

Mapping policy diffusion using network analysis for French participatory budgeting

Gil Pradeau¹

¹University of Westminster

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As it is a work in progress, comments are welcome

When a democratic innovation such as participatory budgeting travelled from Brazil to Europe, many scholars pointed that some initial goals and features of this innovation had disappeared (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2016; Ganuza and Francés 2012; Porto de Oliveira 2017; Röcke 2014; Sintomer, Röcke, and Herzberg 2016). The Porto Alegre model was distinct from what European cities were trying to implement and a much smaller portion of capital expenditure was really discussed within European participatory budgeting. While participatory budgeting used to be one of the first step towards a much bigger discussion about local assets and source of incomes.

Since the last local elections in 2014 in France, a new increase of PB cases has emerged after Paris decision to start one in 2014. Paris was the second capital in Europe to adapt participatory budgeting after Lisbon (Alves and Allegretti 2012). Even if participatory budgeting is not compulsory by national law, many new cases went down the road of Paris, and the French capital city claims the biggest participatory budgeting experience in the world. There might be some concerns about what is now called by local actors participatory budgeting and how academic definitions might be challenged by current cases.

This research will focus on the different ways this participatory device travels in France. Before the last local elections in 2014, only 4 cases were active. In 2018 more than one hundred are being now implemented. This paper tries to shed light on existing differences between the various participatory budgeting waves in France and argues despite new formal rules, that the current wave doesn't build upon on previous experiences. Therefore, this paper shows a new trend in “selective listening” (Sintomer et al. 2008) or “cherry-picking” (Smith 2009) although PB appears to be a robust democratic innovation. Is participatory budgeting clearly resistant to attempts to select proposals that fit into the political agenda of city councils? Like Avritzer (2017), this paper could sustain the claim that French participatory budgeting cases show how “in many cases innovation can play the role of co-optation and disempowerment”. I will also argue it would premature to associate the current expansion to institutionalization.

1. Methods

Many works/authors have been studying how PB has been adapted within a specific country like Spain (Navarro Yáñez, 2004 ; Ganuza et Francès, 2012), Brazil (Spada, 2014) or more recently Estonia (Krenkova, 2017). Some studies focus on different patterns in place such as the diffusion due to a specific party and other look at social or economical variables. In looking at processes by which this policy transfer in France has been adopted, this paper analyses 61 active cases of PB in 2017 based on web mining (Google alerts) and found occurrences in a French newspaper database (Europresse).

Based on this selection, regulations and website functionalities (if online process) were analysed for 61 cases considered as active only if the collecting phase was happening in 2017. I will use Social network analysis based on Gephi software in order to apply these regulation will create exploratory socio-semantic networks that helps to detect models (strongly tied communities of cases) and trace their diffusion between 2015 and 2017. Another survey will analyze at a later stage the cases started in 2018 focusing on their procedures and also the kind of urban projects that could be elected through PB.

2. Participatory budgeting in theory

Leonardo Avritzer (2003, 2017) has described in his works based on Brazilian cases and other experiences in Latin America four essential characteristics: delegation of sovereignty by elected mayors to assemblies, combination of different participatory traditions, principle of self-regulation and inversion of priorities.

Yves Sintomer, Anja Röcke and Carsten Herzberg (p.20, 2016) used for their seminal work about cases in Europe five distinct criteria:

- (1) Discussion of financial/budgetary processes
- (2) The city level has to be involved
- (3) It has to be a repeated process over years
- (4) Public deliberation in specific meetings/forums
- (5) Some accountability on the works delivered

Essential differences exist between these definitions, Avritzer only taking into account processes where citizens could decide about the rules of the institution. The principle is self-regulation is far from being anecdotal and could be a key step for a negotiation between social movements and local authorities: without open platform for the organised civil society, any democratization effect on local authorities is being reduced.

In order to select many examples, this study hasn't used any of these criteria, because it targets all participatory processes that are self-labelled "participatory budgeting", following Porto de Oliveira's strategy (2017).

The procedural rules are decided by the French city councils and use the following steps:

1. Defining rules for public participation
2. Collecting proposals from citizens
3. Reviewing cost and feasibility for each proposal
4. Organising vote
5. Implementing winning proposals

3. Three waves of participatory budgeting in France

First cases of participatory budgeting were not created after the last local elections (2014) in France, when “in a determined context followers emerge who rally around the same path”, following the leadership of an innovator (Porto de Oliveira 2017).

The first wave appeared after World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, where personal networks were linked to the French Communist Party and a small NGO called “*Démocratiser Radicalement la Démocratie*.” These French networks were essential in order to translate documents and train people based on the principles seen in Porto Alegre. Local implementers’ speeches were as radical as in Porto Alegre, as has been documented by Nez and Talpin (2010). A dozen cases were active before 2008 in cities such as Saint-Denis, Pont-aux-Français, Monsang-sur-Orge. These cases were linked to cities where the Communist Party had been elected for decades. Nez and Talpin explain how those processes are framed in a way that prevents marginalised groups from any further political engagement affiliation, despite the very fact that these groups are the target groups in political discourse from the elected officials. Electoral support was not massively gained in a context where the Communist Party influence was fading away, due to change in demographics and a global ideological crisis after 1989.

The literature is not clear about how much money was spent through PB during the first wave. At the city level, its political impact was quite limited : Sintomer’s team only listed a dozen of cases. They pointed out similarities between these experiences and they seem to share the same framework they called “proximity democracy”.

Röcke (2014) explains that French PB were not the results of bottom-up initiatives and are very similar to “Neighbourhood councils” (p.70). These councils were compulsory for cities above 80 000 habitants and created by officials from City councils (officers or politicians) and they were merely consultative instruments, letting space for “selective listening” or cherry-picking.

Sintomer et al, (2016) describe other permanent features such as these PB were mainly neighbourhood focused (p.219) allowed funding for micro-local projects (p.97), offered limited independence for civil society (p. 57) and were constrained by poor deliberative quality. At the local level, these experiments were strategically used by politicians to revive their relationship with their constituency and Röcke (2014, p.72) described how the lack of clear regulations meant that “local politicians (whose power position is that of ‘local kings’) dominate the meetings in that they chair the discussions and resume their results.”

Most of these experiences ended before 2010, although Grigny near Lyon and Divion near Lille were still active between 2010 and 2014 until executives lost in local elections. Only Firminy (near Lyon) and Jarny (near Metz) were active after the 2014 elections and continue until now.

A second wave after 2005 aimed to diffuse participatory democracy to high schools led by the Poitou-Charente

region (Mazeaud, 2011, 2012). 10 millions of euros were dedicated to regional high schools and secondary institutions for specific training and every high school enabled the school community (teachers, students, cleaners,...) to decide how to spend 100 000 euros based on two public meetings. The regional council hired professionals for facilitation during the whole year. Röcke (2014) argues that “the organisers of the participatory school budget independently determine its rules, cherry-picking proposals from participants” (p.118).

From 2010 to 2015, other regions led similar experiments but on a smaller scale such as Nord-Pas-de-Calais (O’Miel et Mongy, 2014), Bourgogne and Paris region (Ile-de-France). Only a small portion of high schools were involved and the regional councils were not providing any support for deliberative events.

This wave in high-schools also disappeared after the 2015 regional elections, due to major political shifts.

During the 2014 political campaign, Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo, inspired by other cases like Lisbon and New York, decided to implement participatory budgeting after re-election. Many national newspapers broadly covered this pledge. During other campaigns elsewhere, local leaders from the Socialist Party decided to make identical pledges, when previously it was a policy only supported by the Green and the Communist Parties for municipal elections. When local coalitions had to merge their political manifesto between the first and second round of the election, participatory budgeting was pushed in cities such as Metz, Rennes and Grenoble.

In less than 4 years, there were in 2017 more than 4 millions people able to have a say about local budgets through participatory budgeting in 61 cases : beside city councils, PB also exists at the university level, in social housing, at different infra-national levels and a national climate strategy discussed as participatory budgeting.

The spread of PB has been realised in two clusters, one in Northern France and the other one in Île-de-France (Paris regional district). A third of these cases involve the already established consultative neighbourhood committees which play some formal role during the process. This means that most cases are not built upon former participatory processes. Nearly 50 new cases are about to start in 2018 and are not taken into account in this paper.

Every case starting after 2014 has happened in a territory that did not have PB during the 1st or 2nd wave. Paris had an early experiment between 2005-2009 in a specific district, but the link between the district experiment and the city-wide experience starting in 2014 is not clearly documented. The phase for collecting proposals is much broader than a decade ago, as the early experiment was only dedicated to local pavement infrastructure (“voirie”). If there is a link to former cases, that would be the only exception.

Because these cases are not related to previous waves, it could easily be imagined that they wouldn’t follow any path dependence. 10 years ago, Sintomer’s team was labelling french PB as typical of “proximity democracy”. If the lack of precise rules and the omnipresence of elected officials were prominent in the first generation of PB in France, most of these processes are now more formal and we might wonder whether “selective listening” or cherry-picking typical from that time are still occurring as budgets get bigger. For example, Parisians are voting for a have created the biggest PB in the world. Still, cases are only discussing less than 1% of local budgets when Paris, Jarny and Firminy are allocating less than 2% of overall budget through PB. If most cases were implemented in small-sized cities during the first wave, the current wave is much more diverse: 57% of cities above 100 000 inhabitants are organizing PB. Smaller cities have much less PB cases in proportion to the number of existing cities.

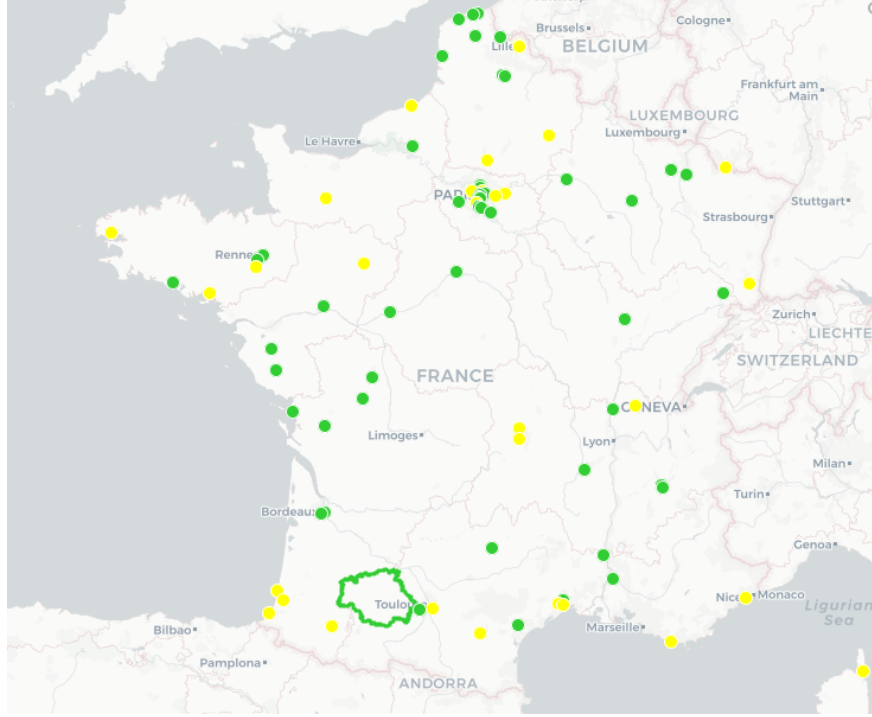


Figure 1: Active cases after 2014 are in green with two clusters (more than 4 cases) in northern France and around Paris. Cases started in 2018 are in yellow but are not considered in this paper.

Population	Number of cities	Number of PB	Percentage of cities with PB
+ 100 000	42	24	0.57
40 000 – 100 000	142	15	0.11
- 40 000	35742	63	0.0

Table 1: Presence of PB for three population size

Stronger interest amongst larger cities could be explained by the current amalgamation of cities in metropolitan areas, with a new law creating new metropolitan local authorities. With this new law, metropolitan central cities transfer part of their administrative duties and prerogatives to this new entity and mayors could feel a gap between citizens' expectations for the former powerful actors to the real governing authorities. Participatory budgeting might be a way to connect with citizens' needs even if the administrative capacity is under pressure because of amalgamation.

The question driving the rest of this paper is the extent to which this most recent wave of PB differs from former practices. Are they still related to proximity democracy featuring no formal rules and low deliberation? Could any regional pattern or pattern depending on the population size could be distinguished?

4. A third wave of participatory budgeting based on low deliberation and low transparency

Different features show that current cases in France do not share critical characteristics with proximity democracy. Most cases have published public regulations online, which means a greater procedural clarity.

When the first wave was only allowing district-level proposals, there is a clear change because 76% cases allow voting at the city-level while only 24% allow only district-level proposals.

Only 33% are related to institutional neighbourhood committees (compulsory by public law for cities above 80 000 inhabitants), which means most cases from the current wave don't rely on already established participatory institutions.

Only 31% involve compulsory face-to-face meetings, which also indicates digital tools are getting part of the mainstream procedural definition. But deliberation appears to be very weak, even for online PB. Only 13% cases allow citizens to comment on proposals, whether in order to express support or concerns. Considering the absence of online and offline debates, French cases are not deliberative. Many PBs are claiming at improving social capital ("préserver le lien social"), but it's not always clear how website design or the way public meetings are organized are really bonding between citizenry.

The first wave made little use of digital platforms. Nowadays, more and more digital tools are made available for city councils to use, especially for the second phase (collecting proposals) and for the voting phase. Most cases allow online submission (63.93%), whether through a specific platform or a simple form to email. Digital voting happens in 44% of cases and fraud is not controlled. Only 6 cases ask for ID check in order to prevent multiple votes.

If city councils provide a list valid projects for vote for 47.54%, most of cases do not publish online the individual reasons why a proposal could be rejected (13.11% only do). This paper will explain why this unsatisfactory justification is essential in a further section.

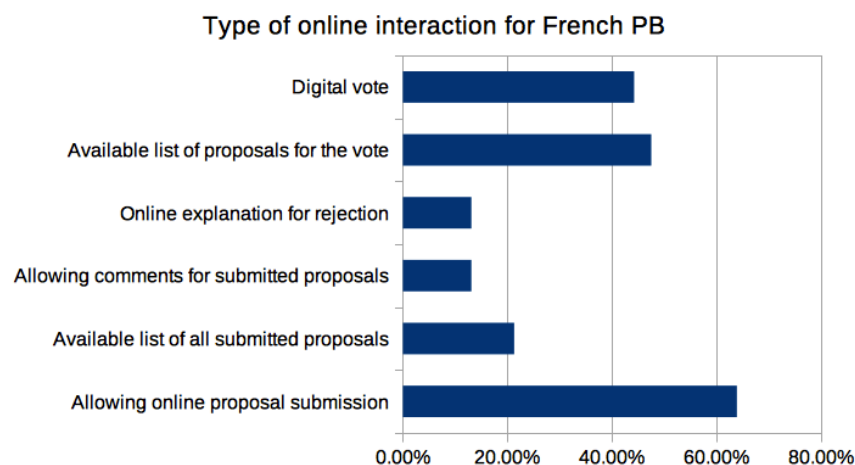


Figure 2: Type of online interaction for French PB cases in 2017

The lack of transparency goes beyond the technical review when few cities really explain motives of rejections. Website provide poor information about implementation rate. Only 6 cases with online single proposal monitoring. Face-to-face meetings are not organized in order to allow any citizen oversight. This is very different from monitoring mechanisms in Brazil based in « *controle social* » like for example the duty of *comissão de obras* in Porto Alegre to audit how works are delivered.

There is not a strategy to link participatory budgeting to a broader budgetary discussion. The proportion of overall budget discussed through PB is less than then 2% are really discussed through PB. Most cities are below 1% which fits into the narrative of marginal power given to participatory device, far from being an “exclusive conveyor belt” as Baiocchi and Ganuza described for Porto Alegre (2014: 36).

Even if current trend relies on online platforms, PB is far from being linked to some open government strategy: less than 10% of cases are implementing both PB and open data for finances. Indeed, only 5 cities have published their budget using open data standard, while 37% local authorities are at least providing some basic financial data. French PBs are not about raising awareness about finance constraints or making budgets more transparent.

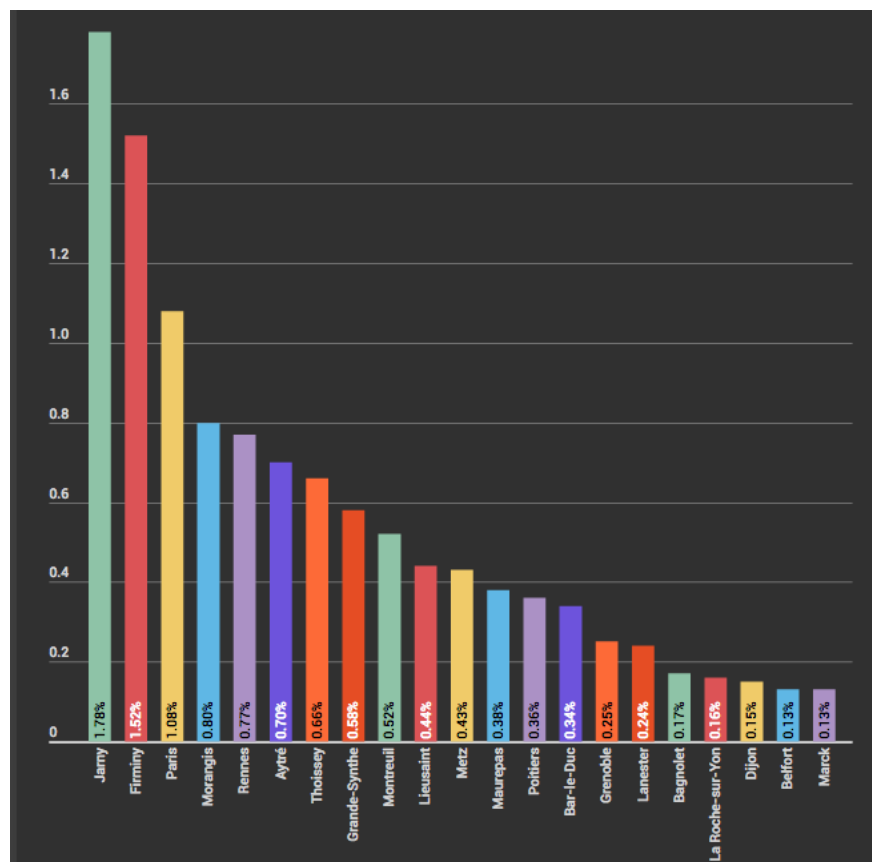


Figure 3: Percentage of the PB compared to the overall budget

5. Is Paris a catalyst for policy transfer?

The map could display 2 geographic clusters (4 cases in the same area) around Paris and around Lille (even if Lille was not implementing it before 2018).

This paper used social network analysis in order to classify procedural models of cases in 2017 in order to relate French cases to institutional design features:

- * compulsory face-to-face meetings
- * association to existing participatory institutions such as neighbourhood committee
- * online possibility to submit proposals
- * compulsory face-to-face meetings (assembly)
- * online listing all proposals before technical review
- * website listing all valid proposals after technical review
- * possibility to comment proposals online
- * online explanation for individual rejection
- * possibility to comment rejection motives online
- * official selection made elected officials
- * city-level (vote for city-wide proposals)
- * only online vote
- * mixing online and ballot paper
- * controlling identification of unique voter
- * vote for district-level proposals
- * ranking voting method
- * open data (open data for budget issues)
- * basic information for overall city budget
- * Online regular update about proposals implementation

Then I used Gephi (Force Atlas 2, 0.9.2) in order to create a bipartite graph linking cases to procedural features for active cases in 2015, in 2016 and in 2017.

In 2015, during the first year of Paris implementation, Paris is very near Montreuil, Metz and Grenoble. This means Paris share most of procedural features. Other former cases such as Jarny or Firminy are not located in the same region, because they function in different ways (most of the PB outputs are not publicized for example).

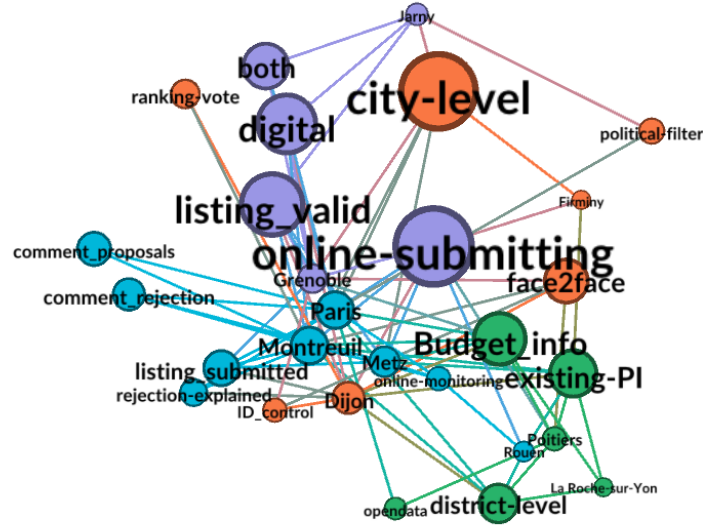


Figure 4: Graph based on cases in 2015 connected to their procedural features

The next following year, when about 20 new cases were added, none were located next to Paris, which means Paris was not inspirational for crafting regulations beside a lot of media attention.

Using Gephi detection of communities based on nodes and edges, 4 types of participatory budgeting could be distinguished (Modularity: 0,239):

- proximity democracy in green (i.e. Bar le Duc). This city organizes the vote only at district-level. There is a project shortlisting done by neighbourhood councils before the discretionary review.
- city-level process with face-to-face meeting in orange (i.e. Grande-Synthe or Couhé): online tools are very limited and assemblies are more likely to be organized because they happen in small cities.
- IT-mixed processes in purple (for example Avignon). They allow online submission and online vote but offer no avenue for accountability neither online or offline deliberation. Online information about the reasons for excluding projects from the voting phase are not provided.
- Stronger online PB in blue (for example Montreuil, Metz or Paris): more online deliberative PB with a greater level of transparency exists about the implementation of proposals and the motives for rejections.

The table 2 shows that, in contradiction to Estonia (Krenjova and Raudla, 2017), diffusion of PB is not directly linked to the first big local authority despite of lots of media attention, because other cities are implementing PB in different ways, even in the same region (Ile-de-France). Paris model of online deliberation is not specific to the region. If 6,38% of cases related to “online deliberation type” are happening in Ile-de-France (Paris region), the same region has developed two other models (Proximity and city-level).

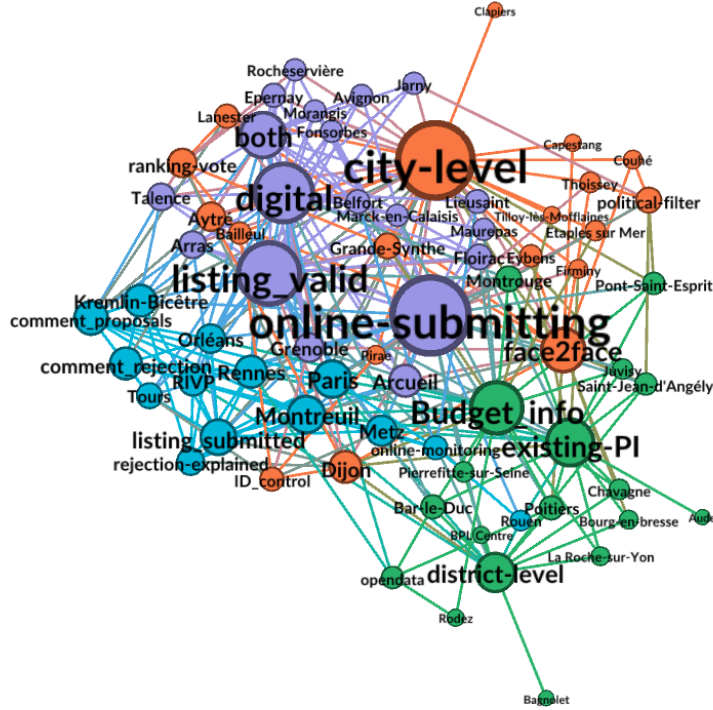


Figure 6: Graph based on cases in 2017

Paris only bases its technical review on the four most used criteria. Only 7 cities are using so few criteria (and Metz is the only city from the same similar procedural type). From the 33 cases where criteria were found in the published regulation, whereas 14 cities use between 5 and 10 criteria, 12 cities use more than 10 criteria in their technical review.

6. Potential for cherrypicking

French cases were often described as weak and leaving a space for “selective listening” (Sintomer et al, 2016). From the list of widely used criteria for the technical review, at least 2 criteria are problematic because they allow room for discretionary selection. Defining why a proposal doesn’t fit common good is nothing but a political stance. Calculating what is a “limited” operating budget is also very difficult.

Latest research about Spanish cases suggests that cherry-picking is happening in much participatory processes. Font, Smith, Galais & Alarcón (2017) show how a “challenging proposal” has a 40% chance of being rejected and only 26% of being fully implemented. A “non-challenging proposal” has a 42% chance of being fully implemented, and only 24% of being rejected.

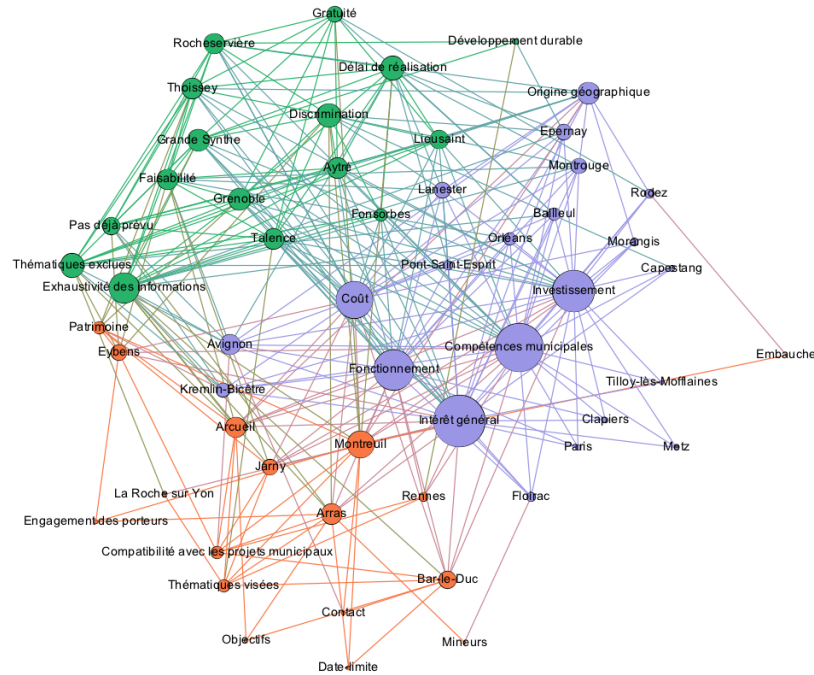


Figure 7: Bipartite graph showing cases and the common criteria used (the more frequent, the bigger)

Font et al (2017) manage to show how PB proposals are more likely in Spain to be implemented comparing to other participatory processes, because PB offers two advantages: a specific budget is dedicated before the implementation and the authors stress the potential impact of citizen monitoring : "the design of participatory budgeting often includes institutionalised citizen oversight: selected participants have a role in overseeing the implementation process by local government. Arguably officials are less likely to cherry-pick proposals when they are being watched." (p.16)

But their research only focus on proposals selected after the "end" of the participatory process, which is mainly the voting phase for participatory budgeting.

I'd like to suggest cherry-picking could also happen during negotiations between citizens and administrative staff when proposals are being reviewed in order to assess their feasibility based on objective criteria. There are at least 3 variations of cherry-picking in current French PBs: informal moulding, evaporation and lack of accountability.

In the next table is analysed how many proposals were submitted to PB, how many proposals were selected for the voting phase and how many proposals were selected through the voting procedure.

In some cities such as Paris, 81% of proposals are declared unfit for the vote. In other cities, such as Avignon,

only 50% are rejected before the vote. This shows how essential is to understand what is happening in the black box of discretionary review.

Further discussion could happen between city staff and citizens in order to make the proposal “tick the boxes” or there is no contact with citizens and only proposals fitting staff expectations are expected. One assumption could be that a process which sees 90% initial proposals being funded would give more satisfaction than a process where only 20% are validated during the discretionary review.

The discretionary review of proposals is based on objective criteria. Criteria are usually mentioned in regulations such as “the proposal should be completed within 2 years” or “the proposal should not discriminate against anyone” or “the proposal should not lead to large operational expenditure”. The appreciation of these objective criteria are not precise for each proposal and city staff could for example reject a proposal in a district because of one of the criteria while the same staff could approve a similar proposal in a different district. That’s a kind of informal moulding but formal moulding could also happen when city officials are allowed to veto proposals.

Proposals are evaporating through the process, but they could follow a different track: proposals could be arbitrarily merged by city officials, or they could be merged through deliberation in public forums. Merging two similar proposals could allow city staff to pick from each proposal which features to implement.

Then the third variation of cherry-picking in french cases is related to low level of accountability. Justification is very rarely provided by city councils when they reject proposals during the technical review. Only 13% of cases are explicitly describing the motives for proposal rejection. Paris examples shows that even when they do so, there is some credibility gap between justification for rejection and facts about other similar proposals that were allowed. There are not any case in France when citizens could appeal city decisions, which is different from other european countries (such as Portugal).

7. French cases challenge current definitions

This paper doesn’t present an optimistic conclusion of the potential of actual french PBs. Engaging citizens in a local debate about spendings could have walked on two legs, such as transparency and priority-setting. These early results should be deepened in order to understand how local authorities are currently framing public participation about spending. The current wave of PB doesn’t help to foster accountability and appears unlikely to increase citizenry trust. This participatory institution is not aiming at democratising bureaucracy and suggests some similarity with Avritzer’s claim about “*insulation of PB within the administration by the political system*” (p.73, 2017).

The new generation of participatory budgeting in France, which started after local elections in 2014, are less and less related to “proximity democracy” (Sintomer et al, 2008 ; Rocke, 2014). The processes are being more clear about their rules, even if there is still room for “selective listening” in most cases before the voting phase based on a great rate of rejection before voting phase and poor justification about why projects are rejected.

Few are using deliberative methods and most of them address small urban needs, while most of capital expenses are decided through traditional decision-making. Eventually, there is no clear link between PB and

open budgets, which means french PB in France are not aiming at politicizing budget debates. This would confirm the key argument of Avritzer (2017): “*most of the political system is closed to political innovation or accepts only token or symbolic aspects of important political innovations such as participatory budgeting*” (p.25).

While Rocke (p.21, 2014) could argue there are “master frames with larger geographic scope (macro)” shaping how participation is being organized in specific countries, this paper shows a contrasted picture within a country. Despite lots of media attention about Paris, diffusion of PB within France is not directly linked to the first big local authority: other French cities are implementing PB in different ways, even in the same region (Ile-de-France). But there provide never strong institutions managing a bit pot of money.

Former academic definitions can’t provide any strong link to current PB cases in France, which is challenging. Are such device really travelling from Brazil to Europe? This paper indicates how PB is not such a robust “democratic innovation” but merely window-dressing.

	1 st wave	3 rd wave
Creation	Top-down	Top-down
Power-sharing	Consultative	Decisive
Deliberation	Low	Low
Geographical scope of projects	Micro-level	City-level
Procedures	Weak clarity	Clear regulations
Cherry-picking	High	High
Justification	Weak	Weak

Table 3: Main differences between the first and the third wave in French PB

From these 61 cases, none really fit into main characteristics proposed by Avritzer or Sintomer.

Delegation of sovereignty (Avritzer)	Yes
Combination of different participatory traditions (Avritzer)	Yes
Principle of self-regulation (Avritzer)	No
Inversion of priorities (Avritzer)	Unknown
Discussion of financial/budgetary processes (Sintomer)	Yes
The city level has to be involved (Sintomer)	Yes
It has to be a repeated process over years (Sintomer)	Yes
Public deliberation in specific meetings/forums (Sintomer)	Weak
Some accountability on the works delivered (Sintomer)	Few

Table 4: Key criteria used to define PB are not fit for French current wave

8. Limits of institutionalization of democratic innovations

This paper has tried to show the limited scope of French PBs, because they don’t really give more power to lay citizens, with poor accountability mechanisms. They also fail to address key social problems that made PB famous in Brazil, such as urbanization, social inequalities or the right to the city. I would like now to conclude on the limits of the way the term ‘institutionalization’ is used in academic debates. This confusion does not help us to grasp the reasons why PB may have been taken place in some places and not everywhere

good conditions could exist. It is now essential to better understand intra-state variation in a context of poor institutionalization.

According to Montambeault (2018), one reason for explaining the variation of PB programs and its lack of impacts is the absence of formalization by legal texts. This indicates an underlying assumption that legal texts would be necessary and sufficient for creating a participatory institution that works. These discussions could be linked to the broader debate about how good institutions can be ground on "good" constitutions. What does it mean to found a "good text" to deepen democracy? Is it enough for its enforcement? This paper has shown how different local regulations exist for PB in France without creating strong political institutions.

For Smith (2009), institutionalization implies some kind of bureaucratization. When PB was adopted in Porto Alegre, it required centralised direction within the local administration, the GAPLAN, in order to ensure the efficiency of the innovation. If the degree of centrality is well documented for the allocation of capital expenses, I am not sure it can provide a stable base for deepening democracy. In the context of Porto Alegre, centralisation was much more seen as a way of derailing potential opposition from another political institution, the municipal assembly. If the term is not defined in his book, one may sometimes understand "effective institutionalisation" as the survival of such innovations in places where the PT fails to be reelected. A new party could then repeat the procedure. But it is not clear why other parties could not be convinced to implement this innovative method of mobilizing citizens. Other parties have tried to implement policies they also called "participatory budgeting" and in other places, local mayors implemented PB under other labels.

Associating procedural grounds and skill sets, some authors approach institutionalisation as the working conditions of people who implement democratic innovations. Those public participation professionals (Bherer et al 2017) are mediators translating political demand for public participation into feasible procedures that can attract participants. The weak design of participatory institutions would be the sign of poorly skilled professionals. An effective process would thus need a procedure, skilled facilitators and consenting performers. Röcke (2014, p.40) indicates the problematic assumption to "procedural power" where "citizens simply have to perform a pre-defined role within a tightly controlled agenda". The strict obedience to some bureaucratic rule does not create a political institution.

"Neutralization" of participatory budgeting has been documented in Europe and in the US (Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2016). Studying Brazilian cases, Avritzer suggests in his latest research (2017) three main limitations to current forms of participatory budgeting: poor attempts to deepen democracy, the limited impact of the discussion on spending and income and "insulation of PB within the administration by the political system" (p.73). These three limitations are present in the French cases.

The argument of depoliticization/neutralization used by Baiocchi and Ganuza fits very much into critical studies of the work on 'globalizers' (Harriss, 2002; Woods, 2006), 'democracy makers' (Guilhot, 2005; Petric, 2012) and anything related to exporting 'good practices' (Peck and Theodore, 2015; Béal et al., 2018). This family of studies assign international organizations a certain responsibility for the absence of ambition in their diffusion of PB, although such accounts may well overemphasize the real influence of international actors promoting PB.

This argument of depoliticization offers an incomplete explanation. Diffusion via militant networks in Europe would be expected to lead to more intense cases, but France is one of the contrary examples that are well documented (Nez and Talpin, 2010). The first wave of participatory budgeting in France (2001-2005) is

associated with the Communist Party and the association *Démocratiser Radicalement la Démocratie* and nevertheless some "banality of practices" is found in the absence of sharing decisions on the budget. It is not even necessary to cross the Atlantic to see the variation in quality. Participatory budgeting cases are heterogeneous in Brazil, even in cities governed by the PT (Wampler, 2009; Baiocchi, Heller and Silva, 2011).

Despite the major replication of PB in France and in Europe for the last 10 years, I suggest this is still a poor institutionalization. These experiences are occurring each year, rely on public participation professionals and formal regulations, yet they produce weak participatory institutions. I would like to contribute to a lively debate in the literature related to the circulation of PB and its diversification. Participatory budgeting has proved "malleable" to administrative contingencies (Baiocchi et al, 2011) and has been adapted by different political actors whose objectives are much more diverse than the original "PT way of governing". This diversification rely on different actors, context and models. Actors don't share the same goals and even though many contextual factors could lead to poor implementation of complex or light models.

Wampler (2009) focus on mayors' strategies and distinguishes possible adoption motives PB by mayors in Brazil that might be extended to French cases (when further interviews are done): "policy advocates" are clearly different from "pro forma copiers" and there are differences in the impact of PB on local militant support (broadening it considerably in the best cases) or the way it is used to re-brand party image or to contribute to individual recognition at a larger scale, especially within the party factions.

These distinctions make it possible to articulate more precisely the motivations of actors to adopt or support a policy of PB depending on their objectives at different levels. If PB seems to be malleable to any context, it is because the values attributed to it are heterogeneous.

Some authors differentiate two main categories of PB. There could be a distinction between powerful PB and PT lite (Spada 2014) or extensive and intensive cases (Hernández-Medina, 2007) or bureaucratic model from a participatory model or a representative one (Ganuza and Francés 2012), and this paper tries to show that, beyond variations, PB can't be considered as a robust innovation *per se*. Tokenistic imitations are travelling much more than efficient cases. In France, as a single civil servant, copying a regulation before asking for ideas from citizens is easier than polishing a responsive administration to contradictory demands while local budgets are getting tighter and tighter.

Other researchers such as Spada (2014) wonder why the PT did not implement in 2004 as many PB as before Lula's election. He presents two hypotheses about the decay. The first relies on a "policy bubble" and the second on a change in the political strategy from the PT. Jones et al. (2014, p.149) explain the emergence of a policy bubble, "when government overinvests in a policy instrument beyond its instrumental value in achieving a policy goal, and that overinvestment is sustained over a relatively long period of time." The hypothesis is interesting for French cases as it is not clear what kind of problems they are trying to really solve. Further research could help to understand if France is creating a policy bubble after PB implementation in Paris.

Conclusion:

The promise of deepening democracy through PB raised hope beyond Brazil and thousands of cities tried to copy Porto Alegre. But can democratic institutions be exported? Or is it be merely the transfer of bureaucratic rules related to 'good governance'?

Combining analysis of PB regulation with social networks could help to map policy transfers based on their procedures. The evolution of these socio-semantic networks show how PB models could be distinguished and how some of them could expand throughout the years. In the case of French PB, it helps to show how “proximity democracy” model has been declining and more accessible online processes have been implemented since 2014. But Paris model remains marginal in the French panorama.

More and more processes are organized at the city-level, where online submission and online vote are possible. Yet transparency and deliberation are not really present so we can conclude these innovations do not provide strong accountability mechanisms, even in Paris where selective listening is still possible. Therefore I also argue we cannot detect any institutionalization. French PBs could repeat every year, the regulation is published and trained public participation professionals are able to organize the processes. But it is not clear PB helps to tackle issues beyond “fix my street” programs. They fail to address issues that matter to people, like democratization, urbanization, corruption and growing inequalities as it was in the 90’s in Latin America.

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