

Participatory Budgeting as an Inclusive Placemaking Driver: Different European and American Practices

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Abstract

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a paradigm that empowers residents to directly decide how a portion of the public budget is spent. Specifically, residents deliberate over spending priorities and vote over how the budget should be allocated to different public projects. As such it is a mechanism of top-down transfer of decisions on the part of budgetary expenditure to citizens. In recent years, PB has become a central topic of discussion and an important field of innovation for those involved in local development, considered one of the most successful democratic innovations of the last 25 years. Participatory budgeting contributes significantly to participatory democracy, inclusiveness processes and placemaking, but some factors limit the scale of these aspects. However, a relatively simple idea – that “ordinary citizens” should have a direct say in public budgets that impact them – has travelled the world by the most unexpected routes and landed in unlikely sites. There is no precise model for PB programmes. While there are similar tenets and institutional mechanisms, PB programmes are structured in response to each city or state’s particular political, social and economic environment. Therefore, it is necessary to consider to what extent PB strengthens the discussed processes, whether it allows reaching new, inactive groups of citizens and includes them in the decision-making process regarding shaping public spaces. The popularity of this tool carries the risk that it will be used to build the image of local government instead of significantly increasing the participation of citizens in deciding on local public spaces. The chapter aims to present and analyse participatory budgeting practices in four European and North American countries (Switzerland, Poland, North Macedonia and the United States of America) to show the role of PB in placemaking processes by the levels and forms of participation, the analysis of representativeness of PB participants (inclusiveness), placemaking impact and its level of digitisation. The proposed comparative analysis allows for assessing the importance of the tool for increasing social participation, which is participatory budgeting, for understanding its limitations and suggesting directions for its improvement to shape more inclusive, friendly and open public spaces.

Keywords

citizens’ participation – citizen-oriented cities – urban governance – limitations – social innovation

1 Introduction

Participatory budgeting (PB) is one of the most promising innovations, which the *New York Times* called “revolutionary civics in action” (Sangha, 2012). It empowers citizens to identify community needs, work with elected officials to craft budget proposals and vote on where and how to spend public funds (Gilman, 2016). Beyond this general definition, participatory budgeting experiments “span a broad spectrum: from symbolic participatory gestures with little transformative impact to vectors of structural change in cities’ governance systems” (Cabannes & Lipietz, 2018, p. 67). Over the recent decade, PB has gained growing recognition among policymakers, practitioners and academics (Ebdon & Franklin, 2006; Cabannes & Lipietz, 2018; Jung, 2021; Uddin et al., 2019; No & Hsueh, 2020; Rubin & Ebdon, 2020). Defined as a budgeting practice built on the active participation of citizens in budgetary decisions to influence resource allocation (Bartocci et al., 2022), it presents various practical examples. PB programmes are implemented at the behest of citizens, governments, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) to give citizens a direct voice in budget allocations. The scale at which PB is implemented can range from national to local to municipal levels. The enabling organisation that shepherds PB can vary as well, ranging from such actors as political parties to international NGOs. However, most PB exercises have taken place locally to allocate small-scale public funds to capital investment projects. Local, social, political and economic environments condition the effects of PB on empowerment, decentralisation of decision-making authority and accountability (Wampler, 2007).

The first interpretations of this phenomenon were closer to understanding PB as a process whereby citizens can provide input on at least a part of the budget. But within years, participatory budgeting received a stricter understanding that the process includes openness to all citizens, a combination of direct and representative democracy, deliberation and not simply consultation, self-regulation and redistribution towards the poor (Goldfrank & Schneider, 2006). In Western democracies, PB has increasingly been seen as an important tool for a deliberative or participative form of democracy in which stakeholders have opportunities to engage in local authority decision-making processes (Ariely, 2013). Normative agreement exists about the potential ability of PB to renew democracy, improve government decision-making, legitimise government decisions, increase transparency and enhance citizen trust in government.

Participatory budgeting initiatives and programmes are generally structured in response to unique political, social and economic contexts (Wampler, 2007).

Still, it is possible to indicate common features and elements, such as set-up, engagement, discussion, approval and oversight (Soysa, 2022). However, in different locations, the described process may proceed differently.

The chapter presents an analysis of participatory budgeting practices in four European and North American countries (Poland, Switzerland, North Macedonia and the United States of America) to show the role of PB in placemaking processes by the levels and forms of participation, the analysis of representativeness of PB participants (inclusiveness), placemaking impact and its level of digitisation. The research question has been formulated: What is the role and importance of the PB for increasing social participation and representing the citizens in decision-making processes impacting placemaking and how digital they are?

2 Theory of Participatory Budgeting

2.1 *The Level and Forms of Citizen Participation*

The crisis of the traditional model of political legitimacy typical for Western countries has led to paying more attention to citizen participation as a method for a potential increase of the representation and engagement of citizens, boosting communication among actors and creating a basis for more social justice (Fung, 2006; Bartocci et al., 2019). Citizen participation can be interpreted as an instrument that brings people closer to community and sociability, combating feelings of dissatisfaction and alienation. In the context of declining public trust in political parties, politicians and public organisations, PB has emerged as a tool for mobilising civil society, deepening social ties and improving governance (Cabannes and Lipietz, 2018).

Participatory budgeting has been regarded as one of the most successful participatory instruments of the past few years. It is considered a democratic innovation and one of the main contemporary participatory devices (Sintomer et al., 2008). As such, participation mechanisms adopted by governments to realise citizen participation have been investigated by many studies (Geurtz & Van de Wijdeven, 2010; Holdo, 2016) to detect conditions driving the success of PB (Barbera et al., 2016; Pinnington et al., 2009), the effectiveness of various approaches used to engage citizens (Lim & Oh, 2016) and the role played by different actors in producing PB in practice.

The levels and forms of citizen participation are different in particular PB localisations. They depend on many factors, such as the condition of the civic society, the homogeneity of the neighbourhood, urgent needs, gender, age and educational characteristics of the local society and many others.

2.2 *Representativeness (Inclusiveness)*

Changing demographics, tensions related to migration, political polarisation, social exclusion and discrimination represent new challenges to achieving inclusive citizen participation (OECD, 2022) effectively. PB aims to engage citizens in decision-making processes, often focusing on minority groups, which have traditionally been denied access. Most participatory budgeting has opened up channels of participation in organised or non-organised civil society with a demonstrated capacity to reach social groups that had historically benefitted less from local governments' attention, which meets Sustainable Development Goal 16.7 (ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels).

Although municipal governments often present PB as a method of increasing civic engagement and elevating community voice, historical examples prove that they excluded residents who find it very difficult to be engaged throughout the process. Insufficient inclusiveness of PB is one of the biggest limitations of this tool and is listed as a key factor to improve. Among the biggest obstacles on the way to inclusive PB, it is possible to indicate such factors as inadequate funds for PB projects, lack of priority to engage citizens from historically excluded social groups, limited options for discussion and voting, limited communication with community members on all decisions and after-action review, lack of possibility to track and monitor PB project implementation (Denny & Doyle, 2008).

2.3 *Placemaking Impact*

Nowadays, when cities are beset with problems of unequal development, including spatial inequality, cooperation between government and residents is required. The connections between people and places become crucial; therefore, PB becomes a tool that cities use to build places that alleviate inequalities and eliminate social and functional problems. This approach is introduced by physical development and enhancement of elements of urban infrastructure, such as small architecture, playgrounds or outside gyms, security systems, video surveillance or traffic slowdown obstacles, urban greenery etc. (Vanş Husar et al., 2023). At the same time, placemaking is a process by which people make meaning in space (Anders-Morawska & Hereźniak, 2019). It is about creating dynamic, mutually constitutive relations between residents and their material environment through claiming and appropriating space, producing a sense of belonging and negotiating and co-constructing place identity (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003). Thus, it can also impact the development of civic identity, resulting in intended and significantly more positive emotions and behaviours related to the place (Dubois et al., 2023). Both the "hard" and "soft"

impacts generated by participatory budgeting in the local communities have a strong placemaking influence on public urban spaces.

2.4 *Digitalisation*

While first experiences were based on face-to-face neighbourhood meetings, technology introduced online elements to the PB processes (dissemination of information, submitting proposals, voting). Current studies urge for a combination of online and offline methods in participatory urban development processes (Giannoumis & Joneja, 2022) and that digital tools should not replace face-to-face encounters (Zurita et al., 2015). Rather, they are considered a means to tackle problems in participatory processes (such as lack of representativity, transparency and accessibility) and to enable and strengthen citizen participation (De Filippi et al., 2016). However, “digital participation is often subject to the weaknesses or challenges of conventional participation” (Hovik & Giannoumis, 2022, p. 3), and a lack of access to digital technology, skills and resources may reinforce the marginalisation of already disadvantaged groups and socio-spatial inequalities within cities. Thus, while the digitalisation of participatory processes may broaden the base of potential participants, excessive reliance on online-only processes could lessen the deliberative aspects and the network-building effect provided by in-person approaches.

3 Cases

In this section, we analyse four different cases of PB practice in different cities in Europe and North America. The cases represent the experiences of the Western European (Lausanne, Switzerland), Central Europe (Warsaw, Poland) and Southern Europe (Skopje, North Macedonia). By such representation, the analysis gives a range of perspectives on PB practices in Europe in a comparative context. The fourth case from North America (Lubbock, Texas) presents non-European experiences and the non-European tradition of using participatory budgeting to enhance citizens' participation. Cases have also been presented in Table 3.1 to compare similarities and differences between introduced practices.

3.1 *Case 1 – the Budget Participatif Lausanne (Switzerland)*

In 2019, the Budget Participatif Lausanne (BPL) was implemented in the city of Lausanne as a participatory approach to neighbourhood development. In 2019–2022, a total of 114 projects were submitted, of which 81 submissions passed the city's feasibility test and were approved for election by residents,

and a total of 39 projects were selected as winning projects and subsequently implemented. The budget was CHF 100,000 in 2019 and has been set at a total of CHF 175,000 per year since 2020. This represents a total of just under 0.1% of the city's budget.

The BPL aims to promote neighbourhood projects. This is intended to strengthen social cohesion, participation and empowerment, and to reinforce local democracy and the relationship between the municipality and its citizens. The programme is seen as an opportunity to use public funds according to the needs of the inhabitants and especially to support disadvantaged population groups. Anyone over the age of 4 who is a primary resident of the city of Lausanne is eligible to participate.

The programme includes four phases: (1) announcement and project submission; (2) feasibility study by the administration; (3) voting by the city's residents; and (4) project implementation. To submit projects, interested parties must register online with their name and email address and agree to the *Charte Lausanne Participe* consent form. Only one project per person may be submitted in total and teams of at least three people must be formed. At least one person in the team must be a resident of Lausanne and the project must have added value for the neighbourhood, contribute to the improvement of the quality of life, be accessible to everyone and not aim at generating profit. However, there is no concrete formulation of rules or specifications on how to ensure these goals. The submitted project must be supported by ten other people who live in or have a connection to the neighbourhood. The project costs may not exceed CHF 20,000 and only the implementation of the projects is financed. No additional costs may be incurred by the city as a result of the project. After submission of the project, the feasibility of the project will be checked by the city's departments. The approved projects are then released for voting.

Different forms of support have been implemented. In the project submission phase, interested individuals are supported by experts in the development and submission of project ideas. A consultation hour has been introduced for this purpose. However, contact can also be made by telephone or email. The BPL website provides information on the process and templates for project description and budget preparation. In the second phase, submitted projects are reviewed by city departments for technical feasibility. Once the projects have been reviewed, a meeting is held between the city's technical services and the project teams to establish direct communication between the administration and residents and to clarify any outstanding issues. Marketing and communication in the voting phase are organised by the city. The winning projects are implemented by the project teams themselves. The citizens have a total of three years to implement the projects. In the first step, they have to form

an association, as the city does not finance projects by individuals. Then, an agreement is signed with the city, which defines the obligations and payment modalities. The city offers support in the implementation of the project by providing training in project management. In addition, there is project monitoring by the responsible coordinator, who, for example, establishes contacts and takes on an intermediary role if necessary.

Since 2019, a total of 18,928 people have cast their votes. Of these electoral votes, 24,492 were verified at the Residents' Registration Office and recognised for the election. There has been a significant increase in voter turnout, as in 2021 the number of verified voters was 3,078, and in 2022 the number of verified voters was 18,355. The city attributes the increase in voter turnout to the increasing awareness of the programme, as well as the expansion of marketing. The voting period lasts for four months. In 2022, votes could be cast at 24 ballot boxes in libraries and neighbourhood centres, via the internet, or – for the first time – at ambassadors who travelled through the neighbourhoods, stopped in public places, and presented the projects. In addition, each person living in Lausanne received a ballot in the mailbox for a postal vote. When voting for the projects, it is necessary to choose a total of three projects to avoid a possible lobbying effect. The winning projects have included neighbourhood festivals, socio-cultural events, music events, free clothing and tool exchanges, the conversion of existing infrastructure into libraries and for the exchange of used items, the greening of public space, cost-free training on biodiversity, repair workshops, or mobile infrastructure to create meeting places.

The programme is designed in a hybrid form – the information material, the support for the submission of projects, the project submission, the mobilisation in the voting phase and the voting offer online and offline variants.

Problems are currently evident in inclusivity and representativeness. Although more projects were submitted in low-income neighbourhoods than in higher-income neighbourhoods, the number of winning projects is greater in higher-income neighbourhoods. Thus, the failure rate of project entries from low-income neighbourhoods is higher, which is due to the insufficient number of votes in the voting process and thus a lower mobilisation power in the competitive process. In addition, the majority of people who entered a project were already active in associations or politically active. The demographic profile points to an under-representation of people without Swiss citizenship, young people and people with low incomes (Jaffar, 2021).

3.2 *Case 2 – the Warsaw Participatory Budget (Poland)*

In 2023, the Warsaw Participatory Budget (WPB) completed its 10th edition. Started in 2014 (projects from the first edition have been implemented in 2015) as one of the first in Poland (Pistelok & Martela, 2019), it has collected 21,893

submitted proposals; among them, 4,929 were chosen for implementation by the citizens. A total of 4,368 projects have been completed, and 537 from the 10th Jubilee edition are in progress (summer 2023). Every year, 0.5% of last year's city budget is allocated to the civic budget (ISAP, 2023; WPB, 2022). In the first edition, it was about PLN 26 million, in the tenth – over PLN 101 million (about EUR 23 million).

Each edition is based on a fixed scheme: establishing and announcing the rules of the programme, submitting projects, verifying them, voting and announcing the winning projects. Every resident of Warsaw can submit a project or vote for ideas submitted by others. It is not required to prove being registered in the city, so as not to limit people staying in Warsaw temporarily, e.g. students. Projects can also be submitted (and then selected) by minors (over 13 years of age on their own, younger through their parents) and by foreigners for whom the English-language version of the website has been created. There is also no limit to the number of applications submitted, but it is possible to vote only once.

Many forms of support for project applicants have been established. Residents who want to submit a project can use the help of city BP coordinators who support the originators, especially in the area of cost estimation. On the WPB website, it is possible to find exemplary prices of various municipal investments or services – e.g. the cost of planting a tree, a bicycle shelter, installing a monitoring camera etc. The support also applies to the promotion activities. For PB to be a real participation tool, non-governmental organisations cannot submit projects and compete with “ordinary” residents.

Submitted projects are to be formally approved. It is verified, among others: compliance with applicable law, the possibility of implementation in the indicated location, the possibility of implementation within a year, compliance with the city's competencies, the estimated cost of implementing the idea, compliance with documents programming the development of Warsaw, compliance with the adopted rules of accessibility for residents. The author of the project may appeal against the result of the evaluation. Projects requiring additions or changes are consulted with their authors in this regard. Applications for locations that are not at the disposal of the Warsaw authorities (e.g. on private land) are not processed automatically.

Great emphasis is also placed on the accessibility of projects: all of them must be open to the public and free of charge. In addition, each project must be available for at least 25 hours per week, between 6:00 and 22:00, including Saturday or Sunday – in the case of infrastructural or renovation projects. In the case of projects addressed to a limited number of recipients, the project must indicate the rules of recruitment, including the method of informing about recruitment criteria.

It should be noted that the catalogue of recipients of projects implemented under the PDB is wide and includes such categories as adults, children, youth, people with disabilities, older adults, families with children, students and animals. However, because it is the authors of the projects themselves who indicate their main beneficiaries, it is difficult to conclude the distribution of project recipients into particular categories (Kimic & Polko, 2023). The same applies to the areas that the projects represent. Applicants decide to which of the following categories their project will be assigned: education, public transport and roads, culture, environmental protection, social assistance, public space, sport, health or urban greenery (Maksymiuk & Kimic, 2016).

The entire participation process within the PB is conducted in a hybrid form – submitting projects and then voting on them takes place both online and traditionally – by delivering paper documentation to the appropriate local office or voting at a dedicated point. All necessary documents and information are also available in both variants; additionally, the website is adapted to the needs of visually impaired and blind people. People who are unable to vote in person for health reasons and do not have access to the internet may use the assistance of a representative of the office who will collect the completed ballot from the voter at his/her place of residence. The correctness of the formal side of the procedure, inclusiveness and representativeness of the PDB is supervised by the Participatory Budget Council composed of representatives of the social side, officials and city councillors.

Despite the dynamic development of the WPB and the allocation of more and more funds from the city budget to it, the tool has various disadvantages and limitations. Firstly, limited resources mean that only specific types of projects appear in the proposals – a lamp post, a pedestrian crossing, an outdoor gym, birdhouses, a dog run, tree planting, dance parties and outdoor cinemas. In extreme situations, the excess of similar projects led to their saturation in the public space and the opposite effect from the intended one. Secondly, despite the hybrid form and promotional campaigns, it was not possible to significantly increase the representativeness of the capital's inhabitants in the BF, although the applications in 2022 included proposals from Ukrainians staying in Warsaw. Thirdly, journalistic investigations revealed many pathologies in the process of accepting projects qualified for voting, the largest of which was the financing of election promises by a city councillor with the help of projects submitted to the WPB. In one district of Warsaw, more than half of the qualified projects were submitted by councillors, officials, employees of public institutions and their immediate families. This calls into question the citizenship of the entire project.

Without crossing out the achievements of the WPB in the field of promoting civic awareness, impact on the environment, including placemaking, and

positive infrastructural and social changes initiated by activities financed under the BP, the example of Warsaw shows that the experience gained in subsequent editions does not always translate into increasing the quality of the project.

3.3 *Case 3 – Municipalities in the City of Skopje (Republic of North Macedonia)*

In the city of Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia, there are several municipalities which have implemented participatory budgeting in the last decade. Also, in the last decade, there were several projects for promoting citizen participation and budgeting, such as the My Money, My Responsibility project, a citizen-centric approach to the delivery of public services (Center for Change Management, 2018a and 2018b), and another promoting citizen-centred financial management at the local level (UNDP in North Macedonia, 2023), among others.

In the municipality of Centar (Opština Centar, 2023), the residents can participate in decision-making at the local level and contribute to the preparation of the work programmes and the budget of the municipality. This municipality has a yearly budget for 2023 in the amount of EUR 18.6 million, and EUR 260,162 are allocated for supporting non-governmental organisations which would address various issues on a local level such as improving social cohesion, environment, sense of place, increasing awareness in relevant topics, cultural activities etc.

The municipality of Centar has been conducting budgeting forums for civil projects in the last decade. The budgeting events took place at large venues, where all city stakeholders could be involved, including citizens, non-governmental organisations, companies etc. In recent years, due to the COVID-19 virus, the forums were conducted online by filling out a survey questionnaire on the website of the municipality of Centar as well as having online meetings. However, after 2022, participatory budgeting has been a process held via physical meetings with the stakeholders enabling discussion on priorities, as well as providing voting regarding the budgeting of the activities of the municipality. According to a United Nations Development Programme report for 2022, the municipality of Centar is a positive example of good financial management directed by citizens.

The *Culture Strategy of the Municipality of Centar, 2017–2022* (Municipality of Centar, 2016) was created using a participatory process. This process involved a series of training courses on the tools used to support participatory processes, such participatory planning (the process of strategic planning, functional analysis, analysis of concerned parties, PEST and SWOT analysis); training on the

importance and the need to have a vision, develop a mission and determine the values in the creation of strategic frameworks, defining the goals, priorities and measures (initiatives) and preparing a strategic card and structure of the strategic plan via the model for a balanced map of indicators; training on confirming the already established goals, priorities and measures (initiatives) for the development of a strategic map, as well as determining activities in the action plan; and training on strengthening the capacities for the development of the strategic plan (surveys, focus groups, taking into consideration the documents on culture on a local, regional and national level).

Other municipalities in Skopje utilise participatory budgeting, such as Ilinden, Gjorce Petrov (Opština Gjorce Petrov, 2023; Center for Change Management, 2018b) and others. The stakeholders, such as citizens, NGOs, legal entities etc., can participate by filling out online surveys which enable them to perform prioritisation and ranking of the different budget groups, such as education, social care, infrastructure, water, sanitation, street lighting, safety, waste, parking, culture, sport, tourism, gender equality etc. Next in the survey, they are asked to choose three priorities and to state their primary need in their place of living as well as the main problems they are faced with and which need to be addressed by the municipality in the following year.

The participatory processes and participatory budgeting have been gaining more relevance in North Macedonia in the last decade and throughout the years there has been an increasing number of stakeholders who are interested in being involved in the planning and decision-making to improve their places of living in the city.

3.4 Case 4 – Participatory Budgeting in Lubbock, Texas (United States)

In the United States, the city of Lubbock, Texas, provides an illuminating case study of the implementation and evolution of participatory budgeting (PB). Initiated in 2022, Lubbock's PB process has since advanced to become a crucial element of the city's approach to local governance and community engagement.

Lubbock's proposed budget for 2023 projects a 10.14% increase, with the sum allocated for taxing unit payments rising by 10.74%. Preliminary allocations of the appraisal and collections division budgets hinge on 2021's parcel counts and tax levies. However, final allocations will account for certified 2022 parcel counts and the tax rates and levies adopted in 2022. Therefore, stakeholders anticipating significant changes in their 2022 tax levy relative to 2021 should consider adjusting their allocated amounts during the upcoming budgeting process (Lubbock Central Appraisal District, 2023).

Lubbock's PB process encompasses three primary stages: proposal collection, deliberation and voting. Citizens are encouraged to submit project proposals at community meetings, following which volunteer budget delegates transform these initial ideas into feasible project propositions (Sintomer et al., 2008). Finally, a voting stage lets the public determine which proposals receive funding. The introduction of PB has led to numerous community-centric and infrastructure-improvement projects. Notably, the range of projects has spanned from enhancements of local parks to installations of street lights in inadequately lit regions, underscoring the potential of PB as a tool for inclusive placemaking (Varış Husar et al., 2023; Hamdi, 2010).

Lubbock's PB process strongly emphasises inclusiveness, aligning with findings that PB initiatives often aim to empower minority groups traditionally denied political access (Cabannes, 2015; Berner et al., 2011). The city has tried to engage diverse community sections, including low-income residents and non-English speakers. However, challenges have arisen, with suggestions for improved communication methods and more extensive outreach efforts to bolster participation (Mehan et al., 2022; Abers, 2000).

The use of digital platforms has been a critical facet of Lubbock's PB process. Online platforms have been utilised to collect proposals, facilitate communication and conduct voting – resulting in a broader, more diverse participant base (Peixoto, 2009). Nevertheless, despite its merits, the shift towards digitisation presents new challenges, potentially lessening in-person approaches' deliberative aspects and network-building effect (Mehan, 2023; Desouza & Bhagwatwar, 2014). Balancing the benefits of digital platforms with in-person engagement is crucial to maintaining the core principles of PB.

Despite the identified limitations, Lubbock's PB process has yielded tangible outcomes, promoting citizen engagement and fostering trust in local governance. However, the city continues to navigate challenges such as maintaining long-term interest and ensuring equitable fund distribution. These experiences underscore the need for an iterative approach to PB, involving continual learning and adaptations to meet evolving community needs (Fung, 2015). Adapting the process to address challenges and foster continuous improvement is essential for maintaining effectiveness.

As Lubbock's PB journey demonstrates, participatory budgeting can significantly enhance civic engagement, foster community cohesion, and shape the development of public spaces. Nevertheless, it also emphasises the importance of addressing ongoing challenges and ensuring the inclusivity and accessibility of the process for long-term success (Souza, 2001; Sintomer et al., 2013).

TABLE 3.1 Comparison of the PB practices in Lausanne, Warsaw, Skopje and Lubbock

	Switzerland	Poland	North Macedonia	USA
location	Lausanne https://participer.lausanne.ch/processes/budget-participatif-2022	Warsaw https://um.warszawa.pl/waw/bo-participatory-budget-in-warsaw	Skopje https://www.centar.gov.mk/	Lubbock, Texas https://www.lubbockcounty.gov/egov/documents/1675197103_41797.pdf
The level and forms of participation	Citizens can participate in the following steps of the PB process: 1. Submit project proposals as groups of at least three people and with the support of ten more people 2. Feedback loop with technical services after feasibility test is finished 3. Vote for submitted projects 4. Stay informed about results 5. Implement the projects	Citizens are engaged in every step of the PB process and can: 1. Submit proposals as groups of inhabitants (formal as NGO and informal) or individuals 2. Vote for submitted projects 3. Follow updates and results 4. Evaluate implemented projects	Citizens are engaged in the PB process (depending on the municipality). All stakeholders can: 1. Submit proposals 2. Vote for submitted projects 3. Prioritise projects 4. Be informed about the realisation of the projects	In Lubbock, citizens actively participate in every stage of the PB process: 1. They submit project proposals during community meetings. 2. They deliberate on these initial ideas and refine them into feasible project propositions. 3. They can vote on which projects receive funding from the public budget. 4. They can stay informed about the progress of the chosen projects through various communication platforms.
Representativeness (inclusiveness)	The BPL aims to be inclusive and anyone aged 4+ who is a primary resident of the city of Lausanne is eligible to participate. The hybrid approach allows offline and	The WPB represents a range of different projects dedicated to various social groups, including the excluded ones. Both forms of voting – online	The process is inclusive in terms of different ages, social groups and physical/legal entities. The inclusiveness is also supported by the possibility	The PB process is highly inclusive, with outreach efforts targeted at traditionally under-represented groups. Translation services and promotional materials in multiple

TABLE 3.1 Comparison of the PB practices in Lausanne, Warsaw, Skopje and Lubbock (*cont.*)

	Switzerland	Poland	North Macedonia	USA
	<p>online participation to ensure inclusiveness. The documents and all the information are in French only. However, there is a lack of participants without Swiss citizenship, young people and people with low incomes. Winning projects are mainly located in higher-income neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>and traditional in the city hall allow different social groups to actively participate in the participatory budgeting process. Main information regarding submitting proposals and voting is provided in English, not only in Polish.</p>	<p>of participating both online and in physical meetings.</p>	<p>languages are provided to enhance accessibility. However, continuous efforts are required to improve participation and diversity further. The availability of both online and traditional voting methods is a positive aspect of the PB process. By providing multiple avenues for voting, the PB process promotes inclusivity and ensures that a wide range of community members can have their voices heard.</p>
Placemaking impact	<p>The implemented projects contribute to the enhancement of greenery and social infrastructure in the neighbourhoods. However, the demographic profile of participants shows a lack of people without Swiss citizenship, young people and people with low income.</p>	<p>The winning projects are in around 60 per cent investments with direct placemaking impact in "hard" infrastructure.</p>	<p>The PB has enabled focusing the municipality budget in priority areas, such as improving infrastructure, parks, lighting, waste etc. depending on the local needs of the citizens.</p>	<p>The PB process has led to numerous projects that directly contribute to placemaking, including enhancements to local parks, street light installations in inadequately lit regions and community gardens in food deserts. These projects have shaped the cityscape and fostered a greater sense of community and civic pride.</p>

TABLE 3.1 Comparison of the PB practices in Lausanne, Warsaw, Skopje and Lubbock (*cont.*)

	Switzerland	Poland	North Macedonia	USA
Digitisation	Lausanne uses the Decidim platform and social media channels such as Facebook for the BPL. All information and projects to vote are available on the platform. Updates on the results are published online.	All information and projects to vote on are available online. Information about winning projects and the stages of their realisation is available online. It is possible to vote online.	The information on the PB process is available online. Surveys and voting are online (depending on the municipality). The realisation of the projects is presented on social media.	Lubbock's PB process leverages digital platforms to facilitate citizens' engagement. These include online platforms for project proposal submission, communication and voting.

4 Discussion

The research question referred to the role and importance of the PB for increasing social participation and representing the citizens in decision-making processes, as well as its impact on placemaking and digitalisation. In all four analysed cases, we have indicated elements confirming the participatory nature of the tool, its contribution to the increase in the representativeness of participants, its placemaking impact as well as digitisation aspects.

First of all, it has been generally confirmed that in some areas, the PB might be regarded as one of the most successful participatory instruments of the past few years (Sintomer et al., 2008). In all cities citizens were engaged in all steps and stages of the process – from submitting proposals, its discussion, voting and implementing or supervising the process. Also, various forms of online and offline support have been implemented to strengthen citizen engagement and empowerment. And, as shown in the case of Lausanne, an additional marketing budget has been invested for the voting stage to increase accessibility, voter turnout and the representativeness of PB projects. The marketing campaign, increased awareness of the programme at the city scale, and a multiplicity of online and offline voting options led to a significant increase of votes from 2021 to 2022 by almost 500%. Lubbock, Texas, provides a compelling example of the implementation and evolution of participatory budgeting (PB) in participatory governance. This city's PB process underscores the capacity of PB as a successful instrument for facilitating civic participation in decision-making

processes. Citizens in Lubbock are actively involved in every stage of the process, thereby substantiating the potential of PB to empower citizens and foster democratic engagement. Lubbock's approach to PB has been innovative, particularly in its utilisation of digital platforms for facilitating various stages of the process. But, at the same time, it has been revealed in the case of Warsaw that the role of the local authorities in the process of acceptance of submitted proposals, is too strong and its impact on the projects too big thanks to the participation of the city councillors as proposers. In Skopje, the degree of implementation of participatory budgeting instruments is heavily dependent on the dynamics of the stakeholders in a certain municipality, the social structure or the ethnic structure. In municipalities, which for several years have been implementing an open and relatively transparent participatory budgeting process, there is an established culture of participation. In other cases, where there is a lack of bottom-up dynamics from the citizens and where they are less demanding from the local governments, there is lower transparency and inclusiveness. This meets conclusions from those PB studies, which are critical of wider stakeholder engagement, reporting unintended consequences such as mistrust between councillors and citizens (Im et al., 2014); low and unrepresentative participation (Ebdon & Franklin, 2006); the domination of technocrats (Gusmano, 2013); and merely being a legitimacy tool, with no direct consequences for the final budget (Bräutigam, 2004).

Representativeness and inclusiveness are the most difficult requirements to follow. In the analysed cases we met the problem of limited representativeness. Although all citizens are entitled to submit proposals and vote, there is a problem attracting other participants than those already active. Older adults, migrants, national and ethnic minorities and lower incomes are among the groups under-represented. There are examples of good practices in this area such as including Ukrainian refugees in Warsaw in the submission process, but they are very limited. In Skopje, in certain cases, major stakeholder groups can have more weight in the voting process which can contribute to the marginalisation of the needs of smaller groups. The inclusiveness and representativeness vary and depend on the economic power of the municipality, its transparency policy, local culture etc.

Another issue, shown in the case of Lausanne, is the competitive nature of PB and the potential lobbying effect caused by the voting scheme and the differing power among citizens to mobilise others for their ideas. The city has tried to counteract such lobbying effects with a voting rule requiring each voter to choose a total of three projects. Nevertheless, a comparison between project submission and voter turnout shows that the number of implemented projects is three times higher in neighbourhoods with higher incomes (Jaffar,

2021). Even though PB promotes participation at all stages of the process, the analysis indicates a reinforcement of socio-spatial inequality at the city scale.

Some studies underlying economic and institutional impediments, such as poor budgetary allocations for citizens and economic austerity discourage the engagement of wider stakeholders in the PB process (Cepiku et al., 2016; Rossmann et al., 2012). Also, the small scale of most PB projects (local level, small-scale public funds) is often highlighted as a negative point because of the scepticism about the size of the real impact PB can have. It is confirmed, for example, by the types of submitted proposals. In Warsaw, where the limitations come not only from the money but from the time as well (the project has to be able to be completed within a year) it is possible to find only a few types of proposals meeting these requirements. A similar situation can be found in Lausanne. The proposed projects must be implemented within three years, and the project may not exceed the expenditure amount of CHF 20,000 and cannot create any additional costs. In consequence, projects are small-scale, punctual and have a low impact on the development of long-time and stable infrastructure in neighbourhoods.

Constraints such as insufficient budgetary allocations and economic austerity can deter broader stakeholder engagement. While PB is seen as a platform for enhancing civic engagement, it often serves more as a signalling tool than a transformative instrument due to the limited scope of projects. However, these smaller-scale projects can still provide immediate, tangible benefits within communities, fostering civic pride and continued engagement. At the same time, comparing the Warsaw case with PB Lausanne, it can be argued that such an acupuncture placemaking approach increases accessibility because of fewer requirements to submit projects, i.e. compliance with documents programming the development (Warsaw). Another aspect in the case of Lausanne is that the implementation of the projects is citizen-led. At first sight, this can be interpreted as promoting a high level of participation as it requires self-organisation. However, the analysis of the participants' profiles points out that the majority of participants have been actively engaged in political and placemaking activities beforehand and that the PB in Lausanne is used as another funding option for already organised and active citizens. Despite this, cities like Lubbock have seen the potential of PB in promoting citizen engagement and fostering trust in local governance. The challenges, however, underscore the necessity of an iterative approach to PB, promoting continual learning, adaptation and responsiveness to community needs. Lubbock's experience underscores the need for continual learning, adaptation and responsiveness to local and regional community needs. As other cities and regions consider implementing PB, the lessons learned

from Lubbock's journey can inform the development of inclusive and effective participatory practices.

In all four analysed cases, the placemaking impact of the PB on the cities has been observed with various intensities. The mechanism is used to enhance the accessibility of public space, improve local infrastructure, increase the scope and the condition of urban greenery, but also to activate citizens by organising social and cultural events. In Warsaw, the most prominent case of this role of the WPB is the transformation of one of the main streets in the capital of Poland – Świętokrzyska. The rules of traffic organisation have been changed, the areas for pedestrians have been substantially increased, a bicycle path has been created, over a hundred trees have been planted and new spaces for recreation and social integration have been created (Smaniotto Costa et al., 2024). In this case, it is possible to indicate both natures of the placemaking impact of the PB – the “hard” one – referring to infrastructure and the “soft” one – creating social activities. In Skopje, various small placemaking projects have been realised, such as the improvement of the infrastructure, urban greenery, bicycle lanes and three small squares. In that last case, citizens have been involved in giving feedback on the design proposals and voting, to propose ideas to the design team. In one case of the design of a small square, students in architecture from the Faculty of Architecture in Skopje have been developing design proposals. These squares have shown to have a highly positive placemaking impact, considering the positive feedback from the citizens, the increase in social interaction on the squares and the improvement of the local microclimate. In Lubbock, the city's PB-funded projects range from downtown park enhancements to street light installations, showcasing the “hard” placemaking aspect. Furthermore, community-centric projects encourage social activities, enhancing the soft side of placemaking. In contrast, PB Lausanne has not visibly impacted the city through infrastructure improvements. With an annual budget of CHF 175,000 in total and the requirement that winner projects are implemented by civil society and without any further expenditure for the municipality, the PB Lausanne does not aim at improving local infrastructure such as bicycle lanes or traffic lights. Such development works are considered to be the sole responsibility of the municipality. The PB addresses soft factors such as the development of social cohesion, the promotion of local democracy, and the relationship between the municipality and its citizens. The majority of the winning projects are neighbourhood social and cultural events, conversions of (unused) local infrastructure and temporary installations to create social encounters and community greenery or biodiversity projects.

Digitisation is also a common element in all four analysed in the chapter PB cases. All of them use hybrid mode. In all stages and activities during the

participatory budgeting process, it is possible to participate in a traditional face-to-face manner as well as online. During the COVID-19 pandemic, mostly in 2020 and 2021, due to sanitary restrictions, a major part of the activities only occurred online (i.e. voting, submitting proposals and consultations). Despite the benefits of online forms of communication, it is worth remembering that digital tools should not replace face-to-face encounters and should be used as a supportive tool, as a means to increase representativity, transparency or accessibility, rather than the main way of interaction between PB actors and participants. Although the digitalisation of participatory processes may broaden the base of potential participants, excessive reliance on online-only processes could lessen the deliberative aspects and network-building effects of PB processes, traditionally associated with in-person approaches (Varış Husar et al., 2023). This dangerous paradox might finally lead to less participation, representativeness and inclusiveness in the PB processes. At the same time, for particular target groups such as teenagers or young adults, the increased use of digital tools (i.e. gamification) might broaden the rate of participation in PB. Thus, as highlighted in previous studies, the selection and type of digital tools need to comply with the target group and the addressed aim to create an impact (Menendez-Blanco and Bjorn, 2022).

5 Conclusions

The presented and analysed participatory budgeting practices from three countries in Europe (Switzerland, Poland and North Macedonia) and one in North America (the state of Texas in the United States of America) showed the importance of PB in the placemaking process. Citizens in various cities actively participate in all stages of the participatory budgeting (PB) process, including proposal submission, discussion, voting and implementation. Lausanne's successful case highlights the impact of additional marketing efforts on voter turnout, leading to a nearly 500% increase in votes. Lubbock, Texas, serves as a positive example of innovative PB implementation with citizen involvement at every stage. At the same time, challenges, such as the strong influence of local authorities in Warsaw and varying degrees of PB success in Skopje, underscore the importance of stakeholder dynamics and transparency in the process.

Ensuring representativeness and inclusiveness in participatory budgeting (PB) proves challenging, with under-represented groups, such as older adults, migrants, minorities and lower-income individuals, facing difficulties in active participation. In Skopje, major stakeholder groups can disproportionately influence the voting process, potentially marginalising smaller groups. The competitive nature of PB, as seen in Lausanne, can lead to socio-spatial inequality,

with wealthier neighbourhoods having three times more implemented projects. Economic and institutional constraints, like limited budget allocations and austerity measures, hinder broader stakeholder engagement, transforming PB into more of a signalling tool than a transformative instrument.

Despite the limitations, smaller-scale PB projects offer immediate community benefits, fostering civic pride and ongoing engagement. In the analysed cases, participatory budgeting (PB) has demonstrated varied impacts on city placemaking. Warsaw's PB notably transformed Świętokrzyska, one of the main streets, improving pedestrian areas, creating a bicycle path, planting trees and fostering social integration. Skopje saw positive outcomes from small placemaking projects involving citizens in design proposals, including improved infrastructure, green spaces and squares. Lubbock's PB-funded projects, from park enhancements to street lights, reflect "hard" and "soft" aspects of placemaking, combining physical improvements with community-focused activities. In contrast, PB Lausanne primarily addressed soft factors, emphasising social cohesion, local democracy and citizen – municipality relationships, with winning projects focusing on social and cultural events, infrastructure conversions and community greenery initiatives.

Digitisation plays a crucial role in all four analysed participatory budgeting (PB) cases, with a hybrid approach combining traditional face-to-face and online participation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online activities, including voting and proposal submissions, became prominent. However, caution is advised to avoid excessive reliance on digital tools, as face-to-face interactions are essential for representativity, transparency and accessibility. While digitalisation can broaden participation, selecting tools should align with the target group and goals to maintain the deliberative aspects and network-building effects associated with in-person approaches.

Apart from some indicated limitations, the PB generally increases social participation and shapes more inclusive, user-friendly and open public spaces. That is why it is so important to increase representativeness and inclusiveness (also by using further digitisation) of the PB to make it more and more participatory.

6 Lessons Learned

Regarding the presented case study analysis and their comparison, as well as generated conclusions, the following lessons learned can be indicated:

1. *Professional support at all the stages of the PB scheme is needed to extend the submission's variety and professionalism.* At the same time, it

is recommended to implement a multilingual approach to increase the participation of non-native speakers and to broaden representativeness in the PB processes. Also, hybrid approaches might enhance citizen participation (information, mobilisation, proposal development, decision-making, voting and project implementation).

2. *Following a competitive logic, PB programmes may reinforce socio-spatial inequalities due to social networks becoming a powerful asset in the voting phase.* This issue could be addressed by a proportional distribution of projects across urban neighbourhoods to ensure a fair distribution of public goods. Another possibility is introducing a 50/50 procedure, i.e. voting by the population in combination with a jury of experts to ensure the inclusion of different perspectives and interests.
3. *Monitoring and evaluating PB (programme, process, implementation) are necessary to increase the impact of placemaking activities.* PB needs to be an iterative process of continual learning, adaptation and responsiveness.

These proposed changes for improvement have been formulated following the lessons learned:

1. *Funding and time allocation.* Increasing local authority funding for more ambitious and medium-scale projects may require some cities to relax the one-year completion requirement for proposed projects.
2. *Enhanced professional support for new proposers.* Expanding professional assistance for citizens unfamiliar with PB due to formal standard requirements. While public money spending necessitates professional proposals, this support, currently available in most analysed PB cases, should be further extended.
3. *Inclusivity in PB participation.* If feasible, PB procedures should eliminate the formal requirement of local citizen registration for proposers and voters. This change could encourage participation from under-represented groups, such as migrants, ethnic minorities and lower-income citizens, making the process more participatory and inclusive.

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