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CEPA strategy guidance note on
Participatory budgeting

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The [United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration \(CEPA\)](#) has developed a set of principles of effective governance for sustainable development. The essential purpose of these voluntary principles is to provide interested countries with practical, expert guidance on a broad range of governance challenges associated with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. CEPA has identified 62 commonly used strategies to assist with the operationalization of these principles. This guidance note addresses participatory budgeting, which is associated with the principle of participation and can contribute to strengthening the inclusiveness of institutions. It is part of a series of notes prepared by renowned experts under the overall direction of the CEPA Secretariat in the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

In reading this guidance note, individuals in government ministries and agencies who are less familiar with the topic will be able to understand the fundamentals. Those who have perhaps taken initial steps in this area with limited follow-through or impact will be able to identify how to adjust elements of their practice to achieve better results and to better embed and institutionalize the strategy in their organizations. Those who are more advanced in participatory budgeting will be able to recognize the practices which contribute to its success.

Understanding the strategy

Participatory budgeting (PB) broadly refers to the many ways in which the general public is able to interact directly with government in the design and implementation of budgetary and fiscal policy. Participatory budgeting is mainly applied in cities and local contexts: indeed, it can be described as a process that helps to localize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the community level. The mutual learning among different actors that it entails, has great potential to help stakeholders understand the complexity of governing intertwined policy areas and to support public officials in better understanding the diverse needs of society.

PB is a process to discuss future investments with non-state actors. Its main purpose is to work *a priori* on the co-design of proposals which will be embedded in budget and planning documents to regulate future financial years. It is different to other tools – such as socio-environmental balance documents and gender analyses of budgets – which mainly work *a posteriori* to understand how the distribution of resources favoured the accomplishment of specific objectives.

Modern PB developed primarily in Brazil, with early experiences occurring in small cities and often including a limited advisory role in decision-making.¹ The first large-scale participatory budgeting exercise was implemented in 1989 in Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul State.² It took place within the framework of the transition from dictatorship to democracy with a more prominent role for local institutions and civil society at large.

Towards the end of the 1990s, some PB processes began to manifest at the regional and national levels³, starting from the scaling up of the experience in Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil) and in Kerala State (India).⁴ While the majority of PB cases occur in a state's decentralized administrative units, such as municipalities, parish councils, or departmental or provincial governments, there have been PB experiments in other type of organizations, for example, in sectoral public or public/private agencies responsible for housing, transportation, or waste

¹ De Souza, B., 2002, *Todo o poder emana do povo* [All Power Emanates from the People], Porto Alegre.

² Fedozzi, L., 1997, *Orçamento Participativo: reflexões sobre a experiência de Porto Alegre* [PB: reflections on the Porto Alegre experience]. Tomo Editorial. See also: Gret, M. and Y, Sintomer, 2005, *The Porto Alegre experiment: learning lessons for a better democracy*. Zed Books, London.

³ See the cases of Portugal, Taiwan and south Korea. For example: Falanga, R., 2018, “The National Participatory Budget in Portugal: Opportunities and Challenges for Scaling up Citizen Participation in Policymaking”. In Dias, N. (Org.), *Hope for Democracy: 30 years of Participatory Budgeting*, Oficina/Epopeia, pp. 447-466. The most authoritative source to follow the development of participation opportunities in budget process at the national level is the [Open Budget survey](#), by the International Budget Partnership. In OBS, public participation at different stages of the budget process, following defined standards.

⁴ See Serageldin, M., 2005, [Assessment of Participatory Budgeting in Brazil](#). IDB; and Blair, H., 2020, [Accountability Through Participatory Budgeting in India: Only in Kerala?](#) In Cheema, S. (ed.). *Governance for Urban Services: Access, Participation, Accountability, and Transparency*. Springer, pp. 57-76

and water management⁵ as well as in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), schools⁶, universities, prisons⁷ and professional orders.⁸

Participatory budgeting directly resonates with the call made by the 2030 Agenda for inclusive institutions, as expressed in SDG 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) and in Target 16.7 (Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels).⁹ Although studies on the multidimensional impacts of PB are still ongoing,¹⁰ expansion of PB is widely considered an important enabler of progress towards many other Goals, among them: tackling poverty, lowering child mortality rates,¹¹ facing the consequences of and preventing further damages from climate change¹² and fostering the conditions needed for gender equality.¹³

Key definitions and attributes of PB

Providing a single definition of participatory budgeting is difficult,¹⁴ as approaches to the practice vary widely and often depends on local contexts. PB experiences can also vary over time with a majority being adapted in both design and methodology in response to changing circumstances and of mutual-learning opportunities.

A process is widely considered to be within the realm of participatory budgeting if it: includes a series of steps leading to the discussion of financial/budgetary issues; affects a territory governed by an elected or appointed body, which has some formal degree of power over administration and resources; is repeated in time; includes some form of public deliberation within the framework of specific meetings/forums; provides some accountability mechanism, so that the outputs reflect the public will of participants; and discusses a significant amount of resources.

Five main attributes of PB emerge from a classification of case studies:

⁵ See the cases of [Toronto Community Housing PB](#) (Canada), or that of [Paris Habitat social housing PB](#) (France).

⁶ See the Project “[Ripartire](#)” [Restart] in Italy, or the [FAQ about PB in Schools of the Participatory Governance Initiative](#) (US).

⁷ See the case of Bollate Prison in Milan, in Allegretti, G. and G. Pittella, 2021, “[Looking Inward or Outward? An Italian Experience of Prisoners’ Involvement in Governance through Participatory Budgeting](#)”. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 11 (11).

⁸ See the Portuguese cases of the [Nurses Professional Rank of Central Portugal](#) and [the Order of Certified Accountants](#), and the Italian case of the [Order of Psychologists of Lombardy Region](#).

⁹ Cabannes, Y., 2019, [Participatory Budgeting: a powerful and expanding contribution to the achievement of SDGs and primarily SDG 16.7](#). UCLG, Gold Policy Series, n. 2.

¹⁰ See the pilot case of Escobedo (Mexico) in the UN-Habitat-sponsored report “[Exploring the Role of Participatory Budgeting in Accelerating the SDGs: A Multidimensional Approach](#)” (2020).

¹¹ Touchton, M. and B. Wampler, 2020, “[Public engagement for public health: participatory budgeting, targeted social programmes, and infant mortality in Brazil](#)”. *Development in Practice*, 30:5, pp. 681-686.

¹² Cabannes, Y., 2018, [Contributions of Participatory Budgeting to Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation](#). OI DP.

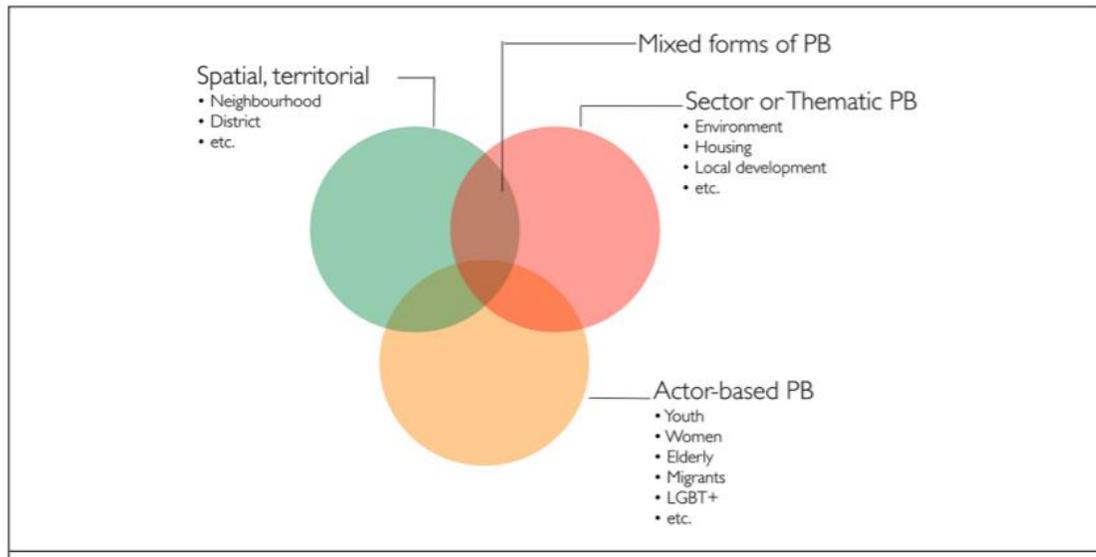
¹³ Allegretti, G. and R. Falanga, 2016, “Women in Budgeting: A Critical Assessment of Participatory Budgeting Experiences”. In C. Ng (Ed.), *Gender Responsive and Participatory Budgeting*. New York: Springer.

¹⁴ See for various definitions of participatory budgeting: UN-Habitat and Municipal Development Partnership Eastern and Southern Africa (2008) [Participatory budgeting in Africa: A Training Companion](#), Volume 1 Concepts and principles, UN-HABITAT/MDP.

1. **Extent of participation** (for example, whether participants are entitled to take decisions and the outreach and design features, methodologies for interaction, rules-of-the-game and voting methods are all inclusive);
2. **Financing** (for example, what resources are at stake, how can they be spent and what is the allocation criteria? Is there a debate process? Is a fixed amount or a fixed percentage of the general budget devoted to PB?);
3. **Legal framework** (for example, in which constitutional and legal framework is PB embedded? Which pacts and norms guarantee people's capacity to take decisions? How are rules approved and/or amended?);
4. **Cultural context** (for example, which local cultural habits can PB challenge, or to which must it adapt?);
5. **Territorial scope** (for example, what is the scope and the administrative scale of PB? Does it concern only some areas or the whole territory? How are territorial differences and fragilities taken into account in allocating resources as in the use of participatory methods? Which are the parameters used to distribute resources according to an affirmative action approach that could benefit the most deprived areas? How does PB relate to other planning tools? How is the connection between urban and rural areas taken into account?).

The public can be involved in some or all of the phases. The degree of participation is related to the number of phases in which people are the main actors (from co-writing regulatory frameworks to co-evaluating processes). In terms of organizational models, participatory budgets can occur at the community, district, city or regional level – acting primarily as a “space-based” management instrument, be organized around thematic issues, addressing context-specific priorities (such as transport, housing, education, the environment or local economic development, etc.), or earmark resources for specific social groups (usually the most vulnerable and excluded, such as youth, women, the elderly, immigrants, First Nations/indigenous groups, etc.). These basic models are depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Basic typology of participatory budgeting



Source: Cabannes (2021, p. 444).

As underlined by several studies, recent effective PB practices have highlighted the importance of active public involvement in the implementation, monitoring, management and even fundraising of PB priorities. In this regard, PB has the ability to help local governments to mobilize potential resources available at the local level. In Bologna (Italy), PB processes resulted in pacts for the shared management of commons signed between the municipality and over 500 civic organizations and informal groups of people. These pacts have contributed to the upkeep and maintenance of several public spaces and services, thus reducing public costs, and increasing the sense of ownership and responsibility of the public for their living environment.

The capacity of PB to build support among participants and continuously attract new stakeholders is directly proportional to its capacity to produce concrete outputs and impacts in a timely manner and to include and empower individuals.¹⁵ In many cases the inability of institutions to produce these results, and to manage participants' expectations, has jeopardized the effectiveness and attractiveness of PB.¹⁶

Balancing financial and participatory dimensions

A challenge in participatory budgeting is making public policies and projects and their financial dimensions understandable to laypersons. The financial dimension is essential to consider because it is a determining factor in assessing the feasibility of a project or policy as well as the

¹⁵ Allegretti, G., 2014, "Paying Attention to the Participants' Perceptions in Order to Trigger a Virtuous Circle", in Dias, N. (org). *Hope For Democracy – 25 Years of Participatory Budgeting Worldwide*. In-LoCo.

¹⁶ The PB Handbook "*Viajando por los Presupuestos Participativos*" (p. 21) summarizes this dilemma through the empiric formula: [S = (R – E)] which means [Satisfaction = (Results – Expectations)].

value of potential impacts. PB may be also central factor¹⁷ in complying with the substantive objectives of inclusion and participation in the 2030 Agenda, as well as for including disadvantaged social groups in decision-making processes.¹⁸

The following aspects of the financial dimension require consideration: the investments required to have a well-designed and highly functioning PB process; the resources that are available to implement the priorities that have been decided together with the community; and the degree of alignment between the resources committed by local governments to PB, and those that are actually spent. The fact that many participatory budgets are implemented “through the path of least resistance, and thus become connected to small and discretionary budgets [...] could imply community effort and organizing around issues that are less pressing from the point of view of social justice, or worse, have the agenda of movements be dictated by the administrative possibilities rather than more autonomous conversations about needs.”¹⁹

In order to attain the 2030 Agenda principle of “leaving no one behind” PB exercises would have to invest adequate amounts of resources to substantially revert social and spatial priorities for the sake of those in need.²⁰ In order to be able to do so, it could help to apply PB principles to a larger public debate on finances, such as extra-budgetary resources and other sources of revenue, to increase the levels of investment in PB.²¹

One of the most recent ideas for explaining the positive impact of PB was put forward by the umbrella organization, [People Powered](#) (see Figure 2 below). This theory of change makes clear that some of the goals of the urban agenda can be considered outputs of PB, and others must be envisioned and leveraged as wider impacts to be conquered through different repeated cycles.²²

¹⁷ Hagelskamp, C., C. Rinehart, R. Silliman and D. Schleifer, 2016, *Public spending, by the people. Participatory budgeting in the United States and Canada in 2014 – 15*. New York: Public Agenda.

¹⁸ UN-Habitat, 2004, *Participatory Budgeting: Conceptual Framework and Analysis of its Contribution to Urban Governance and the Millennium Development Goals*, Working Paper, n. 140. Nairobi: UN-Habitat.

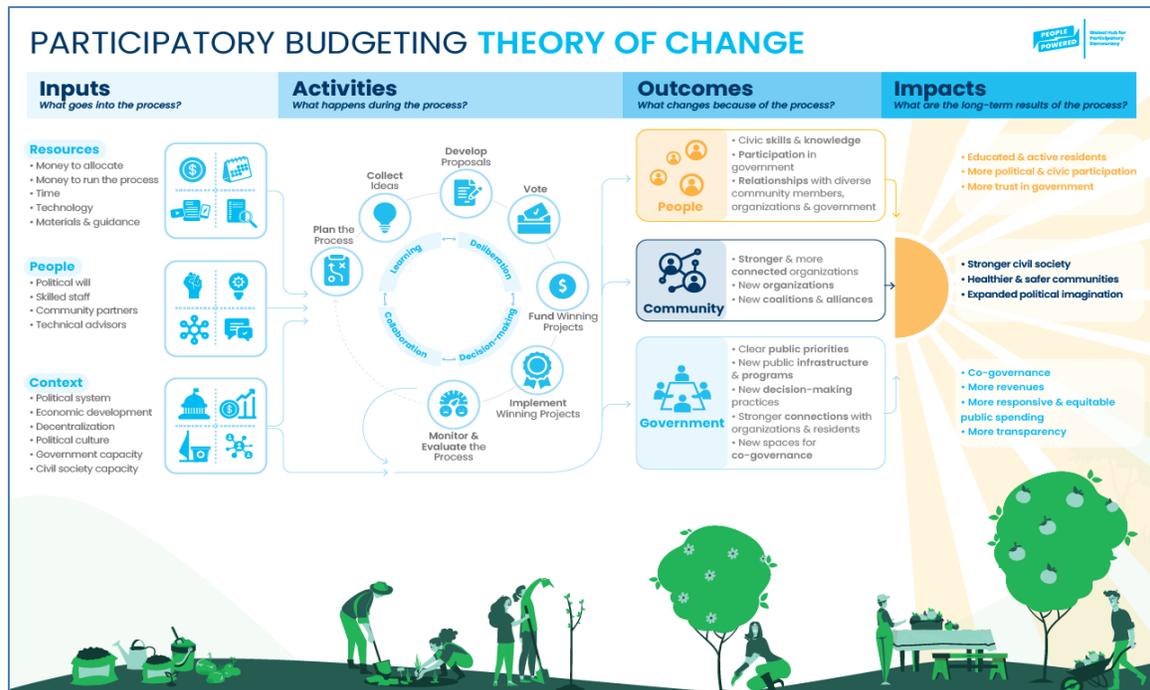
¹⁹ Baiocchi, G. and E. Ganuza, 2014, *Participatory Budgeting as if Emancipation Mattered*. *Politics & Society*, 42(1), 29–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329213512978>

²⁰ See: Cabannes, Y., 2019, “The contribution of participatory budgeting to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals: lessons for policy in Commonwealth countries”. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, 21, pp. 1-19: <https://doi.org/10.5130/cjlg.v0i21.6707>

²¹ The larger pot of resources that constitute the overall wealth of a territory includes town planning compensation for building permits, foreign aid and income deriving from public-private partnerships, but also resources coming from crowdfunding and other creative sources.

²² This research is built on 30 years of PB practice around the world and aims to cast light on how PB can lead to desired changes over time. It includes a series of studies that seek to produce insights into (and evidence about) the impacts of PB on governance and well-being, civil society democratization and political participation, as well as on education and learning.

Figure 2. From inputs to impact: PB theory of change



Source: [People Powered](#).

Benefits of PB

Some PB practices have proved to be important spaces for peacebuilding in cases of local or border conflicts (see several cases in Nariño region, Colombia, and in Matam, Senegal). In the United States, studies have been undertaken on the impact of PB on political participation and the likelihood that participants would vote in elections²³, especially for social groups living in deprived areas. In these cases, a key role was played by the active engagement of community organizations and NGOs focused on advocacy and mobilization of ethnic and religious minorities, ex-offenders and other groups traditionally distant from the rituals of representative democracy.

There are several potential benefits that can result from participatory budgeting,²⁴ such as:

- Customized solutions to socio-territorial problems that include local priorities and specific local conditions;
- Enhanced public ownership of development projects;

²³ For example, in New York, the likelihood of PB voters to vote in ordinary election increased by 8.4%. See: Su, C. (2017). "Beyond Inclusion: Critical Race Theory and Participatory Budgeting." *New Political Science*, 39(1), pp. 126-142; and Johnson, C.; Carlson, H. J.; & Reynolds, S. (2021). "Testing the Participation Hypothesis: Evidence from Participatory Budgeting". *Political Behavior*, pp. 1-30.

²⁴ United Nations Human Settlements Programme and Municipal Development Partnership Eastern and Southern Africa, 2008, [Participatory budgeting in Africa: A Training Companion, Volume 1 Concepts and principles](#).

- Improved public service delivery through the empowerment of people to influence the governance of local resources and their use in the interest of more effective and equitable service provision;
- Greater accountability of public decision-making and enhanced transparency of management;
- Gradual strengthening of decentralized and democratized governance;
- Reduction of corruption; and
- Coalition-building around issues with diverse actors.

These results mainly resonate with SDGs 11 and 16, but many other benefits can result from the medium to long-term impacts of PB, which refer to several other SDGs and the central aims of the 2030 Agenda. Such benefits include reduction of inequalities and gender and age gaps; improved education; better housing conditions; improved healthcare and wellbeing; decrease in child mortality and poverty; different forms of climate action; protection of life on land; and promotion of various forms of responsible production and consumption.²⁵ Other specific goals can be pursued, such as the PB processes in Taiwan that were devoted to promotion of the use of affordable and clean energies and improvement of access to employment for persons with disabilities.²⁶ Moreover, PB can help to create and consolidate those partnerships for the Goals which are envisioned in SDG 17 as strategic and cross-cutting means for the advancement of all other Goals.

PB results are more likely to succeed²⁷ when: there is strong political will to put people at the center of decision-making; the volume and flexibility of capital to be allocated is relatively high, so as to provide sufficient incentives for meaningful participation and substantial impacts; mechanisms and strategies to include minorities and diverse groups of people are put in place; a strong and organized civil society shows interest in taking part in the process; the definition of process rules is a shared task; high priority is given to the capacity-building of government officials, civil society and other stakeholders in preparation for PB; and sufficient organizational/technical state capacity exists to allow timely delivery of co-decided proposals.²⁸

Evidence of impact on sustainable development

Evidence on impacts generally exists at the local level, where many PB initiatives take place. There are also a few larger scale analyses²⁹ that assess PB processes with regard to larger national policies. The most renowned is [the World Bank assessment of the effectiveness of Peru's PB law](#) in promoting transparency and the redistribution of resources. Some recent

²⁵ Cabannes, Y., 2005, *Participatory Budgeting: Conceptual Framework and Analysis of its Contribution to Urban Governance and the Millennium Development Goals*. Working paper. (140). Urban Management Programme /UN-HABITAT, Quito, Ecuador.

²⁶ Cabannes, Y., 2020, *Contributions of Participatory Budgeting to Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation*. OI DP.

²⁷ Ryan, M., 2021, *Why Citizen Participation Succeeds or Fails. A Comparative Analysis of Participatory Budgeting*. Bristol University Press

²⁸ UN-Habitat and MDP for Eastern and Southern Africa, 2008, *Participatory budgeting in Africa: A Training Companion, Volume 1 Concepts and principles*. See also: B. Wampler, S. McNulty and M. Touchton, 2018, *Participatory Budgeting: Spreading across the globe*. Working Paper.

²⁹ Among them the UK Department for Communities and Local Government Ministry study entitled "[Communities in the driving seat: a study of Participatory Budgeting in England](#)" (2011).

cross-cutting studies elaborate on the impact of specific legal frameworks³⁰ and pro-federalist institutional frameworks on the diffusion of PB,³¹ or on the probability of having PB processes in specific areas.³²

PB in Brazil has proved to work well at the local level.³³ Participatory budgeting has been found to have positive impacts on resource allocation on people living in poverty;³⁴ on avoiding capture by powerful social groups; and on lowering the level of patronage in resource distribution.³⁵ Important analyses have focused on how the existence of specific social/distributive criteria in some Brazilian PBs have favoured a more substantive redistribution of resources to the most disadvantaged.³⁶ Larger studies during the 2006–2013 period found that participatory institutions, social programmes, and local capacity have reinforced one another to improve well-being.³⁷ Different studies in Brazil highlight the contribution of PB to improving cities' wealth³⁸ through the improved administrative management of public accounts³⁹ and the increase of fiscal payments.⁴⁰

A recent [assessment done by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development](#), examining 16 studies from low-income countries, found consistent evidence of positive impacts on governance capacity, budget allocation, service delivery, and citizen involvement. Other studies converge in demonstrating similar impacts, stressing that more rarely PB changes existing power relations.⁴¹ Even when it is proved that the PB capacity of promoting social accountability can help territorial wealth to increase, due to dynamics such

³⁰ Picchi M., 2012, "Il «sostegno» ai progetti di bilancio partecipativo attraverso la legge regionale toscana n. 69/2007". In Bortolotti F. and C. Corsi (org.) *La partecipazione politica e sociale tra crisi e innovazione. Il caso della Toscana*. Ediesse, pp. 269–296. See also Allegretti, G., M. Bassoli and G. Colavolpe, 2021, "[On the Verge of Institutionalisation? Participatory Budgeting Evidence in Five Italian Regions](#)". *Finansovyy Zhurnal — Financial Journal*, issue 2/2021, pp. 25-45; and the People Power Report "[PB via National Law: What Works and What Doesn't](#)" (2021).

³¹ Trettel, M., 2020, *La democrazia partecipativa negli ordinamenti composti: studio di diritto comparato sull'incidenza della tradizione giuridica nelle democratiche innovazioni*. Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane.

³² Fedozzi, L. et al., 2020, "[Participatory Budgeting: explanatory variables and new scenarios that challenge its implementation](#)". *Ver. de Sociologia e Política*, n. 28(73).

³³ Baiocchi, G. et al., 2006, "Evaluating Empowerment: Participatory Budgeting in Brazilian Municipalities", in: Alsop, R., M. Frost Bertelsen and J. Holland (eds.), *Empowerment in Practice: From Analysis to Implementation*. The World Bank, pp. 94-124.

³⁴ Gonçalves, S., 2014, "[The Effects of Participatory Budgeting on Municipal Expenditures and Infant Mortality in Brazil](#)". *World Development*, Vol. 53, pp. 94–110.

³⁵ Blair, H., 2008, "Innovations in participatory governance". *Participatory governance and the Millennium Development Goals*. UN DESA, 77-120.

³⁶ Since 2000, PB has been allocating resources to each city district in proportion to its IQVU: the lower the index, the higher the level of resources allocated to improve quality of life. The project was co-funded by UNDP. See M.I. Nahas, et al. (2006). "[Metodologia de construção do Índice de Qualidade de Vida Urbana dos municípios brasileiros \(IQVU-BR\)](#)". *XV Encontro Nacional de Estudos Populacionais*. APEP. See also: Marquetti, A., G. Campos and R. Pires (Org). *Democracia Participativa e Redistribuição: análise de experiências de Orçamento Participativo*. Xamã Editora.

³⁷ Touchton, M., N. Sugiyama and B. Wampler, 2017, Democracy at Work: Moving Beyond Elections to Improve Well-Being, *American Political Science Review*, 111(1), 68-82.

³⁸ World Bank, 2008, *Brazil Toward a More Inclusive and Effective Participatory Budget in Porto Alegre*, World Bank, Washington, D.C.

³⁹ Zamboni, Y., 2007, *Participatory Budgeting and Local Governance: An Evidence-Based Evaluation of PB experiences in Brazil*. CGU.

⁴⁰ Marquetti, A. and D. Berni, 2011, "Efeitos Fiscais da Democracia Direta nos Municípios Gaúchos: 1997-2004". *Análise Econômica*, v. 28, p. 195-223. See also: Touchton, M., B. Wampler and T. Peixoto, 2020, "[Of democratic governance and revenue: Participatory institutions and tax generation in Brazil](#)". *Governance. An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions*, Vol. 34 (4), See [the original World Bank Report](#) (2019).

⁴¹ Cabannes, Y., 2014, [Contribution of Participatory Budgeting to provision and management of basic services: municipal practices and evidence from the field](#), IIED Working Paper. IIED, London. See also: Cabannes, Y. (2015). "[The impact of participatory budgeting on basic services: municipal practices and evidence from the field](#)". *Environment and Urbanization*, 27(1), 257–284.

as higher inter-institutional and fiscal trust,⁴² often documents on executed budgets remain less transparent than those on provisional/future budgetary exercises.

At present, new areas of analysis include multigoal assessments which relate PB to different SDGs⁴³ as developed by the new [Participatory Habitat Initiative](#), including studies on the interaction of PB with environmental sustainability and climate change issues.⁴⁴ Similarly, nascent research aims to develop PB (through established relationships between the Global North and South) as a tool for building transnational climate justice approaches.⁴⁵

However, systemic and comparative studies on the impacts of PB are still underdeveloped (and thus partially inconclusive in general terms) with regard to the range of possible large-scale effects, such as PB's impact on participants' behavior,⁴⁶ on public well-being,⁴⁷ on civic engagement and electoral politics⁴⁸ and on local governance and transparency.⁴⁹ Clues about the last issue exist in several Municipal Transparency Indexes calculated at the national level, which have seen the ranking of cities with PB rising rapidly⁵⁰ but cause-effect correlations have not yet been examined in detail.

Public sector situation and trends

The term participatory budgeting itself emerged in the late 1980s to describe the process whereby ordinary people help to decide how to allocate public funds. Such processes were imagined to empower stakeholders to: identify general ideas and detailed proposals to respond to community needs; work with elected officials and civil servants to craft the content of budget documents; possibly vote on spending priorities for future budgeting exercises;⁵¹ take

⁴² McNeil, M.; Malena, C. (2010). *Demanding Good Governance: Lessons from Social Accountability Initiatives in Africa*. World Bank. See also: Mbera, E. (2012), "Towards budget transparency and improvement in the South Kivu Province", in Parycek, P. et al. (eds), *CeDEM12. Proceedings of the International Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government*, Danube University of Krems, Austria, pp. 47-58.

⁴³ See the UN-Habitat report "[Exploring the Role of Participatory Budgeting in Accelerating the SDGs: A Multidimensional Approach](#)" (2020).

⁴⁴ Cabannes, Y., 2021, *Greening cities through Participatory Budgeting Answers to climate change from Lisbon, Portugal and Molina de Segura, Spain*. OIDD. See also: Cabannes, Y., 2021, "[Contributions of participatory budgeting to climate change adaptation and mitigation: current local practices across the world and lessons from the field](#)". *Environment & Urbanization*, Vol 33(2), pp. 356–375. See also: Falanga, R., J. Verheij and O. Bina, 2021, "[Green\(er\) Cities and Their Citizens: Insights from the Participatory Budget of Lisbon](#)". *Sustainability*, 13(15), 8243.

⁴⁵ See the Seminar on PB and Climate Change organized by UN-Habitat/UCLG in the *WORLD URBAN FORUM*, Abu Dhabi, 07/12 February 2020.

⁴⁶ Talpin, J., 2011, *Schools of democracy: how ordinary citizens (sometimes) become competent in participatory budgeting institutions*. ECPR.

⁴⁷ Campbell, M., O. Escobar, C. Fenton and P. Craig, 2018, "[The impact of participatory budgeting on health and wellbeing: a scoping review of evaluations](#)", *BMC Public Health*, 18:822.

⁴⁸ Spada, P., 2010, "[The Effects of Participatory Democracy on Political Competition: The Case of Brazilian Participatory Budgeting](#)". *APSA 2010 Annual Meeting Paper*, Available at SSRN. See also: Kukučková, S. and E. Bakoš, 2019, "[Does Participatory Budgeting Bolster Voter Turnout in Elections? The Case of the Czech Republic](#)". *The NISPAe Journal of Public Administration and Policy*, Vol. XII, No. 2, pp. 109-129 and https://www.academia.edu/25899286/The_Economic_and_Political_Effects_of_Participatory_Budgeting; and Hagelskamp et al., 2021, *Impacts of Participatory Budgeting on Civil Society & Political Participation*, People Powered Research Brief.

⁴⁹ Barbera, C., M. Sicili and I. Steccolini, 2016, "[What Mr. Rossi Wants in Participatory Budgeting: Two R's \(Responsiveness and Representation\) and Two I's \(Inclusiveness and Interaction\)](#)". *International Journal of Public Administration*, n. 39 (13), pp. 1088–1100.

⁵⁰ See the case of Portugal (<https://transparencia.pt/itm>) and that of Slovenia (<https://danesjenovdan.si/lestvica-transparentnosti>).

⁵¹ Gilman, H.R., 2016, *Democracy reinvented: Participatory budgeting and civic innovation in America*, Washington, DC.: Brookings Inst. Press.

part in the implementation and monitoring of projects that have been decided upon; oversee, review or co-design budget-making processes; and take part in the evaluation and impact assessment of the participatory process itself.

In the last three decades PB has been a major innovation in local participatory governance worldwide.⁵² From this perspective, it is possible to identify some global PB trends, which include the following dynamics:

- The adoption of PB action principles to accompany budget elaboration in organizations that are different from the traditional political/administrative institutions (such as NGOs, schools, enterprises, professional associations and prison, among others);
- A general and drastic reduction of average investment in each PB process (measurable by calculating the resources per inhabitant/beneficiary). This sort of downscaling occurs where PB processes have moved to the regional and/or national government level;
- The consolidation of networks of researchers and practitioners specialized in PB and the growth of cities experimenting with PB;
- The growth in hybrid PB models; and
- The creation of multichannel participatory systems,⁵³ which coordinate PB with other participatory and deliberative processes to reach larger audiences.

PB grew in popularity as it generated more optimized solutions for local needs, starting from the provision of basic infrastructure (such as housing, sewerage, water and electricity) and public equipment (markets, schools, nurseries, and health, sports and cultural centers). In many instances (especially in the Northern regions of Brazil), PB grew alongside governmental capacities and became a sort of enabling environment for other reforms that were needed to better coordinate the different parts of the public machine.

Many PB processes in other contexts have had similar conditions, often with added difficulties due to the scarcity of resources (compared to the situation of many cities in Brazil). In several cases, the PB start-up phase has been funded by foreign donors, or by special envelopes established by national governments and international institutions (such as the United Nations or the World Bank) to support the digitalization of communication, civil society involvement in public policies, or reforms in the functioning of decentralized institutions. Some countries' legal frameworks make PB mandatory at the local level, but rarely have these governments offered resources for strengthening the quality and sustainability of the practices that their

⁵² To have an idea of magnitude, the 2019 of the PB Atlas documented an increase of PBs to almost 11,800 cases, from the around 2,800 that other sources had mapped in 2013 (62% out of them are experimented by local authorities and the rest by schools, province, regions, etc.).

⁵³ See Spada, P. and G. Allegritti, 2020, "[When Democratic Innovations Integrate Multiple and Diverse Channels of Social Dialogue](#)", in Adria, M. (org), *Using New Media for Citizen Engagement and Participation*. IGI Global, pp. 35-59. See also: Legard, S. and B. Goldfrank, 2021, "[The Systemic Turn and Participatory Budgeting: The Case of Rio Grande do Sul](#)". *Journal of Latin American Studies*, n. 53(1), pp. 161-187.

legal frameworks trigger. In addition, few countries have built databases or conducted inquiries to assess their PB practices.⁵⁴

In countries with ongoing civil wars, and in other contexts characterized by high levels of corruption, several international donors have required the creation of [Community-Driven Development](#) practices (CDD) that give control over planning decisions and investment resources to local communities. This has as its main goal to enhance the local capacities of people, civic associations and civil servants especially for planning small-scale infrastructure projects and delivering basic services to poor communities. In this regard, coupling PB and CDD has been viewed by many international organizations as a central strategy to provide a safety net for remote and vulnerable groups in a timely and credible manner, contributing to poverty-reduction and sustainable development at the same time.

Despite context-based differences, there are several common challenges that often characterize poor territories:

- Maintaining PB continuity over time – for example, when the external funding used for the kick-off experiment ends and civil society and local institutions have not acquired the capacity to continue the PB process;
- Limited resources to support communication and transparency protocols; to facilitate PB processes; and to mobilize stakeholders;
- The self-censorship of certain social groups (women, young people, the disabled, etc.) due to cultural habits, even in PB processes where they represent the majority of participants,⁵⁵
- The turnover and/or loss of technical personnel, threatening the continuity of PB processes;
- Scattered villages and limited road connections that hinder the combination of micro-local deliberations with wider visions that can be developed through PB;
- Tensions may exist between the methodologies used for setting PB (which are often imported or dictated by donors) and traditional forms of collective decision-making, or the role of customary authorities formalized in the local governance of some countries;
- Even though some initial investments can be capitalized and amortized over time (as is the case of digital platforms for PB), after several years they may become obsolete and would thus require new injections of resources.

⁵⁴ Some national reforms (such as in Peru, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama or Angola), provided obligations for local authorities to dedicate to PB a portion of the budget received from national authorities. In other cases (Moldova, Kenya, Cameroon, Ukraine, Kazakhstan or Colombia), the choice to use PB was freely made by municipalities or counties within broader legal frameworks that required some form of citizen participation in budgetary and fiscal policies, as/or in territorial planning schemes.

⁵⁵ Techniques, such as dividing PB audiences into homogeneous groups (women groups, youth groups, etc.), are often used so that the different types of participants can feel more at ease in exposing their needs and solutions to peers.

The evolving role of information and communication technologies

The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in PB experiments is a relatively recent trend. Many ready-made ICT platforms for local governments, which offer PB features along with other e-participation tools, have evolved over the past decade.⁵⁶ There are also many new tools for supporting PB, such as budget simulators and planners.⁵⁷ Over 100 cities and organizations use two web platforms to shape their offer of PB activities online: [Consul/Decide Madrid](#) and [Decidim](#)⁵⁸ Madrid and Barcelona have actively promoted the platforms around the world and especially in the Global South. However, adapting municipal ICT platforms to PB has proved to be a difficult task, often due to the lack of experience within local IT departments. This is why standardized PB platforms (such as Consul or Decidim) tend to stand alongside the local government website, rather than becoming integrated, which weakens the potential of e-PB to bring a wider shift in local culture.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digitalization of many PB processes, and increased the preparedness of both public administrations and other stakeholders to make use of ICT tools in this regard.⁵⁹ Despite this consolidation of PB digitalization, substantial skepticism continues to characterize the relationship between PB and ICT.⁶⁰ In fact, many administrations fear that ICT tools may reduce the quality of collective deliberation and reproduce the majority-vs-minority tensions which characterize decision-making in representative democracy. Despite this, with some exceptions, few are the cases in which technologies (and the extent to which they have to permeate the entire process) constitute an object of co-design between the public administration and the potential participants⁶¹.

At present, there are two main trends relating to PB and ICT solutions, with clear benefits and challenges.⁶² The first concerns the use of social networks, which have expanded opportunities for the use of ICT in promoting participation of poorer and smaller organizations (despite problems in relation to the storage and protection of data and interactions). The second concerns the growing and increasingly affordable use of artificial intelligence to enhance and

⁵⁶ See chapter 4 in United Nations (2018). [E-Government Survey: Leveraging E-government at a Time of Financial and Economic Crisis](#).

⁵⁷ See those promoted by SKR (Swedish Association of Municipalities and Regions), by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (UK), by the city of Freiburg (Germany), and by various governments in Australia (like in the South Wales State). See also: <https://www.bangthetable.com/blog/online-tools-deliver-participatory-budgeting>.

⁵⁸ See also chapter 4 in United Nations (2020), [E-Government Survey: Digital Government in the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development](#).

⁵⁹ Falanga, R. and G. Allegretti, 2021, “[Democracia participativa em tempos de covid-19: a procura de uma nova ritualização](#)” [Participatory democracy in times of Covid-19: the search for a new ritualization]. In Mota Almeida, L.F., M. Ramos and L. de Sousa, (eds.), *Poder local em tempos de Covid-19 Vol.1. A qualidade da democracia local e a governação em tempos de Covid-19*, Almedina, pp. 63-95.

⁶⁰ Cunha, E. G. Allegretti and M. Matias, 2011, “[Participatory Budgeting and the Use of Information and Communication Technologies: A Virtuous Cycle?](#)” *RCCS Annual Review*, n. 3. See, also Allegretti, G., 2012, “From Skepticism to Mutual Support: Towards a Structural Change in the Relations between Participatory Budgeting and the Information and Communication Technologies?”. In Mindus, P., A. Greppi and M. Cuono (eds.). *Legitimacy 2.0: e-democracy and public opinion in the digital age*. Goethe-University Press, pp. 145-181.

⁶¹ See: Nitzsche, P.; A. Pistoia; M. Elsäßer, M., 2012, “[Development of an Evaluation Tool for Participative E-Government Services: A Case Study of Electronic Participatory Budgeting Projects in Germany](#)”. *Revista Administratie Si Management Public*, n. 18, pp. 6-25. See also: Peixoto, T.; M. L. Sifry, 2017, *Civic Tech in the Global South: Assessing Technology for the Public Good*. WB/Personal Democracy Press.

⁶² Peixoto, T. and T. Steinberg, 2020, [Citizen Engagement. Emerging Digital Technologies Create New Risks and Value](#). WB; Gilman H.R and T. Peixoto, 2019, “Digital participation”. In Elstub, S. and O. Escobar (eds.). *Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance*. Edward Elgar, pp. 105-118.

simplify PB platforms. Developments include algorithms for randomized views, multilingual translations, dynamic anonymity, tools for clustering similar proposals and georeferenced mapping. At the same time, these tools raise doubts related to the over-simplification of participants' involvement and risks that these may be nudged in directions predetermined by those who program the algorithms and/or manage the process.

Regulatory frameworks for PB

PB is a democratic innovation that is mostly regulated by diverse legal frameworks. Nevertheless, many processes (around 40 percent of all PB processes) take place without any specific legal provisions, instead operating within the autonomous margins of manoeuvre of the administrative authorities that promote them.

There has been a strong effort to institutionalize the presence of PB processes in Brazilian localities in order to make them recognized and reliable institutions in the political/administrative panorama. Since 2001 (when the Brazilian [Law on the “City Statute”](#) was approved), different regulatory documents have been elaborated where PB is mentioned as a meaningful policy, including charters of principles and international agreements on the democratic management of cities.⁶³

The first countries to state the obligation for local authorities to grant PB in the elaboration of their budgetary documents were Peru (2003) and the Dominican Republic (2006). The latter also inserted participatory budgeting in its 2010 Constitutional Reform.⁶⁴ The best sources of information on national laws encompassing articles on PB are the [“PB World Atlas”](#) and the [“Participatory Budgeting via National Law: What Works and What Doesn’t”](#) report produced by People Powered. The report covers 11 countries (whose practices represent approximately 58 percent of global PB cases), including case studies, common challenges, assessments of their strengths and areas for improvement, and recommendations for advocates and practitioners. Only a few countries have included a nation-wide system for training, monitoring and evaluating PB experiences, the absence of which can hinder the quality of practices induced by the regulatory frameworks.⁶⁵ In Poland and Tunisia the approval of a PB regulatory framework included clauses that were contradictory to existing practices, requiring a mandatory change of model imposed from the top down.

Transformations in this field are permanent. In Colombia, where existing legislation promotes citizen participation in planning, the central government has produced tools to improve the quality of PBs, such as the [Guidelines for Structuring Gender-Sensitive PBs](#) (2020). In South Korea (where PB is a municipal duty since 2011) a [hybrid National PB \[My Budget\]](#) has been in effect since 2018. It includes elements inspired by deliberative democracy models. In 2020,

⁶³ See [The World Charter of the Right to the City](#), Art. II (1.2) e III (1).

⁶⁴ See [Art. 206 of the Constitution](#).

⁶⁵ McNulty, S., 2012, “[An Unlikely Success: Peru’s Top-Down Participatory Budgeting Experience](#)”. *Journal of Public Deliberation*. Vol. 8(2) Article 4. See also Olejniczak, J.; D. Bednarska-Olejniczak, 2018, “[Participatory Budgeting in Poland in 2013-2018 – Six Years of Experiences and Directions of Changes](#)”. In Dias N. (org). *Hope for Democracy. 30 Years of Participatory Budgeting Worldwide*. Oficina, pp. 337-354

the Russian Federation passed a law that gives legal coverage to municipalities interested in adopting participatory budgeting and at the same time defines the mandatory implementation of the process if it is formally required by at least 10 members of the public. In this case, the State has opted to “transfer to the population the power to oblige municipalities to adopt participatory budgeting.”⁶⁶

Regulations at the regional/provincial level also exist in a few countries to promote PB and other participatory processes.⁶⁷ In Sicily (Italy), the financial law on PB indirectly triggered a re-organization process for the monitoring and oversight of the law’s implementation. In 2021, the grassroots observatory “[Spendiamoli Insieme](#)” [Let’s spend it together] joined with the regional government to co-design a more comprehensive law dedicated to participation (with a special focus on PB).

In a few cases different levels of government have acted together to foster PB. In the United Kingdom, participatory budgeting was envisioned as a tool for developing a national policy for local authorities in two strategic national policy documents [of 2006](#) and [of 2008](#), and a [green paper of the Home Office](#) in the field of security, which fostered Community Safety Participatory Budgeting pilots. As a grassroots response to this commitment, the initiative *Church Action on Poverty* structured a Participatory Budgeting Unit, from which the [UK PB Network](#) took shape. The government of Scotland went further, as the [Community Empowerment Act](#) of 2015 triggered a [large policy process](#), negotiating with 32 local authorities a [step-by-step PB development](#) process to increase the quality and the percentage of resources devoted to PB.

In Portugal, a [Ministerial Decree](#) passed in 2017 obliged all high schools to create PB processes for students to decide on a small part of the Ministry of Education’s transfers to their schools.⁶⁸ In September 2021 the government approved a [Resolution of the Council of Ministers](#) that formalized the previously existing PB policy, and created the “BP of the Public Administration” (AP Participa). The latter is designed to involve all civil servants in an actor-based PB process. At the same time, it opened a multilevel governance opportunity to share the management of different PBs in cases where different level (national, regional and local) processes coincide in the same territory. The goal is to reduce the burden on the public and maximize the integration, complementarity, effectiveness and attractiveness of all processes.

⁶⁶ See the [2020-2021 PB World Atlas](#), and Laws No. 236-FZ and No. 216-FZ (of 20 July 2020), that amend the Russian Budget Code of 1998.

⁶⁷ South Kivu Province in Congo RDC was an isolated case which provided obligations to local authorities to structure a PB, in order to promote a new relation of inter-institutional trust. See: Mbera, E. and G. Allegretti, 2013, “PB and the budget process in the south Kivu Province”. In Dias N. (org). *Hope for Democracy. 25 Years of Participatory Budgeting Worldwide*. In Loco, pp. 107-126. In Italy, since 2005, five important regional laws provide a policy of incentives to local authorities (and in some cases also to schools and community groups) to experiment with forms of social dialogue. They have contributed to structure various PB experiments, although in different ways, and helped to remove some cultural/political barriers that existed to the involvement of stakeholders in policy-making. See: Allegretti, G., M. Bassoli and G. Colavolpe, 2021, “[On the Verge of Institutionalisation? Participatory Budgeting Evidence in Five Italian Regions](#)”. *Finansovij žurnal — Financial Journal*, issue 2/2021, pp. 25-45.

⁶⁸ The minimum stated value was 1 Euro per student (see [Decree 436-A/2017](#)).

In the Russian Federation, the Initiative Budgeting Programme (IB) is today a large [umbrella brand](#) for different devices to involve people in budgetary processes at local level⁶⁹. A multilevel governance agreement (World Bank Russia, the Federal Minister of Finances and over 50 regional governments) allowed different models of PB to quickly evolve in quality of methods and impacts, through networking with other countries. In many practices, participants are requested to collaborate to cover a small percentage of costs for implementing their proposals. An [annual report on best practices](#) enriches the mainstreaming of PB in State and municipal governance, supported by events on financial literacy, national camps for teams of School-PBs and events for training Initiative Budgeting Consultants.

Indicators to monitor reforms in PB

There are two main recommended macro-areas of indicators⁷⁰ to evaluate the success of a PB process: process functioning and outcomes. At present, the most significant studies of PB performance – especially in relation to the SDGs – rely on indicators elaborated by academics, international institutions⁷¹ or professionals and consultancy agencies that support PB processes. Among the richest key performance indicators specifically built for assessing PB are those elaborated by the Participatory Budgeting Project of New York,⁷² in the [15 Key Metrics for Evaluating PB toolkit](#). Some cities have been investing in specific forms of assessment of their PB's outcomes and impacts (as Seville in Spain or Nanterre and Grenoble in France), for example using georeferenced maps (Belo Horizonte in Brazil), gender-oriented criteria ([Rosario](#) in Argentina with UNIFEM/UN-Women). Glasgow (UK) had produce an [Evaluation Toolkit for its participatory budgeting](#), and - in recent times - the Network of Participatory Local Authorities of Portugal (RAP) has worked to gradually transform into a set of indicators for self-monitoring and evaluation the 2017 Charter of Quality for Participatory Budgeting, that has inspired similar shared documents in Scotland and Slovenia⁷³.

Since PB programmes are geared toward allocating public resources, monitoring of PB programmes should include an analysis of where resources are spent within the municipality and of the redistributive effect of PB projects. For transparency, participation and accountability – which are often difficult to measure – consolidated sets of principles and

⁶⁹ [Literature](#) shows that, from 2015 to 2020, the value given to local authorities increased from US\$ 43 million (25M paid by regions) to US\$ 450M, and the number of approved proposals by citizens jumped from 2,657 to 22,500.

⁷⁰ McNulty, S., 2012, "[An Unlikely Success: Peru's Top-Down Participatory Budgeting Experience](#)," *Journal of Public Deliberation*: Vol. 8 (2).

⁷¹ Cabannes, Y., 2005, [Participatory Budgeting: Conceptual Framework and Analysis of its Contribution to Urban Governance and the Millennium Development Goals](#). Working paper. (140). Urban Management Programme / UN-HABITAT, Quito, Ecuador. See also: Allegretti G. and M. Alves, 2011, [Evaluar los presupuestos participativos: u ejercicio dinámico](#), CEDMA.

⁷² The Participatory Budgeting Project suggests the following metrics: Number of PB participants and percentage of eligible residents who participate; Number and percentage of PB voters who are eligible to vote but did not vote in the most recent local election; Number and percentage of PB voters who are ineligible to vote in local elections; Number and percentage of participants who report prior civic engagement or participation; Number and percentage of participants who report being new or returning to PB; Number of nongovernmental and community-based organizations involved in PB; Allocation of PB funds by project type (to be compared with the allocation of comparable funds prior to PB); Number of new, continued and discontinued PB processes from year to year; Amount and percentage of funds allocated to PB project; Project completion rates and final project costs; Amount of additional money allocated to projects and needs identified through PB; Dollar amount spent on PB implementation.

⁷³ The [Charter of Scotland](#) have 7 principles (PBs must be: Fair and inclusive; Participatory; Deliberative; Empowering ; Creative and flexible; Transparent; Part of our democracy) commented step-by-step, to inspire indicators to measure their capacity of accomplishing with their promises.

indicators established by large alliances of international actors, such as the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT)⁷⁴ or the International Budget Partnership⁷⁵ offer good starting points. The latter assesses the quality of “motivations” that public institutions provide to participants to explain all the decisions they feel are unclear or ambiguous. Requirements for public participation in fiscal and budgetary policies have been incorporated in the 2014 International Monetary Fund Fiscal Transparency Code (principle 2.3.3) and the [Fiscal Transparency Handbook](#), in the [OECD’s Principles of Budgetary Governance](#) 2014 (Principle 5) and the [OECD-GIFT G20 Budget Transparency Toolkit](#), among others.

For hybrid PB models, which include components of deliberative processes, the recently published OECD Handbook presents a complete set of useful indicators, and a table that summarizes the criteria proposed by previous publications.⁷⁶

Methods of implementation

What are the basic building blocks of PB?

PB is not a unique methodology to be rigorously followed, but rather a set of principles and sequential steps to make the participatory process more attractive and understandable to different people with a diverse range of skills, education and cultural views. “Learning by doing spaces” where stakeholders gradually learn how to deal with a budget and its complexity, are key to the process.⁷⁷

The main interrelated characteristics that leading experts recognise as unique to participatory budgeting⁷⁸ include the following:

- PB focuses on concrete outcomes through decisions on how actual pots of money will be used to improve the quality of participants’ daily lives. Competition for resources may initially be a motivating feature, but is generally not the only goal. Opening up decision-making spaces on financial resources transforms traditional power structures.⁷⁹
- PB considers civil society and the public as the main “gatekeepers” of their own decisions. Participants present proposals of policies and projects and can vote on the list of priorities they want to see funded by public resources. In some cases, they also collaborate on the implementation of co-decided projects and policies.

⁷⁴ See: *The High-Level Principles on Fiscal Transparency, Participation & Accountability* (2012, expanded version).

⁷⁵ See the [Guide to Transparency in Government Budget Reports: Why are Budget Reports Important, and What Should They Include?](#)

⁷⁶ OECD (2021). [Evaluation Guidelines for Representative Deliberative Processes](#), OECD Publishing.

⁷⁷ Wampler B., 2012, “[Participatory Budgeting: Core principles and Key Impacts](#)”. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, n. 8(2).

⁷⁸ Fung, A. and E.O. Wright, 2003, *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*. London: Verso. See also: Pateman, C., 2012, “[APSA Presidential Address: Participatory Democracy Revisited](#)”. *Perspectives on Politics*, 10(1), 7–19.

⁷⁹ Powerholders are often defensive about their privileged, entitled or discretionary powers, while also communicating that public budgets are only understandable by a few specialized experts. PB subverts these dynamics by elevating the value of the lived experience of ordinary people, and by showing them capable of finding their own solutions to their needs.

- The quality and attractiveness of a PB experience depends on its capacity to establish meaningful correlations between numbers (resources and budget entries) and narratives (proposals to be funded). In fact, financial boundaries have a “political-pedagogical nature,”⁸⁰ as budgets often become filters or litmus tests to determine which proposals and projects are going to become reality.
- The transparency of the process’ components (rules, voting criteria, motivations for rejecting proposals, etc.) is the main guarantee that PB principles will be respected and that errors can be corrected. Hence, PB is a powerful tool⁸¹ that contributes to the responsiveness and accountability of institutions through social oversight.
- Most PB processes tend to target all people as individuals,⁸² instead of pre-existing social and community-based organizations of civil society.
- PB is often cyclical in nature (as many PB exercises happen each year, alongside official annual budget cycles). This gradually increases participants’ trust in the process, as they observe the concrete results that previous cycles of PB have produced.

Among the building blocks that can support participatory budgeting as a global strategy, the following are pivotal for success:

- Clear technical criteria for resource allocation and strong political will on the part of government authorities;
- Budget literacy, or the ability to understand public budgets to support participation in the budget process;
- Pre-existing networks of social movements, community organizations, and other voluntary associations that provide important support for PB programmes; and
- State support of the process and the implementation of its outputs and outcome.⁸³

Effective decentralization with some degree of financial autonomy also constitutes an important PB building block.⁸⁴

PB provides a “political-pedagogical channel” to make society and policies evolve at the same pace. This is particularly relevant given that achieving the SDGs often requires promoting policies that encourage the public’s active involvement, including changes to their behaviors, habits and lifestyles (especially with regard to environmental goals) and the structuring of

⁸⁰ Wampler B., 2012, “[Participatory Budgeting: Core principles and Key Impacts](#)”. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, n. 8(2).

⁸⁰ Fung, A. and E.O. Wright, 2003, *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*. London: Verso. See also: Pateman, C., 2012, “

K “<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23327060>” [APSA Presidential Address: Participatory Democracy Revisited](#)

”, *Perspectives on Politics*, 10(1), 7–19.

⁸² Powerholders are often defensive about their privileged, entitled or discretionary powers, while also communicating that public budgets are only understand

able by a few specialized experts. PB subverts these dynamics by elevating the value of the lived experience of ordinary people, and by showing them capable of finding their own solutions to their needs.

[icipatory budgeting](#), The World Bank.

⁸⁴ Wampler, B., S. McNulty and M. Touchton, 2021, *Participatory Budgeting in Global Perspective*. [Oxford University Press](#). See also: Kenjova, J. and R. Raudla, 2013, “[Participatory Budgeting at the Local Level: Challenges and Opportunities for New Democracies](#).” *Halduskultuur – Administrative Culture*, n. 14 (1), pp. 18-46.

solidarity practices to benefit the most vulnerable members of a community (as in the case of SDGs 1 to 5 and SDG 10). To foster these proactive behaviors, the people require a greater awareness of socio-environmental challenges and their complexity, but also trust in institutions and in their capacity to evolve. PB can potentially represent a powerful tool in this regard.⁸⁵

How to start a PB process

Most PB processes are led by local governments (or other institutions responsible for the budget at stake), but some experience also exists of PB starting as a request from local communities, with the active support of grassroots organizations and foreign donors. PB processes usually start in one of two ways. They are initiated as a radically new process, for example, a thorough discussion of the financial dimension of local policies and projects; voting on priorities by individual people; or the monitoring of co-decided projects, etc. They may also be gradually structured around a pre-existing participatory process, for example a place-urban regeneration process, by adding modules that can incrementally transform it into a PB.

As a minimal condition for the start-up of a solid PB, many handbooks⁸⁶ suggest giving attention to 5 key areas of activity:

1. **The design of at least 5 sequential phases** to combine face-to-face and online spaces of interaction between people and institutions (i.e., mobilization of people for the process; collection of stakeholders' ideas; evaluation of the feasibility of the proposal; ranking or voting of priority proposals; and a final symbolic moment in which co-decided priorities are formally included in official budgetary documents);
2. **Organization of a managing structure** (a steering committee and a technical group to help evaluate the feasibility of public proposals and develop/oversee project implementation). Preferably, this management structure would involve different departments, units and agencies, have a clear organizational structure and interaction with the officials who support the project.
3. **Capacity-building of politicians, civil servants and civil society organizations** to make different actors aware of the accurate implementation of PB design, but also

⁸⁵ Allegretti, G. and J. Hartz-Karp, 2017, "[Participatory budgeting: a methodological approach to address sustainability challenges](#)". In Hartz-Karp, J. and D. Marinova, (org.). *Leading edge methods to resolve sustainability challenges: more sustainable settlements, economies, resource use, communities and governance*. Edward Elgar, pp. 203-216.

⁸⁶See, for example "[72 Frequently Asked Questions about Participatory Budgeting](#)" (in English, Spanish and French – updated and translated into Italian, Portuguese, Chinese and Arabic); "[Participatory Budgeting in Africa: A Training Companion](#)" (in English and French); "[EU Handbook for Participation](#)" (in English and French); "[Participatory Budgeting in the UK](#)" (in English); "[Participatory Budgeting Toolkit](#)" (in English); "[Orçamento Participativo. Animação Cidadã para a Participação Política](#)" (in Portuguese); "[Travelling with Participatory Budgeting? Handbook](#)" (in Spanish, with some examples of good practices and also of "bad practices"); "[Le Budget Participative en Pratique](#)" (in French); "[Manuel du budget participatif dans les collectivités locales](#)" (in French); "[Guião da Orçamentação Participativa em Moçambique](#)" (in Portuguese); "[Orçamentos participativos e planificação participativa em Moçambique - Proposta de diferenciação e articulação metodológicas](#)" (in Portuguese); "[School participatory budgeting toolkit](#)" (in English); "[Organizing for Participatory Budgeting. How to start participatory budgeting in your community](#)" (in English) or the toolkits "[EMPAVILLE, the role play game about Participatory Budgeting](#)" (in English); "[Citizens Dialogue in Sweden](#)" and "[Medborgarbudget](#)" (in Swedish); "[Guia para a implementação de orçamentos participativos. São Tomé e Príncipe](#)" (in Portuguese); EMPACI's "[Participatory Budgeting Blueprint Guidebook](#)" (in English); "[Grant making through Participatory Budgeting: A 'How To' Guide for Community Led Organisations and community engagement workers](#)" (in English); the "[Guide to Citizens Participation](#)" written by Grenoble City Hall with its participants. [A Spanish Website](#) collects a series of methodological handbooks in Spanish realized by local groups and several municipalities.

more capable of mobilizing other actors and of applying facilitation and conflict-mediation techniques to ease discourse.

4. **Creation of a minimum regulatory framework** that can support the process at the local level and contribute to building credibility and authoritativeness.
5. **Construction of a minimal ICT infrastructure for supporting PB**, to facilitate the spreading of information (on budgetary issues, process phases and timelines), and to create spaces to propose projects, debate ideas and vote on priorities. It is important to safeguard procedures and ensure the identification of participants in order to maintain credibility. Online platforms are also useful tools to reinforce the memory of a PB process, storing proceedings and executive summaries of meetings and public acts (also in multimedia formats – as audio files, video, podcasts etc.) which continuously allow new stakeholders to join the process.

The most important free and open software to support PB incorporate the major functions listed above and can help build a long-lasting archive of citizen proposals. They can also help to “map” facilities, equipment and other important territorial elements that participants consider worthy of protecting and improving.

Anecdotal evidence has shown the importance of selecting “representatives” (like spokespersons, ambassadors or delegates of local communities), that can engage in more time-consuming and in-depth activities (like detailed planning, debates on fundraising opportunities, monitoring committees, evaluation panels etc.) in dialogue with their communities. These figures could be individuals or organized stakeholders elected by participants that help to mobilize others for the different PB activities, transmit information, and/or organize groups to raise funds for some proposals. The presence of external consultants to assist with process design and implementation (and train participants) is especially recommended in the first years of experimentation.

New approaches to PB

As described above, after 30 years of experiments in different places, PB processes are changing in order to better overcome their structural limits and become “game-changers” in the contexts where they take place. In particular, greater research into PB practices is proving useful to measure impacts, in order to improve the capacity of PB processes to reach specific goals linked to different SDGs.

New generations of PB practices are organized as “enabling environments,” which aim to foster a virtuous cycle of gradual improvements in the capacity of institutions and other stakeholders to jointly promote innovative solutions to community needs, thus maximizing the transformative effect of participatory processes. In Valongo (Portugal), participants of the Youth PB must register as users of local libraries, and in Tartu (Estonia) – where PB votes occur through the use of electronic ID cards – individuals receive ID cards that can provide them with multiple services. This mechanism proved highly useful during the pandemic.

In this regard, new PB practices need to set clear goals to optimize impact and could explore some of the directions that earlier processes have taken, for example:

1. Trying to structure a “full PB,” devoting significant amounts⁸⁷ to the debate with stakeholders which could concretely impact policies related to the SDGs. To maintain adequate resources, it is important to use a guaranteed local revenue stream, as external (donor) funding can be uncertain. The strategies for increasing these resources often depend on open debates with stakeholders on diverse possible revenue sources, or on the involvement of members of the diaspora in PB through online technologies. In some countries (such as Russia and Moldova), the majority of PBs state that proposals must include a small percentage of co-funding raised by local communities.
2. Giving priority to the use of hybrid PB models that include a mix of online/offline tools, medium to long-term planning and visioning exercises, and elements that are typical of deliberative democracy experiments (such as the random selection of participants).
3. Favoring the creation of multichannel participatory systems, which articulate and coordinate PB with other participatory and deliberative devices, and with other social innovations (i.e., social currencies or local pacts through which people contribute to the shared management of policies or public spaces and equipment, as in Bologna, Italy). This would allow for the involvement of different audiences and groups of actors, while enabling shared decision-making on diverse issues of public interest.⁸⁸
4. Increasing the existence of multi-level governance systems through which different institutions operate – in a sort of joint venture – to create policy programmes devoted to foster and incentivize the diffusion and consolidation of PB.

Case studies

Cuenca, a city in Ecuador (population of 330,000), began to practice participatory budgeting in 2001 in 21 rural parishes. The process has proved to be sustainable and resilient, despite political upheavals. Recently, it was extended to the urban part of the city, and a [new online platform](#) was adopted that allows for the mixed participation of both individuals and civic organizations. As [a recent report suggests](#), in 2017–2019, an average of USD 35.9 per person was devoted to rural areas. A high proportion of PB projects relate to climate change mitigation and prevention, including innovative initiatives to support local food chains, agro-ecological projects and the restoration of disappeared native species. In several approved

⁸⁷ Reference studies consider that a “significant amount” starts from a value of USD10 per inhabitant in low-income countries, and a minimum of around USD30-50 per inhabitant in the other countries.

⁸⁸ In 2013, Canoas (Brazil) started to experiment with a “participatory system” integrating several different, and already existing, participatory tools, in order to exploit synergies and optimize their joint impact on the quality of the local administration. Today, different cities (such as Lisbon, Cascais and Milan) are trying to connect other participatory tools around their PB. Such systems are still in their infancy, and often very technologically driven, and dependent on institutional interventions, which almost completely shapes their functioning and deliberative quality. See: Falanga R., L.H.H. Lüchmann, A. Nicoletti and D.H. Cargnin, 2020, “[Participatory budgets in Canoas \(Brazil\) and Cascais \(Portugal\). A comparative analysis of the drivers of success](#)”. *Journal of Civil Society*, 16 (3), pp. 273-293.

projects, a provision has been made to allow stakeholders to take part in the implementation of the projects, and the management of the projects has been designed to be more participatory and promote a “social return on investments.” A multi-dimensional “climate justice index for PB spatial allocation of resources” tries to revert socio/spatial disparities by channeling more resources to the most disadvantaged groups and territories⁸⁹.

In Madagascar, the rural community of Ampasy Nahampoana Anosy (population of 10,250) has received best practices awards for the successful PB exercises that have taken place over the past several years. Since 2008, it has redistributed the royalties paid by mining companies (95 percent of the local budget) to “transform the parafiscal income from non-renewable into sustainable resources” by investing in vocational education, basic infrastructure and sustainable income-generating activities. Various editions of the National Report of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative ([EITI](#)) praise the degree of accountability and responsiveness brought by PB to local authorities and its contribution to local management capacities. Nevertheless, the [EITI Report 2018](#) stresses the need for a permanent effort to promote training, support and awareness-raising.

In Kenya, PB has been growing mainly at a supra-municipal level, in line with the Constitution of 2010, the Public Finance Management Act of 2012, and the County Governments Act of 2012.⁹⁰ The County of Elgeyo Marakwet (population of 450,000) started PB within the Kenya Participatory Budgeting Initiative (KBPI) supported by the World Bank’s [Kenya Accountable Devolution Program \(KADP\)](#). In connection with the [Open Government Partnership Action Plan](#), it bridged a mid-term planning vision of the county’s future and its annual budgetary documents. As recognized by the good rankings obtained in the [Kenyan County Budget Transparency Survey \(CBTS\)](#), PB provided an “enabling environment” through which the accounting system [has gradually acquired transparency and responsiveness](#), providing the timely publication of understandable documents and a [data dashboard](#) related to government performance in different sectors. To strengthen [the implementation of its polity outputs](#), a Stakeholder Budget is associated with [Public Participation Policy Guidelines](#) for the [County Integrated Development Plan](#) and with complementary [Budget Memos](#) (in sectors such as [sanitation](#)) produced by civil society organizations. In collaboration with grassroots organizations such as the [Youth Café](#) (with a panel of 50 randomly selected young persons) measures were co-designed to better engage Kenyan youth in PB.

In Indonesia, Law n. 25/2004 required all cities to use a combination of participatory planning and participatory budgeting (known as *Musrenbang* or a forum for development planning). This was later extended to 74,000 villages. The port of Semarang (population of 1.9 million)

⁸⁹ It integrates 4 weighted sub-indexes: (1) Population 40%; (2) Parish Human Development Index 30%; (3) Administrative management 10%; and (4) territorial equity 20%. The equity sub-index focuses on the territorial configuration (density, rural uses, number of communities), including the consideration of environmental services and a component related to the vulnerability to drought, floods, landslides and frosts. See Cabannes, Y. (2019, org), [Contributions of Participatory Budgeting to Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation](#). ODP.

⁹⁰ Rwigi, K.E., et al., 2020, “[New wine in an old wineskin? Socio-political context and participatory budgeting in Kenya](#)”. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14:3, 492-511. See also: Porto de Oliveira, O., 2017, “Participatory budgeting transfers in Southern Africa: global players, regional organizations and local actors”. In Hadjiisky et al., 2017, [Public Policy Transfer. Micro-Dynamics and Macro-Effects](#). Edward Elgar.

has an articulated [climate-sensitive PB](#), spread over its 177 neighbourhoods and 16 subdistricts, to address climate change impacts and create a new symbolic identity for the fragile coastal area.⁹¹ Recently, its PB process has benefitted from new ICT tools. In collaboration with the [Semarang Open Government Strategic Vision 2021-2023](#), the [new web-portal for PB](#) and the [Pangripta App](#) work to provide open-access information on the city, deepen public debate on spending priorities, monitor PB implementation and provide a portal for the procurement of goods and services.

In Portugal, in Cascais (population of 214,000)⁹² PB started in 2011 as a way to reverse the declining success of local development processes. The city's co-decisional PB process is based on public face-to-face meetings and involves stakeholders in the evaluation of proposals, and in the design and implementation of final projects. PB-driven projects receive fast-track authorization by municipal offices, which has encouraged their success. This explains why PB voters increased from 6,903 in 2011 to 69,700 in 2019. Large investments have been made to build teams and capacities (through training, networking with other cities and the support of external consultants aimed at building the capacity of civil servants). The city's [web-platform](#) (integrated with SMS and in dialogue with a [georeferenced dataset](#)) supports a multichannel participation system,⁹³ including an app to report problems in the city and [Cascais City Points](#), a citizenship reward system (including for participating in PB sessions), which allows users to earn vouchers for products or services offered by local partners. The latter has been recently transformed into a digital complementary currency (called Cashcais) for the entire city.

Peer-to-peer learning and research

Following are some of the most important social and academic organizations that conduct studies and advocacy on PB on a global scale:

- [People Powered](#) is an umbrella organization acting as a global hub for participatory democracy and a “global union for participatory democracy workers.” It coordinates research, shares best practices, and develops PB resources. People Powered applies PB methods to the distribution of part of its own internal resources for projects and other diverse activities.
- [The Participatory Budget Project](#) (PBP) is a nonprofit organization that empowers people to decide together how to spend public money. PBP works primarily in the United States and Canada. It produces an annual report on PB and organizes national

⁹¹ Cabannes, Y., 2018, *Contributions of Participatory Budgeting to Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation*. ODP.

⁹² The City hosted the [International Observatory of Participatory Democracy](#), the [Educating Cities Network](#), the [Iberian Network of Participatory Budgeting](#), the [Smart Citizenship Academy](#) and cooperation programmes on PB with Mozambican and Swedish municipalities. It chaired for some years the [Portuguese Network of Participatory Local Authorities \(RAP\)](#), and the workshop that produced the [Charter of Quality for PBs](#).

⁹³ Falanga, R. and G. Allegretti, 2021, “*Democracia participativa em tempos de covid-19: a procura de uma nova ritualização*” [Participatory democracy in times of Covid-19]. In Almeida, L.F., M. Ramos & L. Sousa (eds.), *Poder local em tempos de Covid-19 Vol.1*. Almedina, pp. 63-95.

and international networking events for PB researchers, practitioners and advocates. It partners with the [North American Participatory Budgeting Research Board](#), a group of evaluators, practitioners and academics who study PB effects in different countries.

- There are many academic institutions which support PB development around the globe with publications and expertise. Of note, the [Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard Kennedy School](#) and the [Bartlett Development Planning Unit](#) of University College London, conduct research/postgraduate teaching to build the capacity of governments, NGOs, aid agencies and businesses working towards socially just and sustainable development in the global south. The [National University of Rosario](#) (Argentina) supports various PB practices and has created its own [University PB](#).
- [Participedia](#) is global network and a crowdsourcing wiki platform for different audiences interested in public participation and democratic innovations. Founded by research centers and universities from Canada and the United States, it has since expanded to different continents through several projects. Among its 1,800 online case studies, many refer to participatory budgeting.
- [International Association of Educating Cities](#) has frequently included different PBs in its Best Practices Award, as well as in its annual events and online training toolkits. It is interested in participatory budgeting as a central tool for the teaching and diffusion of civic skills.
- [Public Agenda](#) is a research and public engagement organization dedicated to strengthening democracy, and has conducted research and evaluation of PB projects, mainly in North America.
- [The Participatory Budgeting World Atlas](#) is a network of volunteers (researchers and practitioners) from 65 countries working on a collaborative mapping project to document PB trends at the global level. Coordinated by the social enterprise [Oficina](#) and supported by various sponsors involved with PB, it produces publications and a website that hosts debates and connects to events.

In the domain of global multilateral institutions and transnational umbrella organizations:

- [UN-Habitat](#) has promoted PB in various ways, including publishing books, multilingual handbooks, toolkits and articles, and organizing training events on PB and pilot experiments in different countries and international summits.
- At the [World Bank](#), departments in charge of governance, urban development and social development have published books and reports on PB in different continents. In the last decade, the [Russian Office of the Bank](#) has built a special cooperative relationship with Portugal's PB processes, actively helping to fund multilanguage publications and international events.
- [The Council of Europe](#) (CoE), which upholds human rights, democracy and the rule of law, has been increasingly dealing with PB (especially in the Congress of Local

and Regional Authorities and the Democracy Innovation Award). CoE has also created a [School participatory budgeting toolkit](#) to foster youth interest in PB.

- [The Inter-American Development Bank](#) has expertise in PB and has published an [extensive assessment of PB](#) in Brazil.
- The [International Observatory of Participatory Democracy](#) (OIDP) is a well-known promoter of PB, supported by the Municipality of Barcelona. In 20 years of activity and annual conferences throughout different continents, it has promoted many publications on PB, linked to its annual [Best Practices Award](#). It has an [African Regional Observatory](#), connected to the Inter-African Alliance for Participatory Budgeting (AAPB), through the work of NGOs as [ENDA Ecopop](#) (Senegal) and ASSOAL (Cameroon).
- [United Cities and Local Governments](#) (UCLG) has reported on PB initiatives in its [Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization](#) report. It has also funded research reports, handbooks and training events on PB (also within [peer-to-peer learning projects between Latin America and Africa](#)). Its [Committee on Participatory Democracy, Social Inclusion and Human Rights](#) (CISDP-DH) has collected good practices of PB in the [Observatory of Inclusive Cities](#), and its African Office hosts the [African Local Government Academy](#) (ALGA).
- The [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (OECD), which works as a knowledge hub and promotes best-practice sharing and advice on public policies and international standard-setting, has expertise on PB, quoting it as a sound strategy in many texts of [its rich library](#).
- [The Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency](#) (GIFT) is a multi-stakeholder action network that seeks to share solutions to challenges in fiscal transparency and participation. Since 2014, GIFT has implemented a work programme to generate greater knowledge about country practices and innovations in citizen engagement, a [Guide on Public Participation](#) and discussions on tools to measure public participation in fiscal policy. It co-funds events with space for PB, as the [Smart Citizenship Academy](#).
- The [International Budget Partnership](#) (IBP) advocates for transparent, inclusive, and accountable budgetary processes, as a means to improve governance and reduce global poverty. Since 2006 IBP promotes the [Open Budget Survey](#), a global, independent measurement of government practices in budget transparency, participation and oversight.
- [Cities Alliance](#) is a global partnership fighting urban poverty and supporting cities to deliver sustainable development. It is also dedicating space to PB in its [Development & Urban Regeneration Strategies](#).

Some of the above-mentioned organizations co-organize international events, which have been central meeting places for (and about) participatory budgeting, fostering mutual learning

and training spaces. Among them are the Habitat Summit on Human Settlements (held every 10 years) and biennial events like the [World Urban Forum](#) and the [Africities Summit](#).⁹⁴

International development cooperation

The growing international literature shows that local endogenous PB practices have proved to be the most resilient and sustainable experiences. Nevertheless, is also largely acknowledged that several multilateral and bilateral international agencies have played an important role in supporting local practices. Following is a brief overview of the international institutions that have provided technical assistance and financial support for PB in different regions.

Bilateral development cooperation agencies have been increasingly supportive of PB in the last decade, in different parts of the world. Among the most active are [USAID](#), the [Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation](#), the German development agency ([GIZ](#)), [ICEIDA from Iceland](#), the [Polish Solidarity Fund](#), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the Danish development fund (DANIDA) and the Swedish International branch of the Association of Municipalities and Regions ([SALAR International](#)).

Among the **multilateral institutions**, [UN-Habitat](#) and the [United Nations Development Program](#) (UNDP) promote PB, sometimes jointly with the World Bank and the [Inter-American Development Bank](#). UNDP also plays an advocacy role in countries which are still new to this practice (such as Cyprus or Uzbekistan). [The World Bank](#) has been one of the most active promoters of PB, providing funding and producing training/educational tools, books and reports. [UNICEF](#) has had a smaller role (for example in Cape Verde), but this has been growing with the expansion of PB to the youth and schools in various countries (including several African contexts). [UN Women](#) has also advocated for PB as a space for emancipation and gender equality, favoring in many countries (such as Argentina or Moldova) a dialogue between PB and practices of gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming. The [Council of Europe](#) (CoE) and its Congress have been managing PB projects in several Eastern European countries (including Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). The [European Commission](#) has also been involved in a large range of projects – both in Europe and in low- and middle-income countries⁹⁵, especially after a Report of the European Parliamentary Research Service in Brussels established a new centrality for participatory budgeting.⁹⁶ At

⁹⁴ Porto de Oliveira, O., 2017, *International Policy Diffusion and Participatory Budgeting: Ambassadors of Participation, International Institutions and Transnational Networks*. London: Routledge.

⁹⁵ Initially through URB-AL, a cooperation program between European and Latin American cities, that [dedicated an entire network to Participatory Budgeting and Local Finances](#), coordinated by the city of Porto Alegre. Around 2015-2018 new projects were funded by the “CONNECT” Directorate-General, investing on the relation between PB and the use of ICTs. Among them, as part of the Collective Awareness Platforms (CAPs), there were [EMPATIA \(Enabling Multichannel PArticipation Through ICT Adaptation and D-CENT \(D-CENT \(Decentralised Citizens ENgagement Technologies\)\)](#). At present, there are ongoing projects on PB in Moldova and in the Baltic area, as [EmPaci](#) (Empowering PB in the Baltic Sea Region).

⁹⁶ Sgueo, G. (2016) *Participatory budgeting: An innovative approach*. European Parliamentary Research Service, Brussels.

present, in Europe, two innovative cross-border participatory budgets have been already experimented within Interreg funding schemes.⁹⁷

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⁹⁷ One was a pilot experiment involving Uddevalla (in Sweden) and Fredrikstad (Norway), and the second – already mainstreamed and still ongoing – is [among the cities of Vila Nova da Cerveira \(Portugal\) and Tomiño \(Spain\)](#) (37,000 inhabitants together).