

Contributions of Participatory Budgeting to Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation: Current Local Practices around the World & Lessons from the Field

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Abstract

This report builds on the contributions from two international sessions on the contributions of participatory budgeting (PB) to climate change adaptation and mitigation. It also draws on PB initiatives in 15 participating cities and regions from different continents. Its first objective is to describe and understand what is actually happening in the field and explore the extent to which PB contributes to climate change adaptation and mitigation, how it does so, and the current challenges facing PB actors. It assesses the nature and importance of these contributions: Are they marginal or not? How many projects are implemented each year? What do they cost and where do the resources come from? It highlights the numerous innovations that actors have introduced to integrate PB into climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. It finally raises questions for future explorations and advocates for climate-related participatory budgeting, raising awareness of its huge (and as yet largely untapped) potential to help address the dramatic impacts that climate change has on millions of people's lives.

Executive Summary

This report builds on the abstracts, exchanges and contributions from two international sessions on contributions of participatory budgeting (PB) to climate change adaptation and mitigation: IOPD Conference in Mexico, December 2019 and World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi, February 2020. It also draws on climate sensitive PB initiatives in 15 participating cities and regions from different continents that willingly documented their ongoing experience.

As developed in section 1, its first objective is to describe and understand what is actually happening in the field and initiate a reflection on the extent to which PB contributes to climate change adaptation and mitigation, how it does so, and the current challenges facing PB actors. Its second objective is to assess the nature and importance of these contributions: Are they marginal or not? How many projects are implemented each year? What do they cost and where do the resources come from? Which effects of climate change do they actually address or aim to address? The report aims as well to highlight the innovations that local, regional and national actors have introduced to integrate PB into climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. Its final objective is to advocate for climate-related participatory budgeting and raise

awareness of its huge (and as yet largely untapped) potential to help mitigate the dramatic impacts that climate change has on millions of people's lives.

Section 2 briefly introduces the 15 reference cases and their significance, putting them in perspective, in terms of size, type and location, and their spread over time. It differentiates various types of PB sensitive to climate change: territorial or place-based PB are the most numerous, even if recently thematic or sector-based PB such as eco-citizen PBs or city-level sustainable development PB are emerging. Three cases combining actor-based and thematic PB appear as well as a new generation of quite innovative PBs when considering climate change: Green PB in Schools; Youth PB for climate change or Energy saving PB with involvement of private companies and their employees. One case of space-based and actor-based PB, focusing on rural districts with the highest levels of poverty and migration and exposure to environmental hazards completes the series.

Section 3 summarises and comments on the most striking effects of climate change alterations faced by the 15 cities or provinces and their perceived vulnerability. It concludes that in most cities there is not a single but a combination of striking effects in various cases. Floods, caused by heavy rains as well as sea and river levels rise are the most frequent, followed by wildfires, heat islands, heat waves and typhoons. It tends to indicate that climate-sensitive PB has not emerged in different regions by chance or in response to international priorities and agendas. It is driven by the need to address very specific effects of climate change and their dramatic, often multiple impacts on local communities and settings.

Section 4 examines what kind of projects are prioritized by citizens. It provides the results of the scrutiny of around 4,400 PB-funded projects and focuses on the number of approved PB projects that have had an impact on climate change adaptation and mitigation; their estimated value; their number and value as a percentage of all approved PB projects; and the percentage that were actually implemented. It concludes that in the ten cities whose data could be consolidated, citizens approved above 900 projects over a two years period average, amounting to nearly \$US22 million worth of climate adaptation and/or mitigation projects. This clearly demonstrates the significant contribution that PB has made to efforts to address the effects of climate change in recent years. This contribution is even more significant when considering that the cities concerned are neither particularly rich nor very large.

Section 5 highlights some of the innovations introduced that are organised under four broad dimensions: participatory, financial, normative / institutional and spatial. Participatory: Crucial role of organised communities' initiative for change; key role as well of PB staff, at key moments of the process; importance of mediators of different types as interface between local government and citizens; positive impact of transferring power to people. Financial: Quite a heterogeneous level of financial contribution through PB from quite limited to significantly high; multiple ways of

mobilising and leveraging resources for more climate-related PB projects; some cities address creatively the complex issue of who should cover maintenance and running/operating costs. Normative / institutional, relating to PB design and architecture: powerful climate PBs are part of wider innovative Climate Change strategies & policies & programmes; in addition, PB are an efficient bridge between two systems: “participation” and “action for climate change” and this is taken into account by various cities while others take proactive measures to mainstream climate change into participatory budgeting. Spatial dimension: Cuenca in Ecuador introduced an innovative climate justice index for PB spatial allocation of resources

Section 6 explores some challenges for the future, acknowledges that most international organisations have so far paid little attention to the potential contribution that PB can make to efforts to tackle climate change effects. The report advocates they would do well to recognise the immense potential of climate-sensitive PB and to provide substantial support, and proposes to significantly increase support from multilateral and bilateral agencies and international NGOs for different PB related activities. It explores as well what to do with climate change related multiple PB projects that have not been selected and that are a goldmine to address future and present challenges.

Considering that many least developed countries generate the fewest greenhouse gas emissions, but are the most exposed to the effects of climate change, we advocate for Solidarity PBs for Climate Justice.