

Final Case

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Participatory Budgeting in Lausanne, Switzerland <https://participedia.net/case/7388>

Brief Description

This is the first city-wide Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Switzerland, that started in 2019. It is a pilot project financed by the Swiss confederation for three years. The goal is to allow the inhabitants to implement urban or social projects in their neighbourhood.

Problems and purpose

The aim is to give the citizens of a specific city the possibility to choose a part of the projects that will be carried out within their neighbourhoods. The municipality's goal is to leave the choice to citizens to build and carry out their tasks to feel most integrated within their neighbourhoods in Lausanne. The city, therefore, seeks to strengthen social ties and citizenship within its municipality. The goal is also to involve citizens, who usually do not participate in more conventional forms (such as during votes) either by choice or by an inability to do so, to participate in their neighbourhood's life.

Background History and Context

This PB is in line with the one of Porto Alegre which took place in 1989. This Brazilian case is easily transferable to the swiss system. It adds a new democratic tool to the Swiss Federal System by enabling the participation of local inhabitants to a project.

Direct democracy has a long tradition in Switzerland. It allows citizens to propose a modification or a change to a law without the agreement of any political parties. This can be done either by popular referendum, by citizens' initiative or by a popular initiative. These three tools have roughly the same outcome.

It is usual for Swiss people to vote on many different subjects and at all levels (local, communal, Federal). The specificity of the Swiss system allows all Swiss citizens to give their opinion and thus allows them to influence the outcome of the voting.

PB has already been tested in Switzerland, at a local level in small districts of Zurich.

The PB we are going to describes takes place in Lausanne. It is the first project to be implemented in such a big area involving roughly 150k inhabitants.

Since the 1990s, politicians of Lausanne have always encouraged the funding and the development of projects in many neighbourhoods.

Since the beginning of the PB in 2019, there has been trust link between the neighbourhood associations and the municipality as the both believed in the project. A predominantly socialist municipality has ruled the city of Lausanne since 2017.

This democratic innovation was first proposed in 2017 by three local politicians from different parties (from the populist right to the greens). The idea came from the politicians and not directly from citizens. Then the municipal councillor and director of the Department of Children, Youth and Neighbourhoods (DEJQ), Mr David Payot, oversaw the implementation. The entire PB, from the request to the implementation, was done by the public administration of the city of Lausanne.

The Coronavirus crisis partially disrupted the overall Project because some meetings in neighbourhood centres, were not able to take place face to face. Several sessions took place by videoconferencing, which that slightly undermines the idea of this PB. Despite this health emergency, 26 projects to be submitted at the end of the year 2020 to the popular vote. Project leaders were able to contact citizens of their neighbourhoods by different means such as the internet or door-to-door services to promote this PB.

Organizing, supporting and financing entities

Everything starts from specific associations such as BLI, TSHM, FASL (social associations), which have already been present in the field for years. They make it possible to disseminate the concept of PB within the population and thus be able to include a significant number of citizens. All citizens of Lausanne were included because the only condition to participate was to be a resident of the town. The associations work with the city to promote PB among the population. All associations see eye to eye concerning the municipality because they all have the same common goal.

Once the Citizen's Project has been developed and submitted to the city of Lausanne, a group of experts is made available to help the Project and specially to see if it is feasible in terms of time and money. Once the project submission phase is completed, citizens vote for a minimum of 3 projects to avoid lobbying on a single project. Each project can obtain a maximum of 20,000 CHF on a budget of 100'000CHF the first year, 150'000 CHF the second and 175'000 CHF the third. If the Project gets a majority of votes during the vote, it must be implemented within three years. The city helps this implementation but does not do it to avoid the modification of the initial Project. The projects are supported by the "citizenship" program of the Federal Migration Commission (CFM), which provides assistance and expertise. The city council supports the Project but does not pilot it. Indeed, it is the General Secretariat for Children, Youth and Neighbourhoods (SGEJQ), which is in charge of its operation.

The cost for the city of Lausanne is unknown now and will be explained in the final report in November 2021, as it was necessary to provide experts, organize a communication campaign, and set up an evening for the winners (not in 2020 due to Covid). However, a part time job had to be created in 2020 to link the state services concerned by the implementation and project leaders to best support the winners in their projects. This labour is an additional cost for the municipality.

The city does not pay the leaders as a classic PB to animate the debate and explain the situation to the selected citizens. These are the members of local neighbourhood associations and the experts made available who are paid by the city. Experts are chosen according to their area of expertise among city employees. That is to say that for a construction project, an engineer and an architect will be consulted, for example. Nevertheless, it's possible that a few local association's actors are paid indirectly by the city, but we don't think that's a big impact for owner case.

Recruitment and selection of participants

Strictly speaking, there is no selection because the only criteria to participate in this PB is to live in the city of Lausanne.

As a result, the process is open to everyone as there are no restrictions regarding age, gender, or nationality. People who do not have the right to vote at the national and cantonal level can also participate. In order to be deemed of public utility by the city, the project must be led by at least three residents and must obtain the support of ten sponsors.

The project must meet certain specific criteria such as : promote a social link between residents and be non-profit oriented. It's important the project benefits the whole community and that there is no personal gain to any individual.

The local associations (Reliefs, Atelier OLGa and others) assist with the-files of those who are unable to do it for various reasons such as a language barrier or a handicap. The associations are also active in promoting the project of the municipality to the inhabitants.

The aim is to enhance citizens participation in this project to improve their neighborhoods and thus their quality of life.

Methods and tools used

This project is part of a Participatory Budget method. The inhabitants are at the centre of the municipality's project. That is to say that, unlike other PBs where the local government does the final implementation, it is the inhabitants who are responsible for implementing their project. This is done to involve citizens as much as possible in their neighborhood's life.

The project is structured in four phases during a calendar year. The first and longest is the filing of projects with the municipality. Citizens have from January to September to submit their files. Once this first phase is completed in September, the city is responsible for evaluating the files to see if they are feasible and meet the conditions. The last two steps are the vote and the implementation. A minimum of three projects are proposed to the citizens, who vote for their favorite project. The budget is finally allocated to the projects which received the most votes. The projects selected by popular vote are then financed by the municipality and implement within two years by their authors. Voting can be done by a written ballot in state administrative buildings, in neighborhood associations or electronically on the PB's website. To date, we don't know if the way in which people vote influences the result. We must wait for the outcome of the research which will be published in November 2021.

Once the vote is completed the project which obtains the best score is classified in first place and receives the requested amount, maximum 15'000 CHF. This amount is deducted from the total budget. This system continues until the total budget is exhausted. Some projects that may not get the total amount of the requested funding are replaced by others with a lower budget. For example, a project arriving in 5th place and asking for 15'000 CHF while the balance is 10'000 CHF will be replaced by another project which requires 10'000 CHF or less.

The municipality has set up this system to allow citizens to shape their neighborhoods with bottom-up ideas so that citizens feel better and more attached to them. In general, the feedback from citizens is positive, and the participation rate has been increasing. This suggests that the project appeals to citizens. However, as the project is ongoing, it is challenging to conclude its effectiveness just yet. It can be said however, that the project is not unpopular. The number of votes done on the internet this year (in 2020: approximately 2100 votes) was up compared to 2019, which is probably linked to the recent pandemic. The members of the associations are all volunteers. Letting citizens take ownership of all the phases of the PB, from construction to implementation, is a first on the Participedia platform.

What Went On: Deliberation, Decisions, and Public Interaction

In 2019, Lausanne's participatory budget took place in four distinct phases. The first phase consisted of the creation and submission of projects to the municipality. The second phase was the analysis of its feasibility. Then the voting took place and finally the implementation began.

The four phases of the Lausanne PB took place at different times during the year. First, the "preparation phase", which lasted from January to September, in which citizens developed their projects and submitted them to the municipality. Then, in the second phase, the municipality assessed the feasibility of the projects with the help of experts. Then the city proposed the projects to a popular vote. The third phase was the vote. Citizens were called to vote on at least three projects to avoid a lobby for a single project. They could do this electronically on the city's website or go to various places in town (neighborhood center, libraries, administration, etc.) to fill out a ballot. The city then checks the name and address

of each voter. Once the votes were closed (usually in December), a ceremony was set up to announce the winning projects. The last step of the process took place only with the chosen projects. Participants have two years to implement their projects with the help of the city and citizens must take responsibility for the implementation.

The PB process in Lausanne is designed to carry out concrete projects on the ground by and for the citizens in their neighborhoods. In the penultimate phase of the process, decisions are taken based on the results of the vote. It is the citizens themselves who are encouraged to implement the final choices. Individual unity is emphasized in this project because it is the wish of a small number of people that can be achieved. This is part of Swiss direct democracy where a small number of people can make a difference.

Results are communicated during a meeting organized by the municipality. Once the results are known, the latter publishes the winning projects on its site. The meeting is open to all. The results are also relayed by the associations as well as specific local media. The municipal councilor Mr. David Payot, in charge of the department (DEJQ), comes in person to announce the results to the citizens of his city. The municipality communicates a lot on social networks, especially on their Facebook page and their YouTube channel. The explanations are detailed allowing the majority to understand them.

Influence, Outcomes, and Effects

The process is not yet complete, so it isn't easy to draw any significant conclusions. The University of Zurich evaluates the project via its Centre for Democracy in Aarau (ZDA) for all three editions. The final report will be submitted in November 2021. Only some improvements in the implementation of the project were released in October 2020, but confidentially to modify the malfunctions. The improvements to be made had been requested for its analysis in this paper, however the details have not been disclosed.

We can nevertheless note an increase in participation in the PB between 2019 (2% of the city of Lausanne) and 2020 (4% of the city of Lausanne), demonstrating a particular enthusiasm for this project. Several winning projects in 2019 were set up in the neighbourhoods, for example, an open-air cinema (*Les toiles de Milan*). The actors on the field (associations) did not report any significant problems. As a result, the primary aim of the process is to create

social links in the city's neighbourhoods, which seems to be pretty well respected. The overall influence is not yet measurable, but one can imagine that the project could be implemented in other Swiss cities.

Analyse and Lesson Learned

In this section an evaluation of the impact of the PB using the democratic goods framework introduced by Graham Smith will be made (Smith 2009). Therefore, in what follows an investigation of how the innovation effects the following democratic goods: Inclusion, Considered Judgment, Popular Control, Transparency, Efficiency and Transferability. This evaluation is based on our own reflection developed during the class "Reinventing Democracy" at Southampton University in the Spring of 2021, thus the main reference for this section will be the final essay submitted (Equey 2021)

The Swiss context is already well provided in terms of democratic tools, and the Lausanne PB adds a form of political participation that was missing. As political participation is relatively low in Switzerland for various reasons (Bevort 2011), this form of participation can become a plus for the cities or communes that use it.

PB can be seen as a form of political activation and can allow individuals who do not participate in politics, either by choice or by constraint, to make their opinions heard. It is used by local government to *'reinvent, recreate and redevelop their political and policy landscape'* (Wampler 2012, p.1). The spread of PB to Switzerland is due to the fact that this process is seen as more transparent and inclusive (Ganuza 2012). PB meetings are *'open to everyone, without privileging of existing associations or movement'* (Ganuza 2012,p.3).

According to Smith (2009), the principle of inclusivity is well respected in this PB as there is almost no selection of participants. In addition to that, individuals who do not have citizenship in the eyes of the law can participate in project development. This is one of the highest degrees of inclusion for a PB as it is no longer a representative minority that engages for the majority but rather the citizen's majority that can participate. The good inclusion of citizens in this PB demonstrates that they feel considered and can be in direct contact with the municipality. They can therefore benefit from solid and effective popular control over projects

during voting and implementation (Smith 2009). The particularity of this PB is that citizens have to implement their projects autonomously. That it is up to them to take the necessary steps and follow up; the municipality helps them if necessary but does not take the actions itself. For example, if its authors do not implement a winning project, then the project will not be implemented by the city, and the project will fall through.

This PB allows citizens to make their own choice about their neighbourhood with a substantial degree of implication. Participants are convinced by the necessity of the projects for their city and neighbourhood (Mansbridge 1983). However, not all citizens participate in this process for multiple reasons, such as not wanting to conflict with others for one project. Moderators as Associations could be attentive to allow participation for all. Access to information is relatively easy for participants. They could find it helps at any time with the city service in charge of the PB. Projects are done in solidarity, which means that most citizens debate the projects and negotiate during the construction phase. Both are respected, and so the will of the Considered judgement.

The transparency of the selection process during the vote and the assistance of the city's experts have room for improvement. In particular, experts being employees for the city can potentially hinder projects that it would not necessarily want to implement. It would be better to let participants choose their experts to assess the feasibility of their projects to avoid this kind of bias. However, the rest of the process is very transparent and allows citizens '*...to build trust and confidence in political strategy*' (Smith 2009,p.25).

The efficiency is rather difficult to comment on this project's possible strengths and weaknesses before its end (December 2021), however some conclusions can be drawn. The aims of the BP generally seem to have been achieved, and the process has convinced the population of its usefulness and concreteness. Furthermore, this form of PB demands time and energy from its citizens. It could be a limit as this form limits the participation of certain individuals. However, thinking critically, it can be said that the project is not very ambitious and limited to a restricted part of the population with the means (time, income, level of education). Moreover, the participation rates are relatively low compared to the size of the project.

This type of PB can easily be transposed to a small-medium sized European city as it does not require a massive investment if a network of social actors is already in place. Moreover, it is a small part of the total city budget that is subject to this process, so it does not hinder the smooth running of the municipality. The city has to be prepared to make it available to its citizen's various experts in numerous fields. Furthermore, the population must have a certain willingness to implement projects by themselves, in the sense that the city will not carry out the projects for them. However, the Swiss federal context, the potent power of the cantons and consequently of the cities as well as the relatively easy financial situation in Switzerland allows for this kind of innovation. Thus, it can be considered in a future implementation for other projects.

This form of Participatory Budgeting needs to be explicitly evaluated, as do all other forms of PB, as scientists still have much to learn about how these programmes work (Wampler 2012). Compared to other more traditional types of PB that resemble Porto Alegre's (Baiocchi 2003), the case of PB in Lausanne is different as it includes a more significant number of citizens in terms of the criteria for openness, allows citizens to propose their projects for their neighbourhoods, and finally imposes on the citizens to implement their projects autonomously within a given time frame.

The cost for the city of Lausanne is unknown for the time being, however, will be available in the final report in November 2021. This is because it was necessary to provide experts, organize a communication campaign, and set up an evening for the winners to take place after the pandemic.

References

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External Links

<https://www.lausanne.ch/budget-participatif/> (official website)

Journal Article :

<https://www.24heures.ch/neuf-projets-laureats-pour-la-deuxieme-edition-du-budget-participatif-483101622413>

<https://www.lausannecites.ch/le-journal/lausanne/budget-participatif-un-3e-appel-aux-projets-citoyens-est-lance>

<https://www.lematin.ch/story/lausanne-150-000-francs-pour-des-projets-citoyens-733131417131>

<https://www.zdaarau.ch/aktuell?page=1#> (ZDA)

<https://www.ekm.admin.ch/ekm/fr/home.html> (CFM)

Notes

Lead Image : <https://www.24heures.ch/vaud-regions/lausanne-region/budget-participatif-lausanne-revient-renforce/story/29599589>

ZDA = Zentrum für Demokratie Aarau (Democratic center Aarau)

CFM = Commission fédérale pour la migration (Federal commission for Migration)