



HIC - Revisiting the democratic promise of participatory budgeting in light of competing political, good governance and technocratic logics

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Participatory budgeting (PB) has been a major innovation in participatory governance worldwide, with more than 3,000 experiences listed across 40 countries. PB has also diversified over its 30 years, with many contemporary experiments (referred to as PBs) only tangentially related to the original project to "radically democratize democracy". We propose a taxonomy to distinguish the logics currently underpinning PB in practice: political (for radical democratic change), "good governance" (to improve links between the public and citizens' spheres), and "technocratic" (to optimize the use and transparency of public resources for citizens' benefit). Illustrating these competing rationales through contemporary experiences, we reflect on the contributions of the good governance and technocratic frameworks to managerial and state modernization. Undoubtedly, these help explain PB's growing attraction for proponents of the good governance agenda. However, rekindling PB's promise for democratic deepening, we argue, requires refocusing on its deliberative quality. We draw attention to civic education and empowerment of participants as key components of PB practices intent on opening pathways towards alternative political systems – indeed, of materializing Henri Lefebvre's "right to the city".

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