

Engaging Democracy:  
An Institutional Theory of Participatory Budgeting

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**Abstract**

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This dissertation examines outcomes from participatory budgeting. Participatory budgeting (or PB) is one popular example of a growing suite of “democratic innovations” that have seen growing attention as concerns have risen about weaknesses of existing institutions of democratic representation and governance. Hopes run high that reforms like PB can rejuvenate the public’s interests and capacities as democratic citizens, strengthening the resiliency and quality of developed democratic community. Systematic evaluation, however, has not kept pace with the rapid growth of PB, particularly with respect to the larger hopes for PB as a local treatment for contemporary ills of democracy. Participatory budgeting mechanisms typically determine small portions of local budgets and, while individual participants widely report positive impacts from their personal experience of PB, both research and practice have yet to demonstrate how one might expect such narrow changes in local governance institutions to effectively transform wider political practices.

Responding to this challenge, this dissertation systematically examines the case for participatory budgeting as a strategy of democratic renewal. It starts with an institutional argument articulating the micro-foundations for PB institutions as a democratic institutional intervention, and expands in scope and method to a systematic qualitative assessment of different implementations of PB. Finally, it undertakes a multi-dimensional investigation of the observable residues of PB in the wider community. The scope of this project is thus both ambitious and bounded, aiming for a wide ranging application of

high-level normative claims while staying focused to the narrow conditions of one particular strategy of participatory democratic reform.

The first chapter of the dissertation outlines the broad historical and scholarly context of participatory budgeting and introduces the four primary case sites central to the research. Chapter 2 provides a structured development of an institutional theory of participatory budgeting. I propose a micro-level explanation for how PB processes may impact the broader quality of democratic practice by restructuring of civic relationships and redistributing important civic resources within the community. I translate the normative claims of democratic theorists into empirically tractable individual-level mechanisms through which participatory budgeting matters, generating specific observable implications explored in the following chapters.

Over Chapters 3 and 4, I use qualitative fieldwork, including 100 in-depth interviews with participants and government officials and observation of PB meetings and public events, to identify the operations of specific mechanisms identified as causally important in the preceding theoretical chapter. I pay specific attention to changes in the structure and content of communication relationships initiated in PB institutions. Of the four cases of PB explored, two are found to have substantial impacts on the communicative relationships between community members as well as between community members and government officials. One case, in Edinburgh, exhibits transformed relationships between community members, but not between community and government, and one other case, in London, shows little to no meaningful impact on community or government relationships. Qualitative narratives explain this variation as a result of specific choices of institutional design made in each of these cases.

Chapters 5 and 6 expand from a focused assessment of the operation of expected mechanisms within my four PB cases to a wider evaluation of the observable impacts of PB on wider community behavior and political culture. Exploiting the variation both within my cases of PB and between my cases and matched pairs of communities that did not implement PB, I test for the impact of PB in three different areas. Chapter 5 introduces the matched non-PB comparison cases and examines the wider civil society context in which PB is implemented. I conduct a unique comparative survey of

local community organizations active in both PB and non-PB communities to establish the levels of activity and collaboration in civil society organizations across the different communities, testing for any effect of PB on the frequency of collaboration among community groups and between community groups and government.

Chapter 6 takes an even wider view, considering the impact of PB on aggregate measures of political culture and voting behavior in the community as a whole. I first implement an analysis of public discussion of politics and public life in local media. I develop a new application of machine learning methods, using the R package ReadMe, for which I use human coders to train statistical models to identify mobilizing and demobilizing political expression. This method allows me to estimate the changing tenor of political discourse in PB and non-PB cases over time. Second, I consider voter turnout in local and national elections in case and control areas before and after the introduction of PB, using dynamic panel data methods to identify any effect on turnout from the implementation of PB.

Taken together, the ensemble of different measures in Chapters 5 and 6 provides a unique picture of any impact that PB has had on the constellation of expressions and behaviors that make up the democratic culture of the community. In the final chapter, I draw together the different strands of the project by summarizing the scope and limitations of PB's democratic potential. I conclude with a brief reflection on the recurring tensions between innovation and institutionalization presented by the current, evolving practices of PB.

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<sup>1</sup>Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This year, in dozens of cities across the globe, thousands of ordinary people have come together to propose, discuss, and vote on funding projects that they think will benefit their communities. Allocating budgets ranging from a few tens of thousands of dollars in cities across the US and UK to €200 million last year in Paris, this kind of direct local decision-making, commonly known as participatory budgeting, has become increasingly popular worldwide. Proliferating across diverse sites and process designs, participatory budgeting rapidly expanded from its roots as an innovative left-wing policy in Brazil and its early popularity as a development and democratization strategy in the global south.

Participatory budgeting (or PB) is one popular example of a growing suite of “democratic innovations” that have seen growing attention as concerns have risen about weaknesses of existing institutions of democratic representation and governance. Hopes run high that accessible participatory reforms like PB can rejuvenate the public’s interests and capacities as democratic citizens, strengthening the resiliency and quality of developed democratic communities. Systematic evaluation, however, has not kept pace with the rapid growth of PB, particularly with respect to the larger hopes for PB as a local treatment for contemporary ills of democracy. Participatory budgeting mechanisms typically have a direct impact on comparatively small portions of local budgets and, while individual participants widely report positive impacts from their personal experience of PB, both research and practice have yet to demonstrate how one might expect such narrow changes in local governance institutions to

effectively transform wider political practices.

The challenge to understanding the practical impact of participatory reforms on the practice of democracy is one of both theory and empirics. First, we need applied theory that can provide an analysis of participatory budgeting as an institutional intervention within an existing political context, rather than as an independent idealized democratic procedure. The public and the problems that new PB processes seek to address are the same public and the same problems that would exist without PB. How could the institutions of PB change the engagement of that public or the identification of its problems, at the individual level? Second, we need an empirical strategy that attends to the immediate experiences of participants but also takes a step back to evaluate the scope of any impacts on the community as a whole.

Responding to this challenge, this dissertation systematically examines the case for participatory budgeting as a strategy of democratic renewal. It starts with an institutional argument articulating the micro-foundations for PB institutions as a democratic institutional intervention and expands in scope and method to a systematic qualitative assessment of different implementations of PB. Finally, it undertakes a multi-dimensional investigation of the observable residues of PB in the wider community. Along the way, I help to translate the normative claims of democratic theorists into empirically tractable individual-level explanations of mechanisms by which participatory budgeting matters.

The real, localized stakes of PB have limited scope for direct transformation of the budgets and policy agenda of the community, but I argue that the introduction of well-designed PB institutions can alter patterns of communication and agenda-setting in ways that facilitate future political mobilization, collaboration, and the transformation of public preferences, strengthening democratic politics more broadly. Participatory budgeting provides a unique configuration of incentives and rules for interaction that together can enable a relatively small-scale exercise in public decision making to have an outsize influence, even when implemented in a context of entrenched democratic institutions. By offering real control over real resources that can be directed to people's own tangible priorities, PB can attract participants beyond the 'usual suspects' who typically attend public consultations and council meetings. Meanwhile, the smaller scale of budgets and projects in many PB processes decreases the

interest of the process for the most powerful voices in the community. New incentives establish new interactions among members of the public and public officials, in a context of public control of agendas, discussions, and decisions, that enable substantial transformation of communicative networks that distribute important information and resources among the community.

To evaluate the operation of these mechanisms in practice, I draw on qualitative evidence from fieldwork four cities in the US and the UK that implemented participatory budgeting. Variation in design and implementation across these cases helps to identify the conditions for impact, clarifying which elements of the PB process are most important for reinforcing democratic capacities and practices, specifically. This comparative evaluation makes two main contributions: First, it improves the basis of understanding of what distinguishes PB as a unique set of institutions within communities with established patterns of democratic representation. Second, it lays the groundwork for an analysis of the broader community effects of PB. A major challenge to larger scale assessment of participatory interventions is the variability across processes that confounds any consistent observation of outcomes. The multi-method design I employ allows me to ground the larger scale quantitative analysis in contextualized knowledge of whether or not theoretically critical communicative mechanisms do in fact operate within processes that have simply been labelled “PB” by observers or organizers.

The scope of this project is thus both ambitious and bounded, aiming for a wide ranging application of high-level normative claims while staying focused on the narrow conditions of one particular strategy of participatory democratic reform. Theorists, participants, and advocates of participatory budgeting all offer passionate defenses for PB as a genuinely democratic participatory reform. It is an obligation of independent researchers to take these assertions seriously, but also treat them to rigorous evaluation. PB is a costly endeavor for those involved with it. The many participants and staff people engaged with these processes in the hopes of strengthening democracy in their own communities deserve to know the real scope and conditions of any impact.

## 1.1 Participatory Budgeting and Democratic Innovation

The term participatory budgeting encompasses a range of institutional arrangements in which members of the public propose ideas, discuss options, and make consequential decisions on spending some portion of a local public budget.<sup>1</sup> PB is distinguished from other forms of public communication or consultation around the budget in that it reserves decision making power about tangible projects to the public. The public agenda and discussion of specific projects does not require extensive technical knowledge about municipal budgets and PB can successfully engage residents who may otherwise have little engagement with local politics or policy-making. The specific design of the process, size of the budget, and scope of potential projects can vary substantially across cases, as Sintomer and et al. (2008) have documented. Nevertheless, the defining elements of public proposal, discussion, and decision-making persist.

Several characteristics jointly set participatory budgeting apart from other forms of budgetary consultation. Chapter 2 lays these conceptual conditions out more systematically, but it is helpful from the start to have an idea of what participatory budgeting looks like. PB must be genuine decision-making, where public preferences directly determine spending choices. The public should have control the choice of projects for funding and ideally have some role in design or implementation. In addition, the process should include opportunity for members of the public to discuss or collectively consider their options. Finally, a PB process is explicitly inclusive, inviting participation from all regardless of status or expertise. What this means, in practice, is that PB involves ‘ordinary’ people, people who may or may not typically have clear access to local power and decision-makers interacting with each other while making consequential decisions about where public money is spent. The process can be messy or inefficient and can produce both creative or routine decisions.

Participatory budgeting was pioneered in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989 as part of a broad package

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<sup>1</sup>Participatory budgeting procedures could be adapted to make decisions on a larger level, potentially state or even national. However, such experiments are empirically rare, with the notable exception of the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul (PB’s birthplace) which implemented a state level PB during two three year periods between 1999 and 2014. See Goldfrank and Schneider (2006) for a discussion of the 1999-2002 experiment. For the purposes of this study, I focus solely on geographies of the city and neighborhood level, and do not claim to generalize my findings to larger scale PB that requires multiple levels of public representation.

of participatory reforms introduced by the left-wing Worker's Party following Brazil's transition from authoritarian rule. It started with an explicit intent of practicing and developing a popular citizenship, developing a empowered democratic public (Baiocchi 2005; Baiocchi and Ganuza 2014). It spread rapidly across Brazil, much of Latin America, and then worldwide. The World Bank, UN, a past president of the American Political Science Association, and the Obama administration all advocated for PB as a valuable innovation in democratic governance and development (World Bank 2008; Shah 2007; UN-HABITAT 2008; Pateman 2012; White House 2013). Increasingly extensive across parts of Europe, especially Portugal, Italy, Spain, and Germany (Sintomer et al. 2010), in the past 5 years PB has seen growing implementation in the English speaking world. Academic research has reflected but lagged behind the global spread of PB. While increasing rigorous study of the impacts of PB have been made in the context of Brazil (see especially Touchton and Wampler 2014), research into the operation and impact of PB in established long-term democracies is still in its infancy.

Since its initial popularization in Brazil, participatory budgeting has been regularly cited as one foundational example of a broad class of democratic innovations commonly referred to as 'participatory governance' (Fung and Wright 2003; Gaventa 2004; Smith 2009). Such reforms has been the focus of a rapidly expanding scholarly literature. They can be defined as the formal extension of public voice into political decision-making beyond the ballot box, "the devolution of decision-making authority to state-sanctioned policy-making venues jointly controlled by citizens and government officials" (Wampler 2012b: 669). Participatory governance reforms are designed to complement, rather than to replace, the traditional representative institutions of liberal democracy. They emphasize institutional solutions, characterized by the development of formal rule structures incorporating the public decisions into the policy process, formally reserving opportunities for public control of decision-making. Outside any participatory governance process, the public may have ample opportunity for expression or informal influence through myriad familiar strategies including lobbying, protest, strikes, or participating in existing opportunities for public comment.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>It is important to understand participatory governance reforms like PB as a complement to representative institutions, rather than a replacement. As a family of democratic reforms, participatory governance shares common roots with direct democracy but is distinct from idealized direct democracy. Direct democracy is generally understood to refer to initiative and referendum processes or New England town meetings, in which unmediated public control takes the place

Crucially, for this dissertation, whether participatory institutions are being implemented as part of a package of wider democratic reforms or not, participatory governance processes, particularly PB, are nearly always justified with reference to their supposedly democratizing aspect. While collaborative and/or participatory strategies may also be advocated on the basis of “the wisdom of the crowds” or pre-empting opposition to unpopular policy choices, their dominant framing is consistently as pro-democratic reforms, whose implementation can play an important role in combating public demobilization, cynicism, or the democratic deficit broadly defined. In this project, I take clear aim at such questions of broader democratic impact. As I detail below, while the empirical body of work on participatory reforms such PB continues to grow, our understanding of the generalized impacts of small-scale participatory reforms remains limited.

### **1.1.1 Existing Evidence: What do we know about participatory reforms and democracy?**

Claims about the democratic significance of participatory reforms abound, but empirical examination and detailed theorizing of the capacity of participatory governance institutions to transform local political practices has been underdeveloped. The majority of scholarly work on participatory governance consists of in-depth descriptive case studies of individual instances of reform (Warren and Pearse 2008; Knobloch et al 2013a; Fung 2004). Such case studies provide important evidence for the fact that delegating direct control over policy outcomes can in fact draw in people who have not typically been involved in local political decisions (Kasden, Cattell and Convey 2013; Nabatchi 2010; Docherty et al 2008; Weatherford and McDonnell 2007; Fung 2007). Comparative work has also typically been descriptive, offering typologies of participatory reforms that are theoretically informed and descriptively rich, but without a strong empirical focus on impact or outcomes. An additional subset of influential comparative work has focused on identifying conditions for ‘successful’ implementation of participatory reforms, typically with an empirical focus on participatory budgeting across Latin America

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of representative legislative authority. Participatory governance refers to a distinct approach to incorporating public voice in the formulation of law and policy and, often, in the oversight of its implementation, in conjunction with existing representative institutions.

(McNulty 2011; Wampler 2007; Goldfrank 2007; Fung and Wright 2003). This work provides critical understanding of the context and politics of the implementation of participatory reforms, but again falls short of providing a systematic understanding of the measurable consequences of these reforms for local politics.

Within the research that has directly investigated democratic impacts from participatory reforms, scholarship has developed in three distinct areas of work. The first area has focused on changes in individual attitudes, knowledge and/or efficacy, typically in highly structured consultative processes such as a Citizens' Jury or 21st Century Town Hall meetings (Nabatchi 2007 and 2010; Gastil and Dillard 1999). This body of work illustrates an existing scholarly bias toward looking for direct participant impacts such as immediate learning rather than how new institutions may transform the organizational or political structure of communities. The second area of work has been detailed single case studies tracing a specific participatory process's role in the community (e.g. Baiocchi 2005; Fung 2004), offering keen insights into specific cases but with less focus on general theory.

Finally, a small but growing literature has engaged in systematic comparative study of the consequences of participatory budgeting in particular, especially in Brazil (see e.g. Wampler 2007 and 2008; Baiocchi, Heller and Silva 2012). This work relies on often extensive fieldwork and interpretive accounts of the effect of the implementation of participatory budgeting in cities across Brazil. Baiocchi, Heller and Silva (2012) provide the most developed study of PB's impact on community-level politics, but they focus substantially on the structure and autonomy of civil society actors and the extent to which PB transforms civil society's relationship with the state (with a particular focus on reducing dependent and discretionary relations). Their study is distinguished by what has been a relatively unique attention to the validity of causal inference in their use of a 'matched pair' research design that includes non-PB cases. Wampler (2012a) also provides one of the most systematic efforts at capturing community effects from PB, using a large scale survey of civil society leaders involved with PB to demonstrate how PB facilitates collaboration across civil society actors. Again, however, Wampler's research here is limited to addressing PB's direct impact on civil society participants, in a single country context, without addressing the question of democratic measures in the wider communities.

Research on democratic outcomes from participatory governance in general, and PB specifically, have thus been limited to focused panel study of individual attitude change in tightly controlled experiments and informative but limited examination of experiences of civil society organizations and local governments in Brazil. There is still a compelling need for systematic theory-building and theory-testing to improve our knowledge of how participatory governance processes intersect with existing patterns of politics as usual. This is especially the case when PB is being implemented at a smaller scale in settings with well-established patterns of local democratic participation and representation.

### **1.1.2 Connecting the dots of democracy: tools for knowledge**

This dissertation helps to close the gap in applied theory and evidence about the impact of participatory deliberative innovations on the quality of democratic communities. How much of an impact can we really expect participatory budgeting reforms to have on the wider political behavior of a community? More fundamentally, *why* would we expect PB to have this impact? Advocates and idealists of PB often take this impact for granted: participatory budgeting is, *definitionally*, more democratic than ordinary processes of budget allocation; therefore, cities with participatory budgeting are more democratic. As I argue in more detail in Chapter 2, democracy is not simply an abstract quantity determined by the characteristics of a polity's formal institutions. For a community to be "more democratic" there must be some change in the capacities or activity of the public in active self-government.

In the following chapters, I address the theoretical and empirical basis for claims that participatory budgeting can make a community more democratic in any substantive sense of the term. In so doing, this work makes a primary contribution to the broader research agenda of understanding the design and possible consequences of democratic innovations. As I attempt to both identify the gaps in our knowledge about democratic impacts from PB and build a reasoned theory to help fill them, I draw on intellectual resources from a number of different literatures.

This project starts where extensive theoretical work on deliberative and participatory democracy leave off.<sup>3</sup> Some deliberative democrats argue from normative principles that democratic systems

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<sup>3</sup>For foundational works in participatory democracy, see Pateman 1970 and Barber 1984; for deliberative democracy see Habermas 1989, Warren 1996, and Gutmann and Thompson 1996 and 2004. This is an extensive, wide-ranging literature,

require the distribution of information and opportunities for exchange of perspectives and reasons (Gastil 2008; Fishkin 2009; Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini 2009) while others argue that deliberation can be seen as a way to reconcile differences and come to recognize what members of the public have in common, encouraging policies for the public good, rather than private interest (Habermas 1989; Gutmann and Thompson 1996). Theorists examining the importance of broad participation emphasize, meanwhile, the importance of everyday participatory venues both to act as schools of democracy, training more capable citizens (Mansbridge 1999, Pateman 1970) or even, simply, as a pre-requisite of democracy in practice as well as name (Barber 1984; Dewey 1927; proponents of a ‘maximalist’ conception of democracy, e.g. Dahl 1989; Sartori 1987).<sup>4</sup>

These expansive normative theories of deliberative and participatory democracy undeniably provide an important contextual framing, driving the expectation that either consequential participation or processes of collective reasoning would correspond with stronger democratic practices. These normative arguments make a case for democratic impact from procedural innovations, but have less to offer in terms of operational theories and empirical demonstration. As Gaventa and Barrett (2012) describe, drawing on Mansbridge and Pateman, participatory theories have long presented challenges to measurement and causal analysis, in part because of the breadth and subtlety of the described impacts. While the evidence base for individual-level capacities and impacts from deliberation has grown in recent years, as discussed briefly above, research on spillover impacts and wider influence from isolated deliberation is largely lacking.<sup>5</sup>

In this work, I move away from the normative aspirations of theories of democratic reforms to more applied explanations of individuals’ actions within circumstances of both opportunity and constraint.

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for which I will not provide yet another fully comprehensive review. For good examples of these, see Owen and Smith 2015; Hauptmann 2001; or Bohman 1998.

<sup>4</sup>Many of these democratic theorists, including Pateman (1970), Bachrach and Botwinick (1992), and even Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995) emphasize participation in ‘non-political’ spaces such as workplaces and churches as a strategy of strengthening democratic empowerment and civic capacities. In my work, I basically argue for the construction of new spaces for civic practice, increasingly necessary as previously stable and widely shared social institutions like church membership or stable employment become less widely and equitably distributed.

<sup>5</sup>Recent work on general public perceptions of the Oregon Citizen’s Initiative review by Gastil et al. (2014) is a distinct exception. Also of note, possibly elsewhere: Empirical evidence offered by skeptics of deliberation, including Mutz 2006; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002 base their criticisms of the potentials for deliberation on evidence based on people’s experience of disagreement and conflict. Experiences of facilitated deliberation do not generally conform to the expectations that people are averse to deliberation (Neblo et al. 2010).

Ultimately, a theory of democratic reform must put individuals and their choices at the forefront. In developing the conceptual tools for connecting the practical application of participatory budgeting ideas to wider experiences of democratic life in the community, I draw on multiple areas of scholarship. This theoretical project is fundamentally institutional, focusing on how changes in the ‘rules of the game’ from PB differentially alter the incentives for engagement among members of the community, drawing out new participants. To understand both the immediate operation of participatory budgeting institutions and how the interactions within PB may have spillover effects to other modes of political action, I assume that people are (imperfectly) reasoning actors who respond to incentives and pursue interests—however they define them (as their own, their community’s, or others’ benefit).

This work, in particular my discussion of how new informative relationships from PB may enable future action, builds on institutional work on problems of collective action (see e.g. Ostrom 2009, 1998; North 1990) and ideas of trustworthiness as a precondition for cooperation or risk-taking (Hardin 2002; Cook et al. 2005; Seabright 1993). In addition, I draw on extensive research on social movement mobilization, particularly that which focuses on the role that information about opportunities and access to resources plays in enabling political action (Diani and McAdam 2003; Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Cress and Snow 1996). Finally, I incorporate research from public administration to provide background on participation trends in other generic public meetings and public officials’ baseline expectations of public roles and capacities (e.g. Nabatchi and Leighninger 2015). Each of these disparate literatures provides one or more components of the specific institutional theory that I develop that builds a causal chain connecting the micro-level interactions within the venue of participatory budgeting to collective capacities for mobilization and stronger democratic engagement.

## **1.2 Introduction to Method and Cases**

The institutional theory that I develop in the next chapter generates observable implications that can be explored empirically. I test this theory with a two-part multi-method research design. In depth interviews and observation of four cases of PB in the US and UK allow for detailed analysis to test for the operation of expected mechanisms in each process, while comparative analysis of an expanding

range of community-level outcomes across paired PB/non-PB cases test for substantive democratic outcomes.

Why focus on cases in the US and UK? Participatory budgeting has been implemented in hundreds of cities around the world, from large cities in Brazil and Latin America, small villages in Africa, and cities in China, to towns and cities across Europe, housing associations in Canada, and, currently, six cities in the U.S. The majority of scholarly evaluations of PB have focused on participatory budgeting in the global South, where PB has often been implemented alongside broader democratization or development projects, with the bulk of research based in Brazil where PB was first pioneered. Research in settings where PB is being implemented in a context of established and long-standing democratic practices has been less common. In this area, academic research has yet to catch up with the increasing spread of democratic innovations across Europe and North America as a response to wide-spread concerns of declining democratic quality.

My work focuses on cases in Britain and North America in an effort to fill this empirical gap while gaining traction on my specific concerns of institutional change in established democracies. I use four diverse cases of PB in New York, London, Edinburgh, and Vallejo, CA to test for the development of expected new relationships and patterns of communication and for observable democratic outcomes in political behavior and political communication in the community. A dense practitioner network connects the implementation of PB in the US and UK, with frequent transatlantic sharing of experiences, collaboration in research and practice, and conference attendance connecting the community of people working with PB in each country. This gives me the opportunity to examine the effects of a policy intervention in two different countries with very different institutional and political environments, where those implementing share normative commitments, standards of best practice, and a repertoire of techniques for structuring participation.

These cases were selected in consultation with experts in the field in both countries to include cases regarded as successful (implementation proceeding largely as planned), providing a set of ‘most-likely’ cases to illustrate potential impacts.<sup>6</sup> Limiting my cases to instances where new rules are being

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<sup>6</sup>In experimental terms, one could consider limiting my attention to ‘successful’ cases as a strategy to observe the effect of PB on the treated, rather than an ‘intent-to-treat’. Thanks to Chris Adolph for this analogy.

implemented most fully gives me the best opportunity to explore how they may or may not transform broader political patterns and to clarify scope conditions of these effects. These four cases have been identified to provide variation on scale, both in terms of the scale of the governing unit implementing PB and the scale of the resources opened up to public allocation. Three of the cases include examples of PB implemented at the local district rather than city wide level, and thus allow for within city comparisons following the implementation of PB. Vallejo, CA is a unique case of a city-wide implementation of PB that includes both city capital and expense funds for public allocation. One of my cases (Tower Hamlets, London) gives me the additional chance to compare two different approaches to PB within the same community. Tower Hamlets has implemented two contrasting approaches to PB, one well-regarded example of PB that was cut back amid the change in government after the 2010 general election in the UK, and one less-well funded and more decentralized approach piloted during my fieldwork in 2014.

### **1.2.1 Introduction to Cases/Case Narratives**

Each of the four cities included in this study is distinctive, with its own idiosyncratic history, functional and dysfunctional politics, and reasons for implementing a participatory budget process. At the same time, each city (or local government area) shares a number of key traits in common: a highly ethnically diverse population (often some of the highest in the region), notable areas of deprivation and poverty, a relatively high proportion of recent immigrants, and a simultaneous sense that wealthier outsiders are also moving into the community (a current or threatened sense of gentrification). These dynamics are characteristic of many urban communities around the world (Lees 2012; Harris 2008). Insofar as PB is able to help these four cities negotiate these challenges, there may be more to learn about strengthening local democracies elsewhere as well.

#### **PBNYC**

Participatory budgeting in New York was first implemented in 2011 when four city council members, three Democrats and one Republican, learned about Alderman Joe Moore's experiment with partic-

ipatory budgeting in his ward in Chicago. Council members (now Speaker) Melissa Mark-Viverito of Harlem and the South Bronx, Jumaane Williams and Brad Lander of Brooklyn, and Eric Ulrich of Queens, with the help of the Participatory Budgeting Project, decided to coordinate an experiment in participatory budgeting in each of their districts using money from their individual discretionary city capital allocations. In 2012 it expanded from four to eight councilmembers, and in 2013 to nine districts. This coming year, the fourth year of PB in NYC, 22 council members will be implementing participatory budgeting in their districts. In the 2013 city council elections, participatory budgeting was a campaign issue across the city, and the newly elected Mayor Bill de Blasio, before and after the election, repeatedly voiced support for PB. With its rapid expansion into districts across the city, there has been a developing shift toward centralizing implementation of PB at the city rather than district level.

PB in New York operates in an annual cycle that moves through several phases. First are neighborhood assemblies, local open public meetings across each district over a period of several weeks that are open to anyone to attend and collectively brainstorm ideas for improvements or investment that could be made in the district. These meetings serve in part as informational sessions about PB, but primarily create spaces where people who live or work in the surrounding community, or anywhere in the district, come together in facilitated small group discussions whose purpose is to generate diverse ideas while also generating some sense of the folks' priorities for investment in the district. Ideas are collected, up to a hundred at an assembly, and attendees are invited to volunteer to serve on a recurring thematic committee that sifts through all of the projects in their thematic area, determine their need, feasibility, and eligibility, and work with the relevant city agencies to narrow the field down to several projects in that area that will make it on to the ballot, 6-8 months after the initial neighborhood assemblies. Delegates present projects at series of 'Project Expos' where residents in each district can come to learn about the projects, and delegates can be recognized for the work they have done. A full week is spent voting, with voting sites distributed across times and places in each district, including council members' offices as well as community centers, schools, and businesses. While identity and address is confirmed to minimize double-voting and check for residence in the district, anyone 16 and

older is able to vote regardless of citizenship and/or legal status. Voters can vote for multiple projects and the top vote-getters will be funded up to the maximum amount initially allocated by the council member. In practice, council members will often fund over the cap to allow the last winning project to be fully funded.

Throughout the process, district offices are supported by city-wide staff, including organizers at the Participatory Budgeting Project (based in Brooklyn) and Community Voices Heard (based in East Harlem). These partner organizations provide central coordination, training, materials, and expertise and support for outreach and mobilization among lower income and hard-to-reach populations. A city-wide steering committee including relevant New York non-profits, community based organizations in the districts, district staff, and community representatives oversees the process, establishes and reviews the rules on an annual basis, provides resources and advice for implementation in the districts, and, crucially, provides an opportunity for coordination, problem-solving, and strategy sharing across the participating districts city-wide. Within the districts, the actual on the ground implementation is usually shared between city council staff, local community based organizations (if present) and local volunteers serving on the district committee. Throughout all the deliberative phases of the process (neighborhood assemblies and budget delegate committee meetings), official facilitators assist the discussion and technical preparation of the final project proposals.

## **Vallejo**

PB in Vallejo follows a very similar process structure, but operates in a simpler governance environment. PB in Vallejo was first implemented in 2012-2013, following a campaign to get a majority vote on the city council to implement PB across the city. Funds to be allocated through PB were drawn from a new Vallejo 1% sales tax increase, passed by a public referendum in 2011, 'Measure B', which was intended to bring in additional resources for general city use following the city's emergence from bankruptcy. PB, in Vallejo, is thus based out of city hall. While overlapping governance bodies such as the Vallejo City School District and the Greater Vallejo Recreation District have discretion over whether they choose to work with PB committees on project development, central city agencies have

a mandate that requires them to support the process and members of the public working within it. This contrasts with New York's PB process, which is characterized by intricate and discretionary coordination between city council members and their staff, city agencies, and members of the public. Essentially the multi-level structure of New York City's government proliferates bureaucratic actors with a stake in the decisions being taken in PB. Where PB in New York takes place in a context of dense neighborhoods and a high density of organizational actors and social resources (even in the often under-resourced neighborhoods where PB is being implemented), in Vallejo PB is operating in a relative vacuum of active community organization and a distinctive legacy of city (mis)management and underfunded public services.

Throughout Year 1, when data for this project was collected, PB Vallejo was also coordinated by the Participatory Budgeting Project, who had 2-3 project staff at any given time working locally, based out of city hall. In Year 2 and subsequent expected cycles the city of Vallejo has taken over the management and implementation of the process, creating new city staff positions to coordinate PB rather than bringing in outside coordinators from the PBP.

### **Leith Decides!**

Leith Decides! is both the smallest scale of the PB processes included in this project and the longest-running, with the first cycle occurring in 2010. Leith Decides! is a well-established example of the local community grant-making model that has dominated most participatory budgeting experiments in the UK. In this model, community groups or organizations prepare proposals for ideas for investment or activities that would benefit the community and local residents are invited to come to open public events to learn more about projects and vote on which should be awarded funding.

The process is managed and run by the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership (LNP), a local subdivision of the municipal government of the City of Edinburgh that brings together the City Councillors for the wards of Leith with selected local public service providers and local businesses. Each Neighbourhood Partnership in Edinburgh has a pot of money designated for "community grants," and in Leith since 2010, this money has been partly (and now entirely) allocated through Leith Decides!.

Despite the limited levels of funding available (increasing from £16,000 the first year to £44,000 in the most recent 2016 round), Leith Decides! has received wide-spread support and enthusiasm from within the community. Between 25-50 organizations have put forward project proposals each year, and over 1000 people participated in the vote in the most recent round (out of a total population of about 56,000, comparable to the levels of participation in the most active NYC council districts).

Leith Decides! is an approximately annual process, with one public decision-making event per year. The opportunity to pursue money for local projects is advertised a number of months in advance. Community organizations identify a project or need that would have benefit to the wider community, and put together a proposal that is submitted directly to the neighborhood partnership. One LNP staff person, along with a small steering group of local community members, determine the legal status and eligibility of projects and reach out to organizations with requests for clarification. The date for the main Leith decides marketplace and voting day is set, and partnership staff along with organizations up for a vote participate in the publicity of the event. For the past two cycles, Leith residents and employees have also been able to vote via a 'postal ballot' rather than attend the single voting day event, filling in and returning in person forms available at the public library (where the LNP's offices are located). During the major marketplace event, organizations put together stalls and displays, and several hundred people mingle in the hall talking about projects and voting. While Leith has had a strong sense of community spirit historically, as a community it has lacked a number of the resources and reputational assets available to other areas of Edinburgh. Leith is one of the most diverse areas of the city of Edinburgh, including blocks with the highest levels of deprivation in Edinburgh and one of the highest population densities outside London.

### **London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

The last case study area in this dissertation is the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH). One of 33 boroughs in the complex governance area that is Greater London, Tower Hamlets has a population of over 250,000. 45% of the population was born abroad (compared to 40% for Inner London as a whole), with the largest proportion of migrants coming from Bangladesh and, to a substantially lesser

extent, India and China. Over 70% of homes are rented, with the majority being rented from the local authority or a local (public) housing association. As with each of the London boroughs, the Tower Hamlets Borough Council is publicly elected and, with the mayor, has a high degree of discretion over spending and investment in the borough. Tower Hamlets has a powerful executive mayor form of government, and the contentious interplay between mayor, council, and the political parties dominates local politics and public life.

While known nationally for its fractious and ethnically divided politics, Tower Hamlets has also been known within the democratic innovation crowds as the home of one of the largest PB experiments in Britain. Between 2009 and 2011, the Tower Hamlets council implemented a process known as Tower Hamlets You Decide! that enabled residents of the eight local area partnerships across the borough to vote on the allocation of funds for a wide range of council services. Over the two years this process was implemented, members of the public, in a series of well-attended events, discussed options in small groups and then voted on spending priorities for nearly £5 million of public money.

Widely lauded as a successful project, the flagship You Decide! process did not survive the change in government in 2010, and was not continued in a recognizable form. However, as part of the mayor's Strategic Plan for 2013/14, a new participatory budgeting process was designed and implemented, called Local Community Ward Forums and advertised under the tagline "The Mayor Asks You to Decide!". The earlier You Decide! process diverged from the ideal model of participatory budgeting in its lack of any opportunity for public identification and proposal of areas for investment. This new (ongoing) process, despite a smaller scale and less publicity, actually replicates the more normative participatory budgeting institutions. It features a cycle of local neighborhood meetings where members of the public identify priorities in their community, brainstorm practical solutions that are checked for feasibility by council staff, and then vote on which projects should receive funding, out of a set cap of £10,000 per each of the 17 wards in the borough. While this is a very small amount of money within the borough's budget, especially compared to the size of the first You Decide! process or even the PB budgets in the U.S., it is more money per resident than has been made available in Leith.

The combination of limited funds and limited publicity combine to make participation in this

most recent attempt at participatory budgeting in Tower Hamlets lower than in any other example of participatory budgeting in this project. Low turnout at a number of ward forums can be attributed to a number of possible causes but minimal publicity and the limited funds were identified by coordinators and participants as important challenges to turnout.

## 1.2.2 Fieldwork

I spent several weeks in each of these four cities through 2013 and 2014, observing public processes in action and interviewing diverse actors familiar with the process in each city. I spent over five weeks in New York in 2013 and early 2014 (where with eight districts conducting PB that year, I had literally more territory to cover), attending a wide range of meetings and public events, observing 17 voting sites, speaking casually with many participants at these events and conducting twenty-three 45-75 minute semi-structured interviews with a range of participants, including members of the public and local organizations, government officials, and partner organizations. I spent four weeks in Vallejo, attending budget delegate and steering committee meetings during the first year and project expos and votes in the second year. In Vallejo I interviewed another 24 diverse participants in the process, from high schoolers participating as youth delegates to high level city staff. During 2014 I also conducted a series of follow-up interviews with about half of my initial subjects.

In Leith, I spent four weeks in January and February developing connections with folks in the close-knit community, attending planning meetings and conducting 12 in depth interviews with applicants and organizers of the process, as well as 20 shorter interviews with voters and applicants on the day of the main voting event. Over a month in Tower Hamlets, I conducted 21 in depth interviews with community activists, government officials, and members of the public familiar with either or both PB process in Tower Hamlets, as well as attending decision-making ward forums in seven wards (the meetings were running in parallel in multiple wards each night; meetings attended were selected to maximize geographic and demographic spread across the borough as a whole). The objective of these observations and interviews in all cases was to develop an accurate picture of how each process unfolded in fact, rather than trusting to official accounts. I aimed for a holistic picture of the pro-

**Table 1.1:** Summary of Fieldwork Activities

Case	# Days	# Interviews	# Event hours
New York	37	23	59
Vallejo	28	24	53
Leith	25	32	9
Tower Hamlets	28	21	18

cess, with an emphasis on drawing out which relationships were established between different actors throughout the process as well building a comprehensive account of the flow and finalization of project ideas in the process.

### 1.3 Outline of Dissertation

The next chapter (Chapter 2) provides a structured development of an institutional theory of participatory budgeting that proposes a micro-level explanation for how PB processes could be expected to enable strong democratic practices. In the process, this chapter develops an explicit definition of participatory budgeting in terms of its institutional characteristics, providing a checklist for descriptive evaluation of whether my cases satisfy the terms of PB.

Over Chapters 3 and 4, two complementary empirical chapters, I use qualitative fieldwork, including in-depth interviews with participants and government officials and observation of PB meetings and public events, to identify the operations of specific mechanisms identified as causally important in the preceding theoretical chapter. I pay specific attention to changes in the structure and content of communication relationships initiated in PB institutions. Of the four cases of PB explored, two are found to have substantial impacts on the communicative relationships between community members as well as between community members and government officials. One case, in Edinburgh, exhibits transformed relationships between community members, but not between community and government, and one other case, in London, shows little to no meaningful impact on community or government relationships. Qualitative narratives explain this variation as a result of specific choices of institutional design made in each of these cases.

Chapters 5 and 6 expand from a focused assessment of the operation of expected mechanisms

within my four PB cases to a wider evaluation of the observable impacts of PB on wider community behavior and political culture. Exploiting the variation both within my cases of PB and between my cases and matched pairs of communities that did not implement PB, I test for the impact of PB in three different areas. Chapter 5 introduces the matched non-PB comparison cases and examines the wider civil society context in which PB is implemented. I conduct a unique comparative survey of local community organizations active in both PB and non-PB communities to establish the levels of activity and collaboration in civil society organizations across the different communities, testing for any effect of PB on the frequency of collaboration among community groups and between community groups and government.

Chapter 6 moves the analysis another step wider, considering the impact of PB on aggregate measures of political culture and voting behavior in the community as a whole. I first implement an analysis of public discussion of politics and public life in local media. I develop a new application of machine learning methods using human coders to train statistical models to identify mobilizing and demobilizing political expression. This method allows me to estimate the changing tenor of political discourse in PB and non-PB cases over time. Second, I consider voter turnout in local and national elections in case and control areas before and after the introduction of PB, using panel data methods to identify any effect on turnout from the implementation of PB.

Taken together, the ensemble of different measures in Chapters 5 and 6 provides a unique picture of any impact that PB has had on the constellation of expressions and behaviors that make up the democratic culture of the community. In the final chapter, I draw together the different strands of the project by summarizing the scope and limitations of PB's democratic potential. I conclude with a brief reflection on the recurring tensions between innovation and institutionalization presented by the current, evolving practices of PB.

## Chapter 2

# Institutions, Networks, and Democracy in PB

Participatory budgeting has emerged from and inspired broad expectations for its potential to reinvigorate democracy. The official rule book for one of my cases, PB Vallejo, explicitly declares that one of its main goals is to, simply, “Transform our democracy” (City of Vallejo 2013), while the official rule book for PB in New York City has stated the more specific but similarly ambitious intent to “Open up government, expand civic engagement, develop new political leaders, and build community” (PB NYC 2013). These are not idle, self-important words hidden in formal documents; themes of political transformation and democratic renewal pervade the outreach materials, framing of meetings and public events, and the explicit hopes for PB shared between observers and practitioners in the field.

These are bold and broad claims, generally justified with reference to normative democratic theory and common ideals of participation and deliberation (as discussed in Chapter 1). Skeptics can reasonably ask how a single local decision-making process, involving typically not more 3% of the population and 3% of the budget, at the most, could meaningfully transform anything. Such a limited exercise in direct democratic agency is, at best, a chance for a small, already motivated, segment of the population to have a satisfying democratic experience, or, at worst, a distraction and drain on limited citizen capacities merely putting a sheen of public control on an unchanged politics. The crux of the question of PB and democratization is thus, first, on what basis could a small-scale change in the rules of local

politics like PB be reasonably expected to have a broader impact on the practice of democracy? and second, can such an effect be observed in any cases of PB?

This chapter proposes an answer to the first of these questions, with following chapters responding to the empirical challenge presented in the second. I begin by laying out in more detail the distinguishing features of participatory budgeting as a unique set of participatory governance institutions. Next I outline the individual level effect these institutions are likely to have on the existing pattern of incentives around participation and structure of relationships and information dissemination in the community. Having completed this institutional profile, I shift to focus to lay the conceptual ground underpinning my discussion of democracy, and lay the groundwork for linking small-scale institutional changes to community-level democratic practice. Finally, I connect the dots, specifying how, in an ideal implementation, the institutional impacts on interaction and information in the community can work to support higher quality democracy. I conclude by introducing my empirical expectations for my case studies and previewing the necessary conditions for effective implementation.

## **2.1 Defining Participatory Budgeting**

The design of participatory budgeting processes, in which some portion of a public budget is opened up to binding decision-making by the general public, is distinct from many other models of local governance and democratic decision-making, in many cases going against conventional expectations of the capabilities and appropriate roles of both the general public and government officials. Any departure from business as usual presents challenges to implementation and requires new learning and adaptation on the part of both residents and government actors, which may result in inconsistent or incomplete implementation. Nevertheless, it is very possible to develop an ideal characterization of PB as its own subtype of governance reform.

Five identifiable characteristics distinguish participatory budgeting experiments worldwide from other forms of local participatory planning, consultation, and collaborative governance:

1. The funding decisions from PB are formally binding or government officials have made some other credible commitment to implementation.

2. Decision making is fundamentally open to all members of the community.
3. The decision process includes an element of public discussion and public reasoning.
4. Spending ideas and priorities come from the bottom up, from members of the public rather than government officials.
5. Members of the public are involved in the design and implementation of the projects and/or can hold officials accountable for implementation.

These criteria represent shared standards to emerge from design principles shared across the community of practice that has emerged around PB (see discussion in Peixoto 2012; Sintomer et al. 2008, 2013). Across different observers and practitioners, particular standards may be emphasized, but these five points can be seen to outline the collective boundaries of PB. With these five parameters, there is a wide scope for variation in what could accurately be called PB (even as a number of projects self-described as ‘PB’ do not meet these criteria). These basic traits create the conditions for the initiation of new relationships and agenda-control at the intersection of citizens and state that may drive the democratic impact of these participatory reforms. I discuss each of these criteria in more detail below.

*The funding decisions from PB are formally binding or government officials have made some other credible commitment to implementation.* Participatory budgeting is fundamentally a decisive public process. Distinct from budget consultations, ‘town hall’ meetings and public information sessions, or letters sent to elected officials, PB provides a way for members of the public to have a direct say in where the city’s money will be spent. The amount and scope of funds up for public decision is known in advance and government officials (typically elected officials) have made a credible commitment to allocating the money as the public decides. This guarantee can be made either through formal policy committing the government to implementation of the budget, or through public declaration within a context of adequate transparency where officials will be held accountable for breaking this promise.<sup>1</sup> The fact that the public exercise direct control over real money may have significant impact on the public’s perception of their incentives to participate.

*Decision-making is fundamentally open to all members of the community.* PB processes in general are

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<sup>1</sup>This is a very common dynamic in situations where an elected official is responsible for the budget decisions and thus the decision to implement participatory budgeting. As regularly reported during fieldwork, the perceived political costs of renegeing on the promise to follow through with the allocated funds are so high (in cases of PB with extensive public participation and a highly visible vote) that public participants can often have high levels of trust that the official will make good on their promise.

designed to be more inclusive and immediately accessible than many other opportunities for influence in modern democratic systems. Often, the requirements for participation are simply that voters are residents in the community, in most cases requiring only a local address rather than legal citizenship or voter registration. In addition, PB processes often have a much lower minimum age to participate, in this study ranging from a minimum voting age of eight years in the case of *£eith decides!* to 16 years in both Vallejo and New York.<sup>2</sup> Not only are the formal requirements for eligible participation wider than other opportunities for public decision, meeting and voting sites are typically based within accessible neighborhood sites such as community centers and schools, ideally with targeted outreach to parts of the community that would not normally engage in political activities. The real money at stake in these processes allow for simply-worded straightforward advertising material inviting people come and share their answers to the question “What would you do with \$1,000,000?” (or whatever amount of money is on the table). Such direct appeals appeal to members of the community who would not typically see participation in local city or political activities as having clear relevance or likely impact in their lives.

*The decision process includes an element of public discussion and public reasoning.* A participatory budgeting process will typically include some period of open public discussion of the issues and/or projects up for decision. The space and structure of this discussion may vary across models of participatory budgeting. This could be anything from online exchange of ideas and reasons, to unstructured public events where people can mingle, learn about projects, and advocate for their own, to structured small group discussions with moderators or even a formally deliberative format.

*Spending ideas and priorities come from the bottom up, from members of the public rather than government officials.* Participatory budgeting stands out for offering a unique invitation for the public to be proactive rather than reactive, identifying priorities and generating ideas for projects and implementation themselves, rather than responding after the fact to proposals from government or advocacy groups. Local politics and local civic activists are commonly derided as narrow-minded NIMBY (Not

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<sup>2</sup>During design of PB processes in the UK and US, simple residency is the most common final criteria for eligibility to participate and/or vote, but other potential eligibility frameworks that have been under discussion have often included the wider definition simply being a ‘stakeholder’, typically through working or volunteering in the community.

In My Backyard) activists; as an alternative, PB can take the same intimate attachment to local life and, rather than wait for a reactive NIMBY response, pre-empt it with the open question “What do you want in our backyard?” This open agenda-setting is never wholly unbounded, however. Different participatory budgets are attached to different funding streams, which will have different legal strings attached (from local community grant funds ear-marked for community-based projects to core city capital or expense budgets). As public money, participatory budget spending decisions will be subject to whatever vetting and legal constraints apply to the relevant budget. In PB, however, this vetting is the reactive element in the agenda setting process. Members of the public typically are able to set the agenda and project priorities and government officials then respond.

*Members of the public are actively involved in the design and approach to implementation of the projects.* This last characteristic reflects a common pattern across participatory budgets, and forms the closest connection to other existing modes of collaborative governance. Projects being voted on or implemented through participatory budgeting are typically defined and designed by or in collaboration with members of the public interested in the project. This collaboration may be at the initial stages of proposal development or continue on to specific details of implementation. For example, a project idea may emerge out of PB assemblies that proposes the development of community gardens for local food production and more green space in an urban environment with limited access to fresh produce. This could be a popular project that falls within the budget and is funded as a top priority through the public process. Once (or even before) funds are allocated, there are numerous elements of implementation, from specific site(s) and scale(s), to design, building, and program support, in which members of the public may play an active role or even have control. In some cases, the public may play a dominant role from inception to completion of a project, in others the public may merely identify a key priority for investment by the city, such as road or streetlight repairs, but leave implementation to the city. Within a single city’s PB process in a single year, there may be wide variation in the depth of public involvement in implementation across all projects, but collaboration in design and implementation in at least some of the projects in a given budget cycle is the norm. At the very least (as justified in Sintomer et al. 2008), there must be an accountability mechanism in place so that the public can verify

implementation of the project as promised on the ballot.

The core characteristics of PB outlined above lay the foundation for the potential impact of PB on the existing structure of community life and political authority. In the cases where participatory budgeting is able to approach these ideals,<sup>3</sup> it should be possible to see a real shift in the incentives and likely actions of both members of the public and government officials in the community. Participatory budgeting, as a distinctive set of institutional reforms, is liable to provoke several fundamental changes in the structure of communicative and collaborative relationships and the distribution of information in the community. I argue in Section 3 below that these basic institutional changes, if observed in practice, form the foundations for PB's widely cited role in improving the quality of democracy.

## 2.2 Defining Democracy

Drawing out the connections between the individual level impacts of participatory budgeting and the broader quality of democracy in the community as a whole, it is necessary to address explicitly how I am conceptualizing and evaluating quality of democracy in this project. Definitions of democracy abound across political science, from descriptive institutional treatments intended to help comparative scholars diagnose democracy (or the absence of democracy) across diverse national contexts to richly theorized normative treatments, and beyond.<sup>4</sup> Democracy as a normative ideal is inherently contested, and no single definition or standard for evaluation has been accepted universally. However, there is a core set of meanings to the concept that, while contested at the boundaries, enables comparison and evaluation of evolving political systems. As Lawrence Whitehead explains, even though democracy is “essentially contested”... this is far from conceding that anything goes. On the contrary there can be both a core of meaning that is ‘anchored’ and a margin of contestation that is “floating” (Whitehead 2002:7). Whitehead's discussion of democracy was written in the context of evaluating of transitions into democratic rule and builds on Schmitter and Karl's (1991) procedural definition

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<sup>3</sup>This caveat ends up defining my initial case selection – a classic “most likely” case selection (including diverse but all ‘successful’ PB designs) – which after the fact ends up actually providing interesting variation on the effective implementation of each of these key elements in the design of PB institutions.

<sup>4</sup>Marshall et al. 2016; Munck and Verkuilen 2002; Collier and Levitsky 1997; Alvarez et al. 1996; Inkeles 1991; Bollen 1980

of a democratic as opposed to authoritarian political system. In order to evaluate the evolution of democracy within procedurally democratic systems (such as the US or UK) it is helpful to specify more general ‘coordinates’ anchoring the concept, building on points of broad normative consensus in political science.

What general characteristics should thus be considered at the core of a conception of democracy as popular sovereignty? The question has been widely written and widely discussed, but across perspectives several central elements stand out. Democracy requires broadly inclusive opportunities for the exercise of sovereignty, not only in the act of voting for representatives but also in informing the agenda and issues of concern or otherwise shaping the decisions that affect them. Democracy also requires the real participation of the public. If opportunities for meaningful participation exist, but broad swaths of the population choose not to (or are practically unable to) participate, the quality of democracy may be in question. A high quality democracy is also dependent on the competence of the citizens, where the public is supported in developing the capabilities necessary to exercise meaningful sovereignty. Finally, democracy is facilitated by a broadly civic society, in which members of the public can recognize shared consequences and undertake collective action for public interest.

It is worth noting that democracy is a trait that can only be ascribed to communities. Democracy is not a condition maintained by individuals, or even individual moments of decision. Rather, it is a condition of political communities and institutional settings that demonstrate certain configurations of power, responsibility, and decentralized authority over policy and politics that structures decisions with collective impact. As a system-level variable, however, democracy is a product not only of general institutional arrangements, but is also established as a consequence of individuals’ behaviors and expectations. Talking about democracy requires understanding an individual’s choices and opportunities within their community context. Evaluating the democratic quality of a community depends on understanding the micro-foundations of political action of individuals within that community.

What are, then, the micro-foundations of good democracy? What general factors contribute to inclusive opportunities, widespread participation, and competent citizens who have an understanding of their fate as connected to the fates of others in their community?

### 2.2.1 Inclusive opportunity

High quality democracy also requires opportunities for the public to have a say in matters that affect them. A common standard for democratic participation is elections, particularly voting for representative public officials. However, as has been often pointed out, electoral participation alone is not enough (Dahl 1989). Often, public standards for legitimate decision-making in democracies, as well as the letter of the law, will mandate multiple dimensions for public involvement in policy making or implementation. Reconciling real citizen input with government expertise is not a trivial task, however. A 2009 survey by the League of Cities found that a majority of municipal officials value public involvement in the abstract but generally think that members of the public lack necessary skills or community-minded interest for well-received engagement (Barnes and Mann 2010). The creation of real opportunities for public engagement becomes dependent on public officials' expectations of the future behavior of members of the general public. In the same way that members of the public may abstain from voting because they don't believe any politicians are capable of governing well, public officials may be reluctant to expend resources and energy on engagement processes for a public that is incapable of cooperation. In this case of low baseline expectations of the public, positive demonstration via PB of the capabilities and capacity for a public goods orientation in members of the public may also improve public officials' willingness to engage the public in the future. Public and government must see each other as credible partners in the work of sustaining democracy.

Finally it is worth restating that these opportunities must be designed to be inclusive. For participation to be really democratically open to citizens, care must be given to ensure that opportunities are available to all. For example, times or locations of meetings, availability of child care, and translation and interpretation of meetings or materials can be crucial for ensuring that opportunities for participation really are inclusive. Too often, spaces for public participation are constrained in ways that limit the spectrum of citizens who are effective given the opportunity to get involved.

## 2.2.2 Participation

High quality democracy also requires that members of the public decide to participate.<sup>5</sup> Some people find political or community action to be inherently rewarding in and of itself, some people have had negative experiences and want nothing to do with it, and some people may not see the point of wasting energy on political activity whose effect they cannot see immediately. People choose to participate for a wide range of reasons, responding to a variety of individual incentives. Such incentives can include the social benefits from participating in community activities, economic incentives such as preserving or improving their material condition, social economic, or expressive benefit such as enacting the identity of a good citizen or having the chance to express their ideas in a public space.

This response to incentives is not a straightforward or unmediated exchange, however. Peoples' decisions whether or not to participate is strongly influenced by their expectations of both themselves and others. Concepts of political efficacy try to capture the basic elements of people's perceptions of a) their own capabilities to act effectively in the political sphere (internal efficacy) and b) how responsive the political sphere will be to their actions or expressions of preferences (external efficacy). A person may have full faith in their own ability to make a compelling argument for their position, understand technical details of a budget, or undertake the hard work of gathering support for an issue, but if they don't expect to be able to produce a response from the political system or those with power, they may be less likely to choose to act on their abilities. Studies of political participation find that people with a stronger sense of both types of political efficacy (the sense that they can and will make a difference) are more likely to participate (Niemi et al. 1991; Finkel et al. 1989; Schaffer 1981; Abramson and Aldritch 1982; Finkel 1985; Goodin and Dryzek 1980).

Finally, in order to participate, people need to have and know of opportunities to participate effectively as well as to have access to the necessary resources to take advantage of these opportunities. Extensive studies have demonstrated that political mobilization requires that people have an accurate understanding of the rules of the game and the actual opportunities available to them as well as access

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<sup>5</sup>Compulsory participation is always a possible alternative, but it not evident that making participatory mandatory necessarily improves its quality (Birch 2009; Jakee and Sun 2006; MacKerras and McAllister 1999).

to adequate resources in order to take action (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; McCarthy and Zald 1977).

It is important that these contributing factors of participation are distributed broadly across the citizenry. Part of the anchoring concept of democracy is that participation needs to be inclusive across the polity. Systematic exclusion of parts of the community undermines the quality of democracy. Improving the quality of democracy by changing individual determinants of participation requires attention to variation in elements such as information about opportunities, efficacy, or different incentives across the community.

### **2.2.3 Competent citizens**

Opportunities for participation may exist, and members of the public want to act on these opportunities, but high quality democracy requires that citizens are also enabled with the skills and competency necessary to understand and act on their preferences. Competence here can mean both the basic information necessary to have an understanding of the issues at stake and make a judgment as well as the skills necessary for effective citizenship. Knowledge of politics and the political system itself is necessary for people to act rationally in the public sphere (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Zaller 1992). Acting effectively in the public sphere, especially coordinating with others, requires practical skills that cannot be taken for granted. Such skills can range from basic literacy and numeracy skills to more sophisticated skills such as public speaking, organizing meetings, understanding the structure of relevant political institutions, or knowing how to use the internet to research issues or government policy.

### **2.2.4 Collective action for public good**

At its core, democracy is a problem of collective decision-making, of specifying who gets to make decisions that have a shared impact across a group of people, and how. As such, the quality and sustainability of democracy may be fostered by a public able to act with a wider conception of public rather than solely private benefit. Sustainable democratic government benefits from a public willing-

ness to cooperate and a willingness to forgo narrow private benefit in exchange for a wider public good, or benefits to others in the community. In asking a diverse public to make decisions that impact others in the community as a whole, it is important to consider what is necessary to build a sense of collective responsibility and willingness to cooperate within the community. What would foster these tendencies? A willingness to cooperate may be developed by creating space for repeated interaction between parties, especially where interaction and learning is fostered across groups (Scholz and Wang 2009). Respectful, open deliberative exchange may facilitate better understanding of shared political community, even when individual private interests may diverge (Mansbridge et al. 2010). This understanding of community in common may facilitate the development of a sense of a community of fate that supports future calls for collective action (Ahlquist and Levi 2013). Similarly, providing a public forum to actively reflect on trade-offs and choices to implement different goods can shift people's preferences towards public goods by providing a public forum to actively reflect (Stutzer et al. 2011). Such a forum could even simply provide a "far fuller and richer picture of diverse social goods, and how they might be served" in such a way that preferences update to more accurately serve individual interests, improving the quality of even purely aggregative decision making processes. (Sunstein 1991, 17).

A framework for thinking through the intersection of public and private benefit, recognition of a shared fate within a community, and a willing orientation to cooperation may reinforce the function of democracy as a set of institutions and practices for the collective self-government. Capacities for cooperative action and an awareness of common interests also can be fundamentally important for supporting further mobilization and collective action outside of interaction with institutions of government. Wider associational activity and a stronger civil society, with more cross-cutting connections (bridging rather than bonding social capital) can in turn feed back to support broader participation in democratic institutions.

## 2.3 From Participatory Budgeting to Democracy

What connects the small-scale processes of participatory budgeting to the large-scale dynamics of continuing democratic practice? In this section, I outline in greater detail an account of participatory budgeting processes, defined in ideal here, as a form of micro-level institutional change, distinct from ordinary procedures of public engagement at the local level. I then build a theoretical case for broader spillover effects from the localized interactions within the framework of a PB process to the larger conditions of democratic practice in a community.

Table 2.1 summarizes the full set of expectations that will be developed in the following pages. Section 2.3.1 elaborates on the logic of the first two rows, section 2.4 the row of observable implications, and section 2.4.1 explains the final row detailing the ‘negative’ expectations that would indicate a breakdown of my expected mechanisms of PB’s impact.

### 2.3.1 PB institutions as (micro) institutional change

The implementation of participatory budgeting can change the rules of the game of local politics in several key ways: 1) redefining who is permitted to play, 2) creating new (perceived) benefits from participating, 3) redefining the rules about agenda-setting and interaction between players, and 4) expanding the information that multiple actors have about both other actors and the real conditions in the community, how different actors in the community interact within the PB process, and what people know about other actors and the political process in the community. These four aspects are interconnected, for example, as the distinctive rules of the game (e.g. agenda setting and decision-making powers) shape the expanded incentives to participate.

#### **Who is allowed to play?**

Local democratic politics in the United States typically provides diverse opportunities to provide input or otherwise participate in the policy process. These avenues are, however, either restricted in their influence or restricted in who can be involved. Electoral participation is limited to eligible registered voters in the area, excluding residents or other stakeholders who unable to register in the area (such

Table 2.1: Theory and Expectations for PB

	Participants	Public Officials	Wider Public
Democratic outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to community resources</li> <li>Strategic political knowledge</li> <li>Increased political efficacy</li> <li>Stronger public good orientation</li> <li>Knowledge of community needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preferences for public engagement</li> <li>Better info on public preferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More opportunities to participate (civil society &amp; gov't)</li> <li>More willingness to participate</li> <li>Increased competence from spillover from PB participants</li> </ul>
Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New people participate</li> <li>New, repeated interactions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Among public</li> <li>o Between public &amp; government</li> </ul> </li> <li>New information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New interactions with public</li> <li>Collaborative rather than reactive experience with public</li> <li>Learning new modes of engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicity about the process</li> <li>More activity &amp; collaboration across community groups</li> <li>Diffusion of info about political process</li> </ul>
Observable implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Participants are representative</i></li> <li><i>Issues addressed reflect public priorities (public agenda-setting)</i></li> <li><i>Participants report interaction with strangers/new groups in PB</i></li> <li><i>Participants show learning/skill development in PB</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Report new relationship with public</i></li> <li><i>Report learning/info from public</i></li> <li>Policy areas reflect PB priorities</li> <li>Increased opportunities for public engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater political mobilization: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) <i>increased voter turnout</i></li> <li>ii) <i>increased organization activity</i></li> <li>iii) <i>increased civil society cooperation</i></li> <li>iv) <i>participation in other meetings</i></li> </ul> </li> <li><i>Discourse shifts from demobilizing to mobilizing.</i></li> </ul>
'Cynical' alternative expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only "usual suspects" attend</li> <li>Process is hijacked by organized interests</li> <li>Government officials refuse or coopt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officials avoid process</li> <li>Public preferences ignored</li> <li>Public refuses to respect officials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No change in wider political life</li> <li>Cynical accounts of PB decrease future engagement</li> </ul>

Note: Italicized implications represent outcomes addressed empirically in this dissertation.

Cynical alternatives summarize expectations for the negative case in which PB does not impact democratic life in the community.

as non-citizens, students, convicted felons). Other forms of consultation or public input may be more formally inclusive, but do not allow for strong influence or decision-making authority. Finally, those who are allowed to have a decisive voice in policy and expenditures are generally limited to elected officials and local government officials or influential high-level stakeholders who may be tasked with the job of drafting or implementing policy.

PB opens up participation in real decision-making to many people who would have less access to power in the typical local policy process. Participation is (in the ideal) open to everyone, regardless of voter registration status, socio-economic class or education, and previous experience or expertise with government. Also importantly, participation is open to everyone regardless of issue orientation or ideology. Unlike many consultations or public meetings, the open agenda removes constraints on participation to individuals with an interest in a certain predefined policy area. As described in the next section, this formally open participation intersects with the tangible incentives of PB to allow participant populations that are more diverse and/or representative than many other engagement processes.

### **What are the incentives to playing?**

Traditional public engagement and electoral participation present certain incentives to participate for both members of the public and government officials. Governments may be decide to offer (and attend) public meetings or respond to public petitions for a number of reasons, from statutory obligations to the need for public buy-in (or public cover) for unpopular policies. In some cases, officials may even engage with the public because the practice embodies values of civic life or public service that are important to them. It's also important, however, to indicate the strong *disincentives* to public engagement: public engagement may not be seen as the most efficient use of scarce public money and staff time, or officials may be deterred by past experiences of bad or unproductive public exchanges. On the side of the public, in a consultative, representative context where decision-making control is typically held by government officials, incentives to participate tend to be based in either expressive or group solidarity motivations (to be seen as taking a stand) or as another embodiment of civic virtue.

These incentives are not universally compelling, especially when presented in competition with the many other pressures on residents' time and energy, and are themselves often dependent on experience, education, and other markers of socio-economic privilege (Nabatchi and Amsler 2014: 72-73, McComas, Besley, and Trumbo 2006; Ansell and Gash 2007; Fung 2003a, Heberlain 1976).

Participatory budgeting, as defined here, introduces altered incentives for both members of the public and government officials to engage in a public process. Not only do formal rules of PB extend participation to those typically excluded from electoral politics, the invitation to PB presents a different incentive to attend. Putting money on the table makes the possibility of payoff from participation more credible than nebulous invitations to “have your say” on a specific policy under development. Members of the public may find it easier to imagine how the concrete outcome on which they choose to spend PB money will impact their lives. Existing research on related participatory governance reforms in developed democracies has highlighted increased equity in participation compared to ‘normal’ politics, suggest that an expansion in who participates are a real possibility. Numerous case studies of participatory governance reforms in Europe and North America, including participatory budgeting, provide evidence that delegating direct control over tangible policies clearly relevant to everyday life can in fact draw in people who have not typically been involved in local political decisions (see e.g., Community Development Project 2012; Nabatchi 2010; Docherty et al.2008; Weatherford and McDonnell 2007; Fung 2007). Meanwhile, public officials, for whom there are an array of costs to engaging the public, are be subject to a new bureaucratic mandate to engage, for which they may be held accountable as part of their revised job descriptions.

### **How is the game played?**

The basic ideal procedures of participatory budgeting, how the game is played, differs in several key respects from existing traditional public meetings. These differences have the potential to transform the flow of action, relationships, and information within PB venues in contrast to ‘business as usual’ in local public engagement.

First, PB processes reserve substantial control of the agenda to the public. Public meetings and tra-

ditional engagement processes typically include pre-defined agendas created by public officials or specific proposals or actions for which comment is requested (Nabatchi and Leighninger 2015; Nabatchi and Amsler 2014; Adams 2004). The bottom-up agenda setting in PB is distinctive in contrast and sets the stage for two important differences from business as usual. First, the open agenda amplifies the formally inclusive invitation of a participatory budgeting process. A much wider cross-section of individual perspectives are relevant to a PB agenda, unconstrained by the salience of a narrowly defined policy concern. Second, open public agenda setting expands the scope of potential information that may be revealed in meetings or project proposal and deliberation. When the field of possibly relevant information is not defined *a priori*, participants have the opportunity to introduce surprising or previously unknown issues and perspectives into the public sphere.

Second, participatory budgeting processes are characterized by an explicit framing of collective impact (or community benefit). PB meetings are often equipped with facilitators whose role reiterates the obligation to consider what would benefit ‘the community as a whole’, encouraging participants to consider interests held in common while preserving expressive space for minority or less dominant perspectives. Such consistent framing and values definition can shape the criteria that individuals use to evaluate the relative merits of projects while trained facilitation can broaden the range of positions or reasoning available to participants. As Dal Bó and Dal Bó (2014) demonstrate experimentally, such explicit moral framing can in fact increase cooperative behavior, most likely through adjusting people’s expectations for others’ cooperation (see also Ellingson et al. 2012; Brañas-Garza 2007; Liberman et al. 2004; Cookson 2000; Deutsch 1958). Additionally, the wide consideration of needs and solutions elicited by the structure of PB brainstorming and consideration, as Stutzer et al (2011) and Sunstein have (1991) have described, may also help to shift people’s preferences toward more public goods. While private interests may still conflict, such decision guidelines continually orient people back to a common interest, rather than assuming a pluralist competitive dynamic.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>As Mansbridge et al. (2010) explain, conflict will always be a factor in political and power negotiations. While deliberation may help people to identify commonalities and shared interests, some conflict is inevitable, and it is important that mechanisms exist to negotiate and make a decision in a context of conflicting interests. In the context of participatory budgeting, this persistence of conflict is why PB decisions generally involve a mix of consensual decision-making and final voting, and why participatory governance in general is seen as complementary to existing structures of representation or election to adjudicate competing interests.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, the rules of PB establish new instances of interaction between actors in the community, both members of the public and government officials. The agenda-setting and decision-making authority held by the public in PB means that both individual and organized participants must interact with other members of the public to include their priorities in the agenda while developing support for any proposed project. The structure of these expanded interactions is determined by the design of the process or meetings. The open but intentionally geographically integrative structure of many PB processes offers the possibility of fostering new network structures that cut across common cleavages of neighborhood and issue. By bringing people together in cross-cutting settings PB may be able to facilitate important communication of conditions and preferences across a community as well as allowing actors with diverse experience and expertise to share information about strategies and resources, facilitating new cooperative or collective action.<sup>7</sup>

Participatory budgeting also establishes new relationships both between members of the public and between public and government actors. Open participation regardless of legal citizenship or voter status and more immediate incentives bring in members of the public who may not have previously been active in the public sphere, initiating interactions between members of the community and public officials that did not previously occur. This may especially be the case in the institutional setting of PB that prioritizes discussion and identification of common priorities among the public rather than orienting toward the expertise of government officials. Finally, the structure of PB itself initiates new relationships between members of the general public and government officials, which may see considerably more two-way and iterated interactions, especially during phases of project proposal development and implementation.

Finally, the key distinctive characteristic of giving residents the decisive say over the allocation of funds itself importantly redefines the typical dynamics of local public engagement and decision making. Giving the public final control of the decision shifts at least part of the relative power of government officials and members of the public. Government officials and government policy opportunities become increasingly dependent on public preferences and public priorities. While many

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<sup>7</sup>In other words, increasing social capital as narrowly defined (“access to resources through network ties”) by Lin (2008).

officials may resist or seek opportunities to bypass or circumvent public control, this basic rule change persists and creates both new opportunities for public action and new incentives for government officials to engage with the process.

### **What do players know and learn?**

In defining new rules for the interaction of local political and public actors, PB also alters what information is shared and communicated across these relationships. Members of the public may gain access to new information about the practical workings of government as well as about the interests, resources, and preferences held by other members of their community. Some of this information may emerge purely as a result of new interactions, but the content is also shaped by the demands of the PB process itself, which requires that government become more open about the limitations and process of budgeting and project implementation and that members of the public share information on their priorities and the conditions of their lives with others in the community. Similarly, the open agenda and requirement of government officials to receive and respond to public priorities opens can provide to the local government new information and new ideas about the needs, priorities, and capacities of the community.

Different impacts can be expected from the development of new relationships among members of the public (or community groups) and between the public and government officials. New communicative relationships between the public and government officials result in sharing of information on political structures and opportunities for influence, better strategic knowledge about the real workings of the political system, information on conditions and preferences within the community, and information about the process preferences and capabilities of both public and government actors. This information may affect democratic quality by increasing the public's willingness and strategic capability to participate while possibly increasing willingness of officials to provide opportunities for inclusion.

Finally, the iterated interactions between people in months-long PB processes are likely to lead to revised expectations of others' behavior and preferences. These include the expectations that members

of the public have for both other community members and government officials, as well as the expectations that government actors have of the public at large, motivating the actual practices of actors across the community. Information exchanged in these interactions can include substantive knowledge about the political system, the strategic preferences of other political actors, and experiences and conditions across the community that may foster a new understanding of collective interests. This new information and control of the agenda changes the understanding of risks and incentives accompanying different kinds of political action, potentially impacting patterns of subsequent political behavior in the community.

### **2.3.2 Moving from Micro (PB) to Macro (Democracy)**

But how do these small scale effects fit into a process of ongoing democratization, as I described above? To what extent do these small changes in political institutions contribute to a political system that is more democratic overall? As defined earlier, democracy is stronger where individual citizens a) are more interested and willing to participate in public decisions, b) have widely distributed access to opportunities to participate, c) are equipped with necessary capabilities to act as citizens, and d) understand their interests as operating within a broader framework of collective impact and possible cooperation. Participatory budgeting, as a form of participatory governance, has a distinct combination of elements of open participation, direct public authority, and concretely identifiable policy outcomes. However, PB typically only controls a small portion of the budget, and despite the wider parameters and open incentives to participation a PB process will only ever engage part of the whole public. Understanding whether and how participatory budgeting institutions may have an impact on the overall quality of democracy in a community more broadly requires examining how PB institutions impact these four factors for individuals in that community.

The unique institutional arrangements of PB, outlined at the start of this section, have several broad areas of impact. As I describe above, new rules about who can participate and different incentives for engagement (on the side of both public and government actors) bring new people into public spaces and can initiate new relationships between actors with minimal prior interaction. New com-

municative relationships, formed in settings that emphasize the importance of public good and where members of the public can set the agenda, alter structure and content of information transmitted within the community. As I explain in the sections below, I expect this restructuring of communication and collaboration within the community to have direct impacts for political behavior and the quality of democracy as conceptualized by broad participation, open inclusion of all groups, and competent, public-minded citizens.

Two additional features of PB may amplify these effects of interaction and communication. First, participatory budgeting institutions are designed to also have real implications for the distribution of different kinds of resources across the community. In addition to the informational and social resources discussed above, PB can also involve distribution of civic skills and financial resources in the community. Often, as part of implementing PB, cities invest in training and capacity building in segments of the community with less experience of participation. The decisions to emerge from PB themselves can (but do not always) result in direct investment in neighborhoods and communities that may have fewer resources. Second, PB uses a distinct framing of public life that continually returns people to the issue of the public good. Where agreement between interests is difficult to find, the rules of PB are often designed to use public rather than private benefit as focus of decision. PB explicitly invites people to act as members of a community with shared interests, with implications for the relative weight of public and private interests and willingness to cooperate in the future.

The local rules introduced in PB thus can be linked to a series of changes to the basic factors underpinning individuals' behaviors and choices within a nominally democratic setting. The sections below draw the connections between these micro-level dynamics and the system-level standards for democracy defined above. Table refexpectable, at the end of this section, summarizes these theorized connections and empirical predictions. The sections below outline expectation for both direct and indirect effects from PB on general democratic capacities in communities. This dissertation project does not have the scope to examine, empirically, all of the dimensions of impact, but it is an important theoretical contribution to detail outcomes that would be important to consider in future studies.

### 2.3.3 Participation

The institutions of participatory budgeting, if fully implemented, may be expected to have both direct and indirect effects on participation. PB institutions may be expected to have direct effects both on the democratic quality of local political systems in two ways. First, in the institutional fact that PB opens participation more widely: one of the defining characteristics of PB is that the process is fundamentally open to all members of the community, including those who may not typically be able to vote, and evaluations of PB processes in the US and UK have shown that participants include those who have not participated in other political engagement activities. Second, PB also has the potential to impact the future behavior of PB participants with respect to other aspects of political life, by virtue of direct impacts on individual participants in the PB process. No rigorous research on impacts on future participation from PB yet exists, but research in related deliberative or participatory settings has demonstrated increases in individual attitudes, knowledge and/or political efficacy, typically in highly structured consultative processes.<sup>8</sup> Observing actual behaviors rather than attitudes, Gastil et al.(2010) and Jacobs et al.(2009) both find that individual voter turnout increases after individuals engage in deliberative participation (in courtroom juries or issue deliberations, respectively)

Direct impacts on individuals are of only limited interest, as any effects are limited by the scale and scope of the PB process itself. There is some basis to believe that, with adequate publicity, these direct effects on efficacy may extend more broadly into the community, even among nonparticipants. For example, Knobloch et al. (2013b) describe ‘emanating effects’ resulting from the public deliberative Oregon Citizens’ Initiative Review. They identify an increase in efficacy among the general public who were aware of the process but did not participate. Moving beyond these potential direct effects on political efficacy and turnout, the institutional mechanisms described above may have further indirect

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<sup>8</sup>In both experimental settings (Morrell 2005) and high-intensity, highly structured forums (Nabatchi 2007, 2010; Gastil et al.2010; Gastil and Xenos 2010; Gastil and Dillard 1999) experiences with facilitated deliberation have been associated with increases in both internal and external evaluations of political efficacy. The empirical validity of the causal inference across each of these studies is reasonable, with random selection of participants and pre- and post- surveys. Both Nabatchi and Gastil et al.include follow-up surveys which demonstrate durability of these findings over time. An exception to the highly controlled setting of most of these studies is Docherty et al.(2008) who see higher levels of efficacy in Scottish neighborhoods with more institutions for local participation (these do not necessarily meet the standards I set for PG here).

impacts on levels of civic and political participation in the community. New relationships and new information can both play an important role in supporting future mobilization.

New relationships established in PB, in particular cross-cutting relationships that bring people together across established geographic or issue area divides, extend the networks available to motivated individuals seeking to mobilize others in their community. In addition, these relationships also provide a context for the kind of repeated interaction and familiarity that can support future cooperation among previously uncoordinated parts of the community, increasing the likelihood of future effective public engagement in the community more broadly. Previous research on participatory budgeting elsewhere (largely Brazil) has provided support for the expectation that PB can have an extended impact on the structure of civil society relationships and subsequent collective action. For example, Wampler (2012a) draws on evidence from interviews with 833 civil society leaders involved in PB across Brazil to demonstrate how PB encouraged direct negotiation and alliance-building between civil society organizations. Similarly, although beyond PB, Akkerman et al. (2004) show that introducing a more participatory “interactive state” encourages the development of bridging social capital by strengthening overlapping organizational networks. Greater social capital is associated with greater mobilization and political participation (Putnam 2000; Berman 1997), with bridging connections across disparate segments of society helping to provide access to more diverse or better resources for mobilization (Lin 2009; Ostrom and Ahn 2009; Granovetter 1973).

Moderating these positive expectations, it's worth noting that there is still little empirical research translating such the civil society effects from PB into an account of greater democratic participation. In fact, scholars often present an ambivalence around whether PB can strengthen mobilization. This may in part be explained by concerns that pre-existing civil society mobilization (Wampler 2007; Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011) or other countervailing power (Fung and Wright 2003) is necessary for PB to be effectively implemented. While PB may be able to amplify capacities and connections between existing civil society actors, it may not be effective in creating an alternate, autonomous, and organized civil society where previously absent.

Finally, the new information distributed through channels initiated in PB may have their own in-

direct effects on participation. First, PB allows members of the general public to access new and more accurate information about the real workings of politics in their community. Because of this, members of the public may be more aware of opportunities to meaningfully participate or may be more willing or able to take action effectively when they have a better understanding of the preferences and likely responses of people in government. Conversely, this dynamic also highlights a limitation on any democratizing potential of PB: if implemented in a context of non-responsive or dysfunctional government, the information gained through PB is unlikely to increase people's interest in future engagement.<sup>9</sup> Second, the open participation and communicative interaction that are key characteristics of PB, in combination with the open agenda of PB in its initial stages, allow people to get to know situation and needs of their community better, identifying new or wider areas of interest and concern.

### **2.3.4 Inclusive opportunities**

Considering the impact of PB on public participation more broadly directs attention to how PB affects the lives of local residents. Examining the availability of inclusive opportunities, on the other hand, directs attention to the members of government themselves, who are in large part responsible for the 'supply' of opportunities for public participation. The implementation of PB, mandating the inclusion of the public in the budget process, has a direct, but limited effect of extending opportunities for engagement. However, there is also a reasonable basis to expect an indirect effect on the provision of future space for engagement. A fundamental aspect of participatory budgeting, shared with other forms of participatory governance, is the development of functionally collaborative relationships between members of the public and government officials. In addition to communicating public policy preferences to politicians and information to the public about the operation and strategic behavior of government actors to the public, these interactions allow government officials to learn more about the interests and capacities of the public for productive engagement.

Barnes and Mann (2010) report on the depth of skepticism that government officials have about the public's ability and willingness to be a productive partner in governance (see also Irvin and Stansbury

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<sup>9</sup>If the government itself is seen to have low democratic legitimacy, PB without further reform is likely to simply highlight the low level of democratic quality.

2004; Pearce and Pearce 2010). Participatory budgeting can provide an opportunity for government officials to revise these beliefs. Traditional public meetings and consultations are typically scheduled to provide public reaction to a policy already proposed, typically attracting (basically by definition) negative or disruptive publics. The proactive (rather than reactive) setting for participatory budgeting not only brings out different members of the community, it brings them together in a more productive mode of interaction. Government officials become more of a resource to members of the public developing policy rather than simply antagonists. Gaining experience of members of the public as partners rather than antagonists, in combination with seeing how ready people can be to invest their own time and energy into governance may make officials more willing to open governance to the public in the future.

A last dimension through which PB may impact future provision of opportunities for participation is in providing an opportunity for staff to gain training in different tools and approaches to participation. Including additional participatory methods in the repertoire of approaches to policy development makes it more likely for policy-makers to use participation in the future. Familiarity with a tool makes it easier to imagine a use for it, and may make officials more comfortable with expanding participation into new arenas.

### **2.3.5 Competent citizens**

Participatory budgeting has a broad capacity to develop the knowledge and skills of members of the public who get involved. Facilitated discussions help people practice effective communication and meeting styles, and in some cases participants may even receive some formal training in facilitating meetings or discussions. Developing project proposals and plans for implementation, independently and in collaboration with city staff builds knowledge of the practical workings of a city and its disparate departments, as well as helping build experience with tasks like writing budgets and proposals. Finally, having to appeal to others in the community, to make a case for a specific project, provides an introduction to public communication and advocacy within a highly structured setting. This kind of experiential training into citizenship has been posited as an important consequence from partic-

ipation in governance processes since Pateman's seminal (1970) work and echoed in Barber's 'strong democracy' formulation (1984).

Increased competence from PB can only really be expected as a direct effect on participants. It is possible that these effects could spill over onto others in the (increasingly dense) networks of participants, but such diffusion cannot be counted on theoretically. It is reasonable to expect increased competence to increase efficacy and participants' likelihood of working to mobilize others in their community around particular issues, but it's a step too far to ascribe wider competency gains specifically to PB.

### **2.3.6 Collective action for public good**

Participatory budgeting institutions, finally, may have important implications for people's inclinations to engage in collective action or to consider collective benefit (or the public good) when evaluating priorities or ideal political outcomes. At the micro level, community framing and effective facilitation are conditions that are likely to strongly influence how much PB really shifts people's preferences for public goods or willingness to cooperate. Even given the best facilitation and real changes or reprioritization of participants' preferences, these direct impacts alone are unlikely to directly scale up to the wider community. However, indirect effects may be expected through the potential network and demonstration effects from PB.

The first indirect impact may be expected as a result of the development of new relationships and communication of a wider range of interests and needs across the community. As Scholz and Wang (2009) argue, the expansion of individual networks, with repeated interactions and learning between groups, may support an increased orientation toward cooperation. This experimental finding complements the widespread literature considering the importance of network connections as a precondition of collective action in the real world (Opp and Gern 1993, Diani and McAdam 2003, Ostrom and Ahn 2009). Whether networks serve to distribute information about resources or political opportunities in the community (Kavanaugh et al. 2004; McClurg 2003; Lake and Huckfeldt 1998; Granovetter 1973), or reputational information about the trustworthiness of previously unknown actors (Ostrom

and Ahn 2009, Cook and Hardin 2001), PB may have an impact through building even weak bridging ties between previously non-overlapping community groups.

The second potential indirect effect may in fact result from both participants' and nonparticipants' own observations of the capacity of people to take collective decisions through the process. A successful PB process, which results in collective decision-making across groups, may serve as an effective demonstration of the possibility of cooperative behavior. As Fischbacher et al. (2001) demonstrate, more optimistic expectations about the likelihood of others' cooperation increases willingness to act cooperatively (See also e.g., Ostrom 2009; Axelrod 1984). Seabright (1993) provides an account of the ways that institutions can "channel trust," supporting structured interactions to practice collective action within which individual or collective actors have opportunities to build their reputation for trustworthiness. I argue that PB process can act as such institutional spaces to demonstrate the capacity for collective action where there may not be a bank of past experience to encourage people to mobilize. This may work either by strengthening the reputation of specific community interest groups or by providing a generalized improvement to observers' baseline expectations for the general willingness of others in the community to cooperate in the future.

## 2.4 Empirical Implications

This theory generates a set of observable expectations that I aim to test in my dissertation. These expectations come in two stages, the first as procedural dynamics that I expect to operate in cases of PB, the second as a set of democratic outcomes that I expect to observe in cases of PB demonstrating the predicted mechanisms. These empirical implications are also summarized in Table 1 above.

As I describe above, PB creates new incentives for engagement and new spaces for interaction and discussion between a variety of actors who may not typically have the opportunity for substantive interaction, including diverse members of the community, political elites, and government officials. These leads to my first, procedural, expectation:

*1) In cities where PB is implemented, members of the public, community based organizations, and government officials will all report new relationships and describe new patterns of communication*

*and learning, including knowledge of other actors' preferences, conditions in the community, and the real workings of the political process.*

Any relational and informational effects are expected to be conditional on, first, PB being implemented as an inclusive, community-based process (as opposed to elite stakeholder or randomly-selected 'jury' processes) and, second, adequate buy-in and a credible commitment to abide by the outcome by government authority. If these conditions are not met, I do not expect to see full operation of these informational mechanisms.

The second set of expectations includes democratic outcomes from informational impacts on political mobilization, inclusion, and preference expression. I expect that these community-level outcomes are *conditional* on a PB process satisfying the process-level expectations outlined above. Community level outcomes in these cases should be observable following two complementary expectations:

*2a) Where PB is fully implemented and demonstrates the relational and informational characteristics predicted above in (1), communities will demonstrate increased political mobilization, though i) increased voter turnout, ii) increased organization activity, iii) increased civil society cooperation, and iv) participation in other city/community meetings.*

This set of behavioral expectations is a result of political learning and changes in the understood opportunities, costs, and benefits of political and civic action that may come about as a result of new communicative relationships. I expect that the distribution of these outcomes will be dependent on the specific structure of the relationships and information that emerge in the process. Where PB increases public knowledge about effective operation of the local political system and the issues at stake in local politics, I expect an increase in individual expressions of participation like voting and attendance at other local community planning meetings. Where PB increases opportunities for networking within the community and/or knowledge about shared problems across neighborhoods or distinct constituencies, I expect to see an increase in collective engagement as seen in local organizational density and membership numbers as well as collaboration between different organizations.

Additionally, if democratizing effects of PB scales up to the community level, an impact should be observable at the level of political discourse – how people talk about their interests with respect to their community and government. This expectation leads to the second community-level expectation:

*2b) Where PB has immediate relational and informational impacts, expression of public preferences and articulation of community concerns will shift from a demobilizing emphasis on private interests and irrelevance or ineffectiveness of collective action to a mobilizing emphasis on shared public interests and capacities for cooperative civic activity.*

This second set of expressive expectations emerges from the intersection of deliberative theories with ideas about preference formation discussed above. First, it is possible that the information shared between government officials and the general public, in particular public learning about opportunities for influence and community members' own capacities to work together, will increase representation of political activity as achievable or relevant to the interests of members of the public themselves. Second, the emphasis on collective benefit framing within many PB discussions, the identification of common problems and learning about collective concerns, and shared experiences of community building through participation in PB are expected to encourage the framing of preferences in terms of community good rather than private self-interest.

In exploring advocates' hopes that PB may "transform democracy", my arguments point to a wide range of possible democratic outcomes. While I outline a range of possible mechanisms of democratic impact, I do not expect to see all operating at once in the same cases; outcomes will be dependent on precisely which relationships and what information is distributed through each implementation of PB. It is also worth noting alternate explanations for any observed democratic outcomes. Changes in political mobilization or political expression may be a result of a controversial issue emerging coincidentally with PB. Perhaps an 'innovation effect' in which the novelty of a new process excites members of the public or levels the playing field between elites and the general public who are learning new rules together. Alternatively, it is possible that a community implementing PB was tending toward democratic revitalization anyway, and both the implementation of PB and democratic improvements are results of the same democratizing tendency. Given the complexity of the causal story in each of these cases, eliminating these alternative explanations necessarily directs the analysis to focus on narrative precision to connect each step in a causal chain linking any democratic outcomes back to the implementation of PB.

### 2.4.1 Cynical Alternative Expectations?

There is thus a strong argument from theory and anecdote democracy-supporting outcomes from participatory budgeting. However, it is worth outlining (alongside possible alternative explanations for positive democratic outcomes) the cynic's negative expectations: what I would expect to see if the implementation of PB does not, in fact, have the anticipated positive democratic impact. There is a basis in scholarship for skepticism about PB's transformative potential. Much of the literature on traditional public meetings and engagement processes point to negative or demobilizing consequences of poorly implemented or ineffectual engagement activities, in particular (Nabatchi and Leighninger 2015, Ch 2; Nabatchi and Amsler 2014; Irvin and Stansbury 2004). In addition, alongside the emerging optimistic literatures on participatory budgeting and participatory governance in general, there have been numerous cases where top-down "participatory" regimes have not automatically generated observably more democratic outcomes, even while it may redirect resources to the poor or engage civil society organizations (see e.g. McNulty 2013, 2011; see also Baoicchi et al. 2011; Gaventa 2004).

With respect to the first set of concerns, public engagement there described takes a very different institutional and procedural form than presented in PB, with authors raising concerns with processes that do not give real power to citizens, are merely performing token public consultation, or are structured in ways that encourage strongly adversarial interaction. With respect to the latter concerns, participatory governance policy may be advanced from the national level or by government or donor mandate, but may be inconsistently and incompletely implemented at the local level. While the design of PB differs in numerous respects from these examples, these experiences of cooptation, deflection, or ineffective window-dressing in supposedly democratic, participatory spaces should sound a cautionary note that positive outcomes cannot be taken for granted.

Building on the trends described in these related neutral to negative accounts, I will also tracking the following potential outcomes throughout my cases:

- Only "usual suspects" attend
- Process is hijacked by organized interests
- Government officials avoid the process, refuse to participate, or coopt public decision process
- Final public preferences are ignored or not implemented
- Public refuses to respect officials or acknowledge expertise

- Cynical representation of PB decreases willingness to risk future engagement

Each of these observable features of a process indicate the failure of the PB process to push a change in ‘business as usual’. If the same powerful actors or institutional authorities are able to dominate the real experience of PB, or residents refuse to engage, positive democratic expectations for PB must be tempered or even replaced with the cynic’s expectations against participatory institutions as significant drivers of democratic renewal.

## 2.4.2 Conclusion

This chapter provided the theoretical context and motivating expectations for the empirical work that fills the next four chapters. I outlined the five key definitional characteristics of PB, which must be considered in any evaluation of real world processes claiming status as participatory budgeting. I outlined a conception of the foundational components of democratic practice that emphasizes inclusive opportunities for political control, broad participation, and civic competence with an orientation to collective outcomes. Finally, I provided a detailed account of the precise ways in which PB may be seen as a departure from classical “business as usual.” I outlined a theoretical framework describing how the small institutional changes of PB could (under ideal circumstances) restructure communicative networks in a community, providing the foundation for expanded collaboration, participation, and civic identities. These expectations are tempered by an awareness of pressures for preservation of existing power structures and the stickiness of existing learned practices and expectations of civic life.

In the next two chapters, I move from the idealized world of theory and perfect implementation to explore the operation of participatory budgeting processes in four different cities. These chapters demonstrate a high level of heterogeneity in PB design and implementation, with a corresponding variation in substantive impacts on participants and local political structures. I start with the experiences of PB in two US cities, New York City and Vallejo, California, where participatory budgeting more closely satisfies the ideal conditions of PB. Chapter 4 moves into an explorations of the limits and mixed possibilities of PB processes as process design and implementation moves further from a strict definition of PB.

## Chapter 3

### US Cases: High Density Participatory

### Budgeting

It's 6pm on a Tuesday, outside a school cafeteria in a neighborhood on the edge of Queens, just before the city tips into Long Island, past the end of the F train. Walking from the bus, or the car you parked around the corner (or maybe another corner, and another, and another), or even just from your home, closer than the car is parked, you follow the boisterous query "What would YOU do with a million dollars?!" printed on letter paper directing you to the school's main entrance and into the corridors beyond. Coming through the halls of the school, mostly quiet after the end of the school day, you step into the bright lights and bustle of the cafeteria. The room holds about a dozen round tables, supplied with maps, poster sheets, pens and paper, filling up with a generous cross-section of the neighborhood – families with kids in the school, retired folks with perspective, opinions, and time, a table of Spanish-dominant local families with a bilingual facilitator, a clump of high school students encouraged to come practice democracy by their social studies teacher. It looks like maybe 50 or 60 people in the room – far more than you'd seen last time (the only time, actually) you'd bothered to go to a local meeting on a planning issue in the neighborhood.

"Welcome to the second annual participatory budget in our district!!" You think you recognize your councilmember from his campaign mailings during the last election. "Thanks for coming! You've

joined a movement to reinvigorate democracy that is sweeping across the city and the world!”<sup>1</sup> Over the next two hours, you’ll sit at one of those round tables, learning about the city budget, what can and can’t be done with city funds, brainstorming ideas for projects and improvements in the local community, in a conversation led by a trained facilitator. In largely unstructured conversation with neighbors, mostly people you have never met, you will collectively generate a hundred or more ideas for capital projects that you would like to see in your community. Some people at the table will have a project they’ve been dedicated to for years, some will come to be part of a conversation about the future of their city in general, and some will come because they have general worries about safety or cleanliness on their streets. Some may even be there because they lack the right to vote in regular elections, but received an invitation to participate here and couldn’t resist the opportunity. At the end of the meeting, organizers will ask for volunteers to work together in committees over the next six months to review, prioritize, work with relevant city agencies, and finalize short lists from ideas generated at this meeting and other similar meetings across the district. If you volunteer to be a budget delegate as they’re being called, you’ll meet once or twice a month, until you have a final set of projects that will be returned to the community as a whole for a vote open to anyone 16 and up who lives in the district. The winners of this vote receive at least one million dollars of your council member’s discretionary capital budget.

Since the first year of its implementation well over 12,000 people in New York and 1,500 in Vallejo proposed ideas participatory budgeting (PB) assemblies like this one, over 1800 people have volunteered as budget delegates, and over 100,000 have voted on the final projects ideas, spending between .01% to 2.4% of the city’s expense budget.<sup>2</sup> These are impressive numbers for a local government engagement process, but remain much smaller, in absolute terms, than the numbers of people who turn out to vote, even in low-turnout local election years. Nevertheless, organizers and participants have

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<sup>1</sup>City officials implementing PB really do often present it with this level of hyperbole.

<sup>2</sup>Budget proportions in NYC relative to capital budget only, in Vallejo relative to the whole, as both investment and program spending was possible. Data inclusive of cycles ending by Jan 1, 2016, New York and Vallejo had 11,472 and 1,548 assembly participants, respectively, and, jointly, at least 1774 budget delegates and 97,769 voters. NYC info from Year 4 Evaluation Report, Vallejo from city PB website ([http://www.ci.vallejo.ca.us/city\\_hall/departments\\_\\_\\_divisions/city\\_manager/participatory\\_budgeting/cycles/](http://www.ci.vallejo.ca.us/city_hall/departments___divisions/city_manager/participatory_budgeting/cycles/), accessed March 7, 2017). Budget data from Community Development Project 2012 and calculated from City of Vallejo 2012

high hopes for the conversations, ideas, and connections built in the public spaces of PB. The previous chapter outlined a theoretical case for the potential of the institutions of PB to have an outsized impact on the democratic practices of local communities. This chapter explores the validity of these institutional expectations in two similar cases in the United States: New York City and Vallejo, California. In this chapter I address several key questions: What does participation look like for these many participants? To what extent do these processes satisfy the procedural requirements of participatory budgeting and does this engagement in fact represent any change from “business as usual?”

This chapter starts by outlining the PB process as designed in both New York and Vallejo, describing the many common elements while highlighting a few key differences in design. Next, I systematically evaluate the cases, as implemented, against the five definitional criteria of PB that I outlined in the previous chapter. After establishing that these two cases do satisfy the minimal institutional conditions of PB, I undertake a detailed qualitative analysis of the two cases, investigating the presence of the key dynamics theorized in the previous chapter as key mechanisms connecting the small-scale democracy of PB to wider patterns of mobilization and democratic practice in the community as a whole. I examine the new incentives, relationships, and information exchange that the unique institutions of PB enable in these two cities. I conclude by offering an initial evaluation of idiosyncratic spillover effects observed in each city, and point to broader empirical expectations for macro-level effects discussed in Chapter 5.

### **3.1 A Model Process**

PB in NYC and Vallejo follows the same general process design, on a similar time scale. Over the span of about 8 months, residents in both cities go through a cycle of activities that iterate over open public idea generation events (or neighborhood assemblies), facilitated committee work developing projects (budget delegate committees), coordination with city staff and implementing agencies (project vetting), and a public vote determining final projects to be implemented. In both cities, planning and implementation of the process is jointly shared between resident committees and city or council staff and the annual cycle is book-ended by sessions for evaluation of the previous year’s process, renewing

steering committees for the next cycle, and writing/revising the rules for the next year's process. Figure 3.1 illustrates overall process cycle shared between New York and Vallejo.

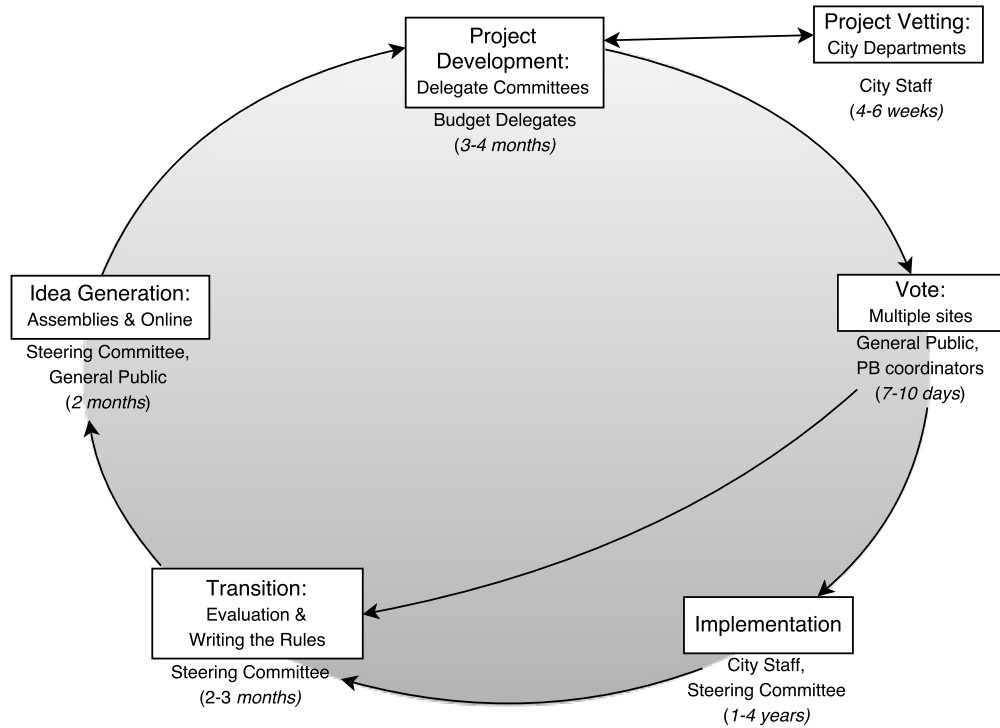


Figure 3.1: Annual PB cycle in NYC and Vallejo

## Process Idiosyncracies

While the general arc of the process is the same in both cities, participatory budgeting in Vallejo and individual council districts in New York is subject to certain local idiosyncracies. These differences include, most notably, the types of funds available to the public, the degree of centralization, and the composition of the steering committee(s). Table 3.1 outlines several varying characteristics of PB in the two cities.

As the discussion throughout the rest of this chapter will highlight, the overall public experience of participatory budgeting shares many common features in each city. Nevertheless, some of these basic design elements, from the types of funds available to the structure of the process steering committee, result in important variation in public and political impacts in the two cities. In the discussions

**Table 3.1:** Comparison of Vallejo and NYC PB

	Vallejo	NYC
PB Mandate	City Council statute	Council member/agency discretion
Process Governance	City-Wide Steering Committee; city staff based in City Managers' office	City-Wide Steering Committee; District Committees in each district, city council member staff
Type of funds	One-time capital and expense	One-time capital
Turnout (% pop.)		
Funds for PB (2013)	\$3.2 million	\$8 million (\$1M per district)
\$ per capita (2013)	\$ 26.10	\$6.05
Funds for PB (2016)	\$1 million	\$27 million (~\$1M per district)
\$ per capita (2016)	\$8.10	\$6.30
Agency authority	Accountable to council-members approving PB	Not accountable to council-members approving PB
City governance	Council-manager government 7 at-large council members total city staff in 2013:	Council-mayor government 50 council districts total city staff in 2013:

throughout the rest of this chapter, I highlight specific points where this variation impacts the assessment or impact of the PB process in each case.

### 3.1.1 Is PB? Is Not PB?

To evaluate the impacts of PB in any given case, we also need to identify whether the process that actually unfolds meet the standards of participatory budgeting as outlined in the previous chapter, repeated for reference here:

**Table 3.2:** Key characteristics of PB

1)	Officials have made some a credible commitment to implementation.
2)	Decision making is open to all members of the community.
3)	The decision process includes public discussion and public reasoning.
4)	Ideas and priorities come from the bottom up.
5)	Public is actively involved in the design and monitoring of projects.

To what extent does PB in Vallejo and New York City actually meet this standard? While room for improvement and expansion undoubtedly exists in both cases, the process as implemented in both Vallejo and New York meets the basic conceptual criteria. Precise details about implementation vary between the cities. Table 3.3 summarizes the key qualities of each process that satisfies these conditions,

explained in further detail in the sections below.

**Table 3.3:** PB Criteria across Cases

	Vallejo	New York
Credible commitment	City statute	Electoral accountability
Open to all	All residents 16 & up	All residents 16 & up
Public discussion	Facilitated assemblies, delegate meetings, Expos	Assemblies, BD meetings, Expos
Bottom-up agenda		Open idea collection process
Public design		Delegate proposal development

### **Commitment to implementation**

This first characteristic is clearly met in Vallejo. By writing PB into law and making a public commitment to implementing projects, council members had created a credible commitment to following through with public preferences. In New York City, PB has been implemented at the discretion of individual council members, rather than a central city mandate. However, the PB process in each district is clearly identified with the individual council members and their own reputations become entangled with the success of PB. In none of the districts where I conducted fieldwork could I elicit skepticism that funds would not in fact be allocated to the winning projects from PB.<sup>3</sup>

### **Open participation in decision making**

Decision making in both cities was technically open to all members of the community. Participation in neighborhood assemblies and deliberate committees was open to anyone with a stake in the community, and the vote to residents 16 years and older. Assemblies in both cities were held in a variety of settings, acknowledging the geographic clustering of different ethnic and cultural groups. Assembly locations included schools (during the school day and after hours) and senior centers, as well as multi-purpose community centers, libraries, and other familiar city venues, with voting sites being located in

<sup>3</sup>Interestingly, members of the public in Vallejo were somewhat more inclined to doubt the credibility of the promise made in implementing PB, despite the formality of legislation, suggesting that a local precedent of council members following through on previous commitments (to PB or others) is more important than formal institutions whose enforcement mechanism may be unclear to the general public. While participants took the process seriously, there was a sense that no one would really be surprised if the city council reneged on their promise and there was a sense that some people opting out may have done so because they didn't trust that any process run by the council could have real teeth.

similar locations. In Vallejo, voting was extended to many other high traffic public locations including outside of churches and grocery stores serving many different demographics across the city.

Participation in both New York and Vallejo was broad and generally diverse. However, while the process clearly appealed to a variety of people across communities, descriptive representation was not perfect in either city. Generally speaking, PB attracted participants from multiple racial or ethnic groups as well as a representative spread of incomes. The least representative trait of participants in both cities was the level of education, with participants at all levels having more education than the community as a whole (replicating trends seen in other modes of political participation). Figure 3.2 summarizes the participation rates across different demographic characteristics over PB cycles until January 2016 (the most recent cycles for which data are available).<sup>4</sup>

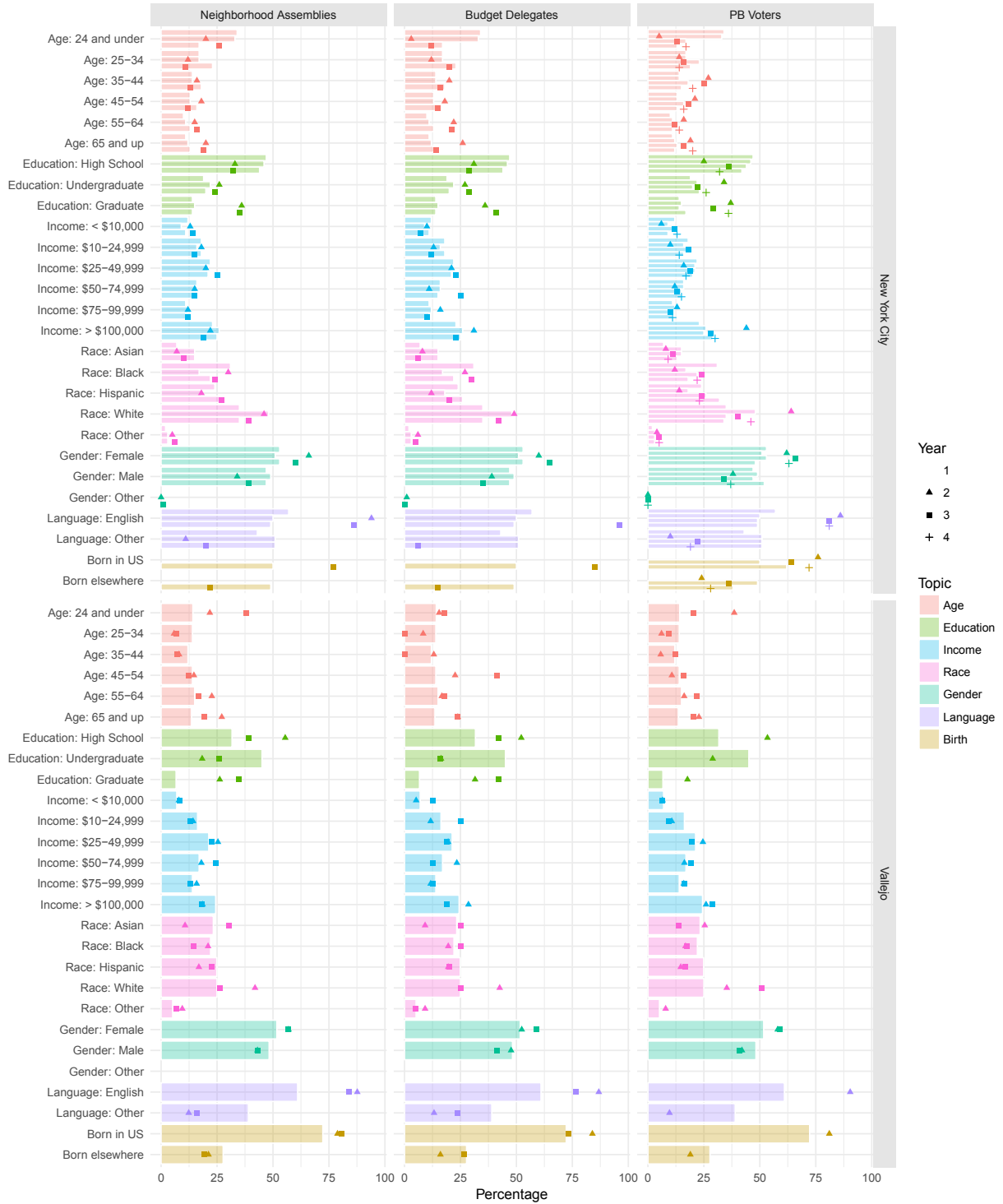
Intentionally reflecting PB's roots in the pro-poor mobilization by the Worker's Party and activists in Porto Alegre, Brazil, PBP (the main technical consulting and advocacy group assisting with design and implementation of PB processes in North America) has maintained an explicit emphasis on the meaningful representation and inclusion of traditionally under-represented populations in the communities where they assist with PB. In New York City, this commitment to representative participation led to partnerships with low income and minority community organizing groups across the city who played key roles in identifying populations for targeted outreach and providing staff time. In Vallejo, a city without a strong history of organizing for social justice, local community leaders brought together on the steering committee translated their pride in the city's ethnic and cultural diversity into a priority of inclusiveness in their implementation of PB.<sup>5</sup>

While the intention of inclusive participation was clear in the design of PB in both cities, restrictions to a fully inclusive process persisted. These challenges are common to many political and

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<sup>4</sup>Note, I have updated figures for these data, that include, for New York, the correct census estimates for each subset of city council districts implementing PB in each year, but am not sure whether or how to include these correct figures, as they get unwieldy. They're included as an appendix at the end of the chapter.

<sup>5</sup>In fact, during deliberations over rules about who should be allowed to vote, one steering committee member, an older African American man, offered the argument that in designing the process the committee should aim to always "err on the side of inclusion." This pithy entreaty clearly had an impact, as it became a recurring focal point in future discussions, both within the steering committee and, later, within delegate committees. I heard in multiple interviews and witnessed in several meetings participants reminding each other that when in doubt they should err on the side of inclusion. This injunction had real force as a decision rule.



**Figure 3.2:** Participation rates across demographic groups for all three process phases in both Vallejo and New York City, compared with corresponding ACS estimates (shaded bars). Data from the City of Vallejo and the Urban Justice Center. As districts implementing PB change with each cycle, the underlying census demographics also change, clustered bars for each NYC demographic category are stacked chronologically, with the first cycle bar on top.

organizing efforts trying to fully engage the community. While materials and ballots were printed in many languages, and some events included translation (or even were held in a primary language other than English), comfort with English remains a barrier to outreach and confident participation. In addition, time is a precious commodity to those working multiple low wage jobs and raising families, and participation costs time. Opportunities for online participation were established in an effort to make the process accessible to those without time to spare for meetings, but unfortunately reliable access to the city's website and digital literacy in general can be an issue for many of the same people who may have a hard time hearing about and making time for public meetings. In Vallejo, organizers made an effort to arrange childcare for assemblies, but serving as a budget delegate, where the most influential work got done, requires finding childcare for evening meetings.

Ultimately, one of the biggest challenges to an truly inclusive and representative process in both New York and Vallejo was the issue of outreach. Effective outreach to less well represented and harder to reach groups is challenging, and requires investment of significant time and resources, and a common theme in conversations with participants and others in the city was difficulty of effectively getting out the word about PB. A budget delegate in Vallejo described the common situation well to me in an interview:

“I think, in reaching more communities, the word, there's a lot of scope for work. It's easy to reach the people who are already volunteers, who are coming to meetings downtown, farmer's market, but in reaching to the community that normally don't show up... I hope the PB team will take it into account and do double, triple, whatever the effort was, because unless people know, the chances are going to be less. We can't, obviously, bring the people to the event all the time, like you can take the horse to the water and not make it drink, but if you even don't take the horse to the water...”

There is undeniably room for improvement in outreach. Nevertheless, outreach for PB in many cases went beyond that which you would find for many other city engagement activities, with door to door canvassing in neighborhoods around assembly locations, information distributed through community groups and steering committee members and outreach online through social media. PB voters in both NYC and Vallejo are at least as representative as participants in other civic and political activities, when compared to census data (Community Development Project 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015; City of Vallejo 2014). Detailed survey questionnaires collected through the first year of PB in Vallejo tell

a clear story of comparably representative participants, many of which are not regularly seen at city council or other public meetings. 34% of voters have never contacted a public official, 76% are regular or repeated voters (miss occasionally), 15% have never been to any community meetings. Only 40% had contacted any member of government in the past year, which is comparable to baseline levels of government contact self-reported in the general public (Smith 2013). To summarize, while participants in PB do tend to be more well educated than the general public, they are representative in terms of income level and baseline tendency to communicate with government.<sup>6</sup> In the end, participation in PB, is described as more representative of the whole community than skeptics expected, attracting diverse participants beyond "the unusual suspects" who are regularly seen at public meetings.

### **Public discussion and public reasoning**

The process of proposing and determining projects requires public discussion and public reasoning at several points in the process: first at the neighborhood assemblies, second within facilitated budget delegate committees, and third in the (sometimes limited) justification of position taking by city officials. Throughout the process, up to the vote, PB is characterized by interaction and explanation, with a recurring focus on collective benefit.

The most structured deliberation happens in the planning stages, within the steering committees refining the rules of the process and in the delegate committees sifting through hundreds of public submissions to determine which projects should go forward onto the ballot. "Writing the rules" workshops for planning committees, which are often revisited each year to improve the process year on

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<sup>6</sup>There are three main metrics to consider how representative PB participants actually are. Two that are most commonly deployed by the tools shared by North American PB evaluators are comparison of PB participants to a) census estimates of education/race/etc and b) comparison to voter demographics. These are both valuable comparisons, often taking the census as a gold standard, and voter turnout as a target to beat. That being said, to understand PB's real status as initiating a change in the practice of politics as usual, it is also important to compare PB participants to public meeting attendees in general. Multiple studies have repeatedly demonstrated that regular attendees of public meetings tend to be better educated, whiter, and more well-off than those that do not attend (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). A 2003 nationwide survey by Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini found that of the 25% of people who reported attending a "formal or informal [organized] meeting" to discuss any issue, 20% had incomes under 30K, and 12% greater \$100K, 31% had no more than a HS degree, while 39% had at least a college degree. More recent data, from a PEW 2012 civic engagement survey (reported in Smith 2013), similar patterns in SES resources are illustrated. In each of these cases, PB appears at least as representative, with better representation of lower incomes and comparable trends in education. Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini (2009) report that 60% of participants in a face to face meeting belonged to an organization (including churches and religious groups); this is comparable with PB voters, and higher than baseline level in both Jacobs et al. and the Pew Study.

year, include facilitated group discussions where committee members identify the overall goals for the process, articulate the values that should underpin their decision-making, and identify challenges for the process in the coming year. Writing the rules can informal consensus procedures, or more structured deliberative methods to help committee members come to decisions about topics that may be more contested (such as deciding the minimum age for voting).

Budget delegate committees, which engage in months-long work filtering, combining, and refining project ideas, are also engaged in often deliberative discussion. While the quality of deliberation varies with the experience and training of the individual facilitators, the work the delegates embark on involves extensive discussion with intentional turn-taking, including consideration of community needs and review of each project in their issue area along criteria of community need, community benefit, and feasibility. Across interviews in both Vallejo and New York, both delegates and facilitators consistently describe these criteria as being the most important factors structuring their consideration and prioritization of project ideas, and in many cases described as consensual the process of applying these criteria to decide on a short list of project priorities. During the delegate process, in some cases, PB also establishes a basis for explanation of reasoning by city officials. The deliberative quality of this exchange can vary across cases and committees, but in most instances at least some justification of positions taken by city staff is evident.

Open discussion also features prominently in the public events of the PB process, notably the neighborhood assemblies and the project expos. The neighborhood assemblies are built on the idea of public interaction and combine information about the PB process and the city budget with open discussion and brainstorming about both community needs and project ideas. Participants consistently describe these events as fun, and emphasize their experience of talking to strangers about their community, with most assemblies including facilitated small group discussions as the setting for brainstorming. Project expos provide delegates with the opportunity to represent their hard work to community members while advocating for their projects. I attended 8 of these expos and project fairs and they were characterized by animated discussions between delegates and members of the public about projects, both the detail of the project proposals and the reasoning behind their selection.

### **Bottom-up agenda setting**

The selection of projects to be funded in these cases is set at two key points: first in the idea collection phase and second in the budget delegate committee and project vetting phase. In both New York and Vallejo, we see that agenda-setting is very strongly bottom-up in the foundational idea collection phase, continuing through the delegate committees although with some potential for filtering or adjustment during project vetting. While the scope of funding available to PB serves an initial restriction on the possible range of projects, final projects do largely reflect public ideas, being introduced during the neighborhood assemblies and flowing up through delegates and onto the ballot.

The starting point, neighborhood assemblies, were consistently described as open brainstorming. As one delegate described their experience of the assemblies, “there was this level of tolerance and respect for even some of the wackiest ideas and, in my opinion, but we didn’t slam anybody down, even in the very first meeting.” Brainstorming in small groups, in some cases prompted by maps of the city and basic breakdowns of area needs, members of the public generated ideas from the ambitiously undefined (for example the popular but unspecific “Our homeless population is growing. We should spend the money to help the homeless.”) to the more whimsical but interesting (“convert Mare Island cranes to art projects”) to more specific, less unglamorous but popular plans such as resurfacing heavily used basketball courts, technology improvements to public school buildings, or better street lighting. Many project ideas come out of this process; for example in the first year of PB in Vallejo over 800 project ideas were collected, while in New York districts during my primary fieldwork averaged over 200 projects per district at the end of idea collection. Once all project ideas are collected, online and in person, coordinators and/or steering committee members identify thematic categories that emerge across the project ideas, which in turn become the the basis for budget delegate committees.

Budget delegates, who are themselves members of the general public who volunteered to serve on committees, perform the initial review and consolidation of projects. These committees work independently to prioritize and develop a short list of preferred projects. This short list will be fleshed out into proposals that are sent for vetting by the city departments who would be responsible for implementing them. This budget delegate process is one point where skeptics may expect to see the

public agenda coopted by private individuals who may dominate the public process. This concern is for the most part not validated by the experiences of committees themselves. While many delegates did enter the process with a particular project or issue they found most important, most committees had at delegates who were not attached to any specific priority and instead made sure that the most important proposals without initial advocates in the room continued to be considered. In many cases, advocates were successful in shepherding their project through the delegate process and onto the ballot. Delegates on a mission, however, were typically only successful if the other delegates on the committee agreed that the project did have a clear community benefit. For more narrowly targeted projects, during discussions, delegate committees were generally successful at prioritizing community projects over narrow benefit. This dynamic of balancing delegate interest with community benefit highlights how robust public agenda-setting is dependent on good facilitation that grounds the committee's work in values of community benefit and equity and allows for deliberative consideration of projects' merits. These values become reference points in discussion that anchor points of agreement and help to legitimate decisions that may go against individual delegates' personal preferences.<sup>7</sup>

The city vetting process is the second point where the public agenda set in the assembly process risks being compromised. It is the most complex phase in the process, requiring cooperative engagement not only from members of the public, but also from staff across a range of city and (in Vallejo) non-city agencies. During vetting, relevant departments can in effect veto project proposals by indicating that they are not feasible with the available funds or not legal uses of the specific funds available to PB. If these concerns are justified fully and transparently, delegates will often accept the revision or elimination of projects as legitimate and chalk it up to learning about the city budget. Departments can and have exercised a more subtle influence on the process by, in effect, having a back and forth with delegates about projects and existing department plans and priorities. Sometimes this exchange is complementary, for example, by identifying PB projects that would be effectively duplicating work already budgeted for the department.

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<sup>7</sup>This decision may not be accepted as legitimate in every case, of course, and there is an additional research project waiting to happen focusing specifically on the relationship between facilitation, deliberation quality, and delegates acceptance of collective decision making.

Sometimes these exchanges can be more problematic for the democratic flow of projects when departments basically use the vetting process to resist delegate proposed projects, encouraging delegates to reframe or adjust projects to reflect departmental priorities. The most acute form of influence comes when a department or agency lacks any sense of buy-in to the process and refuses to engage with PB. As PB becomes more established in each city over time, this refusal is becoming less common, but department priorities can still exercise a (more or less) subtle influence. As one delegate recounted to me,

I think we're all aware at the table when we meet up with [the department] that [they] will be cooperative and helpful with us kind of as long as we are proposing projects that are a priority to them. And [this project] was not a priority to them, [the department staff person] made it very clear at that meeting, low priority. And so, we kind of dropped it. So we've been heavily influenced by their priorities. (Budget delegate)

In other cases delegates recounted responsive exchanges with staff. Despite these challenges, even in cases where staff exercised influence during the vetting process, the range of possibilities are still largely defined by the ideas to come out of the public process; while city staff certainly have influence on which projects can go on the ballot, the agenda, in a real sense has continued to be set by members of the public and their delegates.

### **Public design and/or implementation**

Members of the public have widely varying roles in terms of design and implementation of specific projects. Preliminary project development happens in the delegate committees and the scope of public involvement in the project details is, as a general rule, dependent on how far the project falls from the “normal” operations of the department.

Much of the project development work happens in the delegate committees. Occasionally city staff from a particular department will attempt to hand over projects “ready-designed” as a component of an existing development plan, but this is not always well-received. Once delegates have settled on an initial list of projects, they do the work of identifying and talking with potential partners, in some cases visiting sites for possible capital projects such as park or school improvements, and refining the detailed project proposal. Which specific parks should get new exercise equipment? What sort of

investment or start-up assistance would really be effective at supporting local businesses? Are there local organizational partners who commit to upkeep or maintenance of the project once completed? Once delegates have narrowed down project specifics and have an initial detailed proposal, they will send proposals to relevant city department(s) for costing and legal vetting.

The vetting stage tends to operate more as a veto processes than a space of real redesign by city staff, and the design of projects on the ballot tends to hew closely to the ideas developed by delegates. Implementation of the winning projects has been widely variable across Vallejo and the various districts within New York. Depending jointly on how well-defined the project was as presented at the vote and how well-integrated the project is with existing activities of the department. In some cases, such as road resurfacing or lighting replacement, projects are implemented with little to no interaction with budget delegates or members of the public (and sometimes little to no advertising that it has been completed), while others (such improvements to community resource space at Kensington Public Library in New York) have involved past delegates in a consultative role as renovation designs have been finalized. In the most community-driven projects, such as the community garden project that won in Vallejo's first year, members of the public and partner organizations have managed all the details of design and implementation themselves. Effective implementation can be dependent on the quality of the vetting prior to the vote. Projects must be legal uses of public money, and implementation may be delayed or complicated by a period of redesign if it turns out funds cannot be allocated to a project as initially defined.<sup>8</sup>

It is crucial to the sustainability and credibility of the PB process that winning projects are implemented in a timely fashion. Some projects do take longer than others, but it is necessary to communicate back to the public the status of projects, the reasons for the timeline, and when they will be implemented. The pace of implementation has varied substantially, especially across districts in New York, and has not always been justified. Implementation is definitely the point at which the qual-

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<sup>8</sup>Such complications were evident in the first year of PB in Vallejo, where a college scholarship program was won the vote and was approved by the city council, but was subject to specific revisions required by city staff to satisfy legal requirements of the use of city funds, by adding a community service volunteering component to the scholarship program. The specifics of the adaptation of the project were jointly determined by city staff and the delegates from the Education committee who had developed the initial project.

ity and quantity of public engagement drops off. Prior to implementation, though, the public plays consistently important role in the design of projects.

## **Sum up and expectations**

The public process in both Vallejo and New York City broadly meets the definitional standards for participatory budgeting. There is, certainly, variation in implementation across sites and opportunities to improve the process. Indeed, the transition phase of evaluation and (re-)writing the rules builds in the recognition of the fact that there are specific areas in which each process falls short of the ideal process. Nevertheless, on the main distinctive points of PB these processes do successfully include an inclusive swath of the public, use open horizontal discussion to generate and prioritize ideas, and give decision-making authority to the public.

These two cities thus do present appropriate test cases to examine the impacts of PB as theorized in the previous chapter. To revisit the argument, I expect that PB processes establish new incentives for engagement that enable the initiation of new horizontal and vertical communicative relationships within the community, redistributing important informational resources. In the next section, I will examine the unfolding of these two cases in detail, attending to the observed presence or absence of specific dynamics implied by the theory, outlined below.

### **Incentives**

- New or expanded participation
- Descriptive accounts of unique incentives from PB

### **Relationships**

- Reports of interaction with strangers
- Cooperative working with usual antagonists
- New interactions between government officers and members of the public
- Repeated or unusually substantive interactions generally

## Information

- Learning about government procedures and/or institutional opportunities
- Learning civic skills
- Descriptions of new or modified information about community needs or preferences
- Gaining new information about interests groups or key actors in the community

Despite their many commonalities, there are also important qualitative differences in implementation between these cases which will likely lead to variation in the impacts from PB. For example, the city-wide design with scope for social programs as well as capital investment, partnered with a steering committee which intentionally draws together different constituencies from across the city suggests that we may expect to see stronger impacts in Vallejo in terms of cross-cutting linkages established in PB. There is likely to be a more significant shift in the form of horizontal relationships between members of the public.

New York City, on the other hand, has implemented a devolved participatory budgeting process which effectively limits projects to localized city capital projects, within the context of a complex vertical city bureaucracy. In contrast to the relatively flat governance system of Vallejo, in NYC, PB may be expected to have a stronger impact from shortening the chain of communication between members of the public and the city departments and budget process. Impacts may be more notable in terms of public access and understanding of opportunities and limitations of political action within city politics. In addition, the extensive variability in implementation across districts may moderate observable effects across the city as a whole.

## 3.2 Results

Similar patterns, broadly confirming these expectations, emerge across across many hours of transcribed interviews and fieldwork from Vallejo and New York. The depth and breadth of relationships expressed certainly varies across and within cities, and in both cases the future of any impact from PB is dependent on continued investment in and strengthening of the fundamental commitments to outreach and implementation of PB projects. Nevertheless, evidence from each city supports the argument

that participatory budgeting institutions can effectively restructure the communities' civic networks. The observed and narrated experiences of participants and organizers, including both public and government actors, build a picture of a political community establishing new avenues for informative interaction.

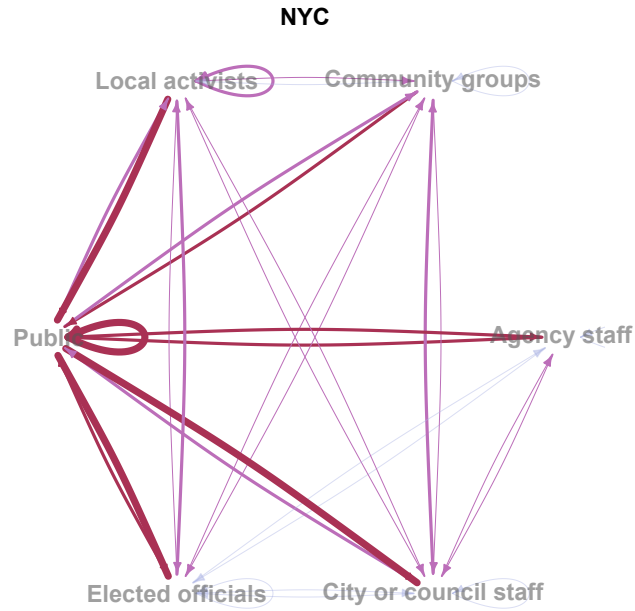
Summarizing the accounts shared with me in over 60 hours of interviews and over 110 hours of meeting and event observations, Figure 3.3 illustrates the specific communicative connections established with the introduction of PB in each city. These figures only represents the new informative relationships initiated or strengthened by PB. For specific discussion of the incentives that enable these relationships and the informational content read on below.

As these figures illustrate, the impact of PB is not identical in the two cities. Even within New York City, a slightly different map could be drawn for each implementing district, as the particular design and implementation varies subtly but importantly across this city. The map for Vallejo highlights the importance of PB in Vallejo in reinforcing and integrating an underdeveloped and divided civil society. In New York, on the other hand PB has had an important role in strengthening the connections of individual representatives to their constituents and creating direct connections between citizens and agencies with some impacts in establishing interaction between members of different groups within the local communities.

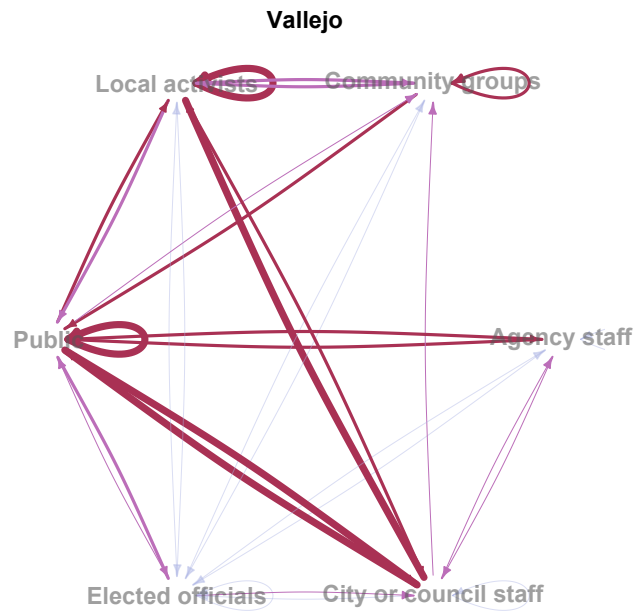
In this Results section, I lay out the qualitative evidence underpinning these diagrams, separately considering PB's impacts on incentives for engagement, relationships initiated within the process, and the different information distributed through these interactions. Given many common dynamics in both New York and Vallejo, I will be discussing the two cities together, while highlighting areas where the experiences or impact of PB in the two cities substantially diverges.

### **3.2.1 Incentives**

In both Vallejo and new York, I see similar accounts of why members of the public chose to get involved. Participants and organizers described novel incentives to engage established by PB in three different flavors: material and social incentives (primarily acting on public participants) and bureaucratic (for



(a) Network change from PB in New York City



(b) Network change from PB in Vallejo

**Figure 3.3:** Communication networks from PB in New York City and Vallejo. Dark red indicates a connection formed in PB, purple a link that existed prior to PB but which was amplified through PB, and light blue a connection that existed prior to PB that was not substantially impacted by the process. The thickness of the lines represents the relative frequency of interactions, with the thickest lines being the most consistently occurring interactions in PB. *Figures are provisional, and will be revised.*

government officials).

## Material

The first, and most significant, incentive offered by PB are the apparent material incentives of PB. Figure 3.4 shows an example of advertising from Vallejo, illustrating the common direct “What would YOU do with \$X million?!” frame of the benefits of participating in PB. These materials (as well as people’s interpretation of them) emphasizes that the process is not merely advisory. Delegating control of the money directly to the public makes the potential material benefits of participation more immediately evidence. As one committee facilitator described the attitude of her budget delegates, “I think [people] finally made a connection between my tax dollar and I can say yes, or no, I have a say. I can do something. I can- my vote counts.” In both cities the unambiguous promise of monetary control is understood to be credible (enough) and enables PB to stand out as unique in a political context where most engagement is consultative as best. The imagined direct impact helps to incite people to come to meetings who may not otherwise have attended.



Figure 3.4: Advertising flyer from Vallejo’s Year 2 process

While the resources made available to PB are understood as promising direct benefit, they are also limited (these limits are explained once someone has taken the first step of attending a meeting). The amount of money available to a PB process, and what it can be spent on, is always under contesta-

tion. While it is certainly possible that so few funds are made available to PB that material benefits no longer work as an incentive (see the case of Tower Hamlets in the next chapter), but the relatively small scale of PB funds in most developed democracies offers two potentially unexpected consequences in terms of the incentives for political participation: First, the limited scale of available PB funds generates differential incentives for regular, powerful political actors and new or lower-income participants. Well-resourced members of the community who commonly exercise power or influence over government decisions have less incentive to participate in the PB process, as the budget at stake is minimal compared to larger infrastructure projects or yearly budgetary contests. This perceived ‘insignificance’ creates space in the process for participation by typically less influential members of the public, with less risk of being co-opted or dominated by powerful actors.<sup>9</sup> Second, the limitations placed on funding have the effect of keeping projects generally more local and tangible for participants. Usually staying under \$500,000, individual PB projects are typically bounded and (relatively) quick to implement. Improvements from PB are clearly defined and clearly targeted: improvements to a specific park, laptops or IT improvements for area middle schools, community gardens and access to fresh produce in low-income communities. Such targeted and tangible projects on their own do not represent sweeping societal reform. Nevertheless other research (e.g. Fung 2007 and Weatherford and McDonnell 2007) has demonstrated that processes oriented to local issues of tangible concern can be uniquely effective at providing incentives for lower income and typically marginalized communities to get involved.

## **Social**

The second kind of additional incentive that PB offers for public participants is a social incentive, the opportunity to get to know neighbors or others in the community. This second incentive is directly dependent on the design of the process and may not always be emphasized. The neighborhood assemblies are interactive, with the focus on community members generating ideas and responding to each

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<sup>9</sup>This observation also points to the importance of understanding indirect democratizing effects from PB. The small fraction of the budget being allocated through PB means PB itself is not the great democratizer (and if it were to be determining the entirety of the budget, it would be much more vulnerable to coercive and undemocratic pressures throughout the decision process.

other, rather than providing feedback to narrow government plans. Participants experience the assemblies as fun and exciting, with more direct positive feedback than in other circumscribed engagement processes or structured public meetings. Outreach strategies often encourage people to bring along family, invite friends, or who may be deterred by formal or non-interactive events. Children are often explicitly invited, and childcare and food, in some cases, add to the social atmosphere: “it’s not set up like traditional processes, like the assemblies are meant to be fun community events, you know, the expos the same thing, it’s like all these things- there’s food, whenever possible, to have music, making them these more accessible kind of like non-traditional political events.” This account comes from an PB staff person, but this experience is real for participants; The most common single descriptor of the neighborhood assemblies, in fact, was “fun”.

This social incentive will have limited attraction for those who lack any interest in community life, but offers expanded interest to folks who may be socially or community minded but deterred by many of the other forms of public engagement events. City council meeting comment periods or the myriad citizen commissions and advisory boards rarely attract participants because of the social fringe benefits, and the adversarial proposal-protest structure of many other public meetings can in fact deter people looking for social connection or a sense of community.<sup>10</sup>

### **Bureaucratic**

Finally, in both Vallejo and New York, PB offers different incentives to government officials to take engagement seriously. First, PB presents new incentives for investing in effective public outreach. Framed very explicitly as an inclusive *public* process, the implementation of PB (by government) is often evaluated on the basis of the breadth and representativeness of public engagement, to a greater extent than they may be evaluated on who comes to public planning meetings. This means local government actors face enhanced reputational incentives to improve the quality of their outreach to potential participants.

Second, as was the case from the start in Vallejo and is increasingly the case in New York after PB

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<sup>10</sup>See e.g. Eliasoph 1998, Mutz 2006, Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 2002.

was centralized by the council speaker, individual staff and departments are subject to a mandate to support the process, at the very least to implement the projects voted in by the public. The obligation to implement publicly developed projects creates an incentive to engage effectively throughout the process, both to ensure that projects are feasible and to work collaboratively with budget delegates in the hopes of ensuring that projects complement existing priorities for the department; in the words of one of the New York committee facilitators working with one of the agencies quick to realize that PB could get the department additional resources, “Well, they’re happy, I mean, their work is being done in this process, so they are willing... They’re getting a serious boost in accomplishing what they’re supposed to already be doing.” Similarly, in Vallejo during the first year of PB, at least one agency initially resisted active engagement with delegates, only to realize, late in the process, that resources were at stake, resulting in a last minute scramble to get the relevant committee to consider their additional priorities (in this case, the committee was having none of that!). In effect, as they are required to respond to PB projects, playing along with PB has the more potential to benefit the department than option out of engagement.

### **3.2.2 Relationships**

As the participation numbers reported above illustrate, in both cases people who may not typically enter into other public civic spaces have responded to the incentives of PB and chosen to engage, often for the first time, in a local political process. The next test for the present theory of participatory budgeting’s impact is whether the institutions of PB actually establish new communicative relationships between different actors in the community who may not otherwise interact.

The expansion of the network of relationships of both members of the public and, often, government actors is, in fact, one of the most widely observed and widely reported dynamics within PB venues. Different aspects of process design and institutional context in each setting does influence which relationship transformations come to the fore, but in both cases the design and sequencing of PB processes in each city opens up substantive new avenues of communication. To quantify the qualitative, across interviews in both New York and Vallejo, 100% of interview subjects reported new

relationships either horizontally, among members of the public, or vertically, between government officials and members of the public. In this section, I outline the specific mechanisms described to me through which these new relationships are established, discussing first the vertical interactions between members of the public and government and second the horizontal interactions between members of the public.

### **Public-Government (Vertical)**

Among my interviews, 96% of respondents, including members of the public, facilitators, and government officials describe PB as initiating new substantive interactions between members of the public and government officials. [In both Vallejo and New York only one interview did not volunteer a description of such meaningful interaction). Accounts of these interactions with government were unprompted in interviews; while I did ask open ended questions along the lines of "what went well", "what happened", and "who did you interact with throughout the process" I was not prompting specifically for new interactions between public and government.

The described (and observed) contact emerges largely throughout the budget delegate proposal development and project vetting phases. Interaction with government officials is built in as part of this process; a project cannot go forward until feedback is exchanged between government staff and the delegates pursuing the project. This necessary collaborative element of PB establishes two primary moments of novel interaction between government and public: preliminary budget delegate meetings with departments and project vetting prior to the vote.

In Vallejo (and since the completion of my fieldwork, now in New York), the budget delegate process starts meetings between the budget delegates and staff from the various government departments who may be implicated by project generated through the idea collection phase. These meetings typically involve department staff providing a breakdown of their scope of work and budget, and answering questions from delegates about their work and feasibility of different kinds of projects. With their mandate from the city council and city manager's office, departments in Vallejo have participated in these meetings since the first year of the process. In New York, on the other hand, several

city agencies were initially more resistant to participating in the delegate meetings, although as PB has become increasingly widespread and centralized across the city more departments are attending meetings. These meetings often represent a new kind of engagement with the public, especially where the departments buy in to the meetings and engage in good faith. Where delegates are able to enter the meeting on equal terms with city staff, the quality of this interaction can represent a major shift from previous antagonistic interactions. This dynamic was described to me multiple times in Vallejo, from multiple perspectives:

City staff were going into this very unwillingly... they were gonna like put on a good face for the community but really they were expecting that people would come in just criticizing them... And what ended up happening was that the delegates came in thanking them. Thanking the public works director for fixing you know that tree that had fallen down on their neighbor's house the last week, and this light that was out at an intersection and their staff was there later that afternoon, and he finally said at one point in the second meeting with delegates "can we do this again next week? Can I take you out to lunch?" It was really funny. (Committee facilitator)

From a morale point of view it was very positive for the people [city staff]. For the most part the people that came out of [the meetings with delegates] were really positive. More upbeat and positive than they were going in, where they're "let's see, I gotta sit with another community group, and answer questions that I don't wanna answer." (City staff)

As delegates identify plausible proposals, identify specific site locations, and deliver finalized projects to the ballot, multiple further contacts with various city agencies are required. At a minimum, project proposals must be vetted and costed by the relevant departments prior to being placed on the ballot. This sustained project development and vetting process is one of the primary points at which the structure of interaction varies between Vallejo and New York. In Vallejo, where the local government is much smaller and institutionally less complex, delegates in many cases interact directly with staff at the relevant department or non-city agencies, maintaining and deepening these contacts. As one of the senior city staff described to me during the first year of PB in Vallejo,

I think more than any other single thing we've worked on it has engaged a great number of people... just in terms of size and scope it's the largest kind of engagement that we've done, and in some ways it's a more positive form of engagement. Like, usually people call their council member when they're unhappy about something. Like, "come out here and help us stop this thing!" It's nice that [PB]'s a more, "let's do something together' thing." (City staff)

While city staff do typically receive input from the public regularly throughout the process of normal policy-making, this contact is often reactive to existing proposals or idiosyncratic proposals for dramatic policy change on the part of the city. In contrast, the contacts initiated through the PB process tend to be productive rather than reactive. This reduces the expectation of public engagement as veto or obstruction and draws city staff and delegates more to consider what the scope of possible action could be.

Proposal development and vetting in New York has typically included less direct interaction between delegates and agencies. In New York, city government is much larger, and agencies are accountable to the mayor's office rather than city council via the city manager as in Vallejo. In this complex large urban context, agencies operate with much larger budgets and workflow and must respond to the project proposals of committees in multiple districts at once. To ease the burden of public engagement on agency staff, delegates were explicitly instructed to channel all communication about projects through the council members' office staff. Operating at scale means that the direct relationships sustained between budget delegates and city staff are focused on city council members and their staff, who operate as gate keepers and translators for the information exchanged between delegates and city agencies. The centrality of city council staff is reflected in interviewees' repeated descriptions of their close interactions with council staff, consistently pointing to them as their central contacts in the process.

The centrality of the council members and their office staff is amplified by PB's presence in New York districts at the discretion of the council member. With the council member claiming credit for PB, in many cases PB events (especially large public events like the Expos and vote) are opportunities for the council member themselves to engage with participants, many of whom (we have seen) are newcomers to local politics. The impact of PB on strengthening relationships between elected officials and constituents is not seen in Vallejo in the same way. While some elected council members attend PB events in Vallejo, these interactions are substantially less significant to the unfolding of the process. Passed by the city council and implemented by the city manager's office, PB in Vallejo plays less of a role as popular vehicle for elected officials.

## Public-Public (Horizontal)

PB establishes multiple new points of vertical interaction between public and government. In its months-long iterated public process it creates even more opportunities for new interaction between members of the public. Across both cities 96% of people interviewed described forming new relationships with other members of the public that they would have not otherwise have known, and most described this as the most significant positive impact from the process, exemplified by this delegate's account of their experience: "I want to see these projects, I want to see the shovel hit the dirt on these projects. But, thus far, if [PB] were to stop today, I know people, I've worked with people, I've laughed with people, that I NEVER would have had contact with. And I like that." This experience of connection is nearly universal across interviews in both cities.

This interaction has been framed in multiple ways. One common, simple description was as basic interaction across community boundaries (even among those who had a more critical evaluation of PB overall):

What went well was that I did meet some people that I would probably never have associated with. That's always good. (Budget delegate)

An alternative mode described these connections as more of a strategic benefit:

I've met a lot of interesting people, the networking has been GREAT, and it's people that, if you're gonna stay in the public, or your community life, they're people you need to know, and this has turned out to be a great networking experience. (Budget delegate)

Whether at neighborhood assemblies, during the delegate process, or at project expos or voting events, a recurring observation is that the process was successful at drawing people together and getting them to actually *talk* to each other about their lives in the community.

The relative success of PB in creating these cross-cutting connections among members of the public is largely a product of institutional design. The structure of the PB process in New York and Vallejo iteratively cuts the community across geographic and issue area cleavages. The initial neighborhood assemblies are non-issue specific and focus on being open to anyone within a neighborhood, school, or church community. While these assemblies alone may not result in cross-cutting communication, the second process of budget delegate committee meetings then pull together people interested in each

thematic area from across different neighborhoods and centers in the community. As illustrated above, in interviews and confirmed by observations during meetings, participants regularly report that this new institutional structure brings them into contact with people they would have no reason to interact with on a normal basis. Even if other participants were highly involved within their own narrow networks, they usually did not know and had not previously worked with the people or interests sharing the committee work with them.

This effect of making new connections across the community is a repeated, near universal experience of participants in participatory budgeting, even those who were critical of PB or had not supported its implementation in the first place. While interviewees in both cities report interactions with strangers at similar rates, the theme of substantive connection is particularly strong within PB Vallejo, with many respondents repeatedly emphasizing the novelty of their experience in PB of talking and working with strangers or even common political antagonists. This strong impact from PB may be consequence of the fragmented nature of Vallejo's suburban city environment. In less densely developed cities like Vallejo, formal institutional support may be more critical to overcome isolated community enclaves than in dense urban settings like New York City. While these interactions were less often described as transformative in New York, the pattern of reported increased network breadth and density is similarly prominent within New York's PB process as well (in each city over 90% of interview subjects volunteered descriptions of substantive interactions with strangers).

The cross-cutting nature of public interactions in PB is a product of institutional structure, but the significant social quality of this interaction is reinforced by the proactive and facilitated discussion within meetings. As I described above, both neighborhood assembly meetings and delegate meetings are characterized by facilitated turn taking and the development of common understandings of needs and potential benefits in the community. In discussions where the agenda is being set by participants rather than organizers, participants have greater opportunities to identify and tell stories about the issues and experiences important to them, and to listen and respond to the stories of others different from themselves. It is important that in early parts of the process this discussion is not decision-oriented, and is explicitly framed as a process of diverse idea-generation. This reduces the immediate

stakes of participants in the conversation and, especially with the assistance of group or meeting facilitators, can open up space to hear others' experiences and priorities. The facilitation work also amplifies the overall framing of PB as a process for shaping collective outcomes, that different parts of the community have a stake in each other's success or failure.

The substantive quality of these new relationships is reinforced first by the idea of shared fate emphasized by the process framing and second (and even more importantly) by the practice of working together to achieve a common goal: successfully pulling together projects and presenting them to the community. These twin practical and normative constraints help to amplify the impact of fostering effective friendship ties between strangers and, occasionally, adversaries. The experience of the PB steering committee in Vallejo highlights this effect of cooperative work building meaningful relationships. In a move that was initially crucial to getting the council votes for PB, council members each selected three committee members, garnering support from skeptical council members who wanted to ensure they had their supporters in the process from the start. This compromise has had the unexpected consequence of building a diverse committee that have drew together community activists who more often find themselves on opposite sides of an issue, building relationships across strong community divides. As one steering committee member (from the PB-skeptic camp) described:

There's a wide variety of organizations represented, like non-profits, churches, neighborhoods, you know, senior center, chambers, and um, we almost always agree on everything. And so it's just really weird to – normally when we're in whatever public meetings and we're on opposite sides of issues or projects or whatever – and for all of us to be like – it's been, just really pleasant getting to know people more, cause it's really easy to say “oh, well, this person is THAT” when you don't know 'em, and then you get to know them and it's like we're all people, we're all shades of grey (laughing). So just learning, seeing that, and being able to build those relationships is nice. (Steering committee member)

The experience of working together on the PB steering committee built meaningful connections between erstwhile antagonists, and in fact built a strong coalition of activists who have successfully advocated for the continuation of PB.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, there is evidence that these new relationships are robust enough to extend substantively

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<sup>11</sup>Notably, in the city council elections during the second year of PB, the three non-incumbent candidates who campaigned and won were all Steering Committee members during the first year of PB. The council is non-partisan, but these candidates actually ran on two opposing platforms/coalitions, emphasizing the cross-cutting nature of the committee.

beyond the PB process. This effect is most notable in Vallejo, where there is a very limited background of community organizing. As described to me by two delegates in Vallejo:

Just this last Saturday, we had an event just up the street, where the neighborhood associations, some of us found out – through PB, actually – ‘God, we’re talking about that over on this side and this side,’ so we got everybody together and did a brainstorming session of our own because the general plan is up for revision and rewriting. And so, PB kind of triggered that sort of thing as well. (Budget delegate)

There’s a lot of collaboration that’s going on outside of the process, which is really great. People are meeting separately and they’re reaching out to other people in the community and developing these programs, cause they can’t just do it on their own, they have to coordinate. (Budget delegate)

In Vallejo, this experience of relationship-building is particularly distinct for participants because there is such a limited tradition of community organizing and collaborative work. However, even in districts in New York that have a more robust context of community work, PB has had a moderate effect of drawing new people into collaborative relationships: As one delegate in a district in Queens described to me, “I met people in this that I’d never seen in three years” of work with the civic association. It’s the first time we’ve ever got together to work on a single process - I mean, I might see them at an open house, or something, but this is the first time we’ve needed to have dialogue like this... We’ve learned that we can work together.” Similar experiences were reported to me in districts across the city.

Participatory budgeting in both cities has thus been demonstrated to bring people into new relationships with both other members of the public and with government officials and city staff. These source of connections can be traced directly to participation in the PB process, and in most cases are unequivocally described by participants as *unique* to PB. It remains to be examined whether and to what extent these new relationships in fact provide new ideas, information, or resources that can be used to foster future mobilization or a broader culture of engagement.

### 3.2.3 Information

Through PB, members of the public as well as government officials gain access to a range of informational resources that would typically be difficult or costly to access. This expansion of information is

most pronounced among members of the public in both New York and Vallejo, but can also be seen, with a more limited scope, within government actors. Information gained by members of the public is in three broad areas that will be discussed further below: a) training in basic civic skills and knowledge about the structure and operation of the local political system (which can serve as important resources for future mobilization); b) gaining more accurate and distributed information about conditions and members of their own community, facilitating identification of future collaborators and generally increasing the size of people's personal networks; and c) gaining a better understanding of the preferences and priorities of other actors in their political universe. On the other side, government actors have the potential to gain: a) better information about actual needs and preferences of people in the community (including some whose perspectives officials may hear less regularly), and b) revised expectations of the capabilities and interest of members of the public in producing public goods (as opposed to reactionary response to policy).

### **Informing Publics**

**Civic Skills** The first major area of public learning in PB is in the broad field of civic skills. These findings generally confirm similar accounts in other cases of participatory budgeting (see chapters 14-18 in Pinnington and Schugurensky 2009) and echo core arguments in Pateman (1970) and Verba et al. (1995). Some of this learning is the result of information about the political process gained during participation in PB and some is learned through active practice of skills like meeting, presenting, and putting together project proposals. Across both Vallejo and New York, all public respondents described learning about the city government and practical operation of politics. Sometimes this took the practical factual form of learning about the actual formal structures of government. One city staff person in Vallejo, who was broadly unconvinced by PB as the most efficient way to identify and fund public goods, provides a good explanation of the technical learning in PB: "PB has brought a whole lot of citizens in contact with staff people over some very basic kinds of questions and I think it has resulted in some better understanding of some of the things that we work on and how we do things that actually has been a very positive thing." PB, as described here, provides a unique kind of hands on

learning about government processes.

This experience of learning the real operation of government is shared by delegates. As one delegate described,

Overall it was an interesting, nice process to be able to experience something that - now you understand why it takes so long to get something passed, why it takes so long to get something funded, all the little loopholes you have to go through, you can't just say 'just do this' and get it done. (Budget delegate)

This education can be practical and strategic for members of the public, but it should not be considered as necessarily just positive PR for local government. As with any move toward more transparency in government, better understanding of the how the process actually works does not necessarily improve people's ideas about the effectiveness or efficiency of government:

Those of us who have been a delegate have gotten a good education. You know, the complexities [of government], some of which are necessary, other complexities that have been created for ulterior motives, whichever they may be, which may have originally been perfectly benign and wonderful, but now they're unwieldy and ridiculous. So, that's been good. (Budget delegate)

Such learning is not simply civic window dressing; rather it reflects increased understanding of where and how decisions are made, establishing a more accurate picture of the structure of political opportunities for future mobilization.<sup>12</sup>

**Community** The increase in civic knowledge is generated through presentations at neighborhood assemblies, participants' exchanges with government during the budget delegate and proposal process, and importantly, the transfer of information between more and less experienced members of the public throughout the process. The interaction between members of the public is also the key component of the second major dimension of information distributed to members of the public during PB: information about the community. As with learning about government, the information distributed is twofold: practical information about community needs and information about who are the other people in the community.

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<sup>12</sup>In a number of foundational works, social movement scholars have highlighted the importance to mobilization of understanding and accessing (changes in) the political opportunity structure; effective political action requires understanding and responding to the actual operation of political decision making. See e.g. Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; Tarrow 1998

First, participants gain information about the wider conditions in their own communities. They may discover that what seemed to be individual problems are in fact shared more widely, or they may learn about significant problems that may only affect a narrow segment of the population and remain invisible to much of the community. One seven-year resident of Vallejo describes how by participating in PB, he is “learning so much about all of the socio-economic cultural elements of Vallejo, you know, in one fell swoop, because they’re coming to the table and they’re all explaining what their desires and needs are.” This process of learning from each other in an open discussion is not just about learning about the other people in the community. As a New York delegate explains,

What it does is gives you a picture of what’s going on in the district. I mean, you would never know about the schools that had these atrocious bathrooms, or auditoriums, or whatever, if it wasn’t for the process. We would never know about the need for lighting in the street in an area that’s totally pitch black because it doesn’t make the news, not even the metropolitan section. So it allows us, within the district...to at least be more knowledgeable about what’s going on if we care. (Budget delegate)

This descriptive information about community needs can have an impact. Interviewees recount numerous stories of delegates changing their minds about what issues should be prioritized once they received a fuller picture of needs in the districts.

Second, the public interaction has the substantive effect of expanding individuals own networks, their basic awareness of who else is present and/or active in their community (in a sense, expanding the weak ties shared among disparate individuals).<sup>13</sup> These connections themselves can become resources facilitating future action (as described above), or they can result in sharing of information about other opportunities to effectively act on a range of issues. As multiple participants report, “there are some people that are on different parts of town that would not necessarily be coming, but see that there’s a common issue or they can share resources with one another, allowing people to sort of see their needs met in other ways,” or “you will discover things that are going on in the community, and many of these things perhaps we don’t do anything about in this PB process, but, this give you the opportunity to meet other people in this community that working together in this community you might be able to make a difference.” The interactions fostered in PB establish a wider community awareness that

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<sup>13</sup>Wide networks of weak ties are important for distributing new information and social resources, facilitating future mobilization. See e.g. Granovetter 1973; Lake & Huckfeldt 1998; Kavanaugh, Reese, et al. 2005; Lin 2008.

can be used for collective action outside the PB process, even if it's simply by providing the chance to publicize one's own activities or recruit members to one's own existing group.

**Preferences and Priorities** The third type of information disseminated to the public in these PB processes is somewhat more subtle, but relates to the two concrete types of knowledge described above. The interactions established in PB, particularly the components of public reasoning and deliberative exchange, provide an opportunity to learn about the fundamental preferences and priorities of both government and public actors. The process of public justification and explanation, where it happens effectively in PB provides opportunities to better understand the basic motivations and reasoning behind seemingly divergent actions. Learning about others' motivations and priorities, can help people not only to be more effective in their own future strategic decision making. It can also create more space for possible cooperative action, where people may have been operating with an erroneous prior expectation that others have no interest in cooperation or compromise.

This understanding of basic beliefs and priorities that others may hold is thus an important complement to the institutional and network learning that is also going on. As one delegate recounted, "I think, I'm so smart, I got the solutions for things, and just the stuff that people come with you think 'wow, they've really thought about this stuff.'" The proactive (rather than reactive) interaction fostered in PB can support open-ended conversation and personal narratives that can help develop an appreciation for the validity of others' different positions.<sup>14</sup>

Better understanding of the positions and motivations of other actors in the community extends, importantly, to understanding the motivations of government actors as well:

In the course of interacting with some of these delegates in each of the committees about the project proposals that they're looking at, we've been able to engage in a back and forth that doesn't typically happen. A project comes through in the budget process and there isn't really a place for the public to say well, how much does it cost to do that, and why did you do that, or why did you choose that or what did, you know? It doesn't typically happen. (City staff person)

Put more simply, in the words of one of the Vallejo youth delegates, "PB helped people understand that, you know, government's not all grumpy! [Laughter]." PB creates a space for different political ac-

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<sup>14</sup>See Escobar 2011; Young 1996

tors to understand each others objectives (both shared and divergent) as well as the diverse constraints that shape sometimes disappointing outcomes. This more complete understanding of the other participants in local politics can both create more tolerant space to work together (as happened on the Vallejo steering committee) as well as higher quality strategic knowledge that can help community members to act effectively into the future.

### **Informing Government**

Members of the general public are not the only ones who gain new influential information through PB. Communication flows both way, and in interactions with the public, government officials gain access to important information that may be elusive or even misrepresented in their everyday workplace. The open agenda and collaborative structure of the process allows government officials to gain access to new information in two primary ways. First, staff and elected officials can access better information about actual needs and policy preferences in the community (especially if the process has effectively drawn in new demographic groups) and second, new collaborative relationships with the public can provide updated information about public willingness to contribute toward public goods or collective action.

**Public Conditions and Preferences** The open invitation to the public to raise the issues or ideas that matter to them means that participatory budgeting can elicit information about community needs and preferences that may not other be known or communicated to government. It is impossible for government officials to have perfect information about the community, and PB's public-driven agenda can give access to this detailed local knowledge. As council staff in New York report, PB effectively draws out such grounded local knowledge:

You're living in a neighborhood, you want that neighborhood to be better, and who better than the people who live in a community know the neighborhood? Councilmen may not know all of the aspects other than people calling in and complaining and asking for help as constituents. It's the people who live in the neighborhood who really would know the specifics. (Council staff)

In both New York and Vallejo, other channels for public input exist, from community boards in New York, to council meetings in Vallejo. Nevertheless, PB is able to elicit information that other

channels for public input are not. For example, a district manager (a local government staff position) in New York, who was also participating in PB as a delegate, observed with surprise that PB resulted in public information that even the Community Board had not heard previously:

That was the first time as a community board that, that we heard about that issue there. Which was surprising. It was surprising. It was never submitted to the community board to incorporate it into a capital project, when clearly it met the requirements. So, so that brought out people to PB that didn't come to US! That didn't come to us. (Delegate and city staff)

Despite the existence of other forms of community input, PB in both Vallejo and New York has demonstrate the scope to access new information about public needs.<sup>15</sup>

The impact of public priorities expressed in the PB process on wider agenda-setting in local government provides additional evidence that this information is effectively communicated from public to government through the process. The design of the PB process reinforces the importance of the public agenda and makes it more more prominent in the ears of local government.

The rules of the process and how it feeds into the city's budget cycle actually give more influence to the public's priorities when setting the agenda for budget and policy decisions. By allowing for full and open identification of both problems and possible solutions by members of the public, PB offers an opportunity to introduce issues that may not have otherwise made it onto the agenda, or to shift a known issue higher on the list of priorities. As an example, many of the council members in New York took project ideas from the assemblies and, even if they weren't eligible through PB, gave them priority in other funding streams. As one facilitator described:

At the neighborhood assemblies, when they're writing down these projects, these ideas, we have a section for eligible capital projects and a section for non-eligible expense. And we're still taking that list, even if they're not eligible, and the council member last year actually funded a lot of things based on just these ideas that people had, even though they weren't necessarily eligible through PB, she used her discretionary funding. (Committee facilitator)

Other participants observed that introducing ideas through PB gave them more weight than they might have otherwise anticipated, effectively equalizing agenda-setting capabilities between insiders

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<sup>15</sup>Government officials in Vallejo in particular emphasize the inadequacies of elections for giving a full perspective on public preferences. While polls may be quicker and cheaper, a process like PB gives the public a "stronger sense of ownership" and the chance to "know they're being heard" which may make them more considered in their communications.

and outsiders in the political community. One delegate succinctly describes their experience with the before and after experience of trying to get an issue on the agenda: “[Previously] I think you’d call the city council person and say ‘Hey I noticed that this is going on, and I wonder if you have some discretionary money that could address this issue?’. But a lot of times, I felt like you know, if you were one of the favorites you might get something going, and if you weren’t, good luck to you.” By creating a new institution to initiate deliberation on issues and make binding decisions, PB provides a new entry-point to local policy agendas. The conversations initiated within and between the public and government transforms which actors are seen as legitimate sources of policy priorities.

**Public-mindedness** Finally, city officials gain important information about the willingness of members of the public to work together for the public good. In casual conversations with government staff at events and in interviews, I heard recurring expressions of surprise at just how willing to work cooperatively, and how attentive members of the public actually were. Coming from a context of adversarial public meetings or dealing with the usual squeaky wheels, officials were often surprised to encounter an enthusiastic and previously unengaged public:

I will say, from having worked in – about 18 years now – in this business [...] and 30 years in planning and other things, I am accustomed to not seeing a lot of people turn out, even when you do, you know, a pretty concerted effort you know to get people to turn out, for ambiguous planning exercises. You will get die hards, for sure, but not as many people as we were getting at the community meetings, it was much more than I expected. So yeah, that was real, that was a big surprise to me. (City staff)

This experience was not universal; it required a starting point of at least a nominal willingness to engage on the part of city/agency staff. In New York, where, at least during the time of my fieldwork, there was no mandate from the Mayor’s office to engage in PB, more agencies were able to avoid engagement in the process. In both cities, where staff were willing open to initial interactions, while there of course were some adversarial or difficult interactions there was overall a capacity for learning and mutual respect in the public-government interactions.

The participatory budgeting process is able to improve the quality of information and interaction between (and among) members of the public and government officials. That is not to say that this information is perfect, or complete. It is still imperfect, and conditional on important aspects of process

design and implementation. Some committees may have more collaborative or responsive experiences depending on the city agencies that they are subject to working with, and some facilitators may put more or less skill into structuring the conversations within their committees in ways that facilitate learning and mutual understanding between diverse members of the public. What is important to note is that in both Vallejo and New York, the process was designed in such a way that it was capable of appealing to different people, initiating new relationships, and communicating new or more accurate information across these relationships. As described in the case narratives above, there is indeed scope to improve the consistency or reliability of these experiences, but the theoretical expectations of PB institutions are demonstrated to be plausible as implemented in these communities.

## **3.3 Conclusion**

### **3.3.1 Institutional Design vs Implementation**

The processes described above are, inevitably, oversimplifications of complex, real interactions, with much more detail and idiosyncrasies, both positive and negative. PB as a process in both NYC and Vallejo represent imperfect implementations of an idealized design. In both cities, we can see breakdowns in ideal implementation, especially at the points of outreach and cooperation with city department/agency staff. This pattern points to common challenges to effective implementation. Each of these elements of the process represent particular points of vulnerability, where external actors must be “recruited” into the process, persuaded to take a risk on in engaging in sustained public interaction, for which many people have low expectations or have had negative experiences in the past. PB does establish new incentives to participation, but there is still a substantial pre-existing aversion to public participation (from both sides) to be overcome.

It is notable, however, that several points of concern to the skeptic of the democratic potentials of participatory budgeting do not emerge as dominant problems in interviews and observation. The processes under investigation are still new (but growing up fast), but at least at the early stages the most acute worries of cooptation and dominance by powerful social groups, in these cases, have not been

borne out in observation. The major points of concern where the skeptic may expect the normative ideals of the process to be compromised are at the point of proposal development and the vote. In practice, proposals found on the ballot can be directly traced back to specific proposals or concerns raised in the neighborhood assemblies (and later online). Contrary to fears that individuals could become delegates and ensure that only their pet projects made it on the ballot, the iterative exchange within delegate committees provided an effective check on projects that were understood by others on the committee as serving narrow or private interest. While it is clear that serving as a budget delegate can help maximize the chances that a particular project will make it to the ballot, committee members make a visible effort to prioritize and move forward projects for the benefit of the wider community, rather than just serving as a rubber stamp process to legitimize private agendas.

As PB becomes increasingly well-established in the community, there is always a risk that more powerful interest groups may develop ways to manipulate the delegate process to their benefit. Indeed, I have encountered some anecdotal evidence to this effect in the most recent iterations of PB in New York, where there has been some concern that the equity of the process is being compromised in such a way, particularly around projects in the schools. Delegates from PTAs of the wealthiest public schools in Brooklyn have reportedly negotiated in the delegate process to ensure that their schools receive funds through PB, by working within the committee to bundle projects in their schools in with projects in poorer schools in the district. I share the concerns of some long term participants and observers that strategic dynamics such as this represent a challenge to the social justice priorities of the PB process. At the same time, taking a broader view of PB as a reform to existing political 'business as usual', it is notable that the durable impact of PB is potentially one where the most resourced and effective actors must tie their interests to the poorer schools serving the neighboring (but oh so distant) young people of color. This may not be maximizing the redistributive potential of PB, but practicing the experience of shared fate may not in fact be at odds with the egalitarian objectives of PB. Establishing the norm that school funding is accessed through PB rather than direct lobbying efforts forces some of the most well resourced constituents not only to share funding but also to campaign on behalf of these more deprived schools that may have less capacity for traditional direct appeals to authority. The equity

ideals in PB may be diluted over time, but the delegate and voting process continue to move forward projects that have a collective or distributed community benefit.

Regarding the vote, the most common cynical concern was that organized groups would be able to simply mobilize their supporters and dominate the outcome. This dynamic has undeniably been seen in some cases, especially around projects providing funding to New York schools. However, such domination is more the exception than the rule, and is counteracted by the design of the ballot. Even if voters are brought out in support of a specific project, the design of the ballot demands them to evaluate and vote on multiple projects. Supporters of a single project may succeed in turning out votes, but they are also turning out voters who will also consider and offer support to other projects outside their core interest. Organizations may be out on the street handing out flyers announcing the voting locations and encouraging people to vote for their project, but we can see from survey data, that participants are comparatively diverse, and in the end the enthusiasm of campaigning, where it happens, may also serve to raise awareness and enthusiasm for the process as having a real potential impact.

Despite flaws, the story of PB in Vallejo and New York City is one of a work in progress, that so far has stayed truer to its normative goals than critics may have feared. The question remains, however: while the process, generally, has integrity as a participatory democratic experience, does it actually matter for democracy in these communities?

In response to this question, in the first instance, we would look at accounts of spillover effects from PB in these two cities. This chapter cannot provide a full evaluation of the policy impact of PB in these areas, but it is worth noting several points at which PB has informed wider political debate and decision-making in each city. Spillover effects immediately apparent to me in the field and in conversations reflect the different democratic deficits in each city (in NYC, the distance from neighborhood citizens to city-level planning and policy-making, in Vallejo the lack of precedent of community organization and collaboration on issues of public concern). In New York, PB has had a demonstrable impact in two major areas. First, PB is understood to have increased transparency around the city budget and especially around the issue of discretionary funding to council members. Since the imple-

mentation of PB, and the rapid increase in public awareness of the existence of members' discretionary funds, the allocation of discretionary funds has changed from the arbitrary preferences and distribution by the Council Speaker to a system of equal distribution with transparent adjustment based on district needs. In addition, the obligation to report back to the community on the progress of implementation of PB projects has established a precedent of public reporting on capital projects. At least one council member who has now gone through four rounds of PB is now reporting back to the community on all the capital projects in the district.

Second, in New York, PB has effectively served to highlight common problems across the city that need to be addressed more comprehensively. A common complaint among participants I interviewed was that they felt many PB projects, including things like school renovations or road maintenance, should just be the ordinary work of government. PB has provided a context in which awareness of fundamental but localized issues have been raised, and raised to become a priority for funding outside the PB process. For example, a very common project in New York has been the renovation of school bathrooms, many of which were in an appalling state (for example, not having doors on the stalls in the restrooms for middle school girls because the stalls were too narrow to have doors installed). Through discussions with schools across communities in PB, it was realized that these problems were common concerns: what felt like it was underinvestment in a single school was actually systematic under-investment. Bathroom projects made it on the ballot across districts in multiple years, and the council has now set aside specific funds to address school bathrooms. While PB may not be an effective tool for reprioritizing basic services in every venue, it has been demonstrated to be an effective tool to highlight "invisible" but basic problems across communities.

On the other hand, in Vallejo, PB has not had the same effect on the side of specific city government priorities. It has, however, had an important role in catalyzing civil society activity and establishing an expectation of public engagement. PB has provided a crucial forum within which civil society actors have developed expectations for collaborative engagement. PB has brought citizens out to city council meetings to hold council accountable for following through on the promises of PB, and has helped to bring together community members into groups that have worked to generate independent

priorities for future investment and development within the city. On the side of the city, PB helped to establish a reputational precedent for Vallejo as a city that is willing to engage the public and prioritizes transparency. Without downplaying very real tensions and uncertainty within the city about the future of PB and who controls the process, city staff or community members, PB gave the city and community a different set of standards with which to evaluate its own governance. Vallejo became a Code for America partnership city, with Code for America fellows working on civic technology that with improve transparency and police-community relations (a serious issue in Vallejo, as in many US cities). The city is also in an ongoing process to rewrite the general plan, a process which has included multiple opportunities for public engagement and extends a number of online engagement tools that were developed alongside the PB process to allow residents to participate in the project proposal process.

### **3.3.2 Theory and Expectations for Community-Level Effects**

These immediate spillover effects are important, but they are not necessarily systemic results of PB as a specific institutional model. It's arguable, although by no means certain, that any substantial budgetary reform in either city may have had similar impacts. PB as a novel participatory institution in each city, as described throughout the body of this chapter, has unique effects on the structure of participation, community-government relationships, and distribution of information that have the potential for more durable impacts on the general political culture in the community.

The robust network effects present in New York and Vallejo establish these two implementations of PB as strong cases in which to observe broader community level effects on democratic practice and political culture. The consistent accounts of transformation and expansion of effective networks for information and mobilization establishes a plausible foundation for spill-over effects to political practice in the wider community. Later, in Chapter 5, these cities will be prime test cases for impacts from PB on the evolution of democratic discourse in the public sphere and the level of collaboration reported by community organization.

These two cases are also presented in contrast to the more constrained network impacts of PB in

Edinburgh and in London, discussed in the next chapter. As I will describe, £eith decides! in Edinburgh demonstrates strong impacts on network connections within the public (civil society), but not between public and government, while PB experimentation in Tower Hamlets failed to demonstrate any broadly reported impacts on relationships either within the public or between public and government. As I will discuss in future chapters, these cases have moderated (or negative) expectations for more general community-level impacts.

# Chapter 4

## UK Cases: Low and Medium Density

### Participatory Budgeting

Across the Atlantic from New York and Vallejo, residents in neighborhoods of London and Edinburgh have been invited to participate in similar meetings, assembling in public spaces, discussing project ideas and local priorities and voting. In church halls, community centers, and housing block common rooms, strangers follow signs to find council officers convening communities to make decisions about the allocation of public funds. The generic form of these events is familiar from PB events and assemblies in the US, but the experience of PB in these British cities is markedly different. Following a wave of central government support for PB in 2008/2009, the implementation of participatory budgeting has come more in the form of localized government administrative policy more so than as a result of local elected officials' or citizens' advocacy. These different local authorities implement different approaches, resulting in a heterogeneous mix of institutional designs. While there is a network of professionals interested and informed about PB in the UK (see the PB Network), PB processes are usually developed on an ad hoc basis by individual local authorities, rather than the distribution and advocacy of a single model. While most PB processes in the UK have come to converge around a small scale grants-making model, this trend is not universal, and the two case sites explored in this chapter represent a mix of British PB models.

This design heterogeneity provides the basis for the contribution of this chapter: clarifying the institutional limits of the impact of participatory budgeting. The three processes in two cities discussed here clarify the conceptual limits of participatory budgeting, as a mode of public-driven co-governance, while highlighting the significance of embedded collaborative interaction between public officials and residents for politically transformative impacts from PB. As I explain in the sections below, these three British processes fall into 3 separate categories: 1) well-implemented but not PB by design (Tower Hamlets You Decide!); 2) poorly-implemented but PB by design (Tower Hamlets Ward Forums); and 3) well-implemented PB (Leith Decides!).

**Table 4.1:** Three British cases of public decision-making

	Is PB	Is Not PB
Well implemented	Leith Decides!	You Decide!
Poorly implemented	Ward Forums	

In this chapter, I begin by briefly outlining the design of each participatory process in both cities, providing a critical assessment of each process against the core elements of PB defined in Chapter 2. The second half of the chapter moves on from the assessment of the institutional components of each process, to consider their immediate effects on the individuals and communities involved. Reflecting the variability in design and implementation, local impacts on incentives, relationships, and information vary substantially across the cases. Impacts in Tower Hamlets are minimal and abbreviated in all respects, while in Leith the process contributes substantively to experiences of community cohesion and opportunities for collaborative relationships, but fails to substantially transform the formal political resources or connections of community members. The chapter concludes by laying out expectations for observation of community level impacts, suggesting a contrast to the proposed impacts in New York and Vallejo.

## 4.1 Process Models

The two local sites discussed in this chapter are both small regional areas of larger metropolitan areas (similar to individual council districts in New York City): First, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, one of 33 political subdivisions of the very large and decentralized Greater London Authority and second, the port district of Leith in Edinburgh, an area made up of two contiguous city council wards.

In this section, I provide a brief introduction to the diverse urban contexts of each of these case sites, followed by an outline of the design of the PB processes in each site and an assessment of these processes along the definitional dimensions of participatory budgeting discussed in Chapter 2.

### 4.1.1 Tower Hamlets

Home to around 220,000 residents, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets occupies much of the iconic East End of London. From the Tower of London and the shiny financial high rises of Canary Wharf, the borough extends across acres of sprawling council estates built up from the extensive rubble of the Blitz, to the edges of the new 2012 London Olympics complex. Tower Hamlets includes some of the most extreme proximities of wealth and poverty in the UK, and is home to a diverse population, with an enduring white British working class population living side by side with large and densely concentrated Bangladeshi and Somali immigrant communities, with a mix of middle class gentrifiers pushing out and across the East End in the search for affordable housing in the difficult London property market. Despite (arguably because of) the borough's many challenges, the council remains well-funded compared to other London boroughs and residents describe a strong sense of attachment to the historically rich and diverse local environment.

Since 1965, each of London's boroughs acts as an independent local authority, with control over education, streets and sanitation, healthcare and other social provision. Each borough has their own system of local governance, either a borough council or, in the case of Tower Hamlets and neighbouring boroughs, an executive mayor-council government. While the Greater London Authority has responsibility for city-wide strategic planning and transportation, as local authorities, London boroughs have a wide scope to shape the quality of residents' lives and opportunities, and different boroughs are

characterized by different styles and priorities of governance.

Tower Hamlets, in particular, gained a high profile within the participatory budgeting community when it became one of several local authorities in England to participate in a series of PB pilots in 2009. Tower Hamlets stood out because, at the time, the borough represented the largest investment of public money in a PB process in the global north, with £4.8 million in funding for core services allocated through a self-described PB process, called You Decide!<sup>1</sup> This process continued for two years (into 2011), with some modifications, but was cancelled after the election of a new executive Mayor and reassessment of local partnership structures in a context of extensive budget cuts from central government. During the administration of that new mayor, Lutfur Rahman, a new participatory budgeting process structure was introduced, in the Local Community Ward Forums, which started in late 2013. While these two processes were not linked in the public eye, internally the second process was designed in part to address shortcomings of the first. During my fieldwork in Tower Hamlets, I was able to observe meetings and speak to multiple participants in the second process, and interview, after the fact, two organizers and several participants in the first You Decide! process. The comparison of these two, very different, participatory processes, provides helpful leverage to understand which elements are significant to the democratic impact of participatory institutions.

Both participatory processes in Tower Hamlets were geographically decentralized, with the You Decide! process occurring in each Local Area Partnership (LAP) across the borough, with residents of each LAP voting on services to be provided in their area. With the new mayor's administration's decision to eliminate the LAPs as a primary geography of governance, the Ward Forums, in contrast, were conducted across 17 small local wards. Apart from the conditions of geographic decentralization and the allocation of public funds, however, these two processes had little in common. Below, I outline the general structure of each process in turn, illustrated in Figure 4.1.

The You Decide! process of 2009-2011 saw residents in different areas of the borough coming together for several hours to listen to presentations from different department heads (police, youth service, health, etc.) on potential service options, discuss the options in small groups, and vote elec-

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<sup>1</sup>DCLG 2011; PB Network 2015; Sintomer, Röcke, and Herzberg 2016:148-154

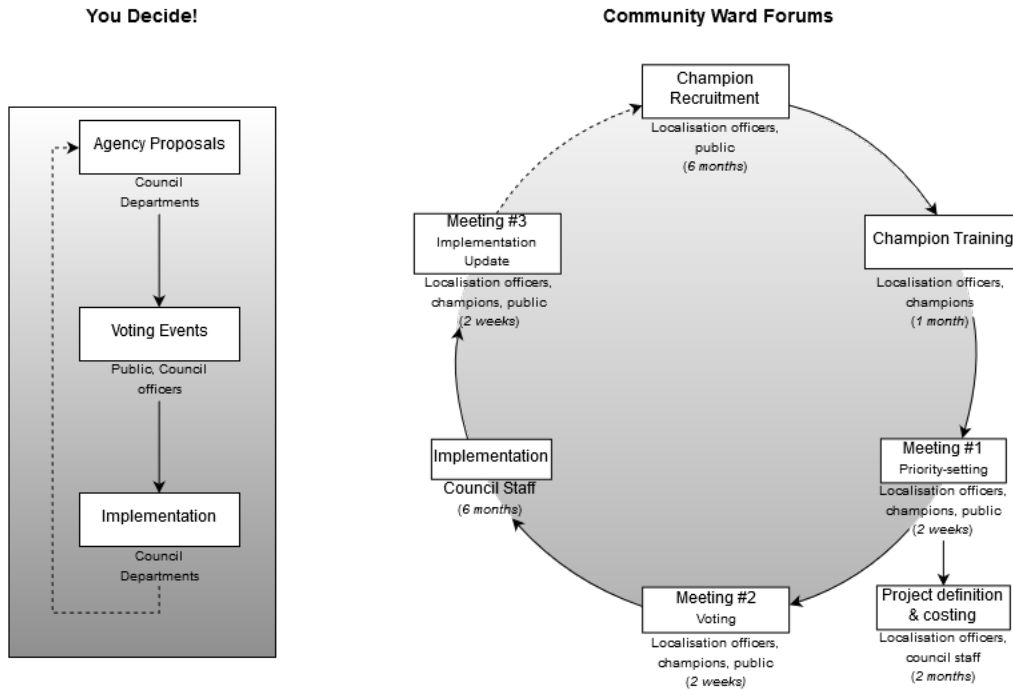


Figure 4.1: Tower Hamlets process summaries

tronically on the day, with winners for each LAPs tabulated and announced at the close of the event. There was some limited involvement of residents in implementation of projects, but, broadly speaking, public involvement was limited to that one day of the year for each LAP. With a large budget, high turnout and real services purchased, this You Decide! process was seen, locally and internationally, as a success and continues to be identified as an example of “best practice” in the UK.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, the Local Community Ward Forums were designed to require more sustained involvement of members of the public in decision-making. Building on a network of volunteers established during the London Olympics in 2012, the first phase of the Ward Forums involved the recruitment and training of around 80 “Community Champion Coordinators” from all 17 wards, who would be responsible for coordinating the forums. The forums themselves had, in theory, more in common with structures seen North American PB processes than with the borough’s previous You Decide! process, with a sequence of three public meetings intended to identify community priorities and brainstorm project ideas in each ward, vote on specific, costed project proposals, and finally feed back on the

<sup>2</sup>see e.g. PB Network 2015; Wilson 2010

implementation of the projects.

Finally, it is necessary to note, that Tower Hamlets is, in fact, a highly idiosyncratic and unusual in the context of British local politics. In the 18 months after I left the field, council/mayoral elections occurred, the independent Bangladeshi Mayor was re-elected, the borough was put under central government supervision because of concerns of corruption and misuse of public funds by the mayor and his team, the mayoral election results were thrown out as the mayor was arrested for serious voter fraud, and a new election was held. While the process dynamics investigated throughout the discussions in this chapter represent real stories about what did (and did not) happen at the Ward Forums, larger inference about their lack of impact in the community must be understood within a context of a serious crisis of government at the same time. The general impression of the mayor and the council, who were typically at odds with each other, at the time I conducted my research, was of an insular and non-transparent style of governance, where effecting change occurred nearly exclusively through personalistic appeals to elected officials. As one of my interviewees, an African immigrant, put it, “this is tribal politics at it’s worst.” In some ways, this dynamic could be seen as precisely where high quality PB institutions, if they received adequate support in implementation and citizen support, could be expected to have the greatest impact, recasting relations of dependence into relationships of citizenship rights (along the lines of the best case scenarios in Brazi in Wampler’s 2007 book on PB in Brazil). As I describe in the assessment and analysis below, this civic transformation did not happen in Tower Hamlets. The process was instead minimally resourced and advertised and was removed from council support when the replacement mayor came into office, leaving few traces.

### **Assessment**

Tower Hamlet’s You Decide! and Local Community Ward Forums both were described by the implementing borough council as participatory budgeting processes and, in the case of You Decide!, were held up across the wider community of practice around PB as best practices. The label on its own should not be taken at face value; any local authority can call an engagement process participatory budgeting without necessarily meeting the necessary conditions to be considered PB in this study. In

this section, I provide an assessment of each process along the five definitional components of PB, as summarised previously in Table 3.2.

Table 4.2 summarizes the performance of the two Tower Hamlets processes on each of these five criteria, explained in more detail below. The You Decide! process falls short, in design, on the fourth and fifth characteristics, while the Ward Forum process meets all required conditions in design, but fails to enact them all in practice. The You Decide! process can be understood as a successful consultation event, but not as a fully fledged participatory budget process. The Ward Forums had potential to be a genuine participatory budget, but haphazard and partial implementation hindered its effective role.

**Table 4.2:** Tower Hamlets Assessment Summary

	Credible	Participation	Discussion	Bottom-Up	Design/Implement
You Decide!	+	+	+	-	-
Ward Forums	+	-/+	-	+	-/+

### **Commitment to implementation**

Both the Tower Hamlets You Decide! and Ward Forums had a credible commitment to implementation. Processes were operated by the council, with the funds reserved for public decision-making clearly specified and set aside in the budget. Framing materials for both processes clearly situated the public’s role as deciding on funds which would be spent accordingly. Observations at the Ward Forums and interviews with participants and organizers of the You Decide! process demonstrated minimal uncertainty on the part of participants or organizers that the council would follow through with the projects to win the vote.

In the Ward Forums, however, the commitment to implementation was poorly advertised. The participatory budgeting purpose of the meetings was poorly explained in the outreach process, and of the participants I spoke to, the majority had not known, prior to attending, that real money was going to be on the table for the public to decide how to spend. Further, two of the nine community champions and community organizers that I spoke to, while describing meetings I had not attended,

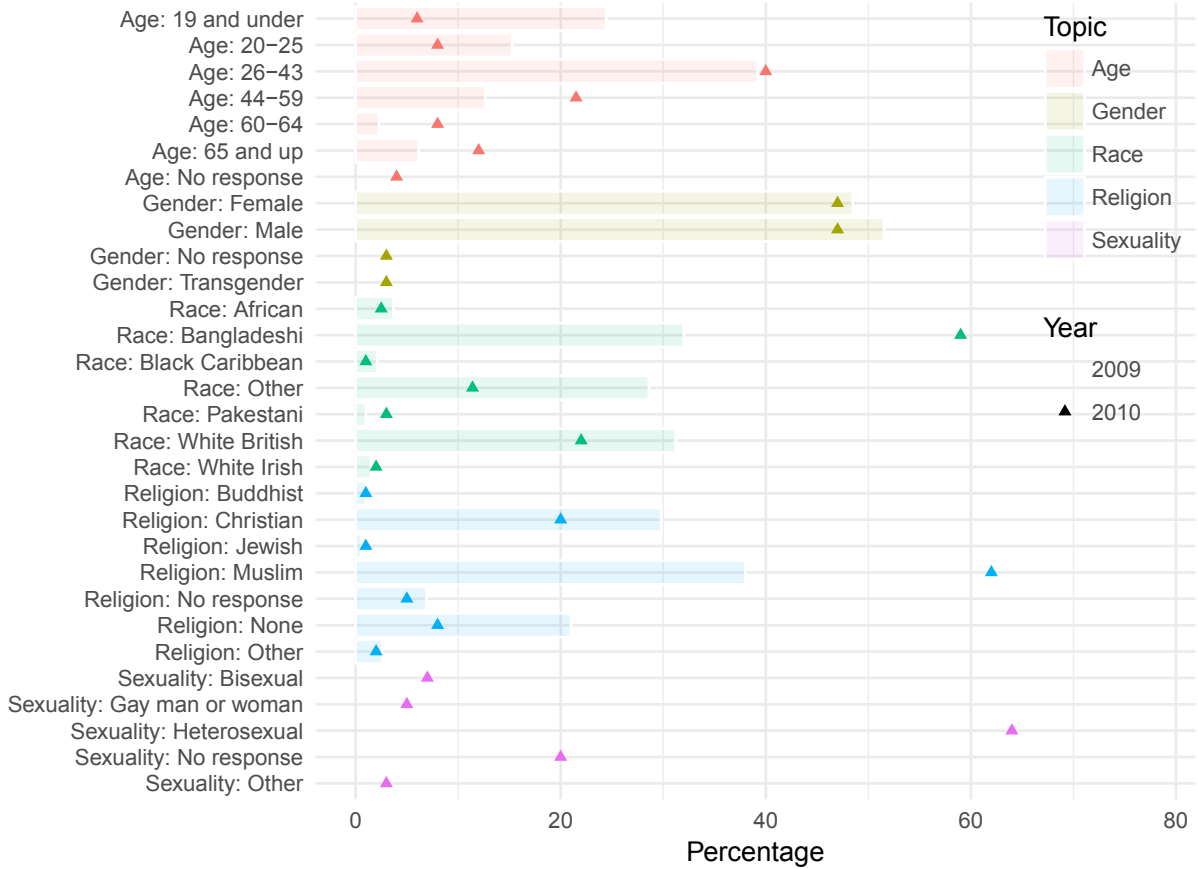
described residents attending who had not known the decision-making purpose of the meeting in advance. In fact, the only “ordinary” residents I spoke with who had known what they were in for were a young professional couple recently moved into the area who had done extensive research into opportunities to get involved in their local area and one lifelong local activist who is very active on a number of committees in their housing association and the borough council.

### **Open participation in decision making**

Both processes offered open participation in decision making, with all community members and residents welcome at decision-making meetings. While on paper both processes easily satisfied this qualification, they demonstrate substantial variability in practice. The You Decide! processes, reflecting their much more extensive budget for implementation and large staff, had more widespread and highly visible advertising and outreach, with 815 and 770 people taking part in the first and second years, respectively (an average of around 100 people per meeting). Being allocated to specific LAPs, You Decide! meetings took place in locations across the borough, resulting in 8 meetings, for communities of nearly 32,000 residents. Ward Forums by definition targeted smaller, more localized geographies, with separate meetings in each of 17 wards, representing an average of about 16,500 residents each.

Despite the more local neighborhood scale of the Ward Forum meetings, the You Decide! process was much more effective in actually reach residents and drawing them in to participate, with an average of 793 participants in each year. Childcare and transportation were available and efforts at linguistic inclusion included Bengali speakers at the registration tables and translators available to all discussion tables. As illustrated in Figure 4.2, attendees included participants from a range of communities around the borough, although with over-representation of the Bangladeshi Muslim population (as is common in public political events in the borough).

Systematic assessment of the Ward Forum processes is much more challenging. While a Freedom of Information request was able to elicit the council’s best estimate of participant numbers at each meeting, the council staff who helped to coordinate meetings that I observed did not reliably collect demographic data on participants, and the council did not provide information on the demographics



**Figure 4.2:** Distribution of participants in the Tower Hamlets You Decide! process, compared to 2011 census estimates for Tower Hamlets. Data from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, UK Office of National Statistics, and internal council evaluation documents shared with me privately. Demographic categories as defined process evaluation metrics.

of meeting participants. I watched officers record total vote counts, but these were not made publicly available and vote systems and vote allocation procedures varied across wards and may not be directly comparable<sup>3</sup> The best attended meeting, according to the council's reporting, had only 27 participants (council officers verbally described up to a maximum of 65 participants in interviews), but other meetings reported not more than a dozen participants. All but one of the individuals I spoke with mentioned, with concern, the low levels of participation in the process. In several instances, only one or two residents of the ward actually attended a meeting. Of the five wards whose meetings I was able to observe (many ward meetings happened on the same nights, and thus I was unable to attend all), diverse participants could be seen in attendance, although visible minorities (in particular the Bangladeshi population that effectively dominates much of Tower Hamlets local politics) were not visible at the rates that would be suggested by census data for the wards. This is in interesting contrast to the only demographic statistics shared with me by the council, which reported the demographics of the community champion coordinators in the truncated second year of the forums as including majority Muslim and nearly exclusively Asian and black participants.<sup>4</sup>

The low rates of participation in Tower Hamlets likely have multiple causes, but a reasonable explanation for low participation can be found in the universally condemned approach to advertising and outreach by the council.<sup>5</sup> Every single person that I spoke to in a formal interview raised concerns with inadequate or poorly implemented outreach, and concerns about poor advertising were raised informally in the meetings that I attended. One champion offered a typical negative assessment of the publicity: "I wouldn't have found out about them unless, well, without having worked here, 'cause they weren't advertised that well. East End Life is basically the extent to which they were advertised." As this champion observed, the primary mode of publicity was through small ads placed in the council's own

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<sup>3</sup>In addition, I do not entirely trust numbers that may be reported, given that at the one of the 5 meetings I was able to attend which provided an accounting of attendance and votes at a previous meeting, these "official" council numbers did not match the community organizer's own record of votes from the previous meeting.

<sup>4</sup>See Figure B.1 in the appendix for these reported community champion demographics compared with census data. They are reserved to the appendix for illustrative purposes, as these numbers do not correspond with either my own observations of champion populations or the total number of community champion coordinators described in other council documentation.

<sup>5</sup>Other explanations for low participation may include diminished incentives as a result of "insultingly small" amounts of money being made available to the public, and a widespread uncertainty or skepticism of activities with the council or mayor's stamp on it, for some people, the idea that this is "maybe just a PR stunt".

newspaper, *East End Life*, with some distribution of fliers and/or posts on a neighborhood-based online social network and discussion forum called Streetlife. Council officers involved in implementation and publicity reported distributing information about the forums to social housing associations, but with the exception of one major landlord with a pre-existing strong commitment to resident involvement (Poplar Harca)<sup>6</sup>, it is not evident from participants that housing associations put much effort into publicizing the events. The council's newspaper and its hard-to-navigate website do not effectively target members of the public who would not typically be informed and open to engaging in the council.

The Ward Forums were, in theory, open to everyone in the community. However, people cannot participate in a process that they do not know about, and the minimal resources dedicated to outreach and publicity limit how effectively much this process was, in practice, open to all. The effective inclusivity of the Ward Forums was also compromised by the scheduling of events. While meetings did take place within the local areas (rather than at the central council offices), they were held at times that were difficult for residents to attend. This was particularly the case for the first round of priority-setting meetings, which were held on weekends in December, shortly before Christmas. While Tower Hamlets is not a majority-Christian borough (with a large Muslim and non-religious population), the Christmas holidays are culturally a very busy time in Britain, with many school and community events competing for residents' time and attention.

### **Public discussion and public reasoning**

Public discussion and public reasoning were built into the meeting structures in both You Decide! and the Ward Forums. As is often the case, actual experiences were variable, but generally preserved real opportunities for discussion and reasoning. The You Decide! process was designed around a central activity of discussion of options within small groups prior to voting on project preferences. This discussion did happen, but the quality of facilitation and the distribution of members of the public across the groups was variable. Council staff who had received a two hour training in facilitation were

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<sup>6</sup>Poplar Harca has is strongly resident-led, with a resident board and a long-running internal participatory budgeting process for the improvement and investment in the each of the different estates that they manage. Folks from Poplar Harca, in fact, take credit for inspiring the borough council to take on participatory budgeting approaches in 2009 in the first place

intended to be seated at every table ensuring respectful, open discussion, and ad hoc efforts were made by staff at events to break up groups of people with shared interests or perspectives across different tables. As one organizer described,

People came in, sat down, then they received an idea of what it was they could expect from the day, they heard then from different services areas. They had a book on their table which they could look at before we started, over tea and refreshments, and then in their group, they looked at different offers, and there was a facilitator on every table that was facilitating discussion about “which one of those did you like, let’s have a talk about it, let’s see what, what exactly are they...” People would look in the book, they’d look at other options. And they’d have a conversation really about what they wanted to buy. And then the voting would take place.

These were not necessarily exemplary deliberative events, but there was a real effort to ensure that discussion between strangers preceded decision-making. Deliberation was not ideal, and there was pressure from others in the council to “limit the amount of deliberation, and...jump straight to presentations and voting.” As the other coordinator I interviewed described:

I thought the, they were never perfect.... [You] think, wouldn’t it be great if we had had that sort of deliberative sort of really passionate discussion that led people to come to collective agreement on things. We never got there. We had voting at the end to try and separate out where people disagreed. But some of the conversation was better than it would otherwise have been.

The case, as always, within the Ward Forums was much more variable. While I was not able to observe the first round of priority-setting meetings, small group discussion and brainstorming of ward priorities and project ideas were described to me by coordinators and observers from across the borough. The actual decision-making meetings, in which residents were able to vote on the specific projects to be funded and implemented by the council, were much more variable in terms of public discussion. Echoing my own observation of dramatically different meeting procedures, interview participants who attended multiple meetings also described implementation of the meetings across different wards as broadly inconsistent. For example, the meetings I observed ranged in approach from brief presentations by council staff on project budgets to members of the public seated in rows, followed by a period of voting (where informal discussion could happen, but was certainly not expected or really even encouraged), to another meeting in a nearby ward where attendees sat around a

single table and came to a decision about projects to fund through an open discussion with a consensus approach, while the attending council officer took a literal back seat. Most meetings fell somewhere in between, with some real opportunity for discussion and public justification.

### **Bottom-up agenda setting**

Bottom-up agenda setting is the second characteristic, after participation, in which the two Tower Hamlets PB processes diverged. The You Decide! process simply failed to satisfy this characteristic of participatory budgeting. The Ward Forums, in an intentional change from the You Decide! approach, preserved real agenda-setting authority to the members of the public who chose to attend the priority-setting meeting (albeit within the limits of the funds available).

In the You Decide! processes, council departments themselves identified projects or opportunities for which they needed additional funds, in proposals ranging from additional police officers to youth services and language courses. These proposals were identified and costed prior to any public involvement and were presented to members of the public on the day of the event through presentations and pamphlet outlining the “menu” of options. There was no scope in events for members of the public to identify other priorities or offer suggestions for alternative spending choices.

The Ward Forums, in contrast, reserved all initial priority discussion and project proposal to the general public, in a brainstorming session much more similar to the neighborhood assemblies seen in the North American processes in the last chapter. Council staff took public priorities and the proposed project ideas (if any specific suggestions were provided) back to the relevant council departments and worked with those departments to identify concrete project ideas that could be implemented with only to £10,000 available to each ward. The role of the community champion coordinators (public volunteers) varied across wards in this respect. In some wards, coordinators took an active role in investigating and following up on specific project ideas with the council, helping to preserve the bottom-up quality of project ideas, while in others, the coordinators were much less engaged in this intermediate period, and found themselves only discovering the council’s intended projects on the day of the vote. Despite this variability in public control in the concretization of priorities, the broad the-

matic priorities and issues raised by residents for the most part continued to set the agenda for funded projects in the Ward Forums.

### **Public design and/or implementation**

Echoing the different approaches to agenda setting, the two processes reserved different roles to the public for design and implementation of projects. The You Decide! process saw design and implementation handled by the usual practices of the relevant department. The Ward Forums presented, again, a more mixed bag. In many cases, the council staff returned to the public decision-making meetings with project ideas that would have simply extended existing council programmes (for example running additional language classes in an already established course or extending the hours of a youth centre). However, in those cases where residents successfully proposed a new project (such as a new community festival), community champion coordinators did play a role in liaising with the relevant departments to help with design and implementation. Design and implementation remains, as was also often the case in the U.S. case studies, one of the most challenging aspects in which to build a meaningful role for the public.

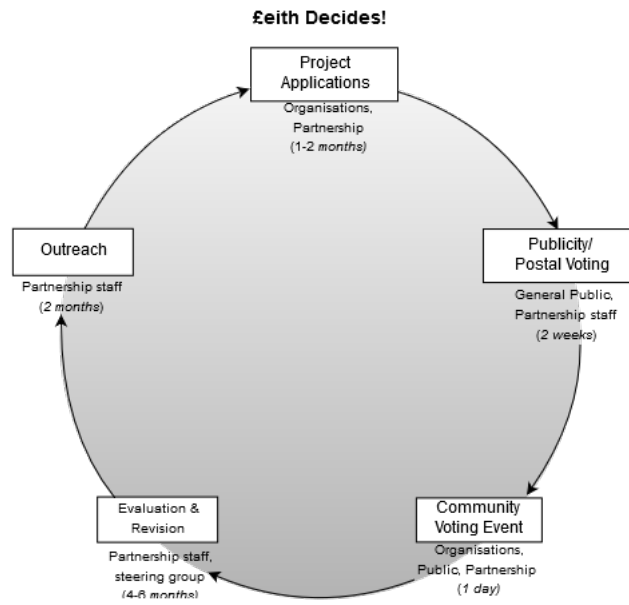
#### **4.1.2 Leith**

A five hours' train journey north from London, Leith, the port region of the city of Edinburgh, has been continuously implementing a small-scale participatory budgeting process since 2010. Called Leith Decides!, this process has involved the public in the allocation of 50%<sup>7</sup> of the Community Grant budget allocated by the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership, one of the regional governance entities that coordinates service provision, consultation, and implementation of city policy locally. From 2010 to 2015, just over £22,000 were allocated by this process. Its popularity as a funding mechanism in the community led to its extension to the entirety of the community grant budget, over £44,000 in the most recent cycle.

Leith is made up of two city council wards, and includes some of the most deprived neighbour-

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<sup>7</sup>As of October 2016, 100%



**Figure 4.3:** Leith Decides! process summary

hood areas in Scotland (according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation). It consists of comparatively diverse neighbourhoods in a largely white, well-off city, including the one of the highest proportions of people born outside of the UK and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) populations in the city.<sup>8</sup> Leith is also an area with an unusually strong local community identity. Leithers (as people from Leith refer to themselves) will say they are from Leith, not Edinburgh, and participate in community remembrance of the time before Edinburgh annexed them. Many people in Leith have a generally strong sense of pride in place, at the same time as the area struggles in terms of community cohesion, economic vibrancy, and physical infrastructure. At the time PB was first implemented, the Leith wards had some of the lowest levels of trust and engagement in the city government, which was a direct motivation for experimenting with PB in the neighbourhood partnership<sup>9</sup>

Leith Decides! was implemented on the tail end of the same wave of British interest in participatory budgeting that drove the implementation of the Tower Hamlets You Decide! process. Where Tower Hamlets jumped in with large amounts of money but little space for bottom up agenda-setting, Leith kept its PB process small, but very closely tied to the community. Projects are proposed, designed,

<sup>8</sup>Based on 2011 census data, available in summary form in the City of Edinburgh Council (2014)

<sup>9</sup>As described in discussions with partnership staff, confirmed against historical Edinburgh People's Survey Data (City of Edinburgh Council 2012).

and implemented by local community groups, who are allocated money depending on which projects succeed in a public vote open to anyone who lives or works in Leith. £eith Decides! is run by the neighbourhood partnership, in coordination with a steering group of local residents, and operates on a roughly annual schedule, with a weeks-long period in which groups can apply with specific projects (capped at £1,000) to include on the ballot, a period of publicity and advertising during which the organisations can advertise their projects and the partnership can do necessary work to advertise the vote, and finally a two week voting period and large community event where all the applicants come together and make their case in a festive setting similar to a project expo in the US PB cases.

**Assessment**

Over the years, £eith Decides! has gone through minor modifications in response to feedback, coming to incorporate postal voting and, most recently, online voting (not included in my field work) as well as expansions in the funds available as the process becomes increasingly embedded in the community. While the relatively small amount of funds available may cause some observers from more well-funded PB processes to hesitate to include Leith as comparable a case of PB, the assessment below demonstrates that the process successfully satisfies all the key characteristics of PB, summarized in Table 4.3. The smaller-budget community grants model of PB has become popular around the UK. The case of £eith Decides! thus provides a valuable opportunity to understand how the dynamics initiated in such differently constrained processes relate to the larger scale processes working with city budgets and city departments for implementation.

**Table 4.3:** £eith Assessment Summary

	Credible	Participation	Discussion	Bottom-Up	Design/Implement
£eith Decides!	+	+	+/-	+	+

**Commitment to implementation**

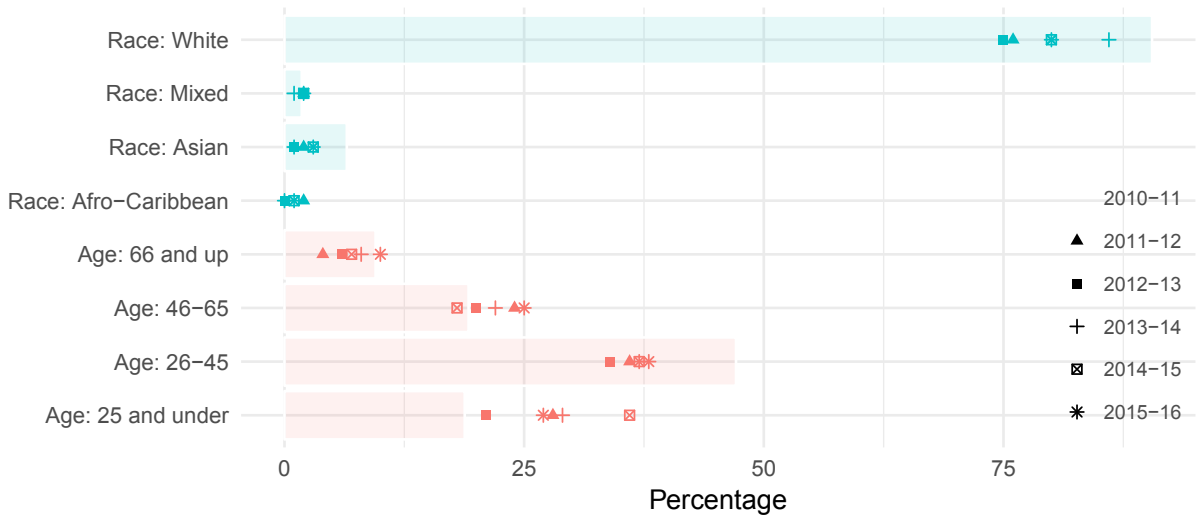
There has never been real doubt as to the neighbourhood partnership’s commitment to funding the projects identified through £eith Decides! The clear ownership of the process by the partnership, espe-

cially the dedicated work of the neighbourhood partnership development officer, lent a clear credibility to the process. This was amplified by the fact that the funds being made available to PB were already known as community grant monies that were to be distributed to community groups to spend on designated projects. The repeated iterations of funds being successfully distributed has merely served to reinforce the reality that the process gives community members a chance to spend real money. The partnership has, in fact, increased their commitment over time, with the amount of community grant funds allocated to Leith Decides! increasing from 30% in the first year to 100% in the most recent iteration.

### **Open participation in decision making**

Participation in Leith Decides! has been open to everyone 8 years and older who lives, works, or attends school within the boundaries of the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership (the two Edinburgh city wards of Leith and Leith Walk). To increase accessibility, voting and learning about projects has been made available at the central Leith Library (and now online), and members of the public are able to take ballots away for others to vote who may not easily be able to make it into the center. In the most recent cycle in October 2016, online voting was allowed for the first time, on similar principles. When registering their vote, people are required to indicate their age and post code, but in general organisers have erred on the side of inclusion (as in Vallejo) when it comes to restricting the vote versus making it accessible.

Publicity could always be better, but the event was advertised across public spaces in the community, including extensive banners and posters (I saw them regularly while moving through the community; without surveying the population it is not possible to know how widely they were noticed by people who were not primed to notice them). However, the several dozen organisations participating in a relatively small geographic area, including schools, youth groups, and core charity service providers in the area, means publicity efforts are considerably amplified by the groups with a stake in the outcome of the event. Organizations themselves work to advertise the event broadly across their networks. It is also worth noting that applicants (organizations) themselves cover a wide range



**Figure 4.4:** Distribution of participants in the Leith Decides! process over all years, compared to 2011 census estimates for Tower Hamlets. Data from Leith Neighbourhood Partnership and the City of Edinburgh Council. Demographic categories as defined process evaluation metrics.

of activities and interests, with proposals from different immigrant community organizations, scout and youth groups, arts organizations, and charitable service providers. Nevertheless, a majority of interview participants highlighting a need for better or more targeted publicity. Among participants on the day who I interviewed, while a handful of people volunteered publicity as an area that could use improvement, most people I spoke with did not volunteer publicity as a problem while a majority remarked positively on how well-attended the event was.

These publicity efforts do pay off, as illustrated by the continually increasing numbers of voting participants in the process. As Figure 4.4 illustrates, participation is representative of a range of age and ethnic groups in Leith. The one group that the partnership has struggled to draw into the process is the BME (largely Asian) community of Leith. It is worth noting that given the very high proportion of white British population in the area, Leith Decides! assumes English competency and does not provide any translation or language support, as with most council and local government activities in Scotland.

Overall, Leith Decides! succeeds in reaching people with a range of interests and who do not typically engage in local council activities or consider themselves political. Over the first four years, for which this question was asked of participants, an average of 77% of participants had not attended

any council or partnership meetings in the past six months. While directly comparable statistics on meeting attendance for Leithers is not available, according to the Edinburgh People's Survey, a representative public opinion survey run by the council, just over 20% of respondents in Leith had visited the central council office in person in the past year; it can be assumed that more would have visited the partnership offices, which are located within the neighbourhood.<sup>10</sup> Representation is not descriptively perfect, but a broad cross section of the community can and do get involved in this process, including those who may not be involved in other council consultations.

### **Public discussion and public reasoning**

Public discussion and public reasoning is one area that, in design, £eith Decides! falls short in comparison to the other processes in this study. While PB processes in the United States allow voters to cast a ballot without necessarily reflecting publicly on the relative values of the projects on the ballot, the neighborhood assembly and budget delegate process do entrench discussion and public reasoning within the process. In Leith, participatory budgeting does not necessarily require discussion or exchange with others. At the community voting event, extensive discussion, learning about projects, and adjustments of preferences can and do frequently occur. However, especially with the introduction of library, postal, and online voting, the built-in framework for such interaction is minimized.

However, while public discussion may be easier to avoid in £eith Decides!, especially as the process expands, the voting procedure itself has been discussed and revised to require members of the public to consider the value of every project on the ballot, supporting internal deliberation. While voters may be drawn to the event by particular support for one or another of the projects, in order for their vote to be counted, they must rate every project on a scale of 1-5. This does increase the decision-making burden on voters, but the distribution of votes across projects suggests that many voters do consider the range of projects on their own merits. In interviews when discussing the voting process, participants often remarked that despite the cognitive cost, they valued the requirement to consider all the projects on the ballot, reporting that it increased the focus on community interest and equi-

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<sup>10</sup>Data from the Edinburgh People Survey (City of Edinburgh Council 2014b).

table representation as opposed to narrow block voting. There is evidence supporting this impression on the part of participants that projects are in fact considered on their individual merits: in those instances where groups submit multiple projects (which is allowed, they are in effect in competition with themselves in these cases), the different projects will receive sometimes very different numbers of votes, with some projects proving much more popular than others.<sup>11</sup> Voters are not simply filling in their ballot in block support of their own preferred organization.<sup>12</sup>

### **Bottom-up agenda setting**

Agenda setting in Leith Decides! is decidedly bottom-up. While there are scope constraints in the amount of money available to projects and the fact that they must be based in Leith or of benefit to members of the Leith community, the type of projects is very open. If a group can meet the basic requirements of being a constituted organization and able to provide cost estimates for a project, they are welcome to make a proposal. Even though there is an initial application to the neighbourhood partnership, the partnership does not play a selective gatekeeper role, rather confirming that the organization exists with designated officers (not necessarily a formally incorporated charity) and ensuring that projects are costed and could have funds disbursed after the vote.

### **Public design and/or implementation**

Finally, Leith Decides! has full public engagement in design and implementation. The projects are fully designed and implemented by the proposing community groups and their staff or membership. Council or partnership staff have no role other than disbursing the funds.

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<sup>11</sup>This is illustrated in the yearly reporting of vote distributions included in the Leith Decides! reports available at <http://www.edinburghnp.org.uk/neighbourhood-partnerships/leith/about/Leith-decides/reports/>.

<sup>12</sup>Some groups have also learned that proposing multiple projects can undermine their chances of winning any funding. In the year I completed my fieldwork, one group submitted five projects, of which only one was successful, potentially a result of votes for the group being split between projects. There's some evidence from one of my interviews with a participant on the day that bidding for so many projects also may be seen as greedy, and decrease possible support for the group. After that year, organizers revised the rules so that groups could not have more than two applications on the ballot in a single cycle.

### 4.1.3 Summary and expectations

Across the three processes in London and Edinburgh, thus, we see broad variation in elements of design, public control and implementation. Table 4.4 summarizes the performance of the three processes across the five characteristics of PB.

**Table 4.4:** PB Criteria across Cases

	You Decide!	Ward Forums	Leith Decides!
Credible commitment		Council budget policy	LNP policy
Open to all		All residents	Stakeholders 8 yrs+
Public discussion	Facilitated groups	Variable meetings	Event & structured ballot
Bottom-up agenda	None	Priorities, project ideas	Full public control
Public design	None	Project dependent	Full public control

Despite the public accolades from practitioners, the first Tower Hamlets You Decide process cannot truly be considered a participatory budgeting process. It was an energetic and empowered public consultation process, but by the standards established within communities of practice and scholarly work, it cannot fully be considered a participatory budgeting process. The design of the second Tower Hamlets process the Local Ward Community Forums better satisfied the requirements for a participatory budgeting process. However, serious failures on the part of the borough to fully fund and implement the process itself compromised the effective status of the process. Nevertheless, this process provides an excellent point of comparison with the earlier, well-implemented but not fully participatory You Decide process. Finally, the Leith Decides! process in Edinburgh, despite its small financial scale, broadly satisfies the conceptual requirements of a participatory budgeting process. Understanding the impacts of this process can provide an interesting insight to the scope conditions operating on participatory budgeting as an institutional strategy for democratic renewal.

#### Expectations

The variation in design and implementation across these three cases of PB leads to similarly varied expectations for immediate outcomes across the three processes. In Leith, a well-implemented process with limited funds and a strong community focus will have a different impact than poorly-implemented co-governance model of the Tower Hamlets Local Community Ward Forums. Table 4.5

summarizes the expectations for changes to incentives to participate, relationships, and information sharing in each case.

**Table 4.5:** UK Case Expectations

<b>£eith Decides!</b>	
Incentives	Offers clear financial & practical programme incentives: showing up makes a difference to offerings available
Relationships	New Public-Organization relationships; Organization-Local Partnership connections. Despite intent of improving relationship, no institutional design linking public to partnership.
Information	Learning about new/unknown organizations and project activity.
<b>Tower Hamlets Ward Forums</b>	
Incentives	Counter-pressure: Small money amount and poor publicity decrease incentives to participate; local and practical projects increase incentive to participate. Few incentives for departments to engage.
Relationships	Potential for new relationships between community champions and any members of the public to attend; limited relationships between council officers and public.
Information	Potential; dependent on rate of participation and exchange
<b>Tower Hamlets You Decide!</b>	
Incentives	High incentives to departments to participate; high monetary incentives for public to participate
Relationships	One-off event, opportunities for relationships limited to brief discussion and lobbying efforts
Information	Information about council budgets and programmes, not tailored to public priorities; limited information on public preferences.

## 4.2 Results

The variability in both design and implementation across these cases results in mixed outcomes among those involved (or who opt not to become involved). In all three cases, interviews and observations provide glimpses of opportunities to reorder interactions between diverse actors within the communities. Poor implementation or design choices limit the breadth of impact from each of these processes, in a variety of informative ways. £eith Decides! does effectively draw people from the community out and into new communications with each other. In contrast, any such public interaction in Tower Hamlets is fragmented or tends to replicate existing relationships. Common across both cities, however,

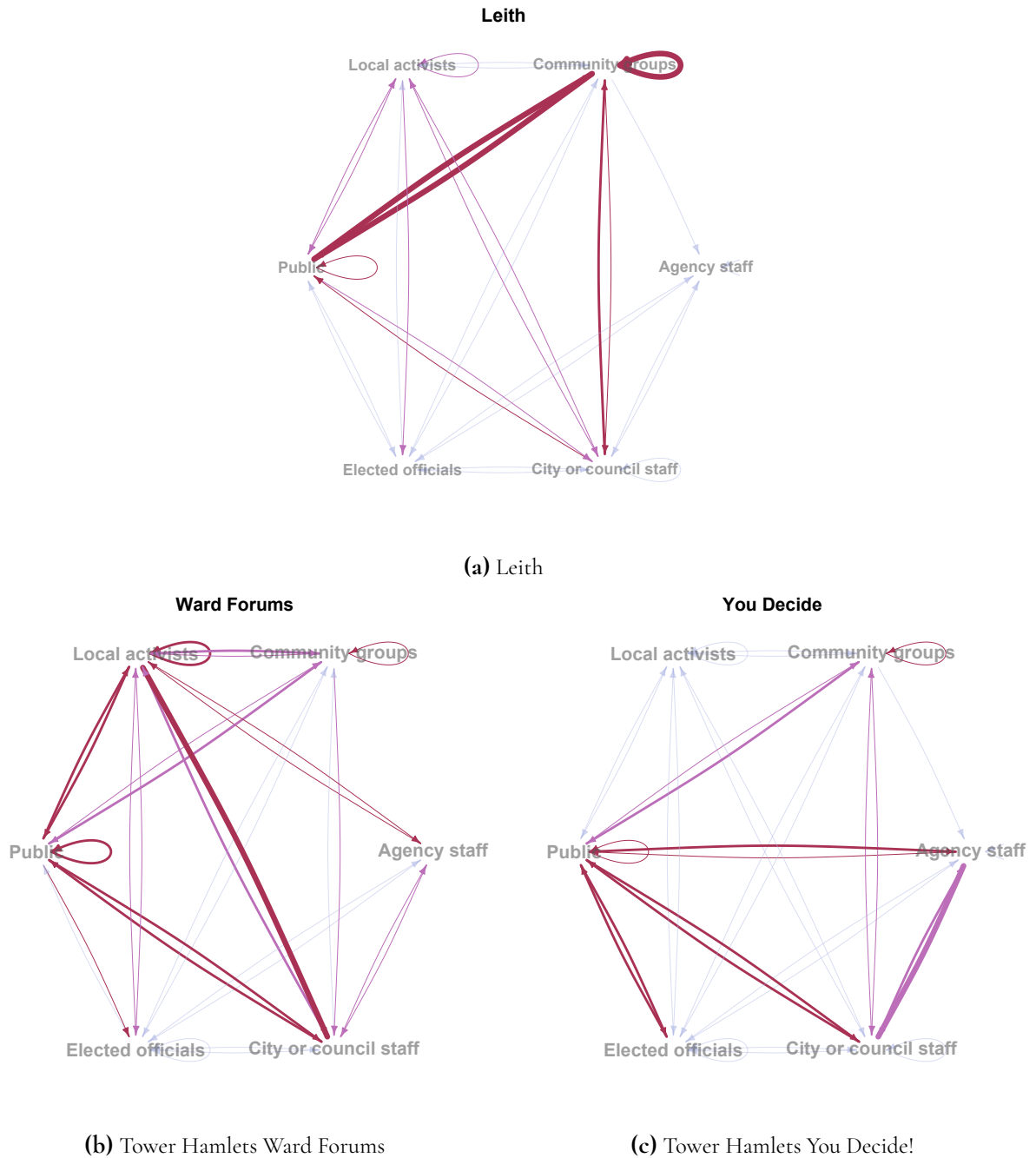
is a lack of sustained and substantive interactions between members of the public and government officials. The precise dynamics vary across sites, but as a whole these three examples of participatory institutions illustrate the limits of PB's impact on the density of relationships and information flow in their communities..

Combining accounts from interviews with 54 people involved in these three processes, and about 25 hours of meeting and event observation, Figure 4.5 illustrates the presence and absence of new meaningful communicative connections established within each of these processes. The top, single figure, illustrates the medium density network influence from Leith Decides!. The two lower Tower Hamlets figures less robust network effects, the first a consequence of weaknesses in implementation, the second a consequence of shortcomings in design (remember, this process, in fact, failed to meet the design criteria for PB).

The sections below build the case for the range of outcomes in the two sites, exploring jointly how design and implementation interact to structure the incentives for participation, the breadth and depth of relationships initiated in PB venues, and the flow of new information and learning as a result. This discussion will be structured by thematic area, but the distinct outcomes in each community will be clearly delineated.

### **4.2.1 Incentives**

This section outlines the multiple different incentive structures operate across these three cases. In two out of the three, monetary and direct incentives operate (representing new motivation). In another two of three local improvements/civic responsibility incentives play a primary role, replicating existing incentives for civic involvement or voluntary engagement. Finally, particularly in Leith, participants also report social motivations for turning out. The Tower Hamlets You Decide process is the only process to create strong material incentives for government departments to take an active role, but the limited scope for bottom-up public engagement in that process limits the development of new communicative relationships from their involvement.



**Figure 4.5:** Medium network impacts from PB in Leith, low network impacts from PB in Tower Hamlets. Dark red indicates a connection formed in PB, purple a link that existed prior to PB but which was amplified through PB, and light blue a connection that existed prior to PB that was not substantially impacted by the process. The thickness of the lines represents the relative frequency of interactions, with the thickest lines being the most consistently occurring interactions in PB.

## Material

In all three cases, there is clear evidence that putting real money on the table works as an incentive for participants who would not otherwise choose to engage in consultation or engagement activities

with their local council. Participants' accounts of reasons for attending demonstrate this in Leith and the Tower Hamlets You Decide! process, while in participants in the Tower Hamlets Ward Forums highlight the importance of real money through accounts of why people chose *not* to participate.

In Leith, organizations participate partly for funding, partly because of the publicity and community-building aspects of the event and public vote. The relatively limited funding available means that for larger groups the community building aspect is often cited as the biggest incentive. Smaller organizations that may not be formally registered as charities with the government are uniquely drawn into £eith Decides! as a funding opportunity, as fewer funding opportunities exist for which these groups are eligible. For voters and the organizations involved, the motivations are

fairly straightforward; as one representative from an organization at the event said, people “see there’s money to be had, and there’s local groups that want it for these small projects, and yeah, want that for Leith.” The hundreds of members of the public who attend the event typically are not familiar with the neighbourhood partnership and have not attended other consultations or events run by the partnership. As shown by the brief monitoring and evaluation questionnaires completed by participants as part of the registration process, around 77% of participants have not attended any other meetings with the partnership or council in the past six months.<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that there are no material benefits on the line for council departments or the neighborhood partnership in this process; government officials are presented with no new budgetary (or bureaucratic) motivations to increase



Figure 4.6: Publicity and voting materials from 2014 £eith Decides!

<sup>13</sup>Steering group members are exceptional, however. Most steering group members got involved as a result of a direct personal invitation from the coordinating partnership officer. They are taking on a more sustained volunteer position and are usually already highly involved, in either community councils or local organizations. Their incentives to participate are much more inline with their pre-existing motivations, with an extra dash of interest in learning more about the local partnership.

public engagement.

The acclaimed Tower Hamlets You Decide! process did successfully put material outcomes on the line and use benefits as an incentive to participation, both for members of the public and council departments. People's motivations to participate were based on the high levels of council funding (£2.4 million/year) allocated through the process and the mobilizing activity of community leaders who recognized the scale of services at stake. The process was implemented at a time when service cuts were unavoidable and the question was where cuts would be felt. public Departments were invited to propose entire budget items (often existing programs) that needed funding and council members, community leaders, and members of the public responded to these very real concerns. As one organizer recounted, when explaining the relatively high turnout, "There were a lot of people came who I think felt obligated to come because of councillors or community leaders telling them they ought to come, 'cause otherwise this service is gonna go. And I think people felt obligated to come and vote for, to keep a particular service." Putting real money and real projects at stake in this way was not understood as business as usual for the council: as the same organizer explained, "[Councillors] mobilized people to turn out... If the council were running any other engagement events, they wouldn't really do that." This real dependence on community mobilization and represented a real change in public understandings of the potential impact of their attendance at the meetings.

The Local Community Ward Forums in Tower Hamlets, on the other hand, make a successful case for real money as a motivation to participate, but largely in its absence from publicity and apparent interest in the process. The limited publicity around the process meant that most participants that I spoke to in fact had had no idea that these meetings were intended to allocate council money. Meanwhile, the community champion coordinators reported that the small budgets available to the forums, when they publicized the meetings in their community, were often seen negatively and taken as a disincentive. For example, one community champion coordinator felt so awkward at the "paltry" sum of money that they "didn't feel confident to go around and say to people to say, come to this meeting, halfway across the other side of this ward, which they probably wouldn't have done anyway, for 5 thousand pounds, possibly," while a member of the public who attended without realizing that there

was any money on the table asked a variant on a common question: “What can you do with 10,000 pounds?![...] why invest this much process in 10,000 pounds?” As another coordinator recounted, “We would have liked to see more residents come forward when they hear about it[...]. When I ask residents within my locality, it’s like, ‘what’s 10000 going to achieve for the ward?!’” Money matters, and in the case of the ward forums, the budget available was more likely to turn people away than not.

Where the money worked as an incentive, it was because, either through ignorance or optimism, a member of the public responded instead with a sentiment like this one from the rare member of the public who attended knowing about the funding objective, saying “I saw it, and I thought- mm, 10,000, I know lots of things we could do with £10,000 round here.” Being able to visualize an impact while feeling like meaningful resources have been made available worked as an incentive in this minority of cases. That perception of the forums was rare and should be understood to directly contribute to the low levels of participation in the meetings.

## **Community**

As a practical monetary incentive to attend the Ward Forums was not widely advertised or understood, a key secondary motivation to participate in Tower Hamlets and, to a lesser extent, in Eith Decides! was an interest in helping the community and in fostering improvements in the local area. When asked why they chose to participate in the Ward Forums, both community champions and members of the public pointed toward community improvements or collective mobilization as a key incentive:

I’m doing this because I want to help the community...I’m doing my bit to help and live in a better place. (Community Champion Coordinator)

We need to start helping ourselves in our own area before we start helping others in other areas, because otherwise we’re not making much of a difference to anyone.... I’m not going to rest until Tower Hamlets is decent enough to walk through without screaming..... [until] it’s more like one of the nicer areas in London. (Tower Hamlets resident)

“It’s getting the community to get in and get involved and to take ownership. Um, you know, the the the whole, I suppose the whole reason of me getting into it was that I’d done lots of talking about it, you know, isn’t community, being active such a wonderful idea, but not actually doing anything about it.” (Tower Hamlets resident)

These incentives are related to material incentives, because they continue to be about “making a difference” in the community, but they are an expression of a interest in investing one’s *own* time and energy, rather than the promise of the government’s time and energy (via budget expenditure). These community incentives are common across many local initiatives, not just PB, reflecting typical motivations to get involved in community projects or neighborhood activism. In this sense, the relative dominance of community incentives is an indicator of the limits of the Community Ward Forums, and to a partial degree, Leith Decides!, in their capacity to use new incentive structures to bring out new participants.

### **Social**

Finally, there are some additional social motivations in evidence, particularly in Leith. The community voting event is broadly seen as “fantastic” and “invigorating”, “a very enjoyable occasion,” “having a nice, social feel,” where “children can have fun.” It is seen as welcoming of children and families and as a good chance to meet other folks from around the community. This social element is not the only incentive, but it amplified the material motivations, encouraging people to attend the face to face event rather than use postal voting, and can broaden the appeal to more people than just those with a direct stake in the projects.

A potential social motivation is in evidence in the Tower Hamlets Ward Forums as well, although underdeveloped by a lack of publicity and low participation rates. For relative newcomers to Tower Hamlets, the Ward Forums were seen as an opportunity to get to know others in their immediate neighborhood: “I thought maybe by bringing together the people from just this block, that we’d be better able to understand, you know, what was going on between people. And when you get to know people you act different towards them, rather than them just being strangers.” This was a minority perspective, but, the brief glimpses of the role of social motivation reinforces the suggestion that the social, interactive, and open-ended elements of these processes could perhaps be strengthened to amplify the appeal to less involved members of the community.

## 4.2.2 Relationships

Each of these three cases features, at its core, some kind of communicative interaction. However, the participatory process initiates a different set of relationships in each of these venues, which typically include a narrower range of actors than I observed in my North American case studies. *Leith Decides!* is characterized by a widespread expansion in the public networks of both individuals and organizations, with all but one (97%) of members of the public that I spoke to describing new connections within the community as a primary outcome of their participation and a substantial minority (about 45%) linking this interaction to the creation of new projects or collaborative relationships. In contrast to the dense network of relationships among members of the public, *Leith Decides* builds only limited new relationships between government and members of the public or public organizations.

Tower Hamlets, on the other hand, demonstrates truncated network-building. The ward forums create space for some cross-cutting connections, but participation and key actors never reached a critical mass necessary to be more than incidental/anecdotal. Looking back to the “non-PB” *You Decide* process, the structure of the process limited community directed expression of preferences and iterated exchanges that could foster the development of new connections. Across both processes, Tower Hamlets demonstrated erratic initiation of new relationships, either between members of the public or between public and government. It is, however, possible to see points where changes in implementation could have fostered more robust interactions. The following sections explore the structure of relationships developed among members of the public and between members of the public and government officials across the three cases.

### **Public-Public (Horizontal)**

In *Leith*, 97% of all interviewees offered unprompted descriptions of interactions between members of the public and/or community organizations. These accounts were offered nearly universally within the context of the one-day community voting event, and were confirmed by my own observations at the event. This voting event takes the flavor of a community festival. All the organizations with projects on the ballot produce a poster and table display advertising their project, often with eye

catching features like food, costumes or other props. For two to three hours, anyone who lives, works, or volunteers in Leith is able to come in, register, collect a voting sheet, and spends long as they like wandering the hall, talking to people and learning about the projects. It's a loud, energetic event, with a positive atmosphere that multiple people recounted to me was able to overcome their initial resistance to giving up part of a weekend. As one organization representative described it to me, "I was in a whole bit of a stinker of a mood, working on a Saturday, so it was actually quite invigorating, coming into a community building, watching the people find out what's the project as well, so it was really good from that angle." The playful community atmosphere pervades the event.

This setting, combined with the design of the voting sheet that requires vote on every project, encourages an outgoing, exploratory mode of interaction at the events, echoed across the accounts of all participants I spoke with, and amply demonstrated during my observations on the day:

[What is] The best part? Well, talking to people. Trying to meet new people, trying to make some connections, some, know some people that could help our organisation or other organisations. It's basically good to create like contact networks with other organisations to make the community stronger. (Voter)

I met an awful lot of people. Yes. You know. Even just the people who are entrants into that, on the day, it's really, quite exhilarating as well, you know, because you do get to talk to people who— I would never see them in other aspects of...stuff. (Resident and organization member)

"For me, it's not necessarily about the funding element, as it is getting to meet other organizations in the area, and just people from Leith, building connections there." (Organization member)

When asked why they participate in Leith Decides! as a funding process or why they would return over multiple years, the ability to build new or stronger relationships with others in the community was consistently offered up as a key justification.

The interactions initiated within the space of Leith Decides! are not simply superficial exchanges. In many cases, they enable real opportunities for sustained relationships into the future, often forming the basis new collaborations or projects. For example, a resident and coordinator of a youth organization directly links their participation in Leith Decides! to their development of a new program:

“To be honest we wouldn’t have a youth drama group, which is what we’re applying for funding for, if it wasn’t for the fact we were at *£eith Decides!*, went through the process last year, and the manager from this community centre came up to me and said, ah, I see you’re a group that does youth drama, we don’t have any at our community centre, how about we work together?” (Resident and organization coordinator)

Interviewees provide similar accounts of new collaboration emerging out of relationships initiated at *£eith Decides!* in 45% of in-depth interviews. This PB process fills a niche that is described as unique by the majority of people involved, and effectively acts as a catalyst for new, substantive relationships among members of the public and community groups.

In Tower Hamlets, the outcome for public relationships is much less decisive, in both cases. In the Ward Forums, which I had the opportunity to observe, forums in different wards had dramatically different levels of interaction among members of the public who attended, with some meetings characterized by open conversation and exchange between people who would not typically be interacting, while others involved little to no open discussion. Nearly all interviewees do report interaction among members of the public at meetings (95%), but this interaction is typically more constrained, with fewer numbers of people involved (many meetings included only a handful of public participants). While the breadth of these relationships is limited by the marginal levels of participation, the open agenda and community focus of the meetings means that where interaction occurs it resembles in small scale the kind of networking seen in the more fully developed US PB processes. For example, a member of the public from one ward forum that did bring in around eight members of the public describes experiences of interaction across difference:

I’ve spoken to people who live in my ward, that, um, I wouldn’t have met on a daily basis because they’re from a different walk of life. Um, I mean, ok, I’ve met people, I’ve met someone who works at KFC, who I’ve never ever thought I’d meet. I’ve met someone who’s um, software developer, which was a cool thing. Someone who does graffiti as a living...it’s just different. (Participant)

Such experiences are fragmented and inconsistent in a process that was imperfectly implemented and failed to effectively establish new incentives to draw people in at large, but among those people who made it to meetings, new interactions were possible. Even one active resident who was generally appalled at the council’s handling of the process as a whole (in terms of failure to implement consistently and effectively) identified the open meeting space as an effective source of new connections to

others in the community: “I don’t think it’s been actually that successful at the moment...[the best part] has been the links I’ve made with other parts of the community, on a personal level, that’s that. But as far as the forum goes, it was an absolute waste of time last time.” The amount of money, low participation, and lack of council communication and follow-through was disappointing, but within the meeting space or within community champions, in wards that were able to achieve some minimal participation, good interactions among members of the public were still had.

The Tower Hamlets You Decide! events, despite efforts to ensure at least some period of facilitated discussion between members of the public, was described to me as similarly erratic in its effectiveness at establishing interaction between strangers. As one coordinator explained to me, she worked hard, at the events she attended, to split up groups that came together and encourage people to sit with others at discussion tables. Nevertheless, the coordinator felt it was an uphill struggle, that other council staff as well as attendees pushed to minimize deliberative exchange and open discussion in exchange for voting. Similarly, when the main coordinators looked back on the event they reflected that public discussion and exchange was minimized perhaps more than it should have been, even more than the original design had promised. In the words of one of the coordinators writing about the process in the immediate aftermath, “In reality the deliberation was always the aspect of the event which got squeezed and in at least three of the events members of staff urged the event organisers to cut short the deliberation and move straight onto the voting.”

This sense that open discussion was secondary in the events was confirmed by those members of public that attended the You Decide events who I interviewed during my later fieldwork. Several of them did not even recall any component of public interaction, remembering only the presentations by council departments and voting procedure.

Nevertheless, both organizers provided accounts of occasional meaningful interaction, particularly in those cases where members of different communities (e.g. different mosques or community centers) found themselves at a voting event making common cause or exchanging commitments to support each others’ budget priorities. No relationships that may have come into being in a single event appear to

have persisted over time (at least not as reported to me in interviews).<sup>14</sup>

### **Public-Government (Vertical)**

While every process included at least some level of interaction among members of the public, processes in neither Leith nor Tower Hamlets successfully established widespread robust relationships between government officials (elected or employed) and members of the public. In all cases, a few individuals identified substantive interactions with government outside the limited contact with council coordinators at the event, but these interactions were usually the product of idiosyncratic motivations of particular participants who pursued relationships in spite of the structure of the process, rather than because of it.

One of the primary strengths of Leith Decides!, its strong community focus, comes at the cost of identification and exchange with the council or neighbourhood partnership. It is understood by members of the public and, for the most part, participating organizations, as a community event rather than a government event. While volunteers from the council, at the event, wear identifying tabards and registration and voting materials are clearly branded with the partnership logo and name, the fact that organizations are the ones bidding for money from community members overrides any strong identification with the neighborhood partnership. At no point during the event do voters need to interact with partnership staff or councillors beyond filling in a registration form.

For applicant organizations in Leith, the level of interaction is somewhat increased. Applicants do typically develop a strong relationship with the partnership officer who is responsible for coordinating Leith Decides! overall. She checks their application materials, shares information about the event, and ensures that the process runs smoothly. Especially as the process is repeated over many years, these connections between organizations and the partnership development officer do become reliable points of contact. However, organizations have no need, as a result of Leith Decides! to communicate

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<sup>14</sup>The You Decide! process generally does not appear to have left much of a durable legacy in the community. While council staff clearly carried some lessons learned forward into the design of the ward forums, as far as I could see in the community the You Decide meetings had faded into a blurred background of skepticism about the effectiveness and openness of the Local Area Partnerships and had no lasting effect of public perceptions of the openness or accessibility of government.

with any other council departments or officers and government interactions remain limited to this one highly central point of contact.

Steering group members (the small group of community members who help to oversee and implement the process) are the biggest exception to this overall rule of minimal government interaction. The steering group meets at multiple stages during the application and voting process, assisting with the count and working more closely with the neighbourhood partnership to implement a fair process. Steering group members, as members of community councils or key organizations, typically have more experience of interaction and familiarity with the partnership and the council than the general public. Even with this stronger baseline they do describe how serving on the steering group has improved their relationships with “a lot of the council people”.

Tower Hamlets Ward Forums, in contrast, were designed to develop collaborative relationships between community champion coordinators (members of the public) and council staff, with additional public-led interactions at forum meetings. In practice, the lack of good publicity and credible incentives to participate on both sides meant that there was inadequate participation by both members of the public and officials from any council departments other than the localisation team (who coordinated the process) to foster widespread communicative relationships. Elected councillors did attend some of the forums, especially in the first round of meetings, but not all. One or two council officers from the localisation team attended (and often facilitated) the forum meetings, and worked to answer questions and take down comments to the best of their ability at the meetings. These interactions, unfortunately, did not extend to the periods between meetings. A general lack of communication and responsiveness from council staff was in fact one of the biggest shared complaints among the community champions who I interviewed, with all champions highlighting it as a problem.<sup>15</sup>

At the end of the day, for community champions at least, these limited relationships that extended over several months did strengthen their feeling of having potential points of contact in government. As one community champion described the experience, “at the end of the day, it’s about, uh, new networks or connections that I now have that I didn’t have before... So, if I, yeah, if I continue to be

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<sup>15</sup>It’s worth noting that individual impressions of the staff were good, but that the office did not seem to have the resources on hand to manage the communication, decisions, and projects of 17 different wards.

pissed off about this crossing, although my councillor has promised me one will go in[...] I now have his contact details. I have contact details of other council officers that I can harass.” Participation as a coordinator creates a potential “channel” (to use another coordinator’s term) that a motivated individual may be able to activate in the future. Lest the significance of these connections be overstated, note that this is a very weak tie, in contrast to the more iterated mutual exchange that was described in Vallejo and New York. These connections from the ward forums involve more of an awareness of the possibility of contact, rather than personal familiarity.

The Tower Hamlets You Decide! process, in contrast, created venues that allowed for mass communication between officials from a wide range of council departments and members of the public, with council officers presenting and members of the public voting. These meetings did not, however, provide many opportunities for unstructured back and forth interaction between public and council officers. Department staff, in fact, were discouraged from directly interacting with members of the public, as that was seen as inappropriate lobbying or co-opting the public discussion period. Without any real public role in agenda setting or implementation beyond departments ordinary consultation and feedback procedures, there were no broader opportunities to develop real interaction between individuals on either side of the public/government divide.

### **4.2.3 Information**

Whether in the rich community networks built in Eith Decides! or in the more fragmented and *ad hoc* connections made in Tower Hamlets, diverse information flows between members of the public, government officials, coordinators, and organization leaders. In some cases, this information could be accessed outside the PB processes, but in many cases the structure of the PB event and of the (few) relationships that are established allows for the exchange of information that would be otherwise difficult to learn.

This information comes in several broad types, which are distributed more or less effectively in each of the cases discussed here.

**Table 4.6:** Types of information

Subject	Topic	Learner		Process		
		Public	Gov.	Leith	WF	YD
Community	Activities/Interests	✓		✓	✓	
	Needs/Priorities	✓	✓		✓	
	Collective Capacity	✓		✓	✓	
Government	Processes/budgets	✓			(✓)	✓
	Resources/opportunities	✓			(✓)	

*Leith = Leith Decides!; WF = Ward Forums; YD = You Decide*

### **Leith: Learning Community**

Leith Decides! has become a hub for information about the community. The public relationships established within the event play a key role in the distribution of information about resources and community capacity. In the simplest sense, these interactions allow people to learn more, in a practical sense, about what groups are active in their community:

One, it brings the whole community together, and encourages people to come out and see what's happening in their community. Some might come just to see one organisation, but once they get there, they can't not see everything that's happening. (Organization, steering group member)

I met a lot of people, to be honest. Quite a few folks that I didn't know, like they guys from the Leith festival, and uh, some of the arts and craft projects here in Leith, I met the guys that run the diving courses and the SS Scotland, and it's been very- I actually voted for more projects than I intended to because I never fully know the extent of their projects, then when you see their presentations and stuff you see that there's good in that. (Voter)

As discussed above, the simple fact of meeting and learning about the work of a wide range of different groups provides a kind of broad information gathering that can be quite costly in private or apart from the event.

This learning about the work of others in the community, even those whose work is not directly relevant to one's own interest, has had an important secondary impact, that of adjusting the assumptions that members of the public and organizations may have about the collective social capacity in the community. As one participant explained to me,

You can get sort of quite ground down by everything. You know, people just making masses of money and nobody really cares, and then you come into something like this,

and you think, oh, there's quite a lot of people who do care, and that's really reassuring, you know. It's not just black and white at every, not every, people are making money and ignoring young people, for instance. (Resident)

Learning about the shared capacity for community work and others' willingness to work and risk for common benefit is crucial for sustaining collective capacities to mobilize and take action.

Finally, while *£eith Decides* does not develop a well distributed network of relationships with government officials, through narrowly-defined relationships with the programme coordinator at the Neighbourhood Partnership, organizations do become better embedded in information networks connecting organizations to information and opportunities through the council and neighbourhood partnership. Members of the public involved in *£eith decides*, however, do not report meaningful learning about opportunities or procedures of formal governance, and existing mechanisms for direct political influence on council decisions remain opaque.

### **Ward Forums: Learning Community and Government**

In Tower Hamlets, in keeping with the uneven and poorly resourced process, we see intermittent and incomplete exchange of information. In the Ward Forums any observed information impacts are limited by the small numbers of individuals attending and the capacity of the council officers working with the forums, and accounts of learning with the forums should be read here more as a demonstration of potential capacity for information exchange rather than an argument for larger or transformative effects. Across the variable experiences of forums in the different wards, participants did in fact describe numerous kinds of learning, both from each other and about council operations. In my observation of meetings, I also observed multiple instances of participants and council staff explaining the practical opportunities or limitations of specific requests or issues raised by participants.

Members of the public learned from the other participants, both discovering that their individual grievances were in fact shared by others and learning about challenges faced by others in their neighborhood that they may never have thought of:

I think, from the second meeting, we went away meeting another couple who have the same problem as us...And we've been reporting it, but they felt like because they were the only, um, um, couple that were complaining in that area that they would be targeted

and picked on. And we kind of reassured them, and it was nice to get to know people who had similar problems. (public participant)

Along with the experience of learning that “we’re all different, but we all usually have the same sort of opinions” (as a community champion said), sometimes this learning takes the form even more of simply learning about the diverse concerns and commitments of others in the community. As another champion recounted, “You don’t realize how much they fight about [their own areas of concern], until you are there and they are telling you so, they’re fighting their corner.” This kind of learning could only occur where people did in fact show up to meetings, and so was not widespread, but illustrates how the open agenda setting and discussion format allow people to share information on what what most important to them, and about which others may not have had an awareness.

Similarly, in the occasional instances where Ward Forum participants and champions came together with council staff (largely when champions were strongly motivated to fulfill what they understood to be a proactive role), glimmers of learning by and about government can be seen. Some of this learning is practical, as in this resident’s description of what they learned about the opportunities and limitations of the council budget:

I liked[...]the fact that we could see the different areas. Like, council workers, they went back and they just went through, budgeted, and showed different examples of where the money was going and how it would be spent. They gave you an idea, a mental idea, of what we could be doing. (Resident)

Other learning (rather less commonly) involved more nebulous learning like that described by this community champion coordinator, about what can actually take to make a difference:

I’ve learned you have to get involved and you have to be vocal about the issues, and you have to be practically taking those vocals to where it matters, i.e. the councillors, the council, mayor, and police– wherever you need to go, you need to go and be vocal about it.[...] It needs protest, and to protest you need to gather momentum, and that momentum needs to come from the community itself, it’s not going to come from the council official, because they’re only there to do a specific role, they’ll do their role, and that’s the remit within their role that they fulfill. (Community champion coordinator)

These experiences are not universal, but they do represent the consequences for ordinary people who came out and worked to set the agenda for how council funds would be spent locally.

These examples are provided more as an illustration of the potential for reciprocal exchange built into the design, but poorly implemented. Many interviewees commented, rather, on the lack of new information, in particular the broader learning about real procedures and opportunities for shaping local outcomes, gained as a result of the process. This lack is particularly striking, given the extensive additional emphasis on training of community organizers in this process. The champions I spoke with all described their training period (and photo-opp dinner with the Mayor), but highlighted the focus of the training on the detailed procedure for meeting agendas rather than the broader community organizing skills with which the voluntary positions were advertised.<sup>16</sup>

### **You Decide!: Learning preferences and policies**

Finally, the earlier You Decide process allowed for certain, defined information exchange to take place, largely the exchange of information about services and public priorities within the bounds of council preferences. The kind of spontaneous, undirected exchange that allows for learning of unexpected information was less available on either side of the process. Members of the public, through presentations by council departments, gain information about existing programs and costs. The department directors had to be able to explain costs and procedures when questioned about projects on the ballot. For example, when questioned on the cost of a tree planting project, the director

...talked about the fact they'd replace [the trees], look after them. It wasn't "don't be an idiot!", it was why it would cost this much, this is what you'd get for your money.[...] there's an educational element of that. And we spent two hours of each of our events educating the public. You could argue that we tricked them all to come so we could give them all a two hour lecture about council budgets, if you were feeling uncharitable."

While there were opportunities for detailed learning like this, the information shared is limited to the project areas in which departments have chosen to bid for funds, rather than filling focusing on areas of greatest impact for public.

Government, on the other hand, gains better information about public priorities. The primary kind of information gained by government concerns the preferences of the public (or at least those who

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<sup>16</sup>As an aside, it was interesting to me that, despite the strong focus on the community champion training days, which by all accounts were focused largely on procedural aspects, that the actual meetings were as widely varied in practice as the were.

attend), within the bounds of the proposed projects. As one of the council staff described, department staff adjust their perceptions of public priorities as a result of the You Decide! votes:

And it also gave people a chance to have their say over the budget, and I think it maybe, it wasn't like this radical change in the way the council did budgets, but it made them think again, it made members think again, well, actually people are voting here for education projects, not for police. Or youth service seem to be really important to the public, maybe we need to focus on them a bit more. The comments back seemed to be that this is the priorities, what does that mean, how do we adjust? (Council staff)

The second type of information about the public is an improved awareness of public capacity for productive engagement.<sup>17</sup> For example, staff could be surprised by the quality and willingness of engagement demonstrated by participants:

Sometimes it would be exactly what you'd expect, people just talking about their own area, and then sometimes it would be, you know, people would actually have a genuine conversation and a discussion, people would trade their votes and stuff...I think I went into it with quite low expectations, and so I was surprised all the way along how well it went and the success in terms of engaging a fairly, not apathetic community, but a fairly disengaged community. (Council staff)

While the You Decide! events were structured carefully to facilitate an exchange of information between public and government, the scope and relevance of this information was carefully contained. Without the development of direct interaction between public and government in these venues, the process did not form the basis for more robust relationships that could become sustained channels of information or mobilization outside the finite setting of the voting events.

### 4.3 Conclusion

The three cases of public engagement described in this chapter all include ordinary members of the public having real decision-making power over the spending of public money. Despite this basic commonality, the three display wide variation in design and implementation that has significant implications both for their valid definition as participatory budgeting projects and for the influence on the

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<sup>17</sup>This may not be *enough* to dramatically transform the culture of public relations in the council (and in fact, I heard from all sources that it wasn't), but it is at least an incremental shift in the baseline expectations of government actors that may make future public participation projects more reasonable or palatable. You Decide was cited in interviews with council staff as at least part of the motivation of the boroughs localization team to implement the ward forums, as a continued mode of PB.

democratic capacities of their communities. Design and implementation both matter. Only two out of three of these processes meet the basic institutional standards of participatory budgeting. Of these two, only one fully is implemented with adequate funding, support, and publicity.

£eith Decides!, the one well-implemented PB process in this chapter, effectively illustrates the importance of process design to the wider democratic potential of PB. £eith Decides! is a well-regarded and well-established process for community decision-making and community building, popular and effective enough to have been expanded in recent years. Despite its success on a range of measures and its universal acclaim as an effective strategy for community building, £eith Decides! does not really function as a tool for transformative democratization. As wholly community-driven as the projects are, the process falls short in two dimensions that limit its broader impact. First, constraining project ideas to organization proposals limits the incentive to participation or expression by unorganized members of the community (or those not already linked into existing organization structures). Second, reserving all design and implementation to organizations pre-empts the construction of the (more-or-less) collaborative relationships between public and government actors that could foster the exchange of information and development of richer, genuinely civic skills in the community. Putting organizations in the charge of design and implementation, in some ways, expands the scope and creativity of what can be done with public funds, but it is less effective at reinforcing political capacity in the community.

The Tower Hamlets Community Ward Forums, in contrast, highlight where design has promise, but is dependent on good implementation. The overall community perception of the forums was one of unrealized potentials. However, in those fragmented instances where the process started to live up to its design (largely in spite of the efforts of the organizers), the open invitation to develop concrete proposals catalyzed informative interaction between strangers and moments of capacity building that echoed the more broadly transformative experiences described in the US case studies in the last chapter. It is telling that those who actually attended forums with other participants in Tower Hamlets generally described more diverse types of civic learning than expressed by voters in the more vibrant and enthusiastically attended £eith Decides! process.

Finally, the well-resourced and well-regarded Tower Hamlets You Decide process highlights the

extent to which the unique package of institutional features that characterize participatory budgeting matters. This was a credible process allocating an extensive budget that nevertheless fell short of the institutional definition of PB. This process may have had value in its own right, as an inclusive way to identify priorities in a period of budget cuts, but failed to establish new relationships or patterns of interaction. Its shortcomings highlight the importance of both bottom-up agenda-setting (and the open discussion that should accompany it) and collaborative design processes for building new relationships and exchange between government and members of the public.

These three cases together powerfully illustrate that the crux of democratic potential for PB does not lie, solely in the act of public decision making. While control over resources and tangible projects does provide a powerful incentive for people to get involved, decision-making alone is not enough to set in motion the secondary effects that can, in fact, build a foundation for further democratic mobilization.

### **4.3.1 Expectations for Community Level Effects**

These heterogeneous processes provide an interesting setting for the testing of my prior expectations of broader community effects from PB. As I describe in Chapter 2, I expect community level effects to result from the secondary spillover effects on participants' relationships and the flow of information through them. Given the variable and truncated relationships established in the three processes explored in this chapter, I expect much more moderated to non-existent community level outcomes.

In Tower Hamlets, given the low density of secondary impacts from either process (PB or otherwise!), I do not expect to observe any community level effects, either in terms of wider collaborative networks, political speech, or voter behavior. In practice, identifying any clear effects in Tower Hamlets is obscured with the wider tumult in the local political community (with the various scandals wracking the Mayor's office).

In Leith, in contrast, I expect to see partial wider impacts on the community. Without strong linkages between government and public actors, I do not expect to see changes in strictly "political" activity such as voter turnout or collaboration with government. However, I do expect to see broader impacts

on community mobilization, both in terms of the level of collaboration reported among community organizations the prevalence of mobilizing speech in the public sphere.

The next chapter moves from these detailed qualitative evaluations of the cases to a more generalized empirical test of these wider impacts including comparison sites that do not implement PB. I will examine, in turn, surveys of community organizations, analysis of voter turnout before and after the introduction of PB processes, and a limited analysis of public sphere discourse in selected communities.

## Chapter 5

# Community Level Effects: Community Organizations

New York, Vallejo, Leith, and Tower Hamlets each introduced a participatory budgeting process, with unique features of design and implementation and widely ranging effects on participants and others directly involved in the process. These immediate impacts and the quality of decisions made in the budget process itself are important, but can tell us little about the wider impact of PB on the democratic qualities of larger community.

This chapter takes a step back from the intimate view of the local operation of PB processes and examines the relationship between the implementation of participatory budgeting institutions on community-level measures of political culture and democratic participation, returning to the more ambitious normative objectives referenced in Chapter 2. As I outline there, reforms like PB are generally justified with reference to normative democratic theory and common ideals of participation, inclusion, and informed, competent citizens. The hope is that such reforms will result in more active, connected, and civic-minded communities that can in turn support more resilient democratic institutions.

These next two chapters (5 and 6) explore the impact of participatory budgeting, at the community level, on three different measures of democratic culture and civic activity. In this chapter, I start

by introducing the comparative set up that will be used for all three analyses. The bulk of the chapter then explores the relationship between participatory budgeting processes and the structure of organizational life, examining variation in the types of community organizations and their collaborative relationships, using a unique organizational survey I conducted in five cities. The next chapter takes an even wider perspective, assessing the impact of PB on aggregate community measures of political discourse and voter behavior.

## 5.1 Comparative Method & Cases

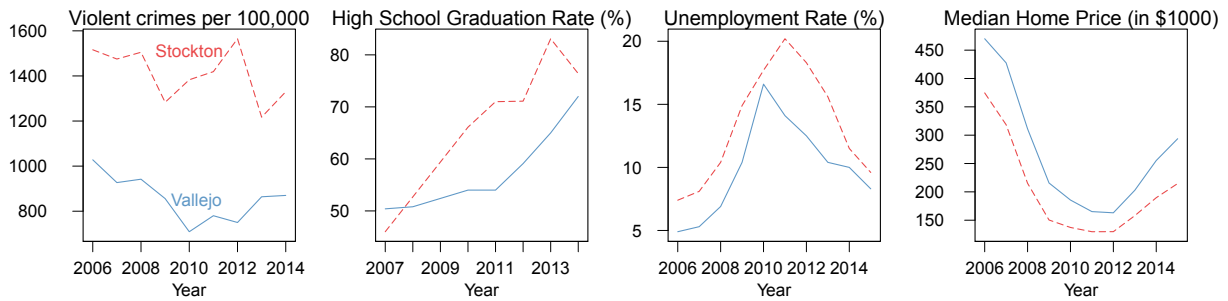
To better identify possible impacts of participatory budgeting on wider communities, it is necessary to look at both communities that implement participatory budgeting and communities that do not. Each of the following analyses is based on a comparative method in which I match the four geographies where PB has been implemented with similar non-PB communities in the same city or region.

In Vallejo, PB was implemented city-wide, while in New York, London, and Edinburgh, PB processes have been implemented at a smaller district or borough level. Operating at the appropriate geographic level, PB districts in New York, Leith, and Tower Hamlets are matched with the most similar districts, wards, and borough (respectively). Matching is conducted, within each city, via Mahalanobis Distance Matching (Nielson et al. Ho et al. 2011; ), using key measures of population demographics, electoral participation, and organizational density.<sup>1</sup> The final sample areas included 24 NYC council districts, 4 Edinburgh wards, and 3 London boroughs (one with PB, two nearest matching without). See the Appendix for further details of the data and methods used for matching.

In the case of Vallejo, I was unable to match within city, as PB was implemented citywide. Matching a single city at a city level is more difficult, as city-level traits may drive any observed differences. In the case of PB, one major city-level characteristic dominated local political life in recent years, since before PB was implemented: bankruptcy. The city of Stockton, the county seat of nearby San Joaquin County, shares many qualitative characteristics with Vallejo (and indeed, was the common response

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<sup>1</sup>NYC districts were, in fact, matched across three types of district: early adopters who implemented PB in either the first or second year were the initial “PB districts”, who were then matched with late adopters and non-PB implementing districts (as of the 4th year of PB NYC).



**Figure 5.1:** Time series summary statistics for Vallejo and Stockton. Data from the California Attorney General, NCES, California Dept of Education, California Labor Market Information Division, and Zillow.com.

to questions during fieldwork of “Which other city in the area would you consider to be most similar to Vallejo, a ‘sister city’ of sorts?”). Importantly, it also recently exited bankruptcy and shares similar concerns with Vallejo.

Inevitably, the cities do not have identical profiles, with unique economic, social, and geographic resources. Nevertheless, they demonstrate similar trajectories on key indicators, along with bankruptcy over the past decade. Figure 5.1 illustrates the trends in violent crime, high school graduation rates, unemployment rates, and house prices in recent years in each city. The broadly parallel trajectories provide further reassurance that any observed variation in these cases is not due to dramatically divergent local economic or political experiences.

## 5.2 Community Organizations, Collaboration, and PB

As a first step back from my immersive fieldwork, I designed and implemented a representative survey of community organizations in both PB and non-PB areas, seeking information about a) organizations’ level of familiarity and participation in PB (where applicable) and b) organizations’ collaborative interactions, both with other organizations and with government officials. The remainder of this chapter discusses the implementation and results of this survey. This analysis addresses three primary questions:

1. How broad is the reach of PB within the community?

2. How distinctive are regions that implement PB?
3. What, if any, effect does PB have on the collaborative relationships of organizations?

Community organizations matter for public mobilization and civic engagement, with the existing organizational structure providing a crucial resource for coordination and effective action among individuals. As I describe in Chapter Two, one of the important theorized mechanisms for PB's proposed impact on broader political mobilization is an increase in interaction within the community that allows for greater information sharing and collaborative action. This impact is likely conditional on the PB process having adequate reach to draw people and groups together. This survey analysis is intended to both shed light on the reach of PB in the community and provide comparative cases that can help clarify any impact of PB on the collaborative activities of organizations. I start by describing the survey methodology and then consider the results with respect to each of the above research questions in turn.

### 5.2.1 Survey and Data

For each of the matched sample areas, a sampling frame of nonprofit and community organizations was developed. Organizations were identified from national databases of nonprofit/charitable organizations, excluding private non-operating foundations and the equivalent, as well as local resource directories and other online resources.<sup>2</sup> After constructing the sampling frame, I drew a random sample, stratified by geography, drawing a larger sample in the US study areas in expectation of a lower response rate due to lower quality data from the IRS Exempt Organization database as compared with British charity registers. Each sampled organization was then searched online, to identify a current email address and identifiable contact person (executive director, president, or other named individual), if available. Organizations that could be positively identified as no longer in operation were excluded and replaced with a new draw from the population. Organizations for which a website with email and/or contact person simply could not be found were still included in the sample, as an ob-

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<sup>2</sup>To minimize bias in the results, I did not use lists of organizations that participated in PB processes, such as steering committee members in Vallejo, or applicants to the Ecith decides! process in Edinburgh when constructing the sampling frame.

jective of the methodology was to include the smaller, less professionalized, or less technically adept groups who may still be crucial to life in local communities.

A final sample of 1979 organizations was defined, and surveys delivered. This included 300 organizations in Vallejo and Stockton each, 600 organizations in New York City (200 early PB, 200 late PB, and 200 non-PB), 200 in Tower Hamlets and 100 each in the matching boroughs of Hackney and Newham, and 379 in Edinburgh. Edinburgh surveys were actually sent out to the entire population of organizations in the PB and non-PB wards, as the small ward size meant the total population was just under the target sample of 200 PB and 200 non-PB. Surveys were delivered by mail to all organizations, with additional contacts made by email to organizations for which I had obtained valid email addresses. Email contact included advance notice of survey arriving in the mail, and a follow-up email offering the option to complete the survey online. Organizations for which I had only a postal address only received a cover letter and survey with return envelope. US organizations received an additional round of follow up letters or emails if I had not received a survey from them within 6 weeks of initial contact.

### **Response Rates**

418 surveys were returned, for an effective response rate was 23% (once undelivered surveys are removed from calculation). This rate is within the normal range for organizational surveys (Baruch and Holtern, 2008; Hager et al., 2003) and higher than initially expected given the types of organizations being contacted (including, in the US case, all religious organizations to ever file with the IRS, whether or not they are still in operation). Table 5.1 summarizes the final response rates across the different study areas and types of contact.

A diverse range of organizations responded to the survey, with organizations ranging from small, volunteer-run neighborhood groups to large, professional organizations, and the full range in between. Along with a series of detailed questions about organizations' collaborative work, both with other groups in the community and with government agencies, the survey questionnaire covered basic organizational information including the size of the organization (in terms of staff/volunteers/members),

**Table 5.1:** Survey Response Rates across Study Areas and Survey Method

Study Area	N	Overall Rate	Postal Only	Email & Postal	Named Contact	Contact Email
Edinburgh no PB	70	0.38	0.13	0.43	0.45	0.48
Leith	65	0.34	0.19	0.38	0.36	0.36
Vallejo	59	0.22	0.05	0.30	0.27	0.30
London PB	41	0.20	0.00	0.22	0.24	0.24
NYC PB	71	0.19	0.06	0.29	0.27	0.30
Stockton	51	0.19	0.07	0.25	0.26	0.27
NYC no PB	33	0.19	0.07	0.27	0.22	0.29
London no PB	28	0.14	0.10	0.15	0.15	0.16
Total	418	0.23	0.07	0.28	0.27	0.29

the geographic scope or focus of the organization’s activities, their primary objective and most significant types of activities, and their general funding sources. Bureaucratic questions were kept broadly non-specific in an effort to make the questionnaire accessible and relevant to as many groups as possible, including those that may not maintain formal budgets.

Groups reported diverse objectives, with health, youth, and adult education groups as the modal categories in all regions (although the greatest number of organizations resisted classification, choosing “other”). The most common source of funding across groups is individual donations, but substantial minorities of groups also receive funding from foundations, local or national governments, or private corporations. Figures C.1 through C.3 in the Appendix provide detailed summaries of the distribution of organizations in the sample across many of these basic organizational “demographic” features.

## 5.2.2 PB in the Community

The first key dimension of information that this survey provides is information on how well-publicized the PB process was in each PB community, as well as informative summaries of both what types of organizations were likely to know about or to participate in PB and the types of participation reported by organizations. In this way, the survey offers a new, comparative opportunity to better contextualize the appeal and footprint of PB in the community.

First, how many groups in areas actually heard about or participated in the PB process? Overall, of

236 organizations in PB districts who returned the survey, 60% reported being aware that PB had been taking place. Of the 141 organizations who were aware of PB, 53% reported that they had participated or assisted, in any way, in the process. Table 5.2 summarizes the structure of awareness and participation across study areas, with all percentages reported with respect total survey responses from that area.

**Table 5.2:** PB Awareness and Participation Rates

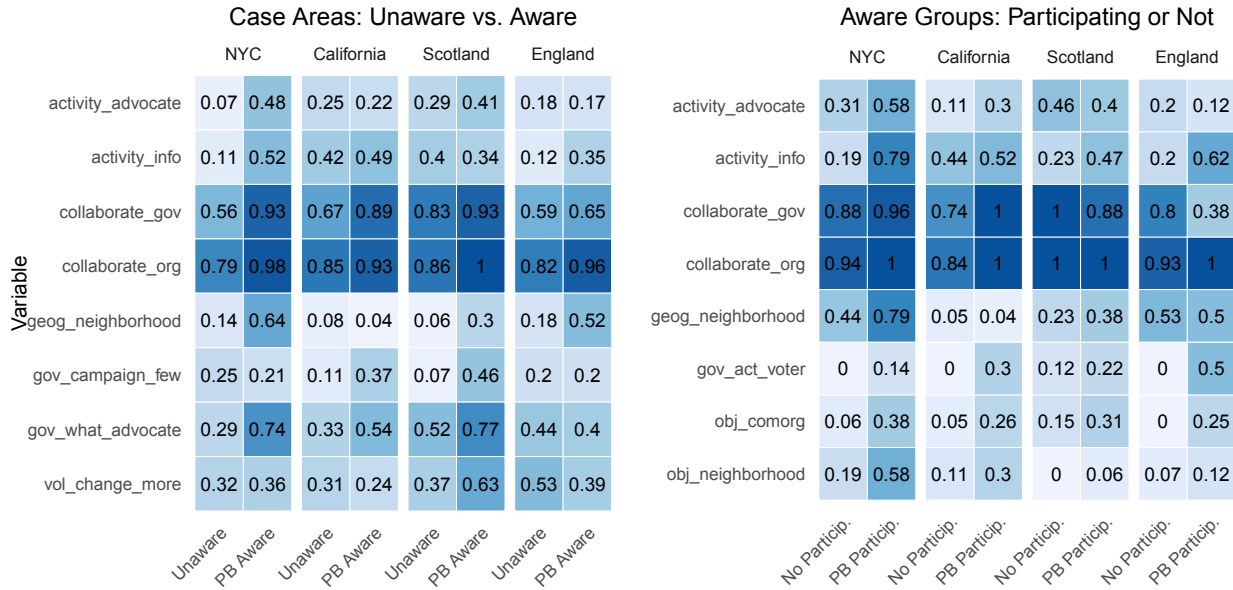
Study Area	N	% Aware	% Participating
Vallejo	59	78	46
New York City	71	59	34
Tower Hamlets	41	56	20
Leith	65	46	25

PB has the most penetration in Vallejo, with the highest proportions of organization being aware of and participating in PB. Leith has the lowest level of awareness, which seems surprising given the duration and popularity of *Leith Decides!* in the community. Leith, however, also saw an unusual number of organizations operating at a national level. When limited to only organizations whose operations target neighborhood or other smaller geographies, levels of awareness rise to 56% and levels of participation to 31%. While a higher proportion of organizations in Tower Hamlets reported being aware that the Ward Forums were going on, few groups chose to be involved in any way, reflecting the generally negative perception of the ward forums in the community.<sup>3</sup>

In these communities, what kinds of organizations actually hear about PB? Among those who hear about it, what characterizes the groups that opt to get involved? Figure 5.2 summarizes the results of each of those comparisons. The left panel reports the statistically significant differences between groups that were aware and those that were unaware of PB in the community. The right panel then compares, within only those organizations that reported being aware of PB, those that chose to get involved with PB in any way (even simply by encouraging members or clients to vote) and those that did not engage in the process in any way. Measures of statistical significance were calculated from data

<sup>3</sup>Indeed, when invited to provide an open-ended assessment of the impact of PB in the community, Tower Hamlets respondents were distinctive, with the majority volunteering that they had either no positive impact or even a negative impact or were a waste of time.

pooled across all communities.

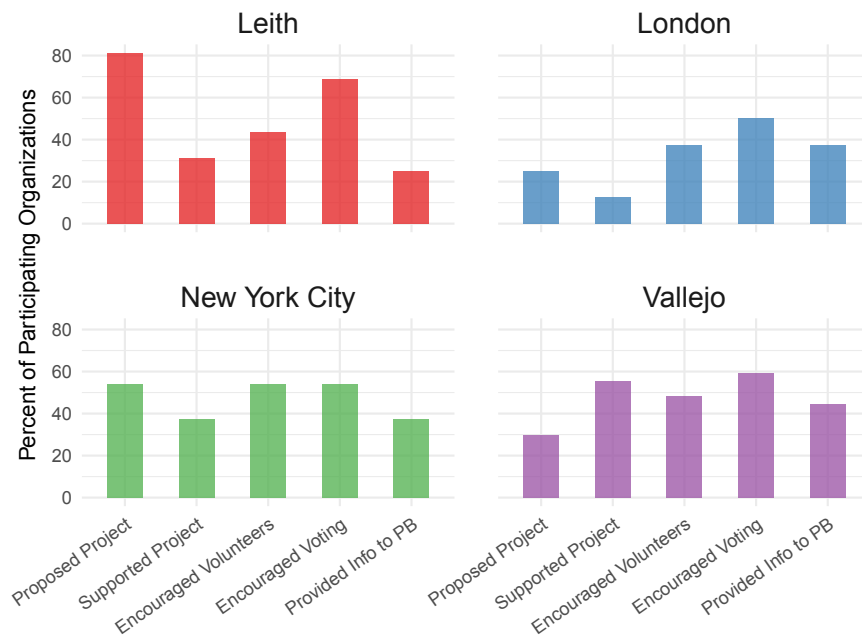


**Figure 5.2:** Variation between Aware/Unaware and Participating/Non-Participating Organizations. Left panel reports measures which demonstrated statistically significant differences between aware and unaware organizations. The right panel reports statistically significant differences between participating and non-participating but aware organizations. Numbers in cells are the proportion of organizations to report each characterization. Darker shading indicates a higher proportion of responses in that subset of the data.

There appear to be several systematic differences that distinguish organizations that hear about PB from those that do not. These differences present few surprises. Organizations that reported being aware of PB happening in their community were more likely to collaborate, both with other organizations and with government. They were also more likely to describe their activities as including advocacy (including advocating to government actors) or information distribution, and to have members involved in electoral campaigning. Reflecting the local focus and community-based outreach of most PB processes, aware organizations were also significantly more likely to describe their primary geographic focus as at the neighborhood level. Interestingly, hyper-local organizations that describe their scope as ‘block’ level (or their immediate streets) were not any more likely to know about PB, suggesting that outreach to the smallest scale of organization may be less effective.

Among organizations aware of PB, the key differences between participants and non-participants relate to the objectives and activities of the organizations. Organizations with complementary objectives of community organizing or neighborhood improvements are statistically more likely to partic-

ipate in PB, as are those who report their primary activities to be advocacy or informing the public about issues. Also interestingly, in all cases, we see that participating organizations are also substantially more likely to have been involved in registering voters for formal elections. Participatory budgeting activities are unlikely, in and of themselves, to be driving voter registration efforts, and it is likely that these responses, along with the higher rates of identification as community organizers, indicate that the organizations that choose to become involved in PB already value formal political mobilization.



**Figure 5.3:** Distributions of participation types across PB sites. Note that percentages may add up to greater than 100% as organizations were able to report multiple forms of participation.

Finally, this survey provides a breakdown of the kinds of participation reported by organizations. Modes of involvement in PB took many different forms among those organizations who chose to participate, often reflecting distinctive institutional features of the processes in each area. Figure 5.3 illustrates the distribution of possible types of participation among participating organizations. New York and Vallejo show similar distributions of participation types, except that New York organizations report higher levels of proposal of projects, whereas Vallejo organizations were more likely to support or campaign for specific projects. High levels of project proposal in Leith are to be expected, given the organization-centered project development, with lower levels of volunteer and information giving

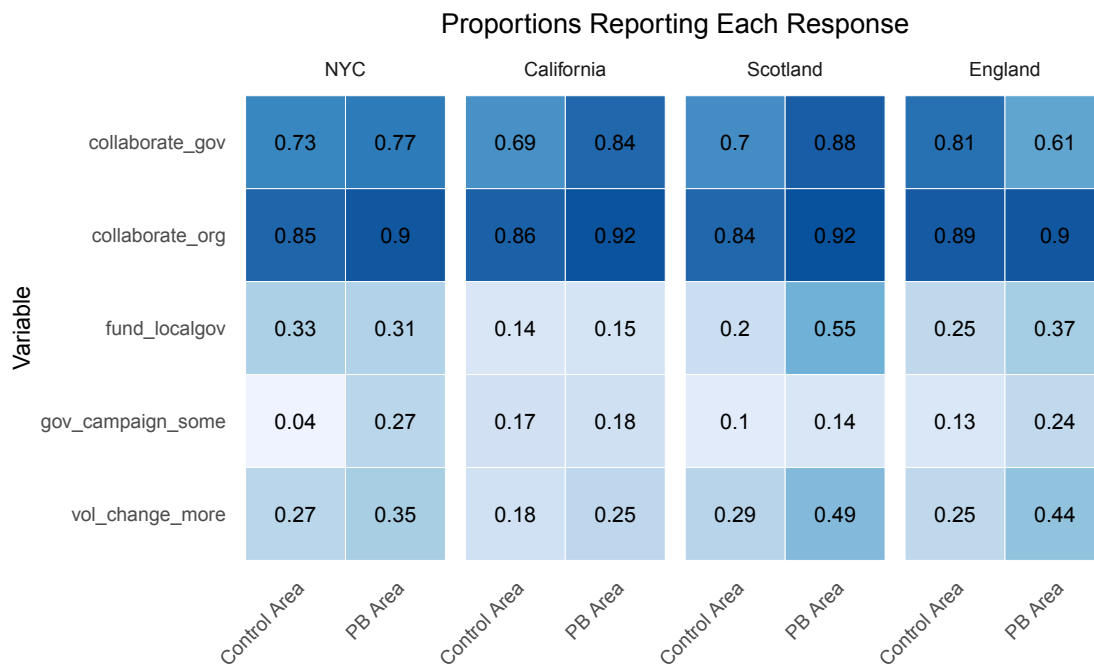
to be expected in a process without the extensive budget delegate meetings of the North American model. The underdeveloped case of Tower Hamlets in London sees generally lower levels of participation, with the most common mode of participation being encouraging people to attend forums to vote.

### 5.2.3 PB Ecosystems

Participatory budgeting, in all cases, had substantial reach into organizations in the communities where it was implemented. Before considering the impact of PB in these communities, it is helpful to take a step back to consider how distinctive the communities to implement PB themselves were. The matched comparison cases were selected to be as similar as possible along a number of demographic and geographic characteristics. Comparable data on organizational environments were not available for matching, which leaves the question, how unique are areas whose local authorities choose to implement PB? Are there systematic ways in which community activities or social resources differ between implementing and non-implementing areas? These concerns of systematic differences are closely tied to the concerns about unclear cause and effect (or endogeneity of outcomes) that often underlie skeptical responses to the vivid accounts of positive outcomes or transformative experiences narrated by participants and activists.

Examining the balance across all survey measures between respondents from PB and non-PB regions, some systematic variation is definitely evident, although organizations in PB and non-PB districts are more similar than organizations that do and do not choose to participate within PB districts (as reported above). Figure 5.4 illustrates the characteristics that vary most substantially between organizations in areas that implemented PB and those in areas that did not, as determined by t-tests and tests of differences of proportion. The biggest statistically significant difference between organizations in PB and non-PB areas overall were the proportion of organizations receiving funding from local government (basically none of whom received funding from their respective PB process), whether people involved in the organization were also involved in formal politics through participation in electoral campaigns, and in the proportion of organizations reporting that their numbers of active volunteers

had been increasing over the past two years. A slightly higher percentage of organizations (significant at the 90% confidence level) report collaborating with either government officials or other organizations and/or groups in PB communities. No other characteristics had large enough differences across all cases to be significant at the 95% confidence level. It's worth noting that between specific comparison areas larger differences may exist; no other variables varies significantly and systematically across all comparison groups.



**Figure 5.4:** Comparing Organizations in PB and non-PB Areas

Perhaps unsurprisingly, what these numbers point to is a potential existing tendency toward closer links between government and civil society in areas that opted to implement PB. The higher rates of government funding are independent of organizations receiving any additional funds from PB and the comparatively more common rates of political campaign activity overlapping with organization members are independent of organizations' awareness or involvement in PB. It's possible that these dynamics are a result of PB activities in the community, but a more plausible story, that is more consistent with the data, suggests that implementation of PB may be part of broader habits of government support and electoral activism. Again, remember that these statistics are comparing approximate like

to like. I do not claim, for example, that Tower Hamlets has an unusually strong tradition of government support for civil society in absolute terms. Rather, the general context for government support appears to be more robust in Tower Hamlets as compared to Hackney and Newham.

#### **5.2.4 PB Impact**

So, does the implementation of PB in fact impact the level of collaborative activity in the community? A single cross-section of surveys after the fact, no matter how generally similar the cases, provides an imperfect basis for inference. They can, however, provide organizations' own self-reported assessment of how their collaborative activities have changed over time. The survey questionnaire covered a variety of topics concerning organization collaboration. Most importantly for the analysis here, organizations were asked simply "Does your organization ever collaborate or work with other groups active in the community?" and "In the past year, have people from your organization interacted with government officials in the course of their work?" As a follow-up question with reference to both community collaboration and government interaction, groups were asked whether this collaboration/interaction was occurring more frequently, less frequently, or about as often "compared to two years ago". Figure 5.5 illustrates the distribution of responses across these overarching questions about groups' interactions. Clearly (and unsurprisingly), the vast majority of organizations report working with others in the community, while a smaller majority also report recent interaction with government agencies or officials.

These questions, asking for the organizations' own perceived direction of recent change, for both interaction with other community groups and with government, form the dependent variable for a series of multilevel regression models that separately estimate the effect of different operationalizations of the "treatment" of PB in a community. Along with random intercepts for each region, random slopes are included to allow the effect of PB to vary across regions, which is very important given the variation in expectations for the four PB processes discussed in the last two chapters. The analysis of changes in both types of collaboration will follow the same basic format: testing the impact of PB measured as:

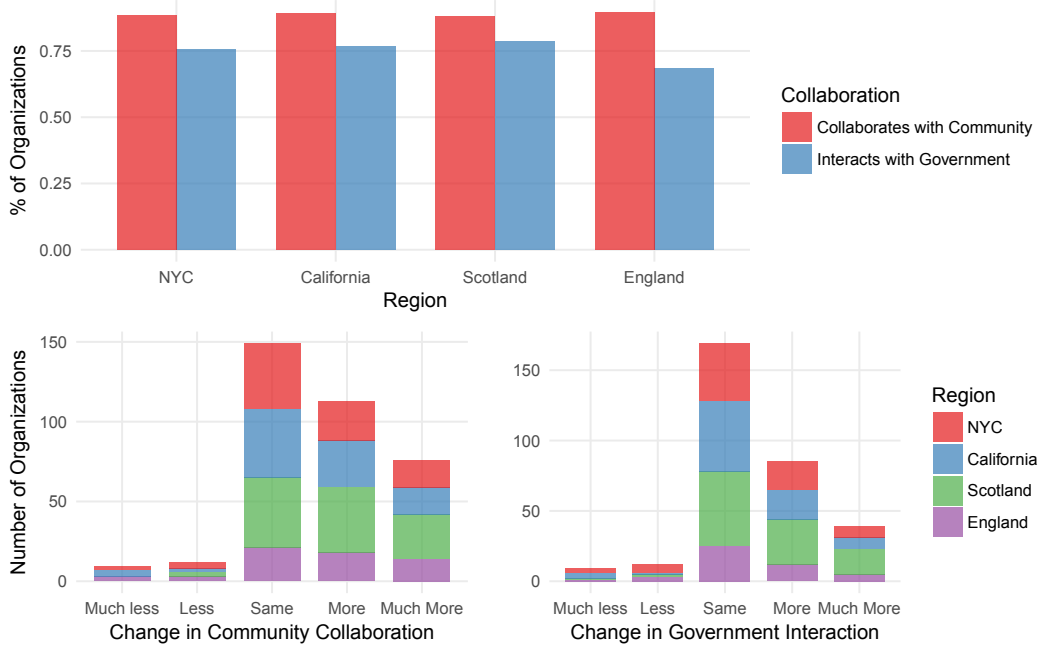


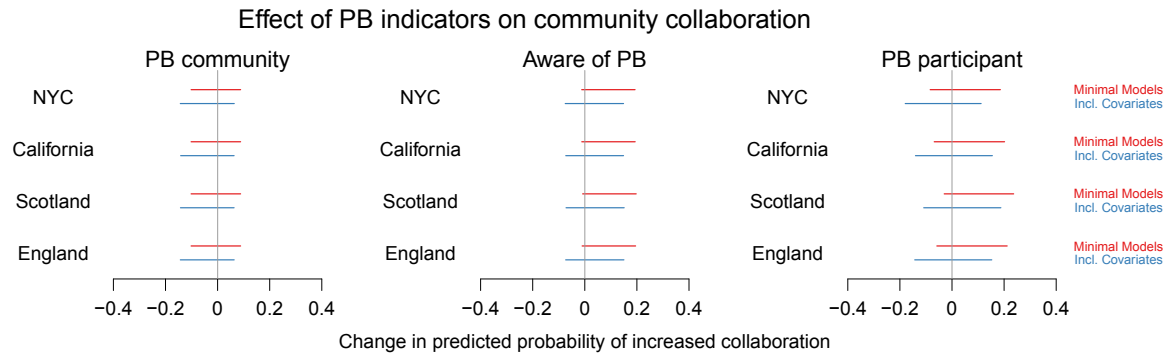
Figure 5.5: Summary of Collaboration Patterns

- a) PB exposure as implementation in an organization's district
- b) PB exposure as indicated by the organization being aware of PB's implementation
- c) PB exposure as indicated by the organization being involved in the process in any way.

The three models are estimated first in a simple bivariate form and second including covariates (those other organizational characteristics that are also strongly associated with the outcomes of changes in collaboration). These controls include whether organizations receive funding from local government, whether they recruit through outreach at other community events, whether they engage in advocacy or information-sharing activities, and whether they report objectives of either community organizing or neighborhood improvements. Full tables of regression results are included in the Appendix. The survey questionnaires asked for changes in collaborative activity along a five point scale, but responses for the models were dichotomized to more often or not.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Original survey measures asked respondents to select one of much less often (1), somewhat less often, about the same, somewhat more often, or much more often (5) for each type of collaboration. Dichotomous split for logistic regressions was between same (3) and somewhat more often (4). Note that organizations that do not report current or recent interactions (11% for community collaboration, 24% for government interaction) are also coded as "0" on the assumption that if they are not engaging in any relevant interaction, they could not be understood to have increased their level of interaction. Excluding these cases from analysis does not substantially alter the result. I also fit ordered probit models for the full five category measure, as well as simplified models including four and three categories (collapse the two "less often" options only and collapsing both "less often" and both "more often" options, respectively). Higher category models (preserving more information on magnitude of the change) did not provide either substantially different results or

## Collaboration between community organizations



**Figure 5.6:** Impact on collaboration with other community groups; generalized linear mixed model. Predicted change in the probability of reporting increased collaboration with other community groups, as an effect of each indicator of PB, in separate models, across all cases and controls, with 90% confidence intervals. Upper red lines in each region indicate predictions from basic bivariate models; lower blue lines indicate predictions from regressions including covariates.

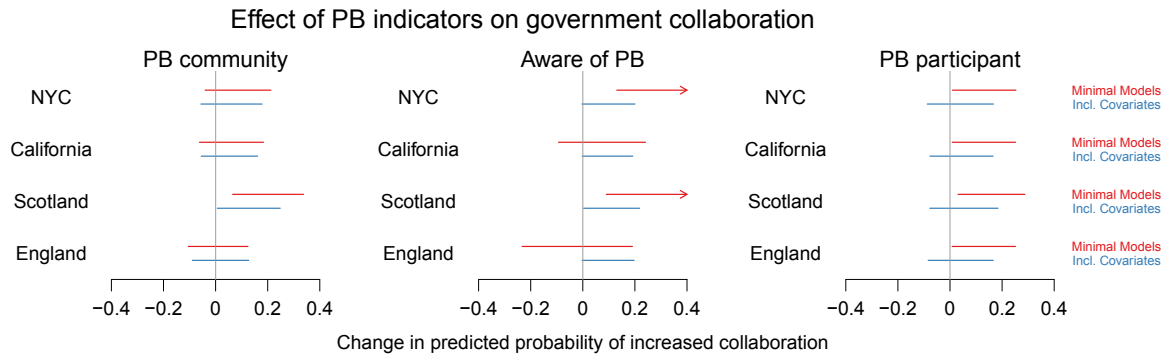
Figure 5.6 summarizes the regression results, with 90% confidence intervals for the impact of PB on changes in collaboration with community organizations. Results generally fail to confirm the expectation of greater community collaboration, while high uncertainty about the estimates suggests that more data may be necessary to make any strong inference about whether there is genuinely no effect, or simply that the current data do not provide a strong enough covariation. Comparing estimates with and without covariates does provide suggestive evidence that possible bivariate associations between trends in community collaboration and either awareness of or participation in PB may be largely attributable to common characteristics of organizations that come into contact with PB. Once covariates are included, estimates for each specification of PB ‘treatment’ appear relatively stable.<sup>5</sup>

## Collaboration between community groups and government

Figure 5.7 summarizes the results of multilevel regressions, with 90% confidence intervals, for the impact of PB on changes in frequency of collaborative interaction between community organizations

additional explanatory power. As a result, I stayed with the simpler logistic models for the final analysis.

<sup>5</sup>Putting aside issues of uncertainty, these patterns are not robust to specifications that use fixed effects and interactions to model the nested structure of the data (giving up power across groups, but allowing the group effects to be correlated with covariates. Figures and further discussion of these modelling choices are presented in the Appendix. In short, fixed effect models allow greater variability in effects across groups, but with even lower confidence in the results.



**Figure 5.7:** Impact on collaboration with other government officials; generalized linear mixed model. Predicted change in the probability of reporting increased collaboration with government actors, as an effect of each indicator of PB, in separate models, across all cases and controls, with 90% confidence intervals. Upper red lines in each region indicate predictions from basic bivariate models; lower blue lines indicate predictions from regressions including covariates. Mixed effect bivariate model results were not available for pb\_aware treatment, due to convergence difficulties; fixed effect results are presented for that single model here instead.

and government actors. These results demonstrate rather more variability from PB and from regional implementations, but low confidence in all estimates again mean that models do not demonstrate generally statistically significant impacts from PB, especially when relevant covariates are included in the models. However, the effect of PB awareness is marginally significant at the 90% level even controlling for other organizational characteristics, suggesting that awareness of PB is associated with a generally increasing trend in collaboration between government and community groups.

Also of interest is the significant effect of the simple implementation of PB in Edinburgh. Organizations in Leith, in contrast to organizations in similar wards in Edinburgh and controlling for organizational characteristics, generally report increasing levels of collaboration with government. There are few differences in governance structure or strategy between Leith Neighbourhood Partnership and other partnerships in Edinburgh other than the implementation of Leith Decides!. Surprisingly, of the well-regarded PB processes in this study, Leith Decides! demonstrated the least active interaction with government staff during the process; the apparently effect in Leith may, however, be due to the fact that Leith Decides! is explicitly centered around organizations as participating units, rather than individuals. While government is not involved in the design and implementation of the projects themselves, the neighbourhood partnership prioritizes outreach and communication with organizations as part

of the process. As a result, the process in Leith may in fact produce more pronounced government-organization interaction effects than elicited in the more individual-centered investigations during fieldwork.

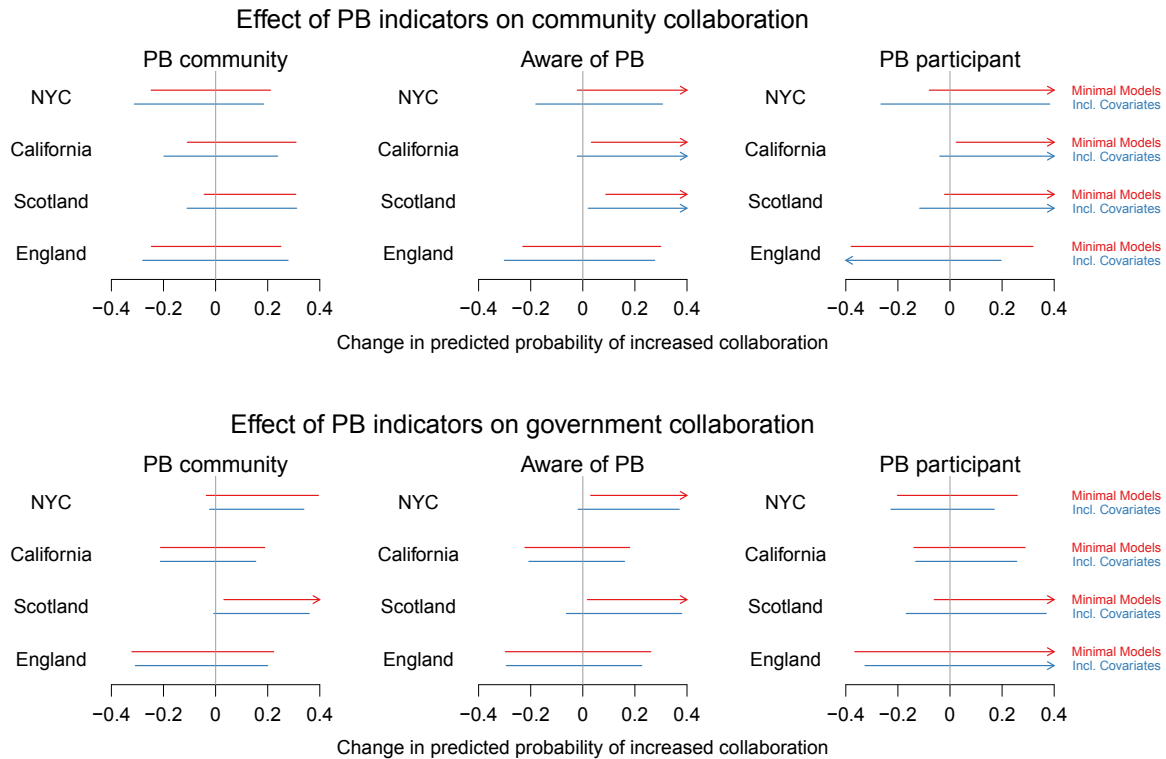
### **Variations**

The overall results presented in Figures 5.6 and 5.7 above generally point to a lack of clear, high level results from PB on organizations overall reported changes in the frequency of collaborative activity. As all models are, these models are simplifications of complex and heterogeneous social phenomena, and it is possible that assumptions of constant effects across organizations made above are themselves too strong. It is reasonable to consider that effects of PB may be confined to particular subsets of organizations or activities. In the following sections, I fit two further types of models. First, the highest collaborating organizations may demonstrate different apparent effects from PB, a result of a kind of ‘right-censoring’ of their effective change in collaboration. Second, organizations that engage in different kinds of collaborative activities may themselves demonstrate different effects from PB.

### **Excluding maximal collaborators**

One possible limitation of the basic models above is that the highest collaborating organizations may demonstrate no apparent effects from PB. An organization that was already operating at full collaborative capacity may say that their frequency of collaboration is unchanged. However, these reports of no change may not be evidence of the ineffectiveness of PB, but rather the practical ‘right-censoring’ of the collaborative change measures (if organizations had infinite capacity, perhaps they would be collaborating more after PB). This dynamic in the data could minimize the observable effect of PB in the models with the full dataset.

One method to explore whether this dynamic may be at play is to replicate the preceding analysis, excluding organization that report the maximum possible collaboration and state that their level of collaboration has not changed over the past two years. Figure 5.8 illustrates the results of this replication, excluding the highest static collaborators for community and government collaborations



**Figure 5.8:** Regression models excluding high collaborators, fixed effect rather than random effect models because of data limitations of subsamples. Regression tables available in Tables C.3 and C.4

separately.<sup>6</sup>

Fewer observations, with less variation, introduces additional convergence challenges for mixed effect models. Figure 5.8 thus presents fixed effect interaction models of the effect of each type of PB treatment, with and without covariates. Using only fixed effects to model the multilevel structure, and with fewer observations produces a substantial reduction in confidence in the estimates, but it worth noting the increase in the magnitude of all point estimates of the effects of PB. As they summarize fixed effect models, these results are best contextualized in comparison with Figures C.5 and C.6 in the appendix.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>For community collaboration, organization were excluded if they identified the maximum possible five collaborators and stated that their level of collaboration was unchanged, leaving 324 organizations (78%). For government collaboration, groups were excluded if they reported working with government the maximum possible “several times a week” and stated that their level of collaboration with government was changed, leaving 304 organizations (73%).

<sup>7</sup>For immediate reference here, the fixed effect models, across the full set of responses, also did not demonstrate any significant effects for collaboration among groups, and only showed effects on collaboration with government for PB implementation in Scotland, and for awareness only in New York and Scotland. Magnitudes of point estimates were higher the the mixed effect models, but substantially smaller than in the “censored” models here.

**Table 5.3:** Logistic regression models of the change in collaboration with other groups, excluding maximal collaborators compared with full sample.

	PB	Aware	Part	PB	Aware	Part
<i>Excluding Maximal Collaborators</i>						
PB area	0.42 (0.44)			0.09 (0.49)		
Aware		1.06* (0.47)			0.90 (0.51)	
Participant			1.34* (0.62)			1.08 (0.66)
Incl. Covariates				✓	✓	✓
<i>Including all respondents</i>						
PB area	0.20 (0.39)			-0.05 (0.41)		
Aware		0.58 (0.39)			0.40 (0.41)	
Participant			0.54 (0.45)			0.33 (0.47)
Incl. Covariates				✓	✓	✓

footnotesize\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

In the case of organizations' collaboration with other organizations, the groups who had 'room to grow' demonstrate much more pronounced effects from both awareness and participation in the PB process. Again, certainty in these estimates remains low, but the effect of PB awareness is large and significant, in both California and Scotland. To more clearly illustrate this changing effect within this subset of organizations, Table 5.3 directly compares the fixed effect estimates excluding the maximal participants to the estimates across the full sample.<sup>8</sup> Magnitudes of effects for participation in PB, for all three cases outside Tower Hamlets, are also much higher. These results suggest that PB may indeed have potential to have a greater impact for organizations who are not as densely connected with other groups or actors in the community. This is an important potential result, especially given normative priorities for PB as a strategy of empowerment for sections of the community that may be less powerful or influential in the established patterns of civic and political life.

With respect to the effect of PB on collaboration with government, omitting at-capacity organi-

<sup>8</sup>Full regression tables for both modes of collaboration can be found in the appendix.

**Table 5.4:** Logistic regression models of the change in collaboration with government, excluding maximal collaborators compared with full sample.

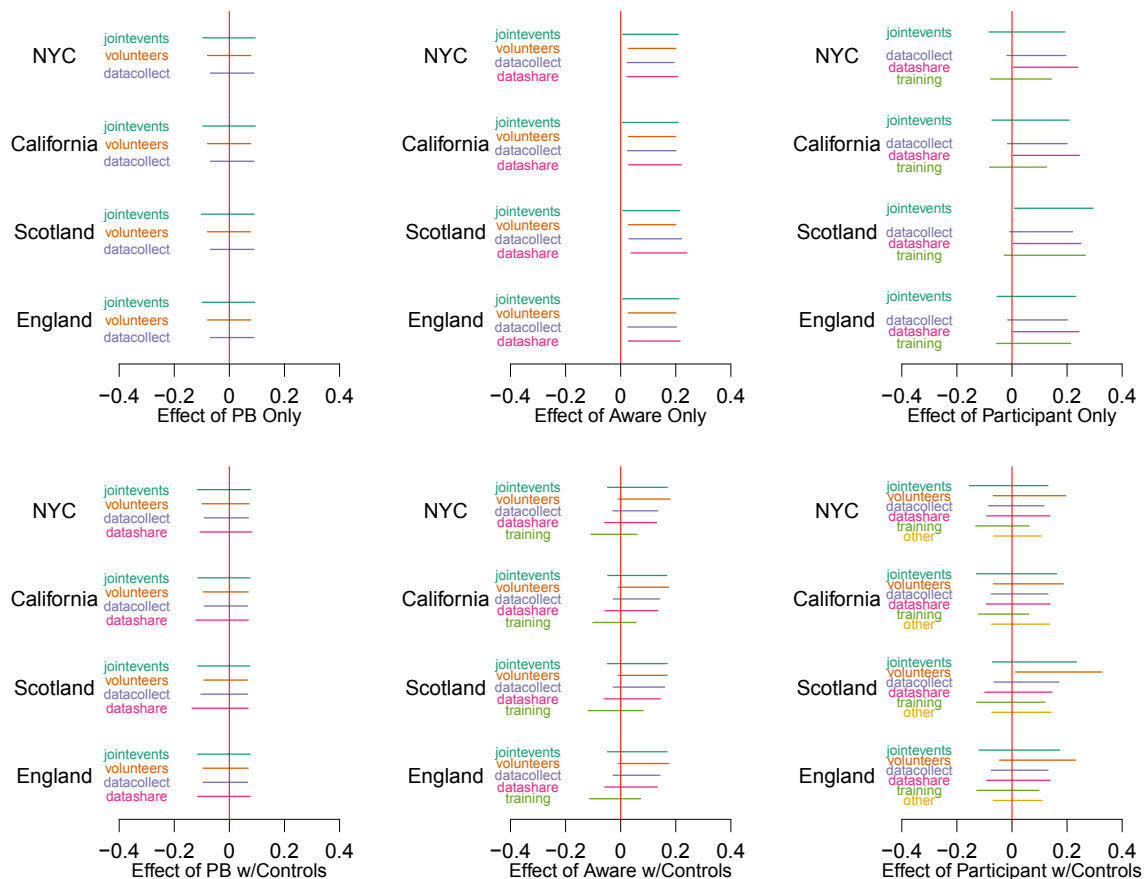
	PB	Aware	Part	PB	Aware	Part
<i>Excluding Maximal Collaborators</i>						
PB area	-0.04			-0.13		
	(0.47)			(0.49)		
Aware		-0.11			-0.11	
		(0.47)			(0.49)	
Participant			0.30			0.25
			(0.49)			(0.52)
Incl. Covariates				✓	✓	✓
<i>Including all respondents</i>						
PB area	0.27			0.13		
	(0.44)			(0.47)		
Aware		0.36			0.35	
		(0.44)			(0.46)	
Participant			0.91			0.76
			(0.47)			(0.50)
Incl. Covariates				✓	✓	✓

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ .

zations does not substantially alter model results when taking into account regional effects. The same pattern of stronger changes in collaboration in New York and Edinburgh persist, but especially when covariates are included the magnitude of the estimates does not change substantially. For reference, Table 5.4 summarizes the changes to the overall effect of each measure of PB; while the sign of effects of PB implementation and awareness flip, high uncertainty means no real inference can be made from those apparent changes. These effectively unchanged results suggest that government collaboration may be less of latent possibility distributed across groups. A group may simply be the type of group that is likely to work with government agencies or not, and while PB may be indicative of an underlying trend toward more communicative or collaborative relationships (which could explain the association with PB awareness) it may not, on its own, drive more interaction between *organizations* and government. These findings, of course, do not extend to the *individual* experiences of increased efficacy or capacities to engage with government that were recounted to me in my fieldwork.

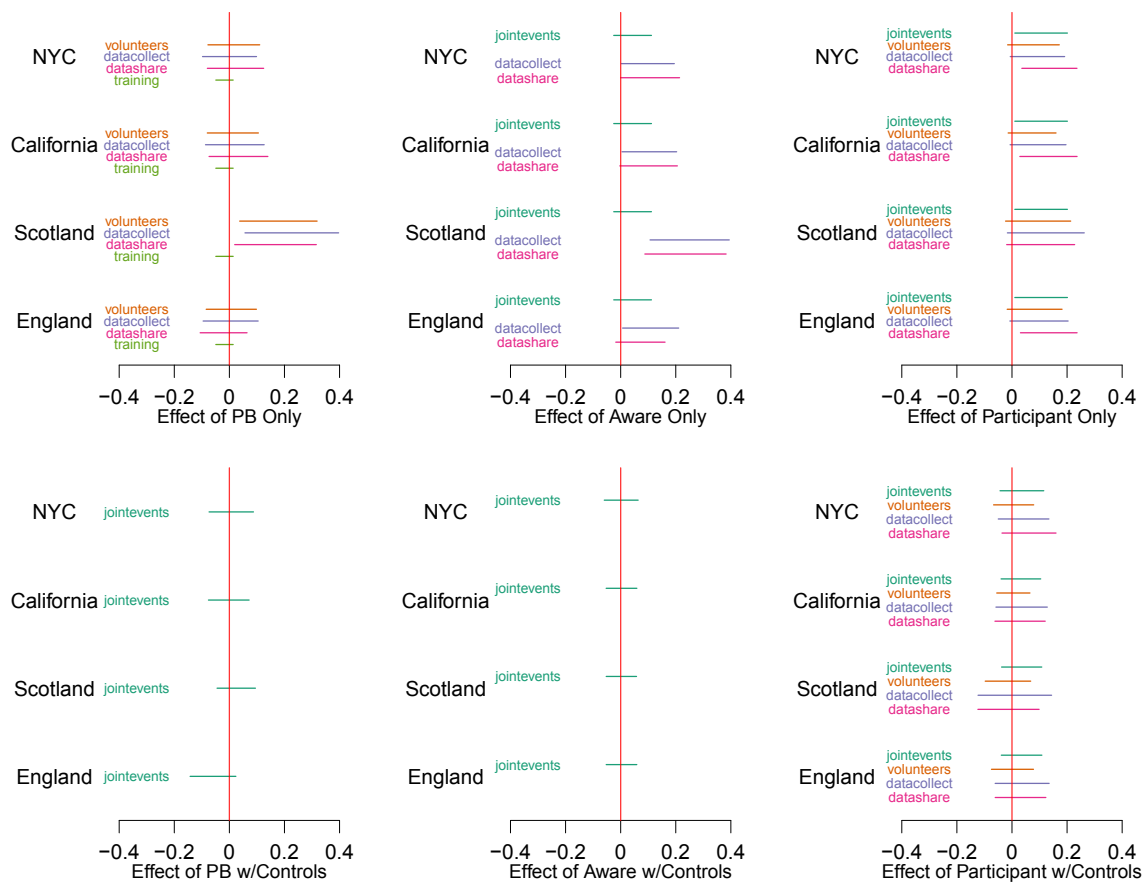
## Differential impacts on types of collaboration

It is also possible that PB may not impact all types of collaboration equally. The survey also asked organizations to identify the types of collaborative activity they engaged in with both government and other groups. Analysis across these small sub samples, and with so few groups, becomes computationally more challenging and extending this work with a Bayesian approach in future may prove more tractable. Nevertheless, for models with enough data to be fit with a conventional GLMM approach shows likely heterogeneity of effects for organizations engaged in different types of collaborative activity. Figures 5.9 and 5.10 illustrate the results of models considering the effect of PB on the frequency of collaboration across different with types of activities. Survey respondents were not explicitly asked



**Figure 5.9:** Change in predicted probability of reporting each type of collaborative activity with other community groups, as an effect of each indicator of PB. Estimates from multilevel logistic models with non-converging types in each PB indicator omitted, with 90% confidence intervals.

about their changing level of collaboration for each specific activity type. Organizations that indicated that they collaborated with other groups or with government were, however, asked to identify, in general, which types of collaborative activities they engaged in. The dependent variables for the following models are thus constructed from the interaction of the organization's reported change in collaboration with the indicators of whether they engaged in each activity. This analysis thus assumes that if an organization increased its frequency of collaboration, it increased the frequency of each type of collaborative activity.



**Figure 5.10:** Change in predicted probability of reporting each type of collaborative activity with government, as an effect of each indicator of PB. Estimates from multilevel logistic models with non-converging types in each PB indicator omitted, with 90% confidence intervals.

In both Figures 5.9 and 5.10, the separate lines clustered by region represent estimates for the effect of PB on the probability of reporting increased collaboration for that type of activity. Again, relatively

high uncertainty in the estimates limits inference from these results, but it is worth noting the higher level of variation in effects on collaboration within community groups across types of collaborative activity. In particular, the effect of PB participation seems to be strongest when it comes to organizations sharing or helping each other to recruit volunteers (particularly in Edinburgh). This is a striking observation in the context of the accounts to emerge from my qualitative fieldwork. Connecting volunteers across organizations demonstrates a particularly strong effect of increasing the interpersonal networks of organization and civil society actors, and is one of the stronger findings from my fieldwork, especially in Leith. This is one case where the quantitative survey results appear to lend support to the qualitative accounts.

Again, relaxing assumptions of constant effects has less of an impact in terms of government collaboration. Model results here reflect less heterogeneity across types of collaboration, and the general structure of results again echoes the basic model presented in Figure 5.7. Assumptions of constant effects across collaboration with government seem more well founded than similar assumptions about collaboration among community groups.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Does participatory budgeting impact the collaborative activities of community organizations? These survey results alone do not point to a strong effect from PB, indicating instead a need for more data and, better, a systematic pre- and post-test design that can generate more reliable indicators of changes in collaboration. While confidence in estimates is too low to make any wider inference about the results, the association between PB indicators and change in collaboration frequency, especially for collaboration with government, tend to be positive. Additional better targeted, research in this area would be helpful to clarify the presence and extent of any possible effects. While this analysis of impact does not confirm the strongly positive expectations for New York, Vallejo, or Leith, neither does it provide strong evidence against. As is often the case, this initial analysis raises more questions than it answers, while pointing to room for improvements for any future extensions or replications of the survey instrument).

Several specific aspects of the available measures limit the inference (both positive and negative) available from these analyses. First, the questions eliciting reports of the recent trend in organizations' interactive activities are blunt instruments. Not only does this rely on accurate recollection of past activities, it does not capture changes in the structure and types of contacts making up an organization's interactions. While PB was not clearly associated with a trend of increasing community collaboration overall, it may be the case the PB has an impact on *who* groups collaborate with. This possible nuance to the collaborative story is one potential interpretation that sits well with discussions and observations to come out of my qualitative fieldwork, although it cannot be tested with data from these surveys.

More informatively, the survey sheds important light on the broader contexts in which PB is implemented. The responses of a representative sample of organizations, drawn from the general organizational population rather than self-selected PB participants, provide a measure of how far the PB process reaches into the general community. Perhaps surprisingly for such comparatively small-scale processes, the PB processes were fairly well known in their communities, with at least half the organizations reporting that they were in fact aware of the process. For a smaller subset of these organizations, PB had a real impact, both in funding and collaboration. Of the 141 organizations aware of PB, 11% reported that they had received funding or support in some way as a result of the process. Of direct relevance to the question of PB's impact on collaboration between groups, 13% of the organizations that participated in PB reported that they had started new collaborations with other groups as a direct result of their involvement in the process. While it is possible to imagine that these groups may have been oriented to collaboration, and found such opportunities whether or not PB had been implemented, such reports provide another piece reinforcing the picture of PB as a venue that can enable new connections.

Finally, this survey also raises important questions for both organizers and researchers about which communities, and which organizations, do and do not take a chance on PB. The evident differences in the ecosystem of organizations around PB challenges to hopes that these processes will have transformative impacts on democratic practices locally. In these data, we can see that PB implementation appears to go hand in hand with a number of other indicators of a healthy grassroots civil society, such

as upward trends in volunteer availability, robust connections between government and civil society (including links with formal electoral politics), and a government supportive of civil society organizations. It is not clear that these trends are a result of participatory budgeting. It is likely, instead, that the local governments willing to take a risk on PB are already those with a greater appreciation for the value of supporting strong local communities and civic engagement. Similarly, looking at the organizations that are opting to be involved in PB, it is clear that some types of organizations are more likely to opt in to engage with PB processes, with organizations with a self-described advocacy organizing bent more likely to be involved. The question remains: can PB be effective as a strategy for transforming communities with the fewest existing civic resources, or is simply a tool to amplify existing ‘good’ practices? Can PB build a culture community organizing and civic collaboration from scratch?

The next analyses cannot correct for the possibility that areas that implement PB are fundamentally different than those that do not. However, they do move beyond the simple cross-sectional design of this survey to making more direct comparisons within PB areas over time, as well as across control areas. By comparing political discourse and political behavior before and after PB, the analyses in Chapter 6 offer additional leverage on the distinctive impacts of PB over time.

## Chapter 6

# Community Level Effects: Political Discourse and Voter Turnout

The final two analyses reported in this chapter provide the broadest investigation of the democratic impact of participatory budgeting, exploring PB's impact on both political speech and political action. Extending the comparison of PB sites with their matched non-PB "control" sites, this chapter first examines the relationship between the implementation of PB and patterns of discourse about politics, democracy, and citizenship in local media, describing the divergence in mobilizing versus demobilizing in political discourse in comparison sites. Second, the chapter examines the returns to voter turnout from the implementation in PB, with special attention to the case of New York, where variation in implementation across council districts allows for comparisons of turnout across time of PB and non-PB districts in the city.

This chapter proceeds in two parts. In the first, I present the method and results of a unique supervised machine learning approach to summarizing the evolution of broad trends in mobilizing and demobilizing speech about politics in local media over time. This discussion provides a detailed account of the human coding and validation of the machine learning method, as well as a structured comparison between the discovered trends in Stockton and Vallejo. In the second, I describe trends in turnout across all case and control study areas and implement a panel data analysis that points to

a small but marginally significant effect of PB on turnout rates. In both analyses, I find that PB is associated with small, but observable improvements in both mobilizing speech and mobilized action.

## 6.1 Political Discourse

Deliberative democratic innovations like PB have often been motivated by the hope that these local institutional changes can serve as a catalyst for a broader transformation of the norms of citizenship in a community. Indeed, participants in the field commonly shared experiences of coming to feel “a sense of empowerment in the community” or “like we are actually a part of this city, we can make a difference in city government,” as well as general shifts in attitude to understanding local political and civic life as a collective project and in public perceptions of the motivations or trustworthiness of government actors. The objective in this section is to establish to what extent such changes in the norms of citizenship have changed in the broader community with the implementation of PB.

Defining and measuring changes in political culture is an ongoing challenge for social scientists, especially when comparing communities across time and place. Norms of citizenship are subject to interpretation and are difficult systematically compare. In this section I present a new approach, using political discussion local newspapers, that allows partial measurement of changes in political culture. I create a dataset of over 20,000 local newspaper articles about politics from 2004-2016 in two cities struggling with bankruptcy and local investment in California: Vallejo, which implemented an ongoing PB process in 2012, and Stockton, which did not implement a PB process upon exiting bankruptcy. I use the ReadMe package in R to estimate changing proportions of mobilizing and demobilizing political speech over time in the two cities. This methodology provides an opportunity to explore whether PB can be seen to have provoked a cultural shift toward a more proactive, mobilizing trend in public political expression.

## Comparing Culture Via Media

I have argued throughout this dissertation that participatory and deliberative reforms like PB are expected to have an impact on the basic norms and practices of citizenship in a community, what has often been termed “political culture” (Dalton 2008, Almond and Verba 1963). Getting comparative measurements on people’s ‘cultural’ ideas of citizenship is difficult, however, typically relying on either large scale surveys or in depth ethnographic studies.<sup>1</sup> The popularity of survey measures as a way to access public ideas and practices of citizenship is reflected in the common use of individual surveys to identify changes in norms or practices of citizenship from local reforms. Numerous research projects following specific innovative reforms or deliberative experiments have relied on surveys (sometimes with the capacity for pre and post questionnaires) to capture estimates of any individual impact from new processes (see e.g. Docherty et al 2008; Gastil et al 2010; Gastil and Xenos 2010; Knobloch et al. 2012; Nabatchi 2010).

A reliance on survey data to evaluate evolution in the norms of citizenship as a result of institutional reforms like PB comes with several practical limitations. Not only is it expensive to implement a representative survey in a community, many new local processes are only known about after they are implemented, and it is not possible to go back in time for valid comparative data. Without this information over time, it is difficult to evaluate how an institutional reform may have changed political practices. Rather than focusing on individual surveys as a way to access information about culture and cultural change, this section develops an approach which relies on media as an accessible, comparable, and (importantly) historical expression and producer of local political practice.

Scholars of media and journalism have been interested in evolving norms of citizenship (see Schudson 1990 for a classic example) and there is a broad tradition of research into the roles of media in the production and reproduction of political activities and expectations.<sup>2</sup> Much of this research on media

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<sup>1</sup>Within political science research into political culture has often been dominated by large-scale surveys of individual attitudes, continuing on from the precedent set by Almond and Verba (see e.g. Inglehart 1988). Some researchers move beyond survey measures of “civic attitudes” such as trust in government or personal efficacy, using ethnographic and interpretive measures to understand which norms of citizenship are popularly (re)produced and how. Two exemplars of these approaches can be found in the work Nina Eliasoph (1998) and Lisa Wedeen (1999).

<sup>2</sup>See Thorson 2005 for a good review of this literature. To summarize key points most relevant to this study, such research has typically emphasized two general areas of research, one focused on media consumption, the other on media

effects has continued with the focus on individual surveys of media use and political attitudes.

The narrower body of work focused on local communities and local news, however, offers examples of research that integrates local media production and content more closely to local political practices, rather than mapping media content to large national surveys. Early work includes Lemert's (1988) observations that newspapers can (and he would argue should) be a source of concrete "mobilizing information" readers can use to identify how to get involved. Smith (1987) demonstrates that newspapers' coverage of community issues is related to the public's concern with the issue and their evaluations of local government performance. Nicodemus (2004) conducts a close qualitative analysis of local newspaper coverage around a local development issue. She identifies clear differences in the presence and impact of what she more defines (more broadly than Lemert) as "mobilizing" information across two local papers' coverage of a local development issue. Finally, Lowrey, Brozana, and Mackay (2008) in a comprehensive review of work on "community journalism" identify many different types of content that could be expected to strengthen communities and support collective action. Such content includes providing information on the activities of community groups and leaders, opportunities to take action or express preferences (similar to Lemert's mobilizing information), and communicating information both on local issues and on proposed solutions to challenges.

This study builds on these literatures by recognizing that local newspapers are an important part of the collective life and political self-perception in many communities. Coverage of community life and local politics in such media are likely to reflect, at least partially, common expectations and values held in the community, and in turn are likely to reinforce the public's expectations about themselves, their neighbors, and their political system. As a published record, it is also available retrospectively; it is possible to go back and examine how discussions in local media shift over time. Examining the trajectory of political speech in local news offers a unique opportunity to evaluate the wider impact of democratic innovations, offering a unique opportunity to go 'back in time' before any local reforms oc-

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content. The first provides evidence that local newspaper reading is a key determinant of political participation and community cohesion (see e.g. McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy 1999; Jeffres et al 2002; Carpini 2004; Scheufele et al 2004; Beaudoin, Thorson, and Hong 2006). The second major area of research focuses on the framing of news. In particular this work has explored how "strategic" framing impacts political cynicism, decreasing perceived efficacy and public engagement, building on Capella and Jamieson's (1997) idea of the "Spiral of Cynicism" concept (see further de Vreese 2004; Pederson 2012; Shehata 2014).

curred. This project thus makes an important contribution, by demonstrating a reproducible method that uses media discourse to create fine-grained estimates of changing expectations of citizenship practices and local political life over time.

### **6.1.1 Data & Method**

The empirical challenge in this paper is to get measures of changing expressions of political culture, through local media coverage of political and community issues. Describing changes over time requires multiple observations across multiple time periods, in this case reaching back to before both Vallejo and Stockton entered bankruptcy and Vallejo proposed participatory budgeting. To get adequate granularity over time across such a broad swath of text, I use supervised machine learning approach designed for aggregate bodies of text to amplify the efforts of human coders.<sup>3</sup> In the following sections, I describe, first, the data and process of human coding used to develop a ‘training set’ of documents and, second, the computational method by which I to train an algorithm to estimate how what what proportion of unread articles would fall into each coding category, if they were also to be read by my research assistants.

#### **Data: The Newspapers and Human Coding**

Of the four cases discussed in this dissertation, in this media analysis I focus on Vallejo, as the most-likely case in which to observe any impact from PB. I limit the study to Vallejo only for two distinct reasons. First, qualitative evidence, detailed in Chapter 3, points to Vallejo and New York City as two two cases where PB may be expected to have the most outsize impact residents relationships with government and experiences as citizens. Second, as the first city-wide PB implementation in the US, Vallejo is the one case where the population exposed to PB overlaps well with a defined, accessible media market. Implementation of PB in by council districts rather than city wide in New York City

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<sup>3</sup>The traditional approach to getting measurements of the content of some particular media has been to have people simply read and describe all relevant text, or, if there are too many articles to code in their entirety, to read a random sample of the whole population of articles (Neuendorf 2002). Using exclusively human coders would be very costly for this project, even if the whole population of articles were sampled, due to the need to include adequate articles across multiple years in two cities.

results in boundaries defining PB populations that cut across (or are nested within) shared local media environments. If indeed PB has an impact, the political geography of Vallejo thus increases the likelihood of observing an effect in local media. This text analysis is thus limited to media from Vallejo and its matched comparison case, Stockton.

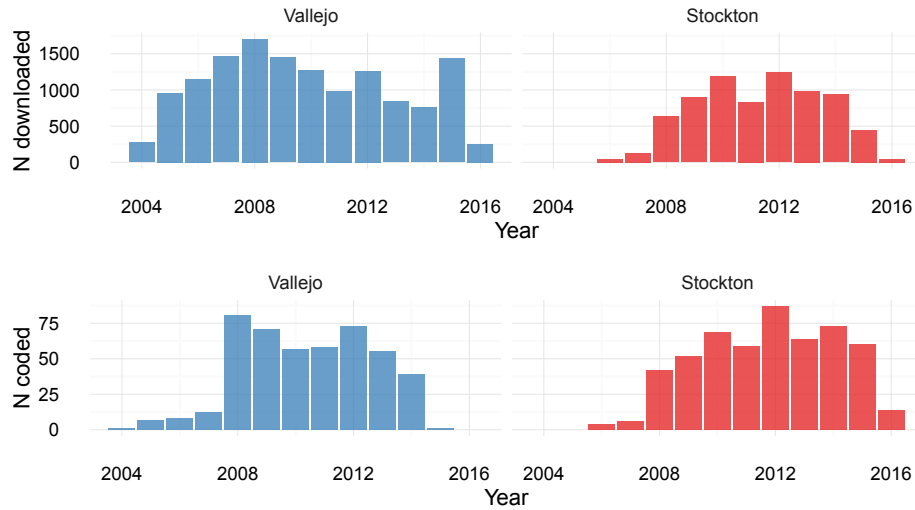
During interviews and local fieldwork in Vallejo, the local paper, *The Vallejo Times-Herald* was consistently identified as the primary source for information on what was happening in the local area, more so than common social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook. While informants were consistently critical of the editorial quality of the paper, it was the dominant informational focal point for all respondents (the only comparably widespread source of information on local community interests and attitudes was word of mouth). As a result I decided to focus on local newspapers for this analysis, in contrast to the increasing use of social media to similar automated text analyses. Vallejo and Stockton each have one daily local newspaper, the *Times-Herald* and *The Record*, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

Articles, editorial and opinion pieces, and letters to the editor for both newspapers were downloaded and the plain text extracted. The *Times-Herald*, including editorial content and letters, is available on LexisNexis back to 2004; a search for any articles with political or community content was conducted and articles downloaded and the plain text and metadata scraped with Python.<sup>5</sup> Stockton *Record* articles were downloaded from EBSCOhost's Newspaper Source, while letters to the editor (omitted from Newspaper Source) were downloaded directly from the newspaper's website, with text extracted with Python. Article coverage was more extensive for the *Times-Herald* than for *The Record*; future iterations of this work will include additional data collection to improve coverage of *The Record*. In total 13813 articles were collected from Vallejo, from 2004 to early 2016, and 7370 articles were collected for Stockton, from 2006 to early 2016. Figure 6.1 illustrates the distribution of articles available over time in each community, as well as the distributions of coded articles used for validation and final

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<sup>4</sup>Further bolstering the argument that these two cities can provide comparable cases, the recent histories of these two local papers are broadly comparable. Each paper has operated continuously, with stable editorial staff throughout the period under study. Like many local newspapers in recent decades, the parent owner of each paper changed hands, and circulation has dropped over the years, but there have been no major changes to editorial staff in either paper that one might expect to dramatically shift the tone of political coverage.

<sup>5</sup>Script for scraping LexisNexis output was adapted from Alex Storer; more info available at <https://github.com/alexstorer/lexisparse> (accessed 8/17/2015).



**Figure 6.1:** Distributions of articles over time. The top panels show the distribution of all downloaded articles; the lower panels show the distribution of all human coded articles.

estimates.

Working with a group of four undergraduate research assistants, I developed a simple four category coding scheme, distinguishing between mobilizing, demobilizing, neutral, and irrelevant categories. The objective of the coding scheme was to capture in broad terms a kind of “you know it when you see it” distinction in political reporting. On the one side were articles that were reflective and productive of a disengaged, cynical orientation to public and political life and on the other side were engaged, mobilizing expressions that could be associated with a stronger democratic orientation in the community. Categories were kept intentionally broad to avoid prematurely defining relevant characteristics of texts.

These categories were defined by overarching themes supplemented by detailed but not exhaustive guidelines to structure classification. ‘Mobilizing’ articles were defined as those that present “public life and politics as a collective task, one in which members of the public can (or should) have a useful, meaningful, or productive role,” while ‘Demobilizing’ articles were defined overall as “encouraging a cynical, disengaged perspective on politics and/or public life. An article that would make an ordinary person want to have nothing to do with politics or politicians.” These categories were kept intentionally broad from the start to see if coders would independently identify a common understanding of

the categories. Table 6.1 illustrates these categories with snippets from articles unanimously classified as mobilizing and demobilizing, respectively. Additional categories of ‘Neutral’ and ‘Irrelevant’ were preserved to collect articles that coders found to be a genuinely unclassifiable neutral presentation of politically-relevant information as well as a small fraction of misidentified articles that made it through search filters. Full definition of the coding scheme can be found in the appendix.

**Table 6.1:** Example text from mobilizing and demobilizing articles.

<b>Mobilizing</b>	<p>Karime Jacobo of Napa said she’ll likely request her voting material come to her in Spanish, even though she speaks English well.</p> <p>Jacobo has that option because this year, for the first time, Napa County voters can get their ballots and other election material either in English or Spanish. Solano County still prints its election material exclusively in English, though that’s unlikely to last.</p> <p>“My vocabulary isn’t that good in political issues and I feel I understand those things better in Spanish,” Jacobo said.</p> <p>A new federal list issued in October, requires 248 cities and towns nationwide to add other languages to their election material, according to local county election officials.</p>
<b>Demobilizing</b>	<p>Trustee Bill Ross said he will actively support a recall campaign against one of his fellow board members rather than staying on the sidelines, as he said he has done to this point. He made his pledge after it was publicly revealed that a board investigation found he “may have” had a financial interest in an architectural firm that did business with Stockton Unified. Ross did not say whether his involvement will be in the recall campaign against Jose Morales or the one against Dan Castillo.</p> <p>“Wait and see,” Ross said. “I know how to run a campaign.”</p> <p>Meanwhile, former Trustee Anthony Silva read a four-page speech to the board in which he defended Ross and attacked Morales.</p> <p>Silva lost his seat to Morales by a single vote in last year’s election, and the two have spent the past year trading allegations.</p> <p>“I am a private citizen now, and if I hear one more accusation that comes from your mouth, I will sue you and the district,” Silva told Morales.</p>

Coders were instructed to follow their overall impressions of the article as a whole. Specific guidelines were developed for coders to assist in classifying more difficult articles. These secondary points were based on existing knowledge about demobilizing effects of reporting on political strategy, and the importance of reporting on community issues and events discussed above. Drawing on ideas of

political efficacy and perceived challenges to overcoming collective action problems, particular emphasis was given to reporting on everyday people effectively taking action and on successful instances of cooperative action. While coders were presented with specific guidelines, these categories remained intentionally open-ended and ultimately depended on coders own gut reactions to articles and letters to the editor.

Through initial phases of coding, and when new coders were introduced to the project, research assistants and I met weekly to discuss any challenges in the coding and briefly discuss any issues with reliability and coder disagreement. These sessions were invaluable for both clarifying the coding scheme and for improving coder ability to classify according to the coding scheme rather than personal policy preferences.<sup>6</sup> Across all articles coded after initial training, inter-coder reliability is reported at the reasonable level of Krippendorff's  $\alpha$  and Fleiss's  $\kappa$  of 0.52 (Krippendorff 2007; Fleiss 1971). Reliability improved over coding sessions, reaching a maximum  $\alpha$  of 0.62; the majority of articles included in analysis were coded in batches with an  $\alpha$  greater than 0.5.<sup>7</sup> Among those articles where all three coders classified it as either mobilizing or demobilizing, reliability was improved to an  $\alpha$  of 0.69. While there is no strict rule for what constitutes acceptable agreement, an  $\alpha$  greater than 0.5 may be considered to represent reasonable agreement for cases where categories are open to human interpretation (Neuendorf 2002), and is particularly encouraging given the open-ended interpretive coding schema. Observed improvements with additional coder training and clarification to the coding instructions

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<sup>6</sup>Untrained coders had a tendency to code articles according to whether they approved of the policies or activities being discussed in the article. For the purposes of identifying generically mobilizing or demobilizing text, I encouraged them to approach the articles from a more neutral stance, paying attention to the role of citizens rather than specific policies discussed. With training, coders were able to make this shift. Nevertheless, this difficulty highlights a genuine concern for external validity of the measure if the impression of the average reader is dominated more by whether the outcomes they read about are ones they personally prefer rather than accounts of the political process that led to them. That said, there is evidence from other fields, for example Tyler 2006, that suggest that information about fair procedures can in fact influence people's judgments of outcomes with which they may not initially agree.

<sup>7</sup>As opposed to simple measures of inter-coder reliability such as percent agreement, these reliability statistics adjust for the expected (dis)agreement due to chance: a score of 0 is analogous to agreement purely as would be expected by chance and 1 represents perfect reliability (Krippendorff 2004). In terms of percent agreement, coders agreed on codings in 68% of decisions across all articles and had 85% agreement in articles agreed to be neither neutral nor irrelevant. Data requirements mean that some earlier coding batches with an  $\alpha$  between 0.44 and 0.5 are included in the analysis; resources to code more data after training would improve quality of estimates. Reliability statistics for full sample calculated using Deen Freelon's ReCal3 web application (available at <http://dfreelon.org/utills/recalfront>, see also Freelon 2013). ICR statistics during coder training and throughout coding were generated internally by the Coding Analysis Toolkit ([cat.ucsur.pitt.edu](http://cat.ucsur.pitt.edu)), the web application used to coordinate coding tasks.

suggest a higher reliability is possible with more time for coder training prior to beginning analysis.

Articles to be coded were sampled at random from the entire population of articles, with new articles added to the population as scraping was updated partway through coding. In total, after coder training, 1019 separate articles (487 in Vallejo and 532 in Stockton) were coded and used in the analysis below. Each of these articles was classified by three coders; conflicts were resolved in favor of the majority opinion. Cases where there was no majority agreement were discarded from the training data as uninformative. Codes were dropped but article text was retained as part of the larger test set to be estimated below.<sup>8</sup> While acceptable reliability statistics suggested that it would be reasonable to have articles coded by only a single reader, I decided to maximize the consistency of the coded data (and include more coded material from earlier in the training process) by taking majority agreement from three independent assessments. This also provides the option of further refining the code categories to allow for the estimation of empirically mixed articles. Distributions of final category classifications over time in the human-coded data is available in Figure D.1 in the appendix.<sup>9</sup>

### **Method: ReadMe and Learning to Estimate Category Proportions**

While the number of articles coded allow for some aggregate comparisons of political discussion in the two cities, there are too few data points to allow inference to local political expressions over time. To get reliable estimates of proportions over time, I turn to machine learning methods which can use the human coded data to learn about larger collections of unclassified texts.

The use of automated methods of content analysis in the social sciences has become increasingly common place, with computationally intensive methods making ambitious text-based research ap-

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<sup>8</sup>Only 4.7 percent of articles were discarded with no agreement.

<sup>9</sup>When coding disagreements were discussed among the research group, in most cases the minority coder could point to a valid empirical basis in the text for their coding. For example, an article might contain a mix of sections separately described by coders as mobilizing or demobilizing, and the minority coder selected a different category as dominating the article over all. Given the empirical basis for conflicts between the primary categories of mobilizing and demobilizing, I developed an alternative classification that included an additional fifth category of “Mixed” for articles that coders identified as both mobilizing and demobilizing. Using this alternative classification scheme, I investigated whether machine learning estimates were improved by recognizing that some articles contain a mix of text that could be classified in either way. As it turns out, substantive results of the analysis were unaffected, and including the fifth category did not substantially change the precision or accuracy estimated category proportions, and I stuck with the four-category approach in the analysis discussed below. See the Appendix for results of cross-validation tests for the five category approach.

proaches relatively accessible (for an excellent review of the variety of automated approaches to text as data, see Grimmer and Stewart 2013). In brief, existing approaches to automated coding (classification) of texts in social science can be divided into three broad families:<sup>10</sup> First are dictionary methods that rely on categorized lists of words with particular meanings, which are used to classify documents according to the relative counts of words in these dictionary lists. Sentiment analysis identifying texts as having positive or negative affect (Young and Soroka 2012; Pang, Lee, and Vaithyanathan 2002) or particular emotions or psychological states (Tausczik and Pennebaker 2010) are examples of common dictionary methods. Once a dictionary has been defined, no human coding of text is necessary. Second, unsupervised methods, such as topic modeling (see Blei 2012) are used to uncover clustering across documents independent of a researcher's *a priori* expectations regarding relevant categories. Finally, supervised machine learning methods require a small sample of documents to be classified by human coders. This sample is then used to train statistical models to classify new documents similarly to how humans could be expected to code them. This paper in effect develops an application of a supervised method.

Many supervised approaches focus on the task of correctly classifying individual articles. Researchers interested in aggregate measures (such as the proportion of articles in 2012 that would be coded as 'Mobilizing') would use human coded documents to train statistical models to predict the most likely category for each individual document document based on the words or word pairings present, then simply count up the total number of articles estimated to fall into each category.

Methods for individual classification, while having many useful applications, introduce an unnecessary step and unnecessary source of bias into the estimates, when the ultimate quantity of interest is proportions of categories in a wider population (such as all political articles in the *Times-Herald* in 2012) rather than accurate classification of each individual documents (Hopkins and King 2010). In this paper, rather than use individual classification to get estimates of changing political discussion over time in the two newspapers, I implement the method of estimating category proportions

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<sup>10</sup>It is worth noting that in addition to the problem of categorizing text, considered in this paper, additional methods exist for placing texts on continuous scales, such as from liberal to conservative. For additional information on scaling, see Lowe 2008 or Laver, Benoit, and Garry 2003.

described in detail in Hopkins and King, using the ReadMe package in R (Hopkins and King 2013).

The general intuition behind the ReadMe algorithm is that, if all we are interested in is the aggregated proportions of categories in groups of texts, we can look at the distributions of the different kinds of language that is representative of those different categories across many texts. From the human coded documents, we can observe the probabilities of unique combinations of words showing up in documents of different categories. (For example, the words “corrupt”, “bought”, “sold”, and “pointless” are more likely to occur together in a demobilizing rather than a mobilizing article, while the combination of the words “effective”, “fun”, “citizen”, and “power” has a higher probability of occurring in a mobilizing article.) We can combine the known probability of unique wordsets occurring in the whole set of all documents and the known probabilities of those combinations of words occurring in each category of coded documents to calculate an estimate of the proportion of documents in the whole set of articles to fall in each category.<sup>11</sup>

The only assumption on which this method depends to generate unbiased estimates of population category proportions is that the probability of these unique combinations of words occurring, given a specific category, is the same in both the human coded and the unknown ‘test’ articles. In practice, this means that while the coded training data does not need to be a random sample from the population, but the same general language used to communicate mobilizing or demobilizing ideas must be present, with similar likelihood given the category, in both the training and the test data. Using text from one source with its own distinctive language to predict categories in another source *may* produce lower quality estimates. For this reason, in my analysis below, I generate estimates for Vallejo and Stockton independently, from separate training data.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Expressed mathematically, the equation at the core of the ReadMe algorithm requires us to solve for  $P(C)$  in the equation  $P(W) = P(W|C)P(C)$ , where  $P(S|C)$  is the probability of a unique set of words occurring in documents in category  $C$  only and  $P(W)$  is the probability of that unique set of words occurring anywhere in the whole corpus of documents. In theory, this is as simple as solving for  $\beta$  in an ordinary linear regression. Computationally, ReadMe introduces additional steps such as sampling subsets of word stem profiles from all possible profiles rather than dealing in unmanageably large and sparse matrices of possible word combinations

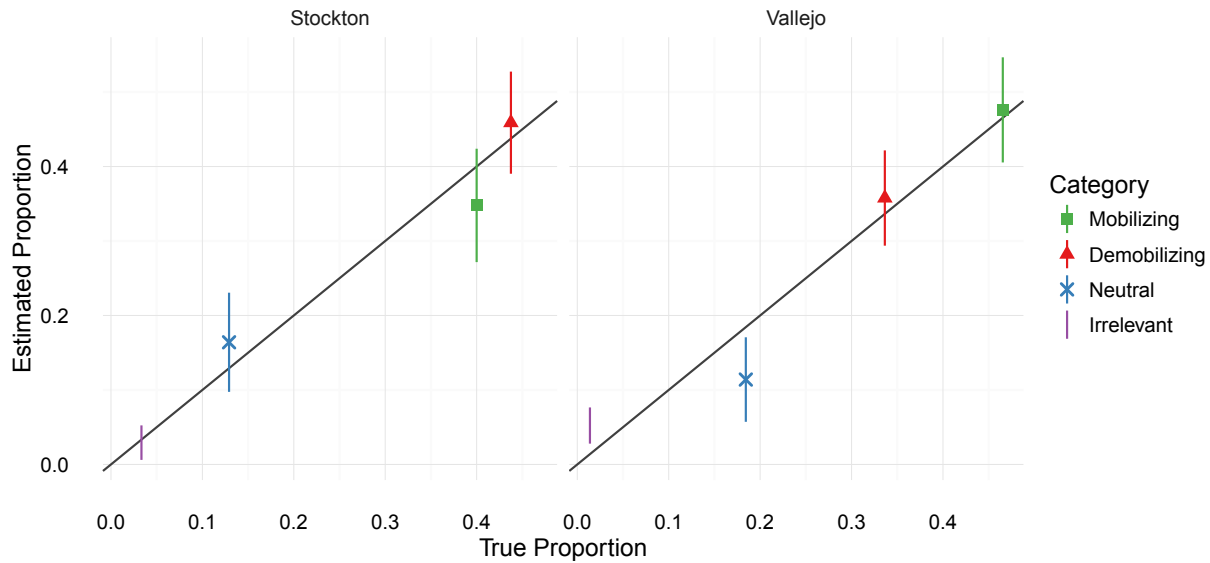
<sup>12</sup>I ran a series of cross-validation tests (repeatedly randomly assigning coded data to training and test sets) to see whether it was more effective to pool coded data from both cities in the training set. Pooling the data generated less efficient estimates, summarized in Table D.1 in the appendix.

## Evaluating the Method

With empirical methods like ReadMe, the most important question to ask when evaluating the method is “does it work?” Does it produce good estimates compared to the “gold standard” of human coded data (Grimmer and Stewart 2013)? ReadMe makes no extensive modeling assumptions and comes with no choices about variables to include or exclude in estimation. The most important test of the method is whether it generates valid estimates, with validity determined by how well it is able to estimate categories for data where we already know the “truth”, i.e. have had humans read and code the documents. Practically, this is done by reserving a portion of the coded documents to use as “test” data, allowing us to compare the estimated quantities with those observed in the data itself.

Figure 6.2 illustrates the effectiveness of this method in estimating category proportions separately for Vallejo and Stockton. 95% confidence intervals are generated by bootstrapping from the training and test word profiles. While true proportions are only available and thus reported for a subset of all “unknown” test data, the test set used for estimating proportions includes all uncoded articles (as follows in substantive time series estimates below). Perfect prediction would result in points aligned along the 45 degree line. As these plots shows, estimates do in practice fit the data well. There is, of course, error in the estimates, but truth lies within a reasonable margin of error, especially for the two main categories of interest. Figure 6.2 also illustrates the different distributions of categories observed in the two cities, with mobilizing articles occurring less frequently relative to demobilizing articles in Stockton. This overall pattern is also reflected in the dis-aggregated estimates reported in the next section.

On the basis of this validation, I argue that ReadMe can offer a reasonable approximation of subjective human reading of political discussion. The ability of the ReadMe method to recover observed category proportions suggests that despite the comparatively open category definitions (which explicitly preserve scope for readers’ own subjective impressions) coders’ classification decisions were echoed by predictable word profiles that could effectively train a machine process. Having demonstrated that ReadMe offers a valid method for extending human codings to my entire population of articles, I am finally able to assess the substantive results of the data, summarized in the next section.



**Figure 6.2:** Validation of ReadMe estimates for total sample of Vallejo and Stockton. 95% confidence intervals generated from bootstrapped standard errors. Size of the training set was 487 in Vallejo and 532 in Stockton.

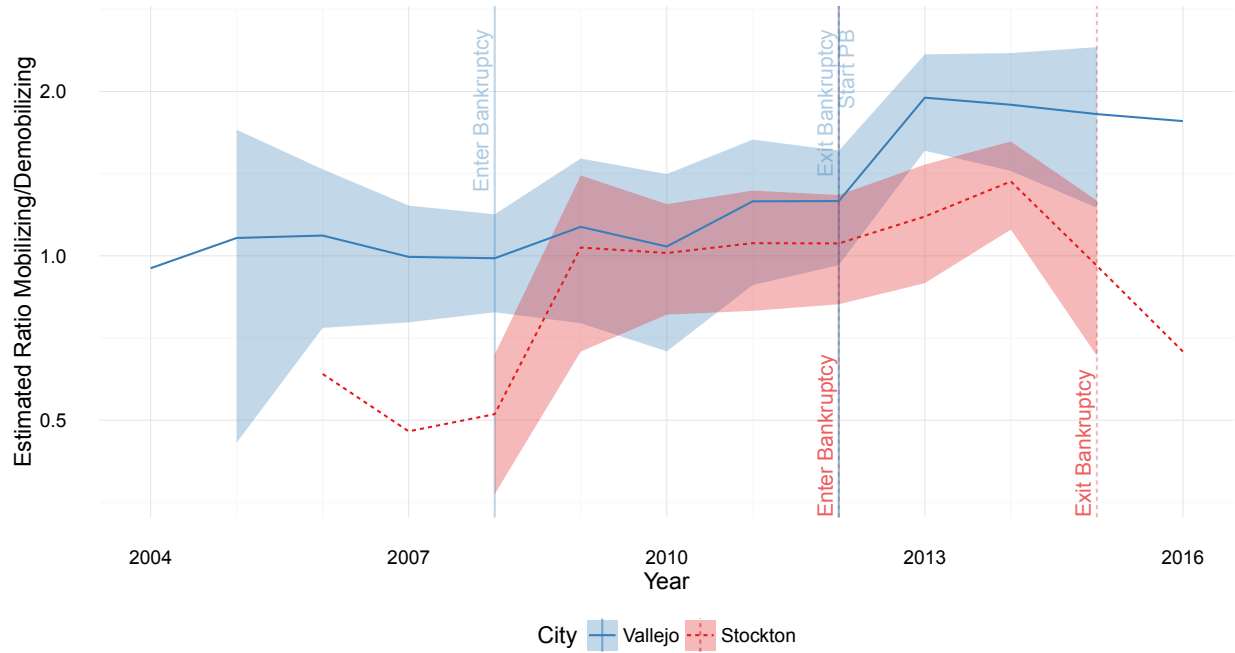
## 6.1.2 Results: Trajectories of Political Speech in Vallejo & Stockton

In brief, the data show a diverging trajectory of political expression in the two cities as they emerged from bankruptcy, providing initial confirmatory evidence for the optimistic expectations for PB. Conclusions that can be drawn from these results are limited, however, by both the relatively brief period of time since Stockton also exited bankruptcy and the potential for other unobserved factors that may have contributed to the mobilizing upswing in Vallejo’s local community over this period.

Figure 6.3 illustrates the changing ratio of mobilizing to demobilizing text in each of the two cities for each year for which I was able to collect data. A ratio of 1 indicates that mobilizing and demobilizing text occurred equally frequently, a number greater than one indicates more mobilizing text, and a ratio less than one indicates more demobilizing text. Shaded bands represent bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals, which were estimated for years with more than 750 articles.<sup>13</sup> Estimates without

<sup>13</sup>The sparseness of the stem-document matrices hinders the ability to draw valid bootstrap samples from the smaller sample sizes; bootstrapped samples must have no unvarying columns. With such sparse data, it takes many iterations to resample the data so that no column is all zeros. With the small sample sizes, this resample and reject approach was too computationally demanding to be feasible at this time. The truncation of the confidence bands thus highlights the years with fewer articles available for analysis. In Stockton, the number of articles available drops off sharply before 2008 as only one of my online sources made earlier content available. For both cities, content was only scraped through the first quarter of 2016. Immediate plans for future work include extending the analysis to articles scraped for all of 2016.

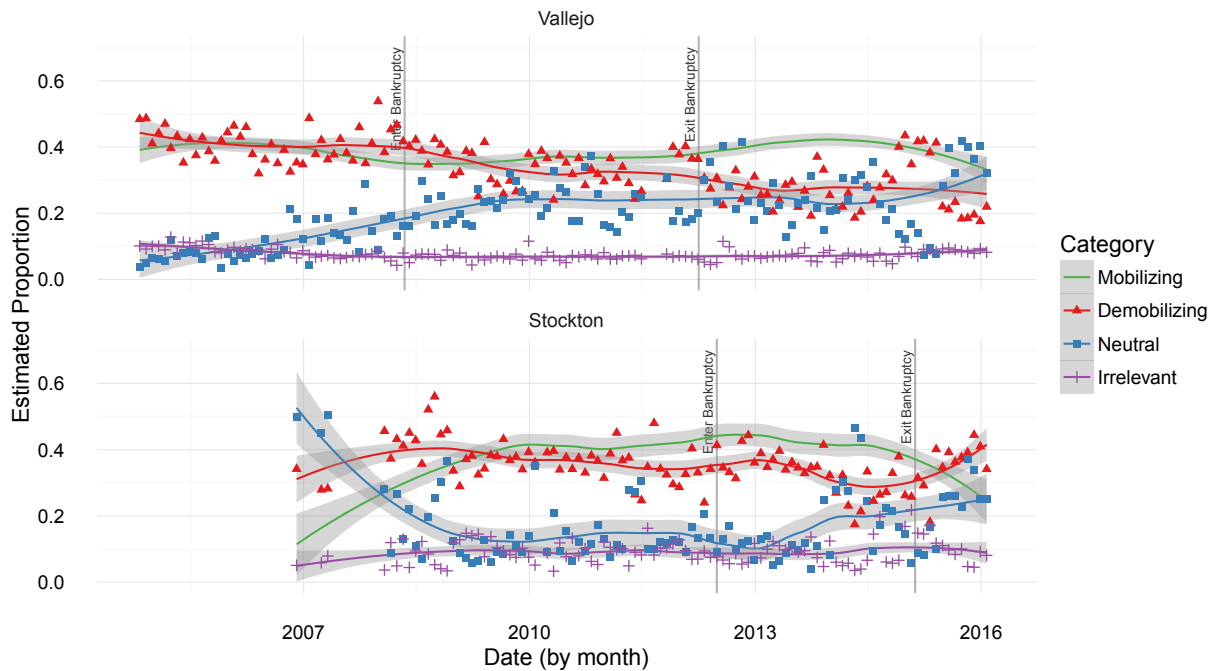
confidence intervals should be considered as, at best, only suggestive, as I can offer no associated measure of uncertainty. In both cities, this ratio largely hovers around 1 until 2012, when Vallejo's ratio begins a sharp move upward away from Stockton.



**Figure 6.3:** Annual estimates of the ratio of mobilizing to demobilizing articles in Vallejo and Stockton over time. Vallejo is represented in the solid blue line, Stockton in the dashed red line. Shaded regions represent 95% confidence intervals, calculated from bootstrapped standard errors. Years when relevant events occurred are represented by vertical lines. Stockton's events are labeled at the bottom, Vallejo's at the top.

To make sense of these different trend-lines in the context, it is important to be clear on the different timelines of bankruptcy in the two cities (illustrated by the vertical lines in Figure 6.3). The key years in Vallejo are 2008 and 2012. In May 2008 the city declared bankruptcy, in the spring of 2012 the city exited bankruptcy and approved PB, and late that year the first PB assemblies occurred. Stockton's period of bankruptcy was later than Vallejo's: the city declared bankruptcy in June 2012, and exited it in February 2015. In Vallejo, we can see a striking relative increase in mobilizing text after the city exits bankruptcy and starts PB. The shorter time span after bankruptcy may be hiding a delayed response in Stockton, but on the basis of available data the story in Stockton looks different, with a drop during the year they exited bankruptcy that appears, in preliminary data, to be continuing in 2016.

On the basis of these descriptive accounts, the data align with the hypothesis that PB helps shift political cultural norms toward a more engaged model of citizenship. Similar trend-lines in the two cities diverge at the point of Vallejo’s exit from bankruptcy and commencement of PB. Even taking into account the uncertainty of the estimates and looking only at results aggregated to the year, the picture is fairly clear that something different is happening in the two cities, in particular as each city exits bankruptcy.



**Figure 6.4:** Monthly estimates of coverage across all four categories in Vallejo and Stockton. Stockton articles prior to 2008 are dropped, with several monthly sample sizes too small for ReadMe estimation. Points are the raw estimates for each month. Due to computational challenges of valid resampling in sparse monthly data, bootstrapped standard errors were omitted. Loess smoothers included to more clearly illustrate trends.

It is possible to use ReadMe to estimate proportions at a monthly, rather than yearly basis. Figure 6.4 shows the raw category estimates for the two cities (rather than the ratio mobilizing/demobilizing), with Loess smooths included to make it easier to visualize the trends in the data. These monthly data are unsurprisingly noisier (reflecting both the variability in the estimation procedure and actual variability in the media month to month).<sup>14</sup> These monthly estimates tell a similar story overall to that illustrated in the annual ratio estimates, but the increased granularity allows us to map the data

<sup>14</sup>Due to limited computational resources, I was not able to estimate confidence intervals for each individual estimate.

more effectively in time to the key events in the story.

At first glance, the monthly estimates do seem to show a distinct pattern in the two cities, with mobilizing articles trending upwards while demobilizing tend down after exiting bankruptcy in Vallejo. Stockton, on the other hand, shows little to no trend; if anything demobilizing seems to be increasing and demobilizing decreasing after exiting bankruptcy. These patterns echo the trends seen in the ratio plot in Figure 6.3 above. These visual patterns are confirmed by linear regressions using the monthly estimates.

**Table 6.2:** Linear regressions of year, city, and post-bankruptcy status on ratio mobilizing/demobilizing

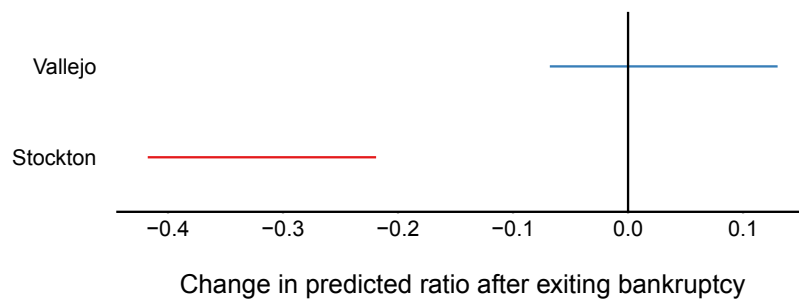
	DV: Ratio		DV: Log(Ratio)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Bankruptcy * Vallejo	0.52*** (0.06)	0.41*** (0.07)	0.48*** (0.06)	0.39*** (0.06)
Bankruptcy	-0.41*** (0.06)	-0.28*** (0.07)	-0.48*** (0.05)	-0.36*** (0.07)
Vallejo	-125.15*** (11.67)	0.86*** (0.09)	-128.62*** (10.77)	-0.16* (0.08)
Stockton	-125.23*** (11.69)	0.79*** (0.10)	-128.75*** (10.79)	-0.28*** (0.09)
Year	0.06*** (0.01)		0.06*** (0.01)	
Year Fixed Effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
AIC	655	553	506	366
BIC	684	635	535	448
N	928	928	928	928
Residual Std. Error	0.34	0.32	0.32	0.29

\*\*\* p < .01; \*\* p < .05; \* p < .1. Models 1 and 2 report regressions of the untransformed ratio. Models 3 and 4 report regressions of the log-transformed ratio.

Table 6.2 summarizes the results of a several linear regressions of year and city interacted with exiting bankruptcy on the ratio of mobilizing to demobilizing text, varying the specification of the DV and the inclusion of year fixed effects controlling for yearly trends (such as the impact of election cycles or shocks like the financial crisis). The best fitting model, Model 4 in Table 6.2, includes year dummies and a logged ratio while continuing to demonstrate a significant difference in outcomes or Vallejo and Stockton upon exiting bankruptcy. The two cities have similar baseline ratios, which appear to be generally increasing over time; while Vallejo's baseline ratio may be marginally higher than

Stockton's, these baseline effects are not statistically distinguishable. Exiting bankruptcy, without PB, is associated with a marked drop in the ratio of mobilizing to demobilizing coverage in Stockton. In contrast, Vallejo's exit from bankruptcy with simultaneous implementation of PB shows no such decline, instead continuing or even accelerating the shared upward trend captured in the year effects.

These results are summarized in Figure 6.5, which illustrates the effect of exiting bankruptcy on the ratio of mobilizing/demobilizing articles in each city. Exiting bankruptcy (with its accompanying budget cuts and external administration) has a negative impact that is avoided in Vallejo. Because the implementation of PB in Vallejo is so closely linked to the other disruptions of exiting bankruptcy, it is not possible to attribute this effect solely to PB, but it confirms the impression that something distinctly different happens in Vallejo as they exit bankruptcy as compared to Stockton. This substantial positive effect in this small-N comparison makes a compelling case for extending this analysis to more comparative cases could help to clarify the precise inferences that can be made about this observed relationship.



**Figure 6.5:** Predicted change in the ratio of mobilizing/demobilizing political speech from exiting bankruptcy in Stockton and Vallejo, with 95% confidence intervals. Predictions are from Model 4 in Table 6.2, for a generic year and include inverse logit transformations.

Participatory budgeting may indeed have had a measurable impact on the nature of mediated political discussion in Vallejo. This analysis shows that after bankruptcy mobilizing text increases relative to demobilizing text in Vallejo but not in Stockton. These findings are currently limited in their generalizability beyond these two cases. Collecting more data, a longer time series for comparison in each city if not data in additional comparison cases, would help to confirm how much of the picture in Vallejo is really attributable to PB itself, rather than an idiosyncratic case study of posi-

tive community change. This textual evidence on its own may not be enough to attribute causality to PB, as opposed to some other combination of factors distinguishing Vallejo's recent political context from Stockton's. In combination with the qualitative narratives of transformative effects from PB, this analysis strengthens the case for PB's potential to shift norms of citizenship.

## 6.2 Voter Turnout

The act of voting holds a distinctive significance to evaluations of the health of local democratic institutions. While voting is, of course, not the only form of meaningful participation, it remains central to shared concepts of modern democratic government. Other forms of participation may be every day acts, or may be more informative of public preferences than simply casting an anonymous vote a few times a year. Nevertheless, democratic institutions that are built on the premise of publicly elected officials require the public, and enough of the public, to vote. The centrality of voter turnout to the ideal of democracy is reflected in its prominence in applied definitions or assessments of democratic quality and democratic deficits (Norris 2011; Dalton 2008; Lijphart 1997). In more practical terms, data on voters and votes is collected and made public as part of the ordinary procedures of democratic government, and so voter turnout provides a broadly comparable measure of public participation political behavior across cities and countries.

Voter turnout is thus an important indicator to include when considering the community level impacts from participatory budgeting. Indeed, possible impacts on voter turnout has been one of the most regularly repeated questions from organizers and participants while I was in the field. As I describe in Chapter Two, in the 'best case' scenario of PB, impacts from well-implemented participatory budgeting processes are expected to lead to increased sense of efficacy, civic consciousness, and denser networks for mobilization among the public, which in turn are expected to lead to increased voter turnout. In this section, I use voter turnout data for the 33 case and control geographies described in Chapter 5 to test this expectation that implementing PB will positively impact voter turnout. All of the cities included in this study have seen at least one election cycle since the implementation of PB, and many districts (particularly in New York) have seen multiple elections since PB was introduced.

In the following analysis, I discuss the structure of the voter turnout data I collected for the five cities, provide descriptive accounts of trends in voting across all case studies, and present results from a series of dynamic panel models of turnout, first in New York and then across all the cases.

### 6.2.1 Voter Turnout Data and Method

For this analysis, I collected voter turnout data for the past 10 years for each of my study areas, including city council districts in New York, London boroughs, Edinburgh, and the cities of Vallejo and Stockton. While information on election results and voter turnout could be considered a quintessentially ‘public’ source of data, the complex geographies and idiosyncratic reporting practices of different cities complicate the collection of these data at the appropriate unit of analysis.

One of the first choices a researcher must make in any study of voter turnout is to decide which measure of turnout is most appropriate for the analysis, turnout as percent of registered voters, turnout as percent of eligible voters (citizen voting-age population), or simply as a percent of adult population, regardless of citizenship or eligibility (Stockemer 2016). For this iteration of this work, I limit the analysis to turnout as a percent of registered voters as it is possible to collect comparable measures across the very different geographies available.<sup>15</sup> Counts of registered voters and votes cast in each election can be calculated directly for each geography, while broader population statistics require estimation and translation between census geographies and across years that vary across cases. This choice in data collection restricts the substantive inference possible from this analysis. The same argument for increased voter turnout from PB could be used to argue for potential increases in the numbers of registered voters (relative to eligible population) and as a result the effective turnout. These data cannot currently account for any increase in voter registration in PB versus non-PB districts and conclusions from this analysis must be limited to a discussion of the impact of participatory budgeting on turnout of registered individuals. It is worth noting that limiting the analysis to registered voters in this way may, in fact, understate any impact of PB if it were to increase rates of registration.

Table 6.3 summarizes the sources of electoral data for each city. Particular mention is due to John

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<sup>15</sup>Pre-empting a primary criticism of comparative use of turnout of registered voters, the US and UK both operate under systems of voluntary individual registration and non-mandatory voting.

**Table 6.3:** Voter turnout data sources

City	Years	Data Source
New York City	7	John Mollenkopf and CUNY Graduate Center, NYC Board of Elections <a href="http://vote.nyc.ny.us/">vote.nyc.ny.us/</a>
Vallejo	9	Solano County Clerk: <a href="http://www.co.solano.ca.us/depts/rov/historic_election_results/resultmaps.asp">www.co.solano.ca.us/depts/rov/historic_election_results/resultmaps.asp</a>
Stockton	7	City of Stockton: FOIA request
London	7	London DataStore: <a href="http://data.london.gov.uk/elections">data.london.gov.uk/elections</a>
Edinburgh	2	Edinburgh City Council <a href="http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/20112/election_results">www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/20112/election_results</a>

Mollenkopf at the Graduate Center at CUNY for sharing voter information aggregated to current New York City council district boundaries, Professor Celina Su (also at CUNY) for advocating for the project, and Sonya Reynolds, recently of the New York State Civic Engagement Table, for confirming my frustrated realization that the New York City Board of Elections simply did not share Election District level election results.<sup>16</sup> Election returns for Stockton and Vallejo come from the San Joaquin and Solano county clerks, while results for Edinburgh and London are obtained through cities' data reporting websites. It is important to note that results at ward (or other granular) geographies are not available in Scotland or Edinburgh for national elections, so Edinburgh data is unfortunately limited to local city council elections (the next local election is scheduled for May 2017, and data will be updated accordingly).

**Table 6.4:** Election summary statistics, including the number of local/midterm elections and national presidential/parliamentary elections in each study area.

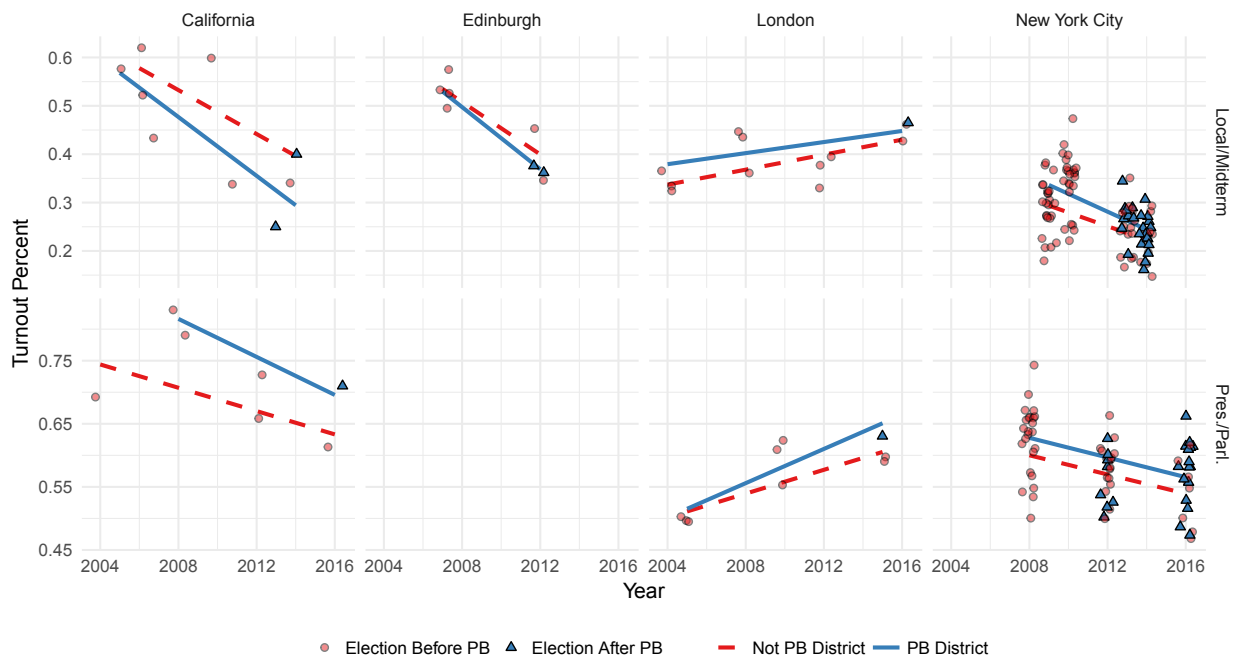
City	N Obs.	N Districts	# Local/Midterm	# Pres./Parl.
Edinburgh	8	4	2	0
London	21	3	4	3
New York City	168	24	4	3
Stockton	7	1	3	4
Vallejo	9	1	6	3

The full data, including only my matched study geographies, consists of an unbalanced panel, with repeated observations along different electoral calendars in the different cities. New York dominates

<sup>16</sup>Since 2016, the NYC BOE has begun publishing ED-level election returns on their website, to the collective relief of an embarrassing number of researchers.

the study, with seven election years in 24 districts. The other regions offer much less cross-sectional variation, with only 4 wards in Edinburgh, 3 boroughs in London, and 2 cities in California. Table 6.4 summarizes the counts of elections observed in each city. The limited sample sizes in 3 of the four matched regions limits the scope for strong causal inference, but still provide an opportunity for informative descriptive assessment, with scope for more systematic modeling possible within New York City. Dynamic panel GMM models, accounting for serial correlation of turnout within districts, explicitly model the effect of PB on subsequent voter turnout.

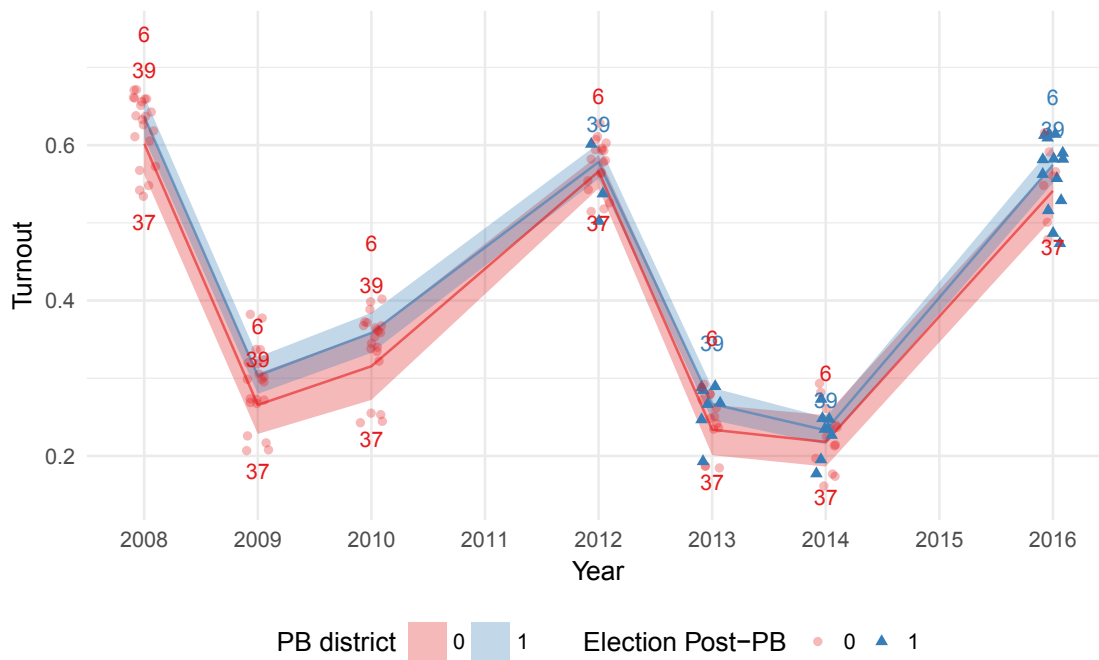
### 6.2.2 Descriptive Accounts



**Figure 6.6:** Turnout trends within matched cases. Scatterplots of turnout in PB and control geographies in each matched study areas. Overlaid lines summarize the linear trend within PB and control areas separately.

The first step in assessing the strength of any association between participatory budgeting and turnout is a simple visual exploration of the trends in my case and control geographies over time, before and after the introduction of participatory budgeting. Figures 6.6 and 6.7 illustrate the trends in general across all sites. As turnout is consistently higher in all cases in national presidential or general parliamentary election cycles, these higher turnout elections are plotted separately so general trends

can be more easily observed. Turnout has been generally on the decline in all areas except London. These recent historical trends appear generally similar across PB and non-PB geographies; PB does not appear to have a generalized impact that is large enough to be visible in these aggregate summaries. Even in California and NYC, where the qualitative assessment of the PB process in Chapter 3 points to the potential for stronger political institutional impacts, there is no strong impression of a trend (positive or negative) from PB.



**Figure 6.7:** Turnout trends within New York City matched districts only. Points are coded according to whether the district had held a PB vote before that election, highlighting the gradual expansion of PB. Lines represent the mean turnout in each election year for PB and non-PB districts, with PB districts defined as those that had conducted at least one PB vote before the 2016 general election. The consistently highest and lowest turnout districts are represented by their district number, color coded according to their 2016 PB status.

Figure 6.7 provides a closer view of turnout trends in New York City, this time including presidential and other elections in the same time series. Blue triangles represent turnout for elections after that district had adopted PB, while lines summarize the mean turnout across PB and non-PB districts. In general, across all districts that had adopted PB by 2016, PB districts have had consistently marginally higher turnout and there is no clear evidence of any systematic variation in turnout trends between the districts implementing PB versus those that do not. However, the amount of data and the vari-

ability of the timing of adoption of PB complicates the effectiveness of a simple visual assessment of trends, and I turn to regression modelling to better summarize any relationship between the adoption of participatory budgeting and turnout rates.

### 6.2.3 Regression Results

**Table 6.5:** Regression results in NYC.

	OLS	panel linear	panel GMM	panel GMM	panel linear
	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>
PB	0.07 (0.14)	0.01 (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)	-0.50*** (0.08)	0.04 (0.03)
Lag(Logit(Turnout))			0.62*** (0.11)	0.42*** (0.06)	0.43*** (0.08)
Presidential election				0.88*** (0.05)	
% Low Income					-2.52*** (0.57)
% People of Color					-0.39*** (0.07)
Intercept	-0.42*** (0.06)				-0.79***
District fixed effects?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Year fixed effects	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
N districts		24	24	24	
Time periods		7	7		7
N obs. used	168	168	168	168	144
Sargan p-value			0.196	0.242	
R-squared	0	0	0.96	0.39	0.96

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1. All regressions include logit-transformed turnout as dependent variable. Model 1 reports results of a bivariate ordinary least squares regression, Model 2 a linear panel model with no lagged dependent variable, Models 3 and 4 report panel system GMM models with lagged dependent variable, and Model 5 a linear model with only year fixed effects and district-level covariates. Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 6.5 summarizes the results of several increasingly comprehensive regression models of turnout. As turnout is a proportion, bounded at zero and one, the dependent variable was logit transformed in all models. Model 1 is the simple bivariate regression of the implementation of PB on turnout, which shows a positive but insignificant initial relationship. Model 2 begins to incorpo-

rate the panel structure of the data and includes year and district fixed effects, which appear to absorb most of initial apparent effect of PB. Autocorrelation tests of the panel data indicate autocorrelation in turnout (with an AR(1) structure), leading me to include a single lag of turnout as a predictor. To avoid endogeneity bias from the lagged dependent variable, I use system GMM estimator (Blundell and Bond 1998, Croissant et al. 2008) with both year and district fixed effects in Model 3, which includes a single lag of turnout.<sup>17</sup> The results of Model 3, the most complete specification of the model of turnout, demonstrate a small, but statistically significant, effect of PB on turnout, even when accounting for idiosyncratic election-year and district characteristics. In effect, if a district had a baseline turnout of 30%, introducing PB could be expected to increase turnout by just over 1%, to 31.3%. This is a small absolute change in turnout attributable to PB in these models, but this is still rather remarkable given that generally less than 4% of a district's registered voters participate in PB.

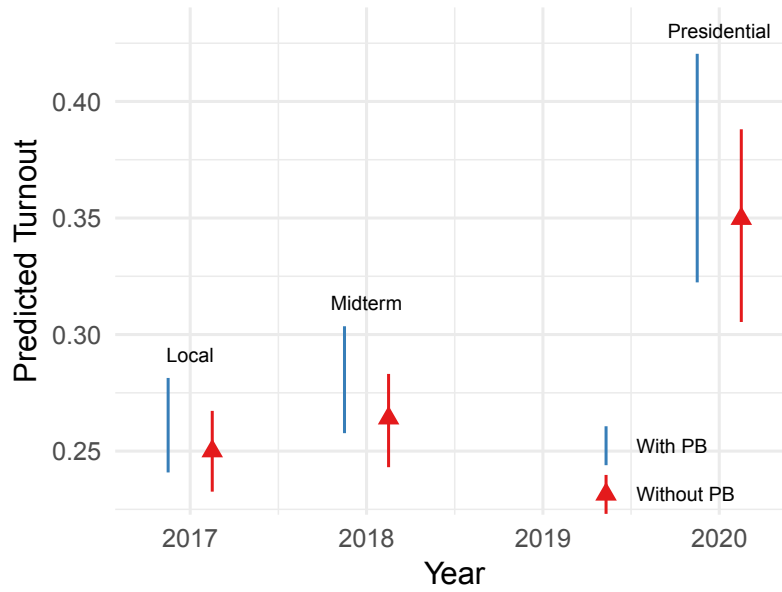
Figure 6.8 illustrates this effect of PB via predicted turnout for the next three electoral cycles, for 'generic' PB and non-PB districts (starting from the same baseline of the mean turnout across all NYC districts in 2016). Note that these predictions are from models which control for district's own varying baseline turnout, and the difference in these predictions are due only to the effect of one hypothetical district adopting PB at the start of the simulations. The effect of PB is small in comparison to district and year effects, but these results do suggest that at the margins PB may help to support a gradually expanding active electorate, at least in New York City.

### **Extensions to full study areas**

The heterogeneity of districts in New York lend themselves particularly well to analysis of the effect of PB. It is however, worth testing the robustness of this small effect of PB in New York to the inclusion of all the comparison sites. I replicate the regression analysis reported above for New York City along, including the turnout data from the other four study regions, including a flag for national elections in all elections as this characteristic now varies across years and geographies. The magnitude of the

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<sup>17</sup>See Figure D.3 in the Appendix for details of selection of instruments and estimator, as well as sensitivity of results to the PGMM specification. Substantive effects were sensitive to system versus difference models, but within system models results were robust to instrument specification.



**Figure 6.8:** Predictions for next three election cycles in New York, for generic PB and non-PB districts

estimated relationship between PB and turnout is unchanged (rather unsurprisingly and New York data continues to make up the majority of the dataset), but the uncertainty of the estimated effect of B increases with the inclusion of the variable data from the other study areas.

Summarizing the results of this analysis, in New York City, I find marginal support for the expectation that PB will increase voter turnout. This conclusion should be tempered by several considerations. First, PB is still new in most of these places, and it may well be that a longer time series would offer a more robust analysis of any effect of PB. The long-term impact of PB may be very different (in either direction) than the effect I am able to observe in the one or two elections immediately following implementation. In addition, turnout is affected by a wide range of factors. While the district and year effects effectively account for the unobserved distinctive traits of specific districts and years, they do not account for the fully dynamic varying conditions of local political systems. Implementation of PB may well be associated with independent political or community organizing activities in a district that are not accounted for in these models. Nevertheless, in terms of the questions posed in this dissertation project, the turnout results loosely support the positive expectations generated by theory.

**Table 6.6:** Regression results from all areas

	OLS	panel linear	panel GMM	panel GMM
	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>
PB	-0.09 (0.12)	-0.06 (0.04)	0.07 (0.07)	-0.61*** (0.06)
Lag(Logit(Turnout))			0.19*** (0.06)	0.26*** (0.07)
National election		0.88*** (0.05)	1.50*** (0.12)	0.82*** (0.05)
Intercept	-0.31*** (0.06)			
District fixed effects?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	No	Yes	Yes	No
N districts	33	33	33	
Time periods	1-7	1-7	1-7	
N obs. used	198	198	198	198
Sargan p-value			0.114	0.089
R-squared	0	0.67	0.92	0.49

\*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < .1. All regressions include logit-transformed turnout as dependent variable. Model 1 reports results of a bivariate ordinary least squares regression, Model 2 a linear panel model with no lagged dependent variable, and Models 3 and 4 panel GMM models. Standard errors in parentheses.

### 6.3 Discussion & Conclusions

Does participatory budgeting matter to the political life of the larger community? While further data collection is necessary to support more generalized inference, the conclusion from these cases appears to be “Yes, a bit.” The effect of PB on political discourse in Vallejo is significant, with the two cities’ experiences in aftermath of bankruptcy being substantially different. In terms of voter turnout, any effect is much more attenuated, but even the small marginal effect of PB in New York supports the expectations from theory. In both of these analyses, limited data and a proliferation of possible confounders do limit the potential for strong causal inference from these results alone. Within the framework of this study, these results do in fact confirm the expectations from theory and the accounts of qualitative case studies. In both these analyses, the implementation of high quality PB is accompanied by both mobilizing political discourse and increased voter turnout. Whether PB is itself a symptom of a general “syndrome” of strengthening democratic practice, or is itself an independent

cause of these results, seeing results at the community level that accord with the ambitious objectives of a localized participatory process like PB.

# Chapter 7

## Conclusion

Is participatory budgeting an effective strategy to strengthen democracy? Can the localized participation of ordinary people, deciding the fate of small portions of a city budget, matter for the quality of democracy in their wider community? The answer is, as is often the case, “it depends.” Clarifying the opportunities and conditions within which PB may live up to these expectations has been an important contribution of this project. This dissertation provides a snapshot of PB in four very different cities developing their own different approaches to PB. With qualitative research and time in the field, I am able to put each case under close examination. I am thus able to develop an understanding of the realities of implementation and the immediate impact of the PB process on participants, with special attention to the relationships and resources that are crucial to supporting wider political and civic organizing.

These PB cases, while sharing the common characteristics of public agenda-setting, discussion, and decision-making about public money, exhibit important variation in design, implementation, and public perceptions. In conditions of full implementation, with adequate resources to support both process and outreach, PB can have the kind of transformative civic impacts on participants that optimistic theories would predict. In three out of four study areas (excluding Tower Hamlets) PB succeeded in bringing out members of the public who had little experience with local government or community organizing. The incentives of real control over resources and opportunities to make tan-

**Table 7.1:** Observable Implications, Assessed

	NYC	V	L	YD	WF
<b>Participants</b>					
Participants are representative	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Issues addressed reflect public priorities	✓	✓	✓		✓
Interaction with strangers/new groups in PB	✓	✓	✓		✓
Learning/skill development in PB	✓	✓	(✓)		(✓)
<b>Public Officials</b>					
Report new relationships with public	✓	✓		✓	
Report learning/info from public	✓	✓		✓	
<b>Wider Community</b>					
Increased voter turnout	✓				
Inter-group collaboration		✓	✓		
Group-government collaboration	✓		✓		
Discourse shifts from demobilizing to mobilizing		✓			

Table summarizes results in each case study, for observable implications outlined in Chapter 2 (Italicized entries in Table 2.1). **NYC:** PB New York City; **V:** PB Vallejo; **L:** Leith Decides!; **YD:** Tower Hamlets You Decide; **WF:** Tower Hamlets Ward Forums. Cells in grey indicate instances where data was not available for that measure in that case.

gible improvements in people’s own everyday lives attracted new people, and the structure of agenda-setting, discussion, and collective decision making initiated open exchange between people who may never have interacted under normal circumstances. These interactions consistently produced accounts of, at a minimum, expanded senses of political friendship and shared community or, in the strongest cases, new collaborations between previous strangers.

In addition to demonstrating the democratic potentials of PB institutions, my case studies also help to delineate the scope and conditions of these impacts. Each case illustrates the necessity of high-quality implementation, in which the local government seriously commits adequate resources (in terms of personnel, money, and time) to the process. The case of the ward forums in Tower Hamlets exemplifies this condition, with under-resourced staff in an underfunded process unable to gain much traction or attract many participants. The truncated implementation of the ward forums, in fact, deterred many would-be participants and appeared to have a negative effect on community members’ interest in engagement. This experience is in contrast to the amplifying effects in Leith or Vallejo, where the investment of visible resources in the process increased both its appeal to the public and

perceptions of the credibility of its organizers. This may seem to be an obvious point, but the variation in resources dedicated to implementation suggests it continues to be a necessary one. For PB to have public appeal and a positive impact, it must have buy-in from local government and from the staff responsible for implementation. When the government's commitment to implementation comes into question, attracting participation and maintaining the integrity of discussion and interaction becomes increasingly challenging.

While the commitment to implementation is a precondition of any democratic outcomes from PB, the design of the process itself is equally important. Highlighting patterns across the cases, several specific elements come to stand out as distinctly significant. First, the process should be designed to require iterated, cooperative interactions between members of the public and government officials. Such interactions maximize opportunities for mutual learning and can play an important role in re-setting respective expectations for governments and citizens. PB's capacity to bridge the gap between the bureaucracy and the public is important. The strongest accounts of impacts from PB in New York and Vallejo often operate at the point of these interactions, while the absence of government officials from public interactions in *£eith Decides!* dramatically limits its impact on participants' civic learning and capacities.

These case studies also point to the importance of real opportunities for public agenda-setting and open discussion. Public control over the agenda, with opportunities for unstructured brainstorming and idea proposals that reflect people's real priorities, provides a crucial opening for information sharing and story telling, without constraining the topics (and thus the people) that are seen as invited and relevant to an event. Open discussion among strangers, preferably facilitated, provides a crucial space for interaction and extension of individual's networks, particularly outside of their familiar interest groups. Similarly, designing discussion spaces, meetings, or committee work to cut across either neighborhood or issue cleavages can play an important role in expanding individual's existing networks and encouraging learning across difference.

It is worth noting that the act of voting, in itself, does not stand out as a key element of design. The public vote on projects is undeniably important; it remains a clear and simple promise of public

authority and attracts the most participants and the most publicity. The vote also plays an important role throughout the process of project identification and development. It serves as an important constraint that ensures that the broad appeal and public benefit of projects is prioritized over narrow interests. However, the importance of the act of voting, in itself, is primarily in its indirect effects on the vigor and quality of process more broadly. An immediate implication from this analysis, as PB processes become increasingly trendy, is that an emphasis on voting alone will fall short of developing a genuinely impactful PB process. The other design elements, defining which projects are developed and how different actors work together to get to the ballot, matters as much or more than the implementation of the final voting events.

The effectiveness of PB as a disruptive or transformational political process therefore requires both careful design and real commitment from government. This is not a surprising conclusion, but it is worth attending to the particular elements of design that seem to matter the most: public agenda-setting power, face-to-face interaction and structured collaborative relationships. These design observations are particularly critical as PB continues to expand at a rapid clip, but with an increasing focus on online engagement or abbreviated processes that require less commitment from participants or risk from government.

The process elements that are most significant for transformative impacts are the most difficult to maintain and are often the least appealing to powers that be. An open agenda exposes local governments to more risk of unpredictable policy outcomes while also incurring greater costs in terms of staff time for working with the public to vet projects and consider the feasibility of and strategies for implementing unconventional projects. Accountability and reporting requirements on the staff that are responsible for implementing the process also typically create pressures to prioritize numeric voter turnout over participation in earlier phases of the project, or to prioritize the number of project ideas submitted over fostering engagement and deliberation in the process of generating those ideas. Such pressures, combined with the appeal of hitting both participatory and e-governance birds with one procedural stone, lead many processes to emphasize the development of online engagement strategies without also emphasizing improvements to outreach and mobilization of new or expanded sections of

the population.<sup>1</sup>

Given that a process is implemented in a way that takes seriously the promise of PB, what can we expect for potential broader impact on local democracy? Conclusions from this second-level analysis are generally positive but empirically constrained. Considering separate measures of organizations' collaborative behavior, trends in political discourse, and voter turnout rates, the results, summarized in Table 7.1 are generally either in line with expectations or inconclusive. The scope of the comparisons is too small to allow wider generalization or even strong claims of clear causality. Nevertheless, the implementations of PB in Vallejo, New York City, and Leith all show promising associations with improvements in at least one of the three macro-level measures. The clearest, strongest effect from PB, across the three measures, is on political discourse. Public accounts of politics and depictions of citizenship were strongly divergent in Vallejo and Stockton after the implementation of PB, with political discourse in Vallejo trending significantly more strongly toward positive mobilizing representations of civic action. Results for voter turnout were small in absolute terms, but also positive, while trends in organizations' collaboration with government were also neutral to positive.

## **Future work and future innovations**

These results are promising, but more work needs to be done to clarify the extent and conditions of any effects from PB. Analysis of more cases, with more opportunities for rigorous comparisons across time, will be crucial. There are several potential areas for future work that could be effective in this task, some of which build directly on the work in this dissertation, and some that represent new directions. The first two suggestions are direct extensions of the text analysis and voter turnout analysis introduced here. A major challenge for the text analysis comes from the geographic scale of PB. The granularity of many PB processes does not map well onto the scale and geographies of local media markets. An obvious extension that would facilitate more rigorous comparative analysis would be to adapt the text analysis methods to identify appropriate social media communities that may be

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<sup>1</sup>In some cases, online engagement does in fact allow for increased contact and appeal to subsets of the population who would rather engage online, but without similar interactive or collaborative online processes the second order effects from PB will still be minimized. This is exacerbated by the bifurcation of the process as a whole into isolated online and offline branches.

able to define neighborhood level discussions. A second potentially fruitful research strategy building on methods here would be to work with individual voter file records to identify what, if any, impact participation in PB has on participants or those in close proximity to participants.<sup>2</sup>

Moving beyond the general approaches introduced in this dissertation, several other potentially fruitful directions for research present themselves. One area of potential observable impact described in Table 2.1 back in Chapter 2, which I was not able to pursue in this project, focuses directly on impacts on public officials rather than public participants. While some limited research, outside academia, has explored the attitudes of elected officials toward participatory budgeting (Hagelskamp et al. 2016), there is relatively little work examining PB from within public agencies. The officials I interviewed described their personal responses and perceptions of the PB processes, which often reflected tensions between efficiency and engagement. The empirical question remains regarding the extent to which the experiences of officials with PB produces systematic changes in opportunities for engagement. Do cities or districts that implement PB in fact introduce more meaningful opportunities for engagement? Does the implementation of PB in fact change the topics and proposals in wider policy-making or budget decision-making?

On the measures accessible to this project, PB appears to have a promising, if practically limited, role in strengthening local democratic communities. My comparative case studies suggest that it is possible to identify generic institutional elements that are important to enabling democratic outcomes. Nevertheless, the local conditions and possible scope for creating these changes are highly variable, and the local challenges to democratic engagement will be just as variable. It is possible to think of democratic quality as a common pool resource, for which every local community may require flexibility for innovation and experimentation around strategies for preserving democracy. The proliferation of democratic institutions that can result from the creative generation of local solutions (Ostrom 2005) may uncover new strategies to strengthen collective responsibility and political friendship that are responsive to and creative within individual needs. While certain core elements (relational and in-

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<sup>2</sup>I am currently working on a collaborative research project as part of the North American PB Research Board analyzing validated individual voting behavior of PB participants, others living in the same household, and similar voters in districts without PB.

formational content of the process) may remain significant, the particular design features must be responsive to the strengths and weaknesses of the existing social and political community.

### **Closing thoughts: innovation and institutionalization**

Participatory budgeting in all these communities, even Leith, is effectively still a *new* process. The study of PB in North America and Europe is necessarily a study of institutional change, investigating a new formal participatory intervention into a political community with existing patterns of authority, negotiation, and communication. This reality conditions the kind of impact that we can observe. In these cases, PB's potential for transformative change comes from its capacity for disrupting and expanding existing patterns of politics as usual. However, as we can see, even just across these four communities, PB can best be successful when it is understood to be a credible promise, repeated over time. This introduces a fundamental tension between institutionalization and innovation in PB. A one-off PB process cannot be expected to have a durable positive civic impact on participants, but as the process continues, its major impacts may be diluted as participants and organizers learn to act strategically within the new institutional framework, attempt to minimize uncertainty and risk in the process, and establish their own stable patterns for interaction and communication.

This tension has become an increasingly visible element of the experiences of PB in New York and Vallejo in the most recent years. In both cases, PB has transitioned from its initial status as an experimental pilot project (as it was during the months of my fieldwork) into institutional procedures coordinated and implemented by city officials in designated offices. Both cities (and most districts) now have experience of multiple rounds of PB proposals and voting. Along the way, several new dynamics have emerged. In a first common trend, templates for successful or “appropriate” projects have emerged, constraining the imagined scope of both needs and ideas for investment through the process. Reflecting these real concerns Celina Su (2017) has done important work critically exploring the role of the “good project” in the PB process in New York and the ways in which issue convergence works to shut out traditionally marginalized voices. Even while new people still join the process every year, as voters and as budget delegates, they are primed to consider the kinds of projects that have had a

track record of success in other districts or other years. This kind of self-limiting behavior comes from a reasonable preference for proposing successful or popular projects, but it decreases the scope for further learning and open exchange which is inclusive of new priorities and new perspectives.<sup>3</sup>

The continuing incorporation of PB into the comparatively stable and well-funded bureaucratic infrastructure of local governments also pushes against the inclusive disruption of early PB experiments. This dynamic has been particularly pronounced in Vallejo, but is by no means unique to Vallejo's experience. While support for PB is by no measure universal, it is broadly popular. Especially in Vallejo, PB can be identified with a general rebranding of the city as a site of local innovation and successful governance (as opposed to bankruptcy and dysfunction). After the first pilot year, the city claimed full authority over the process, taking responsibility for the nuts and bolts of implementation and claiming credit for the positive spin of innovation. At the same time that the city appeared to consolidate its support for the PB process, they also sought to minimize both the perceived inefficiencies of the process and the risk that highly unconventional or legally complicated projects would make it through the process to win the public vote. These preferences have had two main consequences. First, the city moved strengthen the position of the paid staff, in practice taking control over design and implementation elements that had been the joint responsibility of the city and the public steering community. Second, the city worked to constrain the project proposal and development process while exercising stronger vetting authority. These changes were justified with public-spirited appeals to efficiency and responsibility, but also have the effect of taming the sustained disruptive potentials of PB.

The institutionalization of PB is necessary. Institutionalization, in these cases, means that the city follows through on its promises to implement projects and members of the public can trust that they will have opportunities to participate in the future. In all my case studies, the long-term stability of the processes was, in fact, crucial to public perceptions of both the process's value and the government's good intentions in implementing it. However, this institutionalization threatens the necessarily unpredictable and risky elements of expansive (and expanding) democratic practice. As Selznick documented in the 1940s with respect to the gradual ossification of the Tennessee Valley Authority, "the

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<sup>3</sup>This experience has echoes of Pierson's (1996) account of the evolving politics of established versus emerging welfare states. The politics of protecting existing benefits is different from the politics of expanding new ones.

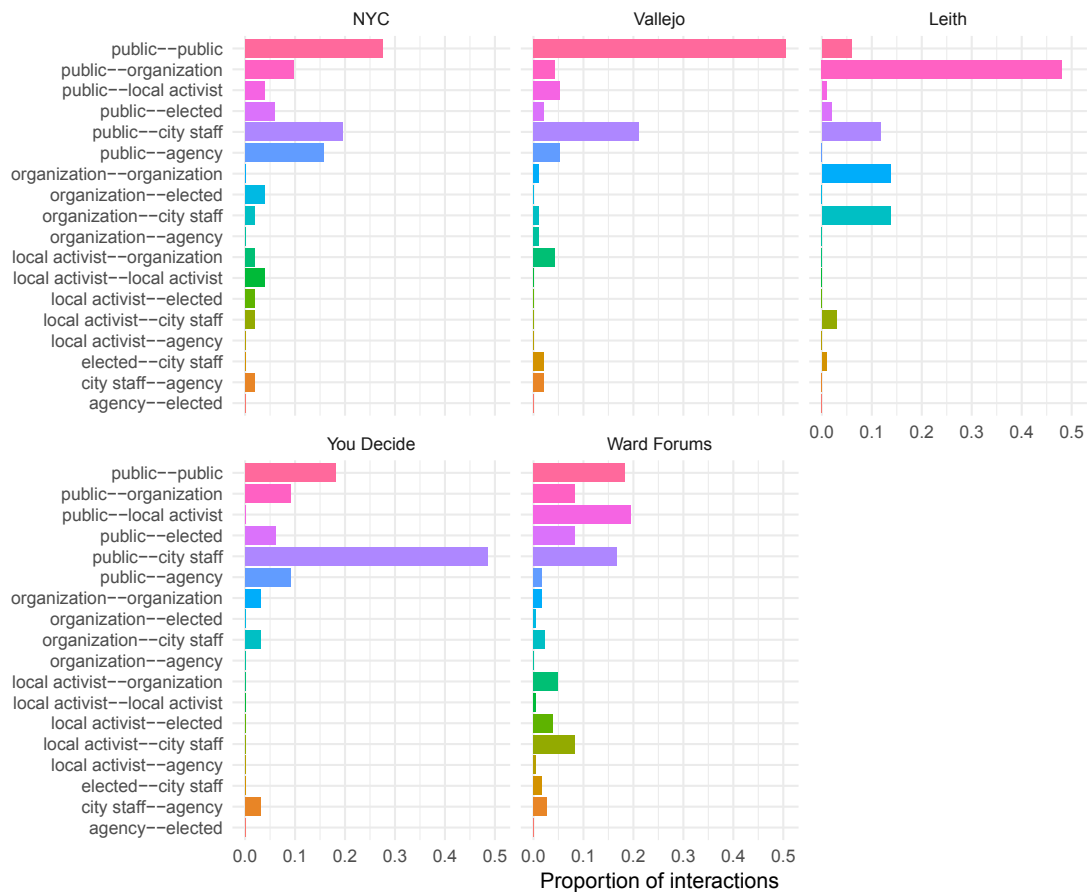
tendency of democratic participation to break down in to administrative involvement requires continuous attention. This must be seen as part of the organizational problem of democracy and not as a matter of the morals or good will of administrative agents” (Selznick 1980: 265). Emerging institutional commitments can come into tension with the objectives of democratic expansion and inclusive participation.

A main challenge for the future of participatory budgeting as a strategy of sustainable democratization is how to build institutions that can prove durable and publicly credible while maintaining their openness to potential disruption from new ideas and new participants. In the conclusion to their foundational anthology documenting emerging forms of empowered participatory governance, Fung and Wright (2003) point to the necessity of “countervailing power” within the community to implement and sustain such participatory mechanisms. Fung and Wright’s emphasis on countervailing power, while helpful, is not a full solution. As I see in the case of Vallejo, participatory budgeting can take root in a setting without strongly organized countervailing power. Additionally, as Selznick reminds us, such organized defenders of a participatory process can themselves be co-opted into institutional logics that preempt future democratic practices. So, what chance is there for PB to persist, and even grow, in its potential as a democratizing process in contemporary communities?

The strength of participatory budgeting rests, in the end, on its capacities for participatory inclusion, and the interactions and exchange that come from it. The key to preserving the democratic capacities of PB is thus in an emphasis on the preservation of expansive engagement rather than the process itself. At the introduction of a new PB process, no one set of actors is “expert” in the procedures the community will follow. In this lack of expertise, there is an opportunity for innovation and new modes of exchange that allow for new interactions and iterated collective risk-taking. Efficient replication of the process must not become the objective. Instead, PB needs the regular inclusion of new voices into organizing committees that can resist full professionalization of design and implementation while being open to future innovations. A continued focus on outreach must remain centered in ongoing iterations of the process. The future of PB must be both expansive and risky in order for it to continue as a strategy for future of democratic growth.

# Appendix A

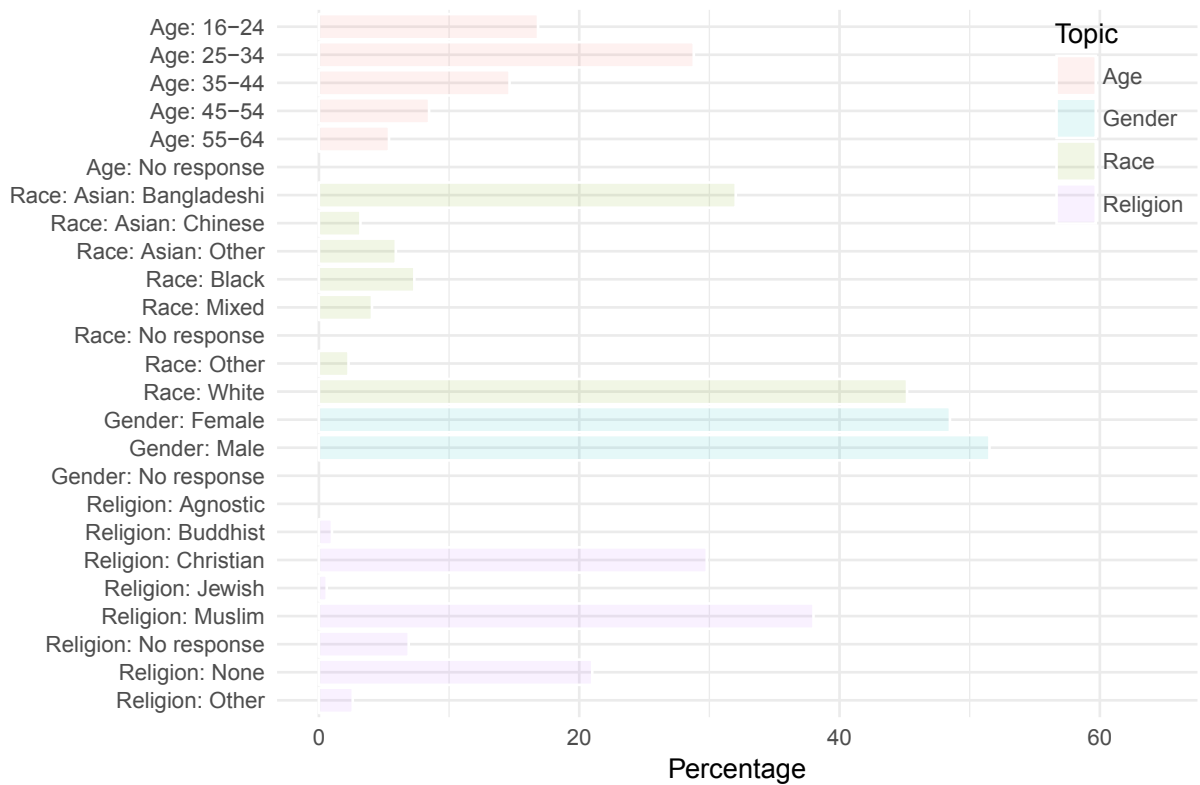
## Chapter 3 Appendices



**Figure A.1:** Distribution of (undirected) network interactions across all case studies from interaction instances qualitatively coded by the author across all interview transcripts. These plots summarize interaction for cases in both Chapters 3 and 4; included here as first referenced in Chapter 3.

# Appendix B

## Chapter 4 Appendices



**Figure B.1:** Demographics of second round Tower Hamlets community champion coordinator recruitment (2014), compared with 2011 census estimates for Tower Hamlets (available from [data.london.gov.uk/census](http://data.london.gov.uk/census)). Coordinator demographic data from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets FOI request #7437074

# Appendix C

## Chapter 5 Appendices

### C.1 Matching Case Selection

Four case areas selected and subjected to detailed qualitative evaluation: Vallejo, CA, New York City, the Leith area of Edinburgh, and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. In three of these cities, PB was implemented on a sub-municipal level (district, ward, and borough levels); Vallejo is the only city where PB was implemented city wide.

In order to gain additional causal leverage on the impact of PB in these communities, I designed a survey of community organizations in both PB and non-PB areas. For the sub-city PB areas I using a range of demographic and survey information about the population to match ‘most-similar’ comparison. Data available for matching varied in each region, and specific details of matching are outlined separately for each case below.

In the city-wide case of Vallejo, local expertise and qualitative similarity identified Stockton, CA as a most-similar case for comparison to Vallejo. Vallejo and Stockton share the relatively unusual experience of municipal bankruptcy, similar problems of economic development, poverty and issues with crime and violence, as well as a struggling city core in need of redevelopment. Differences of course exist: Vallejo’s position on the extreme edge of San Francisco Bay rather than on the San Joaquin delta, where Stockton is located, give Vallejo arguably a greater attractiveness to investment).

### C.1.1 New York City:

- At start of initial data collection for the project in 2013, eight of 51 city council districts in New York City were implementing participatory budgeting. These include four districts whose council members initiated PB in the first year, and four districts whose council members decided to implement PB in its early stages, before it became a form of mainstream supported civic engagement following the 2013 local election.
- The variation in implementation of PB in NYC provides a valuable space to get comparative leverage on the effect of the PB process as opposed to a political environment most prone to engagement. The 8 PB case districts were matched to 8 later-adopting PB control districts as well as 8 non-PB adopting districts.
- Variable used for matching were: . Population and demographic estimates were from the 2010 census, using incarceration-adjusted numbers available from the NYC Department of Planning (cite). Number of organizations in each district in 2011 came from geocoded (non-PO Box) addresses in the IRS masterfiles, omitting foundations (see discussion below). Income, language, citizenship, and education (ETC) data came from ACS 2008-2013 estimates, aggregated from census tract to council district, with partially included tracts weighted by percent of tract area in the district.
- Matching was done by minimizing Mahalanobis distances between pairs, facilitated by the R package MatchIt (Ho et al. 2011). PB case districts were matched to their nearest pairwise neighbor from the set of all later-adopting PB districts and all non-PB districts. The matching order was from smallest to largest distance (nearest neighbor).

### C.1.2 Edinburgh:

- Leith decides! covers the whole Neighborhood Partnership area of Leith, which is made up of two Edinburgh multi-member council wards, Leith and Leith Walk. No other neighborhoods or wards are implementing the kind of participatory budgeting seen in Leith.
- Two of the other 15 council wards (17 total including the Leith wards) were identified as the best match for comparison to the Leith wards. Matching was done at the ward rather than neighborhood level to better reflect heterogeneity across the city. All other neighborhood partnerships have similar community grant-making structures.
- Variables used for matching were population density, proportions of Asian, African, Caribbean/Black, and Asian populations, proportion of the population that have obtained at least their A-Levels degree, voter turnout in the local elections in 2012, proportion of Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones in the 10% most deprived zones in Scotland, median household income, satisfaction with the Edinburgh Council, level of library use (libraries are commonly community hubs and points of contact with council services and outreach), and community cohesion.

Data Source	Variables
National Records of Scotland (2011 Census) Scottish Neighborhood Statistics	Population density, racial demographics SIMD info, estimates of median household income, counts of occupied households (all by datazone, aggregated by me to wards)
Edinburgh People's Survey (Edinburgh City Council)	Council satisfaction, library use, community cohesion
Edinburgh City Council 2012 Election Results	Voter turnout

- Matching was done by minimizing Mahalanobis distances between pairs, facilitated by the R package MatchIt (Ho et al. 2011). Each Leith district was matched to its nearest pairwise neighbor from the set of other 15 wards. The matching order was from smallest to largest. Match was identical to the optimal match.

Leith	Southside / Newington
Leith Walk	Sighthill / Gorgie

### C.1.3 London:

- Similarly to the within-city matching practiced in New York City and Edinburgh, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets was matched to its most-similar boroughs in London. London Boroughs are much larger than either city council districts or (by an order of magnitude) Edinburgh council wards. While all London Boroughs are distinguished by large populations and varied communities, Tower Hamlets, a large, diverse borough in the East End of London is distinctive in the breadth of the worlds encompassed by its borders. Initial exploration of London-wide boroughs highlighted the unique diversity of Tower Hamlets, combining areas of rapid economic development (in Canary Wharf), gentrification and emerging industry in the western areas nearer to Shoreditch and Hackney combined with densely populated areas dominated by Bangladeshi Muslims (both new immigrants and multi-generation families) and post-war housing estates still occupied by long-term white working-class residents. It was very difficult to identify a single borough that had face validity as an excellent comparative case for Tower Hamlets, and following systematic matching I settled on two boroughs that will be jointly compared with LBTH.
- Tower Hamlets is also one of the boroughs to operate with a strong mayor-council form of government, as well as a target for investment and redevelopment connected to the 2012 Olympics. Potential matches were restricted to boroughs with these distinct features (all in the North and East areas of London).
- Variables used for matching were:

Source	Variable
2011 Census (Table KS201EW)	% South Asian population
London DataStore Borough Profiles	% BAME
London DataStore Borough Profiles	Unemployment rate
London DataStore Borough Profiles	% Adult volunteering
London DataStore Borough Profiles	% Working age adults w/o qualifications
London DataStore Borough Profiles	% Non-English speaking
London DataStore Borough Profiles	Index of Multiple Deprivation Score
London DataStore Borough Profiles	Income support rate
Greater London Authority (DataStore)	Median Household Income 2009-2010
London DataStore Election Results	2008 voter turnout

- Matching was done by minimizing Mahalanobis distances between pairs, facilitated by the R package MatchIt (Ho et al. 2011). The two closest matches, across diverse specifications of the match, were the boroughs of Hackney (LBTH's neighbor to the northwest) and Newham (LBTH's neighbor to the northeast). Newham shares a high Muslim population combined with challenges of access to resources and opportunities, while Hackney shares qualities of economic activity and basic wealth available to the council (with accompanying gentrification challenges) in addition to common dynamics of pockets of deprived housing estates and minority populations in a surrounding context of increasing wealth.

## C.2 Survey Sampling Frames

Once case matching was finalized, sampling frames were constructed, primarily using national lists of registered nonprofits or charities. In the US, these lists came from the IRS Master Files, downloaded in September 2014, in Scotland from the Office of the Scottish Charity Register, and in England from the Charity Commission. Official lists tend to exclude smaller or informal organizations that do not need to register. Generating a more complete sampling frame which includes more of these informal organizations is infamously difficult, requiring time on the ground doing a census, phone calls and snowball sampling (Grønbjerg 2010). A full census of organizations in each of the 8 (or 32 districts/cities) in the study was not feasible, but selective web searching was used to extend sampling frames beyond official lists. Web searching strategies varied in communities to optimize efficiency across different scales and settings. Full details are included in case discussions below.

Once sampling frames were constructed, separate simple random samples were drawn for each case/control area separately (essentially stratified by city and district). 300 organizations were drawn

for the two city wide samples in California. In New York, Edinburgh, and London, 200 organizations were drawn from the combined case district(s) and 200 from the combined control districts (described below), for either 400 or 600 organizations sampled in each city. After drawing the samples, contact details were confirmed and, if possible, expanded by searching for current information online, if possible by referencing the organization's own websites or facebook pages. Mailing addresses and, if available, email addresses were confirmed, and for organizations with staff or board information listed online, an appropriate individual contact person to whom surveys could be addressed was identified where possible.<sup>1</sup> Appropriate contact people included, for example, "managing director", "executive director", "chair", "president", or a specified contact person if one was named on the website. Online newsletters or annual reports would be used if staff information was not listed on the website but newsletters or annual reports were.

A total of 2000 organizations across all research sites will be sent surveys, by post and by email for completion online. Organizational response rates are notoriously low (Hager et al. 2003), and local nonprofits demonstrate a high rate of turnover, but it is hoped that with a response rate of 20% enough surveys will be received to enable comparison within a multi-level modelling framework.<sup>2</sup>

### **C.2.1 Vallejo:**

- IRS Master File, filtered to only organizations listing a Vallejo, CA address, downloaded September 2014
- IRS data filtered to remove private and family foundations that are purely grant-making bodies who receive funds from a limited source
- Supplemented by searching on google for "community organization Vallejo"
- Following links and lists of community resources from the four different Vallejo Chambers of Commerce, and exploring the city government's website for community organizations
- Sample of 300 drawn from 519 organizations, of which 97 (19%) came from local online resources. Final sample includes 17% organizations from local resources.

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<sup>1</sup>Response rates have been seen to increase when surveys are addressed to a particular individual rather than having to go through the initial mail-opener or administrative gate keeper (Dillman et al. 2009; Knoke et al. 2002; Paxman et al. 1995)

<sup>2</sup>Happily, I was able to achieve a response rate of at least 20% in nearly all study areas.

### **C.2.2 Stockton:**

- IRS Master File, filtered to only organizations listing a Stockton, CA address, downloaded September 2014
- IRS data filtered to remove private and family foundations that are purely grant-making bodies who receive funds from a limited source
- Supplemented by search on google for “community organization Stockton”
- Searched for community organization lists and resources with the Stockton chamber of commerce, downtown association, inclusive lists for San Joaquin County services/resources
- Sample of 300 drawn from 1282 organizations, of which 235 (18%) came from local resources searching. Final sample includes 18% organizations from local resource lists.

### **C.2.3 Edinburgh:**

- Office of the Scottish Charity Register public download of charities across Scotland, downloaded September 2014
- Charities filtered by geographic area (no organizations with a target geography greater than Greater Edinburgh) and type of activity (purely grantmaking bodies that only provide funding excluded).
- Further filtered by postcode, to include only charities in the postcodes of the selected matching wards (Leith, Leith Walk, Southside/Newington, Sighthill/Gorgie).
- Additional charities found through general google searches for community organizations and charities in the local area. Neighborhood partnerships were checked for links but directories or other aggregate resources were not broadly available.

### **C.2.4 London:**

- Official registration data scraped from the charity commission website, using numbers of relevant charities identified in multiple ways (for complete coverage).
  1. Opencharities.org, full data csv downloaded. Last update in 2012 (no longer available for download as of Jan 2015), filtered to charities with relevant borough postcodes. Further investigation of the quality of this data suggested that
  2. Charities commission: Names and numbers for all charities “operating in” the study boroughs collected manually from the online register, as well as all charities registered since 2012 with a relevant borough postcode (to effectively update the opencharities.org data).

3. Total list (duplicates removed) of charity numbers' publicly available data scraped from the Charity Commission website (including addresses, financial histories, trustees, objectives, type of work, etc).
- Resulting dataset filtered to remove organizations with a primary geographic focus larger than London (eliminating national/internationally focused organisations) as well as purely grant-making organisations (organisations that make grants but also provide services themselves were retained in the sampling frame).
  - To increase coverage of small or informal local organizations, local online directories were also used to supplement registered organizations: Hackney and Tower Hamlets both had comprehensive directories hosted by the local authority, Newham less so. Names and addresses of listed organizations and resources were collected and added to the borough-specific sampling frames, checking for and removing any duplicates.
  - 200 organizations were randomly selected from the organizations in Tower Hamlets, and 100 each from the organizations in Hackney and Newham (which jointly make the comparison area).

### C.2.5 New York:

- IRS Master File, filtered to only organizations with a New York City zip code (file downloaded September 2014)
- IRS data filtered to remove private and family foundations that are purely grant-making bodies who receive funds from a limited source
- Organizations matched to council districts using the New York City Department of City Planning's software Geosupport Desktop Edition (GDE) (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/bytes/gdeguides.shtml>). The process of assigning organizations to districts unfortunately results in the omission of organizations with PO boxes for addresses as they cannot be geographically located.
- Supplementary searching through the city's 51 community districts, many of which provide links to community resources on their websites; referrals to "community resources", "community groups", "organizations", etc. Organizations' address details collected and geocoded to district by GDE.
- Entries in IRS that duplicate organizations listed in community boards are marked as duplicate and removed from sampling frame
- Sample for NY is stratified not only by geography (and thus PB status), but by the 'type' of organization – whether from the IRS Masterfile or from the Community Board directories.

This stratification is done in order to increase the probability of sampling relevant community organizations. The size and density of New York City as a study area, combined with the minimal level of filtering information available in the IRS Master File means that the non-profit information in NYC is much 'noisier' than in any other sample area. This holds even compared

to the Vallejo and Stockton sampling frames, which are also built primarily from the IRS files. For example, the total number of relevant IRS organizations in Stockton is only 1047, and for Vallejo only 412, while the mean number of relevant IRS organizations in a single in-sample district in NYC is 574, with a range of 238-1518. The total number of relevant IRS-only organizations in the 24 sample districts in New York is 10020, and the total number of Community Board organizations is 329. Even removing the private, non-operating foundations from New York City's IRS files leaves thousands of registered non-profits whose work is at a national, international, or personal scale, as opposed to the community focus that more clearly defines registered organizations in the other study areas.

- 25 organizations are sampled from each of 24 districts, resulting in a total sample for NYC of 600 organizations: 200 in PB case districts, 200 in PB control districts, and 200 in non-PB districts. Up to 10 of the organizations in each district are drawn from the Community Board lists. For districts with fewer than 10 CB organizations, all are included and the difference is made up with additional IRS organizations. Otherwise, 10 organizations are drawn from the CBO lists and 15 from the IRS lists for that district. The total distribution of IRS and CB organizations is 139 CB organizations and 461 IRS organizations. 23% of the final sample is drawn from community board organizations (17% in Non-PB districts, 30% in PB case districts, and 24% in PB control districts).

### **C.3 Survey Questionnaire**

Following is a sample survey questionnaire, from New York City participatory budgeting districts. Each region and PB status had customized geographies, city agencies, and participatory budgeting process names. Format and primary content questions were unchanged across survey types.

## Survey of Community Organizations in New York City

### A. Collaboration and Community

A main objective of this study is to understand more about why and how much different organizations in your area collaborate with other organizations and people in the community.

1. Does your organization ever collaborate or work with other groups active in the community?
- Yes
  - No – Move ahead to Question 7

2. In what ways have you worked together?

*Mark all that apply:*

- Putting on joint events
- Sharing or recruiting volunteers
- Collecting information or data
- Sharing information or data
- Providing or sharing training
- Other activities

*Please describe:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Which reason best explains why your organization has chosen to collaborate with other groups?

*Mark only one:*

- We share objectives
- To combine our resources
- To reach a wider population
- To learn from other organizations
- A different reason. *Please describe:*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Compared to two years ago, does your organization now collaborate with other groups more frequently, less frequently, or about the same amount?

*Mark only one*

- Much more frequently
- Somewhat more frequently
- About the same
- Somewhat less frequently
- Much less frequently

5. How has your organization generally identified other groups to work with? *Mark all that apply:*

- Recommendations from members or volunteers
- Professional networks of staff/volunteers
- Shared umbrella organization or network
- Community events or fairs
- Invited by other groups
- Connected by government departments or staff
- Connected by elected officials
- In other ways. *Please describe:*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Please identify *up to five (5)* groups in your community that you have worked with in the past two years.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

7. What strategies does your organization use for outreach or to recruit members or participants? *Mark all that apply:*

- Paid advertisements (newspaper, TV, radio)
- Coverage in local news (print, TV, radio, online)
- Targeted mailings
- General mailings
- Email newsletters
- Door knocking/door hangers
- Tabling at community events
- Tabling in public spaces (e.g. parks or shopping centers)
- Organization website
- Social media (e.g. Facebook/twitter)
- Word of mouth
- Faith organizations/religious leaders
- Through other service providers or schools
- Other. *Please describe:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Questions? Contact Carolina Johnson at the University of Washington, Seattle (csjohns@uw.edu)

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## B. Collaboration and Government

This study also hopes to better understand how different organizations interact with the local government.

8. In the past year, have people from your organization interacted with government officials in the course of their work?
- Yes
  - No – *Move ahead to Question 15*

9. If yes, approximately how frequently does your organization interact with government?

- Most days
- At least once a week
- Monthly
- Occasionally, several times a year
- Rarely, not more than once a year

10. Which of the following parts of government has your organization (or its staff) had interactions with during the past year? *Mark all that apply:*

- City Council Members
- Mayor
- Dept. of Buildings/Dep. of City Planning
- Department of Education (DoE)
- Parks Department
- NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA)
- Department of Transportation (DOT)
- Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA)
- State or federal agencies
- Other: *Which one(s)?*: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. What type of interaction has this been?

*Mark all that apply:*

- Accessing government services for clients
- Providing services on behalf of government
- Providing information or being consulted by government on a topic
- Advocating an issue or for a group
- Supporting candidates or electoral campaigns
- Other: *Please describe:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Compared to two years ago, does your organization now interact with government more frequently, less frequently, or about the same amount?

- Much more frequently
- Somewhat more frequently
- About the same
- Somewhat less frequently
- Much less frequently

13. Are any people who are part of your organization (members, volunteers, staff, board members, or trustees) regularly involved in local election campaigns or local political issues?

- Yes, most are
- Yes, some are
- Yes, a few are
- No, none are
- Don't know

14. During the past year, has your organization engaged in any of the following activities?

*Mark all that apply:*

- Sponsored a community event
- Held a community forum
- Held a forum with political candidates
- Lobbied government officials
- Organized or supported a protest
- Organized a government petition
- Door-to-door organizing
- Helped to organize a neighborhood group
- Helped to register voters
- Helped people to get to their polling places

## C. Participatory Budgeting

In recent years, council members around New York City, including in at least one district where your organization is active have been implementing Participatory Budgeting (PB). PB a way to involve members of the public in deciding how to spend a part of the public money from in the city's budget. Following are some specific questions about this process and your organization's involvement in it.

15. Were you aware that Participatory Budgeting (PB) was going on in your community?

- Yes
- No – *Move ahead to Questions 24 on the last page*

16. In which of the following ways did your organization participate in PB? *Mark all that apply:*

- Proposing a project to be funded
- Supporting or campaigning for a proposed project prior to the vote
- Encouraging members or staff to volunteer in the process
- Encouraging members or staff to attend public voting events
- Providing information or advising on the development or implementation of a project
- The organization did not participate
- Other: *Please describe:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

17. Why did your organization choose to participate in the way that you did?

18. If you participated, in which city council district did you participate?

19. Did your organization receive any funding or support for activities as a result of PB?

- Yes
- No – *Skip ahead to Question 20*

20. If yes, what funding or support did your organization receive as a result of PB?

21. Has your organization become part of any new collaboration with other organizations or local government as a result of Participatory Budgeting?

- Yes
- No – *Skip ahead to Question 22*

22. If yes, please describe the new collaboration that emerged from PB.

23. What impact, if any, do you see PB as having in your community? If you see no impact, please indicate that.

## D. About your organization

Finally, it will be helpful to this study to know some basic background facts about your organization:

24. Which of the categories below best describe your organization's primary objectives? *Mark up to three:*
- Neighborhood improvements
  - Economic development
  - Youth development
  - Community organizing and advocacy
  - Health and wellness
  - Environment or sustainability
  - Recreation
  - Adult education or training
  - Immigration and refugee services
  - Public safety
  - Child care
  - Homeless assistance
  - Legal services
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
25. Which of the categories below best describe your organization's primary activities? *Mark up to three:*
- Provides services to the public
  - Provides information or advice to the public
  - Acts as an advocate for certain groups or issues
  - Acts as an umbrella organization or resource body for other groups
  - Provides buildings, facilities, or open space
  - Conducts or undertakes research
  - Provides financial help to individuals or groups
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
26. Which area below best describes the geographic scope of your organization? *Mark one.*
- A single block or small local area
  - A specific neighborhood/village in the borough
  - NYC as a whole
  - New York State
  - National
  - Worldwide
27. What are your organization's primary funding source(s)? *Mark all that apply:*
- Local/city government
  - Any other government
  - Private foundation grants
  - Individual donors and/or membership dues
  - Corporate donors
28. In about what year was your organization founded?
- |                      |                      |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
29. Does your organization have any paid staff members?
- Yes
  - No – *Skip ahead to Question 30*
30. If your organization has any paid staff members, approximately how many do you have?
- \_\_\_\_\_
31. Does your organization have any volunteers?
- Yes
  - No – *Skip ahead to Question 32*
32. If your organization has volunteers, approximately how many are involved right now?
- \_\_\_\_\_
33. Compared to two years ago, does your organization now have generally more, fewer, or about the same number of active volunteers?
- More
  - Fewer
  - About the same
34. Does your organization have individual members (Can people join your organization)?
- Yes
  - No – *Skip ahead to Question 35*
35. If your organization has members, approximately how many members do you have right now?
- \_\_\_\_\_
36. Compared to two years ago, does your organization now have generally more, fewer, or about the same number of active members?
- More
  - Fewer
  - About the same

*This is the end of the survey. Thank you so much for taking the time to help with this project.*

*Would you like to receive a copy of the study results?*

*If yes, please provide an email address here:* \_\_\_\_\_

Questions? Contact Carolina Johnson at the University of Washington, Seattle (csjohns@uw.edu)  
Survey No.

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## C.4 Survey Response Descriptive Statistics

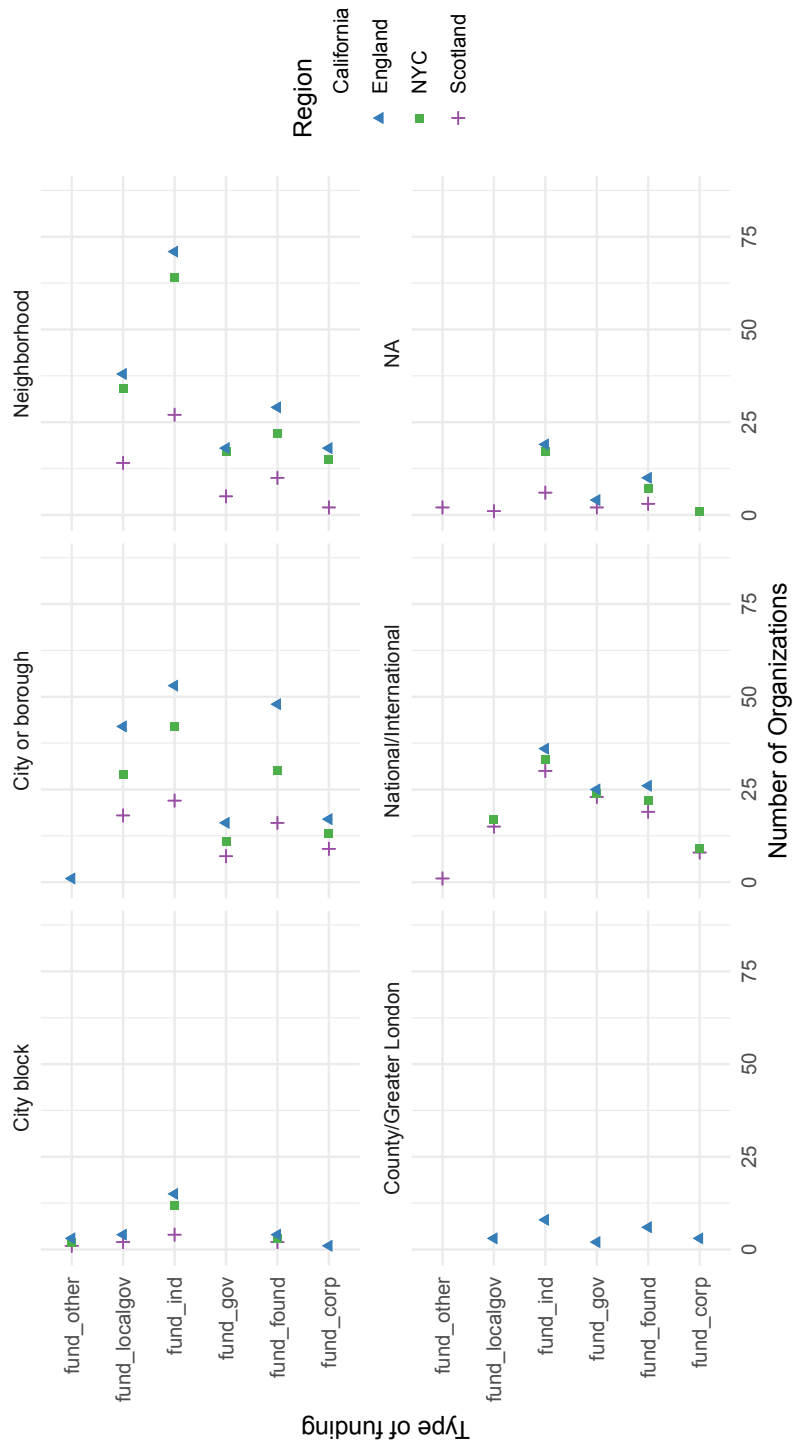
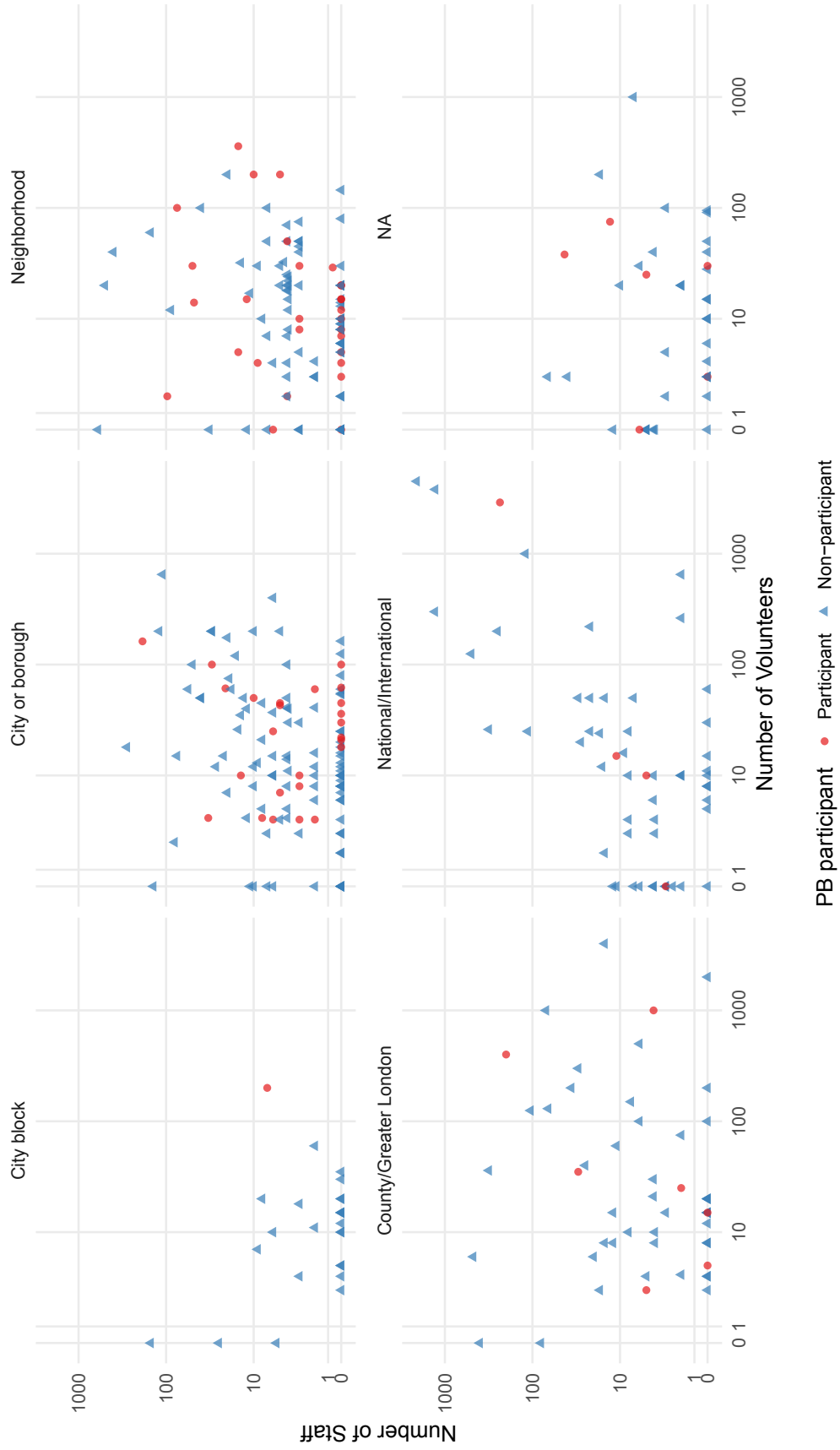


Figure C.1: Distribution of funding sources by region and geographic scope



**Figure C.2:** Scatterplot of number of volunteers and number staff by geographic scope of the organization. Large outliers, especially in regional/national/international organizations are not shown on this figure because of axis trimming. Size measures are all right skewed with many zeros.

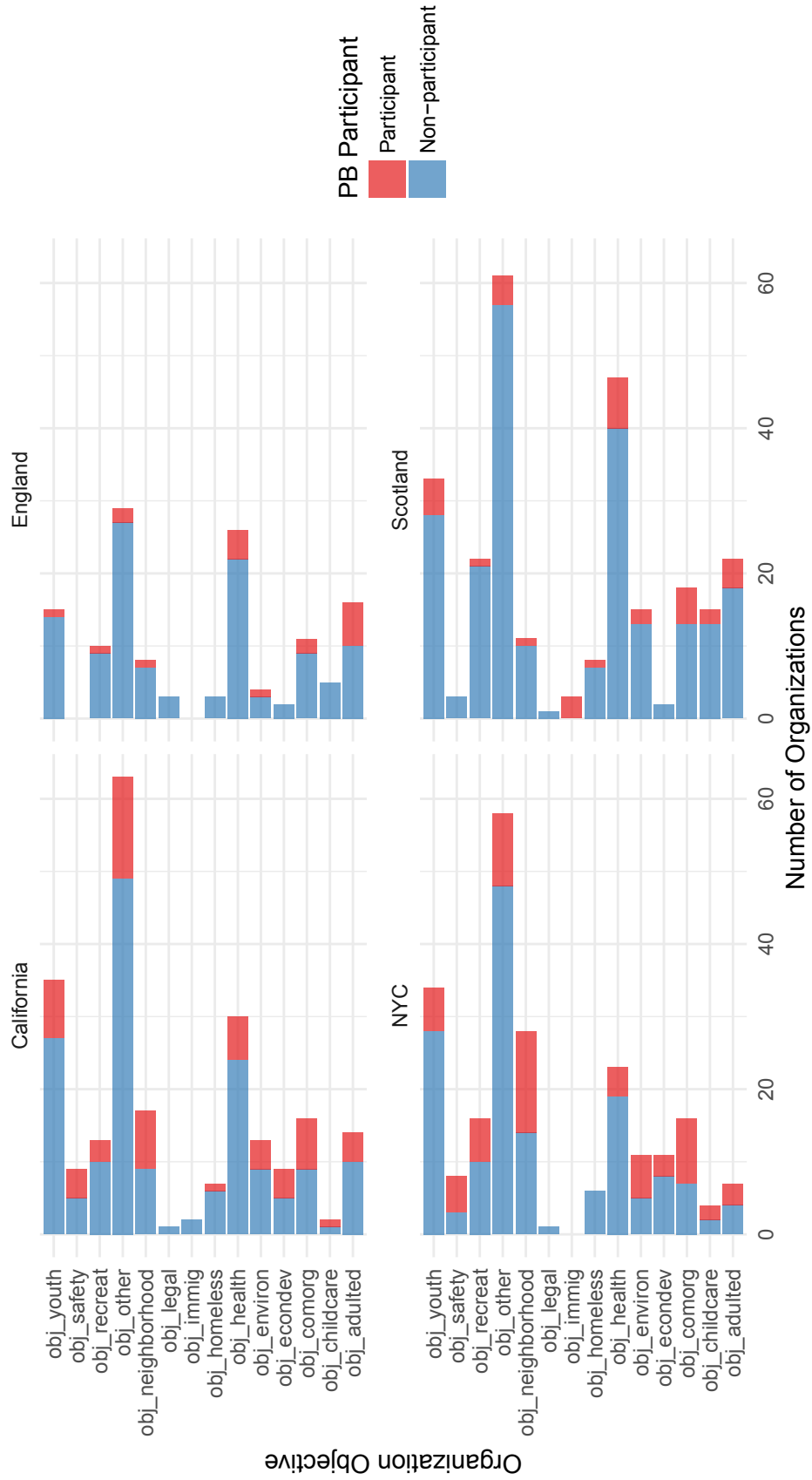


Figure C.3: Distribution of objectives by region and PB participation status

## C.5 Organization Collaboration Regression Results

### C.5.1 Regression Tables for Figures 5.6 and 5.7

Regression tables for effects of different measures of PB on collaboration, summarizing results presented graphically in Chapter 5.

**Table C.1:** Multilevel logistic regression models of the change in collaboration with other groups

	PB	Aware	Part	PB	Aware	Part
(Intercept)	-0.18 (0.15)	-0.33* (0.14)	-0.25* (0.12)	-0.47* (0.20)	-0.59*** (0.18)	-0.57*** (0.17)
PB	-0.03 (0.20)			-0.16 (0.21)		
pb_awareNA		0.38 (0.21)			0.16 (0.23)	
pb_partanyNA			0.30 (0.28)			0.00 (0.31)
fund_localgov				0.50* (0.23)	0.45 (0.23)	0.46* (0.23)
recruit_eventtable				0.46* (0.22)	0.45* (0.22)	0.46* (0.22)
activity_advocate				-0.23 (0.25)	-0.24 (0.25)	-0.23 (0.25)
activity_info				-0.19 (0.23)	-0.20 (0.24)	-0.18 (0.24)
obj_comorg				0.36 (0.30)	0.36 (0.30)	0.36 (0.31)
obj_neighborhood				0.49 (0.29)	0.49 (0.30)	0.55 (0.31)
AIC	585.62	582.53	584.30	559.77	559.89	560.12
BIC	605.80	602.70	604.47	603.76	603.88	604.11
Num. obs.	418	418	418	403	403	403
Num. groups: region	4	4	4	4	4	4

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ . Code Definitions: pb: PB area; pb\_awareNA: Aware of PB; pb\_partanyNA: PB participant; fund\_localgov: Receive funding from local government; recruit\_eventtable: Outreach via tabling at community events; activity\_advocate: Engages in advocacy activities; activity\_info: Engages in public information activities; obj\_comorg: Community organizing objectives; obj\_neighborhood: Neighborhood improvement objectives.

**Table C.2:** Multilevel logistic regression models of the change in collaboration with government

	PB	Aware	Part	PB	Aware	Part
(Intercept)	-1.14*** (0.18)		-1.01*** (0.15)	-1.76*** (0.26)	-1.71*** (0.23)	-1.59*** (0.21)
PB	0.41 (0.31)			0.31 (0.29)		
pb_awareNA		0.68*			0.48 (0.25)	
pb_partanyNA			0.61* (0.27)			0.16 (0.31)
fund_localgov				0.89*** (0.25)	0.90*** (0.25)	0.97*** (0.24)
recruit_eventtable				0.41 (0.24)	0.37 (0.24)	0.39 (0.24)
activity_advocate				0.10 (0.27)	0.10 (0.27)	0.12 (0.27)
activity_info				-0.13 (0.26)	-0.13 (0.26)	-0.13 (0.26)
obj_comorg				0.84** (0.31)	0.80** (0.31)	0.79* (0.31)
obj_neighborhood				0.40 (0.31)	0.35 (0.31)	0.34 (0.32)
AIC	510.46		512.96	475.73	474.80	478.22
BIC	530.64		533.14	519.71	518.79	522.21
Num. obs.	418	418	418	403	403	403
Num. groups: region	4	4	4	4	4	4

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ . “Aware” model without covariates could not converge (degenerate Hessian). Code Definitions: pb: PB area; pb\_awareNA: Aware of PB; pb\_partanyNA: PB participant; fund\_localgov: Receive funding from local government; recruit\_eventtable: Outreach via tabling at community events; activity\_advocate: Engages in advocacy activities; activity\_info: Engages in public information activities; obj\_comorg: Community organizing objectives; obj\_neighborhood: Neighborhood improvement objectives.

## C.5.2 Organization analyses without maximal collaborators

Regression tables for Figure 5.8

**Table C.3:** Logistic regression models of the change in collaboration with other groups, excluding maximal collaborators

	PB	Aware	Part	PB	Aware	Part
(Intercept)	-0.05 (0.31)	-0.23 (0.28)	-0.09 (0.24)	-0.62 (0.38)	-0.90* (0.35)	-0.78* (0.31)
PB	0.42 (0.44)			0.09 (0.49)		
England	0.39 (0.52)	0.50 (0.43)	0.43 (0.38)	0.23 (0.60)	0.58 (0.49)	0.51 (0.43)
NYC	0.29 (0.51)	0.11 (0.40)	0.12 (0.35)	0.15 (0.59)	0.22 (0.45)	0.14 (0.39)
Scotland	0.39 (0.41)	0.56 (0.35)	0.54 (0.32)	0.36 (0.45)	0.61 (0.40)	0.58 (0.36)
PB:England	-0.43 (0.70)			-0.07 (0.79)		
PB:NYC	-0.50 (0.66)			-0.32 (0.74)		
PB:Scotland	0.21 (0.61)			0.33 (0.67)		
pb_awareNA		1.06* (0.47)			0.90 (0.51)	
pb_awareNA:England		-0.88 (0.75)			-0.99 (0.82)	
pb_awareNA:NYC		-0.19 (0.68)			-0.69 (0.76)	
pb_awareNA:Scotland		0.86 (0.91)			0.77 (0.95)	
pb_partanyNA			1.34* (0.62)			1.08 (0.66)
pb_partanyNA:England			-1.39 (1.02)			-1.97 (1.11)
pb_partanyNA:NYC			-0.27 (0.94)			-1.02 (1.03)
pb_partanyNA:Scotland			0.61 (1.23)			0.54 (1.27)
fund_localgov				0.67* (0.32)	0.64* (0.32)	0.74* (0.31)
recruit_eventtable				0.77** (0.27)	0.72** (0.27)	0.77** (0.27)
activity_advocate				-0.03 (0.33)	-0.03 (0.34)	-0.07 (0.33)
activity_info				0.27 (0.31)	0.34 (0.32)	0.32 (0.33)
obj_comorg				0.36 (0.40)	0.26 (0.40)	0.24 (0.41)
obj_neighborhood				1.24** (0.44)	1.20** (0.44)	1.18** (0.44)
AIC	450.13	435.60	440.07	403.55	395.37	397.53
BIC	480.37	465.85	470.32	455.82	447.63	449.80
Num. obs.	324	324	324	309	309	309

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*  $p < 0.05$ . Code Definitions: pb: PB area; pb\_awareNA: Aware of PB; pb\_partanyNA: PB participant; fund\_localgov: Receive funding from local government; recruit\_eventtable: Outreach via tabling at community events; activity\_advocate: Engages in advocacy activities; activity\_info: Engages in public information activities; obj\_comorg: Community organizing objectives; obj\_neighborhood: Neighborhood improvement objectives.

**Table C.4:** Logistic regression models of the change in collaboration with government, excluding maximal collaborators.

	PB	Aware	Part	PB	Aware	Part
(Intercept)	-0.65 (0.36)	-0.62 (0.32)	-0.77** (0.28)	-1.02* (0.42)	-0.99* (0.39)	-1.22*** (0.36)
PB	-0.04 (0.47)			-0.13 (0.49)		
England	0.17 (0.57)	0.08 (0.50)	0.19 (0.43)	0.14 (0.60)	0.12 (0.52)	0.21 (0.45)
NYC	-0.68 (0.62)	-0.58 (0.50)	0.13 (0.40)	-0.86 (0.65)	-0.58 (0.52)	0.15 (0.43)
Scotland	-0.08 (0.48)	0.16 (0.40)	0.45 (0.36)	-0.11 (0.51)	0.19 (0.43)	0.47 (0.39)
PB:England	-0.17 (0.78)			-0.11 (0.82)		
PB:NYC	1.03 (0.74)			1.17 (0.77)		
PB:Scotland	0.98 (0.63)			0.95 (0.67)		
pb_awareNA		-0.11 (0.47)			-0.11 (0.49)	
pb_awareNA:England		-0.04 (0.81)			-0.19 (0.85)	
pb_awareNA:NYC		1.21 (0.68)			1.04 (0.71)	
pb_awareNA:Scotland		1.10 (0.66)			0.77 (0.70)	
pb_partanyNA			0.30 (0.49)			0.25 (0.52)
pb_partanyNA:England			-0.41 (1.36)			-0.84 (1.42)
pb_partanyNA:NYC			-0.22 (0.72)			-0.59 (0.77)
pb_partanyNA:Scotland			0.61 (0.78)			0.09 (0.82)
fund_localgov				0.61* (0.28)	0.61* (0.28)	0.66* (0.27)
recruit_eventtable				0.31 (0.26)	0.27 (0.26)	0.30 (0.26)
activity_advocate				-0.27 (0.29)	-0.29 (0.29)	-0.26 (0.29)
activity_info				-0.18 (0.28)	-0.16 (0.28)	-0.10 (0.28)
obj_comorg				0.82* (0.34)	0.75* (0.34)	0.80* (0.35)
obj_neighborhood				0.44 (0.34)	0.36 (0.34)	0.42 (0.35)
AIC	412.15	410.98	418.06	397.71	399.41	403.73
BIC	441.96	440.79	447.88	449.52	451.22	455.53
Num. obs.	307	307	307	299	299	299

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*  $p < 0.05$ . Code Definitions: pb: PB area; pb\_awareNA: Aware of PB; pb\_partanyNA: PB participant; fund\_localgov: Receive funding from local government; recruit\_eventtable: Outreach via tabling at community events; activity\_advocate: Engages in advocacy activities; activity\_info: Engages in public information activities; obj\_comorg: Community organizing objectives; obj\_neighborhood: Neighborhood improvement objectives.

### C.5.3 Multilevel organization regressions without maximal coordinators

For comparison with the multilevel estimates presented in chapter text, I replicate the figures for multilevel logistic regressions excluding the maximal collaborators for both community and government collaboration change. Smaller sample sizes, with less variation, mean that not all models could converge (again, another possible reason to move to Bayesian models), hence the incomplete figures. Non-converging models are not presented here.

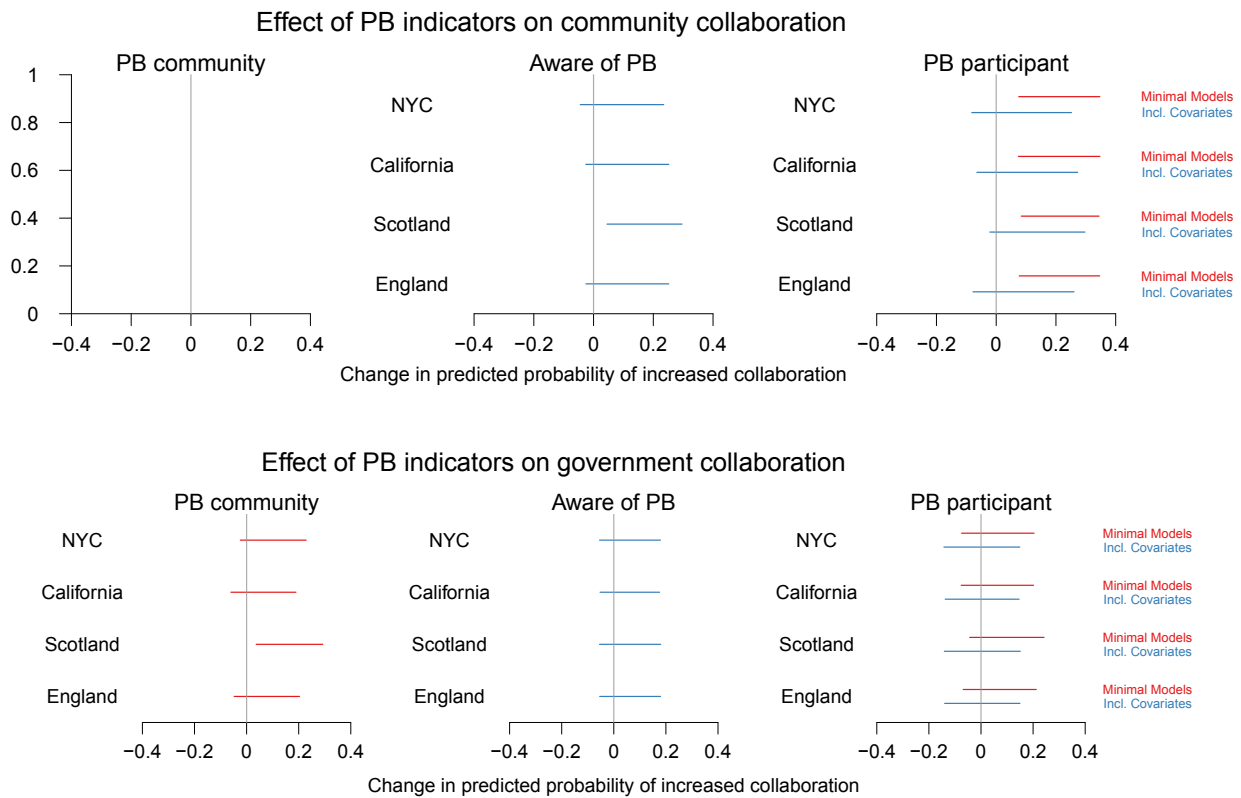


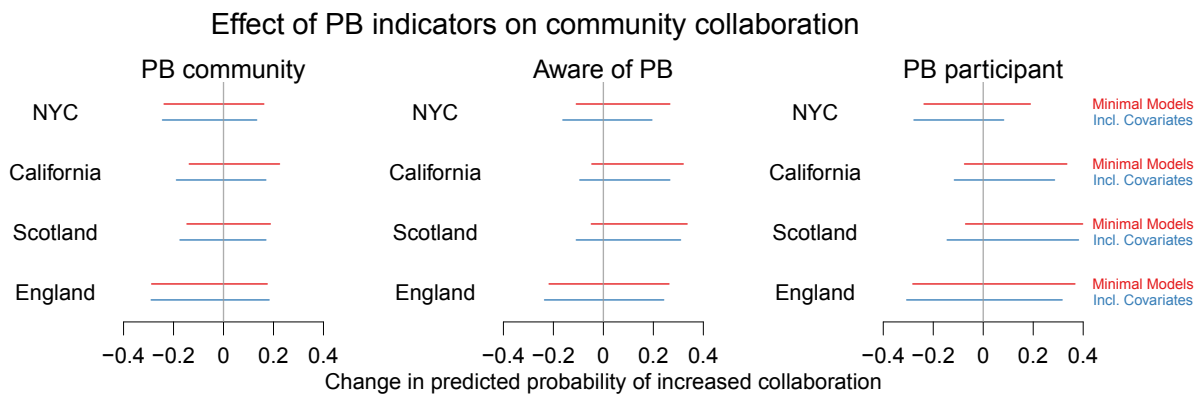
Figure C.4: Modelling without static high collaborators, FE not random effect models because of data limitations

## C.5.4 Organization regression alternative specifications

### Logistic fixed effect only results

As an alternative to the mixed effect models presented in the chapter text and in the tables above, it is also possible to simply use fixed effect interactions to model the variation in effects among groups. Mixed effect models are presented in the main chapter body as they demonstrate better model fit than these fixed effect models presented here (in comparisons of AIC/BIC) and accord better with recommendations from Gelman and Hill (2006). The fixed effect models do, however, offer simpler computation and are particularly relevant here for comparison with the extended analysis presented in Figures 5.8, 5.9, and 5.10 above.

*Community Collaboration:*



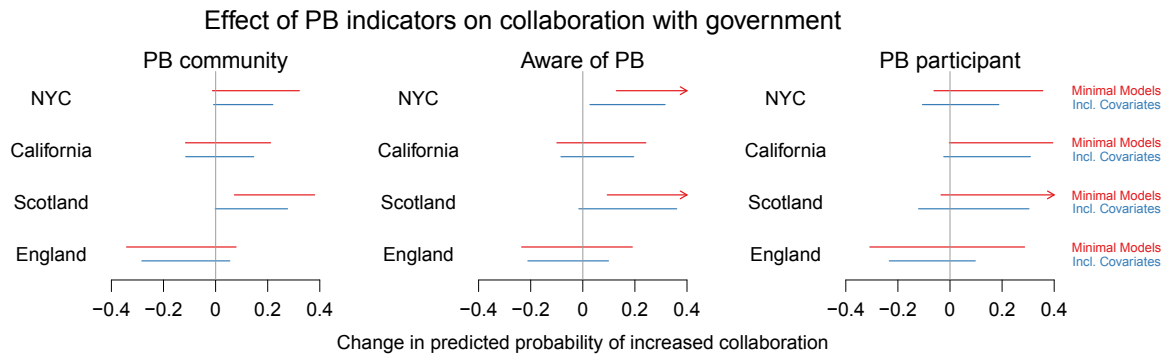
**Figure C.5:** Expected change in probability of reporting increased collaboration with other community groups, from logit model with fixed effect specifications.

**Table C.5:** Logistic regression models of the change in collaboration with other groups

	PB	Aware	Part	PB	Aware	Part
(Intercept)	-0.44 (0.29)	-0.58* (0.26)	-0.47* (0.23)	-0.65* (0.33)	-0.83** (0.31)	-0.80** (0.28)
PB	0.20 (0.39)			-0.05 (0.41)		
England	0.44 (0.47)	0.40 (0.39)	0.30 (0.34)	0.26 (0.51)	0.35 (0.42)	0.29 (0.36)
NYC	0.13 (0.45)	0.05 (0.37)	0.11 (0.32)	-0.03 (0.48)	0.01 (0.39)	0.09 (0.34)
Scotland	0.44 (0.37)	0.48 (0.33)	0.42 (0.29)	0.33 (0.39)	0.44 (0.35)	0.40 (0.31)
PB:England	-0.44 (0.63)			-0.16 (0.67)		
PB:NYC	-0.32 (0.58)			-0.17 (0.61)		
PB:Scotland	-0.11 (0.52)			0.03 (0.55)		
pb_awareNA		0.58 (0.39)			0.40 (0.41)	
pb_awareNA:England		-0.49 (0.65)			-0.44 (0.68)	
pb_awareNA:NYC		-0.24 (0.57)			-0.37 (0.59)	
pb_awareNA:Scotland		0.06 (0.58)			0.02 (0.61)	
pb_partanyNA			0.54 (0.45)			0.33 (0.47)
pb_partanyNA:England			-0.38 (0.87)			-0.50 (0.91)
pb_partanyNA:NYC			-0.70 (0.65)			-0.98 (0.69)
pb_partanyNA:Scotland			0.30 (0.72)			0.20 (0.75)
fund_localgov				0.43 (0.24)	0.40 (0.24)	0.41 (0.24)
recruit_eventtable				0.48* (0.22)	0.47* (0.22)	0.49* (0.22)
activity_advocate				-0.24 (0.25)	-0.24 (0.25)	-0.23 (0.25)
activity_info				-0.17 (0.24)	-0.17 (0.24)	-0.12 (0.24)
obj_comorg				0.36 (0.30)	0.34 (0.30)	0.37 (0.31)
obj_neighborhood				0.60* (0.30)	0.59* (0.30)	0.66* (0.31)
AIC	587.54	582.99	584.28	562.38	560.94	559.78
BIC	619.83	615.28	616.56	618.36	616.92	615.76
Num. obs.	418	418	418	403	403	403

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ . Code Definitions: pb: PB area; pb\_awareNA: Aware of PB; pb\_partanyNA: PB participant; fund\_localgov: Receive funding from local government; recruit\_eventtable: Outreach via tabling at community events; activity\_advocate: Engages in advocacy activities; activity\_info: Engages in public information activities; obj\_comorg: Community organizing objectives; obj\_neighborhood: Neighborhood improvement objectives.

Collaboration with Government:



**Figure C.6:** Expected change in probability of reporting increased collaboration with government, from logit model with fixed effect specifications.

**Table C.6:** Logistic regression models of the change in collaboration with government

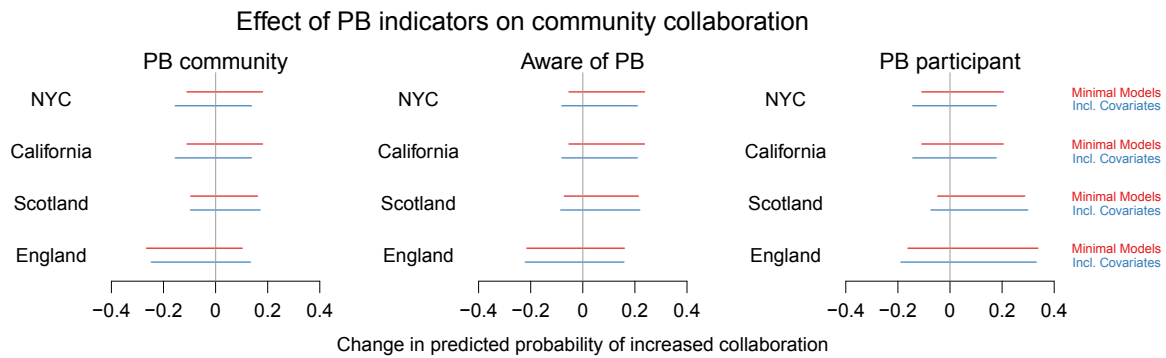
	PB	Aware	Part	PB	Aware	Part
(Intercept)	-1.18*** (0.33)	-1.18*** (0.30)	-1.28*** (0.27)	-1.69*** (0.39)	-1.71*** (0.36)	-1.87*** (0.34)
PB	0.27 (0.44)			0.13 (0.47)		
England	0.43 (0.52)	0.14 (0.45)	0.25 (0.39)	0.34 (0.57)	0.17 (0.48)	0.22 (0.43)
NYC	-0.54 (0.59)	-0.59 (0.47)	0.12 (0.37)	-0.90 (0.63)	-0.63 (0.49)	0.02 (0.41)
Scotland	0.12 (0.43)	0.36 (0.36)	0.64 (0.33)	0.03 (0.46)	0.32 (0.39)	0.54 (0.36)
PB:England	-0.94 (0.71)			-0.88 (0.76)		
PB:NYC	0.71 (0.70)			0.94 (0.74)		
PB:Scotland	0.76 (0.57)			0.64 (0.62)		
pb_awareNA		0.36 (0.44)			0.35 (0.46)	
pb_awareNA:England		-0.60 (0.75)			-0.91 (0.79)	
pb_awareNA:NYC		1.22 (0.64)			0.85 (0.68)	
pb_awareNA:Scotland		0.87 (0.61)			0.44 (0.66)	
pb_partanyNA			0.91 (0.47)			0.76 (0.50)
pb_partanyNA:England			-1.82 (1.20)			-2.35 (1.25)
pb_partanyNA:NYC			-0.25 (0.69)			-0.68 (0.74)
pb_partanyNA:Scotland			-0.01 (0.72)			-0.49 (0.77)
fund_localgov				0.89*** (0.26)	0.88*** (0.26)	0.99*** (0.25)
recruit_eventtable				0.42 (0.25)	0.38 (0.25)	0.43 (0.25)
activity_advocate				0.10 (0.27)	0.03 (0.27)	0.08 (0.27)
activity_info				-0.13 (0.26)	-0.13 (0.26)	-0.09 (0.26)
obj_comorg				0.81* (0.32)	0.76* (0.32)	0.80* (0.32)
obj_neighborhood				0.50 (0.32)	0.41 (0.32)	0.39 (0.32)
AIC	505.55	497.83	510.20	471.06	470.03	475.48
BIC	537.83	530.11	542.48	527.04	526.01	531.47
Num. obs.	418	418	418	403	403	403

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ . Code Definitions: pb: PB area; pb\_awareNA: Aware of PB; pb\_partanyNA: PB participant; fund\_localgov: Receive funding from local government; recruit\_eventtable: Outreach via tabling at community events; activity\_advocate: Engages in advocacy activities; activity\_info: Engages in public information activities; obj\_comorg: Community organizing objectives; obj\_neighborhood: Neighborhood improvement objectives.

## Ordered probit results

An alternative to the binary logit models presented in text, which can better exploit the full spectrum of variation in change in collaboration frequency are ordered probit models of collaboration change. Results presented in Figures C.7 and C.8 and Tables C.7 and C.8 summarize regression results for a four-category specification of collaboration change (with “much less” and “somewhat less” categories collapsed due to low frequencies). Figures present predictions for the probability of reporting any level of increased collaboration (versus reporting less or the same level of collaboration).

*Community Collaboration:*



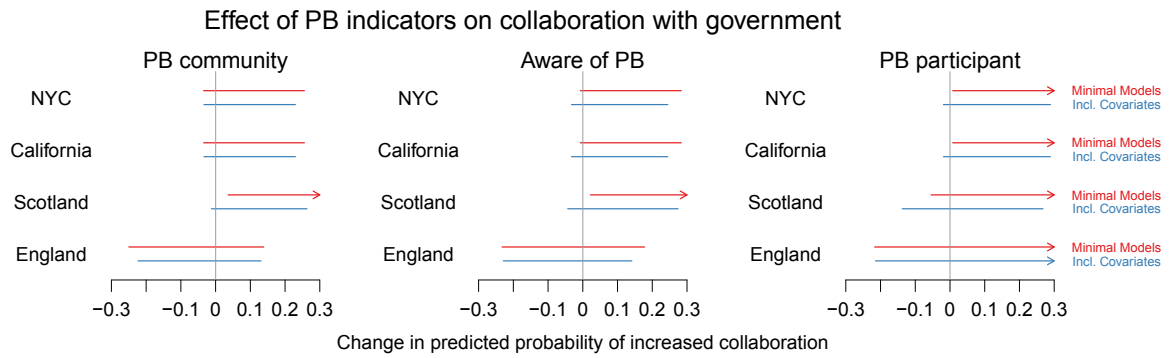
**Figure C.7:** Expected change in probability of reporting increased collaboration with other community groups, from ordered probit model with fixed effect specifications. Multilevel ordered probit models were not computationally possible for these data (without going Bayesian).

**Table C.7:** Ordered probit regression models of the change in collaboration with other groups

	PB	Aware	Part	PB	Aware	Part
PB	0.08 (0.22)			-0.02 (0.23)		
England	0.26 (0.28)	0.22 (0.23)	0.08 (0.20)	0.12 (0.29)	0.15 (0.24)	0.04 (0.21)
NYC	0.11 (0.27)	0.11 (0.22)	0.09 (0.19)	0.01 (0.27)	0.07 (0.22)	0.06 (0.19)
Scotland	0.27 (0.22)	0.33 (0.19)	0.25 (0.17)	0.20 (0.22)	0.29 (0.20)	0.24 (0.18)
PB:England	-0.30 (0.37)			-0.12 (0.38)		
PB:NYC	-0.18 (0.34)			-0.07 (0.34)		
PB:Scotland	0.00 (0.30)			0.12 (0.31)		
pb_awareNA		0.24 (0.22)			0.17 (0.23)	
pb_awareNA:England		-0.31 (0.37)			-0.25 (0.38)	
pb_awareNA:NYC		-0.27 (0.32)			-0.26 (0.33)	
pb_awareNA:Scotland		-0.04 (0.32)			0.02 (0.34)	
pb_partanyNA			0.12 (0.25)			0.04 (0.25)
pb_partanyNA:England			0.15 (0.49)			0.14 (0.50)
pb_partanyNA:NYC			-0.34 (0.36)			-0.39 (0.37)
pb_partanyNA:Scotland			0.25 (0.39)			0.30 (0.40)
fund_localgov				0.14 (0.13)	0.15 (0.13)	0.13 (0.13)
recruit_eventtable				0.12 (0.12)	0.12 (0.12)	0.12 (0.12)
activity_advocate				-0.24 (0.14)	-0.23 (0.14)	-0.23 (0.14)
activity_info				-0.02 (0.13)	-0.02 (0.13)	0.00 (0.13)
obj_comorg				0.23 (0.17)	0.22 (0.17)	0.24 (0.17)
obj_neighborhood				0.24 (0.16)	0.24 (0.16)	0.28 (0.16)
AIC	893.13	892.17	891.25	877.16	876.33	874.67
BIC	931.96	931.01	930.08	938.93	938.10	936.44
Num. obs.	359	359	359	351	351	351

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ . Code Definitions: pb: PB area; pb\_awareNA: Aware of PB; pb\_partanyNA: PB participant; fund\_localgov: Receive funding from local government; recruit\_eventtable: Outreach via tabling at community events; activity\_advocate: Engages in advocacy activities; activity\_info: Engages in public information activities; obj\_comorg: Community organizing objectives; obj\_neighborhood: Neighborhood improvement objectives.

Collaboration with Government:



**Figure C.8:** Expected change in probability of reporting increased collaboration with government, from ordered probit model with fixed effect specifications. Multilevel ordered probit models were not computationally possible for these data (without going Bayesian).

**Table C.8:** Ordered probit regression models of the change in collaboration with government

	PB	Aware	Part	PB	Aware	Part
PB	0.32 (0.25)			0.30 (0.25)		
England	0.27 (0.30)	0.22 (0.26)	0.12 (0.22)	0.19 (0.31)	0.15 (0.27)	0.06 (0.23)
NYC	-0.36 (0.30)	-0.14 (0.25)	0.06 (0.21)	-0.48 (0.31)	-0.19 (0.26)	0.02 (0.22)
Scotland	0.27 (0.24)	0.39 (0.21)	0.42* (0.19)	0.27 (0.25)	0.36 (0.22)	0.39* (0.20)
PB:England	-0.48 (0.41)			-0.44 (0.42)		
PB:NYC	0.36 (0.37)			0.41 (0.38)		
PB:Scotland	0.13 (0.33)			0.04 (0.34)		
pb_awareNA		0.38 (0.24)			0.31 (0.25)	
pb_awareNA:England		-0.48 (0.42)			-0.48 (0.44)	
pb_awareNA:NYC		0.10 (0.35)			0.08 (0.36)	
pb_awareNA:Scotland		0.08 (0.34)			-0.01 (0.36)	
pb_partanyNA			0.45 (0.26)			0.38 (0.27)
pb_partanyNA:England			-0.03 (0.72)			-0.18 (0.74)
pb_partanyNA:NYC			-0.41 (0.38)			-0.52 (0.39)
pb_partanyNA:Scotland			-0.07 (0.41)			-0.23 (0.42)
fund_localgov				0.37* (0.14)	0.36* (0.14)	0.39** (0.14)
recruit_eventtable				0.23 (0.13)	0.21 (0.14)	0.22 (0.14)
activity_advocate				-0.24 (0.15)	-0.26 (0.15)	-0.25 (0.15)
activity_info				0.00 (0.14)	0.01 (0.14)	0.03 (0.14)
obj_comorg				0.22 (0.18)	0.19 (0.18)	0.20 (0.18)
obj_neighborhood				0.23 (0.18)	0.20 (0.18)	0.23 (0.18)
AIC	708.62	710.98	715.79	685.67	690.39	693.26
BIC	746.12	748.48	753.29	745.24	749.96	752.84
Num. obs.	314	314	314	306	306	306

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ . Code Definitions: pb: PB area; pb\_awareNA: Aware of PB; pb\_partanyNA: PB participant; fund\_localgov: Receive funding from local government; recruit\_eventtable: Outreach via tabling at community events; activity\_advocate: Engages in advocacy activities; activity\_info: Engages in public information activities; obj\_comorg: Community organizing objectives; obj\_neighborhood: Neighborhood improvement objectives.

# Appendix D

## Chapter 6 Appendices

### D.1 Text Analysis Appendices

#### D.1.1 Proportions of Human Codes by Year

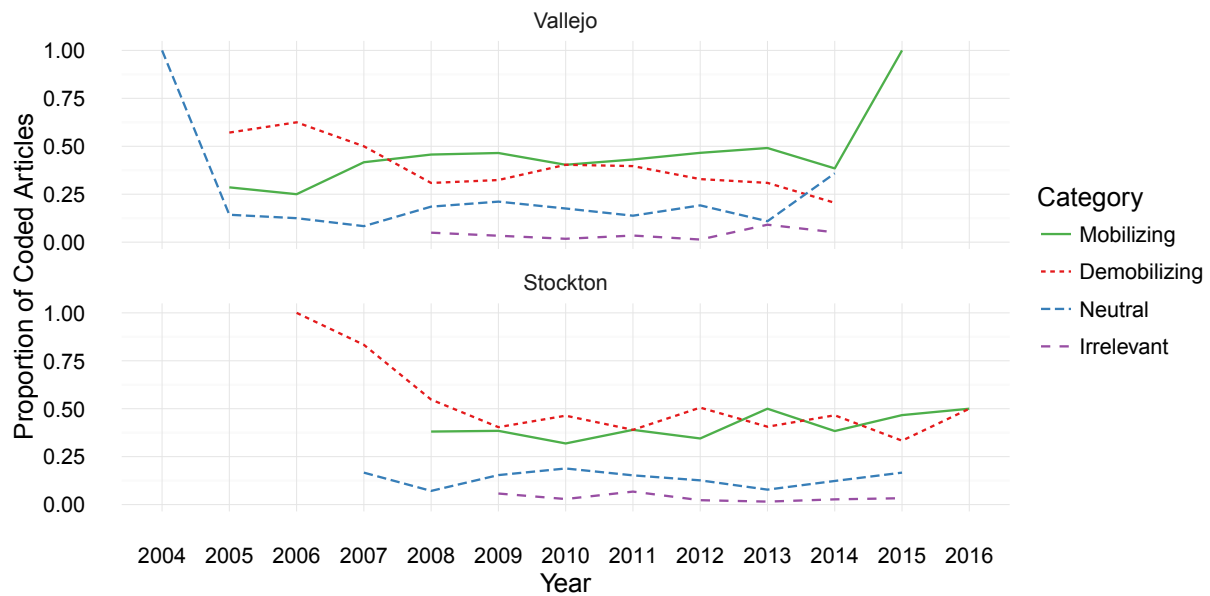


Figure D.1: Proportions of human coded articles in each city over time

City	Training data	MSE	N Categories
Stockton	Single	0.02	4.00
Stockton	Pooled	0.04	4.00
Stockton	Single	0.02	5.00
Stockton	Pooled	0.05	5.00
Vallejo	Single	0.03	4.00
Vallejo	Pooled	0.04	4.00
Vallejo	Single	0.02	5.00
Vallejo	Pooled	0.03	5.00

**Table D.1:** Mean absolute proportion error, calculated from 20 different samples of training and validation data. Pooled and single-city training data included for comparison.

## D.1.2 Comparing error of four vs. five category coding

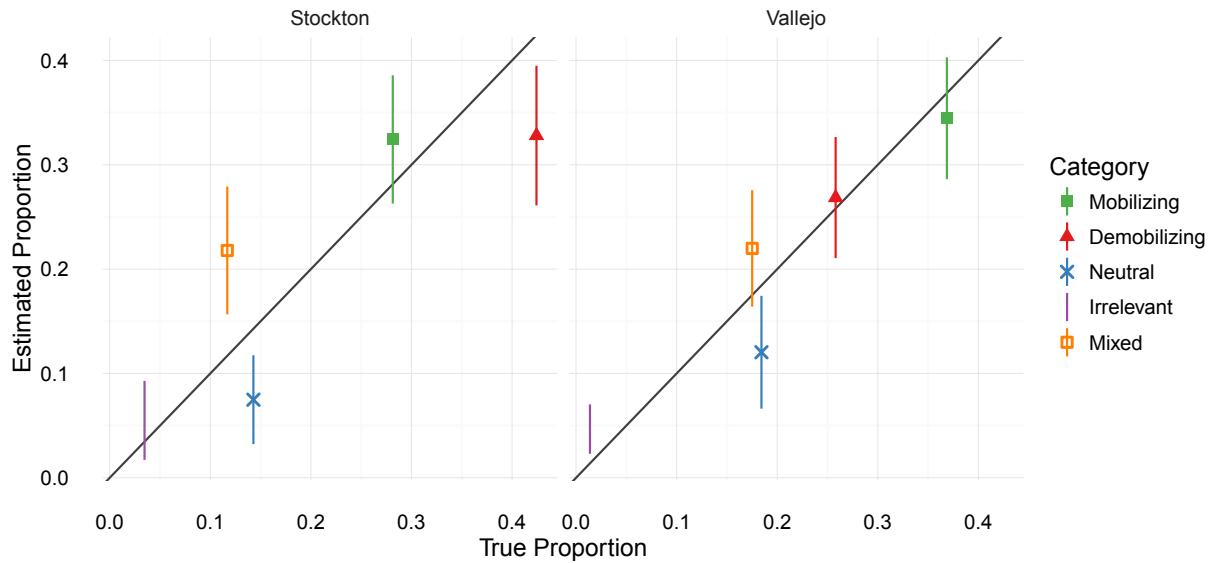
As reported in Table D.1, error increases for Vallejo in both specifications of the training set, or is constant when training set is made up of both cities, while it is increased when the training set is only one city. This suggests that including the mixed category may well be creating a container for harder-to-classify articles in Stockton whose classification changed as coders inevitably revised their strategy with more experience.

## D.1.3 Validation Comparison for 5-category Specification

Creating an additional category for “Mixed” articles for which coders identified both “mobilizing” and “demobilizing” text was also validated by ReadMe, beyond the simple error comparisons summarized in Table D.1.

Figure D.2 illustrates that the ‘Mixed’ category is recoverable as an informative category. It is also clear that the new category picks up a number of articles that were previously being “rounded up” to mobilizing or demobilizing. Preserving a mixed category has the greatest substantive impact in Stockton, where it appears that coders were somewhat less likely to have a unanimous reading of an article as mobilizing. One dissenting voice would be overruled in the four category approach, but is preserved by allowing a mixed category, resulting in a greater relative drop in the proportion of mobilizing speech identified by coders.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The source of this variation is not immediately obvious, but my hunch, based on discussions with coders, is that the more formal language and journalistic style coders experienced in the *Stockton Record* biased readers slightly more to



**Figure D.2:** Validation of ReadMe estimates for five category specification. 95% confidence intervals calculated bootstrapped standard errors.

The five category coding specification produces less efficient estimates with tend to deviate further from the truth (MSE is similar between four and five category models, as Table D.1 illustrates, category proportion estimates are smaller, so error is greater relative to size of outcomes being estimated). Yearly estimates were also replicated for this five-category specification of training data and substantive results are largely unchanged.

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feeling that the topics discussed were inaccessible. This trend would disproportionately impact unanimity of mobilizing classification. This hunch obviously would require careful testing, but suggests an interesting area for further study. It is interesting that even when trained on five categories, the ReadMe algorithm estimated approximately equivalent proportions of mobilizing and demobilizing articles, similar to estimates from the four category model.

## D.1.4 Coding Instructions

The following text was presented to research assistants and remained available as they worked independently. This text was revised in early pilot and training phases to clarify the task and preemptively identify common difficulties. All assistants independently reported to me that they usually kept the guide open on their computer and would refer to it regularly when uncertain as to appropriate codes.

### Local Media Mobilization Coding Instructions

For this task, you are asked to classify articles from a local newspaper. For each article, you should identify one of the following four categories as best describing the article. The majority of articles should be identified as either mobilizing or demobilizing. Sometimes it may seem challenging to classify the article, but do your best, and try not to over think it.

The bullet points below the main category description provide examples of the types of articles that should be classified under each category. An article need not fit perfectly into one of those bullet points to be classified in the category: if upon your reading it seems to fit in to the broader category (the bold text below), mark it accordingly. In such cases, describe your reasoning in a bookmark in CAT.

**Caution:** Do not just code based on whether you like/dislike or agree/disagree with what you read. You will likely read articles describing citizen's positions or policy developments that you disagree with or that sound negative, but that still should be coded as mobilizing, and vice versa.

When in doubt, ask yourself "What is the role of citizens in this article?"

**Mobilizing: Text presents public life and politics as a collective task, one in which members of the public can (or should) have a useful, meaningful, or productive role.**

- Profiling 'ordinary people' who become effective activists; modeling that anyone can become an effective citizens
- Accounts of successful cooperative action, especially collaboration across different groups
- Modeling 'collective efficacy' — the ability of a community, neighborhood etc. to get things done and make improvements for themselves.

- Accounts of government responsiveness to general public preferences or expressed needs

**Demobilizing:** Text encourages a cynical, disengaged perspective on politics and/or public life.

**An article that makes you want to have nothing to do with politics or politicians.**

- Accounts of ‘capture’ of government by private actors (e.g. businesses, unions, other individuals or single organizations controlling decisions/budgets etc.) – this may depend on subtle reading to distinguish from positive accounts of responsive government
- Government unable or unwilling to take decisions
- Presenting politics as a game, in which politicians or parties compete, focusing on the strategic motives behind positions or political actions or the relative popularity or power of individual actors (politicians or parties). Focusing on the effects of policies or political events inside the political sphere, rather than the substantive impact on the community/public.

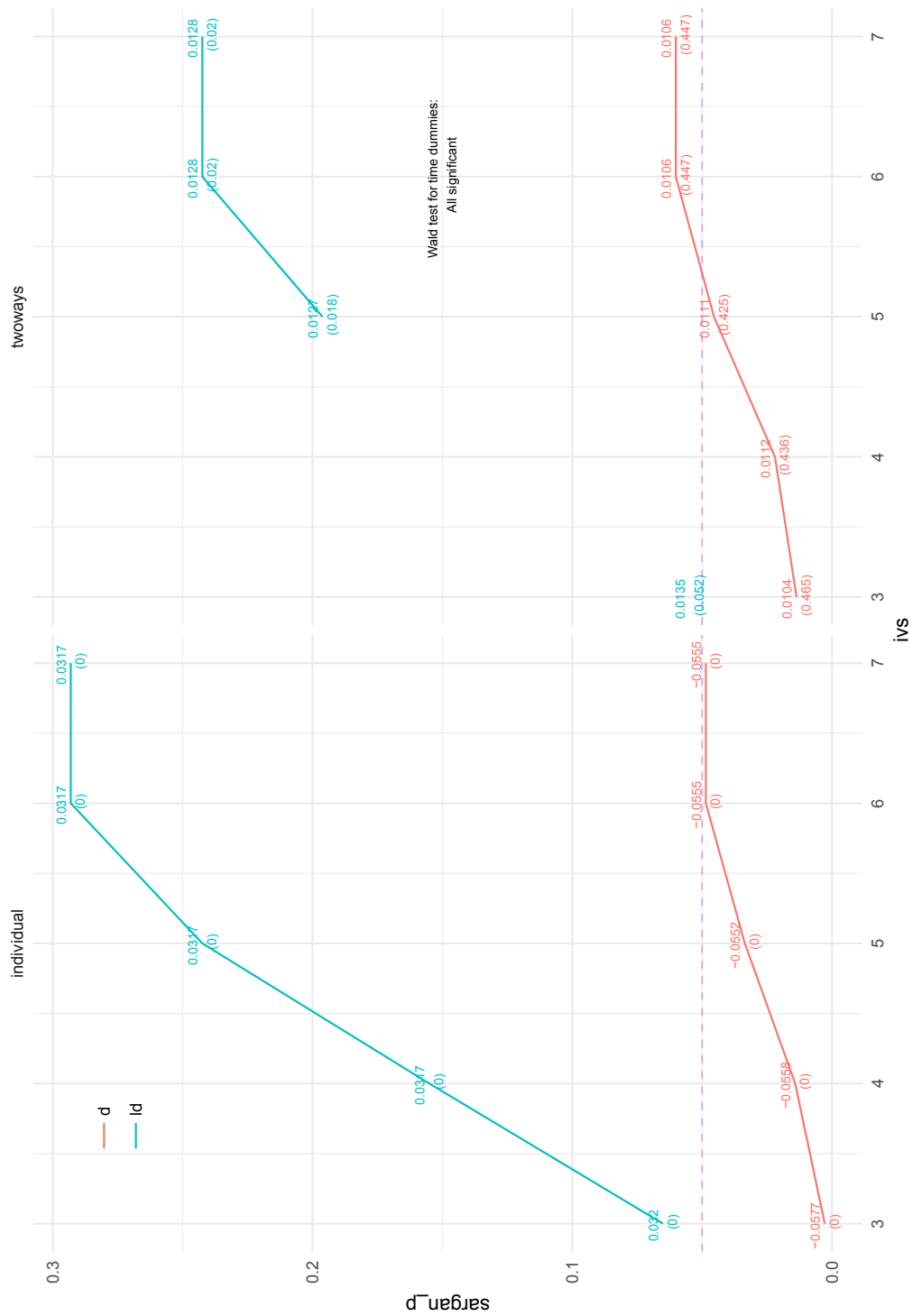
**Neutral:** Text presents neutral description of decisions or public life.

- Genuinely unclassifiable reporting of political affairs
- May be appropriate for simple summaries of council proceedings or candidate press releases, or similar
- Only use if mobilizing/demobilizing are not a good fit; even if most of the article seems neutral, if it includes any classifiable text, code accordingly.

**Irrelevant:** Text has been misclassified as politics/public life

- Article is not about politics or local government. Should only be applied when you’re certain it’s appropriate. You should be able to identify the word from the search string that caused this article to be caught in the search (“city council”, “city budget”, “politic...”, “election”, “democra...”)
- and be able to delete that word or sentence without altering any of the substance of the article.
- For example articles about company or organization activities that include the word ‘election’, but not in reference to government elections, may be determined to be irrelevant.

## D.2 Turnout Analysis Appendices



**Figure D.3: PGMM model selection:** Effect estimates and fit statistics for potential model types and instrument specification for panel GMM models. Twoways 'ld' models with maximum IVs selected as consistently high Sargan-p and significant Wald test for time dummies.

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