

democratic innovations: citizen participation from the streets to the institutions

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Scotland's Democratic Deaficit: A model Signing Parliament
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#DemocraticDeaficit
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What is a participatory democracy?

*“**citizens** govern themselves **directly**, not necessarily at every level and in every instance, but **frequently** enough and in particular when basic policies are being decided and when **significant power** is being deployed.*

*This is carried out through **institutions** designed to **facilitate ongoing civic participation** in agenda-setting, deliberation, legislation, and policy implementation”*

Benjamin R. Barber, *Strong democracy*, 1984

Why public participation? (Involve 2005)

- Addressing **complex problems** drawing on untapped knowledge, experience and perspectives
- Making **better policies and legislation** and ensuring effective implementation
- Improving public **service design and delivery**
- Building **legitimacy and trust** in public institutions
- Developing **citizens' skills, confidence and ambition**
- Enabling **active citizens and communities**

Public participation in Scotland

deficits and aspirations

(Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2015, 2017 + Ipsos Mori 2014)



35% of Scottish citizens feel part of how decisions affecting their community are made

77% would get more involved in their community if it was easier to participate in decisions that affect it

57% said the Scottish Parliament is giving ordinary people more say in how Scotland is governed – 38% said it makes no difference

International trends in participation



<https://participedia.net>

Evolving role of citizens: 2 stories can be told

Story of decline

- Declining...
 - Voter **turnout** in elections
 - **Trust** in & **legitimacy** of traditional institutions of public life (e.g. government, media, parties, unions, community associations, etc)
 - **Social capital**: community 'ethos' & networks

(Dalton 2005; Putnam 2001)

Story of progress

- **Citizens are becoming...**
 - better educated, more knowledgeable and critical;
 - less deferential to traditional authority and elite-driven / top-down forms of governance;
 - dismissive of conventional channels and engaged in alternative forms of political expression;
- **The myth of public apathy**

(Norris 2002; Castells 2012; Dalton 2017; Eliasoph 1998)

Debunking the myth of apathy: Civic participation in Scotland

- Record-breaking participation in the independence referendum (84.6%)
- A growing, vibrant civil society / third sector: social enterprises, community development trusts, housing associations, transition towns, community ownership initiatives, etc
- Civic participation on the rise:
 - 55% in 2009
 - 61% in 2013
 - 69% in 2015(Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2013 and 2015)

But is all participation good?

- Paradox of **growing participation and growing inequalities** (Walker, McQuarrie & Lee 2015) – *the self-selection bias?*
- Inequalities in health, income, wealth, education... stemming from **inequalities of power and influence**
- The participation gap (Dalton 2017) – growing gap between **the ‘politically rich’ and the ‘politically poor’**

unless **corrective measures** are taken “participation of all varieties will be skewed in favour of those with higher socioeconomic status and formal education”

(Ryfe & Stalsburg 2012)

Key challenges in public participation processes



The growing field of Democratic Innovation: Building institutions for participatory democracy



Democratic innovations are processes or institutions developed to reimagine and deepen the role of citizens in governance processes by increasing opportunities for **participation, deliberation and influence**

Examples:

1. Online crowdsourcing
2. Mini-publics
3. Participatory budgeting



Crowdsourcing

- Open Ministry in Finland
- Taiwan tech experiments in crowdsourcing laws
- Crowdsourcing the Icelandic Constitution

Open Ministry Crowdsourcing legislation



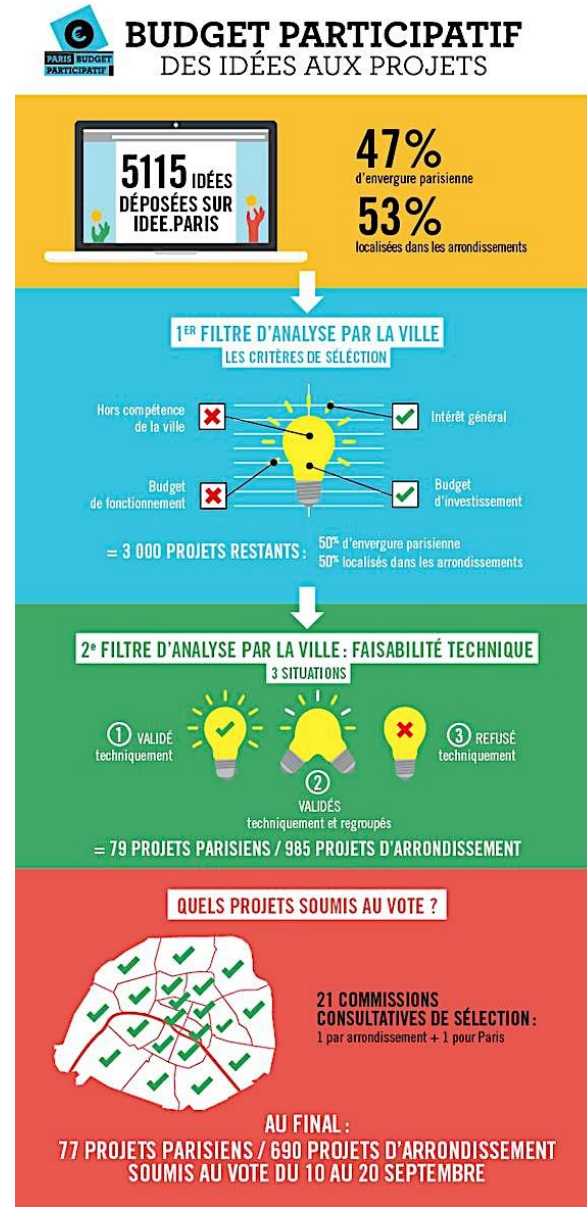
Mini-publics

- Melbourne Citizens' Panel on Finance
- Citizens' Assemblies in Canada and Ireland
- Oregon's Citizen Initiative Review
- Mongolia's Legislative Citizens' Hall
- Madrid Decides (Spain) and Ostbelgien Model (Belgium) > new permanent citizen bodies alongside legislature



Participatory Budgeting

- From Brazil to over 3,000 localities around the world
- Combining public service reform, community empowerment and social justice
- Over 250 processes in Scotland so far



Democratic innovations seek to redefine:

- Democracy as more than representative democracy
- Politics as more than party politics
- Public participation, **not only in the streets but also in the institutions**

the bigger picture:
global democratic recession?



Democratic Recession?

- **The Democracy Index 2016 / 2018**
 - The number of democracies has dropped in the last decade
 - Half the world's population (49.3%) live in a democracy of some kind
 - But only 4.5% of people live in a 'full democracy' (19 countries)
- **People love the idea of democracy, but despair at how it is practiced**
- Global Attitudes Survey suggests an increase in indifference, frustration and even **authoritarian attitudes particularly in the youngest populations** of democratic systems around the world (Foa & Mounk, 2016)

*“Everywhere there are waves of criticism and doubt as to whether democracy can meet pressing problems ... **Wherever it has fallen, democracy had not become part of the bone and blood of the people in daily conduct of its life.** Democratic forms were limited to Parliament, elections and combats between parties.*

*What is happening proves conclusively ... that **unless democratic habits of thought and action are part of the fiber of a people, political democracy is insecure.** It can not stand in isolation. It must be buttressed by the presence of democratic methods in all social relationships”*

John Dewey

The Public and its problems (1937: 467)

Concluding:

what does this mean for the BSL/Deaf community?

- Thinking carefully through the **dilemmas** of creating dedicated / separate institutions (e.g. risk of isolation, irrelevance, lobbying from the outside)
- Engaging in the (re)design of **systems**, building **capacity** and civic **infrastructure**
- Maximising the use of **existing legislation** – not just *BSL Act* but also others like the *Community Empowerment Act* and the *Public Sector Equality Duty*
- Contributing to drive the current wave of **democratic innovation** in Scotland and beyond



<http://whatworkscotland.ac.uk/events/empowering-people-and-places-what-works/>



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