The deliberative turn in participation: the problem of inclusion and deliberative opportunities in participatory budgeting

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Participation has undergone a communicative shift, which has favoured the organization of new participatory processes based on classic principles of deliberation theory. These experiments go beyond traditional protest: they include a communicative element with the aim of defining a public politics, which places them alongside models of deliberative governance. The present work sets out the characteristics of these new instruments (participatory budgeting, PB) in order to find out which problems deliberative governance initiatives are faced with. The conclusions tell us that the inequalities in participation are significant. Nevertheless, PB enables most participants to make effective use of their opportunities for deliberation. From this standpoint, the challenge for deliberative governance does not seem to be the deliberative capabilities of individuals, but rather the design of participatory procedures and the participation of individuals. We may question whether the administration can guarantee impartial political spaces that are as inclusive as possible.

Keywords: participatory budgeting; deliberation; inclusion

Towards deliberative governance

In recent years, the theory of democracy has undergone a shift towards the theory of deliberation (Manin, 1987; Bohman, 1998; Dryzek, 2000). This shift reflects the growing importance of communication in politics, moving away from authoritarian codes, and opening legitimization processes based on deliberation, accommodation, or mutual influence (Habermas, 1996; Knight and Johnson, 1997). However, above all, it has meant the incorporation of individuals in politics as competent rational agents who think about their preferences in the light of open debate (Chambers, 2003). Parallel to the communicative shift in the theory of democracy, participatory theory has undergone a similar shift, at least for its practitioners. Little more than a decade ago, a representative sample of European countries broadened the conception of participation, advocating deliberative

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