

The effectiveness of Participatory democracy at the municipal level In Québec

Vickie Courchesne, University of Ottawa



*The effectiveness of Participatory democracy at the municipal level In
Québec*

Vickie Courchesne, University of Ottawa

2017 National Student Thought Leadership Award
69th IPAC National Annual Conference, Charlottetown, PEI

Purpose

1. Offer a tool to evaluate the participatory democracy mechanisms that are prevalent in Québec's municipalities and discuss factors related to their effectiveness.
2. Take a look at Saint-Basile-le-Grand's participatory budget with the analysis grid.

Research Question

While the number of participatory democracy mechanisms is growing, can their prerequisites of “effectiveness” be identified?

In this analysis, the term *effectiveness* is defined by the ability to produce the intended results. In other words, it is the ability to overcome the limitations of representative democracy which were highlighted in the literature review.



The effectiveness of Participatory democracy at the municipal level In Québec

Vickie Courchesne, University of Ottawa

2017 National Student Thought Leadership Award
69th IPAC National Annual Conference, Charlottetown, PEI

Brief literature review

STRUCTURAL FACTORS

Here are elements we must keep in mind throughout the implementation of citizen participation mechanisms.

- Participant recruitment
- Access to information
- Process transparency and clarity
- Accounting

... which led to the analysis grid, a key tool in this study case!

Analysis grid

Structural factors	Variables	Information sources	Measure
<i>Participant recruitment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of participants - Gender - Age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Representative - Unrepresentative
<i>Access to information on the participatory budget</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information accessibility - Media diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access by local media - Media coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessible - Inaccessible - Extensive - Rare
<i>Process transparency and clarity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information accessibility - Planning / Preparation of the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Production of clear and concise documents by municipal authorities - Participants' knowledge on the process (feasibility and limits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existent - Non-existent - Little - Extensive
<i>Accounting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow-up of decisions / Monitoring - Follow-up of the experience / Monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Municipal council's decisions / budget adjustment / implementation - Recommendations to municipal council, elected representatives' statements déclarations, media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent - Exceptional - Consistent - Exceptional

Participatory Budget

Analysis St-Basile-le-Grand case (1/4)

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Variables : number, age, gender

- The number of participants tends to remain constant from the 1st to the 3rd year, observable decrease at the 2nd year
- The main challenge of the organizing committee is unquestionably :
recruitment
- **Methodological limitations** : Lack of data on gender, age or participants' professional and personal experience

Participatory Budget

Analysis St-Basile-le-Grand case

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Variables : information accessibility, media diversity

- Use of traditional media and social media to better inform and involve the public
- Website : exercise control over the democratic deficit regarding information accessibility
- Flow of information (process, promotion of the ideas that have been submitted, vote, project delivery, etc.)
- Disponibility of the employees (Montreal Urban Ecology Center) and the city staff



The effectiveness of Participatory democracy at the municipal level In Québec

Vickie Courchesne, University of Ottawa

2017 National Student Thought Leadership Award
69th IPAC National Annual Conference, Charlottetown, PEI

Participatory Budget

Analysis St-Basile-le-Grand case

PROCESS TRANSPARENCY AND CLARITY

Variables : information accessibility, planning/preparation of the process

- The rules are clear, known and agreed by all during the process
- Use of media and diversity
- Accounting for all three cycles
- Use of language that is understood by all age groups

Participatory Budget Analysis St-Basile-le-Grand case

ACCOUNTING

Variables : follow-up/monitoring of decisions, follow-up/monitoring of the experience

- Follow-up of decisions is consistent with the municipal website's processus
- All selected projects have been implemented or are being implemented
 - Town square, secure passage, climbing wall, open air cinema, soccer field upgrades, etc.
- Each cycle has its own particularities and ways to include different age groups and to overcome budget limitations
- Absence of 2017 cycle information to rethink the standards.



*The effectiveness of Participatory democracy at the municipal level In
Québec*

Vickie Courchesne, University of Ottawa

2017 National Student Thought Leadership Award
69th IPAC National Annual Conference, Charlottetown, PEI

Analysis grid – Conclusions and results

Structural factors	Variables	Information sources	Measure
<i>Participant recruitment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of participants - Gender - Age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not available
<i>Access to information on the participatory budget</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information accessibility - Media diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access by local media - Media coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessible - Extensive
<i>Process transparency and clarity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information accessibility - Planning / Preparation of the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Production of clear and concise documents by municipal authorities - Participants' knowledge on the process (feasibility and limits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existent - Extensive
<i>Accounting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow-up of decisions / Monitoring - Follow-up of the experience / Monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Municipal council's decisions / budget adjustment / implementation - Recommendations to municipal council, elected representatives' statements déclarations, media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent - Consistent