

# The National Participatory Budgeting in Portugal: Opportunities and Challenges for Scaling up Citizen Participation in Policymaking

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*“Participation, which is also a form of intervention, is too serious and ambivalent a matter to be taken lightly, or reduced to an amoeba word lacking in any precise meaning, or a slogan, or fetish or, for that matter moly an instrument or methodology. Reduced to such trivialities, not only does it cease to be a boon, but it runs the risk of acting as a deceptive myth or a dangerous tool for manipulation.” (Rahnema, 2010, 138-139)*

## **Introduction**

Discussing the scaling up of Participatory Budgeting is a long-standing and challenging issue in this field of study and practice. The implementation of the first edition of the National Participatory Budgeting in Portugal (NPB) in 2017 provides some key insights which will encourage future debate. With this in mind, the chapter firstly provides an outline of the scholarly debate about scaling up citizen participation in policymaking. Some important contributions in this field of study focus on the deliberative system of participatory institutions and the State Participatory Budgeting in Rio Grande Sul, in Brazil, whose experience is considered paramount worldwide. Literature on Brazil helps untangle some of the challenges that scal-

ing up Participatory Budgeting should consider focusing on: (i) reliance on a network of interconnected institutions on different scales; (ii) driving of claims from local to upper scales; (iii) adoption of direct and representative approaches to participation; and (iv) taking advantage of knowledge transfer and production in informal arenas. Secondly, the chapter describes the institutional design of the NPB, the first national Participatory Budgeting ever implemented in the world. The third part of the chapter analyses the NPB in light of the main lessons learned from the Brazilian deliberative system and the state Participatory Budgeting implemented in Rio Grande do Sul. The analysis is aimed at highlighting opportunities and challenges from the NPB and hopefully broadening the debate over scaling up Participatory Budgeting. The discussion argues that future editions of the NPB could rely on the formal identification of figures intermediating between citizens and national government. The inclusion of these figures could further be improved by a reframed strategy of interconnections between NPB and governments on lower scales, as well as with other participatory initiatives in the country, namely local PBs.

### **The Participatory Budgeting**

In 1989, the municipality of Porto Alegre designed and implemented the first Participatory Budgeting (PB) in the world, providing citizens with the opportunity to have their say in the allocation of a share of the municipal budget. The PB was included in the local political agenda by the Popular Front (“Frente Popular”), a party coalition led by the Workers’ Party (“Partido dos Trabalhadores”) and the former Brazilian Communist Party, currently the Popular Socialist Party (“Partido Popular Socialista”). In subsequent years, as argued by Souza (2015), the PB became one of the most important political platforms for the political campaign of the Workers’ Party. Beyond that, PB became an international reference for those thinkers, practitioners, and politicians that were advocating for innovations in democratic governance at large (Avritzer, 2006; Smith, 2009).

Praised during the World Social Forums that took place in the early 2000s in Brazil, and acknowledged as an effective practice in operationalising goals of social justice through the redistribution of socio-economic resources to the most disadvantaged sectors of civil society, PBs were spread by post-communist and alter-globalist movements

worldwide (Baiocchi, 2005). At the beginning of the 2000s, transnational and international agencies also paid a great deal of attention to the potential for PBs to support new patterns of governance for democracies affected by the spread of citizenry distrust. The World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations, and the European Union incorporated PBs, and the whole package of participatory methods, as one of the key pillars of a new age for local governance (WB, 1994; EU, 2001; OECD, 2001; UNDESA, 2008). The convergence of these agencies over PBs raised interest and concerns among scholars, as the extensive dissemination of new guidelines and toolkits, together with the compilation of comprehensive lists of good participatory practices around the world, unveiled risks of political co-optation. More pointedly, some scholars argued that the convergence of transnational and international agencies aimed to make the “invisible hand” of neoliberalism manipulate participatory processes to the detriment of goals of social justice and economic redistribution (Dagnino, 2004; Baiocchi e Ganuza, 2016). Evidence of the alleged shift from the original goals promoted in Porto Alegre to the instrumentalisation of PB in favour of economic and political elites was, according to some thinkers, the neutralisation of the political debate within participatory arenas and the reduction of deliberation around governance issues (Leal, 2010).

The worldwide dissemination of PBs relies, therefore, on the actions of both left-

ist and neoliberalist agents.

From this controversial convergence, PBs have been designed and implemented mostly on a local scale, due to the proximity between electors and elected (Pateman, 1980). However, concerns have been raised about risks for the instrumental reduction of the potential of citizen participation in policymaking (Avritzer and Ramos, 2016). Whereas local democracy is celebrated by political scientists as the most adequate setting for public deliberation, scholars increasingly recognise the need to reflect upon concrete opportunities for crossing the boundaries between neighbourhoods and cities (Fung, 2015). Brazil, and more recently Portugal, prove that scaling up mechanisms of citizen participation is not merely a question of theory. Scholarly debate on the “deliberative system” of participatory institutions in Brazil has highlighted some main features for mechanisms that aim to include citizen voices within decision-making at different levels of governance. While this is true, the scaling up of participatory budgeting in Rio Grande do Sul at the state level further provides insights for the discussions around the NPB in Portugal.

### Learning from Brazil

In Brazil, the deliberative system of participatory institutions provides mechanisms of citizen participation aimed at influencing policymaking at the local, regional, and federal levels. The three main participatory institutions – the National Councils, the Regional Conferenc-

es, and the PBs – were designed and took place during different historical phases, therefore playing different roles for the participation in decision-making. The (i) National Councils gather organised actors from civil society, together with decision-makers, to formulate, implement and monitor public policies from the (ii) Regional Conferences, which collect societal inputs from the regional scale. Lastly, (iii) PBs are implemented at the local level and, out of formal interaction with Conferences and Councils, provide mechanisms of both direct and representative participation. The articulation of participation in the deliberative system on different scales is aimed at ensuring that citizen voices in decision-making can be effectively driven up to the federal system. Towards this aim, participatory institutions rely on the interplay of direct and representative forms of participation (Cabraia, 2011). Likewise, citizens are allowed to elect delegates and councillors to represent their voices in local PBs. The articulation among the participatory institutions where elected delegates aggregate citizens' claims at each level to intermediate with governments, becomes more valuable when it results in local claims being escalated to the federal system (Pogrebinski, 2013). Circulation of social agents among the participatory institutions and other informal arenas further ensures the interconnections among participatory institutions, as well as between them and the representative democracy system. Almeida and Cunha (2016) argue that informal arenas can, on the one hand,

effectively integrate different points of view but, on the other, prevent the most marginalised sectors from full participation. For similar reasons, Mendonça (2016) argues that the potential “connectivity” among arenas should be improved through the circulation of key actors. The author (*ibid.*) advocates that civil servants should defend the voice of the most marginalised; mass media should make public announcements on deliberation and its outcomes; and activists should supervise the performance of decision-makers and highlight contradictions that emerge. The role of these key actors should guarantee the fair development of the deliberative system at large. Towards this end, Avritzer and Ramos (2016) acknowledge the need to scale out participation by ensuring institutional inclusiveness as discussed above, and in addition, scale it up. Scaling up, according to the authors (*ibid.*) can either consist of citizens invited at the local scale to deliberate over national issues (weak version) or cumulate and replicate the outcomes of deliberative meetings at the local level in order to constitute a new national public sphere.

Considering the framework established by the deliberative system in Brazil, and on the basis of the sound experience of local PBs, the State of Rio Grande do Sul conducted a PB at the state level. The Workers' Party State governor Olivio Dutra, former Mayor of Porto Alegre, capital city of the State, initiated the process in 1998 (regional law 1179/1998) which was labelled “Popular Consultation” and aimed at including the voice of the peo-

ple into the allocation of a share of the state budget. The leading role was played by Municipal Development Councils called “Comudes” and Regional Development Councils called “Coredes”. The Comudes were required to organise local meetings and invite citizens to elect their delegates. The Coredes were composed of citizen delegates and political representatives, who informed the state government on the outcomes of the Comudes and supervised the implementation of the projects agreed by the community, which were included in the state budget. As pinpointed by Linke (2009), the election of Tarso Genro in 2011 as governor of the state further led to the creation of the new State System of Citizen Participation, which aimed to provide a comprehensive platform of participation. However, the change of political leadership in 2015 had controversial consequences as, according to some scholars, it led to the slow dismantling of the system of participation in the state (Carbonai et al., 2017).

Insights from the deliberative system in Brazil and the implementation of the state PB in Rio Grande do Sul can help reflect upon the recent implementation of the NPB in Portugal for at least two reasons. The first reason is that they provide a considerable amount of theoretical reflections and evidence that are worthy learning from. The second reason, related to the first is that the State PB in Rio Grande do Sul represents an international comparable case of PBs on a larger scale, and its actions can be positively understood within the framework of the abovementioned participatory institutions, although out of formal relations.<sup>1</sup> Four insights about scaling up can be identified accordingly:

- Scaling up citizen participation in policymaking should rely on a system of institutions on different scales;
- Scaling up citizen participation in policymaking should allow citizen claims to grow from the local to the national scale;
- Scaling up citizen participation in policymaking should rely on different approaches to participation, namely direct and representative;
- Scaling up citizen participation in policymaking should take advantage of the knowledge transfer & production in informal arenas.

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<sup>1</sup> Further international examples of participatory processes on larger scales are provided in chapters 3 of this book.

## The National Participatory Budgeting in Portugal

In Portugal, the dissemination of PBs has grown extensively at the local scale in the last fifteen years (Dias, 2013). The country currently holds the world record of PBs when considering the ratio between number of PBs and number of local authorities (308 municipalities and 3092 parishes). In a recent search conducted by the author of this chapter on the national observatory of participation website in August 2017 (website: [www.portugalparticipa.pt/monitoring](http://www.portugalparticipa.pt/monitoring)), more than 180 ongoing PBs were identified at both municipal (around 80%) and parish levels (20%). Although the majority of PBs have opened the deliberation on all the policy areas managed by city councils and/or parish governments, a substantial number of the PBs have constituted their public on the basis of age cohorts, as around 20% of the ongoing PBs are designed to exclusively engage young people.

Against this background of diffuse implementation of local PBs, the NPB was included in the Portuguese Socialist Party programme for the most recent national elections held in 2015. The elections represented an historical turn for national public agenda, as between 2011 and 2014 the conservative coalition leading the national government agreed with international lenders (International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank, and European Commission) on a bailout of seventy-eight billion euros and an austerity-driven agenda as a condition to this bailout. The Socialist Party, supported by the Communist Party and the Left Block, issued the NPB under the Law 42/2016 (Art.3) out of alignment with trends of economic retrenchment, and aimed to recover the growing citizenry disaffection towards political institutions and representatives. More specifically, the NPB covenant issued by the national government lists the following goals (Diário da República nº 21/2017, Série I de 2017-01-30):

- Reinforce the quality of democracy by means of participatory democracy, consistent with the Portuguese Constitution;
- Engage citizens in decision-making by promoting active and informed participation;
- Promote economic and social cohesion by implementing projects able to link people from different areas of the country.

Towards the same end, together with the NPB, the national government also implemented two further Participatory Budgeting at the

national level: the PB for youth, with an amount of three hundred thousand euros , and the PB for schools with tailored budgets allocated to public primary and high schools in the country (Falanga, 2018).<sup>2</sup> The former was coordinated by the State Secretary of Youth and Sport, while the Institute for Financial Management of Education in partnership with the General Direction of Schools was in charge of the latter. The PB for youth aimed at engaging young people between the ages of 14 and 30, and its institutional design reproduced the key pillars of the NPB (more information at: [www.opjovem.gov.pt](http://www.opjovem.gov.pt)).<sup>3</sup> The three PBs implemented at the national level were implemented for the first time in 2017 and were all confirmed for their second edition in 2018.

Figure 1 Logotypes of the three PBs implemented at the national level in 2017



Source NPB: [www.opp.gov.pt](http://www.opp.gov.pt); PB for youth: [www.opjovem.gov.pt](http://www.opjovem.gov.pt); PB for schools: [www.opescolas.pt](http://www.opescolas.pt)

Focussing on the NPB, the first edition was conducted in 2017 under the supervision of the State Secretary for Administrative Modernisation (hereinafter: Secretary). The NPB was provided with three million euros to be allocated to national and regional projects. The distribution of the budget covered three hundred and seventy-five thousand euros for one or more national projects; three hundred and seventy-five thousand euros for each one of the five continental regions (North, Centre, Lisbon and Tagus Valley – AML, Alentejo, Algarve); and three hundred and seventy-five thousand euros for each one of the two autonomous regions (Madeira and Azores). Citizens

<sup>2</sup> NP for schools distributed the budget to public schools as follows: (i) 500 euros to schools with fewer than 500 inscribed students; (ii) tailored amount calculated from one euro per student in schools with more than 500 inscribed students (more information at: [www.opescolas.pt](http://www.opescolas.pt))

<sup>3</sup> One main difference between NPB and PB for youth regards the criteria for budget allocation to the regions. Whereas NPB defined a minimum budget for the seven regions, the PB for youth allocated the budget for national and regional projects without defining a minimum corresponding amount.

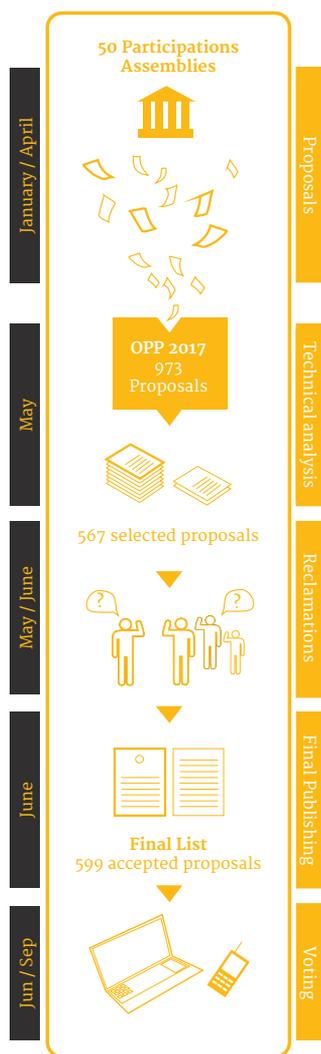
were invited to participate in open meetings organised by the Secretary in all the regions of the country between January and April 2017.

Collected proposals were analysed by government ministries and appointed institutional bodies according to the corresponding policy area. The analysis was run throughout May 2017 and aimed to assess whether the proposals matched the criteria of availability, which were made explicit in the NPB covenant. The criteria imposed the identification of the scale of implementation, which should either be national (i.e. involving more than one region) or regional (involving more than one municipality), and one in of the predefined policy areas: culture, science, education and adult learning, and agriculture for continental regions; justice and public administration for autonomous regions. The criteria also regarded the exclusion of proposals that were: about infrastructure building; in support of private service delivery; in contraposition to the national government coalition programme; technically unattainable; impossible to transform into a project; in excess of budget for each single project (two hundred thousand euros maximum).<sup>4</sup>

After the collection and analysis of the proposals, citizens had the opportunity to request further explanations regarding the exclusion of their proposals. This stage altered the final list of the proposals to be put to the public vote, which remained open for approximately three months.

Government declared that approximately two thousand and five hundred people took part in the fifty open meetings organised throughout the country (Diário da República nº 245/2017, Série I de 2017-12-22). The collected proposals amounted to 973, and their assessment resulted in 567 accepted (and 406 rejected) proposals. The requirement for further explanation provided the op-

Figure 2 NPB cycle in 2017



Source: author's own work

<sup>4</sup> Each one of the two national projects amounts to two hundred thousand euros, which requires an adjustment to the budget allocated for national projects that exceeds three hundred and seventy five thousand euros.

portunity to review rejected proposals, resulting in the re-inclusion of 32. The final list of 599 proposals to be put to the vote covered almost two-thirds of regional projects and a third of national projects. In particular, from the 350 proposals received for projects at the national level, 202 were finally accepted, while from the 623 proposals received for regional projects, 397 of them were put to the vote.

Public voting was opened through ID identification via website and SMS, providing each citizen with two votes: one for regional and one for national proposals. The identification of 38 projects resulting from voting corresponded to around 4% of the received proposals. National and regional scales were covered by respectively two and 36 projects to be implemented within 24 months (tab.1).

**Table 1** Received proposals, accepted proposals, and projects won at national and regional scales

| Scale    |          | Received proposals | Accepted proposals | Projects |
|----------|----------|--------------------|--------------------|----------|
| National |          | 350                | 202                | 2        |
| Regional | North    | 394                | 248                | 6        |
|          | Algarve  | 302                | 167                | 5        |
|          | Centre   | 514                | 309                | 4        |
|          | AML      | 275                | 145                | 7        |
|          | Alentejo | 275                | 211                | 4        |
|          | Azores   | 128                | 65                 | 4        |
|          | Madeira  | 153                | 72                 | 6        |

Source author's own work

Considering the policy areas covered by the 599 accepted proposals, culture received the highest number of proposals (=370), resulting in the highest number of winning projects (=13), including the two projects to be implemented at the national level. Conversely, the public administration policy area received 24 proposals, resulting in five winning projects. This data, however, should be interpreted in light of the criteria for budget distribution and the predefinition of policy areas. The distribution of the budget in the NPB supplies each region with the same amount of public funding. Against this backdrop, however, the regions have very diverse sociodemographics – with the largest population in the North region (3.818.722), followed by the metropol-

itan area of Lisbon (2.808.414) and the central region (2.348.453) – education and socioeconomic rankings, whose disparity has been aggravated by the implementation of the austerity agenda (OECD, 2015). In addition, the predefinition of the policy areas also comprised the distinction between continental and autonomous regions. The public administration policy area consisted of autonomous regions only, and the rate of success from accepted proposals to projects was anything but low, as five projects won out of seven accepted proposals.

**Table 2** Received proposals, accepted proposals, and projects won according to policy areas

| Policy area           | Received proposals | Accepted proposals | Projects |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Culture               | 370                | 288                | 14       |
| Agriculture           | 165                | 99                 | 3        |
| Science               | 126                | 97                 | 8        |
| Education             | 253                | 96                 | 3        |
| Justice               | 35                 | 12                 | 5        |
| Public Administration | 24                 | 7                  | 5        |

Source author's own work

The high rate of proposals received and projects funded in the culture policy area can be connected to at least two contingencies. The first concerns the effects that budgetary cuts in this policy area have had on a national scale. For example, in 2013 this policy area covered 0.1% of the national GDP, lower than the 1% international average as recently claimed back by spread protests in the country due to 2018 State budget cuts. Another piece of evidence is related to the predefinition of the policy areas, and more pointedly to the difficulty that citizens may have had in classifying their proposals into a specific area. As the Minister of the Presidency and Administrative Modernisation declared during the public announcement of the 38 projects, the majority of the received proposals addressed borderline and crosscutting issues that could potentially cover more than one policy area.<sup>5</sup> The high number of proposals in the culture policy area may have been biased by this limitation, which

<sup>5</sup> The announcement of the 38 projects took place on the 14th of September 2017 in Lisbon.

could suggest the potential for NPB to reformulate the “boxes” of policy classification in future editions.

**Table 3** Distribution of the projects according to the seven regions

| Policy area           | North | Centre | Alentejo | Algarve | AML | Azores | Madeira |
|-----------------------|-------|--------|----------|---------|-----|--------|---------|
| Culture               | 4     | 2      | 1        | 2       | 2   |        |         |
| Agriculture           | 1     | 1      |          |         | 1   |        |         |
| Science               | 1     | 1      | 1        | 2       | 3   |        |         |
| Education             |       |        | 1        | 1       | 1   |        |         |
| Justice               |       |        |          |         |     | 3      | 2       |
| Public Administration |       |        |          |         |     | 1      | 4       |

Source author’s own work

Of around eighty thousand possible votes, 12406 votes were cast for projects at the national level and 24127 votes for projects on the regional scale, making a total of 36533 votes which decided the final list of 38 projects. This data shows that not all the people who voted used the two available votes (one for national and one for regional projects), and that a higher proportion of votes were cast on regional projects than national ones. Unfortunately, disaggregated data on votes for national and regional projects, as well as geographic origin and sociodemographic characterisation of voters was not made available by the Secretary. A final consideration regards the final budget allocated by the national government for the implementation of the projects, which exceeds the initial amount of three million euros, and comprises a total of 3.2 million euros.

**Table 4** Projects and corresponding votes

| Scale    |  | Name of the project  | Number of votes                   |
|----------|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| National |  | Culture for all  | 6614                              |
|          |  | Bullfight, cultural heritage of Portugal                             | 5792                              |
| Regional | North  | National network of toy libraries                                    | 8373                              |
|          |  | Agriculture and culture: a promising relation                        | 1436                              |
|          |  | Tales and legends from Trás-os-Montes                                | 760                               |
|          |  | School of arts and crafts  | 705                               |
|          |  | Science in the park  | 653                               |
|          |  | Theatre and the saws   | 424                               |
|          |  | Centre   | Botanic garden of Domingos Valley |
|          | Interpretation Centre in Óbidos Lagoa                                      |  | 1601                              |
|          | Cultural and ethnographic route in Arcês river banks, Frio and Tagus river |  | 867                               |
|          | Aveiro and Albergaria connected via the ria                                |  | 348                               |
|          | Alentejo   | In-between dialogues   | 753                               |
|          |  | Degebe river's mills: contributions to save their memory             | 627                               |
|          |  | Health education: teaching, preventing, and saving money             | 300                               |
|          |  | Alentejo taverns: art and science                                    | 202                               |
|          | Algarve  | Algarve Digital Library  | 703                               |
|          |  | My beach   | 420                               |
|          |  | The celebration of "Nossa Senhora dos Navegantes"                    | 150                               |
|          |  | Eco-science  | 137                               |
|          |  | Park guide   | 117                               |
|          | AML  | Singing groups for senior people                                     | 260                               |
|          |  | Transformation of different varieties of traditional apples          | 221                               |
|          |  | Cold fire: science for the prevention of fires                       | 124                               |
|          |  | Digital communication of proximity                                   | 102                               |
|          |  | Adopt one of ours: platform against loneliness                       | 100                               |
|          |  | Makerspace in the school: a project for education in the XXI century | 88                                |
|          |  | How to deal with animals   | 75                                |

| Scale    |         | Name of the project   | Number of votes |
|----------|---------|---|-----------------|
| Regional | Azores  | Exploring routes  | 504             |
|          |         | Citizenship promotion and prevention of miseducation and violence | 64              |
|          |         | Training for prisoners  | 60              |
|          |         | Creation of a trainers' grant for prisoners                       | 53              |
|          | Madeira | Preventing for success  | 244             |
|          |         | Education for risk  | 80              |
|          |         | Contacts system for senior people to security forces              | 54              |
|          |         | Recovering embroidery tradition in Madeira                        | 52              |
|          |         | Radar for inclusion resources                                     | 46              |
|          |         | Reinsertion of young people with at-risk-behaviour                | 46              |

Source author's own work

Scientific analysis of the NPB is necessary given the impact of the first edition on the implementation of the 38 projects with public funding, and the decision to proceed with its second edition in 2018, which was being conducted at the time this chapter was written. The second edition has been provided with an increased budget of five million euros distributed for projects on national and regional scales: six hundred and twenty five thousand euros for national projects; six hundred and twenty five thousand euros for each one of the five continental regions; and six hundred and twenty five thousand euros for autonomous regions. Unlike the first edition, there is no predefinition of policy areas and each project can be funded up to three hundred thousand euro. In addition, proposals can be made in open meetings as well as via the website.

### Analysing the NPB

Considering the institutional design described above, the following analysis contrasts the four insights on scaling up retrieved from literature on existing participatory practices in Brazil, and adapts them to the Portuguese context to understand if and to what extent the first edition of the NPB:

- Relied on a system of participatory initiatives on different scales
- Allowed citizen claims to grow from the local to the national scale
- Adopted different approaches to participation
- Took advantage of the knowledge transfer and production in informal arenas

The analysis takes into consideration the socio-political context wherein NPB was designed and implemented in order to provide insights for situated improvements and broader debate. The analysis is based on the review of scientific and grey literature in this field of study, and relies on the collection of data about the NPB (official documents, website, and social networks), fieldwork, and a personal interview with the Secretary (on the 31st of October 2017). Limits of the discussion should be considered due to some data that had not been made publicly available, namely: number and sociodemographic characterisation of participants in each open meeting; model of participation adopted in each open meeting; geographical origin and sociodemographic characterisation of voters; disaggregation between votes for national and regional projects. Lastly, as the implementation of projects funded in the first edition of NPB was being run at the time when this chapter was written, no evidence can be shared on this stage of the process.

### *Did the NPB rely on a system of participatory initiatives on different scales?*

The national government based its decision to promulgate the NPB on the extensive dissemination of PBs at the local level, as confirmed by the Secretary (personal interview). Dissemination was further supported by the recent constitution of the network gathering local authorities

that implement PBs and/or other typologies of citizen participation in policy-making (more information at: [www.portugalparticipa.pt](http://www.portugalparticipa.pt)). From this background, the national government issued the NPB together with two additional PBs on a national scale: the PB for youth and the PB for schools. Both PBs were implemented in 2017 and, like the NPB, were confirmed for their second edition in 2018.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the flourishing of PBs on both local and national scales in the country, formal connections among them were not unleashed by national and local governments. The three PBs at the national level were managed separately by State Secretaries and other governmental bodies. Compared to the deliberative system of participatory institutions in Brazil, there were no links between national PBs and other participatory initiatives that, in the Portuguese case, could be represented by local PBs. Although the Secretary sought wide agreement with governmental bodies on the institutional design of the NPB, and received support from the Regional Commissions for Coordination and Development (CCDRs) in the dissemination of the process with local authorities, the reproduction of some Portuguese political/administrative legacies was evident in the design of the process.

In particular, the echo of national centralisation and local dispersion of political powers (Ruivo et al., 2011) emerged from the management of the NPB. The

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<sup>6</sup> The autonomous region of Azores further announced the implementation of a regional PB in 2018: <https://op.azores.gov.pt/>

assessment of the proposals was exclusively conducted by ministries and other appointed governmental bodies for each one of the six policy areas. Local authorities only played a marginal role, essentially concerned with the organisation of the open meetings. As regards the implementation of the projects, no available information was provided by the Secretary on the ways in which different agents and agencies should be engaged and coordinated. The plausible involvement of CCDRs and local actors, including their proponents, lacks public guidance in the NPB covenant. In fact, no common rules were shared on the establishment of public-public and public-private partnerships for the implementation of the projects. As proof of this, the governmental bodies devoted to the analysis of proposals in the science policy area opened a call for the implementation of the three winning projects (more information at: [www.cienciaviva.pt/concurso/opciencia/](http://www.cienciaviva.pt/concurso/opciencia/)). However, this was not the case for the projects in the other policy areas, corroborating a lack of common rules at this stage.

In summary, the centralisation of management by the national government, and the marginal role of regional (CCDRs) and local authorities in the NPB reproduced historical legacies of national centralisation and local dispersion of the political/institutional system in Portugal. Despite the extensive dissemination of PBs at the local level and the enactment of three national PBs, these initiatives were legally

issued, politically managed and institutionally designed out of a comprehensive system that could articulate agents and agencies of participation.

*Did the NPB allow citizen claims to grow from the local to the national scale?*

The first edition of the NPB relied on the organisation of fifty open meetings around the country where citizens were invited to present their ideas. The strategy for dissemination incorporated a wide range of channels and actions, including a bus that travelled around the country to advertise the NPB ahead of the open meetings. The selection aimed to include both urban and rural contexts, as well as both interior and coastal cities. The implementation of local PBs in the cities that hosted the open meetings was not considered as a criterion for the selection. Meetings were coordinated by the Secretary in partnership with local authorities and/or other local agencies, and were announced, in advance, on the NPB website and social networks, supported by additional dissemination made at the local level. The locations for the meetings were identified according to criteria of public visibility and accessibility.

Each open meeting allowed citizens to present their ideas according to a variable model of participation. Both one-off presentations and/or round-tables were set up at the meetings. The former relied on the expertise provided by “Ignite Portugal,” an NGO contracted to assist citizens in briefly presenting their ideas to

other participants.<sup>7</sup> While citizens were often required to provide online presentations about their ideas, implying some preparation prior to the meeting, round-tables did not require any particular training and rather relied on the sharing of lay knowledge. The model of participation was variably implemented, and no official information was made available on rules and outputs at each meeting.

After the proposal stage, citizens were encouraged to campaign and get support from other citizens in order to get funding for their projects. Focus on the competition of non-organised citizens' ideas has been greatly emphasised by the Secretary through mottos like «Do not let the others decide for you», which appeared in NPB social networks. The Secretary further provided a standard kit for citizen campaigns. The kit included standard images to be used by citizens to publish, in their personal online campaigns, the name and code number associated with their proposals.

Figure 3 – Sample of materials provided with the kit for citizens' campaign



Source: [www.opp.gov.pt](http://www.opp.gov.pt)

Considering the model of participation promoted by the first edition of the NPB, some considerations should be made as to which version of scaling up was actually promoted. According to Avritzer and Ramos (2016) a strong version of scaling up allows the construction of an enlarged sphere of deliberation, while a weak version of scaling up reduces such

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7 More information at: <http://igniteportugal.blogspot.pt/>

potential by transferring citizen claims from the local to the national level without intermediation. The implementation of a model of participation focussed on the competition of ideas that were not processed from the local to the national scale through other participatory initiatives and/or intermediating figures, configured the scaling up of the NPB as a weak version. Considering that weak versions, according to the authors (*ibid.*), may decrease the chances of creating an enlarged public sphere on a supra-scale, the NPB may use the opportunity to improve additional mechanisms of deliberation in future editions.

### *Did the NPB adopt different approaches to participation?*

The NPB drew inspiration from the key pillars of the institutional design of PBs implemented at the local level. More pointedly, the PB implemented in 2007/2008 by the Municipality of Lisbon was the main source of inspiration for other municipalities in the country, as well as for the NPB.<sup>8</sup> As with local PBs, non-organised citizens were invited to submit and campaign for their ideas in order to find support in the voting phase. Unlike Brazil, no intermediation of delegates or councillors was included in the model of participation either at the local or national level. PBs were rather disseminated throughout the country by putting emphasis on the provision of

power to propose and vote ideas, according to the framework discussed above.

The Secretary confirmed the centrality of citizens in the NPB by arguing that the main goal of the process was to strengthen citizen trust towards the government, rather than improve associated forms of active citizenship (personal interview). The centrality of non-organised citizens requires, however, more understanding on the societal dynamics engendered within and produced by the model of participation. Whereas in local PBs citizens mainly rely on proximity networks to seek wider consensus on their proposals, different forms and extents of support are needed on larger scales. Most probably, NPB-driven campaigns relied on either existing groups or on new networks created in support of the proposals according to the capacity – and the “social capital” – of the proponents.

On the one hand, the creation of new networks has provided great opportunities for the NPB to induce social mobilisation around the process. On the other, the constitution of strong networks could work in detriment to the full participation of all citizens, and potentially hijack the NPB thanks to large bases of support. Scholars confirm that the constitution of similar coalitions carries risks of marginalisation of citizens with reduced access to socioeconomic resources, possibly resulting in the exclu-

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<sup>8</sup> Notably, this transference was also made possible by substantive contingencies as the head of the Secretary was the political councillor in charge of the PB in the Municipality of Lisbon (2009–2015) and, seemingly, the current Prime Minister was the former mayor of Lisbon (2007–2015).

sion of large sectors of civil society from the process (Swyngedow et al., 2002). In the first edition, an indication was given of the need to reinforce the debate on such risks because there was some discontent with one of the two winning projects at the national level, regarding the promotion of the Portuguese tradition of bullfighting as a cultural heritage, which saw the opposition of environmentalists and animal protection groups.<sup>9</sup> In summary, further discussion is needed on the model of participation enacted by the NPB. Great emphasis on the competition of ideas among non-organised citizens has encouraged the self-organisation of networks. Although self-organised societal dynamics could positively feed NPB with new ideas, the risk that strong networks might shadow the full participation of all citizens – specially those with fewer socioeconomic resources and the opportunity to perform successful campaigns – should be more attentively considered in future editions.

#### *Did the NPB take advantage of the knowledge transfer and production in informal arenas?*

Previous discussion has made clear that the emphasis on the participation of non-organised citizens relies on citizen capacity to mobilise their groups or create new networks. This capacity stems from their socioeconomic resources, opportunity to devote time to campaigning, as well as to their social capital (cf. Putnam, 1995). From the conception of ideas to the final stage of voting, such “informal arenas” were originated, fed, and possibly dissolved without any formal interaction with the NPB. Although influencing the entire course of the NPB informally, those arenas lobbied their outputs and never formally intervened before, during, or after the process.

The creation of such informal arenas around the NPB should be more attentively observed. On the one hand, the Secretary encouraged people to connect with each other and virtually cover long distances across the country on behalf of common projects to be implemented. On the other, the achievement of this goal was not consistently supported by the institutional design of the NPB, and there was no strategy for the sustainability of this (new form of) social capital. However, the creation of new alliances among citizens implied circulating knowledge and information that could be beneficial to the NPB, and to the government at large.

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9 The project aims to catalogue and classify bullfights in Portuguese municipalities, while promoting the reestablishment of the national culture of bullfight (more information at: <https://opp.gov.pt/winners2017>)

As pointed out by Mendonça (2016), the improvement of the connectivity between informal and formal areas of participation could rely on the role of figures devoted to transferring knowledge within and between groups, networks, and coalitions. However, the lack of formal intermediators in the NPB may have reduced the chances of dialogue between informal and formal arenas. The role of intermediators could be of help in addressing this goal, and could further make sure that these arenas fairly attain goals of social justice within, against the use (or abuse) of discretionary powers that could generate the exclusion of the most disadvantaged sectors of civil society. In summary, the constitution of informal arenas that influences the course of the NPB has opened the doors of knowledge transfer and production among citizens that were not adequately incorporated by the NPB. One of the reasons this did not occur was the lack of official intermediating figures between citizens and national government. The inclusion of these figures in future editions could increase the chances of connectivity between formal and informal arenas, and decrease the risks related to discretionary powers played within them.

### Conclusions

NPB represents a sound attempt to scale up PB and contribute to the expansion of the culture of citizen participation in policymaking in the country. There is evidence that confirms the existence of a fertile ground of local PBs in the country, currently reaching world records when considering the ratio between number of processes and number of local authorities. Furthermore, the implementation of PBs at the national level – the NPB, the PB for youth and the PB for schools – proves that Portugal is today one of the most vibrant contexts in this field of study and practice.

In order to contribute to the ongoing debate on scaling up citizen participation in policymaking, the analysis of the institutional design of the first edition of the NPB was contrasted with literature on the Brazilian deliberative system, and on the state PB in Rio Grande do Sul. More pointedly, the analysis of the NPB aimed to understand whether and to what extent the process relied on a system of participatory initiatives on different scales; allowed citizen claims to grow from the local to the national scale; relied on different approaches to participation; took advantage of the knowledge transfer and production in informal arenas.

The discussion shed light on opportunities and challenges retrievable from the first edition of the NPB, which aim to foster larger debate in future editions. Formal articulation of the NPB from national to lower scales was limited, while the role of CCDRs and local authorities was reduced in the management of the process. The lack of democratically elected governmental bodies between municipalities and national government eventually reproduced legacies of national centralisation and local dispersion of power. The absence of a comprehensive system where PBs implemented on both national and local scales could find common institutional arrangements is challenging for future editions. The lack of formal intermediating figures between citizens and national government could help balance the role, over the course of the NPB, played by informal arenas, which are constituted in support of citizen proposals. Furthermore, and despite the support provided by the Secretary to the creation of such arenas, opportunities to take advantage of knowledge transfer and production within them could be improved through such figures. Increasing the connectivity among informal arenas, as well as between them and the government, may result in greater supervision over the discretionary power held by informal arenas, specially with regard to the full inclusion of all citizens. If the NPB is addressed to reinforce the quality of democracy, then future debate should focus on what the quality consists of and how its attainment is operationalised. As the insights discussed in this chapter confirm, the improvement of the NPB cannot help but reflect on the effective capacity to promote economic and social cohesion through its model of participation, as stated in its goals. More pointedly, the main argument defended in this text is that without the constitution of intermediating figures between citizens and the NPB, within a reframed strategy of interconnections with governments on lower scales (as well as with other participatory initiatives), risks of social exclusion are likely to continue to be underestimated. Great opportunities for the NPB to develop changes in the future should not be undertaken without further research on new evidence and additional comparisons with international cases. Beyond sharing knowledge about the NPB with the international community of researchers, decision-makers, and citizens, the insights shared in this chapter will hopefully contribute with new evidence from Portugal to the scientific debate on scaling up citizen participation in policymaking.

