Daniel Schugurensky

Arizona State University

Social pedagogy meets local democracy: Examining the possibilities and limits of participatory budgeting

Pedagogika społeczna spotyka lokalną demokrację: weryfikacja możliwości i ograniczeń budżetowania partycypacyjnego

STRESZCZENIE: W artykule podjęto zagadnienie roli pedagogiki społecznej w rozwoju dyskusji na temat uczenia się demokracji poprzez partycypację. Wymiana myśli ostatnich lat na temat poprawy relacji pomiędzy obywatelami i samorządem lokalnym jest istotna z punktu widzenia pedagogiki społecznej, ponieważ uznaje wiedzę lokalną i stara się rozwijać nowe kompetencje i dyspozycje polityczne oraz demokratyczne mieszkańców. Jedna z takich innowacji – budżetowanie partycypacyjne – została wręcz nazwana „szkołą obywatelstwa", w której ludzie uczą się demokracji i poprzez aktywne uczestnictwo w procesach demokratycznych i zdobywają obywatelską i polityczną wiedzę, umiejętności, postawy, wartości i praktyki, których rzadko uczą się w formalnych instytucjach oświaty.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Pedagogika społeczna, demokracja lokalna, budżetowanie partycypacyjne, umocnienie, budowanie społeczności, postawy, wartości, umiejętności.

ABSTRACT: This article argues that social pedagogy can make a contribution to discussions on learning democracy through participation. The latest discussions on improving the relationship between citizens and local government are relevant to social pedagogy, as they recognize local knowledge, and attempt to develop new political and democratic competences and dispositions among inhabitants. One of these innovations – participatory budgeting – has been dubbed a 'school of citizenship' in which people learn democracy through active participation in democratic processes and acquire civic and political knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and practices that are seldom learned in formal educational institutions.

KEYWORDS: Social pedagogy, local democracy, participatory budgeting, empowerment, community building, attitudes, values, skills.

Introduction

In the last decades we have witnessed the development of a variety of democratic innovations that go beyond tokenistic exercises and aim at improving the relationship between citizens and local governments, increasing the transparency, legitimacy and accountability of democratic institutions, generating more creative solutions to problems, and bettering the quality of life of residents. Moreover, and this is relevant to social pedagogy, these innovations recognize local knowledge, and attempt to develop new political and democratic competences and dispositions among residents, particularly those who have been previously marginalized from decision-making processes. One of these innovations, participatory budgeting, has been dubbed a 'school of citizenship' in which people learn democracy through active participation in democratic processes and acquire civic and political knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and practices that are seldom learned in formal educational institutions.

For instance, in a recent study on informal learning in the participatory budgeting process that was developed by self-organized local and district community assemblies in Maribor (Slovenia), Gregorčič and Krašovec (2016) found that participants acquired significant instrumental and technical knowledge about politics and citizenship, developed analytical, leadership, and deliberative skills and, more importantly, translated these new understanding, abilities, and dispositions into new social practices. The authors concluded that participatory democracy provides a privileged learning site because, in addition to a variety of civic and learning virtues, citizens also developed the capacity for co-governance and influencing political decisions. Likewise, Gilman (2016), in another recent study on the youth participatory budgeting of Boston (USA), reported the transformative effects of this process: "Through the act of participating, people formed new relationships with their elected officials, neighbors, and even the physical spaces of their community. The high demands of participation resulted in high levels of knowledge transfer; citizens left with a unique civic education in politics. Citizens were forging a communal identity— albeit frustrating, a collective identity that sustained their involvement. This collective identity is the by-product of authentic and binding substantive participation" (Gilman 2016, p. 87).

These two recent studies confirm the findings of several prior studies conducted in other countries that explored learning and change in participatory budgeting. However, as these studies also acknowledged, not everyone learns necessarily the same things or is empowered in the same way. As an

inclusive space, participatory budgeting has been effective in attracting people who do not usually participate in civic and political life. This creates new opportunities for the development of agency among the disenfranchised but it also confronts the challenge of continuous unequal participation. While it may be expected that at the beginning 'newcomers' are more likely to take peripheral roles in the process while active citizens assume higher levels of participation, it is possible that, over time, newcomers feel both confident and competent to take more complex tasks. However, this process does not necessarily occur spontaneously, and could be assisted by an institutional design and by pedagogical interventions that aim at closing the civic engagement gap.

This article argues that social pedagogy can make a contribution to this project. The first sections of the paper provide a general overview of social pedagogy and participatory budgeting, with a particular focus on the educational dimension of participatory budgeting[1]. The latter sections of the paper take issue with some of the claims advanced in the first sections in order to avoid overgeneralizations and to call our attention to the heterogeneity of participants and roles in the PB process. The argument is that the learning and change experienced by participants is highly influenced by three factors: their background, the role they play in the process, and the institutional and pedagogical design of the process. Taking into account these three factors, the final section raises some challenges for social pedagogy.

Social pedagogy, community building and agency

Since its origins in the late 19th century and early 20th century, social pedagogy has conceptualized education and socialization as overlapping processes. Indeed, social pedagogy pioneers like Natorp argued that all pedagogy should be social, and that educators should always consider the interaction between educational processes and societal processes. This implies that the field of social pedagogy should be concerned both with the social aspects of education and with the educational aspects of social life.

Because its field of intervention encompasses all spaces where people interact, social pedagogy is not located in one specific institution. Instead, social pedagogy initiatives can take place anywhere where people congregate, from families, local communities, schools, neighborhood associations and groups of

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[1] Of course, public officials and staff who are involved in participatory budgeting processes also experience learning and change, but this is a topic for another paper.

friends to museums, libraries, faith organizations, cultural centers, civil society organizations, local government institutions, shelters, hospitals and workplaces, to name a few (Winiarski 2011, Úcar 2013).

Social pedagogy theorists also attempt to reconcile the tension between individual and social goals. They claim that, on the one hand, social pedagogy should foster the autonomy, freedom and self-realization of learners, and on the other hand it should nurture the development of responsible and engaged citizens who are concerned with the common good. Moreover, inspired by Pestalozzi's pedagogical thought, they advocate for a holistic approach that combines intellectual and emotional development, and emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships as mediators of socio-pedagogical actions (Kornbeck 2002; Petrie and Cameron 2009; Coussée et al. 2010; Úcar 2013; Stephens 2013).

From a normative point of view, in social pedagogy it is possible to identify a spectrum ranging from conservative traditions oriented at integrating people into society to emancipatory traditions fostering social criticism and social change (Hämäläinen 2015). Social pedagogues who identify with the humanitarian tradition that has emancipatory and progressive goals, inspired by the work and ideas of pioneers like Jane Addams (1912), Freire (1970) and others, tend to work primarily with the most marginalized members of society, are oriented towards community building, draw on the experience and knowledge of participants, connect the educational interventions to local problems, promote group work and reflective action, encourage a dialogical relationship between educators and learners, and acknowledge that, in order to be effective in the long run, pedagogical interventions must be accompanied by justice-oriented policies and a project of social transformation. Interestingly enough, in a recent study that used the Delphi method and included a series of surveys with social pedagogy specialists from around the world, Janer and Úcar (2017) found agreement among those experts that social pedagogy should aim at achieving equity and equality in society and at ensuring the quality of life and well-being of all people and communities, and that it should have a strong commitment to social justice. In these traditions, the social pedagogue plays the role of community animator by helping to identify the assets of local communities and to activate those resources and the creativity of residents (Kretzmann and McKnight 1996). The outputs of such creativity, channeled through collective organization, can contribute to the improvement of those communities community and eventually to implement systemic reforms in the larger society. Social pedagogy also emphasizes authentic learning, and contends that this is more likely to happen when learners are em-

powered to engage with real life content, to make their own connections and to construct their own meaning while becoming active agents in the process (Freire 1998; Hämäläinen 2003; Schugurensky and Silver 2013; Schugurensky 2014; Muszyńska 2016).

In summary, social pedagogy is based on humanistic values stressing human dignity, mutual respect, trust, appreciation, dialogue and justice among others. It is underpinned by a fundamental concept of children, young people and adults as equal human beings with civil, political, economic and cultural rights that need to be protected. Moreover, social pedagogy considers human beings as competent, resourceful and active agents with great potential to transform their realities for the better, and argues that in this process they also transform themselves. When social pedagogy is understood as a pedagogical and political project to make society a better place, the development of agency becomes a central task because it is a key condition for personal and social transformation. Given that agency is unequally distributed, an important goal of social pedagogy is to promote a more even distribution of agency in society. A related goal is to help to create spaces and processes in which participants can develop their sense of agency (Naumiuk 2012; Stephens 2013; Muszyńska 2016; Skrzypczak 2016). The importance of the development of collective agency (also referred to in the literature as collective efficacy) to achieve change cannot be underestimated, particularly in contexts characterized by long histories of oppression and feelings of fatalism. In the words of Canadian scholar Albert Bandura, one of the main pioneers of social learning theory, „Many of the challenges of life are group problems requiring collective effort to produce significant change. The strength of groups, organizations, and even nations lies partly in people's sense of collective efficacy that they can solve the problems they face and improve their lives through unified effort. People's beliefs in their collective efficacy influence what they choose to do as a group, how much effort they put into it, their endurance when collective efforts fail to produce quick results, and their likelihood of success" (Bandura 1994, p. 75).

For this reason, Stephens (2013, p. 142) has argued that one of the main tasks of social pedagogues is to enable perceived self and group efficacy so that people can change their lives and society for the better. From this perspective, social pedagogues play the role of animators of changes in the community. In so doing, they help to mobilize local knowledge and resources and to nurture the development of active citizens who become more confident about their own capacity to bring about change. It can be argued that when communities organize to solve social problems they undertake civic activities that

generate new subjectivities among participants and tangible improvements in quality of life as well. One of the many possible ways to mobilize local knowledge and resources, channel community creativity, nurture the development of active citizens, and increase political efficacy is to involve people in deliberation and decision-making processes that are inclusive and solution-oriented. One of those processes is participatory budgeting (PB).

Enter participatory budgeting

Since its modest origins in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989, participatory budgeting has expanded to all continents and has been adopted by over 1,500 cities and towns from all over the world. Participatory budgeting is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to allocate a portion of a public budget. Participatory budgeting belongs to the family of democratic innovations usually known as participatory democracy or participatory governance. When governments decide to engage the public in so-called invited spaces, it is possible to identify a spectrum of activities that range from low to high intensity engagement. At the low end of the spectrum are information sessions in which the community simply listens to presenters and may be allowed to ask questions at the end of the presentations. In the middle of the spectrum we can find consultation sessions in which residents are allowed to make recommendations, but these suggestions may or may not be considered seriously by government officials. At the high end of the spectrum are collaborative processes in which government official and the public enter into a more horizontal and dialogical relation and in which residents have real decision-making power on matters that affect their lives. These collaborative processes often express genuine partnerships between local authorities and residents, and include accountability mechanisms to ensure that the decisions made during the process are subsequently implemented properly. The distinction between information, consultation and genuine collaboration is relevant because political efficacy tends to increase when participants can witness the impact of their participation. Instead, pseudo-participatory processes that consist of tokenistic and manipulative exercises under the false pretense of genuine collaboration can exacerbate feelings of distrust and powerlessness among participants, and undermine future efforts even if they are legitimate and well intentioned (Arnstein 1969; Jarosz 2016).

Participatory budgeting is often practiced at the municipal level, but it has also been implemented at the state (provincial) level and in other settings like universities, public housing units, cooperatives, social clubs and

nonprofits. Although participatory budgeting tends to involve adult residents, in some places the process also includes young participants (youth participatory budgeting) and in other districts even teenagers and children (school participatory budgeting). Participatory budgeting is an interesting model of participatory democracy because it combines elements of direct democracy and deliberative democracy. It has received several awards and international recognition as 'best practice', largely because it provides a more transparent and responsive way to manage public resources and a new modality to engage people in their communities and work together with government to find solutions to local problems. Moreover, participatory budgeting increases accountability, efficiency, legitimacy and fairness in government decisions on resource allocations. Interestingly, whereas most participatory democracy initiatives tend to have a middle class bias and attract the "usual suspects", PB processes tend to attract a larger proportion of low-income residents and racialized groups, and generate a more equitable distribution of funds by transferring resources to poorer neighborhoods of the city. Through these investments, participatory budgeting aims at improving the quality of life in those communities. Through promoting a more deliberative political culture and a more responsive and open government, it aims at improving the quality of democracy in a city.

These two goals (improving the quality of life and the quality of democracy) are certainly important, but from a social pedagogy perspective it is pertinent to pay attention to a third dimension of participatory budgeting: the improvement of the quality of participants. Indeed, many philosophers of citizenship and democracy have claimed that a key function of participatory democracy is the development of "better citizens" who have greater civic and political knowledge and skills, are more aware of their rights and responsibilities, have more democratic dispositions and are more willing and able to exercise their agency to make a difference in their communities (Elkin and Soltan 1999; Merrifield 2002; Gaventa and Barrett 2012). Aristotle, for instance, argued twenty-five hundred years ago that the ethical and virtuous life is only available to those who participate actively in civic life, and that the main concern of politics is to engender a certain character in the citizens and to make them good and disposed to perform noble actions. A few centuries later, philosophers like Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) and John Dewey (1859–1952) elaborated on Aristotle's arguments. Although with different emphases (after all, they lived in different centuries), these three thinkers contended that local democratic spaces in which people could discuss issues affecting them would nurture more reasoned, respectful,

informed and tolerant voices and would nurture more conscious community members who understand the needs and perspectives of their fellow citizens and are willing to work together for the common good. Like other thinkers, they argued that there is a connection between participation in democratic processes and the development of better citizens. More recently, in her influential book *Participation & Democratic Theory,* Carole Pateman (1970) went one step further, and claimed that the justification of participatory democratic processes rests largely on their educative effects. However, she recognized that these educative effects still remained largely unknown. In all these works, the theoretical claims were well argued, but there was a dearth of empirical evidence to support those assertions.

'Does participation make better citizens'?

A quarter century later after the publication of Pateman's book, political scientist Jane Mansbridge (1995) addressed this gap between theoretical and empirical claims in a direct way by saying that she believed that participation makes better citizens, but she was unable to prove it. Moreover, she claimed so was anyone else. Based on her own personal experience and anecdotal evidence from people she knew, she observed that those who have actively participated in democratic governance often feel that the experience has transformed them. However, she stated that it is very difficult to identify the exact nature of these changes with the blunt instruments of social science, partly because the changes are subtle, and partly because they have long-term effects. This is, in a nutshell, which I call "the Mansbridge challenge": Is it really impossible to show that participation makes better citizens? If we think that it is possible, two questions arise from the outset: a) what do we mean by "better citizens"? and b) how can we identify the changes experienced by participants, especially considering that these changes are subtle, have a long-term impact, and often unconscious?

Regarding the first question, there is no universal definition of what constitutes a 'good citizen' and different taxonomies have been advanced (Westheimer 2015; Koyama 2017). A discussion on what constitutes a good citizen would take several pages, and would necessarily lead to a discussion on the good society, and this is beyond the scope of this paper. In the context of our particular topic, it is pertinent to ask if people who go through the experience of participatory budgeting acquire new civic and political knowledge, skills, values and practices. For instance, do they become more interested in public affairs, more engaged in the civic and political life of their communities

and more willing and able to work with others to contribute to the common good? Are they more confident in their own capacities to make a difference? Are they more respectful and open-minded? Are they more knowledgeable about the needs of other communities in the city? Are they more able to engage in deliberative and decision-making processes?

The second question (how can we identify the changes experienced by participants?) is the methodological component of the Mansbridge challenge, and calls for different approaches to find out whether participants change as a result of their engagement in participatory budgeting. This includes ethnographic research, observations of meetings, longitudinal studies, interviews, surveys and focus groups, among others. It also requires the design of elicitation strategies to help participants to uncover their tacit knowledge acquired through informal learning. Fortunately, in the last decade and a half we have seen a number of studies on the learning dimension of participatory budgeting that employ different methodological approaches. Although perhaps none of them, taken in isolation, categorically answers Mansbridge's question, the aggregated evidence emerging from these studies strongly suggests that participatory budgeting has an impact on participants.

A school of citizenship?
Learning and change in participatory budgeting

Although there is an increasingly abundant research literature on participatory budgeting, the specific literature on its learning dimension is still limited. One possible explanation for this situation could be found in the goals and in the institutional design of participatory budgeting. The former focuses on equitable resource allocations for infrastructure and services, and the latter on ensuring inclusive and efficient processes of public participation. The educational dimension is seldom an explicit objective of participatory budgeting initiatives. Like in many other spaces of public engagement, learning is a by-product of participation, but not something that is sought and nurtured intentionally through institutional design. This explains the absence of educational initiatives (either before or during the participatory budgeting cycle) to promote among participants the civic and democratic knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and practices that could help to improve the quality of the process (Luchmann 2009). It also explains why researchers have focused on issues related to equity in resource allocations, dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, transparency and accountability, quality of deliberation, improvements in community wellbeing, collaboration and trust, and the like.

Despite the lack of intentional educational efforts, a variety of studies on participatory budgeting in different parts of the world have found that participants experience significant learning and change. This civic and political learning and change could be organized in four categories, which for simplicity purposes can be referred to as KASP: a) knowledge, b) attitudes and values, c) skills, and d) practices. Before delving into these areas, it is pertinent to make three observations. The first is that these categories often overlap, as the cognitive, emotional, normative and instrumental dimensions of the learning process (in Pestalozzi's terms, head, heart and hand) are in constant interplay. The second observation is that sometimes changes in one area may be preconditions for changes in another area. For instance, a higher sense of political efficacy (an attitude) increased the likelihood of political participation (a practice). Last but not least, it is relevant note that the type and intensity of learning and change is not uniform across all participants. This can be affected, among other factors, by their personal biographies, their social context, their level of involvement in the process, and the particular positive and negative experiences in that process.

Knowledge

Throughout their involvement in PB, participants acquire local knowledge (non-specialized use of a place), professional knowledge (technical expertise) and activist knowledge (political know-how), and the associative experience also creates a kind collective knowledge that is shared by the group (Nez 2016). To begin with, PB participants often report learning about the budget and particularly about the rules and regulations of participatory budgeting. They also get to know their neighbors and other people in their communities, and about the needs of their own communities. Interestingly, one of most significant changes typically experienced by PB participants is knowledge of other people, organizations, and neighborhoods. This is partly because at the PB meetings they get to meet people and groups from different social classes, races and backgrounds that they would rarely encounter in their daily life, and partly because they often go to some areas of the city that they never visited before. Middle class participants are often surprised (sometimes outraged) by the material conditions and infrastructure of poor neighborhoods, and low-income participants sometimes witness for the first time the features of affluent areas of the city. Sometimes they also learn about inequities in resource allocations in the city, about environmental and social issues affecting certain neighborhoods, and about the social and environmental impact of proposed projects for new infrastructure and services.

Moreover, PB participants usually report a better understanding of democracy in general, and of participatory governance and local governments in particular. They acquire specific instrumental and technical knowledge about administrative processes. Indeed, participants often find out how the local government is run, how public funds are allocated, and how projects are implemented. They also learn the names their representatives, and occasionally they get to know them personally. As importantly, they learn about their individual and collective rights. They also learn about the intricacies of the administrative machine (e.g. procedures, roles of different departments), the responsibilities of different jurisdictions (e.g. municipal, state and federal; legislative, judicial and executive powers) and the conflicts among them. Likewise, they learn about power dynamics and increase their information about urban development and political issues, sometimes through interactions with participants who are active in community organizations, social movements or political parties. They also gain knowledge about the ideological orientation and past performance of elected officials, civil society leaders and political candidates running for office. One of the impacts of this knowledge is that citizens are less likely to be deceived and manipulated by unscrupulous politicians, then reducing the incidence of political patronage and clientelism. Participants also report gaining knowledge about the difficulties and challenges faced by city officials, about the relation between revenues and expenses, about taxes, laws and regulations, and especially about the trade-offs involved in most budgetary decisions (Lerner and Schugurensky 2007; Goldfrank 2007; Lerner 2009; Talpin et al 2010; Grillos 2014; Gilman 2016; Brennan 2016; Gregorčič and Krašovec 2016, Almasan 2017).

Skills

According to several studies, community members who are involved in participatory budgeting develop a variety of social, technical, analytic and deliberative skills. For instance, they report increases in leadership, teamwork, networking and conflict resolution skills. By addressing problems and needs in their communities, they develop problem solving skills. They develop communication skills like public speaking and careful listening. They learn to develop project proposals, elaborate budgets, organize meetings, prepare an agenda, promote their projects through personal interactions and social media platforms, rank priorities and evaluate the merits of other projects. They learn to persuade but also to negotiate with others when necessary. They learn to make collective decisions. They learn to interact with people from different cultures

and generations, and sometimes (like in the case of Toronto public housing) with people from many national origins who speak different languages. They learn how to interact with government officials, to understand and critically analyze official documents (including budgets), to monitor government commitments, and to confront public officials when a promise is not fulfilled or a law has been infringed.

These skills are usually acquired by observing others and by incremental practice. Some participatory budgeting processes have established a mentoring process in which novice participants learn by shadowing more experienced budget delegates, and eventually replace them at some meetings when needed. Moreover, participatory budgeting systems that have a mandatory limit for budget delegates allow the continuous rotation and the emergency of new leaders, preventing the concentration of certain knowledge and skills (and the perpetuation of power) in a minority of participants. Furthermore, participatory budgeting processes that have good facilitators are more likely to nurture a more equitable development of skills among participants. Finally, in participatory budgeting processes that involve residents in the phase of project implementation, they learn practical skills related to those projects, from preparing a community garden to building a playground or a health clinic (Schugurensky 2006; Lerner 2009; Luchmann 2009; Talpin et al 2010; Grillos 2014; Gilman 2016; Almasan 2017).

Attitudes, values and dispositions

This is an important area of learning and change that should not be underestimated. Many participants, particularly those with little or no prior experience of civic or political engagement, often report a growing feeling of self-confidence. Participants whose voices are typically marginalized (particularly women with low levels of formal schooling) mention that as a result of their experience in PB they feel more confident to express their opinions in front of other people. As they realize that they can make a difference, many participants tend to report a growing interest in addressing problems in their communities and in local politics. When their political efficacy increase, participants are more likely to join a community group, to volunteer in an association, or to vote in local, state or national elections. To a lesser degree, they are also more likely to join a political party or to contact public officials.

As a result of their PB experience, some participants felt empowered for the first time in their lives to dare challenging some of the arguments or figures advanced by technical experts, or to hold public officials accountable.

At the same time, as they learn about the issues faced daily by public officials, for the first time in their lives they put themselves in their shoes, begin to appreciate their efforts and develop a more tolerant attitude towards them. More-over, as they increase their interactions with public officials, and as transparency and accountability mechanisms become more habitual, participants develop more trust in local government. However, this does not automatically translate in higher levels of confidence towards state and federal governments. Such confidence often remains the same, as participants normally do not see any connection between those levels of government and participatory budgeting. However, when PB participants perceive (rightly or not) the federal or state governments as the 'villains' that are not fulfilling their financial obligations with the municipal governments, their confidence in those levels of government may even decline. Moreover, if the municipal government (or school board, public housing authority, or whatever entity is in charge of the process) does not implement some of the projects that were voted and approved by PB, it is very likely to witness a decrease of trust towards that particular agency by participants, and even a feeling of disempowerment.

A similar situation may occur with participants whose proposed projects do not gather sufficient votes in PB. In some cases, frustrated by the outcomes, they express discontent with the process or allege that the crowd lacks wisdom, and report a decreased sense of political efficacy. When these cases are far and few between it could be considered a normal situation of disillusioned participants who were in the minority. However, when a critical mass of participants express disappointment, it may indicate that a problem may exists, and suggests that more efforts should be undertaken to make sure that the rules are clear and fair to everyone, and to encourage people to come back again because proposals that were not successful one year could be successful in another year if they are improved. To work well year after year, participatory democracy needs not only 'happy winners' but also needs 'happy losers' who are committed to the process and are willing to return again with better ideas.

When participants realize that they can propose projects to improve their communities and that they can have a voice in deciding which projects should be prioritized, and witness the implementation of those projects in their neighborhood, they develop a stronger feeling of ownership and pride. This is particularly evident in marginalized and under-serviced communities. Over time, as they interact with people from other areas of the city and become more familiar with those areas, their feelings of attachment, belonging and identity grow from their neighborhood to the city as a whole. In a paral-

lel development, as they gain more information and open their horizons, many participants tend to transition over time from an emphasis on their narrow self-interests to the common good. In this regard, it is interesting to note that when we interviewed first-time PB delegates they tended to use first person singular (e.g. "I got this playground for the children of my neighborhood") whereas delegates with more experience in the process often used first person plural (e.g. "we managed to improve our community"). Moreover, in many PB processes around the world, participants from wealthier districts tend to develop an attitude of solidarity towards underserved districts of the city. After listening to the presentations of delegates from those poorer districts, and becoming personally acquainted with the realities of those districts through individual or group visits, participants from more privileged districts are sometimes willing to support the projects of the marginalized districts. Likewise, in situations where there are some funds left after PB allocations are completed, participants tend to agree on allocating those resources to neighborhoods with more needs (Schugurensky 2007; Cabannes 2004; Talpin et al 2010; Pinnington, Schugurensky 2009; Lerner 2009).

Last but not least, by the very nature of the deliberative processes, PB tends to nurture democratic attitudes and values among participants. Many new participants tend to be impatient with the amount of steps needed to make a decision and sometimes express frustration over the number of meetings, the length of those meetings, and the quantity of interventions. Over time, these participants are more likely to understand and respect the slow pace of democratic processes that aim at being inclusive and fair and at ensuring proper deliberation before reaching decisions. Along the same lines, the more they participate, the more likely they are to listen carefully to other people's arguments without interrupting them or turning off. Over time, if the PB processes are well designed and implemented, and sustained year after year, the collective aggregation of these individual attitudes can make a contribution to the development of a more democratic political culture in the city.

Practices

Acquiring new civic and political knowledge, skills and values is important, but as important is to put them into practice. Many of these new civic practices are directly related to the participatory budgeting process. For instance, many participants who are silent at the first meetings begin to speak up in small groups, and some eventually end up addressing a large assembly with a microphone in hand. During the meetings, they start listening more

and stop interrupting others at the meetings. Participants also report that they start talking with neighbors about problems in their communities, devoting time to find solutions to these problems, and channeling the proposed solutions to the PB process. They also start contacting staff in city hall staff and technical experts to request general advice or specific information to improve particular proposals. Once projects are approved, they start monitoring the quality of implementation and the adherence to the timetable. Likewise, at the end of each PB cycle, participants evaluate the process and put in practice improvement for the following year, such as changes in voting procedures (e.g. minimum age, online voting), new quotas for delegates (e.g. gender parity), new rules for deliberation (e.g. participants cannot speak again until all those who wanted to speak have had a turn), better community outreach, etc. (Schugurensky 2007; Lerner 2009; Talpin et al 2010; Luchmann 2009; Brennan 2016; Almasan 2017).

However, new practices are not restricted to the realm of PB. This is important, because as p*articipation begets participation*, the new opportunities for civic involvement opened by PB nurture collective action. Thus, for many novel participants, PB can be understood as an entry point to civic life. In particular, when the feel empowered by the PB process, participants report that they begin to get involved in community affairs beyond PB. Some participants say that when they are walking in their neighborhoods and observe a problem related to infrastructure or to services, they contact the responsible agency or other citizens in order to fix the problem. Sometimes they also advocate for participatory budgeting in districts where it is not yet implemented. They also report becoming more interested in political dynamics and, that as their sense of political efficacy increases, the level of intensity of their activities deepens and their sphere of interventions widens. These participants report paying more attention to political news and public budgets, join community organizations and to less extent political parties, volunteer in local associations, and engage in activities like networking, petitioning or attending public meetings. They also begin to exercise their newly acquired capacities in different settings such as home, work, religious organizations, educational institutions, group meetings or social clubs. In those places, they start expressing their ideas and some of them eventually take leadership roles. When they become more active members in civil society organizations or public agencies, they display democratic behaviors, do not take policies and rules for granted, participate in decision-making bodies, and sometimes make proposals for the internal democratization of those organizations. It is not clear whether there is an impact on electoral turnout, but there is evidence that some former PB

participants dare to run for public office (usually at the municipal level), and some of them eventually are elected and serve in city council and other government agencies. In this sense, PB (like other spaces of local participation like neighborhood associations, community agencies and school councils) provides a pathway to politics for adults (particularly women and minorities) who were not exposed to prior political socialization in their social milieus (Schugurensky 2007; Talpin et al 2010; Luchmann 2009; Patsias et al. 2013).

Problematizing learning and change in participatory budgeting

At this point, it is pertinent to raise a caveat that has implications for social pedagogy theory and practice: In PB, not all participants learn the same things or are empowered in the same way; furthermore, some may even feel disempowered. The learning and change experienced by participants depends on a variety of factors. Prominent among them are a) their prior civic and political experiences before joining PB, b) their particular experience in the PB process, and c) the design of the process.

Prior experience

Participants come to PB with a variety of previous civic and political experiences which cannot be isolated from economic, social, gender and racial inequalities. Building on the typologies developed by Gilman (2016) and Montambeault (2016), it is possible to distinguish three main profiles of PB participants: 'usual suspects', 'engaged citizens', and 'newcomers' (see Diagram 1).
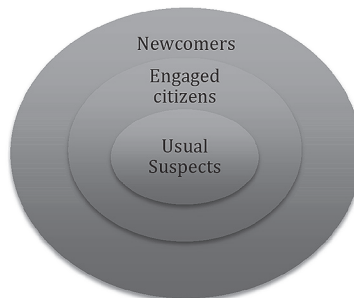

Diagram 1. Typology of participants (based on prior civic experience)

The term 'usual suspects' refers to those who are already highly engaged in civic life in spaces like community boards, neighborhood associations, tenant organizations, government commissions or civil society organizations. They

tend to be older, white and middle class, and have higher levels of formal education, and their level of involvement is generally continuous, often holding leadership positions. 'Engaged citizens' are somewhat involved in civic and political life, but in a more sporadic way and to a much lower degree than the previous group. The third category, "newcomers", refers to people who were not previously engaged in civic or political life except occasional voting, and sometimes not even that. They are often unacquainted with civic and political life in their cities, and are usually unaware of opportunities of citizen participation in 'invited spaces' opened by government agencies. For them, participatory budgeting constitutes the first time in their lives that they are involved in local democracy or that they interact with other people in a collective decision-making process. Participatory budgeting allows them to transit from being spectators to becoming actors. For this reason, they are also known as 'first-timers'. The literature on the topic and my own field observations suggest that participatory budgeting has a larger impact on participants with very limited or no prior civic and political participation. For many of these first-time participants, participatory budgeting acts as a stepping stone to civic engagement, nurtures the development of greater civic and political knowledge, and generates a greater sense of awareness of rights and political efficacy, which are considered prerequisites for further engagement (Merrifield 2002; Talpin et al 2010; Montambeault 2016; Gilman 2016).

Experience in the process

The learning and change experienced by participants is also largely dependent on their particular experience in the process. This, in turn, includes two dimensions: the roles they play in the process, and their personal feelings (positive or negative) about the process and its outcomes. First, PB participants play different roles in the process and have different degrees of involvement that require different time commitments (see Diagram 2). At the center of the process are those who participate regularly as PB delegates, PB councilors, or members of the steering committee, and experience high intensity participation. Then, in a second layer of the concentric circles, there are participants who propose projects and advocate for them with other community members, and those who may participate and speak at one or two assemblies. They experience a medium or moderate level of participation. Lastly, there are those who are at the periphery of the process: they may attend one or two assemblies but remain in silence; they may cast a vote but never participate in any deliberative forum or interact with other participants.
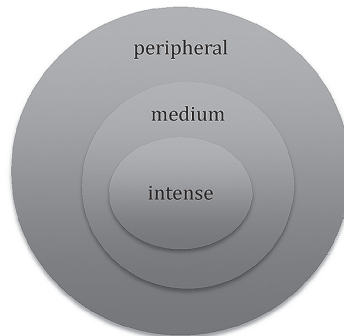
Diagram 2. Levels of Participation

Frequently, the two concentric circles overlap: usual suspects tend to experience intense participation, whereas newcomers tend to experience peripheral participation. Sometimes, however, newcomers experience medium or intense levels of engagement. In these cases, the learning and change is significant.

Second, the learning and change experienced by participants is also conditioned by their feelings about the process and its outcomes. For instance, participants who felt excluded or silenced during the process, or think that the process was unfair, or believe that the implementation phase is too slow, may experience little empowerment, and may actually feel disempowered. Conversely, participants who had a positive experience, enjoyed multiple opportunities to develop new competences and relationships, believe in the integrity of the process, and witness investments in infrastructure in their communities, tend to report higher levels of learning and change, particularly in the areas of political efficacy (Lerner and Schugurensky 2007; Lerner 200; Funes, Talpin and Rull 2014).

Process design

The learning and change experienced by participants is also dependent on a third factor: the design of the process. In the same way that students learn different things in a traditional school that emphasizes memorization, competition and rote learning than in a progressive school that emphasizes critical thinking, reflective practice and teamwork, the design of the PB process has pedagogical consequences. Like other 'invited spaces', participatory budgeting has a pedagogical dimension, but the learning experience tends to improve when the organizers of the process make an intentional effort to incorporate a pedagogical intentionality in the design.

As Lerner (2009, 2014) has argued, some designs lead to more learning than others. He notes that some sort of organized training for participants

in the form of talks or workshops before they start the process can help, but creating time and space for informal peer-to-peer learning is even more impactful. Particularly effective are mentoring systems in which more seasoned participants work together with newcomers in a model that encourages rotation by establishing term limits for delegates. In addition, the use of popular education techniques, theater, music, posters, play, videos, visual arts and online tools can help participants to learn about proposals and to communicate ideas. Also important are the creation of opportunities to learn about one's own community and the realities of other districts through bus tours, walking trips and city-wide forums, especially if they are complemented with opportunities to reflect collectively on those experiences. Last but not least, learning can be promoted through skilled facilitators who are cognizant of strategies to encourage democratic deliberative processes that are inclusive and promote genuine dialogue among participants instead of a sequence of monologues.

Concluding remarks: The challenges for social pedagogy

As an experiment in local democracy, participatory budgeting has great potential to empower community members, especially those who have been traditionally marginalized, to have a voice in public affairs. It also has great potential to nurture more engaged, informed, critical and caring citizens who are willing and able to work with other community members and with government officials to improve the quality of life of the city where they live.

It can also inspire participants to become more active in community organizations and to become involved in civic and political life. However, this is not a given. It is also possible that the political and civic learning experienced by many participants is negligible or, even worse, reinforces anti-democratic attitudes and practices. Moreover, it is also possible that the most significant and impactful learning is concentrated in a small group of participants. Indeed, like many other social institutions, participatory budgeting could equalize opportunities but can also reproduce and even reinforce existing inequalities by empowering those who already have power. This poses two challenges for social pedagogy. The first is to increase the likelihood of meaningful educative experiences for all participants. The second is to close the civic engagement gap by increasing the political capital[2] of 'newcomers'.

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[2] Drawing on Bourdieu's (1986) three forms of capital, I have conceptualized political capital as the capacity to influence political decisions. Political capital is correlated (and convertible) with the other three forms of capital. In the context of participatory democracy, politi-

In addressing the first challenge, it is pertinent to recall Dewey's observation that if knowledge is conceived as something external to experience, human beings are deprived of the capacity to direct their societies and control the institutions that affect their lives. This highlights the importance of experiential learning, and participatory budgeting provides educative experiences when citizens learn democracy by doing. However, as Dewey also warned, experiences can be "miseducative" when they have the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. For this reason, he argued that the central problem of an education based upon experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences (Dewey 1938, p. 25). Social pedagogy can contribute to this by designing participatory budgeting processes that nurture teamwork, promote creativity, enhance public deliberation and encourage reflection about practice among participants. In this regard, the importance of good facilitation cannot be understated, as it can transform a potentially miseducative experience into an educative one. From a social pedagogy perspective, participatory budgeting can be conceptualized as a space of informal education, meaning by this the deliberate arrangement of conditions for informal learning. Informal education does not necessarily require the presence of a curriculum, a teacher or a textbook, but presupposes an educational intentionality and the organization of meaningful learning experiences.

The second challenge, which PB shares with other spaces of civic engagement, consists of avoiding the risk of reproducing social inequalities. As noted above, participatory budgeting processes can address this challenge through a pro-poor design that includes strategies like a targeted outreach in marginalized communities, free transportation and childcare to reduce participation costs, cyclical rotation of delegates, and equity-oriented funding allocation criteria that benefits underserviced communities (Lerner 2009). To increase the political capital of 'newcomers', a pro-poor design also requires social pedagogical interventions that include accessible training materials, peer mentorship, skillful facilitation, and a variety of non-formal and informal educational activities. Drawing on the insights of situated learning theory, these supportive processes can help build capacity among newcomers to progressively move from the periphery to the center of the PB process (Lave and Wenger 1991; Cornwall 2008; Lerner 2009) and eventually of other political processes.

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cal capital has five dimensions: knowledge, skills, attitudes, closeness to power, and resources (Schugurensky 2000).

For these participants, PB can play the role of an alternative institution of secondary socialization that provides recognition, self-esteem, networks and a variety of competences and dispositions that people from higher socio-economic backgrounds typically acquire through other socialization opportunities (Fedozzi 2002; Luchmann 2009).

In closing, participatory budgeting shares several principles and values with social pedagogy. Among them are dialogue, trust, local knowledge, community building, democracy, rights, quality of life, justice, and the development of individual and collective agency, particularly among the least privileged members of society. In a previous text (Schugurensky 2015) I argued that social pedagogy can make two contributions to participatory democracy. On the one hand, it can assist with design, implementation and evaluation of participatory processes, paying special attention to their pedagogical dimension. On the other hand, it can help with capacity building initiatives aimed at improving the quality of participation in those democratic processes. What I would add now, along the lines of the argument of this paper, is that in both areas social pedagogy needs to make a conscious effort to make those processes more inclusive, participatory, democratic and deliberative, and at the same time help newcomers to feel more comfortable, confident and knowledgeable to ensure that they increasingly play central roles in the participatory budgeting process and eventually in other civic and political organizations and institutions.

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