

# Participatory Budgets.

## Theoretical Background, The Role of Public Administration, and Case Study from Spain.

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- ❖ The context, design and implementation of a particular experience of participatory budgets in Albacete (Spain)
- ❖ Conclusions and key findings.



# 1. Local governance and participation.

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- Citizens support representative democracy as an ideal form of government but:
  - a) Have low confidence in the performance of their governments and public administrations.
  - a) Have less confidence in the extent to which politicians and administrators care about their opinions.



# Governance

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Governance has to do with:

- ✓ The need to deliberately include citizens and other actors in governmental policy making.
- ✓ The introduction of new processes of public management to recover the importance of civil society in the making and implementation of public policies.
- ✓ Reconciling the institutions of representative government and networks.

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## KEY ISSUES AND VARIABLES IN PARTICIPATORY BUDGETS.

ISSUES	INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	DEPENDENT VARIABLES
STRUCTURAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE LOCAL CULTURE.</li><li>• POLITICAL LEADERSHIP.</li><li>• LEGAL CONSTRAINTS.</li><li>• DECISION MAKING CULTURE.</li><li>• POPULATION SIZE</li></ul>	
DESIGN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GOALS/TIMING</li><li>• BUDGET ALLOCATION</li><li>• WHO PARTICIPATES</li></ul>	
INSTRUMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PUBLIC MEETINGS</li><li>• COMMITTEES</li><li>• FOCUS GROUPS.</li><li>• SURVEYS/ICT</li></ul>	
OUTCOMES		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GAIN POLITICAL SUPP.</li><li>• INPUTS FOR DEC. MAK.</li><li>• TRANSP/SOC. CAP.</li></ul>

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### 2.1.1. Political and administrative culture.

- ✓ Participative traditions influence politicians, administrators and citizen's perceptions: a city with other participative experiences is likely to introduce participative budgets.
- ✓ Non traditional bureaucratic public organisations are more likely to encourage citizen participation in budget processes.
- ✓ Decentralised organisations are more likely to seek citizen's inputs.

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## 2.1.2. Political leadership and administrative professionalism.

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- ✓ Key role and personal support of the Mayor.
- ✓ Traditional administrators may regard public issues to be complex for the average citizen.
- ✓ A professionalised bureaucracy is more likely to innovate with management methods such as strategic planning and participatory budgets.

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## 2.1.3. Legal Constraints

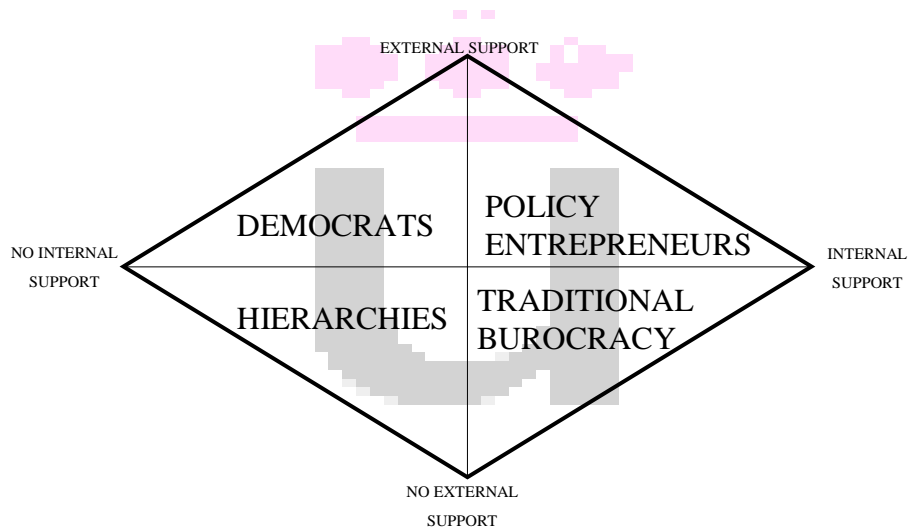
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- ✓ Degree of autonomy for the local government.
- ✓ Central control over local expenditure (to increase taxes or to issue public debt.)
- ✓ Public hearings for the general public.
- ✓ Others.

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## DECISION TAKING AND CITIZEN'S PARTICIPATION IN BUDGETING



### 2.1.5. Population size.

- More difficult in large cities.
- The more population the more level of issues in conflict.
- The more heterogeneity the more need for formalised processes.



## 2.2.1. Design and implementation process.

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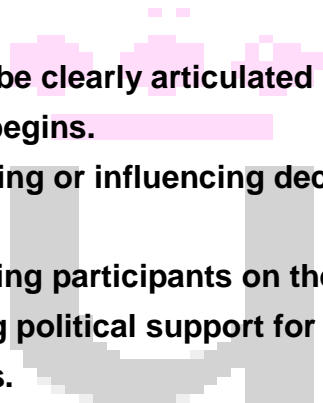
- Goals.
- Timing.
- Selection of participants.



## Goals

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- **Should be clearly articulated before the process begins.**
- **- Informing or influencing decision making.**
- **- Educating participants on the budget.**
- **- Gaining political support for budget proposals.**
- **- Create social capital.**



## **Timing**

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- Citizens proposals have to be included before final budget is approved.
- ¿Which portions of the total budget are to be included in the participatory process?

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## **Selection of participants.**

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- ¿Open to a large number of citizens or only associations?
- Representative of the community or only those politically active.
- ¿Only those who support the political agenda?

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## 2.3. Instruments

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- Public meetings.
- Focus groups and surveys
- Committees.

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## Public meetings.

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- Open to all citizens.
- Low attendance unless in case of political conflict.
- Lack of representativity
- Little knowledge of the budget as a whole.

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## Focus groups

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- Representative of the entire population.
- Useful to determine citizen's general preferences.
- Can be complemented with citizen's surveys.

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## Committees

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- The most used: allow participants to be informed about budget issues.
- May not be representative if participants are not democratically elected.
- Costly in terms of time and money.

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## Outputs and outcomes

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- Gain political support and selling proposals to the public.
- Obtain inputs for decision making that: 1) may influence the final resource allocation decisions or b) set issues for discussion in future years.
- Enhance transparency and efficiency and create social capital.
- *There exist little research on how all this is to be achieved.*



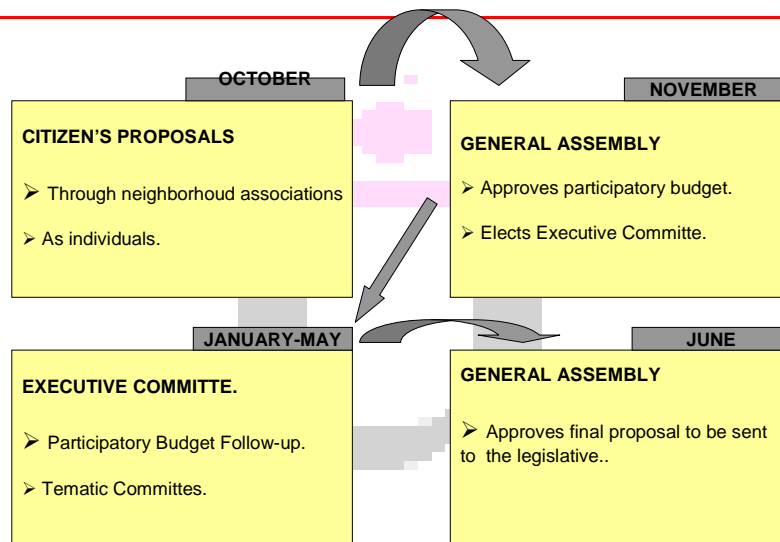
## Participatory Budgets in Albacete.

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- 160.000 inhabitants.
- Divided in 7 district councils as a process of sustained decentralization.
- Within the municipal districts creation of neighborhood councils that guarantee consultation and participation of citizens.
- The ruling party has the majority of the Council.
- The participative budget is an electoral compromise.



## PARTICIPATIVE BUDGET PROCESS IN ALBACETE



## General Assembly

- 400 citizens elected within the associations and representative of the districts.
- Honorary non remunerated work
- Debates and gives priorities to the citizen's proposals (public investments, health, education, public parks, etc.)



## Executive and Thematic Committees.

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- E.C.: 25 citizens elected by the Assembly and representative of the districts.
- T.C.: Citizens and public officials discuss particular issues. Between 10 and 15 and open to all citizens.
- Participates 4% of the total adult population.

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## Results.

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- 1. Supply of institutional arrangements for the process is a must.
- 2. Previous creation of neighborhood networks is necessary.
- 3. There must be a high concern of political actors.
- 4. The process may serve to reinforce democratic legitimacy, educate citizens about fiscal priorities and trade-offs and to enhance trust and transparency in government.
- The empirical study shows that there are no directly observable results but interviews with key local stakeholders do suggest that there is a certain degree of satisfaction.

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## Further Research

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- 1. There is little empirical knowledge about goals and outcomes and their relationship.
- 2. A case study may be useful from a descriptive perspective, but,
  - A) There is a lack of large scale research projects on participative budgets.
  - B) Longitudinal analysis and comparative studies are required.

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