

Participatory Budgeting as a Social Innovation: Motives and Outcomes of Enactment /Based on the example of the city of Tartu/

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Abstract: The diffusion of Participatory Budgeting (PB) at the local level has attracted the attention of many researchers, because it is so well-suited as a tool for new democracies to prove their intention to bring about participatory democracy, reform, and social change. PB was invented in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989, during a time of redemocratization, and it has been diffused globally, currently existing in almost all continents. This study explores the diffusion of PB at the local level, how it travels around the world, more specifically, how, why and with what results it was adopted in the city of Tartu, Estonia. The main aim of this study is to understand the motives of PB adoption in Tartu and whether the expectations from this initiative have been met or not. A basic assumption of this study was that Tartu city government adopted PB for gaining popularity and votes, as well as for increasing levels of citizen participation and awareness. Qualitative methods of analysis were used to conduct this research, relying on elite interviews with employees of Tartu city government and e-Governance Academy as the primary sources of empirical information. Examining the case of Tartu has brought new to the field of PB implementation. The study demonstrates that PB enactment in Tartu was the result of cooperation between the NGO and the city government, both having the same incentives and expectations from the initiative. The main incentives of PB implementation in Tartu were citizen education about the city budget and citizen engagement. The results of this research indicate that the case of Tartu corresponds to the previously existing theories of citizen engagement and citizen education on budgeting processes, and some of the expectations of the research have been met (citizen engagement and awareness), whereas the expectation that city government adopted PB for the reason of gaining votes and popularity was not supported. In sum, this study contributes to the field of PB diffusion at a local level, and its results can be applied both in and outside of Estonia to other cases of PB enactment.