Overcoming Inequalities in Citizen Participation in Participatory Budgeting

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October 2016

About the Report

This report was commissioned by Edinburgh City Council and was produced by Stephen Elstub, Ian Johnson and Ruth Puttick from Newcastle University.

The report should be cited as:

Elstub, S., Johnson, I., and Puttick, R. (2016) *Overcoming Inequalities in Participation in Participatory Budgeting in Edinburgh*, Newcastle: Newcastle University.

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Executive Summary

- The report considers how to most effectively overcome inequalities in citizen participation in Participatory Budgeting (PB).
- The report synthesises key findings from the various methodologies employed in the research. This included a focus group with Edinburgh PB leads to gain further understanding of their problems with inclusion, a systematic literature review, case study analysis and expert consultation.
- Those not submitting applications for funds, participating in the event or voting, are typically those from black and minority ethnic (BME) or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities, and young people. However, there are inconsistencies in how inclusion is evaluated and a low completion rate of the Equalities Monitoring Form.
- Within PB processes around the world, a number of measures are employed to increase citizen inclusion, with varying degrees of success: allocation of resources to support participation such as transport or childcare; use of digital technologies; IT support and help to purchase computers; direct communication, particularly with disadvantaged groups; creative community events; scheduling meetings at convenient times; ensuring citizens are active in sessions; and adapting the programme to engage with under-represented groups.
- There is a lack of evidence on which measures help include which particular groups and to what extent.
- The New York City PB process seems a particularly successful grant-making approach to gaining inclusion and the São Paulo PB process an example of good practice when mainstreaming PB.
- In New York, citizens were involved at every stage of the PB process. Community organisations proved particularly successful in mobilising a diverse range of citizens to participate and online engagement was utilised.
- In São Paulo, the use of segment delegates to represent citizens with protected characteristics was important to ensure that they were included in the process.
- In both New York and São Paulo, deliberative processes were important features of the PB process.

Recommendations

To foster inclusion, Edinburgh City Council could consider the following recommendations, derived from the broader literature review and case study analysis, and grouped around the CLEAR framework, an acronym which denotes the key factors which foster greater participation:[1]

Can: they have the resources and knowledge to participate

- Providing practical support such as training, transportation or child care
- Keeping the event and decision making process as straightforward as possible
- Introducing deliberative features into the PB processes

Like to: people feel attached to their community and the process is made enjoyable

- Engaging people in the community, in cafes, schools, youth clubs, and holding specific events, such as fetes or BBQs
- Communicating the success of previous projects and the impact of PB
- Adopting a variety of facilitation techniques

- Involving citizens in the governance of PB, assigning them key roles in the process

Enabled to: opportunities to participate

- Scheduling meetings at diverse times and holding meetings in accessible venues
- Streaming meetings, including the capability to contribute to live discussions

Asked to: mobilised by community and voluntary groups

- Communications must be easy to understand for the residents.
- A blend of transparent, mass and targeted communications, both on and offline.
- Partnering with community groups as a way of fostering outreach.
- Use purposive or stratified selection methods to make sure minority groups are represented in the process.

Responded to: they can see their views being listened to and their input is used

- Ensuring skilled facilitators are at all deliberations to ensure all voices are heard.
- Utilising online technologies to assist voting, such as by text message, online or by phone.

Next steps

- Staff training
- Trial of different measures to increase inclusion recommended above, chosen for best with particular context
- Further evaluation and research on how successful these measures are
- Evaluation must be standardised, more comprehensive, and external facing across all PB programmes

Contents

Introduction

Like many other areas around the world, Edinburgh City Council is facing the problem of inclusion in its participatory budgeting (PB) programme. By this, we mean that certain demographic groups are not taking part. Our understanding is that in Edinburgh, those not submitting applications for funds, participating in the event or voting, are typically those from black and minority ethnic (BME) or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities, and young people. This report draws on research to examine how inclusion can be fostered to ensure greater participation in the PB process. The research was commissioned by Edinburgh City Council and carried out by Newcastle University in October 2016.

The report is organised into five sections. In section 1 the methods and approach that underpinned the research are explained. We then give an overview of PB in the Edinburgh context, with a particular focus on the challenge of including all citizens in the PB process, in section 2. Section 3 provides a macro analysis of inequalities of participation in PB processes from around the world, and identifies two cases, New York City and São Paulo, which have been more successful than most in overcoming these inequalities. This case selection also represents two broad approaches to PB, namely grant-making and mainstreaming. Section 4 provides a micro analysis of these cases and particularly their measures to engage a diversity of citizens. We conclude in section five with some recommendations for improving the diversity of engagement in participatory budgeting in Edinburgh and beyond.

Methods and Approach

This section provides an overview of the methods and general approach adopted on this research project. Essentially, there are four key and interconnected elements to the methodology underpinning this research: a focus group with PB leads in Edinburgh, a systematic literature review, case study analysis, and expert consultation.

- **Focus Group with Edinburgh PB Leads**

  In the early stages of the project, a focus group was held between the principle investigator and a number of PB initiative leads in Edinburgh. The purpose of the focus group was to help identify the specific issues that Edinburgh City Council is experiencing with inequalities in participation in their PB processes. For example, the focus group discussions provided the research team with a greater understanding on which groups Edinburgh City Council are particularly struggling to get to participate in the PB processes; why these groups are not participating; what measures have already been introduced to combat these problems; the relative success of these measures; and how the measures were evaluated. Furthermore, it was crucial to the literature review element of the research project.

- **Systematic Literature Review on Inequalities in Citizen Participation**

  In addition to extensively enhancing the research team's understanding of the context of PB in Edinburgh, the findings from the focus group further informed the systematic review of evidence from around the globe on the issue of inequality in citizen participation in PB. In particular, it helped the research team to identify key search terms and contextual factors which formed the structure of the initial review. Ultimately, the review provided a macro analysis of the most salient evidence on inequalities in citizen participation in participatory budgeting with respect to which groups are typically excluded; the measures that have been taken to foster greater inclusion; and the lessons learned from these measures. Through this systematic review, key case studies of best practice in PB processes, which contribute to more inclusive participation, were identified.

- **Case Study Analysis**

  These cases were New York City PB and São Paulo PB. Both cases were investigated further, through a review of available evidence of each case in order to provide a micro analysis of inequalities in citizen participation in PB and in particular to identify the specific measures that helped to overcome these inequalities in these cases. The case study analysis also helped contextualize the broader lessons gleaned from the literature review.

- **Consultation**

  As the institutional features and PB measures to enhance inclusive participation were derived from cases with different contexts to Scotland and Edinburgh, a period of consultation with

leading UK PB and Scottish politics experts was undertaken to tailor the recommendations specifically for implementation in Edinburgh.

All of these elements were then synthesized to produce the final recommendations and this report itself. We now turn to report the findings from the focus group.

Participatory Budgeting in Edinburgh

This section gives an overview of PB in Edinburgh, with a particular focus on inclusive citizen participation. It starts with a general overview of PB and moves to a specific focus on PB in Edinburgh and the focus group findings.

From its inception in Brazil in the late 1980s, Participatory Budgeting (PB) has now been adopted worldwide. Essentially, it is a process that involves citizens in directly deciding how public funds should be spent.[2] It is thought to deepen democracy and advance equality. It is increasingly being utilized in Scotland[3] and has been used in Edinburgh since 2010. PB in Edinburgh accounts for approximately 9-10% of Scotland's PB processes.[4] However, there are issues with ensuring that citizens with protected characteristics are equally included in both the application for funding stage and the decision making of fund allocation process. This is a problem Edinburgh City Council has experienced with its PB processes but which research suggests is also occurring in PB around the globe.[5] Indeed it is a factor that affects all forms of public participation.[6]

Citizens participate in PB for a range of reasons. PB provides new civic knowledge, relationships with officials, and leadership skills, enabling "people [to] make friends, form new networks, and enjoy being a part of something larger than their personal day-to-day concerns."[7] Some people want to propose specific ideas, whilst others may want to feel part of their community.[8] PB helps people think more creatively, helps citizens engage with each other and elected officials in non-traditional roles, and the "civic rewards of the process motivate a diverse swath of people, granted the opportunity that PB affords, to experience for themselves what it means to think expansively about how they might channel the resources of government to better their communities."[9] Figure 1 below summarises the stages of the PB process.

Figure 1: The Participatory Budgeting Process
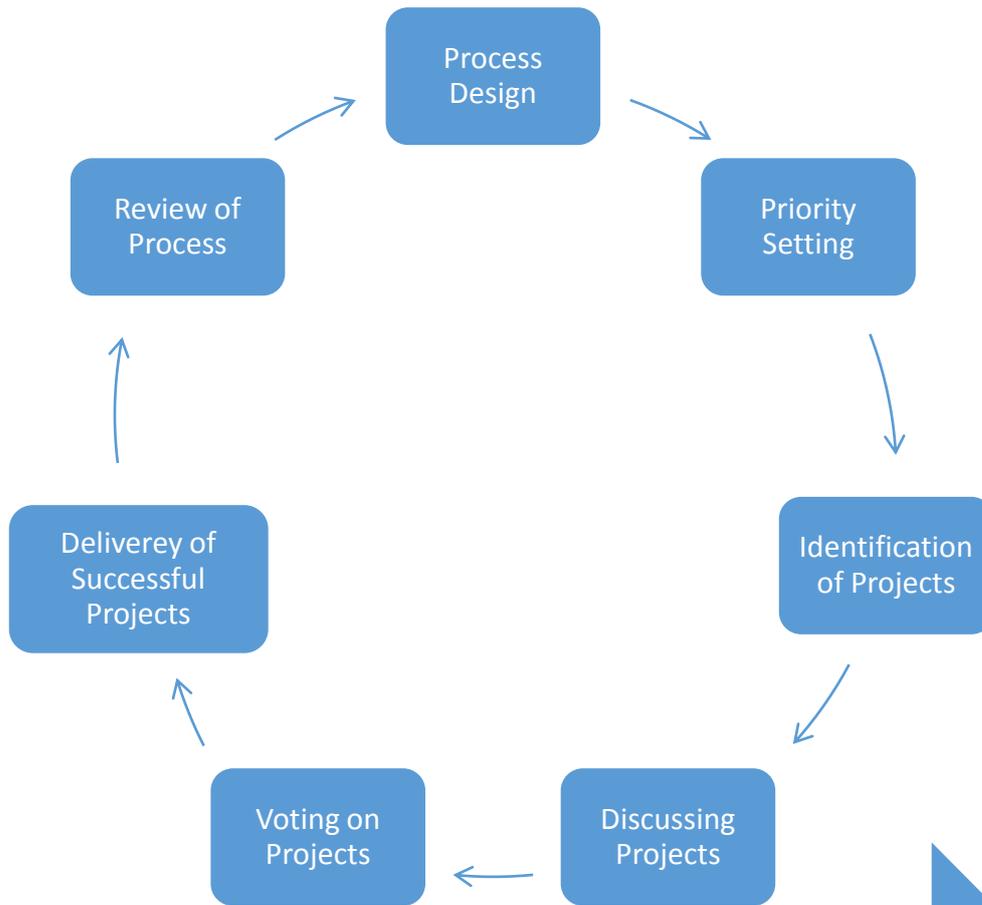
At each stage of the process there should be:

- Citizen engagement
- Communication of progress and results
- Monitoring and evaluation, with feedback and learning in real time

Focus Group Findings

There were a number of themes that structured the discussion between the research team and the leads of the various PB projects in Edinburgh. These included timescales, promotion techniques, type of events, support for applicants, voting procedures, groups they are struggling to include, the reasons for this, and the evaluation processes employed. There are some important differences across the various PB processes, but also a number of similarities as it seems apparent that many of the PBs take inspiration from the 'Leith Decides' format. Table 1 below summarises the findings from the focus group.

Table 1: Participatory Budgeting in Edinburgh

	PB in Edinburgh
Promotion Period	• 6 weeks
Methods of Promotion	• Mailing list (networks) • Posters (in community centres and places of worship) • Leaflets (in community centres and places of worship) • Target local residents and third sector organisations • Social media • Word of mouth
Application Period	• 1 month
Methods of Promotion	• Mailing list (networks) • Posters (in community centres and places of worship) • Leaflets (in community centres and places of worship) • Target local residents and third sector organisations • Social media • Word of mouth
Support for Applicants	• Library information sessions • Community development and learning worker • Translation services
Voting Period	• 2 weeks
Methods of Promotion	• Mailing list (networks) • Posters (in community centres and places of worship) • Leaflets (in community centres and places of worship) • Target local residents and third sector organisations • Social media • Word of mouth
Voting Location	• Hard copies posted to Council • Hard copies deposited in libraries • On-line
Voting Format	• Either rank all applications or just top five
Event Sequence	• Usually at the end of the process but sometimes at the start
Event Format	• Market place
Excluded Groups	• BME • LGBT • Young People (although not necessarily if the funds are relevant to schools and they make an application)
Reasons for Exclusion	• 'Don't see the value in the PB process' • 'Too much work for not enough money' • 'Its new' • 'The process changes each year' • 'It's a popularity contest' • 'Put off by the competitive nature'
Attempts at Inclusion	• By contacting associations and organisations (e.g. schools places of worship) that are connected to these groups or represent them • Holding tailored workshops
Evaluation	• Ad hoc use of 'Equalities Monitoring Forms' • Moving towards a standardised 'Equalities Monitoring Form' • Maximum 60% completion rate making evaluation challenging

Literature Review Findings on Inclusion in Participatory Budgeting

This section reports the findings of a systematic literature conducted on the issue of inclusion in PB programmes around the globe in order to outline the extent of the problem of inclusion in citizen participation in PB programmes in other countries and cities, which groups are typically excluded, the measures that have been taken to foster greater inclusion, and the lessons learned from these measures. It commences with an overview of factors needed to create a successful PB programme gleaned from the review.

Factors Needed to Create a Successful PB Programme

Previous research has identified several factors which are critical for the success of a PB programme:[10]

1. **Political will**: the PB process must be a priority for the administration, and receive high-level support from senior officials within the government.

2. **Regionalisation of the city:** the city should be divided into regions and sub-regions to decentralise the process, with PB supported in each area by a dedicated government staff member.

3. **Definition of transparent technical criteria for a fair distribution of resources**: the city government must clearly define both the criteria for the allocation of funds, and the amount available. (Although the development of the definition can be generated in collaboration with the community).

4. **Adaptation of the administration:** the processes of government needs to be updated to reduce bureaucracy. Culture change is also required, with staff learning to work in a reality where citizens define their work and activities.

5. **Legislative involvement:** a change of behaviour and philosophy is also required of the budgeting staff who must engage with the process.

Participation in PB

PB typically engages citizens in the local area, or those affected by a particular public service. In some cases, such as Paris, Porto Alegre, Tower Hamlets, Cordoba, Lisbon, and Edinburgh every local resident is given the opportunity to participate and vote. In other cases, where PB is thematic and focuses on a specific service area, those involved are directly invited. An example would be PB for youth services where school children, teachers and parents are engaged.[11]

As well as participating in the PB events themselves, there are other opportunities for citizen participation, including:[12]

- Priority setting
- Proposing projects

- Designing the PB process
- Engaging the community
- Running the PB event
- Participation in decision making in project scoring and prioritisation
- Evaluation
- Monitoring of projects
- Strategic planning

Factors which Influence Exclusion in PB

As the case studies demonstrate, PB has generated significant benefits but there are also hurdles to building and sustaining successful and inclusive participation. These include: [13]

- **Citizens feeling knowledgeable about the process and what is expected**

  Power dynamics - both hidden and overt – can exist between public officials and citizens, and there are often very different levels of knowledge about the nature of public services. Compared to citizens, public sector workers typically have much more detailed information and data about the service, and a greater understanding of the historical context. While there is increasing public access to relevant data, this is not universally true nor will this information ever be universally accessed. It is therefore essential that information is made freely available by government about the PB process and the projects to be funded. [14]

- **Commitment to maintaining the citizen/state relationship**

  PB demands careful fostering of citizen engagement, cohesion and trust, which - unsurprisingly - is often hard to maintain. It is essential that everyone involved, including public sector workers and citizens, see the real benefits from their efforts. [15] This involves communication with citizens that impacts evidence of the PB process and the benefits gained.

- **Political changes impacting priorities and strategies**

  Even the strongest PB programmes are not immune from political changes. For instance, in Porto Alegre a change in political leadership in 2005 resulted in the proportion of the budget allocated to PB reducing from 21 per cent to 1 per cent. [16]

- **Ensuring representation and engagement across societies**

  It is essential that individuals and communities are represented and heard but this is difficult to ensure, and there is also a risk that certain groups can dominate the PB process. The section below details the measures which can be taken to foster inclusion with certain groups, and the measures that can be taken, such as by professional facilitation of events, to ensure that all voices are heard. It can also be difficult to convince certain people that politicians are serious about listening to their views. [17] As noted below, it is imperative that government staff, leaders and political appointees are trained on the PB process, understand what it entails, are briefed on progress, and act as its champion and advocates.

PB is underway in almost every continent across the globe. From these different PB programmes, certain groups and sections of the population are often excluded or underrepresented. This includes indigenous communities[18], ethnic minorities[19], and those with disabilities[20]. There are other groups who are either over- or under-represented, depending on the location of the PB programme, including retired and younger people.

Measures Employed in PB Processes to Foster Greater Inclusion

This section examines a selection of PB programmes to outline the groups excluded and the methods and tactics deployed to help engage them. Table 2 below summarises the approaches used to foster engagement at different stages of the PB process. It is worth noting that although there is much information about different tools and techniques to foster inclusion, few studies quantify the actual impacts of these tools on engaging different groups. This means there is not robust evidence base to clearly say which intervention or set of interventions should be used to effectively engage with specific groups in the community. It is clearly an area that requires further research.

Table 2: Summary of Approaches used to Foster Engagement in PB process

Stage of the PB process	Tool or intervention
Designing process	- In-person meetings, with free/subsidised transport and/or childcare, with skilled facilitation - Online debates - Face to face engagement with residents in the community, such as in coffee shops or schools
Setting priorities	- Online debates - In-person meetings, with free/subsidised transport and/or childcare, with skilled facilitation - Face to face engagement with residents in the community, such as in coffee shops or schools
Discussing projects	- Online debates - In-person meetings, with free/subsidised transport and/or childcare, and skilled facilitation - Face to face engagement with residents in the community, such as in coffee shops or schools - Events in the community
Voting	- Online voting - Free phoneline - Bus with computer terminals that visits communities with limited IT or internet access - Text message voting
Communication to promote PB, the events and to disseminate results	- Social media - Email - Local media - Leaflets - Posters - Face to face engagement with residents in the community

Each of these interventions are now discussed in greater depth.

- ## Allocate resources to support participation, such as transport or childcare

Engaging socially excluded groups requires dedicated time and resources to lower the barriers for participation, which can include differing levels of self-confidence, education and income. Innovative means of engagement will be needed throughout the process, with dedicated support to cover the basics such as transport or childcare. [21]

- ## Inclusion of digital technologies

Traditionally, PB has favoured direct communication between residents and public officials over Information Communication Technology (ICT), for several reasons, including the perception that these technologies can perpetuate a distance between citizens and 'cold and technocratic' government. [22] However, as digital technologies evolve, there is a growing list of examples where ICT, such as computerised campaigns, mass public information systems, electronic debates, and active learning, are helping foster greater inclusion.[23] For example, in Modena and Parma in Italy, ICT was used to help include those who were unable to attend meetings such as commuters, families residing far from the meeting location, or those with restricted mobility. The live streaming of the meeting allowed pauses in the discussion for contributions and suggestions into the ongoing PB discussion. [24]

- ## Digital PB

In Belo Horizonte, Brazil, PB has been used since 1993 with various innovations made in the design of the process. In the early years, the intention of ICT was mainly to engage the upper-middle class, with other means of direct communication used to engage with a broader demographic, including the use of leaflets, caricatures and cartoons, street broadcasts, posters, and announcements on local radio. However, this began to change in 2006 with the so-called "Digital PB", with the possibility of choosing investments for the city budget via the internet. To help implement this process, a bus travelled the city, particularly to the poorer areas where the digital divide is greater, to enable people to vote. As well as voting, people could also send messages to the PB team, and take virtual site visits to the building sites. In addition, a free telephone line was made available for voting to reach the population without access to the internet. The real-time PB meetings and digital PB processed were operated as complementary processes. The voting lasted 42 days and in this time over 172,000 voters cast a total of over half a million votes. In the same year, over 38,000 people took part in live PB sessions.[25]

Digital PB has also been used in Lisbon since 1998.[26] It is also worth noting that Lisbon was the first European city to use PB across the whole municipality rather than individual parishes, as it was considered the only viable way to engage with a large "floating population" in the metropolitan area. This meant that from the outset Lisbon aimed to engage everyone who studied and worked in the city, not just residents. PB in Lisbon has been adapted over the years. In 2010, for instance, new features were introduced to help engage those without internet access such as the abandonment of discussing proposals by electronic means only, and the reinstatement of meetings in various parts of the city where citizens could submit proposals in person, with geo-referencing used to help locate them in the city. These ideas were then ranked afterwards by electronic voting. Like Brazil, to help engage those unfamiliar with IT or who do not have internet access, Lisbon also introduced a "special PR Bus", equipped with computers and internet access. In addition, meetings were held with specific groups, such as the elderly and pupils from the local schools. Although the profiles of those involved in the debate and electronic voting remained similar (consisting of mainly

residents, aged 26 – 45, with a slight predominance of females, and higher levels of education), voting numbers did increase, rising from over 1,100 in 2008 to over 4,700 in 2009, and reaching over 11,500 in 2010.[27]

- ### IT support and help to purchase computers

This is an area on which there is very little evidence in Scotland.[28] In Spain, PB has been used since 2001 and is now in more than 50 different cities across the country, with total participation between 1 and 3% of the population. This may sound small, but is a figure comparable to that of Porto Alegre in Brazil, the city often seen as the international benchmark for PB. In Spain, male adults and educated people are more likely to participate than women and the young, with a strong interest in politics also seen as a motivating factor for those involved. Techniques to engage include the use of telephone messages and the internet, which helped increase participation amongst young people. [29] Whilst in Jun, a municipality of Granada, Spain, all local families have been given IT support and help with purchasing computers for family use, and internet access in public areas to enable web-based voting for citizens on the Annual Budget. [30] The ICT programme was aimed at the whole population, rather than targeting specific groups, and has reached 80% of the population.[31]

It is worth noting that when technology is introduced to foster inclusion, that it does not unintentionally alienate those groups who do not have access, or who are not at ease with it. [32] It is also important that offline interactions are not ignored or compromised by using online techniques. In one example, Vignola in Italy, the introduction of online voting resulted in disincentives for participating in actual meetings.[33] In addition, as noted at the outset, people engage to reap civic awards. It is therefore imperative that online engagement does not strip this away and stop people participating in the longer term.[34] In-person interactions should therefore always complement digital technologies.

- ### Direct communication, particularly with disadvantaged groups

A comprehensive study of PB programmes across 13 cities in the US found that person-to-person outreach was associated with greater participation of traditionally marginalised communities. The engagement techniques included talking to residents on the street, in coffee shops, in laundromats, fast food restaurants, and in schools, and other areas where people congregated. In the areas where this happened there were higher rates of participation from low-income groups and BME groups. Another factor which fostered greater inclusion was local government partnering with community-based organisations, with the data showing that the more partnerships underway, the larger the proportion of residents from disenfranchised communities participating. Data was collected to analyse how the different interventions were in successfully engaging marginalised groups by assessing how representative PB voters were of their local communities. It revealed that black residents, women, and people from lower income households were over-represented, by that we mean that they were very effectively engaged. Whilst those with less formal education and Hispanics were underrepresented, and less effectively engaged in voting.[35]

- ### Creative community events

Officials need to think creatively about ways to bring communities together, and to ensure that their involvement is tangible and visible. As an example, Cornwall Council engaged three villages in a PB exercise. The council had previously struggled to engage with these communities so they held fun events for families, with events promoted to children during school to encourage them to bring their

parents and other local family members.[36] These events were designed to be fun and welcoming, but formed a core part of the PB process and helped the council engage with groups they had previously struggled to involve.

- **Schedule meetings at convenient times**

The scheduling of meetings is important to reduce barriers to participation. As low income people tend to be more reliant on public transport, assemblies should be held near public transport routes, or ideally where everyone could walk. Meetings should also be held at diverse times as youth less likely to attend in the morning, and seniors are likely to attend during the evening. Free childcare can also help boost participation.[37]

- **Ensure citizens are active in sessions**

Attending a PB meeting is only the first step in the engagement process. Ensuring the citizens are active in the sessions and deliberations is essential for the PB mechanism to be effective. Indeed, it is argued that some form of public deliberation must be included in the process otherwise it does not constitute PB.[38] Spaces for deliberation should be created in different moments of the process, with proposal preparation, regulation, criteria, assessment, and initial diagnosis, going through a higher degree of deliberation.[39]

Digital technologies can be useful here. For instance, in certain municipalities in Sweden, technology has been used to effectively increase the number of young people in the voting phase. Whilst in other areas, technology is concerned with fostering physical encounters between citizens.[40]

Skilled facilitators should attend all session to ensure that the voices of the marginalised residents are not crowded out by more confident or experienced attendees. In New York City, it was recognised the presence of skilled facilitators increased the overall effectiveness of the PB meetings.[41]

- **Adapting the programme to engage with under-represented groups**

In São Paulo, the PB programme introduced a specific alteration to the process to ensure the representation of certain groups in the deliberation stages. Termed "socially vulnerable segments" by government officials, the programme aimed to engage with nine historically disadvantaged groups: Afro-Brazilians, senior citizens, children and adolescents, youth, the GLBT community, women, indigenous groups, the homeless and people with disabilities, by involving them in the PB differently.[42] Rather than requiring twenty votes to become a PB delegate or councillor, they only needed between one and five votes, based on the degree of vulnerability associated with the given segment. For instance, members of the indigenous population, the homeless or people with disabilities only required one vote to be elected, whilst members of other groups required five. The segment representatives helped identify discrimination within the city, redressed exclusion of marginalised groups, and "helped to change the nature of the conversation by bringing new issues to the table". For the PB segment representatives, they were initially attracted by the possibility of solving problems affecting their communities, but the longer they stayed in the process by becoming PB delegates and councillors, the more they welcomed the chance to interact with their peers and public officials with respect and recognition.[43]

Conclusion

In addition to reviewing the evidence on inclusion across PB programmes globally, and particularly the various measures to cultivate greater inclusion, this review has identified two cases, São Paulo and New York City, that appear to have been particularly successful. These have been selected because they have been particularly innovative in adapting the PB model to achieve success. In São Paulo, the involvement of socially excluded groups increased from 29% of the overall delegates to almost 45%. Whilst in New York, the interventions used, including online voting, led to 10% of districts voting, much higher than the accepted success rate of 3%. We now move to provide an in-depth analysis of these two cases to draw lessons from their relative success.

Case Study Analysis on Inclusion in Participatory Budgeting

The above systematic literature review helped identify two cases of PB processes that have been relatively successful at ensuring inclusive citizen participation, New York City and São Paulo. Moreover, they represent two different approaches to participatory budgeting, which make for a useful comparison. PB in New York City takes the form of community grant-making, which is also the approach currently adopted in Edinburgh. Important lessons can therefore be gleaned from this case if Edinburgh City Council chooses to continue with the grant-making approach to PB. In contrast, PB in São Paulo has been mainstreamed. Given the increasing emphasis currently being placed on PB in Scotland, mainstreaming PB processes may well be something Edinburgh City Council will want to consider.[44] Important lessons can therefore be learnt from the São Paulo case. Below we report the background, PB format, citizen participant selection methods, and the specific methods adopted to increase inclusion for each case.

Case study 1: New York City Participatory Budgeting

Background

New York City (NYC) is the most populist city in the US, with a population of over 8.5 million.[45] As a historical and current gateway for immigration, NYC is the most diverse in terms of language and culture in the world. However, ethnic minorities are more likely to have lower incomes, struggle with language, have barriers to vote in elections, and live in specific communities and geographic areas of the city.[46] The city of NYC is made up of 51 districts, within five boroughs, which each represent around three to 20 neighbourhoods. The vast majority of elected district council members are from the Democrat Party. The PB initiative was brought to NYC in 2011 with a pilot study, and it has continued for five cycles to 2015, so far. The amount of money allocated was 1% of the capital discretionary fund, representing a very small fraction of the overall budget.[47] The PB initiative has grown year-on-year, and in the 2014 election became part of candidates' pledges for their district.[48]

Format

Council Members choose to join the PB initiative, giving at least $1 million from their discretionary budget. Each participating Council Member guarantees funding for the projects that receive the most votes, until their PB funding runs out. But there are restrictions on the type of project that is eligible: each project had to cost a minimum of 35,000 dollars, have a 'useful life' of at least five years, and involve (re)construction of a physical public asset.[49]

A steering group, made up of individuals, community organisations, and Council Members, helps guide the process and supports PB across the city. The Steering Committee proposes rules for the process each year, which are formalised into a Rule Book adopted by the City Council.

The PB process starts with an ideas collection phase in the form of Neighbourhood Assemblies (NA), of which 35% are targeted at particular demographics. For example, they are held at a particular community space, or invited by a community advocacy group. Residents attended assemblies across each district and ideas are submitted through the website as well as at the 'assemblies'. NAs used simple techniques like brainstorming ideas using paper and pens.

The second phase is the allocation of Budget Delegates (BDs). BDs were recruited at NAs and through social media and e-mail invites. Each BD then attended at least two meetings where training and guidance were given by council officials. BDs are supported through training, resources, and research, but the role is voluntary (and unpaid). The main role of the BD is the collection of ideas and, in turn, the filtering of these into 'eligible' and 'ineligible'. Finally, they encourage and publicise the vote.

The third and final phase of the NYC PB is the voting phase. Residents vote for as many as five project proposals in their district ballot. Although the reason for this is not explicitly revealed, other PB processes such as Durham County Council use this method as a means of eradicating biases involved with voters only voting for the project they are part of, or already know of. Taking the advantage away from proposals that are attached to community groups with large memberships. Table 3. Below provides an overview of each PB cycle in NYC and the numbers of districts NA participants, BDs and voters.

Table 3. Participation Levels in NYCPB

PB Cycle	Districts Involved	Neighbourhood Assembly participants	Budget Delegates	Voters
2011/12	4 districts	2,138	251	5,985
2012/13	8 districts	1,546	274	13,035
2013/14	10 districts	1661	333	16,642
2014/15	24 districts	6,127	606	51,362
2015/16	28 districts			67,000

Selection Methods

Recruitment was dependent on district but importantly, methods for collecting ideas were part of this process, meaning ideas were collected prior to the NA events. Over 80% of the districts used online methods for collecting ideas and the community organisation collected ideas at other meetings beyond the official NA events.

Across all districts online participation was very low. A scheme that allows for remote voting was piloted in eleven districts. However, people who heard about PB online, via social media or from a Council Member tended to be white, higher income, US-born, and English-speaking. Similarly, those who heard about PB from a Council Member tended to be high earners (68%), born in the host country (80%) and white (57%).

On those occasions where particular groups were targeted for participation, there was a clear increase in that particular group. This was limited by, but also shown to be successful by, the community organisation being limited to targeting only one group in each district.[50] [51]

Mechanics of Inclusion

A key to the success in this area was the autonomy of the districts. For example, Korean and Bangla-speaking outreach workers were hired in specific districts, one district used a rap video, and others had language- or age-specific meetings, and community organisations made things visible in the community using countdown clocks. The types of projects that won in each individualised district also reflect the micro-level nature of each budget.[52]

By the 2015-2016 Participatory Budgeting cycle, ballots were available in nine languages other than English—Spanish, Chinese, French Creole, Korean, Russian, Polish, Greek, Yiddish, Bengali—based on local demographics in participating districts. At the assemblies the most successful districts provided childcare, as well as refreshments.

Most assembly meetings were partnered with, and co-organised by, community organisations (civil society groups). Recruitment of these assemblies was an important element as the following stages, leading to the final vote on projects, came from these groups and their social networks. A third of all assemblies were targeted at specific communities related to language, age, or socio-economic position.[53] This was achieved by location of the assembly event (within walking distance of lower-income family housing, or at churches or schools), and through using the networks of specific community organisations who had a track record of engaging marginalised groups (for example CVH, an advocacy group who work with women and lower-income families) who personally invited specific groups to participate.

Every district featured digital voting stations at poll sites as well as pop-up mobile voting sites on commercial strips, in community centres and building lobbies using mobile electronic devices provided by Microsoft and Google.[54]

The barriers to voting were low. The sole identification requirement is proof of residency in the district, removing traditional obstacles to full civic participation such as youth, income status, English-language proficiency and citizenship status.[55]

Successes of Inclusive Measures Adopted

Each district had around 1,500 to 3,000 voters (i.e. small micro-locations "where citizens can use speech and reason to create new forms of engagement[56]). This represented about 10% of most districts. Although the accepted rate for success is usually around 3%,[57] for example in the much championed Porto Alegre, these figures tell us nothing about inclusivity. However, 21% of budget delegates and 19% of PB voters were born outside of the United States.

The mobilisation of community groups to engage their communities was a success of this initiative. In many ways, NYC were fortunate in that CVH and the PB project came to them via some Council Members; however, the way the relationship was maintained was through giving the group genuine influence in the evolution of the process. After the first cycle the group produced a report[58] outlining recommendations which the council took on-board. In addition, other community organisations were encouraged by the political will[59] to include the marginalised groups for which they advocated.

People who heard about PB from a community group, via door knocking, or from a school tended to be non-white, lower income, more likely foreign-born and non-English speaking. Of these, 30% were non-English speaking, 75% were non-white and 50% had a 'barrier to voting' in regular elections, compared to 23% of PB voters overall.

Of those who heard about PB through a community organisation, 71% of ethnic minority participants were approached by someone 'knocking on their door' (compared to 57% of PB voters overall) and 56% were low-income earners (compared to 44% overall).[60]

Measurement of Participation

Over 22,000 surveys were collected, which were distributed with the voting materials (either post or online), 264 surveys were completed by council staff, 164 of 179 assemblies were covered by the research team and reported on, 22 of 24 districts reported on the delegate phase, and 56 delegate committee members wrote reports for researchers. Furthermore, the council held in-depth interviews with community organisation members who carried the initial outreach in the communities.

Case study 2: São Paulo Participatory Budgeting

Background

São Paulo is the biggest urban centre in Brazil and in the fifth largest in the world with a population of almost 20 million, characterised by social and economic polarisation.[61] The gap between the relatively few highly skilled, well-paid jobs in the city and the majority of low skilled, low-paid grew significantly during a process of the Brazilian economy opening up to compete in global markets, using São Paulo as an economic centre. From 2001 to 2004, São Paulo ran a PB at the same time as a city-wide decentralisation process.[62] An office was created in local government to oversee the PB. Unlike in other Brazilian models, where large parts of the municipal budget was allocated, 5% of the budget in São Paulo in 2001 (and up to 8% in 2004) was made available to the PB process. The *Democracia Socaialista*, the section of the Workers Party who started the PB in Porto Alegre (one of the most championed PB exercises) were in a majority, but in São Paulo, they were in a minority.[63] Furthermore, as the PB initiative was on the periphery of policy-making in the government, it was eventually disbanded as it was said to have too many overlapping areas of concern with other government offices focused on citizen engagement.

Format

The PB process starts with Neighbourhood Assemblies (NA), which last around four months. During this period 'delegates' are also nominated (1 delegate per 20 participants). From the delegates, councillors are elected. It was this council who made any final decisions. There were three types of assemble: thematic, territorial, and segment. Table 4 below provides an overview of each PB cycle in São Paulo and the numbers of participants, delegates, councillors, and assemblies.

Table 4: Participation Levels in SPPB[64] [65]

Year	No. of participants	No. of delegates	No. of councillors	No. of Assemblies
2001	34,000	1,076	112	191
2002	55,000	1,134	139	386
2003	80,000	2,131	216	450
2004	82,000	2,219	241	653

The *Thematic* cycle starts with assemblies in nine regions of the city. The municipal administration present their programs to participants, the assembly defines the priorities for the next year and elects delegates to policy-areas. These delegates (referred to as the link between community and the state[66]) set spending priorities and elect councillors to the PB council, which oversees the administration's implementation of the decisions made during the budgeting process and negotiates changes proposed by civic authority officials. The *Territorial* Cycle follows a similar process but with a few differences. Preparatory assemblies occur in 270 small geographic locations that cover the entire city, and the deliberative assemblies are organised according to 96 administrative districts. Residents and delegates present and debate proposals for public works and services for their regions in the areas of education and health, and in a third area that is decided by the assemblies themselves.[67]

The delegates were responsible for encouraging popular participation in the region, meetings with the community, discussing problems and solutions, monitoring the execution of works and services, monitoring the municipal administration and bringing information to the population.[68] Although it is noteworthy that in São Paulo, members of civic organisations were disproportionately represented as delegates (70% more likely to be delegate if a member of an association, such as residents' association).[69]

This process evolved throughout the four cycles to include – among other changes to the types of policies included, the general scope, and the modalities of participation through which ordinary citizens could get involved – was the introduction of 'socially vulnerable segments.'[70]

Selection Methods

In addition to *thematic* and *territorial* representatives, 'segments' were introduced in 2003 as an affirmative action mechanism to include groups of the population who had historically been marginalised. There were nine groups targeted: Afro-Brazilians, older people, young people, children, the LGBT community, women, indigenous groups, people with disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness. These groups could become a delegate or councillor with either one or five votes (dependent on the level of vulnerability) unlike *thematic* or *territorial* delegates who required 20. People were able to 'select' their segment if they covered more than one. Like other roles in the PB process, the delegate and councillor roles were voluntary, but relied on self-selection and were recruited through targeted pamphlets and publicity materials.[71] Those segment groups who needed only one vote could be elected by simply nominating themselves.

Mechanics of Inclusion

Explicitly conceived as a "mechanism of social inclusion" segment delegates had a unique responsibility that was more about the macro politics, unlike the micro politics of the policy area of the *thematic* delegates, and the geographical area of the *territorial* delegates. These segments were not selected on a quota basis; rather they were recruited to stand for election through other community organisers who wanted to take advantage of their privileged position. The delegates representing segments were expected to be active in understanding the issues and were trained in order to do this: *"Delegates in this category were expected to know and speak up for the issues associated with their segments; know and debate public policies for those segments; advocate for public works and services to address their needs; participate in their segments' municipal assemblies; interact with other institutions related to their segments; and participate in training activities designed specifically for them."*[72]

Successes of Inclusive Measures Adopted

The levels of participation for the 'segment' groups increased from 2003 to 2004, along with an overall increase in levels of participation generally (see Table 4). When first introduced as a mechanism, the segment groups represented 29% of the overall delegates, increasing to almost 45% in 2004 (see Table 5). Many delegates from the segments were not part of organised groups, and were recruited through pamphlets and publicity (see above). Although we cannot say for sure what made segment representatives take on these leadership roles within PB, we have an indication of why they did it. Segment councillors and delegates when interviewed talked of a 'civic duty' and 'compensating' for marginalised groups.[73] The PB initiative was also successful in providing opportunities for organisations who work with lower income groups to acquire a voice in public policy.[74]

Table 5: Segment Delegates in SPPB[75] [76]

Segment	No. of delegates 2003	No. Of delegates 2004
Women	174	275
Afro-Brazillians	76	99
Homeless Population	30	53
Youth	108	253
Indigenous population	11	40
People with disabilities	57	58
Senior Citizens	132	200
LGBT	32	12
Total	620	990
Segment delegates as % of total delegates	29% (620/2,131)	44.6% (990/2,219)

Measurement of Participation

This was in part completed by academics with extensive expertise about participatory mechanisms in Brazil, and included 30 interviews with PB representatives, PB staffers and key informants. Fieldwork also involved participant observation of multiple PB assemblies, seminars and meetings.[77] Also, the government asked all participants to complete demographic questionnaires (although the completion rates for this survey are not known to us).

Lessons and Recommendations for Enhancing Inclusion in Participatory Budgeting in Edinburgh

As this paper shows, there are a broad range of PB approaches and techniques to foster inclusion, and as has been noted, "there is no standardized set of "best practices" that governments are adopting, but there are a broader set of principles that are adapted by local governments to meet local circumstances".[78] A diversity of measures are required. Moreover, the measures selected should be chosen for what is best for each area and its specific context to ensure the measures are 'fit for purpose.'

To foster inclusion, Edinburgh City Council could consider the following recommendations, derived from the broader literature review and case study analysis, and grouped around the CLEAR framework, an acronym which denotes the key factors which foster greater participation:[79]

- **C**an do – that is, have the resources and knowledge to participate;
- **L**ike to – that is, have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation;
- **E**nabled to – that is, are provided with the opportunity for participation;
- **A**sked to – that is, are mobilised by official bodies or voluntary groups;
- **R**esponded to – that is, see evidence that their views have been considered

Can: they have the resources and knowledge to participate

- Provide practical support, such as training, transportation or child care, to enable participation.

> *In São Paulo citizens were educated and trained to understand the segments they were representing. NYC included training in several languages, as well as making it easier for those of lower-income or education to take part, by mobilising local community organisations to target groups of people on-board and enabled from the start of the process. The council provided childcare, travel, and food for participants, as well as translators. They also took into consideration travel and walking distance for lower-income citizens.*

- Keep the event and decision making process as straightforward as possible, such as reducing the levels of bureaucracy, so that people can easily take part, and are not dissuaded from getting involved.
- Introduce deliberative features into the PB processes to enable citizens to set the agenda for PB spending priorities collectively and also enable citizens to become more informed about the various applications under consideration prior to voting. The deliberative quality of the PB process should then also be a key element of the evaluation. [80] [81]

> *Neighbourhood Assemblies were integral to the success of both New York City and São Paulo. Not only did they allow access to groups through their location and recruitment, they offered a deliberative environment where ordinary citizens were involved in discussion with officials, fellow citizens and members of community groups, in the discussion of needs and requirements. Assemblies offer an opportunity for inclusion across socio-economic (NYC) and representational (SP) lines (through institutional design), and offer a deliberative environment for citizens, which can help citizens understand the political process, and help develop a shared understanding of shared issues, taking a position that is for the sake of the municipality and prioritising their proposals accordingly. The mobilisation of community groups is key to this.*

Like to: people feel attached to their community and the process is made enjoyable

- Engaging people in the community; in cafes, schools, youth clubs, and holding specific events, such as fetes or BBQs. These events should act to both promote the PB process and form part of it.[82]
- Communicating the success of previous projects and the impact of PB to highlight to citizens that the work may not have happened without their involvement so they can clearly see the value of their input.

> *The delegates in São Paulo work alongside public officials, giving a feeling of instant feedback. This was an issue in New York City; in the second cycle people were less likely to be involved if they had in the first cycle as many projects that had won votes had not yet begun.*

- Adoption of a variety of facilitation techniques, as different cultures like to participate in different ways.
- Involve citizens in the governance of PB, assigning them key roles in the process

> *People felt part of it because they are given roles from the start, including the governance. For example, in NYC ordinary citizens are enrolled to write the 'rule book' for each cycle, and groups 'that are usually left out' are encouraged and favoured for leading roles within the initiative through the mobilisation of community groups, as those who invited participation.*

Enabled to: opportunities to participate

- Scheduling meetings at diverse times and holding meetings in accessible venues.
- Streaming meetings, including the capability to contribute to live discussions.

Asked to: mobilised by community and voluntary groups

- Communications must be easy to understand for the residents. There should be clear communication on the PB process, progress, and the impacts so that participants can see the tangible outcomes of their involvement.
- A blend of transparent, mass and targeted communications, both on and offline. As the evidence shows, residents will only participate "if they are invited. And then invited again, and again." [83] In particular personalised invitations should be used where possible.

> *Traditional channels of communication that come from the civic authority are the best way to reach the 'usual suspects' but don't expect to reach groups who have not participated in the past with these methods. In both case studies the hardest to reach groups were engaged only when targeted specifically, and through community organisations' social networks.*

- Partnering with community groups as a way of fostering outreach. Although there may be opposition from some groups already receiving public funding through other avenues.[84]

> *The PB in both São Paulo and New York was led by the civic authority, but relied on the mobilisation of community groups and associations. It is important not only to ask people to participate, but for them to be asked by the right people, and to ask them in the right way. In New York, this meant community organisations and civil servants getting their communities involved, knocking on doors, making phone calls and creating public displays to encourage specific groups of people to vote. The São Paulo 'segments' success indicates that there is value associated with focusing on social groups and movements, instead of individuals or territories. In other words, there is potential to build community and citizenship around identity politics in moments of citizen participation in urban contexts.*

- Use purposive or stratified selection methods to make sure minority groups are represented in the process. Here lessons can be gleaned from the way mini-publics engage citizens to overcome inequalities.[85] It does appear possible to successfully incorporate features of the mini-public process within participatory budgeting.[86]

> *People in São Paulo represented a particular social group (segment), or geographic area, they were not simply representing an entire city or even suburb. People in NYC had assemblies and voted in districts and projects were very specific to geographic area and the needs of that area.*

Responded to: they can see their views being listened to and their input is used

- Ensuring skilled facilitators are at all deliberations to ensure all voices are heard.
- Utilising online technologies to assist voting, such as by text message, online or by phone.

Beyond Citizen Engagement

The focus of this paper has been on how to engage hard-to-reach groups in PB processes. There are several other elements which Edinburgh City Council could also consider.

- **Engaging Staff**

  PB will involve a different way of working for many within the city council, such as by the potential for citizens to set the work agenda of staff. This means that alongside engaging the wider community, there is also a need to ensure that the internal workings of government adapt to enable PB to have the adequate administrative, managerial and cultural support. This shift in working will require a change management programme of communication and training of those involved. This could include communicating with all staff to demonstrate the benefits and positive impacts of the PB programme. High level political support is therefore essential. Consequently, councillors must be trained to ensure they understand the PB process and can act as its champion and advocate. It is also important for citizens to see that their voice matters and they are listened to and heard by senior officials.

- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Research**

  Effective monitoring and evaluation needs to be in place to ensure the benefits of the process are tracked, with progress fed back to residents and shared within government. It must therefore become more external facing. This data will also help ensure improvements can be made in real time. It is also important that data of those involved in the PB process is segmented to enable the identification of the socio-demographic groups not engaged at different times. To understand which groups are excluded and the impacts of PB, data collection needs to be built into the process. This could involve recording the number of participants engaged at each stage, and collecting details on their socio-demographic backgrounds. This could help produce a baseline to help track how engagement changes over time. In addition, this data could help to analyse whether certain interventions – such as the use of community events, or the use of online voting – impacts on the socioeconomic groups taking part. A range of the different measures suggested in this report should therefore be trialled in PB processes and further research commissioned on their effect on the inclusivity of political participation.

  With plans to expand PB to encompass 1% of local government budgets across Scotland, Edinburgh City Council could learn a lot from other areas. Standardised data collection should be built in across Scottish PB programmes from the outset, including recording data on the numbers and socio-demographics of attendees at different stages of the process, and tracking progress against the overarching objectives of the programmes. This data would help Edinburgh and other areas to learn about which tools and techniques help to foster inclusion in different settings, as well as learning about the effectiveness of different approaches to the PB process more broadly. As research has repeatedly indicated that levels of education are the most

significant indicator of political participation, with the more educated more likely to participate,[87] questions on this should be included in the Equalities Monitoring Form that participatory budgeting voters are asked to complete.

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