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## POSSIBILITIES FOR DEMOCRATIC EQUALITY?

### Participatory budgeting as a question of municipal resources

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#### Introduction

For decades, participatory budgeting (PB), in which citizens are invited to participatory procedures of allocating public funds, has been globally implemented in different contexts and ways (Sintomer et al., 2008). Municipalities have played a key role in adopting PB as a democratic participatory tool. From them, the promise of PB lies in its potential for developing local governing practices, such as enhancing citizens' roles in decision-making; ultimately, this is believed to improve the organisation of public services (Sintomer et al., 2008). PB is also used to increase opportunities for citizens to influence decision-making concerning their living environments. This is a foundation for equal and democratic governance and community empowerment as focal elements of social sustainability (Rogers et al., 2012). Therefore, PB can be a possible mean of developing governance and improving democracy in an era of public mistrust in governments (Kuenneke & Scutelnicu, 2021). However, research has shown that the outcomes of PB's participatory exercises largely depend on the diversity of participants (Jaramillo & Alcázar, 2013). McNulty (2015) has argued that to be successful, participatory processes should include those who have been excluded from mainstream political life due to gender, economics or race. PB has been acknowledged as a potential political space, for example, for senior citizens, indigenous groups and the LGBTQ+ community (Hernández-Medina, 2010).

Inclusivity and equality have been frequently discussed in PB studies. These studies have mainly scrutinised *who participates* and *how* they participate. Less attention has been devoted to the question of inclusivity and equality of PB based on the *differences between organisations*, such as municipalities, *and their resources*. However, this is an essential issue concerning the

possibilities of municipalities to provide different participation channels. We argue that there are significant differences between organisations, particularly municipalities, in how well they are resourced and how broadly they can offer different kinds of participation channels for their citizens. We consider this as a fundamental question of inclusivity and democratic equality of participation. Hence, the chapter moves beyond studying the diversity of PB participants to analyse how organisational conditions, particularly resources, may influence the equality of PB and even the possibilities to use PB in municipalities.

This chapter approaches local adoption of PB from the perspective of municipal resources as a question of democratic equality. Our aim is twofold. Firstly, the chapter aims to identify the organisational resources required to organise PB. Secondly, as a wider question on participatory democracy, this chapter combines organisational resources with democratic equality, i.e. organisations' provision of equal opportunities for citizens to take part in PB. We ask (1) *what is needed to resource PB in municipal organisations*, and (2) *how do municipal resources enable or limit the possibility of providing an equal and democratic process of PB for citizens?*

The resource perspective is understudied, even though planning and implementing PB requires a variety of resources. Moreover, the impact of organisational resources on equal opportunities for citizen participation has gained less attention. In contrast to the wide range of studies concentrating on equal participation opportunities for different citizen groups in municipalities or communities (e.g. Hernández-Medina, 2010; Kuenneke & Scutelnicu, 2021; McNulty, 2015), there is a lack of research on the equality of participation possibilities between different municipalities depending on the available resources of each municipality. To fill this research gap, this chapter adds new knowledge on the crucial role of resources in whether and to what extent municipalities can implement democratic innovations, such as PB, and how this is related to democratic equality and social sustainability. The chapter builds upon empirical data from interviews and focus group discussions on two local PB processes: Helsinki and Tampere. It takes an organisational viewpoint on PB; thus, the data are gathered from civil servants who organise and implement PB in their daily work.

The chapter starts by discussing resources in previous PB research, followed by the presentation of the empirical context, cases, data and methods. In the analysis, we identify different types of resources and investigate their influences on PB. To conclude, the chapter argues that more attention should be paid to the resource intensity of democratic innovations to understand and develop possibilities for democratic equality and social sustainability.

### **Taking a resource perspective on PB**

In public administration, the concept of resource is not often very clear and, at the same time, it is very situational. Aside with budgets, for example, human

resources as ensuring adequate workforce, supporting employees' professional development and working conditions, can be seen as key resource for public organisation (see [Brown, 2004](#)). Also, knowledge can be seen as valuable resource for organisations ([Leitner & Warden, 2004](#)). In citizen participation processes, sufficient organisational knowledge concerning citizen participation is needed, and for human resources, this could mean educating the personnel and professionals ([Yang & Pandey, 2011](#)).

Public administration resources play an important role also in processes of citizen participation as the organisation of participation is generally considered complex, time-consuming and costly ([Sørensen & Bentzen, 2020](#)). Better on-the-ground results might be produced if resources for participation were spent elsewhere ([Irvin & Stansbury, 2004](#)). Organisational resources that are required, and seen focal, for citizen participation, such as working time or specific competencies of the personnel, are not always sufficiently recognised, planned or allocated, which challenges the implementation of citizen participation ([Kurkela et al., 2023](#)). Yet, despite the importance of resources is acknowledged within citizen participation practitioners, the deeper academic understanding concerning the role of different resources in PB is lacking. We argue that the question of resources in the PB context is central and needs scholarly attention.

In earlier PB studies, resources have been approached relatively seldom. They have been discussed, for example, as a *question of allocation* by focusing on the distribution of PB funds ([Cabannes, 2004](#); [Shybalkina & Bifulco, 2019](#)). [Calabrese et al. \(2020\)](#) discovered that PB does not reduce officials' power in allocating public finances; it only alters the methods of public spending. [Ewens and van der Voet \(2019\)](#) employed the view of *organisational structures*—one example of organisational resources—by looking at the relationships between these structures and the adoption of PB. They noticed that organisational size had no statistical significance and argued that, rather than the number of people in an organisation, it is the functional expert knowledge of those people that influences the adoption of PB. [Ebdon and Franklin \(2006\)](#) investigated PB's participatory mechanisms, such as focus groups and public hearings, by observing the *administrative requirements* of these mechanisms and the participation they enable. They addressed the differences, such as whether the mechanisms give citizens direct influence or whether they are mostly used for preliminary information sharing. From the resource viewpoint, their study provides knowledge about the organisation of budget participation, such as how much investment a particular participatory mechanism requires from an organisation.

In previous PB studies, *equality* has been studied but not very widely. For example, [Kuenneke and Scutelnicu \(2021\)](#) studied how PB promoted social equity in different city council districts. [Su \(2017\)](#) approached PB from the perspective of critical race theory and racial hierarchies, and [McNulty \(2015\)](#)

studied the diversity of participation by gender in Peru's PB process. In the context of social sustainability, [Sinervo et al. \(2024\)](#) highlight that prior PB studies have scrutinised the viewpoints of citizen empowerment, opening of political space for new groups, communication and civic learning and social well-being impacts. These perspectives of equality are important to study, especially in the era of democracy crises and in the case of PB, which is rooted in the inclusion of silent voices. Furthermore, in this chapter, we argue that distinguishing the connection of organisational conditions, such as resources, to the equality of PB processes is necessary.

### Empirical context of the study

In Finland, interest in PB has increased in recent years, as local politicians have promoted PB as part of local government activities ([Lehtonen, 2021](#)). One reason behind this is an amendment in the Local Government Act (LGA 410/2015) that specifies 'arranging opportunities to participate in the planning of the municipality's finances' as one possible option for participation. While Local Government Act does not state that participation *should* be enabled through PB, this has been the common interpretation in Finnish local government.

At the same time, Finnish municipalities struggle to solve the conundrum of providing high-quality welfare services at lower costs as numerous service requirements have burdened municipalities ([Vakkala et al., 2021](#)). This surplus of municipal tasks has not been accompanied by a corresponding level of financial resources provided by the central government ([Sinervo, 2014](#)). This has created a structural imbalance between service responsibilities and financial resources. This imbalance—and thus the inadequacy of financial resources—has forced municipalities to raise tax rates and increase borrowing.

As part of the Nordic welfare system and with municipalities struggling with their finances and service demands, Finland provides an fruitful setting to investigate how participation, especially PB, is locally resourced. We scrutinised the resourcing of PB in two Finnish cities: Helsinki, the capital of Finland (appr. 665,000 inhabitants), and Tampere, the third-largest city in Finland (appr. 250,000 inhabitants) ([Table 8.1](#)). In Finland, Helsinki is considered the flagship of the Finnish PB scene, with vast organisational and financial resources. PB is one of the participatory mechanisms in the city of Helsinki. Other mechanisms utilised in Helsinki are, for example, residents' events, resident or client panels and local residents' initiatives. Tampere first piloted PB in 2014 at the neighbourhood level and subsequently organised a city-level PB.

In Helsinki, the first round of PB at the city level was organised in 2018–2019 with a budget of 4.4 million euros (the total operational expenditure of Helsinki was 5.5 billion euros in 2018). The city district population size

**TABLE 8.1** PBs in Helsinki and Tampere

	<i>Helsinki PB 'OmaStadi' 2018–2019</i>	<i>Tampere PB 'Mun Tampere' 2020</i>
	<i>4,4 million euros (appr. 7 euros/citizen)</i>	<i>450,000 euros (appr. 2 euros/citizen)</i>
<b>Idea creation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizens' proposals on any theme</li> <li>• Preliminary feasibility evaluation by civil servants</li> <li>• 1,273 submitted proposals of which 839 deemed actionable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizens' proposals on youth well-being</li> <li>• Feasibility evaluation by civil servants</li> <li>• 380 submitted proposals of which 227 deemed actionable proposals</li> </ul>
<b>Co-creation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further development of proposals by civil servants and citizens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further development of proposals by civil servants and citizens</li> </ul>
<b>Cost evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost evaluation of co-created proposals</li> <li>• 296 proposals proceeded to the voting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost evaluation by civil servants</li> <li>• 120 proposals published for voting</li> </ul>
<b>Voting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voting (age limit 12 years) on the co-created and cost-evaluated proposals</li> <li>• 49,705 submitted votes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voting (age limit 12 years) on the co-created and cost-evaluated proposals</li> <li>• 2,927 voters</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 44 proposals for implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 proposals for implementation</li> </ul>

determined the budget of each district. Nationally, the PB in Helsinki, called *OmaStadi* (loose translation: My own Helsinki), has been the most resourced in terms of staff and the amount of allocated funds. In Tampere, the first city-wide PB, called *Mun Tampere* (loose translation: My Tampere), was organised in 2020 with a budget of 450,000 euros (the total operational expenditure of Tampere was 1.6 billion euros in 2018). The PB was thematically framed to improve the well-being of young people. [Table 8.1](#) describes the PB processes in Helsinki and Tampere.

### Data and methods

The PB processes in Helsinki and Tampere offer interesting cases as they are quite well-resourced for example from the viewpoint of personnel working in these processes. As multiple persons took part in the organisation of PBs, we were able to gather illustrative data, offering diverse viewpoints to the questions of resources. The empirical data were collected from 2019 to 2021

in two independent research projects (further information anonymised). This offered us an interesting opportunity to gather data, as both cities were first-timers in organising city-wide PB processes. The insights of their first city-wide rounds offer valuable understanding from the viewpoint of resources when the resource needs are at highest without prior experiences or knowledge. Instead of comparative study, we provide rich empirical data by combining insights from these cases (see Yin, 2009).

The primary data include interviews and focus group discussions of key PB actors. In Helsinki, three key actors were individually interviewed, and a focus group of six key people was assembled. In Tampere, 8 individual interviews were conducted with civil servants who were involved in PB, while 11 group interviews with the *My Tampere* team (three to four participants) were conducted. We used secondary data consisting of documents of the planning, implementation and outcomes of the PB processes (e.g. the City of Helsinki's Participation and Interaction Model; Helsinki City Council's Decision on the Implementation and Financing of Its Participation Model, 13 November 2017; Assessment Report on the Participation and Interaction Model of Helsinki; Assessment Report on the My Tampere PB process; the City of Tampere's Participation and Interaction Model) to gain background information.

This chapter draws on the case study approach as it analyses the details of these cases. We recognise that the cases have their own particularities, but they share similar questions. In inductive data analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), we identify and illustrate resources needed for planning and implementing PB. Firstly, we analyse the data by distinguishing the situations in which informants talked about essential issues in implementing PB. Secondly, from these data, we searched for moments that focused on the resources of PB. Thirdly, we grouped the identified resources into four thematic categories, which are presented and illustrated in the next section.

### **Identifying resources needed for socially sustainable PB**

We identify four categories of resources needed for implementing PB: (1) financial resources, (2) human resources, (3) knowledge resources and expertise and (4) technological and material resources. This section deepens the understanding of the resource intensity of PB through these categories.

#### ***Financial resources***

Financial resources allocated for the PB include not only the sum that citizens will decide about but also the resources needed to organise the process (e.g. communication, services and salary costs). These resources

are closely connected to and typically explained by the overall financial position of the city. Helsinki's financial position is rather solid and quite exceptional in Finland, with remarkable surpluses accumulated on financial statements, resulting in considerations for reduced tax rates. The city has a strong revenue base. The mobility of people and businesses in Helsinki secures advantageous financial conditions for the city (City of Helsinki, 2020). Tampere is a growing and attractive city, but it is struggling with inadequate financial resources. Tampere has a strategy for large investments, which has increased the level of loans. The city has started austerity policies to balance the economy, meaning budget cuts and increasing tax rates (City of Tampere, 2020).

In the first round of city-wide PB in Helsinki in 2018, a budget of 4.4 million euros was funded from a former 'suburb fund' that was transformed into a 'participation fund'. The total costs of the PB were much higher than 4.4 million euros as it included salaries of the PB experts, along with communication, software and service costs. The administrative costs were embedded in the city's normal operational costs without any pre-assessment. Compared to other Finnish municipalities' PB budgets, Helsinki's budget is clearly the largest. This was made possible due to strong political will and support:

I am astonished how easily the decision was made. We gave a lot value for the participation and influencing possibilities of the residents as an essential part of this larger management system reform. ... We had quite adventurous and innovative politicians to make such a decision.

*(Member of the Citizen Participation Management Team)*

In Tampere, PB funding was included in the city's annual budget. The original plan was to allocate 600,000 euros to PB, but the city council reduced the sum to 500,000 euros due to changes in the city's general budget. The amount was further reduced by 50,000 euros for the administrative costs of PB. Thus, inhabitants decided on the use of 450,000 euros.

Resourcing PB financially necessitates political and strategic will at the city level; additionally, thorough planning of the distribution of PB funding is also required at the district level. In Tampere, the PB staff developed a model for the equal distribution of PB funds. In the model, the city was divided into five districts that were evenly assigned 70,000 euros each for district-level proposals. An additional 100,000 euros was allocated for city-wide proposals. The PB budget in Helsinki was divided among seven districts based on their population size. Overall, 80% of the budget was divided into districts, and 20% was used for city-wide proposals.

Both cases illustrate that the PB's financial resources were not solely limited to the direct implementation of PB proposals. The PB demanded a lot of

work resources from cities' different service units and caused future maintenance costs:

We opened discussion[s] in the executive board of these maintenance costs in terms of PB and our other annual development programmes. If there is something that needs to be built or repaired as a result of PB, or investments that cause expenses in coming years, we started to discuss how to cover those costs.

*(Member of the My Tampere Team)*

### **Human resources**

Human resources are crucial, from the early planning of PB to the evaluation of submitted proposals, calculating the costs of projects, implementing the winning projects and facilitating and supporting the participation of citizens during the PB.

In both of our cases, the cities appointed PB staff to take care of the process. The linkage between the PB staff and other experts from the cities' service units turned out to be an essential resource in proceeding with PB. In Tampere, the PB staff consisted of a 'My Tampere' team (three to four civil servants) responsible for planning and organising the process. The team worked in cooperation with a working group of 15 members from the city's different service areas. A group of over 40 civil servants in service areas worked as pre-examiners, evaluating the feasibility of the submitted proposals. Tampere had also an executive PB board that provided support and an arena for discussing and approving the overall design and principles of the process. In Helsinki, the PB staff consisted of ten civil servants who organised the PB process in collaboration with other experts from the city organisation. Additionally, numerous civil servants in service areas evaluated the proposals. Helsinki also had an advisory board for participation and interaction led by the mayor.

During the process, difficulties occurred in balancing human resources with the workload of PB. In Helsinki, the city succeeded in encouraging wide participation but was not sufficiently prepared for the flood of ideas (1,273 proposals). This challenged the city's experts, as all the ideas needed to be evaluated and their costs estimated. PB required significantly more work time than expected. Initially, it was estimated that the seven borough liaisons of the PB team would dedicate 25% of their working hours for PB, but during the first round, they used 70–80% of their working hours for PB:

I have been thinking over whether I am doing the work that we have promised for the residents. And then I started to do that, but then I noticed that it is too much work because participatory budgeting is of course a really important thing, and it is understandable that it is the one that we put our effort into.

*(Member of the Borough Liaison Team)*

Service areas carried the major responsibility of directing their staff's worktime to the process. In Tampere, it was estimated that, on top of 40 pre-examiners, approximately 100 civil servants were involved in the whole PB implementation process:

There really is a lot to do. From so many different perspectives, communication and cost estimates. Overall, establishing cooperation with all the different actors. The IT side and the internal partners and outsiders and system providers and who knows who else... There's a huge crowd of people involved, and coordinating the whole thing is another issue altogether.

*(Member of the My Tampere Team)*

In Helsinki, as 70% of the ideas concerned the city environment and planning, this service area was particularly overloaded with work without sufficient resources. This caused stress, frustration, impatience and led to negative attitudes towards PB among some civil servants. The resource intensity led to changes in Helsinki's PB process. Initially, the idea was to perform the process every year, but the cycle is now biennial, and the process is shorter. Tampere has also been favouring targeted, smaller-scale PBs focusing on particular topic.

One of the key challenges concerning the PB process in both our cases was the amount of extra work, especially during the pre-examination and the cost-estimation phases. Thus, cooperation, coordination and division of labour between different units during the PB process was seen highly important.

### ***Knowledge resources and expertise***

PB challenges the traditional role of professionals and poses needs for new skills. In the analysis, we distinguished several areas of expertise required for PB. *Expertise in substance* was required in pre-examining the practical and financial feasibility of submitted. This required expertise in estimating possible future expenses as well.

PB requires *project and process management and development skills*. In Helsinki, the process required skills to deal with winding processes and stressed organisations' and personnel's ability to plan and implement PB:

This requires very good skills of tolerating incompleteness, uncertainty, and change resistance, and maybe also skills of project management.

*(Member of the Citizen Participation Management Team)*

*Communication expertise* is crucial in informing citizens about PB and supporting its promotion through various social media channels and mainstream local media. In Tampere, the PB staff promoted PB in over 130

Facebook groups. Expertise and *skills in face-to-face and online interactions* were highlighted.

Besides interaction skills, *expertise in the methods of facilitating interaction* was essential in organising PB workshops of developing project plans. Facilitating groupwork entailed expertise in encouraging deliberative discussion and creating safe and equal spaces. In Tampere, one of the workshops targeted young people, which necessitated skills to facilitate discussions with this age group and translate administrative language to be understandable.

*Local knowledge* of the city's neighbourhoods became essential in facilitating the workshops, reaching local key actors, collaborators and networks and supporting participants in developing proposals. The data also highlighted the *ability to organise intra-organisational cooperation between service areas and the central administration*. The tight schedule of assigning tasks to different organisational units and insufficient human resources challenged intra-organisational cooperation in both cities.

### ***Technological and material resources***

PB requires technological tools and services, material equipment and physical spaces. Both cities used the *Decidim* digital platform to collect the proposals and arrange the voting. In Helsinki, an expert was hired to develop the platform. It is noted that PB would benefit from more technological resources, such as coding resources. Much effort was put into the marketing of PB, such as social media and internet-based marketing, outdoor advertisements and a special PB supplement in the city's bulletin magazine.

Meeting citizens 'in the field' to talk about PB face-to-face in familiar, safe and neutral locations, such as local libraries, community houses or welfare centres, was considered important for mobilising people. As COVID-19 limited face-to-face interaction, extra effort was put into visual communication materials in public spaces, such as street banners.

In both cities, PB staff utilised technological and material resources to reach different participants, such as people with disabilities. Finnish and English were used in communication. Helsinki, as a bilingual city, had all its material available in Swedish as well. The main material and instructions were also available in Estonian, Russian, Somali and Arabi in Helsinki. Tampere provided information in (Finnish) sign language for people with hearing disabilities.

### **Resources and the equality of PB**

This chapter has aimed to further the understanding of the resources in organising well-functioning PB by asking *what is needed to resource PB in municipal organisations*. We identified four kinds of organisational resources:

financial, human, knowledge and expert resources, as well as technological and material resources. Because of the novelty of PB in both of our cases, there might be further needs for resources in the forthcoming years. As PB is a mechanism that includes unexpected elements, it is not possible to know beforehand how citizens take part in it. PB may require more targeted marketing resources in the next rounds. The number of proposals may increase requiring more human resources to evaluate and develop the ideas. Moreover, the resource intensity may prevent the use of PB in municipalities, thus affecting the equal participation possibilities of citizens depending on their municipality's financial situation.

Even though it has been discussed whether PB helps reduce costs by increasing administrative efficacy (cf. Cabannes, 2004; Röcke, 2014), our study suggests that it actually requires a lot of resources, thus increasing the costs. Whether resources are used to institutionalise PB or implement it as a singular effort is important in terms of resource intensity as well as the sustainability of PB. The resource intensity described in this chapter sets limitations on where and how PB can be implemented, as it is highly dependent on municipalities' resources. The austerity of resources reveals the vulnerability of PB. In addition, experiences of uneven distribution of resources may cause contradictions between different service areas of the city. If there are not enough resources for estimating, co-creating and implementing the ideas, this may lead to conflicts and disbelief in the units leading PB. In addition, reluctance towards PB and citizen participation in general may increase (cf. Núñez, 2018; Kurkela et al., 2023).

This chapter also explored *how do municipal resources enable or limit the possibility of providing an equal and democratic process of PB for citizens*. By understanding the resourcing of PB in-depth, we contribute to the discussion of democratic equality and equal participation opportunities. These are essential features of social sustainability. Table 8.2 summarises tasks where resources in PB are needed. Firstly, resources can support the planning and implementation of an inclusive and equal PB process. Secondly, resources can help formulate a shared understanding of PB in organisations. Thirdly, resources play a role in developing the participatory elements of the PB process. However, from the viewpoint of social sustainability, (insufficient) resources may also form barriers to equality in PB.

We argue that, due to the imbalance and austerity in resources, municipalities are at risk of divergence concerning the provision of different participation channels and opportunities for citizenry. In practice, this could mean that citizens of less-resourced municipalities are at risk of having fewer democratic opportunities than citizens in well-resourced municipalities. We consider these divergence possibilities an issue of democratic equality and inclusivity and, thus, a question of social sustainability.

TABLE 8.2 PB Resources and Equality

<i>Aim</i>	<i>Resources needed</i>	<i>Barriers and enablers of equality</i>
<b>Planning and implementing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Division of work (tasks, responsibilities, assignments between units)</li> <li>• Planning the process</li> <li>• Marketing and advertising</li> <li>• Online platform design and maintenance</li> <li>• Pre-examination of the proposals and finding relevant experts for assessment</li> <li>• Cost calculation and feasibility assessment</li> <li>• Planning and executing of winning proposals</li> <li>• Evaluation and redevelopment of the whole process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of resources to organise PB</li> <li>• Prioritisation of participatory tools</li> <li>• Political will for the implementation scale of PB (e.g. city-wide vs. small grants)</li> <li>• Financial constrains</li> <li>• Principles and criteria for the fund allocation (e.g. population size, even distribution by districts)</li> <li>• Division of responsibilities and work tasks within organisation</li> </ul>
<b>Building common understanding and supportive organisational culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a shared vision on the role of PB</li> <li>• Enabling commitment in PB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational commitment</li> <li>• Shared understanding of PB</li> </ul>
<b>Enhancing citizens' participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tools, methods and material for wide participation (e.g. marginalised groups)</li> <li>• Facilitating proposals and co-creation</li> <li>• Tools for sharing a wider understanding on PB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workload of participatory tools</li> <li>• Communication for inclusion of diverse population and language groups</li> <li>• Locations and times of PB events for inclusion of diverse population and language groups</li> </ul>

The resource aspect is related to the cultural context of the PB. In the Nordic context specifically, as [Pereira and Figueira \(2022\)](#) put it, governing has become increasingly complex and specialised due to the many functions to be performed in a modern economy, especially under the premises of the welfare state. Our research findings indicate that the increased duties and responsibilities of municipalities are accompanied by growing demands for the administrative processes of engaging citizens.

We underline the connection of the availability of resources to the level of democratic equality. The underlying assumption is that as municipalities' programmes and commitments, such as PB, become more intricate and widespread, citizen participation becomes increasingly challenging not only in

terms of the capacities required from citizens to participate but also in terms of how municipalities allocate resources for these processes. This questions whether the resource intensity of PB challenges its potential for equal and inclusive democratic participation and whether this issue is of particular importance in Nordic countries, where the welfare state context highlights the importance of strong administration and extensive responsibilities (see [Haveri, 2015](#)).

### Implications for practice and policy

This chapter emphasises the importance of organisational resources as either enabling or hindering elements of democratic equality and social sustainability and recognises the role of municipal resources as inevitably connected to the possibilities of implementing PB—or other democratic innovations. The resources, that a municipality has for developing inclusive PB, must be taken into consideration. As municipalities struggle with limited resources, they are at risk of divergence concerning the opportunities of participation for citizens. There is a need to critically reflect PB's potential as a democratic innovation. This is especially important in countries with strong incentives or even an obligation to organise PB. Resource concerns may be highlighted in Nordic countries, such as Finland, where municipalities have wide and highly regulated responsibilities. Widely regulated administrative procedures may cause a situation in which PB heavily burdens the municipal organisation.

We find that the question of resources is not always well-recognised or considered beforehand. When the variety of resources that PB requires is recognised, it is easier to prepare and re-allocate resources accordingly. Furthermore, this is important in deciding whether to conduct PB or some other participation mechanism.

We call for future studies on the resources of PB in other countries with different administrative cultures and studies on the availability of PB and other democratic innovations in municipalities struggling with their financial situation: Do municipalities with scarce resources give up with or avoid PB or other resource-intensive participation methods? There is also a need to evaluate the resource intensity of different democratic innovations and to address the interconnections between municipal resources and democratic equality as an essential aspect of social sustainability.

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