



**13TH "BEST PRACTICE IN  
CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION" Award**  
AWARD APPLICATION FORM

**1ST PART: BASIC DATA**

Title of the experience: <b>Hybrid Participatory Budgeting - a methodological proposal to reduce urban and political inequalities in Volta Redonda, Brazil</b>		
Name of the city/region: <b>Volta Redonda, Rio de Janeiro</b>		
Country: <b>Brazil</b>		
Institution presenting the candidacy: <b>Department of Planning, Transparency and Management Innovation, Volta Redonda City Government</b>		
Start date of the experience: <b>January 2017</b>		
End date of the experience: <b>February 2019</b>		
Type of candidacy	New experience	
	Innovation on an existing experience	X
Type of experience	Participatory budgeting	X
	Urban planning	X
	Council	
	Workshop/meeting for diagnose, monitoring, etc.	
	Audience/forum	
	Poll/referendum	
	Citizen jury	
	E-government/open government	X
	Citizen initiative	
	Others (say which one):	
Objective of the experience	To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation and to incorporate diversity as a criteria for inclusion	X
	Community empowerment	X
	To empower non-organised citizens	
	To increase citizen's rights in terms of political participation	X
	To connect different tools of participation within a participatory democracy "ecosystem"	X
	To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanisms of participatory democracy	X
	To improve the quality of public decision making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy	X
	To improve the evaluation and accountability of	X



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	the mechanisms of participatory democracy	
Territorial area	All the territory	X
	District	
	Neighbourhood	
Thematic area	Governance	X
	Education	
	Transport	
	Urban management	X
	Health	
	Security	
	Environment and/or urban agriculture	
	New social movements and associationism	X
	Culture	
	Housing	
	Job creation	
	Decentralization	
	Local development	X
	Training/learning	
	Economy and/or finances	X
	Legal regulations	
Social inclusion	X	
All		
Others	X	

**2ND PART: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE (4 pages maximum)**

**Objectives**

**Main objective of the innovative experience:**

*To connect different tools of participation within a participatory democracy "ecosystem"*

**How have you achieved this objective?**

*In this project "Hybrid Participatory Budgeting - a methodological proposal to reduce urban and political inequalities in Volta Redonda, Brazil", we put together three main methodological aspects in the Participatory Budgeting: a) social participation and political learning b) operational and financial dimension and; c) transparency and accountability with the tools to stimulate the face-to-face involvement of citizens, as well as information and communication technology, such as the Digital Participatory Budgeting. The proposal of a hybrid Participatory Budgeting, which includes the face-to-face and virtual aspect in an interdependent circle was possible due to a methodological restructuring of the participation process that took place in 2017. This restructuring was attended by members of neighborhood associations and urban social movements, which were responsible for proposing new tools and ways of involving the population in decisions about the public budget. Thus, under the principle of open government, the Municipal Department of Planning, Transparency, and Modernization of Management was able to redesign*

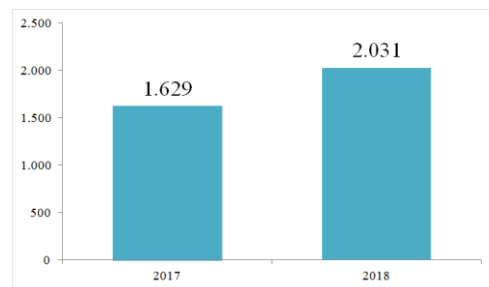
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*the Participatory Budgeting methodology to integrate different segments of society and different ways for social participation and transparency.*

*Additional information such as photos, posters, videos, and news about the experiment is available on <http://bit.ly/2yd47QJ>*

## **To what extent has this objective been achieved?**

*Following the restructuring of the Participatory Budgeting, which began in 2017, the municipality of Volta Redonda has created many community empowerment tools which had not been considered in the old PB model and were vulnerable to clientelist and opportunist practices that used to subvert the meaning of democratic participation. Considering the three methodological aspects mentioned above, we introduced new mechanisms to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of democratic participation:*



*a) in the dimension of social participation and political learning, the Participatory Budgeting Forum, the Participatory Budgeting Committee, the Technical Training Committees and the Digital PB were created; b) in the operational and financial dimension, we introduced as a parameter for redistribution of resources the Urban Quality of Life Index (UQLI), which allowed the mapping of social vulnerability and access to public services as well as the urban infrastructure of the city's territories. The map is available on: <http://bit.ly/2YgTvjs>. In addition, a special technical committee composed of members of government and society was created to control investment expenditures in the approved demands of the Participatory Budgeting; c) With regard to the transparency and accountability dimension, we have created a unique website for the publication of all Participatory Budgeting activities, including minutes, images, participating members, decisions and other information of public interest. All information is available on [www.voltaredonda.rj.gov.br/op](http://www.voltaredonda.rj.gov.br/op). Besides, to evaluate and control the effectiveness of the participatory mechanisms implemented, the accountability of Participatory Budgeting actions has been included in the government's mandatory action to organize public hearings about the Annual Budget Law. The results now being published in government buildings visited by the population with Transparent PB program. Regarding the scope, results, and impacts of the initiative it was found that with the restructuring of the PB, there was a significant increase in the number of neighborhood associations interested in discussing the public budget. Regarding the scope, results, and impacts of the initiative it was found that with the restructuring of the PB, there was a significant increase in the number of neighborhood associations interested in discussing the public budget. Given that in 2017, only 47 of the 87 neighborhood associations held meetings to discuss local investment improvements. In 2018, it had an increase of over 40% in contrast to the previous year. We also noticed that compared to 2017, in 2018, the number of participants in neighborhood meetings increased as can be seen in the following chart. There is an increase of 24% in the number of citizens interested in discussing the PB in their neighborhood, which suggests a recovery of social capital regarding the political confidence placed in the democratic instrument. These results are compatible with a series of transparency actions of PB procedures carried out jointly with society, according to the following information and according to the news (in Portuguese) disclosed below:*

*"Volta Redonda advances through participatory budgeting and got new investments" <http://bit.ly/2Ys0Rj6>*

*"Volta Redonda City Hall begins to apply participatory budgeting" <http://bit.ly/2GsbGrr>*

*"Volta Redonda Planning Department launches Digital Participatory Budgeting" <http://bit.ly/2ZbiP6L>*

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"Volta Redonda invests R\$ 30 million for Participatory Budgeting" <http://bit.ly/2Z9mZfu>

"Volta Redonda step forward to restructuring Participatory Budget" <http://bit.ly/2K4jz7i>

**Dimensions of the experience**

**Which is the most innovative aspect of the experience?**

Since its inception in 1990 in Brazil, the Participatory Budgeting has been one of the main methods used by local and international governments to improve the quality of public budget decision-making. The growing experiences of PB around the world aroused the interests of theorists of participatory democracy (SANTOS, 2002; AVRITZER, 2003; LUCHMANN, 2014) so that most of their studies were based mainly on the effectiveness of the participatory process within institutions. However, studies on the link between the effectiveness of the participatory process and the increase in citizens' political rights and the reduction of social inequalities are still rare (ARAUJO, 2012; SILVA, 2017). The reason there are few studies is that there are also few cases aiming to balance the levels of democratic participation and its connection with the development of urban equality.

It is from this gap of cases that this proposal differs from the experiences of Participatory Budgeting in Brazil and worldwide. The Volta Redonda PB, in a hybrid way, creates and uses different face-to-face and virtual places for democratic participation, at the same time as it uses the level of quality of life of the territories as a parameter for the distribution of financial resources and for evaluating the effectiveness of urban investments. Thus, it is considered that one of the most innovative aspects of this new Volta Redonda PB methodology, which started in 2017, is related to the capacity of the distributive effect of the public budget in favor of the reduction of urban inequalities, especially the effort to reduce political inequalities with increasing citizens' rights in terms of political participation.

**To what extent is the procedure transferable?**

In general, we can state that much of the Brazilian Participatory Budgeting experiences follow an exclusive methodological model, especially associated with how local rulers historically led the PB and the geographical conditions of the cities where it was implemented or regulated. We can observe this in the studies conducted by the researcher and participatory democracy specialist in Brazil,

Lúcia Luchmann. However, the Volta Redonda PB methodology enhances its adaptive capacity by including different tools of democratic participation intended at empowering citizens who participate directly in public decisions. One such instrument is Digital PB, which is supported by software developed by the city and which can, by authorization, be easily transferred to support other PB experiences in Brazil and around the world. Digital PB allows projects, works, ideas, and other elements to be entered that can be valued and voted on from a specific budget value. The software simulates a shopping cart and leads the participant to vote on the demands that a citizen considers to be a priority and yet economically viable. In this sense, the system supports citizens' decision-making by allowing them to give importance to the public budget and the democratic principle of political participation. Another element incorporated into the Volta Redonda PB methodology is the UQLI, which maps the quality of life of neighborhoods through indicators that calculate the level of access to urban public goods and services in the areas of public safety, education, health, culture, economic development, social assistance, and urban infrastructure. The Brazilian researcher Maria Inês Pedrosa Nahas developed the method of calculation. It was first implemented in the city of Belo Horizonte and has been adapted to the



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city of Volta Redonda. The calculation methodology is available on <http://bit.ly/2YpJqsm>.

## Why do you consider that the experience is feasible?

The experience of Hybrid Volta Redonda PB comes from different contexts and its success has been supported by the way its methodology has been redesigned since 2017. From an economic perspective, the tool makes it possible to minimize the scenario of social inequality in Volta Redonda city by introducing a methodology that intends to redistribute public resources to regions with higher social vulnerability and limited access to public services. According to Oxfam International, Brazil ranks the 9th position of the most unequal countries in the world, which impacts directly on regional and urban inequalities in the main Brazilian towns, such as the city of Volta Redonda. The city was based on the 1950s company town model and had a sudden urbanization process complicated by the migration of rural workers to work on the construction of a steel mill company. From a technical point of view, the proposal follows the worldwide scenario of the progress of information and communication technologies by introducing the Digital PB tool as one of the mechanisms of qualification of the democratic process of public decision. The Digital OP is materialized through a software developed by the municipal government and is available online to citizens. From an organizational point of view, the proposal of the Volta Redonda Hybrid PB proposes to incorporate the main municipal laws regarding the public budget, as well as to support, with the study of the UQLI, other public policies created at a local level related to the

demands asked by citizens at the institutionalized channels of participation. Finally, from a sociopolitical point of view, the hybrid feature of the Volta Redonda PB contributes to the enhancement of citizens' political rights by including different modes of citizen involvement in public decisions, either face-to-face or online. Since the 1990s, the Volta Redonda PB, instead of proposing a further expansion of participatory democracy mechanisms, has been used as an instrument for strengthening clientelistic and opportunistic practices by changing the meaning of participation through the tool. This context motivated the municipal government to restructure the PB methodology, including different mechanisms of social control and transparency in public decisions. Among the new elements included in the methodology, it is possible to mention the Participatory Budgeting Forum, the PB Committee (PBC), the Digital PB, the thematic committees formed by the government and society, and the Transparent PB program.



## How has the experience been coordinated with other actors and processes?

One of the main features of the proposal is its ability to coordinate between different social and political actors and public management. The creation of the Participatory Budget Committee, for example, has allowed the interlocution of public policies with actors of social movements and members of municipal councils from various segments:

- Municipal Councils:** the municipal councils' members occupy 4 vacancies in the Committee and have participated from the planning of the new PB methodology until the project proposal phases in face-to-face meetings;
- Neighborhood Associations:** Neighborhood associations members occupy 24 vacancies on the PB Committee and, in addition to assisting in the redesign of the new methodology, they are responsible for intermediating the discussion between citizens and the government in submitting proposals to compose the public budget.

### Comitê do Orçamento Participativo é eleito em Volta Redonda

**Volta Redonda.** O primeiro Fórum do Orçamento Participativo de Volta Redonda aconteceu na manhã de sábado (6), no auditório da UQR (Centro Universitário Getúlio D'Ávila), no Alameda, e teve a participação de associações de moradores, secretarias municipais e membros da sociedade. Na ocasião, foram eleitos os representantes que vão compor o Comitê do Orçamento Participativo de Volta Redonda. Eles terão o mandato de um ano (maio de 2017 a agosto de 2018). A cidade foi dividida em dez setores e as reuniões do comitê devem começar neste semana. O vice-prefeito Myron Almeida, que representa o prefeito Suanica Silva, destacou a importância das associações de moradores para a elaboração do orçamento da cidade. "Retomamos dialogando com todos os setores da sociedade. Com essa parceria



entre poder público, iniciativa privada e associações de moradores, vamos conseguir avançar - frisou o vice-prefeito. A primeira palestra do evento foi com o secretário municipal de Planejamento, Júlio Andrade, que ministrou sobre a "Experiência de Orçamento Digital pelo Brasil e pelo mundo". Segundo ele, há dois modelos de Orçamento Participativo: totalmente digital (online) e os híbridos (presencial e online). A segunda opção é a que já foi adotado em Volta Redonda. O OP Digital já foi realizado e teve a participação de mais de duas mil pessoas. Agora, a fase é presencial, onde os moradores elegerão os representantes da associação de moradores, em plenárias realizadas nos bairros. "Não é uma disputa entre bairros. Não vamos realizar eleições ou pedir por limitação orçamentária, mas a população que escolherá as prioridades - disse o secretário municipal, responsável pela organização do Orçamento Participativo. Após a palestra do secretário, foram apresentados todos os ações da secretaria de Planejamento, de janeiro a julho, sobre o Orçamento Participativo e uma mesa redonda. Quem compareceu ao evento teve a oportunidade de conhecer o Projeto Brasil Participativo, que faz a abertura do evento. Atualmente, o programa atinge cerca de 460 alunos, de seis a 14 anos, de todo município. O objetivo do projeto é atuar a educação, cultura e arte. Foram quatro apresentações na abertura do fórum, coordenada pela professora Isabela Santos Leite.

Veja os nomes do comitê	
SETOR 1	Júlio Gil
SETOR 2	Maria das Graças Luís Lino (suplente)
SETOR 3	Alcy Viçente Mário Magalhães (suplente)
SETOR 4	Márcio Coelho Evelis Oliveira (suplente)
SETOR 5	Fátima Martins Wagner Moreira (suplente)
SETOR 6	Claudian Nascimento Wagner Ricardo (suplente)
SETOR 7	Josiane Carneiro
SETOR 8	NÃO COMPARECEU AO FÓRUM
SETOR 9	Alan Cunha Fernando Pereira (suplente)
SETOR 10	Wanderley Dias

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3. Social movements: The members of social movements occupy 4 vacancies in the Committee and have been essential in proposing projects and in decision-making by neighborhood associations and the government regarding priority areas for public investment.

**Which has been the level of co-responsibility?**

With the PB Committee and other channels of participation established, it was possible to establish a public sphere of discussion between civil society and state actors, where it was possible to co-create the new PB methodology and reflect on its senses and sociopolitical impact. Among these actors, we can mention:

1. Public servants who were responsible for involving participants in the processes of construction, monitoring, and control of PB actions, in addition to the creation of new mechanisms for democratic participation, such as Digital PB;
2. The multidisciplinary technical team of civil servants, which was responsible for evaluating the technical and financial viability of projects and proposals sent to the PB. This team was also responsible for calculating the amount to be invested in each proposal, to build the database for Digital PB;
3. The participants, composed of members of municipal councils, neighborhood associations, civil servants and other citizens interested in public decisions. These participants are mainly responsible for mobilizing the other citizens to the face-to-face meetings for proposing and discussing the demands and for the virtual space for voting on the proposals. Besides being responsible for the redesign of the PB methodology, they are also supervisors in the implementation of the proposed public policies. The members of the neighborhood associations were responsible for organizing Digital PB polling stations in neighborhoods with difficulties in accessing the internet, as can be seen in a news article available on <http://bit.ly/2ZatRcj>.

**Which evaluation and accountability mechanisms were used?**

Transparency and accountability are one of the main methodological aspects of the Volta Redonda Hybrid PB and are divided into different evaluation and control mechanisms, such as:

1. The Transparent PB refers to the monthly publication of the status of the most voted proposals by participants. We publish information about the protocol number registered for the proposal, the responsible department for its execution, the estimated financial value of the proposal and the delivery deadline date for the project;
2. The official PB website available on [www.voltaredonda.rj.gov.br/op](http://www.voltaredonda.rj.gov.br/op) with minutes, images, the profile of participating members, decisions, PB Transparent data, and other public interest information;
3. Live and interactive meetings held through the Facebook official website, where they are open to all people with questions and opinions regarding the decisions of the members on the PB Committee face-to-face meetings.
4. Publication of an annual UQLI evaluation study conducted by the government to publicize the social impact of the implementation of the proposals included in the PB in reducing urban inequalities in the municipality.



**Bibliography**

Available on <http://bit.ly/2MrmZE0>.