

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING WORLD ATLAS

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING AND DISTRICT'S LABORATORIES

DEBATE ENGAGING CITIZENS IN DISCUSSING REVENUES:
CHALLENGES, EXPERIENCES AND LESSON LEARNED

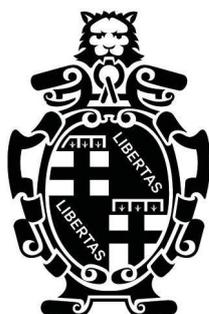


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PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING AND DISTRICT'S LABORATORIES

BOLOGNA



I. Name of the country where the experience is/was located

Italy.

II. Name of the City

Bologna.

III. Name of the Region

Emilia Romagna.

IV. Name of the organization that promoted the experience

Foundation for Urban Innovation (FIU) and Municipality of Bologna.

V. Typology of the organization that promoted the experience

Municipal Government and other institution/organization.

VI. Name of the process

Participatory Budgeting and District's Laboratories.

VII. Dates or year(s) in which the citizens engagement happened

Three editions which started in 2017 and were gradually enriched in 2019-2020 (Third edition – still ongoing).

VIII. Was the experience formally part of PB?

Yes.

IX. Short description of the methodology of the experience

Can participatory processes produce added value in terms of wealth for a city? Bologna municipal government believes that is possible, especially if immaterial contributions of citizens are given monetary value, and they help in saving resources that can be used for other projects.

Therefore, since 2017, Bologna organizes district's laboratories: through meetings, assemblies in all neighbourhoods and via a web-portal, the local government (with the mediation of the Foundation for Urban Innovation) aims to create a space for listening, collaboration and co-production processes to bring out priorities, needs, directions and proposals of citizens, while imagining shared solutions. In this scenario, Participatory Budgeting became a core part of Bologna methodologies for conducting social dialogue and involve citizens in the decision-making about their city.

The process revolves around the concept of "proximity": on one side the term refers to the physical scale at which the District Laboratories operate, on the other it refers to the effort and willingness to put social and human capital at the centre of public choices. The proximity dimension enhances and activates networks of discussion and practice, trying to identify administrative tools and innovations capable of enabling the civic potential to propose new models of city management.

The Laboratories, using the necessary tools and methods depending on the context, thus become the field of experimentation of an open process, which is nourished by the practice and the experiences made, and which wants to establish a direct link between needs and public policies.

After three years of activity and continuous learning, it is possible to identify some elements that define and distinguish the proximity approach of the Foundation for Urban Innovation.

In 2017 and in 2018 citizens could propose and vote projects to renew and regenerate public spaces on specific areas of the district, selected by the districts' council. The most voted project for each district was the one that the municipality had the obligation to implement in the next few years.

In 2019 another option was added: in fact, citizens could also propose and co-produce policies that were voted as priority for a specific District. The actions corresponding to three most voted priorities of a district - approved by the district's council - can be supported and implemented through notices, calls or via collaborations agreements.

The latter is a form of cooperation that among the municipality and groups of citizens, which exists since 2014, when a specific Ruling Document was approved, in order to give the legal possibility to the Town Hall to support citizens' initiatives aimed to take care of both material and immaterial commons (places, services, digital infrastructures etc.).

Such form of collaborations are explicitly valued by Bologna Municipality as a source of revenues, and as a form of reproductive work based on "caring" common goods that deserve recognition and praise, because it allows the city to save resources (both human and financial) for granting a better maintenance of places and services that - otherwise - would have to be maintained or improved through public interventions.

In such a perspective, we consider that the more than 450 existing "collaboration agreements" (or "pacts", as they are formally named) represent a sort of crowdsourced contribution to the city wealth, as their presence allows to "free" for the sake of new investments a volume of resources that traditionally would be devoted to the current expenditure chapters.

Therefore, within the framework of participatory budgeting and neighbourhood laboratories, a line was introduced in order to co-fund and incentivize the construction of such pacts, which are rewarded for their meaningful contribution to the citizens wellbeing, coming from organized groups of citizens themselves.

X. Short description of the results of the experience

Bologna municipality met almost 14.000 people in three years, during public meetings in the 6 districts. 109 propositions were admitted to the voting stage (27 in 2017, 33 in 2018 and 32 projects on public space plus 47 priorities for the districts proposed in 2019/2020). 12 winning projects were financed (one per each district in 2017 and in 2018). Out of these, 2 building sites closed already, while the other 10 projects are ongoing.

The 2019/2020 edition is just re-starting from the voting stage after a few month stop due to the COVID pandemic; so, in few months all the proposals that include collaboration agreements will be known. Signed collaboration agreements are more than 450 since 2014, and is expected that the new dialogue established with participatory budgeting could help them this year to increase their number.

XI. Some data on participants

14.000 people participated in the public assemblies (7.000 in 2019, 5.000 in 2018, 2040 in 2017);

30.932 people voted online through the municipality's website (14.584 in 2017 and 16.348 in 2018; for the edition 2019-2020 voting has been delayed by the pandemic).

XII. Weblink or other sources



<http://partecipa.comune.bologna.it/node>

<http://www.fondazioneinnovazioneurbana.it/>

XIII. Name and address of the person who answered the questions

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