Policy on the move: the enabling settings of participation in participatory budgeting

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Policy on the move: the enabling settings of participation in participatory budgeting

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ABSTRACT
This article explores how participatory budgeting (PB), which is described as a travelling policy innovation, has been interpreted in different urban governance contexts, particularly how local settings that are created by contexts and practices enable participation in PB. Travelling policy innovations are sets of ideas or experiments that aim at renewing governance practices and are adopted globally. PB engages citizens to discuss, prioritize and decide about the use of public funds. With empirical data from the cities of Tampere, Łódź, and the Greater Manchester area the article demonstrates that settings of participation in PB are conditioned by (1) socio-political context, (2) objectives setting, (3) resourcing, (4) decision-making and (5) relationship-building. Based on an interpretive view on policy studies, it is argued that these settings enable participation in PB in three ways. Firstly, they influence the continuity of PB; secondly, they suggest particular roles for participants; and thirdly, they formulate the level of interaction. This is demonstrated with three operationalisations of PB, such as pop-up PB, traditional PB and do-it-yourself PB.

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Introduction
A central question posed by governance is how to provide settings and arrangements for meaningful interactions amongst different actors and different ways of knowing. However, enabling an open and meaningful interaction in participatory exercises that promote citizen involvement in local decision-making is often an unreachable goal. Participatory exercises are loaded with contradictions amongst their participating actors (Quick and Feldman 2011; Goodman and Douglas 2017). For example, Innes and Booher (2004, 419) argue that methods of public engagement frequently do not satisfy the participants’ desire to be heard, nor do they succeed in incorporating a broad spectrum of the public. They stress that some methods of public engagement antagonise the participants by pitting them against each other. Focusing on the inclusiveness of public engagement, Young (2002) addresses the risk of marginalizing certain groups that do not have the ability to take part in deliberative discussions.
However, participatory budgeting (PB) is viewed as one of the most successful participatory instruments that pays attention to inclusion, equity and openness of governance (e.g. Sintomer et al. 2012). PB is a popular method of public engagement that involves people in the prioritization of the allocation of public money by engaging them in the discussion of spending priorities and allowing them to submit their own proposals and vote on them. It is described as *travelling policy innovation* (cf. Röcke 2014), which refers to the phenomenon in which policies travel from one setting to another, are translated and adopted in different contexts.

The article considers a situation where PB is translated into local conditions, where participation is often controversial to create open and meaningful participation. Given the popularity of PB as a participatory instrument, it is explored how local contexts and practices enable participation in PB. The article asks what kind of settings do contexts and practices create for participation in PB?

This is investigated with three sets of data. The primary data are collected in the city of Tampere (Finland) that piloted PB in an urban regeneration process for participatory planning and co-designing services. To reflect the findings from Tampere, secondary data were collected in the city of Łódź (Poland) and the Greater Manchester area (UK). In Łódź, PB is institutionalized city-wide in decision-making structures. In Greater Manchester, it is widely used for small community projects that tackle social inequality and encourage community empowerment.

Theoretically, the interpretive policy analysis approach that emphasizes the interconnectedness of context, practices and knowledge in governance (e.g. Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Wagenaar 2007) is drawn on in this article. To learn more from the celebratory nature of PB, a look at its implementation in contextualized practices is needed. When discussing PB as a travelling policy innovation, it is simply a reference to a set of ideas or experiments that aim at renewing the practices of governance and are adopted globally. By focusing on local contexts and practices, the call for different points of departure in the studies of policy travel is answered, thus moving forward from seeing the translation of policies happening in “the idealized universe of rational-actor models” (Peck 2011, 780).

This article starts by introducing policy travel from the practice-driven perspective and moves on to discuss PB as a travelling policy innovation. Subsequently, case examples and research materials from Tampere, Łódź, and the Greater Manchester area are introduced, and an analysis of PB is performed to highlight how local settings created by contexts and practices enable participation in PB. In the analysis, the article distinguishes five key variations in settings of participation: (1) socio-political context, (2) objectives setting, (3) resourcing, (4) decision-making and (5) relationship-building.

According to Mukhtarov (2014), little is known about what makes policy instruments to succeed in becoming part of the institutionalized participatory tools in local governance. Scrutinizing the settings enables recognizing key elements in the translation of PB as a participatory method of governance. In the discussion, based on the analysis the article argues that it requires to be attentive to how local settings (1) influence the continuity of PB, (2) suggest roles for participants and (3) shape the level of interaction. This is demonstrated with three operationalisations of PB: Pop-up PB, traditional PB and do-it-yourself PB illustrate the settings of participation. To conclude, the article addresses that the varying settings of participation condition the inclusion and equity of participation differently, which needs to be considered in further PB studies.
Practice-driven view of travelling policy innovations

There is much literature on the travelling of policy innovations, such as in political science, sociology and geography. Generally, policy travel involves processes in which policies are disembedded from and re-embedded in different political, social and economic contexts (Cook 2008, 791). Political scientists emphasizing a view on diffusion address the role of structures when analyzing the translation of policies (e.g. the diffusion of structural forces such as globalization), whereas sociologists favouring the notion of transfer privilege the agency as the core of the translation (e.g. the roles of agents, such as government officials, policy elites and non-state actors). However, some scholars suggest the dialectical relationship between these views (Marsh and Sharman 2009).

Recently, scholars have critiqued the conventional approaches for defining policy transfer or diffusion narrowly. In geography, McCann and Ward (2013) have talked about policy mobility and mutations for understanding policy-making as both a local and a global socio-spatial and political process, where “policies are assembled in particular ways and for particular interests and purposes” (8). In respect to environmental governance, Mukhtarov (2014) has criticized the conventional approaches for assuming the perfect rationality of actors, the stability of governance scales and the immutability of policy ideas when they travel. According to him, the notion of translation pays explicit attention to how the processes take place and what effects they might have.

This article emphasizes that the study of policy travel should not view global policy ideas as given, but rather, following the translation approach to investigate how the actors shape meanings and construct scales. The approach, therefore, concentrates on the agency and interests of policy actors and how these are constructed by the discourses, non-material symbols and norms involved (Mukhtarov 2014, 77). Furthermore, the interpretive policy analysis drawn on in this article emphasizes that the methods used in governance should be adapted to contexts and issues that are being dealt with (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Wagenaar and Cook 2003; see McCann and Ward 2013). By the concept of practice, the article means that policy actors do not utilize pre-held, formal knowledge but produce emergent understandings and activities together (Bartels 2018). This article considers practices as socio-material: human activity is materially mediated and impossible to separate from its interactions with artefacts, technology, nature, bodily sensations or physical spaces (Bartels 2018).

Participatory budgeting: origins and usage

PB is gaining attention within governance due to its potential for strengthening the local democracy and co-governance, empowering citizens and improving public services (Sintomer, Herzberg, and Röcke 2008; Röcke 2014). The flexibility of PB has made it popular at different levels; PB exercises have ranged from small community projects to deciding how municipal public services are delivered.

First developed in Brazil in the late 1980s, PB is now a well-known tool used for local governance internationally. In Porto Alegre, Brazil, it was created when a military junta was removed from power. The people’s confidence in the politicians was low, and the allocation of public funds was associated with corruption. The leftist activists introduced
PB to attain more community control over municipal finances, which led the Workers’ Party government to implement it (Sintomer, Herzberg, and Röcke 2008; Ganuza and Baiocchi 2012).

Its far-reaching results in the mobilization of civil society, the more just redistribution of public money and the fight against corruption have played important roles in PB’s global expansion. According to estimates, PB exists in over 1,500 cities on five continents (Ganuza and Baiocchi 2012; Röcke 2014). Global actors, such as the World Social Forum, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN), have promoted PB (see Porto de Oliveira 2017).

In PB’s global travel, Ganuza and Baiocchi (2012) distinguish two phases. During the first phase, starting in the early 1990s, PB travelled as part of comprehensive administrative reforms considered to be “a centrepiece of political strategy” (1–2) that rendered social justice and good governance for leftist politicians. However, during the second phase, starting in the late 1990s, PB attracted international attention. In Europe, especially, it was not considered a reform instrument of the administration, but a neutral device with the potential to improve governance and generate trust. The logic of PB was reversed; fiscal reforms were no longer a pre-condition for PB (Ganuza and Baiocchi 2012, 7).

In PB research, there exist a large number of case and country explorations (e.g. Goldfrank 2007; Sintomer et al. 2012; Dias 2019) and comparative analyses, ranging from studies that compare Latin American examples with European cases to those that make European-wide city comparisons (e.g. Sintomer, Herzberg, and Röcke 2008; Röcke 2014). One body of literature investigates PB in relation to its characteristics and criteria. For example, Sintomer, Herzberg, and Röcke (2008) scrutinized the variety of European PB models by looking at the extent to which the models can contribute to the renewal of democracy and administration. Some studies have focused on PB’s concrete outcomes and effects (e.g. Boulding and Wampler 2010; Gilman and Wampler 2019), such as its implications for the well-being of citizens (Goncalves 2014) or democratic theory (see Röcke 2014). In this article, local settings of participation created by contexts and practices are analyzed to scrutinize how they enable participation in PB.

**Research methodology**

This article provides three case studies of the development of participatory budgeting schemes in major cities. The research question that it addresses is what kind of settings different contexts and practices create for participation in PB. The studied cases illustrate different democratic and political environments that have seldom been discussed in detail within the same research. Tampere, Łódź, and the Greater Manchester area share similar trajectories of urban development as industrial working-class cities undergoing regeneration (Haapala 2005; Swinney and Thomas 2015, 21–23; Rek-Woźniak and Woźniak 2020). However, their distinct cultural contexts affect how PB is organized, such as the Finnish social democratic welfare state model, the post-communist era in Poland, or the Labour government in the UK.

Tampere provides an interesting case of a jurisdiction adopting PB. Although there are many democratic elements in its society, Finland has only recently started to practice PB,
thus, Tampere is piloting with PB (Lehtonen 2018). Łódź demonstrates practicing PB in a situation where the history of developing democratic practices is relatively young and weaknesses in governance exist (cf. Dias 2019). In the UK, the centrally led government has influenced the development of a strong civil society (see Röcke 2014). In this context, PB in principle has had political support; however, in the Greater Manchester area, PB projects often have been developed by civil society actors without a direct connection to administration.

The data collected in 2014–2015 consist of individual interviews, group discussions with civil servants, community activists, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), residents and researchers, as well as action research material, such as audio recordings and notes from the PB workshops. The data collection focused on how PB had been introduced, what inspired its use, identifying the key people promoting it and the key issues guiding its use. The data vary amongst the three places due to the particularities of each context. Methodologically, the article follows the case study approach by looking at details of cases (Flyvbjerg 2001); the cases have their own particularities, but do converge on some aspects. The approach analyses the causes behind an issue and its consequences. It seeks to find other than representative cases as they are not considered as “wealthy in information” (Ruddin 2006, 803).

The primary data is collected in Tampere, where the piloting of PB together with the City of Tampere and residents was part of the research process for this article. The data consist of audio-recordings and notes for four PB workshops, notes for meetings of a PB planning group and nine semi-structured interviews with residents and civil servants.

In Łódź, two semi-structured interviews and two group discussions with NGOs, civil servants and researchers were conducted. In one group discussion in Łódź, an interpreter was used as the participants were not fluent in English. There were three participants in both group discussions. In the Greater Manchester area, three semi-structured interviews and three group discussions with NGOs, community activists, researchers and representatives of local administration (e.g. police officers) were conducted. In the first group discussion, there were ten participants; in the second and third discussions, there were five participants in both sessions.

In data collection, “the snowball method” (Noy 2008) was used by asking initial interviewees to identify relevant actors. Interviewees and discussants in Łódź and Greater Manchester took part in their professional capacity. The participants worked with issues related to PB in their local environments. In Tampere, four interviewees were residents, and five were civil servants. In the PB workshops, the participants were residents, members of civil society associations and civil servants. The number of participants in PB workshops varied from 9 to 40 participants. In this article, interview and discussion extracts are used to illustrate the findings.

It is recognized that data from Łódź and Greater Manchester are limited. The low number of individual interviews was strengthened with group discussions that brought together an extended group of PB actors. The data collection focused on distinguishing the key actors who were active and/or responsible for developing the PB practices (cf. Mukhtarov 2014, 76). It was expected that the number of these actors is relatively small. The snowball method enabled finding them as it assumes that in a given field key actors are interconnected (Farquharson 2005). In this regard, the case study and the snowball methods support accessing the key actors and their knowledge.
The analysis of the transcribed data was based on qualitative content analysis that was directed by the case study view on real-life situations and unfolding issues in practice (Flyvbjerg 2006). First, the data were grouped into two thematic categories: introduction and implementation of PB. Under introduction, PB was analyzed on how it was introduced, the local situation where PB was started, its aims and who were the key actors introducing and organizing PB. Implementation focused on the procedure of PB, such as how it was organized and what guidelines were directing its use. Because the focus was on local settings, specific categorisations were established to discover the practices that influence PB’s organization. The data were analyzed from the view of participation to look at what issues condition participation in PB. The data coded under introduction were divided into socio-political context and objectives setting. Implementation was divided into resourcing, decision-making and relationship-building.

The categorization addresses critical moments where the settings of participation are created: (1) the socio-political context illustrates local needs in relation to participation to which PB is hoped to respond to; (2) objectives-setting determines the focus of PB and creates a framework for participation; (3) resources that are provided for PB, such as the amount of funds or staff resource influence the scale of participation; whether participation in PB bases on small community projects or is included as part of the city level budget; (4) PB’s decision-making practices illustrate how people are invited to use their power in PB; and (5) relationship-building addresses interaction in PB and possible challenges connected to it.

**Tampere: co-designing urban services**

**Socio-political context**

In Tampere, interest in PB grew relatively late in the 2010s, and during the PB pilot, it was a little-known policy innovation in the city’s administration. The advocates of PB were administrative actors, such as the Council of Tampere Region, the city mayor and individual politicians and researchers who promoted it, subsequent to noting international discussions. PB was included in the city’s strategy, as a means to co-design municipal services together with the residents, and in the previous city mayor’s political programme (2013–2016).

The PB was first experimented with in 2014 through a joint pilot of the city and Tampere University (see Lehtonen 2018). For the city, it was a new tool to include the residents’ voices in neighbourhood planning and strengthen the co-operation of residents and civil servants. The university was keen to develop decision-making and participatory planning. In the pilot, local residents were invited to develop the popular recreation area of the Tesomajärvi lake in the Tesoma neighbourhood. Originally, the city planned the PB pilot for developing a new welfare centre in Tesoma, but because its building process was postponed, a different case was chosen. The recreation area was important to the residents and it was often brought up in local discussions.

PB was introduced as “a new way to work together with residents”, as one of the leading civil servants described it in the first PB workshop. He continued: “We are looking for the best way to practice PB in the Tesoma neighbourhood; we are looking for our way to do PB”. The pilot indicated a growing interest in PB. It had gained political
acceptance; however, immediately after the pilot, no plans existed to institutionalize it further. In 2020–2021, Tampere implements a new PB process that concentrates on the well-being of young people and children.

**Objectives setting**

The PB was envisioned as a new tool for the interaction between administration and residents, a form of co-designing urban areas and their services:

> First, we thought that it is not necessarily budgeting but mere participatory planning and co-producing of services. (Civil servant)

At the neighbourhood level, PB was thought to strengthen people’s activity and the identity of neighbourhood. Civil servants hoped PB to increase the sense of community and residents’ ownership of their neighbourhood, and to initiate a process in which residents take care of their neighbourhood together. This would, at the same time, contribute to the aims of effective governance, as people would assume responsibility for taking care of common tasks.

The objectives of PB related to a form of co-design or co-production, where citizens, non-governmental organisations and public administration collaborate to deliver public services (Tuurnas 2016). Participants were not considered as mere objects but as co-producers of neighbourhood development; they discussed problems, evaluated and prioritized them, and participated in solving the problems. However, the goal with the PB pilot was not to radically shift more decision-making power and monitoring power to the people, but to increase the communication between governance and residents. It was also seen as a tool for strengthening multi-actor co-operation inside the city organization itself.

**Resourcing**

Before the start of the PB process, the city defined a thematic topic and an urban area for the pilot. The decision to pilot PB in Tesoma was a result of a moment where external funding was available for neighbourhood development at the same time when the city was developing interaction with residents. PB received relatively large funding, 640,000 euros. It was funded partly by the city and Finland’s Housing Finance and Development Centre’s (ARA) development programme. This collaborative funding established a schedule for the process with the deadline for the use of ARA funds.

A temporary PB team consisted of a group of civil servants who developed PB in addition to their regular work duties. They represented administrative sectors whose responsibilities were connected to the topic of PB, such as the unit that maintains recreation areas. From this team, one to two civil servants were responsible for PB implementation. The civil servants toured in the area, for example, in a shopping mall and a library and organized events to meet and invite residents to workshops. PB events were held at local spaces such as schools and premises of a third sector association. Researchers cooperated with civil servants in, for example, planning the PB practices and delivering insight from foreign PB experiences.
Decision-making

The PB was implemented as a form of participatory planning and co-production. Participants were invited to discuss with the civil servants how to allocate the money to develop a recreation area and prioritize the development proposals. The final prioritization was made collectively during the final PB workshop. No voting was arranged due to the tight schedule of the process and the technical problems that restricted online voting. Participants worked on the proposals in deliberative workshops:

We wanted to have an open process where it was possible to genuinely answer to the residents’ wishes and to provide residents an opportunity to discuss and ask questions as openly as possible. (Civil servant)

Civil servants, consultants and researchers organized the workshops together. Three PB workshops and one evaluation workshop were organized in which the participants’ visions were refined into proposals that gained general acceptance by the participants. The participants were mostly middle-aged or senior residents and spokespersons of local civil society associations. Participation of youth was low, even though local schools and the youth centre were informed about PB.

Relationship-building

Tampere has a long tradition of developing public engagement, but the interaction between its residents and local administration remains somewhat contentious. Especially in urban planning, people have experienced that their participation has lacked influence over the planning proposals (Laine, Leino, and Santaoja 2018). Also, in PB, people had doubts about the influence of their participation. In the workshops, the participants were mixed in small groups to facilitate finding a common ground for the process. The discussions began by asking people to envision the “Tesoma of their dreams”. With this task, the city wanted to provide a fresh start for PB. However, the idea of the residents being allowed to prioritize the development measures initially produced some doubt amongst the civil servants:

Luckily, it did not happen as I feared. I feared that, when you give people free hands to plan, they will get really excited. Then, there are these regulations that affect how the city can work and limited funding, limited resources. Then, you would have to say to the people that they won’t get what they would like to have. (Civil servant)

In addition, the civil servants pondered whether the participants’ group was diverse enough. The representativity of participation was brought up:

Inside the city’s organisation, I was told that let’s choose a group of residents who are eligible to take part in it …. But I thought that they [workshops] must be open so that everyone can participate in a way they want to. People can come to one workshop or to all three workshops, but it’s up to them to decide. So that people can decide and not in a way that fifteen people are chosen to decide on behalf of the others, in a representative way. (Civil servant)

The civil servants were not used to giving decision-making power to residents, which made them doubted if the residents’ proposals and decisions were reasonable. The PB proceeded in the style of “learning by doing” since it was not a familiar tool for the
civil servants, the researchers or the residents. It was also a new way to work inside the administration itself. The process brought together civil servants from fields that had not previously co-operated extensively, which revealed the challenges of multi-actor work, especially in relation to how to divide PB tasks between city units, such as which unit was responsible for implementing the selected proposals.

Łódź: an institutionalized model for public engagement

Socio-political context

In Łódź, the interest in PB was inspired by discussions of a participatory, deliberative democracy that aims at good governance. PB can be considered a continuation of the Polish governance reforms executed following the country’s exit from its communist era, (Radzik-Maruszak and Mieczkowska-Czerniak 2013, 156).

Łódź was amongst the first Polish cities to adopt PB. It was advocated by NGOs, who promoted PB to city councillors by emphasizing renewing old governance practices to create transparency in local democracy. The NGOs were supported by international Western philanthropists, such as the Open Society Foundations of George Soros, which supports volunteer socio-political activity that aims to improve the level of democracy.

These NGOs were familiar with PB’s roots in Brazil, but according to the interviewees, the ideology of PB as a political reform did not figure eminently in how PB was executed in Łódź. Rather, the motivation originated from the pursuit of a more inclusive role for the citizens in modern democracies and the building of sustainable interactions with decision-makers, civil servants and residents. A team with members of the city council, academics, NGOs and local organizations developed the local PB model.

Objectives setting

PB was considered as “a good solution for a city” by its advocates, as one of the interviewees noted. PB was linked to the development of a modern city with a willingness to enhance its residents’ role; it was considered a tool for polishing the city’s brand. PB was seen as revolutionary in the sense that it questions the existing power structure of governance:

This participatory budget, it’s a very new thing, and it goes totally against the structure. It’s not vertical, it’s very horizontal. (Civil servant)

The interviewees considered PB to serve citizenship education. It opened the processes of administration and provided people with information on tasks that the administration was responsible for. It also taught people economic facts:

When they have to estimate the costs, there’s, even though it’s, say, building a playground, it’s not just throwing some sand on the ground. It costs actual money, and they must estimate the cost of every single element. (Civil servant)

PB can thus increase awareness of the city organization’s tasks, bureaucratic procedures and yearly cycles it must follow. It potentially guides the citizens to learn to discuss and elaborate arguments in public. With respect to communication, PB has the potential to
improve social cohesion. Interviewees addressed it as a possible means of creating a sense of community at the time when “the common good starts to become less and less of a general value”, as one civil servant said.

**Resourcing**

Łódź had stable PB resources that included a fixed budget and a permanent PB office. PB was implemented city-wide in relation to the municipal budgeting process. It was one of several tools used for organizing citizen dialogue, such as social consultations and citizen surveys. The local model was an open structured framework for setting and voting on proposals.

The allocation of the city’s yearly budget for PB has been usually from 0.5–1%. With 40 million Polish zlotys shared by the PB in 2019, Łódź was one of the Polish cities that had dedicated the largest amount of money to PB (Budziarek 2019). The number of proposals submitted has been high; almost 1,300 proposals were submitted in 2019. PB has succeeded in mobilizing the people to vote on proposals; in 2017, a total of 97,974 people voted, and 69,000 of the total votes were submitted electronically.

The local top-down model included the dedicated PB office (the first of its kind in Poland) that maintained interactions with citizens and organized deliberative meetings:

> First, a culture of openness and transparency, and everything is visible at every single stage, and people can access, can have information on what’s happening with this in this application, which is always available. Secondly, not only can they view the information, but they can join a discussion with the commission, they can voice their concerns, they can voice their support. (Civil servant)

The designated PB office enabled institutionalizing PB in government structures. To residents, this may be taken as a token of trust building; locating the PB office in the administrative structure, the city communicated its motivation for interaction with the residents.

**Decision-making**

The PB office communicated with residents who authored applications for PB. The authors got information on the procedure and were invited to discuss their proposals with a city committee that checked the applications in terms of, for example, legal issues:

> That’s a revolution in the relationship between a citizen and the government. It’s not they file an application, someone puts a stamp on it, and the person gets rejection. But here, they file an application, and someone in the City Council sits down and says, “Okay, this may not be possible. But maybe something else can be done”. (Civil servant)

Following the check, the approved proposals were published, voted on, and the successful proposals proceeded towards implementation by the municipality. Any local resident could author proposals, but they needed to be supported by 15 residents. Voting on the proposals was open to residents over 16 years of age and took place online or at designated sites.

The inclusion of citizens in the PB was challenging. Interviewees noted efforts to reach a wider social spectrum of participants, such as youth. They believed that the challenge to get people to participate originated from a wider cultural change that Polish society was
going through; in an era of individualism common action on behalf of one’s living environment was not valued as much as previously.

**Relationship-building**

Despite the general positive attitude about PB, some opposition that originated from the lack of trust towards administration existed. The citizen critique concentrated on motives and transparency of PB. Some people were unsure whether the successful proposals really got implemented or if the administration filtered out proposals that it did not approve of (see Budziarek 2019). There was also confusion on criteria for accepted proposals, particularly what tasks belonged to the administration’s responsibility. In daily life, these things were not usually visible, which is why people were unaware of them. However, these responsibilities could restricted what proposals got accepted. Some of the interviewees asked for more transparency on the selection when the city committee filtered eligible proposals for voting. If the proposals were rejected without clear grounds, trust in PB might decrease.

Our interviewees were concerned whether the administration seriously advanced democratic interaction or merely polished the city’s brand to communicate outside that democracy was a key issue in the city (cf. Zhang and Liao 2011). In addition to the NGOs insistence for the renewal of governance practices, some of the leading politicians saw the promotion of PB as a potential tool that could be used to garner election support:

The leading party in Łódź and especially the president in Łódź wanted to gain some additional points and to be elected for a second term. That was the first reason. Second reason was the climate in Poland and the changing climate about city and citizenship … In Łódź we have a few strong NGOs and quite a few local leaders, and they tried to lobby it to the city. (Researcher)

Although the PB office worked to open the decision-making process, the data demonstrated that it had not yet succeeded in convincing residents about the transparency of PB. However, since 2018 due to changes in legislation, the local government cannot change or delete, to an essential degree, the selected proposals (Budziarek 2019).

**Greater Manchester: fighting social injustice through community empowerment**

**Socio-political context**

In the Greater Manchester metropolitan area, the inspiration for PB was connected to national politics, programmes and policy making. PB was introduced in the early 2000s under Labour Party rule. The New Labour Party introduced a democratization agenda and emphasized developing the efficiency of public services. In the background of PB development, there was the political situation that resulted from the extensive privatization agenda led by Margaret Thatcher. Politicians (especially Labour ones) were concerned about reducing the power of the local administration and demanded that local decision-making be less constrained by the central government. Citizens were disappointed by institutional politics and felt that they had no influence on decisions being
made in local areas. The ideas of community participation and empowerment began to appear in urban renewal policies, but spread to other policy domains, such as those of police, health and justice (see Röcke 2014, 92–94).

Later, under the first coalition government (2010–2015), and thus a new political situation, PB was further included as part of the Big Society project that aimed at redistributing power from central administration to local communities and increasing the culture of mutuality and social responsibility. One of the early supporters of PB was the politician Hazel Blears (Labour MP, later Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government), who emphasized community empowerment and public engagement in increasing community ownership (Röcke 2014, 96, 103.). This increased interest in PB encouraged the launch of a PB network, that consists of community activists and participation professionals who approached PB from the bottom up.

Community activists, who worked together with social justice charities, such as the Church Action on Poverty and Oxfam, as well as NGOs, such as the Community Pride Initiative, were the driving forces of PB. They promoted PB as a way of strengthening community involvement, social justice and empowerment:

During the 1980s, the Church of England produced a report called “Faith in the City”, which basically said that the church should have a social justice role. This was in the process when Thatcher, Margaret Thatcher, was cutting all these services. The church was basically saying, poverty is a political issue, and the church should therefore be engaged in politics. (NGO representative)

Together with Oxfam, the Church Action on Poverty set up a learning exchange to take community activists to Brazil to learn about PB. They saw the potential of PB for providing answers to the problems that increased social injustice and deprivation of neighbourhoods were producing (see also Sintomer et al. 2012). These actors started a PB Unit (later known as the PB Network) that promotes PB in the UK. Together they started to work on a plan to apply PB to the government’s structures in the Greater Manchester area:

… we were funded by the Oxfam as part of their voice programme, so it was their programme to give voice to people who are excluded from power, women, people from migrant communities, young people, older people and how they could then have influence over their lives, their communities. (NGO representative)

**Objectives setting**

The PB was understood to be an enabler of societal well-being and an advocate of cultural change in governance. This was the result of the strong centralized governing system in the UK. The PB was not emphasized as a tool for public engagement in governance, but rather for empowerment and community-building on a local level. However, when connected to local government and service production, it was seen to contribute to people’s satisfaction with and trust in local democracy:

I think it increases happiness with local democracy. People pay more council tax in Brazil as a result of entry of PB. They actually increased the tax take because people saw the direct connections between their participation and the services they received, and we’ve seen that in the UK as well. (NGO representative)
The interviewees considered PB to have the potential to improve the relationships between the authorities and citizens. For example, the police began to utilize PB to tackle crime and to build relationships with local communities, for example, in Wythenshawe and Bolton (municipalities in the Greater Manchester area), where relations between the police and residents were not free of conflict. Creating a sense of ownership of one’s neighbourhood and identifying local problems together was believed to encourage the active agency of people in their communities, a process that, it was hoped, would further reduce the mistrust between the police and residents.

**Resourcing**

Despite the Big Society project, the autonomy of local authorities had not significantly changed. The shift towards a stronger inclusion of citizens and local communities was happening slowly. The use of PB in the Greater Manchester area reflected this institutional situation. PB projects were relatively small and were implemented outside the established policy and decision-making frameworks. There was a gap between political support and the local PB projects. For example, in Oldham (a municipality in the Greater Manchester area), there hardly existed any interactions between the Oldham City Council and the Big Local Oldham project that organized PB locally. A weak link between the administration and community levels was a problem for institutionalizing PB over time:

> It’s got to have something in it for elective members, because otherwise, they will stop it. It has to speak to service managers. It has to be part of the modernisation agenda for the internal work in the town hall, but it also has to work for community. It has to actually provide something to community. (NGO representative)

Consequently, PB practices were dependent on limited and unpredictable funding. However, participation in PB engaged individuals and community groups to identify local issues and contribute on their own to their communities. Community-based associations and third sector organizations were active participants in organizing PB, often with external funding. The most widespread approach was provided by the participatory grant-spending processes, where residents and local communities were invited to bid for projects that they implemented themselves. For example, Oldham delivered £5,000 at one round of PB, and £30,000 of police funding were available in the Wythenshawe and Longsight areas. Additionally, financial support, free use of venues and communications support were available.

**Decision-making**

Typically, PB projects focused on a particular area or a theme and were implemented as participatory grant-spending processes. For example, Oldham received a million-pound funding to develop the area from the Big Local Programme of Local Trust. As part of this programme, the NGOs organized PB as a grant-making event:

> We just made sure that they [proposals] had to be a benefit to the community. That they were within the Big Local area. We left all of the decisions about the quality of the project up to the residents. (NGO representative)
In Oldham, £15,000 were dedicated to PB in the first round. The amount was further divided into several thousand-pound grants. People sent in their proposals, which were then put on public display. The authors first introduced their proposals at public voting events before voting was opened for the public in the event. People over 16 years of age who lived, worked, volunteered or were members of groups in the area were eligible to vote. Outside of these events, there were not many other opportunities for deliberation (see Röcke 2014).

**Relationship-building**

To apply external funding and to implement PB proposals required solid interaction and trust amongst local actors. People themselves came up with ideas, made proposals and implemented the winning projects, which may have increased trust amongst participants as there was no “middle-person” to filter proposals. The process was more direct and transparent than in administration led PB.

Local events were important venues for promoting proposals. In these events, the variation in the skills of people to promote their proposals might have caused inequality in how to get attention to proposals. People with promoting skills tended to receive more votes for their proposals. To address this issue, local actors organized training, for example, in presentation skills, to enable equal possibilities for proposals to get votes.

**Discussion**

Following an interpretive view on policy translation attentive to contexts and practices, this article has demonstrated three settings of participation in PB. The findings strengthen the previous studies that actors interpret travelling policy innovations in relation to local situations (e.g. Ganuza and Baiocchi 2012; Wampler and Hartz-Karp 2012; McCann and Ward 2013). There exists no universal model for PB, but it needs to be adjusted to local contexts to have relevance on the ground (Sintomer et al. 2012). According to Gilman and Wampler (2019), for example, the institutional design of PB affects its outcomes. By taking context-specificity as a starting point, this article has scrutinized the role of *settings of participation* created by contexts in local operationalisations of PB.

Mukhtarov (2014, 71–72) stresses that little is known about what makes certain travelling policies spread and produce impact on the ground. Gilman and Wampler (2019) point out the institutional rules that govern PB to influence the degree to which PB can become more than a temporary experiment of governance. In the study of Scottish PB, O’Hagan et al. (2017) address that following expectations and principles of PB requires clarity in articulating its purpose and intention. Furthermore, this article argues the importance of being attentive to whether local settings enable participation in PB in a way that supports its sustainable adoption in governance.

Five enabling practices (socio-political context, objectives setting, resourcing, decision-making and relationship-building) exert influence on the settings of participation in at least three ways. The local settings created by contexts and practices enable participation by (1) developing structures that influence the continuity of PB, (2) suggesting roles for participants and (3) shaping the level of interaction. This is
now demonstrated with three operationalisations of PB: Pop-up PB, traditional PB and do-it-yourself PB. Based on the data, Tampere is an example of a “pop-up PB” where interest had increased in PB, but where political will was not sufficiently strong to establish it as a permanent participatory practice. Łódź is identified as a “traditional PB” that developed PB on a city-wide level connected to its yearly budget. PB in the Greater Manchester area is reminiscent of “do-it-yourself (DIY) PB”, where independent local actors organized PB to fight social inequality in a situation where there was discontent about the ability of the administration to tackle the issue.

**Continuity**

In a pop-up PB in Tampere, interest in PB was emerging. In principle, PB had political acceptance, but support in terms of resources was limited, partly because of its novelty as a participatory method. It was implemented as a project, that works well where PB is being introduced; for administration, a pop-up project is relatively easy to organize without pressure for further commitment to PB. Funding came partly from external sources which left little financial risk in experimenting with PB. The Pop-up form also enabled focusing on a particular issue instead of a city-wide PB process, which would have demanded significantly more resources. City-wide PB establishes more requirements to arrange, for example, voting with equal and valid methods. On one hand, the pop-up PB enabled more flexibility to plan the process than a city-wide PB. On the other hand, the small resources of the pop-up form limited participation, such as participation by voting.

The Pop-up PB proposed a framework for participation with clearly defined aims and focus (cf. O’Hagan et al. 2017). However, it enabled only temporary participation as PB was not adopted as a long-term participatory tool at the time.

In Łódź, a “traditional PB”, the introduction of PB based on the trend of developing deliberation between administration and citizens. Stable resources, the PB office and staff, and an annual city-wide PB process with budget funding enabled long-term commitment to PB as a participatory instrument. The repeatable process provided a participatory setting that supported the continuity of participation with PB.

The DIY PB in Greater Manchester had been developed as a counterforce to centralized governance; it was practiced in a socio-political environment in which encouraging active citizenship was considered a way to respond to social injustice. Although PB was included in national policies, local experiments have lacked the resources, and the general political support, that would move PB towards a more institutionalized instrument of public engagement in local governance. The rather distant relations between the city authorities and residents have led to organization of PB through civic associations and NGOs. However, for the continuity of participation the dependency of the DIY PB on external funding causes uncertainty.

**Roles of participants**

The smaller-scale projects in Greater Manchester provided participants with a relatively strong and independent role in PB. Civil society actors, such as Big Local Oldham, applied for independent funding from external sources to implement PB. This DIY
PB, participatory grant-making, based on proposals that local people implemented themselves. PB literature has discussed whether the direct involvement of citizens leads to increased satisfaction with governance. It is suggested that PBs best serve areas with minimal public resources, because participants know what projects respond to their needs (Boulding and Wampler 2010, 126–127). The DIY PB may have potential to respond to local needs, as the grass-roots participants themselves carry the responsibility of PB.

The traditional PB in Łódź has maintained a rather neutral role for its participants. PB was defined and implemented by the administration, which invited people to join as participants who were presented with a predefined path for how to participate. Although NGOs were active when first introducing PB, in later phases they have had a smaller role. With its pop-up PB, Tampere sits somewhere between Łódź and Greater Manchester. The pilot was set at the neighbourhood level with deliberative workshops and civil servants touring in the area to develop close interaction with participants. As the city’s first PB, civil servants promoted that participants were invited to develop the local PB model. In pop-up PB, residents acted as co-designers of PB as they participated in developing the new participatory tool and evaluated its use in the workshops. Barbera, Sicilia, and Steccolini (2016, 1093) emphasize noting the actual way in which people get to participate in PB. When invited as co-producers, people are more positive with their role than if the PB appears to be controlled by the municipality or elite groups in, for example, pre-selecting the proposals.

Level of interaction

The pop-up PB favoured close interaction in deliberative workshops and neighbourhood visits. The project staff was small, making it easy for residents to know whom to contact in the administration. Established ways of organizing PB had not yet been created, which encouraged flexible interaction. The PB had a fresh start, which supported the PB staff to plan the arrangements, such as organizing meetings between civil servants and residents. Close interaction was favoured also inside the administration, where PB increased the communication amongst different administrative sectors. The connection between stronger deliberation and a smaller number of participants has been noted by Gilman and Wampler (2019, 24) in their study on US and Brazilian PBs. The US cases that emphasized deliberation created more opportunities to engage in community building and interaction with participants than the Brazilian cases, which drew on representative democracy.

The city-wide, traditional PB had resources for a stable and continuing PB but possessed the risk of leading to more formal and distant interactions between residents and administration. A level of mistrust towards the administration influenced people’s eagerness to participate and the motives for PB were questioned (see Budziarek 2019). However, the city sought to open the process by inviting authors of proposals to discuss the selection criteria with civil servants. This kind of interaction has been noticed to improve the quality of PB decisions, instead of relying only on voting processes (Barbera, Sicilia, and Steccolini 2016).

In the DIY PB, the grass-roots actors authored and implemented proposals. Proximity to the context helped to avoid bureaucratic procedures, which may have encouraged
participation. Local topics to which PB is sought to respond to were familiar to participants, which potentially enhanced interaction on collective needs. However, in DIY PB there appeared to exist little deliberation on discussing the proposals.

**Conclusion**

Providing settings for an open, meaningful and inclusive interaction has been one of the goals of developing public engagement in governance. PB has been celebrated as potentially responding to this goal. However, PB is not transferred to predefined situations in perfect rationality (McCann and Ward 2013; Mukhtarov 2014), but it is enacted in public engagement practices as an assemblage of contexts, activities and actors where the understanding of PB and the agency of participating actors are negotiated.

This article provides insight into role of **settings of participation** in the translation process of three PB cases. The settings significantly condition the attempts to pursue open and inclusive interaction as they shape (1) the continuity of PB, (2) the roles of participants and (3) the level of interaction. However, the aim has not been to evaluate whether the studied cases have succeeded in creating an open and inclusive participation or create a comparative study of the three PB cases but to highlight what kind of influences the different translations of PB, the pop-up PB, the traditional PB and the DIY PB, may have in terms of enabling participation.

PB is considered to foster inclusive and equal participation. However, as the settings of participation vary between places, the aspects of inclusiveness and equality are manifested differently. For further studies, this raises important questions on how the aims of inclusion and equity of participation are defined, operationalized and answered in the multitude of PB cases.

Ganuza and Baiocchi (2012) distinguished two phases in the travel of PB, where PB was first travelling as a reform instrument that later transformed into a neutral participatory device of governance. Based on the analyzed case studies, a third phase of “customized” PBs is recognizable, where PB is translated to respond to the distinctive needs and topical questions of local governments. This highlights the significance of studying the local settings to identify local elements, decisions and frameworks that direct the translation of PB. This view is pertinent when looking at the current global development of PB, where there appears to exist a few popular, thriving “top” PBs, such as New York, Paris or Barcelona, that attract a wide interest among PB scholars and practitioners. However, at the same time evidence exists of cases where PB is ceased, such as its birthplace, Porto Alegre, that has now suspended PB (Núñez 2018). Finally, this development calls for studies to investigate the enabling or hindering role of local settings in the adoption of PB.

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