these participatory budgets. They could receive training through schools, where pro-social values



would be promoted and they would acquire a basic knowledge of participation, so stirring their initial interest.

8. **Commitment from the parties concerned:** if the participatory budgeting process is to be a success, all the parties must take part in the project. In other words, young people, as well as the local authority, associations, organisations, schools and so on must be committed to the process from start to finish.
9. **Assessment:** it is necessary to carry out an assessment of the process, to assess the results and check whether it has been effective or not. This will also allow the strengths and weaknesses of the process to be identified, so that any necessary improvements can be made.

Case study: youth anticipatory budgeting in Boston

In January 2014, the city of Boston launched the first-ever youth participatory budgeting process in the USA, allowing teenagers and young adults to decide on how to spend \$1 million of the city's budget. Through this process, called "Youth Lead the Change: Participatory Budgeting Boston", young people put forward ideas for improving their communities, turned them into concrete proposals and voted on the best ways to make Boston a better place. They also played a central role in the Youth Lead the Change Steering Committee, which oversaw the process and determined its rules and structure. This pilot process ran from January to June 2014 and was a collaborative effort between PBP, the city of Boston, the Mayor's Youth Council, and Boston Centers for Youth and Families.



For further information: <http://www.participatorybudgeting.org/boston/>

http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/grillos/files/pb_boston_year_1_eval_0.pdf

<http://youth.boston.gov/youth-lead-the-change/>



Children and young people with their own say in the local space

Dr Cristina E. Bloj

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In a global context where over half of the population live in urban centres, Latin America has achieved an urbanisation level of over 80%. Cities play a bigger role and have more influence on the daily lives of their inhabitants, and they have become key settings for the “citizenisation” of childhood and youth¹. **An important aspect here is that these categories, *childhood and youth*, are not limited to mere stages in life, they express social conditions and social and historical constructions that have undergone resignification over time, calling into question rigid generational stereotypes. From that perspective they cannot be understood as preparatory stages for a later (adult) life, but as having a value in themselves, so their rights must be recognised and exercised in the present. If we accept that, it has direct consequences in the field of public policies and requires a conceptual shift, as well as the design of new tools that reflect the concern for broadening and deepening the quality of participation.**

Participation is a principle and a cross-cutting right, enabling citizens to influence the decision-making processes and have their say in public affairs. Children and teenagers have had little say in this area, historically, or in the issues that affect them and their views have been mediated or eclipsed by those of adults. The right of children **and young people** to take part, express their ideas and be listened to requires rethinking their links with adults and the various government authorities. As the Italian educationalist Francesco Tonucci has suggested, public authorities must lower their perspective to “the

¹ A high percentage of these children and young people experience spacial and social segregation, violations of their rights and high levels of poverty.



level of children”². Democratic learning within the framework of early participation contributes towards informed decision-making, helps to increase their independence, reappraise their knowledge and foster identities in the city and reference microspaces.

In general terms, as is well known, participatory budgeting is one of the most innovative decision-making experiences. Initially created to channel adult participation, the trend to include young people is gradually increasing. There are many cities in the region today that have begun to implement “youth budgeting” with various formats and results³. Participatory processes with such features are fundamental for building, strengthening and exercising democratic skills and for establishing the role of children and young people in defining their own wellbeing and that of their surroundings.

Cities must give increasing priority to children and youth in their participatory processes and initiatives, by committing local public management to a perspective of rights, with a view to bridging the inequality gap suffered by these population groups in urban life. A policy founded on such imperatives implies changes in our conception of childhood and youth, developing more horizontal relationships and creating spaces where the various experiences and voices can interact. Though the idea of policies “for children” has so far failed to give way to developing policies “for and with children”, the latter based on recognition of the value that they have as “city makers”, initiatives such as Youth Participatory Budgeting account for the efforts that various municipalities have embarked on in this direction.

² There is an indisputable reference point for reflecting on the relationship between children and the city: the Italian educationalist Francesco Tonucci and his “Children’s City” project. International initiatives and networks such as Child-Friendly Cities and Educating Cities have also contributed considerably.

³ To give but one example, Rosario (Argentina) is a pioneering case, as youth participatory budgeting (aimed at the population aged 13 to 18) has been going on since 2004.



Child participation and building citizenship

Children as people with rights: the Youth Participatory Budgeting project in Córdoba.

Osvaldo Marcelo Ortiz

Resident Participation Board Coordinator in Córdoba (Argentina)

Education is seen as a tool that enables citizens to build and develop their capacity for acting and taking part in society. It therefore enables them to intervene in its dynamics, resolve disputes and take part in its construction. In other words, education serves to build personal identity and generally integrate people into society.

Primary and secondary school students have traditionally been relegated to the background when it comes to issues involving their treatment as people with citizen rights and duties. On the whole, children and young people are not seen as people with rights to information and consultation or as a source of important contributions on specific issues that reflect their experiences as citizens. The idea that students can and should take part in the realms of opinion and participation, beyond the classroom, is what lies behind this project.

Advancing towards a society of learning and knowledge would imply involvement in the school system from a different sphere to the one that the educational community understands as formal education.

Participatory policies bring voices and views to the public arena, as well as highlighting demands and problems. In that sense, fostering the participation of children, teenagers and young people in the activities of citizens, and participatory budgeting in particular, would represent a good and healthy practice.

The aim, then, is for the official side (mayor's office, council, commune) to team up with their social partners in the participatory arenas (resident participation boards and the Community Council for the Rights of Children and Teenagers, both participatory bodies in Córdoba) and the various education systems to boost learning opportunities on effective participation issues, both real and possible, by intervening in the public sphere on issues that affect them. This is where participatory budgeting for young people can play an essential role.

What we are seeking to do with that is to integrate these groups into the public sphere, which will make it possible to build a new area of citizenship and political socialisation.



The experiences of different spheres, cities, communes and municipalities tell us there are numerous ways that children, teenagers and young people can take part. Some are one-offs or seasonal, such as schools; others focus on specific problems, such as highlighting a violated right (young people mobilising because they have been victims of police abuse or other forms of mistreatment, and many other examples we could give), and others may be spontaneous, such as participation in various cultural events.

This diversity in participation modes is reflected in this group we are aiming to reach as unrepresented parties in homogeneous groups. By contrast, there is a complex diversity within these sectors.

In the search for “citizenship building”, we began to enter dialogues that led us towards participatory budgeting and the inclusion of these groups (children, young people and teenagers) in a space which, though it provided them with policies *for* them, did not do it *with* and *from* them.

Hence the creation of what we call Youth Participatory Budgeting, with the support of the Undersecretary for Public Participation. This project was the reason for the dissertation at the 2015 International Congress on Local Politics (Asunción, Paraguay).

The “Participatory Budgeting for Children and Young People” project was presented at the 2015 General Assembly of the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD) in Madrid, which was voted for as an international “working group” and whose signatories were the representative of Córdoba City Council (Argentina), its author and one of its current coordinators.

Youth Participatory Budgeting is a project initially aimed at young people aged 14 to 24 that attempts to achieve their inclusion in the city's public affairs, making them participants in discussions on priorities where a specific part of the municipal budget is to be invested. In these areas they will be provided with spaces so they can be given tools for learning how to be citizens, with a strong stamp of joint responsibility in decision-making terms for public policies. This will enable them to see how local governments are the basic blocks in the territorial organisation of the State, as well as immediate channels for local participation in public affairs, bodies with the independence to institutionalise and manage the interests of the corresponding urban groups and those of which the territory, population and organisation are key elements.

The Youth Participatory Budgeting mechanism has a strong element of urban education, as the aim is to include children and young people in political life from a *micro* sphere, their everyday life and territory.

Youth Participatory Budgeting aims to strengthen youth participation within a formal decision-making space, by expanding the opportunities young people have to exercise their citizen rights. The project's achievements will be their formal inclusion in participatory budgeting through a generational approach (their own perspective), citizenship building among young people and the execution of works and projects that flow from the priorities raised in the various bodies.



Municipal institutions such as the Community Council for the Rights of Children and Teenagers or the resident participation board in each of the communal participation centres (CPCs) present a wide range of proposals for young people but, very often, without having consulted them about either their interests or their needs.

Activities arise *for* rather than *with* or *from* young people, who are seen as targets of policies rather than people with rights and obligations.

Now, though, we are trying to analyse the situation of the city's children, young people and teenagers without considering it from a perspective where adults are the centre of every decision but taking their demands, needs and thoughts into account. So, the aim is to create and expand these new discussion spaces, where it is young people who become the central movers and strategic players in building the city, their city.



Ágora Infantil: a municipal participatory democracy project

Andrés Falck

Director of Consortium Local-Global

In 2016 some ten municipalities in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia (Spain) have launched experimental processes in direct democracy with children aged 10 to 14. They are intended to involve young children in making decisions on issues that affect and are of interest to them: leisure and cultural programmes, facilities for children and young people, awareness-raising campaigns on environmental and community issues, and so on. This innovative experience, commonly known as *Ágora Infantil*, is being tried out in cities such as Huelva and Marbella, with around 150,000 inhabitants, and rural communities with fewer than 3,000.

Ágora Infantil is a municipal participatory democracy programme being carried out in the final cycle of primary education (fifth and sixth years) and the first cycle of secondary education (first and second years). It has four main goals: 1) building a participation programme for children, 2) empowering the youngest citizens through the collective building of a specific initiative for the municipality, 3) stimulating learning through a specific practical experience and 4) bringing the local authority and children in the municipality closer together.

Designed by the Consortium Local-Global (Coglobal) association, it has the backing of research teams at the University of Málaga (UMA) and the University of Huelva (UHU). It is an experiment that enables very young children to take part in building, using and managing public resources from their own perspective and in line with their needs. The programme is put together in such a way that school classrooms become spaces for discussing and making decisions, where children analyse their area, identify its needs, then discuss and, together, put together a proposal which the local government will adopt as its own. It is a programme that is implemented on the initiative of the local government and in collaboration with schools⁴, for the purpose of opening a channel for young people to take part in local politics, by allowing them to have a say in a specific decision-making area.

The 2014-15 school year was the first in which the Ágora Infantil was implemented, starting with twelve groups in seven municipalities in Andalusia: Archidona, Ardales, El Burgo, Casabermeja, Casares, Puente Genil and Trigueros. During the first school year, the activity with each group was designed through five working meetings, based on participatory techniques and play dynamics, that were held in school during class time, between January and May 2015. The programme involved 224 students, 15 teachers and 12

⁴ Educational policies and school management are the responsibility of the autonomous communities, not the municipalities, so launching Ágora Infantil initiatives requires *ad hoc* agreements between the two levels of authority.



people linked to the municipal institutions (technical staff and elected representatives). An outline of the 2014/15 programme can be seen in **diagram 1** and included the following sessions:

1. *“Getting to know each other”*. The project, timetable and way of working was presented on the first working day with the children. One person attended on behalf of the local government and told them about the initiative and its scope. That person explained any proposals they might come up with had to be technically and economically feasible. The students were asked to do a little research on the issue they were going to work on in their family and social circles.
2. *“Let's do some field work”*. The children visited the place where they could work on the issue (a cultural centre, if it was on the cultural agenda, a park that was going to be remodelled, etc.) Municipal technical staff accompanied the students in this session, to introduce the project as well as explain the design and implementation stages and how to manage the activity decided on.
3. *“Let's make some proposals”*. The children held a brainstorming session. Groups were formed to select the proposals they liked best and develop them further. The proposals selected by the various groups were forwarded to the local government to study their feasibility.
4. *“From imagination to action”*. One person attended on behalf of the local government to inform the students of the feasibility of the proposals raised at the previous meeting. This was the time for selecting the proposals that would finally be implemented from the feasible pre-selected ones. The motivation team assigned the defence of each proposal to a different group from the one that designed it (cross defence), to enable an exercise in empathy between the two groups. Finally, the proposals were selected and prioritised.
5. *The Full Children's Meeting*. The government team gave way to the children so they could be the ones providing the setting for the approval of the initiative proposed. The local government team attended the event and made a commitment to comply with what was agreed. This full meeting was an open and public event with the entire school community (teachers, families and friends) invited to attend.

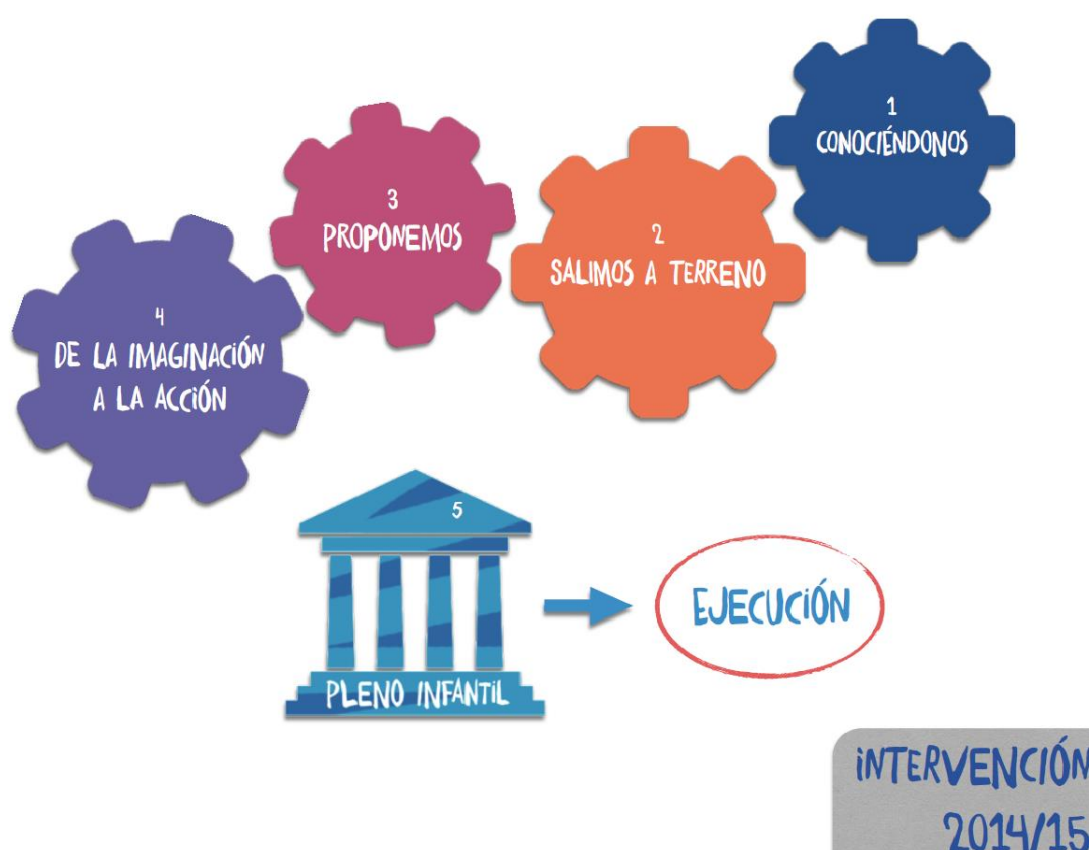
The option of working in the classroom and during school time was chosen because the programme has a special interest in observing whether its implementation generates the democratic inclusion of sectors of the young population that are not prone to participation. The classroom serves as a random sample of the population and working with the whole class is very valuable for observing and validating the methods used. The downside is that the activities take on a pilot character by not involving all the students in the area, although this problem is being tackled with new activity designs that connect the participatory processes in the classrooms to representative children's territorial forums.

A quantitative evaluation⁵ of the first twelve *Ágora Infantil* experiences during the 2014/15 school year shows better data among participating children with regard to such aspects as (1) the perception of self-sufficiency, (2) the perception of feeling listened to and being taken into account, (3) the confidence shown in the local council and (4) the level of knowledge of the area and local politics. The best data are those recorded in the participating group before and after the activity, as well as the comparison of these data with those recorded in similar groups that did not take part in the process. The children's

⁵ http://www.agorainfantil.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/InformeEvaluacion_AgoraInfantCuanti2015.pdf

level of satisfaction with the activity was very high. The programme's adult circle (teachers and local authorities) also scored highly on the satisfaction questionnaires.

Diagram 1:



1 GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER
 2 LET'S DO SOME FIELD WORK
 3 LET'S MAKE SOME PROPOSALS
 4 FROM IMAGINATION TO ACTION
 5 FULL CHILDREN'S MEETING
 PERFORMANCE
 2014/15 ACTIVITY

Valuable things can be learned from the observations of the Ágora Infantil sessions. A lot relate to the different reactions of the girls and boys to the dynamics and the role of leadership in class, aspects that need to be actively tackled by the motivation group, to enable the contributions and creativity from all the individuals making up the group to flourish. The suitability of working in small groups, incorporating anonymous proposals to free them of prejudice against those who propose them, prioritising play as a way of relating and happiness as the dominant emotion in the group and encouraging reflection on stereotypes and the social value of participation through the motivation group are just a few of the



significant improvements incorporated into the design of the activity based on the observations made in the classroom.

During its brief period of implementation, Ágora Infantil has managed to create active and participatory involvement processes in Andalusian schools that students respond to positively, increasing their empowerment in the local public sphere. In some municipalities, the children taking part in the programme begin to collaborate with existing youth participation structures in the municipality, giving continuity to the results sought by the intervention. There are reasons to believe that continuing the programme in a particular area would help foster a stronger, more public-spirited and more participatory citizen culture. Coglobal hopes to be able to confirm this in the coming years, so it will continue to implement and evaluate the Ágora Infantil programme.



Learning how to count

Documenting youth PB around Europe

Gilles Pradeau

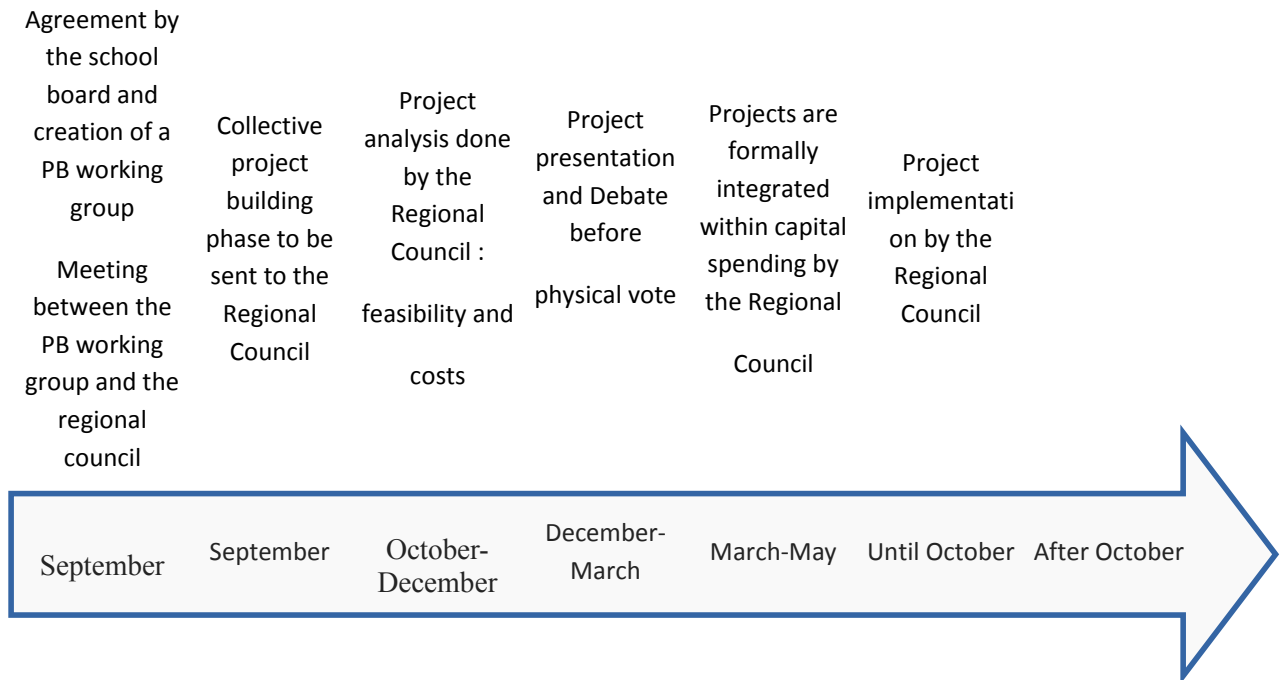
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20th April, 2016

- What is the young participatory budget?

Many cases of youth participatory budgeting have been implemented in Europe for the last decade. Depending on which administrative level is organizing it, different options are possible.

PB could target high schools like in France in Poitou-Charentes (2005-2010) or in Nord-Pas-de-Calais (2010-2015). During a year different meetings took place in each high school in order to define what proposals could meet the community needs. Then the Regional Council, which takes care of the buildings, evaluates the cost of each proposal. A final meeting takes place around May and the whole community debates about the different projects before voting. The 3 most voted projects are the projects likely to be implemented the year later, up to 100 000 euros per high school. In this case, students, teachers and any professional working in the high school are entitled to take part in the deliberation and in the final decision.



Those experiments look massive when every high school is required to organize PB: in Poitou-Charentes, nearly 20 000 students were involved in 2010 and the overall budget decided by the school community is about 10 % of the regional council budget. Due to political disagreement in Nord-Pas-de-Calais, only 30 high schools had implemented PB by 2014, so about 10 % of existing high schools.

Another kind of PB targets youth projects at the city-level because the administration is a city. There are such cases in the UK and in Portugal and the available budget could be sometimes less than 15 000 euros. Depending on the objectives, the pot of money could be used for one project or two projects or for match-funding. This last option is very common in the UK like in Brighton (£20 000), Aberdeen (£50 000). Projects could address issues both in schools and in a broader community like in Trofa (25 000 euros) and Valongo (40 000 euros) in Portugal.

There are different ways of engaging with a young audience. For example in Trofa, before the vote there is always a presentation of each project before the vote. Even in 2014, the city council allowed the



audience to ask questions during the presentations. In Brighton, the process doesn't include a debate, because each project has its own stall and voters could decide whether they want to talk or not with a project leader.

- Strengths (successes, positive opinions)

The main successes happen when PB is repeated. That's how students could learn they have a say and that eventually if their project is not a priority, it could be presented again a year later.

For the first time, power could shift on young people, as a young French girl said: « *Everyone could vote in the school could vote, but for the first time, students were the majority group* ».

Within PB, direct democracy is implemented, so more people are involved than the only school delegates that are common as the main form of democracy at school. Every student could vote directly for projects and that's also an evolution. Decisions are made directly, theoretically without even the consent of the school manager about the projects to be implemented. Teenagers are learning how to debate and could decide about the priorities for a place they spend 30 hours a week.

Cesar Muñoz provides different insights about the impact of PB for youth:

“An opportunity to improve

A way of learning to vote and to give votes

A way of learning to respect everybody

A way of learning how to speak in public

An opportunity to get to know new places”

Indeed, young people have to manage their stage fright when they speak in front of 200 kids who might be ready to laugh at them. That's why Trofa municipality uses short videos in order to help young people to pitch their project during the debate and the videos are also used to promote the projects on social media.



With “Learning to count”, a documentary project focused on youth PB, 3 different youth groups from England, France and Portugal were involved in a European seminar where they discussed good practices about participatory budgeting after comparing their experiences and they agreed on the following points:

- PB should target both school and overall community
- Projects leaders should be able to evaluate and negotiate the costs of their own project
- Project leaders should get the possibility to get help for elaborating and marketing their PB project
- PB projects should be publicized with videos and public presentations
- PB should encourage deliberation with contradictory debate for each project
- Ballot boxes should never be transparent, excluding bias about early voting trends.
- Ranking voting methods are good voting methods for PB because they ask participants to take into account different projects when people vote
- Online vote should secure deliberation about the different projects
- Teenagers should debate about the rules when PB targets young people

Other results about PB could be quite mitigated depending on the city and its methodology. Young people could sometimes get a greater knowledge about the way a school or a city is managed. PB is very similar to other experiences such as Young Mayor, Youth council, etc. It could also be a way of exploring new ways of renewing former civic education schemes thanks to direct democracy through PB, involving more people than the few elected in a youth council.

PB could provide a greater involvement beyond the pupils delegates as a teacher from Nord-Pas-de-Calais explains: *“At the beginning, teenagers don't see the impact PB could have. When we explain how PB works, we tell them they will have to work, and then projects could be implemented in the next 2 years. And some of my students told me: « in 2 year time, I will have left this high school, so it doesn't have any interest for me. » Mobilizing them with this time frame is very difficult but maybe one of our difficulties in this high school is the lack of student mobilization.”*

This challenge could be even more real when PB is implemented in a vocational school (lycée professionnel): *“I think it's harder than elsewhere: they are not used to be expected to have a say”,* the teacher highlighted, *“but now some of them have learnt how to give public speeches and that's important and they want to boost collective projects”*. They learn how to work with others and are also more likely to gain more knowledge about the different project groups competing for a community



grant. They could find out what is going on in their city in a very interactive way and it could create new social relations between participants.

- Problems arising (weaknesses...)

Thanks to PB, public services sometimes are more reactive to students' wishes and the rooms fit better their needs. It really depends on the way works are done and if teenagers are still involved in the very detailed definition of the works. Sometimes civil servants are not likely to change their working methods and as soon as the votes are closed, the routine comes back and the decisions are routinely implemented by people who might not care as much as the project leaders.

The level of satisfaction can't be measured only by the quality of decision-making process. It should include the quality of the implementation, and sometimes delays occur and the people are already gone.

For school PB, the school manager commitment to a democratic process is essential. Sometimes they don't fully play by the rules, developing strategic uses of PB, as noticed Alice Mazeaud in her PhD thesis about Poitou-Charentes. That's also why the Regional Council hired for each high school a youth worker in order to foster engagement in each high school.

In Nord-Pas-de-Calais, the Regional council has nobody working every day with the students and each year trust is renewed to the high schools playing by the rules. Trust can be never taken as granted and the school manager could use many tricks in order to fix the results. The most obvious trick is about organizing token participation. O'Miel and Mongy compared two high schools who's both track records contrast with each other:



	Number of students	Number of students involved in PB	Number of participants in PB	Part of students involved within the total of students	Part of students involved within the overall participants (en %)
School A	260	178,5	211	68,65 %	84,60 %
School B	1378	48	72	3,48 %	66,70 %

Numbers from O'Miel, Mongy (2014)

With a minority of students involved, school managers are more likely to control how the debates are led and have an influence of the final results in the school B. That's why after few years the Regional Council decided that works can't be implemented if the number of students involved in PB is lower than 10%. Another way to influence the results is very simple prior the analysis: before sending the proposals to Regional Council, some managers filtered the proposals and forgot to send few proposals they didn't want to be implemented.

In some high schools, teenagers were not even aware when was organized the voting day, so they were not ready to prepare a pitch or a campaign for their project, mobilizing other students to come to the voting session. Depending on the high school manager, students are not always free to go to the voting session before the vote if they have a course occurring as the same time than the debate.

- Why learning democracy by doing it is essential

Related to social and civic competence, PB could support a strategic approach for the eight competencies for lifelong learning used in the EU. Whether PB is implemented in a school or at the city-



level, teenagers could learn how to become better citizens. Thanks to the work done by teachers or youth workers, PB could really help teenagers to embrace a broader reality while listening to what others have to say about their needs: it's about becoming less individualistic by facing other views and other needs. Like Paulo Freire wrote: *"I cannot think for others or without others, nor can others think for me. Even if the people's thinking is superstitious or naive, it is only as they rethink their assumptions in action that they can change. Producing and acting upon their own ideas—not consuming those of others."*

Being involved in PB could be easily done because of some personal interests. But with strong methodologies for youth engagement and deliberation, on-going participants could be given new reasons to remain active in PB such as civic duty or care for others. Deliberation provides also an opportunity for project leaders to change their mind after the debate: in the documentary movie "Learning to count", a young participant explains how she didn't eventually vote for her project.

Eventually PB is also an opportunity for starting a discussion about needs and how some needs could be priority. Raising issues about social justice is important and in many PB, teenagers gave their vote to projects they won't benefit directly from them. In Poitou-Charentes, this discussion even led to big event where students decided that poor high schools should get a bigger pot to money to decide though PB.

- Perspectives

We need more evaluation on the impact of PB: what are the long-term learning students have? How does it foster ownership in the places teenagers live? Can PB could give a better meaning to the International Convention about Child Rights stating that children should have a say in the decisions that matter to them? It's also Alice Mazeaud highlighted how PB in Poitou-Charentes led to new policies started thanks to discussions about different needs such as cultural or food policy.

Why France has not scaled PB up? Whereas 5 regions somehow implemented PB for high schools, 10 years after the first experience by Ségolène Royal in Poitou-Charentes, the balance is clear: none of them are still implementing them because of the last elections in December 2015. PB challenges directly how education is shaped by complex relations of power and that might be one of the reasons stopping these experiences became urgent for right-wing political parties.



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Note: Challenges and Opportunities of Youth and Children Participation

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This brief note provides some input for a discussion on democratic innovations and participatory strategies aimed to engage youth and children (YCP) in decision making processes regarding the space and the context where they live, focusing in particular on the practice of youth and children participatory budgeting (YCPB)

As we know, along the last three decades a number of local democratic innovations have been blooming worldwide, focused on the inclusion in public policy making of segments of inhabitants commonly marginalized in traditional mechanisms of representative democracy. We refer here to deliberative processes where non-elected citizens are engaged by Local authorities in decision-making processes regarding a broad range of issues: i.e. Participatory Planning, Participatory Budgeting (PB), Agenda 21, etc. In this variety of democratic innovations and social experiments a special space have been reserved to the active engagement of children and youth through specified strategies.

This is for example the case of YCPB, a participatory process aimed to engage groups of youth and children in the decision regarding the destination of a “pot of money” part of the budget of a local authority (generally a Municipality) or in other cases implemented at a smaller scale, within an educative institution as a school or a youth centre. Even if with a number of significant exceptions, YCPB is a practice that is shaped on the structure of a standard PB, where a number of proposal are collected, collectively developed into projects and finally voted/selected in order to establish a priority for funding. Under this broad definition a number of models have been tested: a variety that depend by key contextual variable as the scale of implementation, the political commitment of the entity, the relevance of the resources committed, the continuity of the process over the time, the number of participants and the age ranges considered, etc.

Independently by the model adopted a number common feature of YCPB have been observed in literature.



Legitimacy

In general terms, it is possible to distinguish between the participatory strategies centred on youth and children as subject of the process and those strategies where the quality of life of children and youth is the object of policy discussed in a participatory setting where the range of subject engaged could be extended to other actors as parents and tutors. This dualism is reflected in the mechanisms of legitimacy of ycp. Indeed on one hand participation of children and young people has been generally framed as a subcategory of general participatory processes aimed to engage a specific category of inhabitants (youth and children) intended as a carrier of a specific subset of rights. In this perspective the focus is often appointed on the “rules of the game” - the condition of the discourse of the participatory public sphere - shaped on the features on this “particular” public. On the other hand our societies often conceive children as young adults. As a consequence the right to participation and to be heard is granted to children in a society that is culturally and historically constructed with reference to adults and that also conceives childhood as a “becoming”, emphasizing the pedagogical function of participation.

A Dedicated Participatory Sphere

Even if there are some exception, YCPB generally is carried out in a specified participatory space, differentiated by other participatory spaces that involve other (adult) social groups or where general themes are discussed. In many cases youth and children are engaged in participatory processes that are supposed to discuss and influence choices that directly regard their daily life. In practice the contradiction subject/object is solved through a consistent sectorialization of YCP: youth and children participate to define policies and choices that regards their condition of youth and children, as for example the management of public spaces in a school or the equipment of public parks in a city. Just rarely youth and children are engaged in decision making processes where they are called to describe and develop a point of view on more complex issues regarding the daily life in the “adult” environment.

There are good arguments in favour and against this choice. In favour, the identification of a specific subset of YC rights to be pursued and a simpler definition of the inclusiveness participatory sphere based on the identity of the participants. Against, the reproduction of consolidated settings of engagement and the lack of cross-fertilization between YC and adult (in general or specific social groups) perspectives risks to reduce the transformational capacity of YCP in terms of internal (epistemic capacity of participants) and external outcomes (the decision made through the deliberative process).

This limitation of possible impacts is reflected in the marginality of the outcomes of YCP compared to the important decisions that actually affect the life of participants. This is also a point commonly raised against PB in general: quality and intensity of participation are not independent by the actual outcomes that it produces. Participants should perceive the new participatory spaces as actually able to influence their everyday life and the production of the space where they live. In “adult” PB a simple indicator of the quality of a participatory process (and in particular of a PB) is the existence of rules and mechanisms that ensure the enforcement of the decisions made in a participatory setting. In the case of PB it is generally



reflected in the existence of a “pot of money” that the local authority commit to expenditures decided by inhabitants. Also YCPB should provide similar enforcement mechanisms in order to make explicit and increase the perception of its effectiveness.

Pedagogical goals

Literature on YCP generally emphasizes pedagogical goals: young citizens are engaged in a process where they can learn what is the actual functioning of a public budgeting system or, more in general, they can learn by doing the complexity of collective deliberation, the importance of listening the others and express and argument their point of view. Two additional consideration on this point. The first is that the attribution of educational goals to public participation is an element commonly reported also when participants are adults. It is for example the case to remember the influence of Freire’s critical pedagogy in the flourishing of participatory experiments in Brazil. In this perspective the development of critical thinking of participants is intrinsically linked with their self-definition as active agent of transformation of a situated context. Other approaches frame the educational dimension of participation under a more passive and traditional framework of knowledge transfer, assuming a “paternalistic” perspective that don’t recognize the possibility that youth and children can be already carrier of critical thoughts regarding the society and the space they live.

Anyway, the idea of YCP as a school of citizenship is generally one of the main explicit objectives. Literature warn that such an emphasis risks to hide other possible objectives that can be attributed to YCP as actual change agents at societal level. Framing YCPB as a pedagogical experiment implicitly creates a correlation with a specific setting: the educational environment, whose rules and mechanisms are well known and recognized by the participants as well as by other third actors (this is emphasized by the fact that in many cases ycp is carried out physically in the same spaces of schools and youth centres). This correlation shapes invisible discursive constraints that limit and regulate the participatory sphere of YCP, reproducing rules and behavioural patterns already pre-existing in the didactical environment.

Digitization

In recent years, the widespread diffusion of ICT tools and devices strongly influenced the design and the management of Democratic Innovations in general and PB in particular, with the proliferation of collaborative platforms and other means to interact remotely between citizens and local authorities (and between citizen themselves of course!). Some of the main challenges and opportunities observed in “adult” processes have consequent influence on YCP:

- Inclusion/Exclusion of new publics: Flexibility of ICT vs. the rigid space and time constraint of off-line participation can foster the inclusion of new groups and in particular of adolescent population. At the same time skills-related barriers exist also within YC population, with the



additional problem that a minimal age difference could be reflected in significant differences in ICT skills.

- Multiple processes in multiple channels: The possibility to manage in parallel a plurality of networked participatory processes open the possibility to interconnect YC dedicated channels with other participatory strategies opened to other publics. When not adequately managed, on-line participation and off-line participation follow two parallel paths, creating conflicts instead of collaboration.
- Vote vs. deliberation: The availability of ICT solutions to collect votes and preferences emphasized the vote stage of PB against the deliberative component of the process (the development, discussion negotiation between alternatives), affecting the educational dimension that is grounded in the direct experimentation of deliberative practices.
- Gamification: Digitized PB are being increasingly gamified, with the adoption of techniques and solutions adapted from the videogame industry (i.e. Interface solutions, proliferation of point-based games aimed to reward compliant behaviors). Literature highlights how “serious games” can be used for educational purposes, once participants are able to reflect on the game experience isolating it from real life situation. At the opposite, when adequate space for collective reflection is missing, the adaptation of game setting in participatory processes risks to reproduce epistemic mechanisms and behavioural patterns consolidated in an external environment (the competitive and non-neutral videogame industry).