Participatory Budgeting in the UK:
An evaluation from a practitioner perspective

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(PB Unit logo)   (ESRC logo)   (ICPS logo)

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Brief note on the background to this study

The PB Unit

The research and writing of this report was carried out by Kezia Lavan of the PB Unit. The PB Unit works to develop models of participatory budgeting in the UK and to disseminate learning and knowledge about them. Between 2003-2007 it was funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government to develop four pilot models of PB in England. The PB Unit has also supported processes in Scotland and Wales. The project continues to grow through continuing research and policy work, the development of new approaches to mainstream PB and the accompaniment of several new pilots. The PB Unit is a project of Church Action on Poverty. For more details see: http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/

The International Centre for Participation Studies

The International Centre for Participation Studies was created in 2003 to provide a focus for research and teaching on the relationship between political participation and peace. ICPS is a response to the emergence of new forms and theories of democratic participation and it is working with fellow academics, participatory practitioners and grassroots activists to co-produce knowledge of these social and political change processes. ICPS is based in the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, the largest academic centre for the study of peace and conflict in the world.

Municipal Innovations in Non-Governmental Public Participation

Municipal Innovations in Non-Governmental Public Participation is a research project at the ICPS funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. It focuses on the municipal spaces of innovation in public policy making that have been notable in Latin America since the 1980s and in the UK since the 1990s. The research aims to contribute theoretical insight into the evolution of democratic theory in the age of globalisation through comparing and contrasting participatory spaces and processes in cities in the UK and Latin America, including Manchester, Bradford, Caracas, Medellín and Porto Alegre. For more details of this project see: www.lse.ac.uk/collections/NGPA/pdf/Large_Project_abstracts/Municipal_Innovations_in_Non-Governmental_Public_Participation.pdf

The Practitioner Fellowship

This research has been supported by a Practitioner Fellowship, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The Practitioner Fellowship is a new scheme which gives practitioners the opportunity to carry out research alongside academic bodies working in the same field. The work was carried out in partnership with the ESRC funded Municipal Innovations in Non-Governmental Public Participation project at the ICPS (see above). I am very grateful to Heather Blakey and other colleagues at the ICPS for their support throughout this project.

Structure of this report

This begins with an executive summary and ends with some conclusions and suggestions for further research. Before the main body of the report are 'quick guides ' which cover brief factual information about examples of PB in the UK, including both the main case studies and other PB processes which are referred to in the text. They are designed to be used to supplement and clarify information in the main body of the report. The main body of the report has 8 chapters, at the end of which can be found a short summary of the information in each chapter. In the appendix can be found details of the methodology used in the report.

Executive Summary

What is Participatory Budgeting?

o   Some of the many different definitions of Participatory Budgeting (PB) which have been applied to UK processes suggest that PB is: participatory, educational, transformational, empowering, democratic, developmental, creative, efficient, relationship building, and is able to deliver benefits to those who are currently excluded.
o   Other PB experiments can enlarge this definition to include a process which: is owned and shaped by participants, grows over time, develops a deep and critical citizen participation, reinvents local leadership and fundamentally changes mainstream resource allocation and distribution.
o   PB in the UK has been influenced by both international practice and local initiatives seeking to engage with citizens and shape services
o   For the purposes of this study, it is the practice rather than theory of PB which is of most interest.

What factors were important in the development and implementation of PB?

o   The most significant factors which effected the development and implementation of PB were: the amount and nature of planning that took place, effective community engagement, the presence of a dedicated and balanced steering group and networking.
o   Community engagement was resource intensive, but work with groups to develop project proposals, accompany residents involved in designing PB processes and outreach with 'hard to reach' groups improved the quality of process and diversity of participation.
o   Most of the pilots were led by a committed individual or small group of people and in some cases by community members.
o   Effective planning and preparation were important and made more effective by community involvement.
o   Formal and informal learning were useful for reflection on a new and developing process, but existing knowledge was not always fully capitalised upon.
o   Strong branding enabled the PB concept to be communicated to a wide audience. Although resources for publicity and communication were limited many managed to make good use of existing networks.
o   Most PB pilots were delivered with no extra resources, but even those that were had hidden cost implications which were not fully recovered.
o   External factors such as constraints and limitations on the funding pot used in PB processes also impacted on the development of the process.

How were successful PB processes developed?

o   Although the definition of a successful PB process depended on the interests and perspective of those involved, there were some common aspects of the process which were considered important.

- o Having a clear meeting structure with strong facilitation and an engaging process ensured that everyone could participate and goals were met.
- o Honest communication about the amount of money available and any constraints helped facilitate learning and prevent a scramble for resources.
- o Collecting and providing adequate information ensured that participants and organisers were fully informed throughout the process.
- o Technical support from others was essential for the development of processes where specialist knowledge or technology was needed.
- o As even well planned participatory processes are often unpredictable, a high degree of adaptability was sometimes needed.
- o Participants were generally positive about the PB processes, both as well organised events and opportunities to transform their local communities.
- o Occasionally, project presenters were unhappy because they felt uncomfortable or coerced, but most felt it was a positive opportunity to develop confidence and share ideas.

Were PB processes fair?

- o Fairness was a major concern with organisers and participants on a number of different levels.
- o All the pilots tried to ensure that procedures for presenting projects and scoring were done equally.
- o Instructions of how to prioritise and vote on projects were key to enabling participants to understand the process.
- o Despite a strong commitment to equality of opportunity in participation, many PB processes were not inclusive enough.
- o Organisers planned for the fact that imbalances in participation, such as one group or area dominating over another, could discredit the process.
- o Some residents, such as councillors and PB process organisers, chose not to participate in the voting so that the process would be independent.
- o Instant feedback and reports ensured that decisions were transparent.
- o There was little evidence that participants were 'unfair' in decision making - in many cases they supported projects that did not benefit them directly.
- o Opportunities to share information and knowledge about project proposals helped capacitate participants to make decisions based on fair knowledge.
- o Project presentation was a controversial aspect of the process but there was no link between presentation skills and participants' scoring.
- o Building concerns about the fairness of project presentation into the process reassured participants and strengthened the process overall.

How participatory were PB processes?

- o PB processes studies were generally successful in getting local communities involved in the process.
- o Learning shows that improving diversity and opportunities for participation throughout the process would improve decision making, the process itself and contribute towards a community-owned process.
- o There was participation in the PB pilots in: priority setting of the pot of money used in the PB process, proposing projects, designing the PB process, engaging the community, running the PB event, participation in

decision making in project scoring and prioritisation, evaluation and monitoring.
o There was no evidence of community participation in strategic planning but the vision of many participants shows that it would add value.
o Although some participants partly voted out of self-interest, they also considered wider factors such as the need for the project, sustainability, cost, and how it would impact and benefit others.

What were the power and political dynamics in the PB processes?

o The political context of PB in the UK has been very diverse, with no particular party identifying with it.
o A party-politics free space has enabled PB to develop without political interference but the potential cost of this is a lack the high-level political support needed to develop and mainstream the processes.
o Elected members were relatively little involved in PB processes, which were in the main officer-led.
o Some local councillors took an active role as 'neighbourhood advocates' in PB processes. This demonstrates the potential role they could play in contributing to the PB process and improving their own democratic accountability and legitimacy.
o It was important to recognise that those with power over budgetary decisions, such as councillors and officers, might be threatened by the PB process and development.
o PB processes change the existing configuration of power, which can feel disempowering for some who currently have it, even if this fear is not borne out. Opportunities for constructive engagement with the process can help with this.
o PB processes empowered communities in a number of ways, including giving them power to make decisions about budgetary decisions and articulating their own needs.

What were the main impacts of the PB processes?

o Although it is still early days, it is clear that there have already been many positive impacts of the PB processes.
o Impacts included: social, democratic and learning impacts, resources, project proposal and delivery, as well as in other areas.
o There were positive impacts on service providers and elected members, as well as community members themselves.
o A few negative impacts were recorded but these were generally minor and easily remediable with small changes to the process.
o A major impact is to have developed models of PB that were popular, successful and delivered in terms of participation, projects, and process.
o The overall and potentially lasting impact is that a strong vision for deeper and more extensive community participation in budget decision making has been developed.

Quick Guide: Bradford Safer Cleaner Greener Participatory Grant-Making Event

Area	Bradford
Lead organisation	Bradford Vision (BV)
No. of processes	First city-wide process using Stronger Safer Communities funding. BV have run processes since 2004 processes at district and neighbourhood level in Keighley using Neighbourhood Renewal funding (money for area based regeneration). In total BV have now spent £1m in PB processes.
Brand name	Safer, Cleaner, Greener (SCG) participatory grant-making event
Aims	To engage local groups in project proposal and decision making for environmental funds linked to locality planning processes
Objectives	• To support locality planning process and develop links between Urban Villages and Parish Councils and BV and strengthen it with NAP groups • To develop knowledge of PB amongst community and council • To stimulate innovative projects under the SCG the criteria • To allocate £300,000 locally • To develop opportunities for networking between groups
Process	• Max of £6000 could be applied for
Key organisations	Bradford Vision
Structures involved	Bradford Vision, Urban Villages, Parish Councils, NAP groups
Money	£300,000
Resources into the process	Staff time of project Steering Group
Communication with local community	A flier and application form were sent to key contacts in all UV, NAPs, and PCs. This was then followed up by engagement work.
Role of community	• Groups in Urban Villages (UVs), Neighbourhood Action Planning groups (NAPs) and Parish Councils (PCs) proposed project ideas • 60 projects from these areas were presented at the event • 2 members of each groups presenting the project attended the event and voted on each others' projects
Role of councillors	• Councillors are involved with NAPs and UVs and elected onto PCs • Councillors were not actively involved in developing the process but some did attend the event as observers
Role of regeneration partnership officers	• To design, organise, communicate and monitor process
Background to the process	This process was one of several which BV have run since 2004. The Stronger Safer Communities Partnership decided to release £300,000 of environmental money for the city to be decided using PB process.
Plans for the future	• BV is continuing to explore how PB processes can be developed
Further information	A video of the first PB event can be watched at: http://www.bradfordvision.net/video1.php A DVD of a PB process in Keighley is also available – contact Bradford Vision for details http://www.bradfordvision.net/index.php
Known parallel processes	None known
See also	Quick-guide to Keighley PB process

Bradford Safer Cleaner Greener event: the process

The Safer, Cleaner, Greener event followed a model adapted from other participatory grant-making events which Bradford Vision has developed over the last 3 years. Neighbourhood Renewal Funding from the Environmental Partnership within the Stronger Safer Communities Partnership of the city council was used in the process. The partnership set the three main priorities of 'safer, cleaner, greener'. A small working group of officers from Bradford Vision who had self-selected to get involved in the process met regularly to plan the event. Working on a short timescale, they had to put in more effort than would normally be required to engage enough groups when applying for the money in order for it to be a competitive process.

Community groups were invited to apply for up to £6000 of the funds. At the closing date for applications, the amount of money applied for was only just over the amount of money available, so it was decided that a 'top up fund' would be made available, which the highest scoring projects would receive. In the event of their being less money than was needed for all the groups. It was decided that groups would be asked if they would be able to 'give back' funds to fund those who were eligible for funding but were prioritised at the bottom of the list. Applications had to be from Urban Villages, Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Action Planning groups who were required to complete minimal paperwork and verbally present their projects to other applying groups from across the city. Five projects were presented at a time, before being scored out of 10 on cards. The rules stated that each project must score an average of 4 points in order to be funded. Two members of each group were entitled to attend and vote. Two sessions was held, with groups only required to attend one of these. In the morning session, there were more projects than money, so the 'give back' process applied and groups asked to give back money to help fund the other groups if they could. The outcome was that all groups were eligible for funding and all received at least part of the funds they needed. In the afternoon session enough money was available for all the groups so only the 'top up' process applied. Around 60 groups were funded in total.

How Bradford Safer Cleaner Greener process was initiated

Bradford Vision had already been developing their own original method of participatory grant-making when they came across the PB concept. Learning from practice in Brazil then enhanced and gave vision and direction to what they were doing. The Safer, Cleaner, Greener PB in this study is one of several participatory grant-making processes that the organisation has developed, which include experiments at neighbourhood, district and city-wide level.

Quick Guide: Keighley Decision Day[1]

Area	Bradford
Lead organisation	Bradford Vision
No. of processes	Single process in 7 neighbourhoods in Keighley, Bradford District
Brand name	Keighley Decision Day
Aims	• To involve local residents in the allocation of neighbourhood renewal funds (NRF) and Local Area Agreement (LAA) funds • To pilot a PB process across a multi-neighbourhood area
Objectives	• To stimulate wider resident engagement with local participatory structures • To develop greater resident understanding of budgeting processes • To increase cross-community working • To encourage service provider receptiveness to resident knowledge
Process	Before event: • Reference group formed of staff from Bradford Vision, Keighley Voluntary Services (KVS), Bradford Council and the wider voluntary sector. • PB proposal taken to local Neighbourhood Action Planning (NAP) groups. • Spending themes prioritised by residents; approx 400 responses generated door-to-door and at community events. This information was sent to applicants, though funds allocated by area population, according to neighbourhood renewal rules. • Invitation for bids sent out using VCS databases and NAP groups. • Bids reviewed by scrutiny panel of local service providers, reference group members and councillors; advice about projects offered. • Invitation to the Decision Day sent to all residents in the eligible areas, alongside outreach work by the KVS community development (CD) team. At event: • Voting took place in 2 sessions, 3 in the morning, 3 in the afternoon. • 3 minute presentations: voting on paper sheets every 5 presentations. After event: • Funds distributed to successful projects by Bradford Vision. • Support and monitoring provided by KVS. • Scrutiny and monitoring groups hosted by local NAP group, to which residents who volunteered for this at the Decision Day are invited.
Key organisations	Bradford Vision, Keighley Voluntary Services
Structures	PB reference group (NAP Groups, involving local service providers and residents)
Money	£130,000 sourced from NR and LAA funds
Resources into the process	• Administration and monitoring costs (provided through KVS) • Mail-out to all households in the area • Staff time of Bradford Vision officers, KVS CD team & reference group members
Communication with local community	• Process explanation and updates to the NAP groups in each area • Outreach work by KVS community development team • Door-to-door prioritisation process (and follow up letter) • Invitation mailed to all households in the area
Role of community	• Participation in prioritisation exercise, proposing and voting on projects and in monitoring project delivery
Role of councillors	• Local councillors invited to help deliver prioritisation process • Involvement in scrutiny panel • Support from Chair of the Area Committee on Decision Day • Councillors invited to the process evaluation session
Role of council officers	• Area Coordinator and lead officers from LAA partnerships participated in the PB reference group
Background to the process	Bradford Vision's history of involving local residents in NRF decisions through the NAP groups, and track record of developing PB processes with environmental funds.

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[1] Thanks to Heather Blakey for providing this information

Quick Guide: The Village Spend, Coedpoeth

Area	Coedpoeth village, near Wrexham, Wales
Lead organisation	Coedpoeth Community Council
No. of processes	1
Brand name	The Village Spend
Aims	To engage local residents in putting forward and selecting priorities for Community Council money
Objectives	• Engage residents in process and in Community Council • Encourage new Community Councillors to come forward • Empower community leaders • To enable taxpayers to have a say in how money is spent • Develop citizenship in local schoolchildren • To trial a PB model for Wales • To engage policy makers in Wales • To develop model of engagement in budgets for older people
Process	• Steering Group of local voluntary organisations planned process • Meeting held with local community leaders • Priorities and project ideas identified in first public meeting • Parallel process to identify project ideas in local schools • Projects worked up and costed • Projects prioritised and selected for funding in second public meeting • Projects to be implemented by County Council
Key organisations	Coedpoeth Community Council, Help the Aged in Wales, TCC, AVOW, Wrexham County Council
Structures	Village Spend Steering Group
Money	£20,000 'precept' funds. This money comes from council tax, is held by the Community Council and decisions are usually taken by the Community Council.
Resources into the process	PB Unit, TCC, Help the Aged and AVOW staff time. Voluntary time of Community Council chair. Funds from Help the Aged for development of process.
Communication with local community	• Leaflet drop to all households in the village • Word of mouth via community leaders
Role of community	• Community leaders (youth workers, chairs of community groups, etc) were informed about the process and asked to bring people to the event. • Community members invited to attend event, propose and select projects • Local schoolchildren asked to propose projects
Role of councillors	• Chair of Community Council active on Steering Group • To support and communicate to community members about process
Role of council officers	• Attend Steering Group • Provide costings on project proposals
Background to the process	• PB Unit personal contact with TCC • PB Unit workshop at Participation Cymrie • Community Council Chair learnt about PB at a local government seminar
Plans for the future	• Process will be repeated the next year • Advocacy work with Welsh Assembly • PB post for north Wales planned (subject to funding)
Further information	Help the Aged Village Spend evaluation report

The Village Spend, Coedpoeth: the process

The pilot in Coedpoeth was designed by a small steering group made up of interested parties from the community and voluntary sector in North Wales, a representative from the PB Unit, plus the chair of the Coedpoeth Community Council, who was also the chair of the main local voluntary sector support network. The group already had good working relationships and had come together to explore how PB could be piloted in the Wrexham area.

After the Community Council agreed to the precept funds being used in a PB process, an initial meeting was held with what were described as the 'movers and shakers' in the village, such as chairs of community groups and other local leaders, with the aim of engaging them with the process so that they would communicate the idea and process to those they were in contact with. A leaflet was then distributed to all residents in the village informing them about the process and inviting them to a public meeting. During the first public meeting participants were asked to suggest project ideas under pre-prepared themes, which were then prioritised using sticky dots until six favourites were produced. A parallel prioritisation process was also held with primary schoolchildren who fed in their ideas for project proposals, although they did not attend the public meetings. Project ideas were then costed and worked up and a second public meeting was held at which the projects were presented and participants asked to select their top 3. The result was a list of six prioritised projects.

How the Village Spend, Coedpoeth process was initiated

By coincidence PB reached Coedpoeth by two routes. Having worked with TCC in a previous job, one member of the PB Unit saw an opportunity to introduce the idea into Wales alongside a like-minded organisation. An introductory workshop about PB was held at a participation conference in Wales, which gave the opportunity to bring together members of the north Wales voluntary sector who began to develop a vision for PB in the region. Seeking to test out interest locally, it was soon discovered that by chance the Chair of Coedpoeth Community Committee had recently attended a local government conference in which PB had been mentioned.

Quick Guide: U-decide Children and Young People's pilot

Area	Newcastle
Lead organisations	Newcastle City Council and Newcastle Partnership (local strategic partnership)
No. of PB processes	First of 2 Children and Young People's pilots
Brand name	U-Decide Children and Young People's pilot
Aims	• To involve young people in developing, prioritising and delivering projects across the city • To pilot PB with a community of interest
Objectives	• To explore a new way to engage young people • To stimulate other forms of engagement • To learn from the process and communicate it to others
Process	Before event: • 4 priorities for the money set from pre-existing review of children and young people's views of their needs • Youth groups across the city informed about the U-Decide pilot through publicity and existing networks with statutory, community and voluntary sectors • Young people invited to propose bids by completing a simple pro-forma • Bids checked for legality and each group invited to send 4 young people to event • A group of young people, 'The Wikkid Planners' worked with a council officer to design and advise on the process At event: • Youth groups were given materials to make a creative display about their project and asked to make a short presentation to the other groups bidding for money • Participants prioritised projects using e-voting • 18 projects were successful in obtaining funding, 4 were unsuccessful but were given on the spot and follow up funding advice After event: • Money allocated to groups and support given to help them spend the money • Ongoing monitoring of project delivery with support provided as necessary
Key organisations	Newcastle Council, Newcastle LSP
Structures	U-Decide Working Group, U-Decide Learning Group
Money	£75,000 from Neighbourhood Renewal Fund over 2 years, £30,000 for year 1
Resources into the process	• £50,000 over two years for U-Decide Children and Young People's and Liveability pilots for admin and publicity • Staff time of pilot lead, policy officers, community development officers and other staff. • Voluntary time from young people in Wikkid Planners group. • Voluntary time from around 40 residents on Working Group. • Staff time of youth workers.
Communication with local community	• Leaflets and strong branding of process • Outreach work with youth groups to develop project ideas
Role of community	• Participate in Working Group to design and advise on process • Participate in U-Decide process to propose and vote on projects
Role of councillors	• None identified other than a watching brief
Role of council officers	• Participate in Learning Group to learn from and advise on process • Facilitate development of process, outreach work with youth groups, monitor and share learning from the process
Background to the process	Officers in Newcastle first heard about PB through participation in an EU Learning Network, 'Participando'. After observing a PB event in Bradford links were made with the PB Unit who were asked to accompany the process.
Plans for the future	• To explore ways to learn from and improve the process • To involve children and young people in prioritising a lottery pre-allocation for play. • Vision of mainstreaming PB within council and with partner organisations
Further information	• Videos of both U-Decide events available from Newcastle Council

	• Evaluation report of U-Decide available shortly
Known parallel processes	Ouseburn Ward – local resident involvement in decision making around project proposal and prioritisation for spending of £50,000 Section 106 money
See also	• Newcastle Liveability PB pilot • Separate pilot with under 5s is currently underway but at a much earlier stage.

U-decide Children and Young People's pilot: the Process

The U-decide pilots used funds allocated by the LSP but were delivered by the local council. Both U-decide pilots developed along a participatory grant-making model in which the funds were allocated either directly to community projects, or to groups who would work in partnership with the council and other service providers to deliver their ideas.

The Children and Young People's pilot targeted its funds citywide. As with the Liveability pilot, publicity and a simple pro-forma was developed, accompanied by networking and outreach work with youth workers. A small group of young people, 'The Wikkid Planners', worked with a council officer to design and develop the process. Keen to develop an original and in their terms, fair event, they chose not to copy how others had run similar events and decided that groups should not be asked to prepare anything in advance, as this might disadvantage some groups. Instead, the organisers asked the young participants to prepare a brief on-the-spot presentation and make a display out of materials provided at the event. The young people attending then scored one another's projects in the same way as the first pilot. 18 out of 22 projects were then prioritised for funding, and follow up support with projects provided after the event.

How the U-Decide pilots were initiated

The concept of PB first came to Newcastle through the participation of the council in 'Participando' an EU learning network. Following this, officers and councillors remained in contact with some of those involved and visited Bradford in 2004 to observe the first PB experiment there, a participatory grant-giving process, similar to that described in this study. After this visit officers were supported by the PB Unit to develop a PB proposal which was presented to councillors and senior officers. The Local Strategic Partnership then agreed that two pilots would be developed using Neighbourhood Renewal Funds and delivered by the council.

Quick Guide: The U-Decide Liveability Pilot

Area	Newcastle
Lead organisations	Newcastle City Council and Newcastle Partnership (local strategic partnership)
No. of PB processes	First of 2 Liveability pilots
Brand name	U-Decide Liveability pilot
Aims	• To involve residents in developing, prioritising and delivering projects on a Safer, Cleaner, Greener theme funded by Neighbourhood Renewal Fund in Denton, Leamington and Woolsington wards • To pilot PB with a geographical community
Objectives	• To explore a new way to engage residents locally • To stimulate other forms of engagement • To develop the capacity of residents to inform and engage in the process • To learn from the process and communicate it to others
Process	Before event: • Priorities for money set from local quality of life surveys, top 2 in each ward taken • U-Decide Liveability pilot was publicised widely with residents who were invited to make project proposals on a simple pro-forma within the 3 priorities • Project proposers supported by a council officer to make bids fit for purpose • Up to 3 people for each project proposal were invited to attend the event • A Working Group of local residents facilitated by a council officer met regularly to design and advise on the process • A Learning Group of officers from the council and partner organisations was formed to learn from and advise on the process • Project proposers asked At event: • Project proposers made short presentations about their project to an audience made up of largely other project proposers • Audience prioritised projects using e-voting and evaluated it with questionnaires • 15 projects were prioritised for funding. After event: • Money allocated to groups and support given to help them spend the money • Ongoing monitoring of project delivery with support provided as necessary
Key organisations	Newcastle Council, Newcastle LSP
Structures	U-Decide Working Group, U-Decide Learning Group
Money	£75,000 from Neighbourhood Renewal Fund over 2 years, £30,000 for year 1
Resources into the process	£50,000 over two years for U-Decide Liveability and Children and Young People's pilots for admin and publicity Staff time of pilot lead, policy officers, community development officers and other staff. Voluntary time from around 40 residents on Working Group.
Communication with local community	• Leaflets and strong branding of process • Outreach work with local community to develop project ideas
Role of community	• Participate in Working Group to design and advise on process • Participate in U-Decide process to vote on projects
Role of councillors	• To observe and learn from process • To encourage community to get involved
Role of council officers	• Participate in Learning Group to learn from and advise on process • Facilitate development of process, outreach work with residents and community groups, monitor and share learning from the process
Background to the process	Officers in Newcastle first heard about PB through participation in an EU Learning Network, 'Participando'. After observing a PB event in Bradford links were made with the PB Unit who were asked to accompany the process.
Plans for the future	• To explore ways to learn from and improve the process • To involve children and young people in prioritising a lottery pre-allocation for play. • Vision of mainstreaming PB in council and with partners
Further information	• Videos of U-Decide events available from Newcastle Council

	• Evaluation report of U-Decide available shortly
Known parallel processes	Ouseburn Ward – local resident involvement in decision making around project proposal and prioritisation for spending of £50,000 Section 106 money
See also	Newcastle children and young people's PB pilot

U-Decide Liveability Pilot: the process

The U-decide pilots used funds allocated by the LSP but were delivered by the local council. Both U-decide pilots developed along a participatory grant-making model in which the funds were allocated either directly to community projects, or to groups who would work in partnership with the council and other service providers to deliver their ideas.

The Liveability pilot took place in three wards in the outer west of Newcastle, an area often considered peripheral to the city, which had received relatively less regeneration money than other areas of the city. The priorities for the pilot were safer, cleaner and greener, and were the top two priorities of each of the three wards, based on extensive surveys that had been carried out across the city.

The design of the pilot was mainly decided by a Working Group of local residents working with a community development officer from the council. This 40-strong group were responsible for decision making about all aspects of the pilot from publicity and process, to venue and refreshments. A Learning Group of council officers, partner organisations and representatives from the local universities followed and occasionally advised on the process. Support was also given throughout the process by the PB Unit.

Publicity and strong branding of U-decide were developed to inform both residents and other stakeholders about the process. Residents were invited to complete a very simple pro-forma with their ideas of how the money could be spent on one of the three themes. After being checked for legality, a council officer worked with the groups to develop their ideas. An event was then held in which a representative from each project gave a short presentation to other proposers and residents about their idea. Support was offered beforehand to help with presentation skills. Participants at the event then scored each project with marks out of 10. The top 15 projects were then prioritised for funding. After the event groups were given their money and support delivering the project provided by the council.

Quick Guide: Claremont and Weaste PB event, Salford

Area	Claremont and Weaste, Salford
Lead organisation	Salford City Council
No. of PB processes	1
Brand name	Salford Highways Participatory Budgeting event
Aims	To involve the local community in proposing and prioritising projects for highways improvements
Objectives	• To involve a wider range and number of residents than would normally attend a Community Committee meeting • To produce a list of prioritised schemes • To learn from the process

Process	Before the event:
	• Project proposals were gathered from:
	   • The Claremont and Weaste Community Action Plan
	   • Residents were invited to submit schemes ideas via publicity in the community newsletter
	• Residents were invited to attend the PB. Efforts were made to target those who did not usually come to meetings.
	• Project costing estimates were given by Urban Vision
	At the event:
	• Written information and photos of each scheme were laid out on tables
	• A technical officer from the council was available to answer questions.
	• Residents were given score cards to mark out of 10 for 23 schemes
	• The top 10 scoring schemes went through to a 2nd round of scoring using the same process.
	• Residents' final scoring allowed 4 schemes to be potentially funded, subject to project estimates being correct.
	• The participants evaluated the event using e-voting

Key organisations	Salford Council, Urban Vision
Structures	PB Steering Group, Claremont and Weaste Community Committee,
Money	£800,000 was devolved to 8 Community Committee areas for Highways improvements. Claremont and Weaste Community Committee decided to use its £100,000 share in a PB process.
Resources into the process	Staff time of Neighbourhood Manager, 2 community development workers, volunteer from local community and PB Unit support on Steering Group. Staff time of Urban Vision for estimates, Steering Group and event.
Communication with local community	• Publicity included community newsletter, leaflets, emails, telephone calls, word of mouth, presentations at Community Committee meetings. • Dissemination through a video of the event and community newsletter
Role of community	• Participation in design and delivery of project through Steering Group. • Propose projects and prioritise them at PB event
Role of councillors	• Elected members approved devolving of £800,000 • Part of membership of Claremont and Weaste Community Committee who approved PB process • One local councillor joined the Steering Group. • Other councillors observed and learnt from the event
Role of council officers	• Lead, design, implement and support process • Observe and learn from process
Background to the process	Locality working, planning and budgets (Neighbourhood Management, Community Action Plans and devolved budgets) were introduced by the Council by 1996. Community Pride, proposed the first of several PB models in 2000. The PB Unit was asked to accompany the Claremont and Weaste PB process in 2006.
Plans for the future	• To share learning with other Community Committees • To repeat and improve the process (subject to money being devolved again)

Further information	A video of the event will shortly be released, contact Salford Council for details.
Known parallel processes	• Decisions on spending of the Devolved Budget (£2.80 / head of population) is decided by a budget sub-group made up of Community Committee members • Salford Youth Bank is a panel of young people who, following training, make decisions on the funding of youth projects.

Claremont and Weaste PB event, Salford: the process

Claremont and Weaste PB event prioritised an allocation of £100,000 of money devolved to the Community Committee for Highways improvements. The event was planned by a Steering Group which met monthly, consisting of council officers, a local councillor, local residents and myself, representing the PB Unit. After presentations to Community Committee, the project was approved and work began to gather together existing project proposals from the Community Action Plan and encourage new ones from local residents. The scheme was promoted using simple publicity in the community newsletter, on a flyer, at Community Committee and via existing networks. An event was planned to prioritise the 23 schemes that had been proposed and efforts made to target those on the Community Committee mailing list who did not normally come to meetings. Cost estimates for each scheme were provided by Urban Vision, an arms length company set up to deliver the council's environmental works. The target of 30 participants was surpassed at the event which was attended by 50 residents, many of whom were new faces. The event was held in local conference facilities and information about each scheme was presented in both written form and photographs, along with an accident map of the whole area. Prioritisation took place with residents scoring each scheme out of ten on scorecards, and then repeating the process with the top ten scoring projects. The cost of the schemes on the prioritised list meant that, based on estimates, four schemes would probably be funded. Residents then evaluated the process using electronic voting.

Claremont and Weaste PB event: how the pilot was initiated

The initiation of the Claremont and Weaste pilot took place seven years after a PB model was first proposed to Salford Council by Community Pride Initiative (CPI), the forerunner of the PB Unit, who were working in Salford on a number of community development and participation projects. CPI developed a PB working group of councillors and officers, carried out budget literacy workshops with residents about the council's budget consultation, produced a participatory comic about budgets, gave PB workshops to community groups and carried out research studies about the council's participation and locality planning processes. During this time various models of PB for Salford were proposed, linking the city's mainstream and local budgeting cycles, but despite some interest and involvement in PB related events, a decision to develop this model was never taken. The PB Unit continued to try to push for the development of a pilot using the locally devolved budgets in one area of the city, but it wasn't until some further funding for highways improvements was devolved that an opportunity to do so appeared. This was bolstered by the opportunity for a council officer to participate in an EU supported Learning Community course about PB.

Quick Guide: Sunderland Safer Cleaner Greener Participatory Grant-making event

Area	Sunderland (East End and Hendon)
Lead organisation	Back on the Map New Deal for Communities
No. of processes	5 PB processes have taken place so far
Brand name	The People's Fund
Aims	To involve local residents in proposing projects and decision making on the allocation of New Deal funds for Community Chest small grants
Objectives	• To involve local residents in budget priority setting • To engage local residents in decision making • To build relationships between elected members, the NDC and the community • To encourage local groups to put forward innovative ideas • To develop knowledge and skills in developing PB processes
Process	The priorities for the pot were set by residents using questionnaire and group deliberation. In the last People's Fund event these priorities included: healthier lifestyles, celebrating life in the East end and Hendon, provision for ethnic minority, provision for young people, provision for older people. Local community groups filled in a simple application form with ideas of projects they would like to carry out. Officers checked the proposed projects matched the priorities. The process was advertised to residents in the area who were asked to apply to take part. Up to 100 residents were selected to attend the PF voting event where project proposers verbally presented their project ideas and residents gave them marks out of 10 using e-voting.
Key organisations	Back on the Map NDC
Structures involved	Back on the Map Community Panel,
Money	£96,000 has been allocated using PB processes since 2005
Resources into the process	Staff time Volunteer time through participation in Community Panel
Role of community	• Local residents set priorities and thematic allocation for the pot in questionnaires and group participatory appraisal • Community Panel work with officers to design process • Community groups proposed project ideas and presented them to local residents in a special event • Local residents voted on projects using e-voting
Role of councillors	• To observe process
Role of regeneration partnership officers	• To design process, engage community, communicate with residents and others, train community members in presentation skills, monitor and evaluate.
Further information	There is a video available of the second BOTM PB event – see http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/Video.htm for details Contact the PB Unit for an evaluation report of the first BOTM PB event mail@particiaptorybudgeting.org.uk
Known parallel processes	None known
Website	http://www.backonthemap.org/home.htm

Quick Guide: West Dunbartonshire People's Fund

Area	West Dunbartonshire, near Glasgow, Scotland
Lead organisation	West Dunbartonshire Partnership
No. of processes	First of two planned
Brand name	West Dunbartonshire People's Fund
Aims	To involve local community groups and residents in decision making of a participatory grant-making process
Process	• The West Dunbartonshire Partnership approved the money for the process and a PB Planning Group of residents and agencies was set up. • Broad criteria were drawn up and local groups invited to propose projects of up to £2000 in presentations to local residents in a participatory event. • Community development workers visited groups to support them develop their presentations. • Local press was used to invite local residents to fill 100 places at an event to vote on which projects were funded. • The event was held at a local community centre and voting too place using e-voting technology. • 17 projects were presented and 12 were successful. The other projects were given support and advice to find funding.
Structures	West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Board, PB Planning Group
Money	£20,000 for 2006-07, £30,000 for 2007-08
Resources into the process	• Staff time • Community representatives time • Venue hire and refreshments cost
Communication with local community	• The People's Fund was promoted in the local press and application forms sent to local groups.
Role of community	• Community representatives involved in Planning Group to develop process • Local community groups proposed projects • Local residents attended event and voted on projects
Role of councillors	• Councillors were informed of process but did not get involved directly in it.
Role of partnership and other officers	• Officers from West Dunbartonshire Partnership, local council and other agencies were involved in developing, organising and monitoring the process. • Community development staff provided support for community groups proposing projects.
Background to the process	Community representatives from West Dunbartonshire Partnership attended the People's Fund event in Sunderland and proposed to the Community Planning Partnership that they develop the idea.
Plans for the future	• A second event using the same process is planned for next year.
Further information	An evaluation by West Dunbartonshire will shortly be available, for contact details see: http://www.westdp.co.uk/
Known parallel processes	West Dunbartonshire Partnership have previously involved community representatives in a decision making panel for allocating the small grants fund, the Community Key Fund.

Chapter 1: What is Participatory Budgeting?

> *'A genuine engagement of the community in how public money is spent'*
>
> *(Community sector worker)*

> *'The engagement and potential afterwards for people to get involved in new ways – to start taking some control and start building their own community'*
>
> *(Voluntary sector worker)*

> *'It's a way of the people being able to put ideas forward of the best way of spending money to benefit the most people in the most sensible way.'*
>
> *(PB Participant)*

> *'Involving the community in decisions upon spend for services that they receive...engaging with people who are broadly representative in a way'*
>
> *(Council officer)*

> *'A mechanism whereby local communities come together in dialogue with Statutory Providers to scrutinise, influence and a have a degree of control over the way mainstream public resources are spent'*
>
> *(Policy worker)*

At its most simple, PB can be described as an inclusive and participatory process by which communities can influence how local budgets are spent. The definitions above are just some of those given by people interviewed in the course of this study. Many, very different responses were given, so a table overleaf collates the main concepts mentioned.

Table to show definitions of PB given by those interviewed in the study

Theme	Specific
Participatory	Balanced
	Mass
	Inclusive
	Meaningful
	Continuous
	Sustainable
Educational	Increases understanding budgets
	Increases understanding of local government structures
	Develops knowledge about community
Transformational	Changes local people
	Changes mainstream budget structures
	Changes services
Empowering	Increases control over local budgets by neighbourhoods
	Increases control over mainstream budgets by citizens
	Increases influence on decision making on services by community
	Increases influence on decision making on budgets by community
Democratic	Increases access to information
	Strengthens democratic processes
	Increases transparency in decision making
Developmental	Knowledge and ideas of community shape projects and priorities
Creative	Risk taking
	Innovative
Efficient	Money spent wisely
	Spending scrutinised by community
Benefits excluded	Benefits those who have not had resources before
	Benefits those whose needs are greatest
Builds relationships	Builds community cohesion
	Builds dialogue between community and service providers

What else could PB be?

As over 300 cities and localities have now developed PB, there are obviously many more definitions of PB which are possible. Some things which participants didn't mention but which experience shows can enrich a working concept of PB include:[2]

- Redistributes resources to those in most need
- Reshapes use of mainstream funds
- Develops participatory consciousness
- Transforms existing social structures
- Develops role and accountability of local councillors and other local leaders
- Enables local areas to shape central priorities
- Incremental process which deepens and grows over time
- Contributes to development of local economy
- Builds more equitable relationship between central and local government
- Develops as a process shaped by participants

Understanding of 'PB' in this study

Although theoretical knowledge of PB is useful when developing and planning a process, this study is more concerned with what happened in practice in the processes studied, than comparing them with 'ideal' models of PB, from Porto Alegre or elsewhere.[3] Therefore this study seeks to understand the case studies in terms of local context, rather than in comparison with an external model, and attempts to understand them in terms of their own practice and aims. The following brief history of PB in the UK demonstrates the value of learning from a study of practice rather than theory.

A brief history of how PB developed in the UK

It has been suggested by some council officers interviewed that the way PB models were initially proposed to local authorities in the UK was 'naïve'. Those involved in the initial introduction of the idea into the country intended that 'models' based on research from Porto Alegre, the Brazilian city which first developed PB, could be used to inform work in the UK. It was hoped that basic principles of redistribution, empowerment and direct democracy would be directly translated into a UK policy context of 'narrowing the gap', citizen engagement and neighbourhood working. Seven years later it is clear that this is not how PB is developing in the UK. It has been more of a case of an interaction of ideas seeking to find solutions to similar, but not identical social and political realities.

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[2] See for example: Community Pride (2004) Breathing life into democracy: the power of participatory budgeting, Forum Nacional de Partiçipão Popular (2003) Participatory Budget trial, Wampler, B (20000 A guide to Participatory Budgeting
[3] Porto Alegre, a city in southern Brazil was the first city to develop the 'orçamento partiçipativo' or 'participatory budget'.

Perhaps the naivety was on three fronts: firstly, in terms of translating to a very different political context; secondly, the conceptualisation of PB as primarily a technology, rather than a cultural change; and thirdly, attempting to 'implant' it in a very different social and political context. If the situation had been reversed, many would have questioned the introduction of a 'developed' world technology into a 'developing' country in the way it was initially attempted to do with PB in the UK. Additionally these early ideas drew heavily on descriptions of idealised structures and processes of the Porto Alegre 'model' of PB, rather than close observation of practice, as well as policy. Closer contact with the development of PB in other parts of the world, particularly Spain and Italy, has led to deeper and more complex thinking about the process.

The attitude of officers at Salford Council, who for a long time have felt a strong degree of ambivalence about the 'label' of PB, is illuminating. Having developed complex processes for joining up services, devolving budgets and involving the community in decision making at local level, they (and international researchers) consider that they had already developed something very similar to PB. Whilst this is a controversial issue, it suggests that PB is perhaps best understood as a set of local institutional and citizen solutions to social and political challenges which incorporate learning from other places experiencing similar challenges, such as Brazil and elsewhere.

Summary

There are many different definitions of PB which have been applied to UK processes by those involved in designing and participating in them. From these definitions emerge several common themes, that PB can be: participatory, educational, transformational, empowering, democratic, developmental, creative, efficient, that it builds relationships, and delivers benefits to those who are currently excluded. Other PB experiments around the world show that this definition could be enlarged further into a vision of PB as a process which is owned and shaped by participants, grows over time, develops a deep and critical citizen participation, reinvents local leadership and fundamentally changes mainstream resource allocation and distribution. PB in the UK has been inspired by international practice but has also been shaped by local initiatives and policies seeking to develop new methods to engage with citizens, improve services, develop local leadership and devolve resources.

Chapter 2: Development and implementation of PB

This chapter looks at some of the factors that affected the practical development of the PB pilots in this study, particularly the design and implementation of a PB process.

The following table outlines some of the factors which participants in the study who were involved in development and implementation identified as important. The most significant factors which influenced the development and implementation were the amount and nature of planning that took place, the presence of a dedicated and balanced steering group, networking and community engagement. Each of the factors mentioned in the table are explored in more detail in the section below in terms of some of the opportunities, pitfalls and challenges.

Key design and planning factors which influenced the development and implementation of the pilots	
Community engagement	Skills and time to engage local community
	Skills and time to target diverse groups
	Skills and time to build community capacity to participate
Leadership	Having strong leadership to motivate others and overcome blocks
Planning	Briefing local groups on process
	Time to plan the process, find a process that works and plan for problems
	Community members involved in the planning process
Learning	Opportunities to learn from others
	Opportunities to reflect on process as it develops
Communication	Branding and communication of the idea
	Method of communicating a new and abstract process
Support	Having support of the PB Unit
	Having strong skills and commitment to community development in the lead organisation
Resourcing	Support from other organisations and partners
	Teamwork
	Having a strong steering group
Pot of money	Knowing how much money is available
	Nature of money

Community engagement

In all of the case studies, officers from the main organisations involved spent time networking with community groups and individuals. This work was time and labour intensive, as this council officer comments.

> *'we spent at least two days solid on the phone, ringing round, an inordinate amount of time on the phone and email to get people along, but it's still really, really hard to get people involved.'*
>
> *(Council officer)*

Other activities included visiting groups to inform them about the process, holding meetings to engage local gatekeepers, support with preparing project proposals and presentation skills and carrying out long-term accompaniment work.

Although a lot of hard work went into engaging the community, this was undoubtedly affected by pre-existing levels of contact. In particular, difficulties were found in engaging sections of the community where the lead organisations involved did not already have strong or well developed links. For example, the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnicity participants was lower than would be expected in terms of the general population for both the U-decide Children and Young People's and the Claremont and Weaste pilots. In a similar way, the short timescale on which the Bradford Safer Cleaner Green Steering Group operated meant they had to work 'doubly hard' to engage the Urban Villages and Parish Councils in the process, compared with the Neighbourhood Action Planning (NAP) groups, with whom they already had a closely established relationship.

Leadership

All of the case studies seemed to be led either by the initiative of a single individual or a small group of people, rather than an organisation. This leadership was often inspirational and required great commitment on the individual concerned, as this interviewee comments.

> 'it couldn't have gone ahead without him sticking his neck out and that's one of the biggest challenges of this kind of work – it's having one or two people who have the vision to see how important it could be and what it's possibilities to follow it through are.'

> *(Voluntary sector worker)*

As the comment suggests, this leadership could also come at a cost; placing significant responsibility on the individual concerned and needing strong support to be sustainable.

However, sometimes this individual leadership was by default rather than through choice, and there was a recognition that something wider was needed, as a council officer who was interviewed noted.

> 'It might as well be me (leading it), you might hope it would be the community, but realistically I don't see that happening, and I'm paid to do this kind of stuff, and I would see it as my job really, but at the moment it is a council initiative to involve local people, rather than local people demanding a say.'

> *(Council officer)*

It is perhaps inevitable that leadership currently comes from committed individuals, given the ad hoc nature of PB pilots at present. Having said this,

although leadership might necessarily begin within a service provider, it is possible to build in a principle that this be transferred to the community through the building of skills and capacity of the community, as happened with the Working Group in the U-Decide pilots. It could be that this initial leadership from organisations plays an essential role in developing enthusiasm and commitment within communities (who may have a level of distrust of traditional 'consultation and participation').

Planning

Effective planning and preparation was noted by many organisers. Meeting regularly to organise, plan and think through the process was essential to avoid pitfalls later in the process, as this interviewee from the Village Spend Steering Group reveals.

> *'We knew that there would be a public meeting but were afraid it would be unstructured, so we sat down for a few hours and thrashed out exactly what information was going to be needed from that meeting... we were looking for a clear target from that meeting, it wasn't just a case of, getting a few people together to get some ideas.'*

> *(Voluntary sector worker)*

Similarly, the level of community involvement in each steering group impacted on the process. In the U-Decide pilots a resident led Working Group helped develop ownership amongst the community, and a group of young people informed the development of an engaging process for the young people's pilot. However, this commitment to community engagement meant going at the community's pace, which although sometimes causing tensions with officers under delivery pressures was a learning point for service providers, as this interview with a U-Decide pilot worker reflects.

> *'we discussed at every stage (with the Working Group) what needed to happen …and came up with a decision which everybody was happy with. At first some officers found it difficult, saying "you know, this has taken far too long, we shouldn't have as many of the community there, we should just make the decisions and do it". But that was what it was about, about everybody feeling that they were playing a role and making those decisions.'*

> *(Council officer)*

Although the absence of resident involvement in planning processes might be quicker, the lack of this knowledge could imply risks later in the process. This was evident in a planning meeting for the Safer, Cleaner, Greener event in Bradford, which, due to time and resource constraints, was entirely officer led. Whilst trying to make decisions about particularly difficult aspects of the process, the question 'but what will the community think of it?' was repeatedly asked. Including the community in the planning stages, who as experience from U-Decide shows, are often keen to give up their time to do so, is one solution to this.

Learning

Opportunities to both learn from others and reflect on the process as it developed helped give focus and direction to the implementation process. Formal processes included training provided by the PB Unit, a formal Learning Group in the U-Decide pilots and participation in EU Learning Networks. More informally, ideas were often exchanged at National Reference Group and Practitioner Group meetings or through visits to other pilot areas. Although it was mostly PB pilot 'leads' who benefited from this opportunity, the value of this would be amplified if these opportunities could be extended to those involved in implementation and engagement work, and even community members themselves, in addition to 'pilot leads'.

Learning about PB was in itself an active process, as opposed to one of simply translating one idea from Brazil to the UK, as this council officer comments.

> *'Initially, the discussion was, 'well this is how you do it – this is how it's been done in Porto Alegre' – and I think it's taken a while to think 'well what sense do we make of it for ourselves, and how does it work here?'. I think that's work in progress to think it through and make sense of how we can apply something from one context and put it into another and make it work.'*

> *(Council officer)*

However, there is also evidence that practitioners sometimes didn't bring enough of their own knowledge into the learning process, perhaps due to organisers' consciousness that they were trying something for the first time. Most practitioners had watched Bradford Vision's video of the first UK PB process. This was a large and well attended public event, which although inspiring, seems to have stifled innovation to the extent that many pilots chose to use a similar format to run their PB process. This was despite their knowledge that a public event is not the best method of engaging younger people and other 'hard-to-reach' groups. With the exception of the Village Spend, which carried out some outreach work with schools, none of the case studies took the PB prioritisation processes direct to pre-existing groups or communities, contrary to common – and often their own organisations' – community development practice. Clearly there are already good models of engagement which PB in the UK can build on rather than reinvent.

Communication

Introducing a new idea like PB required strong publicity, communication and branding. Most areas did not have a large budget to do this, so relied on existing networks and communication sources to get the message across. Branding was felt to be essential in both attracting community members and building ownership and trust, as this participant from U-Decide states.

'The difficulty was I think, getting people to understand what it was all about, the very name 'Participatory Budgeting,' puts people off. U-Decide is much more...You can know what that means, but Participatory Budgeting, it's 'that's what the council does' sort of.'

(U-Decide participant)

Support

Support internal and external to the organisations involved was felt essential to keeping the PB planning process on track. Some were supported by officers with a remit to carry out this work, such as in U-Decide, but others, such as the organisers of the Village Spend, carried out planning work as extra tasks on top of their usual jobs. It was found helpful when relevant to be able to call on the support and knowledge of others, as Steering Group members from Claremont and Weaste comment.

'it was good having a technical expert at the event – lots of people talked to him, asked questions that I wouldn't have been able to answer'

'having a person (from the PB Unit) kept us on track, share experiences from other areas, experiences of what's happening in the country, not just Brazil.'

(Steering Group members, Claremont and Weaste)

Resources

Most of the pilots had no or little extra money or resources to deliver the pilot, such as dedicated officer time to develop the process, publicity or engagement costs, and even those that did found themselves under heavy workloads.

'It was blummin' hard work, those last weeks I put about 70 hours a week in and I'm paid for 18 ! So it was really harsh but so good to be involved in – you don't mind being that busy in a short period of time if that is what it needs – and that's what it needed.'

(Council worker)

Although admirable that workers were willing to meet resource gaps themselves, it should be remembered that relying on goodwill and individual enthusiasm is not sustainable in the long-term, and that the true costs of supporting a new process need to be fully supported if it is to be successful.

The U-Decide pilots were the only ones to have extra funds and specific staffing for delivery. This enabled them to develop participatory processes and community accompaniment, work that was resource intensive but brought huge benefits in terms of increased community ownership.

Whilst resources were limited, spare capacity was often made good use of, such as in Claremont and Weaste, who were able to use venues, access other colleagues and utilise already existing communications.

Pot of money

The nature of the funding involved influenced the process in terms of pre-existing limitations on the use of the money. Organisers had very little influence over what money was used in the PB process. Whilst the regeneration funding used in the U-Decide pilots was comparatively flexible, enabling innovation in the community to be encouraged, it was a small and discrete pot which is not guaranteed annually. In contrast, whilst the money used in Claremont and Weaste was a relatively large pot in terms of the area, it came with many constraints from central government on what it could be used for, which narrowed the scope of community influence.

This learning suggests that organisers need to find creative ways of managing this difficult tensions between centrally set directives and opportunities for meaningful decision-making at the local level.

Summary

A range of factors influenced the development and implementation stage, the most significant of which included the amount and nature of planning that took place, effective community engagement, the presence of a dedicated and balanced steering group and networking. Community engagement was resource intensive, but activities such as working with groups to develop project proposals, accompaniment of residents involved in designing PB processes and outreach with 'hard to reach' groups paid off in terms of quality of process and diversity of participation. Most of the pilots were led by a committed individual or small group of people which was often a lot of responsibility, although experience shows that this leadership could also be developed amongst community members. Effective planning and preparation was important and made more effective by community involvement. Formal and informal learning was useful for reflection on a new and developing process, but existing knowledge was not always fully capitalised upon. Strong branding enabled the new concept of PB to be communicated across a wide audience, and although resources for publicity and communication were useful many managed to make good use of existing networks for this purpose. Most PB pilots were delivered with no extra resources, but even those that were had hidden cost implications which were not fully recovered. External factors such as constraints and limitations on the funding pot used in PB processes also impacted on the development of the process.

The next chapter will explore how successful PB processes were developed within the context described above.

Chapter 3: Running a successful PB process

This chapter explores some of the processes used in the cases studies, their common factors, experiences and difficulties. Process is defined as the prioritisation and decision making procedures which took place in each case study.

What is a successful process?

The processes described above contain many similarities and overlaps which means that it is more effective to explore the common difficulties and successes in process, rather than look at each pilot in turn. As has been mentioned, those involved in the study had a wide range of definitions of PB, and similarly of success. The definition of a successful process varies as it reflects the interests and opinions of the person being asked. Clearly a practitioner interested in building a relationship with a particular community will have a different view of a 'successful process' than a community member seeking to have their project selected for funding by other community members. Broadly speaking here, success is defined in terms of the perceptions of organisers and/or participants.

Key process success factors identified by participants*

The following table outlines some of the factors whose presence or absence was identified as key to a successful process of the PB pilot.

Factors which influenced the success of the PB process*	
Meeting structure	Professional facilitation
	Structured approach to meeting
	An engaging process
Communication	Clear instructions and explanation of process, particularly scoring
	Clear communication about the amount of money available and any constraints to spending
	Clear rules
Inclusiveness	Opportunities to ask questions and make answers available
	Holding the meeting at a suitable time and place
	Process appropriate to the needs and capacities of participants
	Process which meets the needs of participants
	Support for participants where needed during the process
Information	Advice and support for those whose projects do not get funded
	Finding the balance between providing participants with enough information and overloading them
	Technical expert on hand to respond to questions
Support	Support from other organisations and departments
	Getting costings for project proposals
	Strong team to deliver
Adaptability	Fitting the technology to the needs of the process rather than the other way around
	Adaptability of process design to circumstances

*I have not included any reference to participation in this chapter because although this is an important aspect of process, it is dealt with in its own chapter.

Meeting structure

Each case study seems to have prepared a carefully thought out structure to the event beforehand. Even so, there were still opportunities for learning, such as in Claremont and Weaste where issuing scorecards too early led to some participants completing them incorrectly. In this case, some cards had to be reissued.

Communication

Honesty and clarity about the amount of money available, constraints and process were fundamental to the credibility of the process with participants. This was a lesson learnt during the U-Decide children and young people's process after which unsuccessful participants reacted responded badly to their project not being selected for funding. Organisers felt although this may be an inherent risk of a competitive process, it possibly could have been averted by more thorough briefing of support workers. In this vein, organisers of the Village Spend had prepared for the potential controversy which could result from opening up a limited resource to public deliberation.

> *'We made it clear that if there was a shortage of money then we would have to come upfront and say, 'look we can't do all the projects because there's a shortage of money.'*

> *(Voluntary sector worker)*

Inclusiveness

Having an inclusive process which meets the different needs of community members is clearly an important issue. This is covered in depth in the chapter on PB and fairness.

Information

The participatory grant-making pilots were replacing often quite complex written application processes with mainly verbal ones. However, monitoring and funding rules still meant that a certain amount of information was needed, which was not always collected satisfactorily in the new processes, as this officer noted:

> *'We have a principal of trying to keep paperwork to a minimum and I'm not sure we got the balance right this time...maybe it was a bit too minimal'*

> *(Regeneration officer)*

However, anecdotal evidence from Keighley, where residents are involved in the monitoring of project delivery, suggests that accountability to one's peers may improve the collection of such information.[4]

Other information regarded by organisers as important included advice and support for those not funded, and project related technical information.

Support

Support from colleagues and other departments, particularly around complex issues such as using voting technology or technical information, was important, as evidenced by problems arising where it was lacking. For example, in Claremont and Weaste time spent working out what kind of voting technology to use in the process was helpful in ensuring that the event ran smoothly, whereas the rather late arrival of cost estimates for projects was not helpful. A solution to this in general could be stronger support and backing of the process from higher levels within the organisation.

Adaptability

'There's nothing here like the Porto Alegre model, they are all far more sectoral and limited. Ideally they would use £1million of mainstream budget in neighbourhood meetings.'

(Policy worker)

All of the case studies adapted the PB concept to suit their own local circumstances. Although some, such as the policy worker quoted above, wished that things were different, the reality was that it was necessary to adapt in order to establish a process that would have validity as a decision making process and credibility with participants. For this reason Bradford Vision's Safer, Cleaner Greener Steering Group decided that they would not force what they called an 'artificially constructed PB process' of competition on participants if a situation arose where there were less bids than money available, and instead came up with an innovative solution in which participants were given the responsibility of redistributing the extra resources.

Perception of the process by participants

One of the most important aspects of success in a process is clearly what participants think of it. All of the PB processes in the study showed consistently high approval ratings from participants. This included enjoyment of being involved and willingness to repeat participation, belief in the process and support for future development of PB with other pots of money. Positive aspects of the process noted by participants included: that it was a chance to include local knowledge in decision making; that decisions had not been made already; that they felt empowered and included; that it increased the

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[4] Conversation with monitoring officer, Keighley, May 2007 (Heather Blakey)

value for money of the projects proposed, and that it overcame some of the unfair advantage those with fundraising skills had. Positive aspects of the process that may not have been specifically planned by organisers included that the event gave them a chance to network, meet people and learn about their community and others' ideas.

The following quote, from an interview with a participant at the Safer, Cleaner, Greener event in Bradford shows that participants' approval was not simply about enjoying the event, but experiencing a strong sense of the transformations that PB might achieve.

> *'It gives the people on the ground a lot more power. They're the people close to the ground and who know what works and what doesn't work and that's good.'*

> *(Participant in Safer, Cleaner, Greener event, Bradford)*

Although participants' views of the process were generally positive, there were some project presenter participants who felt disempowered by the process, that it was over complex and they were being made to 'jump through hoops' to access scarce resources that had previously been allocated in a satisfactory way. As the participant from a PB event in Keighley states, these experiences risked jeopardising future involvement.

> *'I think it has been very chaotic. And really stressful for people presenting applications. I probably wouldn't do it again....People turned out but the actual set up doesn't seemed to have been able to cope with the quantity of people that turned up.*[5]

> *(Keighley participant)*

A solution to this could be to offer the groups involved support and training with presentation skills, as was carried out in the U-Decide Children and Young People's pilots.

In general, participants who felt the most unhappy were those who felt they had given a lot to the process, but received nothing in return. Those involved in grant-giving processes who felt forced to give a presentation in sometimes stressful circumstances were particularly unhappy. Other participants wished to improve representation from all parts of the community and to have access to more information with which to make decisions.

Perceptions of the fairness of the event were a key factor indicating project success, as distinct from participants overall impressions. This is a particularly important issue, and there are many aspects to perceived and objective fairness in PB processes. For these reasons, these concerns are dealt with separately, in the following chapter.

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[5] Interviews with PB event participants carried out by Heather Blakey in Keighley – November 2006, Keighley

Summary

There are many aspects to a successful process and the definition of this will depend on the interests and perspective of those involved, with a participant hoping to have a project funded having a different view from a council officer keen to engage widely with the community. Having a clear meeting structure with strong facilitation and an engaging process were important in ensuring that everyone could participate and goals were met. Honest communication about the amount of money available and any constraints on it was a learning for participants and helped to prevent scrambles for resources. Collecting and providing adequate information was necessary to ensure that participants and organisers were fully informed throughout the process. Technical support from others was essential to the development of processes where specialist knowledge or technology was needed. As even well planned participatory processes are often unpredictable, a high degree of adaptability was sometimes needed, and it was important to bear in mind the aims of the process and expectations of the community. Participants were generally positive about the PB processes they took part in, both as well organised events and opportunities to transform their local communities. Occasionally, those who had to present projects to get funding were unhappy because they felt uncomfortable or coerced, but most felt it was a positive opportunity to develop confidence and share ideas. The next chapter will explore to what extent the PB processes can be considered 'fair'.

Chapter 4: Fairness in PB processes

A major concern of all those involved in designing PB was that the processes would be considered fair by a range of actors, and in particular by the local community. The risk that a process of awarding funding might be seen as unfair relative to one section or area of the community, or increase community competitiveness at the expense of cohesion, is a concern that practitioners often express when first introduced to the idea of PB , and one which seems to have influenced the design of all the pilots. These concerns were particularly acute in Keighley for example, where cohesion issues are especially sensitive, and in Claremont and Weaste,[6] where organisers didn't want to risk endangering the good relationship between the council and the community, which the Neighbourhood Management structures had helped to develop. In addition to this, there are many other aspects of the process which affect perceptions of fairness. Some of the key ones raised in the course of the study are:

- Procedure
- Understanding of process by participants
- Equality of opportunity to participate
- Participation which is balanced in terms of participating groups and associations, sections of the community or communities
- Independence
- Transparency
- Fairness of participants making decisions
- Validity of decision making (decisions made by a sharing of different and relevant knowledge on the subject)
- Projects presented equally in terms of time, space and format

Procedure

In all of the pilots, organisers spent time thinking through procedures and rules which matched their view of a fair process. Issues included ensuring that information about all project proposals was presented in an equal way, that project presenters began from an equal footing and that one group of people did not outnumber others, and that there was a fair process for deciding which projects should be funded if there were issues such as tied scores or money left over at the end of a prioritisation process. It is not thought that any of the case studies concerned themselves with traditional electoral process issues such as having independent monitoring for counting participants prioritisation or voting scorecards. Whilst this was not an issue in any of the case studies, it is likely that it would be necessary to tighten these procedures as more people and larger amounts of money became involved, in order to ensure transparency and regulation of the process.

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[6] Heather Blakey 2006-07 ESRC Research Diary - Municipal Innovations in Non-Governmental Participation: Bradford case study

Understanding of the process by participants

Ensuring that participants understood the process was considered key to ensuring fairness. All the pilots had a procedure and instructions for participants to follow, which aimed to be clear enough that all participants would be able to understand the process sufficiently to participate fully. Occasionally problems were encountered, such as in Claremont and Weaste where some scorecards were spoilt due to participants filling them in before the procedure had been fully explained. This was remedied by organisers who spotted the problem and were able to issue new scorecards ensuring that the process wasn't unfair due to lack of understanding.

Equality of opportunity to participate

Various attempts were made to bring an ethos of equal opportunity in participation to the pilots. As the quote from a voluntary sector worker from the Village Spend Steering Group shows, there were many different and subtle aspects to this.

> *'We got everyone into small groups and made sure there were stewards to help people, because not everyone can read and write very well so we thought writing notes might be intimidating.'*
> *(Voluntary sector worker)*

Having said this it should be noted that often equalities issues were either overlooked or not met. For example, disabled people did not have access to the venue in the Village Spend and auditory project presentations could potentially exclude deaf and hard-of-hearing people, or those with some forms of dyslexia. In Keighley, where many of the project presenters and audience spoke English as a second language, neither time nor facility was provided for translation and presenters had to present and translate within their allotted three minutes.[7] In a similar way, the written presentation information used in Claremont and Weaste could exclude the visually impaired or those with literacy or language needs. A learning point from this is to remember that providing the 'same' treatment is not the same as enabling 'equal' treatment, because different members of the community have different needs, which need to be fully recognised if their potential as participants is to be realised.

Social inclusion issues were dealt with differently in the various areas. In Bradford, to ensure that all groups started from the same footing, groups who did not turn up to present their project on the day were automatically given zero points, whereas by contrast in U-Decide, the two highest scoring projects in the Children and Young People's pilot were two groups who were absent due to reasons of social disadvantage. The young organisers felt that to be fair to these groups their project ideas should still be presented, even in absentia.

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[7] Heather Blakey 2006-07 ESRC Research diary (op cit)

Balanced participation

'It seemed a bit wrong that there were only few people from one part of the town, only four of them, I think, and they wouldn't get the same say in it.'[8]

(PB Participant)

A key criticism which is sometimes made of PB is that the process may become unfair due to particular groups dominating or capturing it, and therefore obtaining a greater share of resources or implementing more projects which represent their interests to the exclusion of others. Whilst there have not been enough PB processes in the UK to measure to any meaningful extent whether this is true, the above quote from a participant at a PB event in Keighley, Bradford shows that under or over-representation can happen. However, good planning had ensured that this situation had been foreseen and was a key factor in the decision to cap the spend by geographical area, so even though there was an imbalance in terms of numbers participating, each area got it's 'fair' share of money. Similarly the Claremont and Weaste Steering Group decided that there should be a limit of 5 participants from any one area or group.

Although the fear of practitioners, and often participants, is that one group will deliberately dominate, a more likely risk is that this will happen by accident due to under-representation by particular groups (as occurred in Keighley). One proactive solution to this is being tried out by Manton Community Alliance who in the design of a forthcoming PB event have been monitoring applications by age and gender and using the information to target any 'missing' groups.

Independence

Some organisers felt that it was important that those involved with running the process be perceived as independent in order for it to have credibility with the community. For this reason, local councillors in the U-Decide Liveability pilot in Newcastle and a local resident who sat on the Steering Group in Claremont and Weaste chose not to take part in the voting processes, fearful that their involvement would damage the perception of transparency of the process. To ensure that the process was perceived as independent in a potentially conflictive context, external facilitators were asked to run the project development and initial prioritisation part of the Village Spend.

Transparency

All the pilots felt it was important to provide participants and elected members with clear, transparent information concerning which projects had been

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[8] Interviews with PB event participants carried out by Heather Blakey in Keighley – November 2006, Keighley

funded and what scores they received.[9] This was done through instant feedback, reports to local structures, such as the Community Committee in Claremont and Weaste, and evaluation reports.

Fairness of participants making decisions

> ' I don't think it's happening in this room, but you could see a situation where everyone votes for their mates, that would be quite easy to do – to vote for the areas or the people that you know and like.'

> *(Keighley participant)*

The comment above from a participant at the Safer, Cleaner, Greener event in Bradford is symptomatic of the fear that voting in PB processes will follow community cleavages, whether by neighbourhood, ethnicity, age, street or group, and thereby be unfair. Although some behaviour which seems to live up to this concern has been observed in PB processes, such as participants completing scoring cards before they have received all the information about a project , it is also the case that the reverse has been true, as an older participant in U-Decide expressed.

> 'They didn't just vote for the project they were involved with, some of the young people's project was fabulous, and nobody knew these young people but everybody voted for them.'

> *(U-Decide participant)*

Evidence that participants do not simply vote for the own immediate interests also comes from an event in Keighley in which over half the participants were from Asian communities and from one area. The two top projects voted for were neither projects of Asian community-led voluntary groups, nor from that area.[10]

As PB voting processes produce either electronic or paper trails the organisers have an opportunity to monitor whether this is true. Similarly, effective capacity building before the start of a process in both bringing groups together can also address these issues.

Validity of decision making

A valid decision can be defined as one that is made by the sharing and exchange of knowledge by all those effected by the issue concerned. One of the key principles of a PB process is that it enables those with knowledge about their community to influence this decision making. Some of the case studies with a locality focus attempted to implement this principle by organising a PB at neighbourhood level. This was particularly appreciated by

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[9] The role of elected members in PB processes is dealt with in more detail in the chapter on Power and PB.

[10] Heather Blakey 2006-07 ESRC Research diary (op cit).

some participants, such as the one interviewed below at the Safer, Cleaner, Greener event in Bradford.

'The people close to the ground know what works and what doesn't.'

(Participant in Safer, Cleaner, Greener event, Bradford)

However, even in a small area, there may be unofficial boundaries and divisions which mean that community members are unaware of the realities of life in some parts of the area, and this can have implications for the validity of decisions made, as this participant told me.

'For one or two of these (projects) I don't know the area, so I really don't feel I can comment, it's very difficult to compare one that you don't know very well with one that you do. The one you don't know might actually be more important and more worthwhile than the one that you do know.'

(Claremont and Weaste PB event participant)

Having said this, there was discussion and exchange of information evident at this event that would help address this issue. Similarly, participants suggested that providing more information about projects before the event could help overcome this problem, as well as providing opportunities for community learning. Other solutions might include aiming for wider participation and care in demarking the geographical boundaries used in the process.

Presentation of project proposals

Simple processes such as giving project presenters support with presentation skills, the same space and length of time in which to present their idea or presenting them all in the same format were intended to ensure a sense of fairness. Nevertheless this is a sensitive area, as this quote from a participant interviewed at the Safer, Cleaner, Greener event in Bradford shows.

'It should be a different way of presenting, because going out on a stage – it's not everybody's thing 'cos some people are good at it, some people aren't, so it puts some people at a disadvantage. Although it's been said that people don't score on the presentation, I think some people do!'

(Participant in Safer, Cleaner, Greener event, Bradford)

The assumption that presentations are inherently unfair is so strong that I systematically observed this factor at the Safer, Cleaner, Greener event in Bradford. I found that there was no positive correlation or link between the volume of a speaker, the length of the presentation or their overall confidence and the score awarded by the audience, and that there was actually a negative correlation between score for overall presentation skills and audience score. More details of how this was calculated can be found in

Appendix 2. This demonstrates the fact that less confident speakers were in fact not disadvantaged by their lack of experience. This may be very surprising, but is backed up by an earlier study of a PB event in Sunderland which I carried out and may be partly explained by the fact that Bradford Vision gave specific instructions to participants to beware of being influenced by the quality of presentation. This suggests that participants voting on projects were not automatically influenced by slick, flashy presentations, but that they may have identified with the less confident members of the community and listened harder. Most of all it shows that participants are capable of thinking through and making complex decisions.

Even in Claremont and Weaste where projects were in a different format – using photographs and in writing, some of those who had originally suggested the projects were not satisfied with the way the information was presented. This suggests that project presentation can be inherently contentious and needs extra attention and innovation to convince others of its fairness. One good example of this comes from the U-Decide Children and Young People's pilot whose young organisers decided to ask participants to make a creative display about their project at the event as well as talk about it. The idea behind this was that this would hopefully overcome the disadvantage some groups might have in presentation skills.

Summary

Fairness in the PB process was a major concern with organisers and participants alike and there were several distinct aspects to this. All the pilots tried to ensure that procedures for presenting projects and scoring were done equally, although they were less concerned with independent monitoring of votes. Instructions of how to prioritise and vote on projects were key to enabling participants to understand the process, but not always thorough enough to avoid small problems. Despite a strong commitment to equality of opportunity in participation, many PB processes were not inclusive enough. Organisers were aware that imbalances in participation, such as one group or area dominating over another, could discredit the process with the community and so planned for this possibility. Other concerns included that the process be perceived as independent and for this reason some residents, such as councillors and PB process organisers, chose not to participate in the voting. Similarly, instant feedback and reports were made available to ensure that decisions were transparent. Concerns that participants would make unfair decisions and only support projects of direct benefit to themselves or their friends were not borne out in general, and in many cases the reverse was seen. Some participants were concerned that they would not have enough local knowledge to make a decision, but opportunities to share information and discuss with others helped make this an opportunity for learning. Despite project presentation being a controversial aspect of the process with participants, observation shows that there was no link between presentation skills and scoring. Building concerns about the fairness of project presentation into the process helped reassure participants and strengthened the process overall. This chapter has touched on the subject of participation in PB processes, which the next chapter will explore in more detail.

Chapter 5: Participation in PB Processes

This chapter explores participation in PB processes: who was involved, where and in what.

Who was involved in the PB processes?

> *'We got a good range of people, a good geographical coverage of the city, all areas of the city involved, and had a pretty reflective group in terms of the diversity of young people in the city, a good mix of age ranges, people with and without disabilities.'*

> *(Council officer)*

> *'There a few younger people here, but more of them are middle aged or elderly and they are all white. It's 6-8 o'clock, people with young children can't come.'*

> *(PB observer)*

The quotes above show that there were differences in terms of diversity of participation between the case studies. Although systematic data about numbers and profile of participants does not exist for all the case studies, some general conclusions can be made. Whilst in PB processes in Bradford, Keighley and to a lesser extent the U-Decide Children and Young People's pilot, participation was diverse in terms of age and community, in almost all other cases participants were on average, over the age of 50, female and white. In participatory grant-making processes the gender balance has been roughly equal, but in the community project prioritisation processes in Claremont and Weaste and the Village Spend, Coedpoeth, slightly more women participated. In Appendix 3 can be found detailed figures from selected areas.

In general, organisers prioritised mass, over diverse participation, and it is probably for this reason that they were not more successful in ensuring that a wide range of people came to the event. Where processes have been more diverse, like in Keighley, it is usually because they have followed effective long-term engagement with a range of groups, such as had taken place with the Neighbourhood Action Planning (NAP groups).[11] This ensured that a good range of project proposals were developed which appealed to a wide cross-section of the community who came along to support them.

As the observation on attendance at a PB event shows there was awareness of the lack of diversity and of the need to address it. To do this, systematic monitoring of participation by age, gender, ethnicity, disability, etc is needed for organisers to know who is participating and who is not and respond in a pro-active rather than reactive way. However, at the moment there is very little

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[11] Heather Blakey 2006-07 ESRC Research Diary - Municipal Innovations in Non-Governmental Participation: Bradford case study

monitoring taking place. To ensure that one group does not 'drop off' part way through, monitoring should be done at all stages in the participation process, such as at project proposal, presentation and voting stage.

The risk of not monitoring this is that firstly it will not be clear whether particular groups are participating or not and secondly organisers will not be able to respond clearly to any concerns about over-representation of particular groups. Thirdly, A lack of diversity in participation means that the quality of decision making is affected. As the quote below highlights, when PB processes are being used to make decisions about aspects of community life which are highly specific to factors such as gender and age, such as highways, it is all the more important to be aware of the need to involve those groups in decision making.

> *'when our daughter was at the college, she was regularly walking down by that path (on the proposed scheme), but now at the moment I couldn't care less about that – it doesn't affect me in any way whatsoever, but it did do a few years ago when my daughter was walking along there.'*

> *(Participant, Claremont and Weaste PB event)*

Experience from pilots which have successfully engaged young people, such as in Newcastle and Coedpoeth shows that it is possible to design PB processes that will engage with 'harder to reach' groups mentioned above, and all that is needed imagination in process design and strong community engagement with these groups. Pro-active routine monitoring can then supplement this process as the organisers of a forthcoming PB process in Manton, Nottinghamshire are currently doing to ensure that participation in balanced in terms of age and gender.

Although there are clearly gaps in some of the pilots in terms of diversity in participation, many of them did have an inbuilt agenda of social inclusion. For example the pilot in Keighley was open only to residents of deprived areas (those eligible for Neighbourhood Renewal funding), the liveability pilot in Newcastle in a geographically excluded part of the city, and the other with young people, a specific community of interest, all aimed to foster the participation and engagement of these communities. Similarly, one of the aims of the Claremont and Weaste pilot was undoubtedly to develop participation mechanisms within a wider context in which the community shows low levels of participation in traditional democratic processes such as voting.[12] Evidence from the pilots suggests that PB could provide a meaningful and accessible way for the most excluded to participate is reflected in the following statement by a Newcastle council officer.

> *'You wouldn't expect a lot of the young people who got involved to get involved. It's clearly beneficial to them to get involved in something*

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[12] Turnout in Weaste was 29% in the 2007 local elections and Claremont 33%

where they get to have some power and feel powerful and they are making a difference.'

Why did people get involved in PB processes?

Participants said that they were involved in PB processes for a range of reasons which included: being already active in the community, having a particular issue to raise, feeling they needed to participate in order to change something, needing money for a project, to find out what was happening, to support a particular project, or just to attend an event.

Some participants were involved in presenting their own projects verbally to other participants for scoring in the grant-giving processes. This provided good opportunities in terms of experience and in some cases a chance for other local residents to come to the event to support a project and find out what was happening in the area. However, it was not welcomed by all presenters, who, like the one quoted below, occasionally felt that it was a compulsion, rather than an opportunity to participate.

> *'I think everybody is nervous and probably wondering why they have to do this, because they're all here because they have to be. They wouldn't get the funding otherwise.'*

> *(Participant in Safer, Cleaner, Greener event, Bradford)*

Opportunities for participation

This section explores what opportunities there were for the community to participate throughout the PB processes. As well as participating in the PB events themselves, other opportunities for participation include:

- Priority setting of the pot of money used in the PB process
- Proposing projects
- Designing the PB process
- Engaging the community
- Running the PB event
- Participation in decision making in project scoring and prioritisation
- Evaluation
- Monitoring of projects
- Strategic planning

Examples of successes and challenges in each of these areas of participation follows below.

Priority setting for the pot of money used in the PB process

Constraints around some of the pots of money used in PB processes such as the funding for highways improvements used in the Claremont and Weaste pilot prevented any community prioritisation being done. The priorities for this

pot are set centrally, and so it is only at project stage that any meaningful choices about how to spend it can be made. The fact that many pots of money have strings attached like this severely limits opportunities for community participation. In the other case studies there was little community involvement in priority setting, and the only well developed example of this was in the People's Fund in Sunderland, in which priority setting took place through both participatory appraisal and group deliberation. In Keighley, an extensive prioritisation exercise was undertaken, but due to constraints on funding available, this was used as a guide only.[13] Hopefully new policy developments, such as Local Area Agreements, will create more opportunities for participation at this stage in the future.

Project proposal

In all of the case studies there were opportunities for participation in project proposal and presentation. This varied from suggesting an idea on a simple application form to developing and costing a whole project and presenting it to the community. In some areas such as Bradford and Newcastle support was offered to those with project ideas. However, there is some evidence from the U-Decide project that this can be a more complex and time-consuming process when working with community groups that are not already well established.

Of course it is not necessary to always reinvent the wheel and develop new processes for proposing projects and ideas, particularly when opportunities for meaningful participation in identifying needs for projects in the community already exist. This was the case in Claremont and Weaste where the project proposal process was bolstered by the many excellent schemes already in the area's Community Action Planning, produced the previous year in an in-depth participatory process.

Designing the PB process

The pilots in Coedpoeth and Newcastle undoubtedly had the widest community involvement in the design of the process, the former being a process almost entirely developed by the local community and voluntary sector, and the latter setting up structures such as a 40-strong resident-led Working Group to develop the whole process.

> 'I feel completely guilty about the amount we took of their time, but they never complained, they never whinged – it's just phenomenal, inspirational, honestly.'

(Council officer)

Whilst the above comment from a Newcastle council officer is testimony to the huge amount of ownership they developed amongst the local community, the officer also tells us that there is a fine line between developing the

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[13] Heather Blakey 2006-07 ESRC Research Diary op cit.

community's ability to participate and using them. This reminds us that, in PB processes, as in any community work, it is important to ensure that the commitment that local people make in investing time and energy into a process is matched by a commitment of service providers to keep them involved as the process develops.

Engagement of community members and groups

In the Village Spend, Coedpoeth a broad-based organising approach was used to organise and mobilise the community into the process. This involved training and motivating community group chairs, church ministers and others identified as 'leaders' to bring their members along to the event and brief them on the process. Although participation in this stage of the process helps bring more and harder to reach groups into the process, it also contains the risk that spontaneous mobilising will bring imbalances in participation into the process as the participant from a process in Keighley below commented:

> 'It's clearly been sold to one area as just come along, you must come along, it's a numbers thing, and in other areas, there's been a lot of apathy about it.'[14]

> *(Keighley participant)*

One way to reduce this risk, which was used in the Safer Cleaner Greener event in Bradford, is to places limits on the number of people who can attend from each particular group; another way is to carefully monitor attendance. Alternatively, using a cyclical rather than one-off process, where the PB is repeated and grows over time should also help prevent imbalance, as groups who are under-represented initially will be more likely to get involved as knowledge of the benefits of participating spreads.

Event organisation and delivery

Some PB processes, such as the Safer, Cleaner, Greener event in Bradford and to a lesser extent the event in Claremont and Weaste, were entirely organised by the main organisation delivering the event. Whilst this clearly paid off in terms of a smooth running and successful delivery, experience from Newcastle shows that it is possible for this to be brought about by community participation as well.

> ''We asked the Wikkid Planners to work out how the event would work on the day, so they decided how the voting would work, how people would present their idea, what the agenda would be, pretty much everything about the day we left to them to make the decisions about, and on the day they organised registration, did a bit of an introduction to the event, explained who they were.'

> *(Council officer)*

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[14] Interviews with PB event participants carried out by Heather Blakey in Keighley – November 2006, Keighley

Participation in organising the event can help the PB process is several ways. Firstly, it helps develop wider knowledge and ownership of the PB in the community and secondly, if those with firsthand knowledge of the needs and interests of potential participants are involved, then in all likelihood a better and more appropriate process will be developed.

Participation in decision making in project scoring and prioritisation

Although all the projects used a similar method of scoring and prioritising projects, the amount and nature of participation in this process varied greatly, from individual scoring to group deliberation. For example, the number of projects presented in the Safer, Cleaner, Greener event in Bradford did not allow much time for participants to think deeply, ask questions, nor discuss scoring of project presentations. This was in part no doubt due to the difficulty of time constraints of a half-day session in which 40 presentations were presented and scored.

By contrast, in Claremont and Weaste, even though they had received no instructions to do so, community members proactively discussed, deliberated and exchanged information about proposed project schemes. The fact that participants were required to move around the projects to learn about them encouraged the mixing and socialising which facilitated this. Although it had been decided early in the planning process that it would be unfeasible to have a project 'presenter' for each proposal it was noted that in at least a couple of occasions community members spontaneously took on this role. The impact of this is perhaps confirmed by the fact that the table of the top scoring project of the evening had apparently been stationed by an enthusiastic supporter who successfully captured the attention of groups of participants throughout the evening. Probably because the event was organised in 'community tea' format linked to the local Community Committee, participants clearly felt they had the authority to shape the process as they saw fit.[15] The presence of participants taking control of the process is clearly evidence of empowerment. However, to ensure that not only those who already have skills, confidence and authority benefit, appropriate support should be provided for those who need it, so that they can be empowered too.

Evaluation

All the pilots involved participants in evaluation after the event, and some involved them in focus groups or workshops to reflect and evaluate on the process after the event.

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[15] A community tea is an informal community-friendly event where local residents are invited to eat, socialise and link up with local service providers.

Monitoring

Monitoring of project delivery is another opportunity for community participation in the PB. The only known examples of good practice of this is in participatory grant-making processes in Keighley, where community members are becoming involved in project monitoring steering groups.[16]

Strategic planning

It is not thought that any of the case studies showed any examples of involving the community in extending or mainstreaming their PB processes. This is a missed opportunity because, as the quotes from interviews with participants in Newcastle and Bradford show, they often have their own long-term visions of how the process could develop in future, which is a great resource for organisers and strategists alike.

> *'Well in the future we would like to see is bigger budgets put forward, being able to persuade some of the people who hold the purse strings to let more money to come. I think we've proved that the people can spend sensibly.'*

> *(Claremont and Weaste PB event participant)*

> *'I think it could be part of a larger decision making process. I can see you could take it through devolving national budgets to local level and with very much bigger service providers as well.'*

> *(Participant in Safer, Cleaner, Greener event, Bradford)*

Extent and depth of participation in PB processes

The level of participation in each of these aspects of the process can be placed on a scale between passive and active. The table overleaf shows on a passive-active rating scheme of 0-3 examples of how the community can participate in different aspects of the PB process, based on the experiences of the case studies.

On the following page can be seen basic charts of the shape and amount of community participation from start to beginning of process in each of the case study areas. They demonstrate that although some areas may have been weak on some aspects of participation, they have achieved much in others, and can build on this to improve areas where they are weaker. The monitoring and strategic planning stages are not included in the charts as none of the case studies had begun to develop participation in these parts of the process. Overall it shows that whilst there are always constraints on developing participatory processes, such as time and money, that there are also great possibilities of what can be achieved.
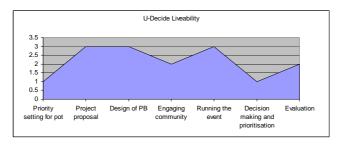
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[16] Heather Blakey 2006-07 ESRC Research Diary op cit.

For example, although the Safer, Cleaner, Greener pilot in Bradford did not have much community involvement in the planning process, the high level of participation in the project proposal and engagement stage and two previous 'Clean Green' PB processes show that it already has substantial 'buy-in' from the community which can be built on. Similarly, whilst in the U-Decide Liveability pilot there was a lot of participation in terms of running the process, there was relatively less in terms of active involvement in decision making at the event, suggesting that there is some catching up to be done between developing the community's capacity in running a process and the possibility of making complex decisions.

Participation in different aspects of the PB process

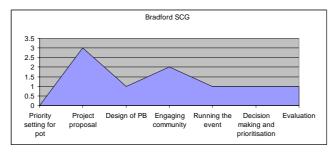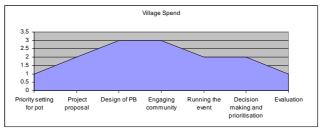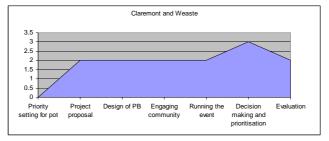|	Score	Priority setting for pot of money	Project proposal	Design of the process	Engagement of the community	Event organisation and delivery	Decision making	Evaluation
Active	3	Community set priorities for pot of money to be used for PB process	Project proposals entirely generated and presented by community	Design of process led and controlled by community	Community members take an active role in mobilising, organising and training others to participate	Community run whole event, including chairing, running voting, welcoming, entertainment, etc	Participants decision making is active (as no.2) and they reshape the process to suit their needs	Community involved in evaluating and reflection on learning throughout process
	2	Priorities for pot negotiated between community and local authority or service provider	Project proposals suggested by community and worked up by service provider	Participation in steering group or other aspects of the planning process	Community members help main organisers identify participants and assist in briefing and publicising process	Community members help out by welcoming, assisting with explanations, entertaining participants	Participants are active in decision making through exchange of information, deliberation, discussion and questioning	Community involved in evaluating questionnaire, feedback and reflection at end of process
	1	Individual consultation on priorities such as survey or questionnaire inform priorities of pot	Project ideas suggested and some selected for development by service provider	No community participation in planning other than by paid voluntary and community sector workers	Community members share information about process informally with close contacts	Community members attend as audience members in a process organised by service provider or local authority	Participants receive information with which to make own decisions, but do this alone without discussion or questions	Community give views on event in questionnaire and comments analysed by organisers
Passive	0	No participation in priority setting, priorities for pot set by central or local government or service provider	No participation in proposing projects for money – all ideas from service provider or local government	No participation in planning process	No participation in community engagement and communication about process	No participation at event	No participation in decision making	No evaluation takes place with community

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Participation in different stages of the PB process

U-Decide Liveability

U-Decide Children and Young People

Bradford SCG

Village Spend

Claremont and Weaste

Participants and decision making

> *'Putting the points is hard, it's just hard to decide, to know how many points you give and stuff like that. There isn't enough money to go round for everything.'* [17]

<p align="right">*(Keighley participant)*</p>

The quote above encapsulates both the difficult decisions and dilemmas, and the opportunities for learning about budgets and financial decisions, which participation in PB processes offer. Although systematic study of how participants make PB decisions has not been within the scope of this study, several factors which participants said that they considered include:

- How the project would effect them
- Sustainability of project
- Realistic and deliverability
- How many will benefit from project
- Overall benefit and impact on community
- Cost relative to budget available
- Whether the budget is realistic or not
- Technical information
- Whether it fits the priorities of pot
- Whether it would get the community working together
- Whether the funding source is appropriate
- Impact the project would have on other community members
- Motives of project
- Knowledge about the organisation proposing the project

A small numbers of participants mentioned that they felt unqualified to make a particular decision or that they did not have enough information. Very few mentioned that they believed others were making choices based on negative reasons, such as for their friends or as others told them to. It is probably difficult to get completely honest answers about the question of how participants make decisions, therefore further research is needed to compare the nature and quality of decision making processes in different forms of PB processes. A dilemma also seems to exist for organisers as to whether decision making is somehow 'better' when carried out by a lone individual or by a group of people acting collectively, as the following comment from a council officer at an event in Claremont and Weaste demonstrates.

' I've just been doing some of the marking and you could see that there were some people who clearly had the same views and were influencing each other, but then maybe they live in the same street and see the same problems.'

<p align="right">*(Council officer)*</p>

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[17] Interviews with PB event participants carried out by Heather Blakey in Keighley – November 2006, Keighley

Probably the key thing here for those who are designing PB processes is to remember is that when a pot of resources is limited care needs to be taken not to encourage an atmosphere of competition, particularly when there is a risk of further increasing existing fractures within a community. Budget literacy training about the constraints and possibilities for spending money can help here. Similarly, innovation in the process can also be useful. For example, the 'claw back' method pioneered by Bradford Vision in which successful project proposers are asked to voluntarily give back part of their funding to help unsuccessful ones, both makes the money go further and encourages a co-operative spirit in participation.

Summary

As new and experimental ideas, the PB processes studies were successful in terms of the fact that local communities did get involved, and that they did so for positive reasons, such as a desire to improve their community or to participate in decision making. However, there were still many areas where participation could be improved, including increasing the diversity and opportunities for participation throughout the process. Learning suggests that this would improve both decision making and process and contribute towards the development of a process which is owned by the community. There was participation in each of the pilots in some of the following areas: priority setting of the pot of money used in the PB process, proposing projects, designing the PB process, engaging the community, running the PB event, participation in decision making in project scoring and prioritisation, evaluation and monitoring. It was not thought there was any community participation in strategic planning but the enthusiasm and vision of participants shows that involvement at this stage would add value to it. Participants took a range of factors into account when making decisions about prioritising and voting on projects. Although factors of self-interest undoubtedly played a part, participants made complex decisions which took into account wider considerations such as the need for the project, sustainability, cost, and how it would impact and benefit others. This shows that participation in PB processes is not simply about an individual experience, but is something which is both defined by and shapes interactions with others. This often involves shifts in power relations as the following chapter will explore.

Chapter 6: Power and PB

This section explores questions about how PB can be developed within a context of complex and sometimes difficult power relations. It aims to both contextualise the PB processes in this study, as well as provide further thought for those involved in developing new PB processes.

Politics and PB

The relationship between PB in the UK and politics is a curious one. Whilst the development of PB in Brazil, and in Porto Alegre in particular, was very closely associated with the left-wing Workers' Party, in the UK there is no such obvious link. At a national level the development of PB was supported from 2004 by a grant to the PB Unit from a government department, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now the DCLG) which is perhaps most closely associated with New Labour's urban reformist vision of neighbourhood renewal policies, devolved government and more lately, engaged citizenry. Community Pride Initiative, the forerunner of the PB Unit, began work to explore how PB could be developed in the UK began in 1999, and it was hoped by those involved that the New Labour government would furnish the political will, funding and policy opportunities necessary for PB to take root. However, at a local level the story has been very different, at least in terms of party politics.

Table to show political make-up of PB case study areas

Case study area	Political make-up of locality	Political make-up of wider area
Bradford	(Safer, Cleaner Greener case study was a citywide process)	No overall control (Labour largest party)
Coedpoeth (Village Spend)	Community Councillors not politically elected.	Wrexham County Council is no overall control (Labour largest party)
Newcastle (U-Decide pilots)	Mixture of Labour and Lib Dem councillors in wards where Liveability pilot held	Liberal Democrat controlled since 2005, formerly Labour controlled
Salford (Claremont and Weaste PB event)	Pilot area all Liberal Democrat councillors	Labour controlled council with strong majority

Political parties and PB

Given the political diversity in the table above it would be expected that it would be difficult to draw conclusions about the relationship between politics and PB in the UK so far. However, the interviews reveal that there is a very strong consensus that PB is a non-party political initiative amongst all the case studies, and whilst occasionally elected members' actions may have been perceived to have been a threat, these issues were considered by

interviewees to be about issues of power or understanding, rather than ideology or party membership.

> *'I think the majority of people involved did so for the right reasons, did it from an idealistic, not from a political agenda or their own power base agenda.'*

> *"I think we had one (councillor) who tried to muscle in, but was quietly told you know, 'we're not political,' because we can't be seen to be political."*

> *(Voluntary sector worker)*

The comments above from voluntary sector interviewees reflect a common view of those involved in the study that PB has, and should have, no political agenda. Many several saw this as a defining feature, and key to the success and long-term credibility of PB.[18] The only case study which stands out as having any degree of identification with a political party was in Newcastle, where the ruling Liberal Democrats had warmed to the initiative, though without adopting it officially.

Although there are clear advantages of PB developing within a non-party political space in terms of winning cross-party support, there are also clear dangers. In order to mainstream a PB process from local pilot to an initiative across a whole local authority, the approval and support of elected members is required. Whilst there are no known examples where a group of organised politicians has 'blocked' the development of a PB process, the case study with the greatest amount of support from politicians and senior officers is Newcastle, where the development of PB has been fastest and most strongly supported in terms of resources for delivery. Similarly those who were involved in the Village Spend pilot believed that engaging the support of the Welsh Assembly will be a key step in persuading council leaders of the value of PB and developing it in Wales.

Bearing in mind the above, some fears were expressed that PB, if not an obvious political project in itself, could become used as a 'political football', if too closely associated with one party or another. Although this concern was raised around the development of the pilots in Claremont and Weaste, which took place in a Lib Dem area in Salford, a Labour controlled council, and Newcastle, which is Lib Dem controlled but with a large number of Labour Councillors, it has so far not been borne out in reality.

Involvement of elected members in PB processes

> *'One of the councillors desperately felt he needed to give a presentation. Managing him was quite a job and it involved wading in*

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[18] . Whether this was due to the way the question was asked or a narrow understanding of the term 'political' is unclear, as when asked if there was a 'social' agenda, interviewees were more responsive.

now and again and moving him to another table because he really was influencing people.'

<div align="right">

(Voluntary sector worker)

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'I think councillors have been a little bit sidelined. They could have been more involved in it in terms of helping people understand the process and taking the lead in shaping the kind of projects that come forward. But they are much more likely to support the process if they are involved early on...because they're elected to help shape their communities and to take their problems forward... and this budgeting should help to solve problems to bring more money down into communities and enable residents and councillors together to shape their communities for the better.'

<div align="right">

(Councillor)

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The contrasting views above, which are drawn from interviews with a community sector worker and elected member, outline the contrasting and sometimes conflicting attitude to the role of councillors in PB processes. In most cases, local councillors have had very little involvement and engagement in the PB processes. One exception to this was in Keighley where one councillor was involved with the priority setting process and another accompanied organisers in door-knocking in the ward.[19] With the exception of the Village Spend, which was led by the Community Councillor chair of the Community Council working with the local voluntary and community sector, all of the pilots have been led by the council or Local Strategic Partnership officers.[20] Even in the Village Spend case this role was more of a 'local visionary' with the other Community Councillors taking on only limited roles. Although there were a few occasions mentioned by interviewees in which they felt local councillors had attempted to undermine or capture the process, this was perceived to be due to a fear of losing power or possibly political infighting, rather than to political ideology.

Although some would suggest that the quotes above reflect a crisis between 'traditional' representative democracy and 'modern' participatory democracy, the evidence suggest this is possibly a misleading and false dichotomy. As we have seen, many of the PB processes that have developed have aimed to be 'representative' of the community in terms of who participates, and, as the councillors quoted above and below suggest, it is possible for their roles to be developed through the PB process, as well as for them to be transformed by the process as much as any other local resident.

'I learnt that what I might not think is valuable in the ward is valuable to others in my ward.'

<div align="right">

(Councillor)

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Clearly then, there are opportunities to involve local councillors more actively in PB processes. Whilst this will require skilled communication and openness,

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[19] Heather Blakey 2006-07 ESRC Research Diary op cit.
[20] Community Councils are the equivalent in Wales of Parish Councils in England, and Community Councillors of Parish Councillors

it should help to deepen the democratic processes and local engagement which many of those involved felt was such an important aspect of PB. Without structured and meaningful engagement with elected members there is a danger that any future development of the PB process could be compromised by a lack of support and understanding. For this reason, officers at both Bradford Vision and Newcastle Council are now beginning to develop more structured ways to engage with elected members.

Redrawing of power relations

Disempowerment

"It's a power thing. It's about people being comfortable with what's happening, with control, with 'well, we've always done it this way, that's the way the paperwork works, that's the way councils work. Elected members are there to tell us what people want, we don't need people to sit in a meeting and do a bit of PB.' "

(Council officer)

Most of those interviewed felt that the PB processes they were involved in were re-shaping the boundaries and location of power in various ways. The PB implementer who made the first comment above was not alone in feeling that these changes could be potentially perceived as very threatening to those who currently hold power over budgetary decisions, such as senior council and regeneration partnership officers and particularly, local councillors. For practitioners considering how to overcome the blockages that might be created, it is worth remembering the other histories and geographies of power which are partly responsible for this fear. Since the Local Government Act of 2000, the new cabinet style of leadership adopted by many has arguably eroded the traditional role of the local councillor. Similarly, the central government imposed delivery and target culture has massively constrained the way and direction in which council officers and other public servants work, a disempowerment which can understandably lead to reluctance to try out new ideas or share remaining power.

As has been suggested above, the role of the local councillors is not necessarily at odds with PB, and can even be developed into that of a 'neighbourhood advocate' as at least one policy officer and one councillor interviewed suggested. Although it is not likely that those developing PB processes on the ground will be able to change the entire practice of public sector delivery culture, ways of bringing potentially sceptical actors into the process are being developed. For example, a Learning Group has been set up in Newcastle where officers from the council and other organisations can develop knowledge about the process in a positive learning environment.

Similarly, time spent thoroughly thinking through how government initiatives such as the 2005 White Paper, 'Why Neighbourhoods Matter' can link to more local policies through PB can also potentially help this process in making the case to councillors and others with influence.

Empowerment

'It's good in that those who are going to get the benefit of it are coming in and saying yeah 'that's what I want to vote for'...whereas before you put an application in and it would be somebody that's sat down at Bradford Council deciding if it's a yes or a no.'[21]

(Keighley participant)

Similarly, many in the study, like the participant in the Keighley event above, welcomed the empowerment of the community that they felt PB brought. Specifically, it was felt that this community empowerment had several aspects, including: stimulating engagement and involvement, the needs and desires of the community being better met, smaller community groups having a greater share of resources, stronger links built between and within communities, and the development of a collective consciousness and desire for power amongst the community. Despite the perception that some councillors and officers might feel disempowered, it was also suggested that in fact this would be compensated by increased opportunities for them to learn what the community wanted and therefore increase the legitimacy of those in power as well as improve the delivery of services more generally. As the comment from the councillor below shows, building a strong and collective vision for the role of PB is one element in managing these fears of disempowerment.

'The city as a whole would gain from it because it's about citizenship. And if people understood their own citizens better, then the whole city benefits.'

(Councillor)

Summary

The political context in which PB has developed so far in the UK has been very diverse, and there has been no strong association of PB with the political agenda of any one party. This has been beneficial in terms of allowing PB to develop in a party-politics free space, but it contains a potential weakness in that high-level political support is needed to make the decision to develop the process with mainstream service budgets. With a couple of notable exceptions, elected members were in general relatively little involved in PB processes, which were in general led by officers. However, in some places local councillors have begun to take on an active role as 'neighbourhood advocates' which shows that there is potential for elected representatives to become actively involved, contributing to the process and their own democratic accountability and legitimacy. Developing both this active role in, and opportunities for learning about PB is important if the potential disempowerment which councillors and others with existing power over budgetary decisions may fear is to be avoided. As PB processes develop,

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[21] Interviews with PB event participants carried out by Heather Blakey in Keighley – November 2006, Keighley

power relations begin to change, and there is a strong sense that the community starts to become aware of both the power it has and the power it would like, in terms of influencing budgetary decisions and articulating and meeting its own needs. Clearly, power relations are one area on which PB has a big effect, which along with other impacts will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: The Impacts of PB processes so far

This chapter explores some of the main impacts of the PB case studies. It should be noted that as many of the case studies are still at a relatively early stage, particularly in terms of the delivery of the projects funded by PB processes, then it is too early to tell what some of the impacts are. During the course of the study a great many impacts were mentioned by those interviewed. Therefore this chapter attempts to give a flavour of these impacts, rather than detail of every single one. The sections below explores what some of the positive, negative and unknown impacts of the PB case studies are on the following:

- Local democracy
- Social and community structures and relations
- Resources
- Learning
- Project proposal and delivery
- Other

Each section begins with a table of the main impacts under each heading. It should be noted that each impact was not found in every area, but in at least one case study.

Impacts on Local Democracy

The following table summarises the impacts of PB so far on local democracy.

Positive impacts of PB case studies on local democracy	
Impact on elected members	Elected members began to reassess roles
	Councillors developed increased local credibility
	Some degree of political acceptance achieved
	Some degree of acceptance amongst senior council officers achieved
Impact on civic relationships	Built trust between community and service providers
	Agreement in principle for new money to be allocated using PB process
Impact on power relationships	Power being reshaped and devolved
	Citizens making political decisions
	New forms of leadership developed
Impact on decision making	More people involved in decision making
	Decisions made more openly
	Decisions made with greater deliberation

Impact on elected members

'I think it's given the Community Councillors a terrific amount of credibility. It showed that politicians can listen.'

(Voluntary sector worker)

As has already been mentioned, the role of local councillors was limited in the processes studied. However, as the quote from a Village Spend Steering Group member above demonstrates, there is great potential to improve both local democracy and political legitimacy through involvement in a PB process, as well as increase the potential impact of participation in a PB process, once councillors adopt an advocacy role.

Impact on civic relationships

The opportunity to build trust between service providers and the community is potentially great when budget decision for mainstream services are being made. The presence of a technical officer from the council, available to answer questions on proposed projects at the PB event in Claremont and Weaste is one example of how this was facilitated. Having said this though, as building trust is a slow process, the real test for all areas developing PB will be whether they are able to continue to deliver on a commitment to devolving decision making, through the continuation and deepening of PB processes.

Although it is early days in terms of the case study areas' future plans for PB, there have been some developments, such as in Newcastle where it has been agreed that a PB process will be used to decide which projects will be included in a Big Lottery application for £0.75m for play in the city.

Impact on power relationships

'Instead of councillors deciding or whatever, the people themselves were deciding what they were going to do with the money.'

(U-Decide participant)[22]

As has already been outlined more fully in the chapter on power, PB involves some redrawing and re-imagining of power relationships, which as the U-Decide participant above suggests places power over budgets directly into the hands of the community. However, it should still be pointed out that in all of the processes councillors still had an important role in terms of making a political decision to devolve some of their own powers.

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22 Transcripts of video interviews with participants in U-decide liveability (Newcastle City Council)

Impact on decision making

The fact that the processes had a big impact on decision making is self-evident from the numbers of people involved in each process, the open fora in which they were made and the degree of deliberation which took place in most of the examples. For example, 47 people were involved in making the decision about which schemes would be funded in Claremont and Weaste, a decision which, if it had been taken by the budget sub-committee of the Community Committee would have been deliberated by perhaps a maximum of around five people in probably one meeting. [23]

Unknown political impacts so far

Possible political impacts, for which no evidence has yet been found, is that participation in the processes has led to improved knowledge and ability to challenge mainstream structures. Again it is likely that this impact is more likely in those processes which were placed closer to existing structures, such as in Claremont and Weaste, where organisers hope that some of those who participated in the PB process will become active participants in local Community Committee meetings.

It is unclear at the moment what the impact of the pilots has been on local politics more generally and it is perhaps unfeasible to expect to see any changes in indicators such as on voter turnout with projects of this scale. However, it is notable that one of the hoped for impacts of the Village Spend, Coedpoeth, was an increase in community members putting themselves forward for election as Community Councillors, and this may be something to look out for in the future.

There has been direct support for the PB case studies through the existence of a National Reference Group facilitated by the Department for Communities and Local Government. However, it is unclear what impact the individual case studies have had on local relationships with central government so far, although many, such as those who developed the Village Spend process in Coedpoeth, hope to be able to engage them in the further development of PB processes.

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[23] Decisions about other devolved funds in Claremont and Weaste are currently taken by the Budget sub-committee with formal approval by the whole Community Committee

Social Impacts

The following table summarises the impacts of PB so far on social and community structures and relations.

Positive social impacts of PB case studies	
Impact on community as a whole	Communities articulate needs and priorities which inform budget decisions
	Community made choices in a democratic process
	Community members developed a shared vision and consciousness which transcended individual interest
	Increased amount of community participation
	Increased depth of community participation
	Increased diversity of community participation
	Increased the confidence of the community to influence decisions
	People felt they had made a difference
	Brought community together
	Increased interaction between different communities and groups
	Brought community closer to service providers (and vice versa)
	Raises aspirations of community
Impact on community groups	Community groups networked and learnt from each other
	Community groups started working together
	Community groups strengthened
	Got community groups involved in new initiatives and structures
	Increased volunteering
Impact on individuals	Individuals developed empathy and ability to understand needs of others
	Got individuals involved
	Built individual confidence
Impact on services	Mainstream services shaped following articulation of community priorities
Negative social impacts of PB case studies	
Impact on vulnerable	Confidence of some individuals and vulnerable groups whose projects did not get funded negatively affected
Impact on unsuccessful project proposers	Some community groups whose projects did not get funded felt alienated by process

Impact on the community as a whole

'It's given the Working Group a taste of things to come and they're looking towards probably a little bit more power in the future'

(Council Officer)

The impact on the community was not limited to simply the event itself, as there is evidence that participation began to stimulate some transformational processes, such as the development of a participatory consciousness and the desire for empowerment noted above. Similarly, as the comment below suggests, although community members participated as individuals, this did not mean that they took only their own individual needs into account when making decisions. Opportunities for deliberation in the form of small group discussion, as occurred in the Village Spend process, will have helped facilitate this, and shows the value of making space for this in building a community through the process.

"'Transport for the lunch club, that got quite a lot of votes, even though it was really for the elderly people. People thought, 'yes that's ok, we think our money should be spent on that.' So it wasn't just being spent on their pet projects, people really did agree with things that didn't affect them too."

(Voluntary sector worker)

Impact on community groups

'It's been interesting to come and meet different people who are doing similar projects in their own communities, to network with them, to share ideas and to share resources'

(Participant, Safer, Cleaner, Greener event, Bradford)

The fact that all of the case studies involved at least one lively and well attended community-wide event meant a lot was achieved in terms of bringing communities together, strengthening existing groups and building new ones. This was particularly apparent in the Safer, Cleaner, Greener event in Bradford, where the atmosphere of a community-owned get together developed as the day wore on. Being a citywide event, many of the groups would not have known each other beforehand, but the space for networking provided by the organisers helped facilitate this process.

Impact on individuals

'I try to put myself in the shoes of the people who are coming from that environment and see what kind of a difference that money would make to me.'

(Participant, Safer, Cleaner, Greener event, Bradford)

Listening to the project ideas, proposals or views of others had the impact of developing empathy and knowledge about the realities of the lives of others in their communities. This was apparent in the U-Decide Children and Young People's event, in which participants gave a high score to a group of young people living in temporary accommodation after it was explained that they felt too ashamed to attend due to the stigma and bullying they suffered because of where they lived.

Impact on unsuccessful project proposers

Although in most cases it is thought that those who were not successful in having their project proposal funded, there were a small number of incidences in which this was thought to have had the effect of alienating individuals from the wider engagement process and negatively impacting on individual confidence. The organisers of the U-Decide Children and Young People's pilot in Newcastle responded to this problem by follow-up work with the groups involved to provide them with funding advice and to bring them into the process by listening to their experiences and ideas of how the process could be improved in future. This shows that even negative impacts can be useful learning points with which to develop further engagement and shape future processes.

Unknown social impacts so far

> *'And some things came up that were quite easily done just by changing the way people did things that people didn't know were an issue. One particular area has a sub-station that doesn't get included in the clean up, well that doesn't need extra money, it just needs to be made sure that it gets done next time'.*
>
> *(Voluntary sector worker)*

Although there is some evidence that some mainstream services have been shaped and influenced by the presence of the PB processes, such as in the quote above, it is unclear as yet what the impact has been on mainstream budgets. All of those involved in developing the case studies have a vision of the process being extended to mainstream funds. However, at present most UK PB processes have involved the community in participatory grant-making in which the community delivers projects using regeneration funds. Therefore it is unclear whether there is even a route from this process by which the community would shape services and mainstream budgets.

For similar reasons as above, it is unclear to what extent the PB processes have led to increased participation in other structures and processes. This was certainly one of the aims of the events in Bradford and Claremont and Weaste, where the organisations involved used the opportunity to bring new groups into their processes. However, as both these events took place very recently, it is not possible to know what impact this has had. It is likely that there will be greater impact here where the PB process has a strong link to an existing structure.

Impact on Resources

The following table summarises the impacts of PB so far on resources.

Positive impacts of PB case studies on resource use		
Increase in existing resources	Leverage of new funds	
Improved use of existing resources	Better value for money in project costings	
	More efficient use of existing resources (*council can avoid VAT by placing orders through central purchasing*)	
	Spending of other service providers budgets influenced	
	Resource capacity of community released and used more efficiently	
Fairer use of resources	Budgets more directed to communities and areas of disadvantage	
	Community groups who hadn't been funded before get share of funds	
Resource investment	Investment in human resources	
	Investment in services where needed most	
Negative impacts of PB case studies on resources		
	Cost to set up and run PB process	
	Cost to existing human resources	

Increase in existing resources

'we've played for play equipment out of some of the project ideas, and that's levered in much much more, to finish off their play project you know. Even if we've spent one quarter of it and three quarters has been levered in, that's been kind of typical.'

(Council officer)

Although no case study area has yet carried out a systematic analysis of how much extra funding has been levered into a community by the PB process, it is clear that many of those interviewed, like the officer above, believed that it had. It is likely that the impact of this could be maximised further once other service providers are brought into the process.

Improved use of existing resources

'On the crossing and other projects the initial figures put forward by the council have been reviewed and they've come down with their costs, so I think that when we deliver we're going to give value for money.'

(Councillor)

There is some evidence that the PB processes led to an improved use of existing resources. This includes successful community groups handing back some of their funds to support other groups in processes in Bradford,[24]

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[24] This 'claw' back mechanism has been used in PB events in Bradford since the first pilot in 2004

service providers being able to reduce costs through purchasing materials for projects through a central purchasing system, to costings being lowered in the wake of strong community support for a particular scheme.

Fairer use of resources

'I think a lot of the older people wouldn't have dreamed of putting in for funding for chip pan exchanges and kettle exchanges - it's such a simple procedure as well, compared with a lot of applications you put in for other places'

(Participant, U-Decide)

At least two of the case studies used Neighbourhood Renewal funds, which are already targeted at areas of disadvantage. It is unclear to what extent the use of funds reached the most disadvantaged groups beyond that. However, it is clear that the simple procedures for proposing projects and support offered at this stage meant that access to these budgets was greatly widened, as the participant above comments.

Resource investment

For many of those involved in designing the PB processes, they were learning how to design and deliver a totally new process. For areas such as Newcastle, where both staff and volunteers worked intensively on the development of the PB processes, this represents a substantial investment in human resources. Whether these skills are then re-invested into another PB process or other participatory decision making processes, they represent significant accumulation of human capital.

Negative impacts on use of resources

The work needed to initiate a new PB process which is both participatory throughout and reaches deep into the community can be costly in terms of both money and human resources. This was particularly the case for U-Decide which invested a significant amount of resources relative to the size of the PB pot in order to carry out the development work necessary to run a PB process faithful to these principles. However, as a result, the U-Decide processes were both highly participatory and developed substantial human capital and learning. It is also unlikely that an increased programme size would need to be matched by a similar increase in resources of start-up costs.

Unknown resource impacts so far

As most of the case studies are still in the early stages of delivering the projects selected for funding in the PB processes, it is too early to tell whether there has been an impact in terms of improvements in number of projects successfully delivered. The only evidence to support this is from the first PB pilots in Bradford which had a very high rate of successful project completion. Similarly, it is too early to tell yet whether a greater number of people have benefited from projects delivered under PB processes.

Impact on Project Proposal and Delivery

The following table summarises the impacts of PB so far on project proposal and delivery.

Positive impacts of PB case studies on project proposals and delivery	
Proposal	Wide range of innovative project ideas developed
	Wide range of innovative projects funded
	Projects proposed by those who would not usually put ideas forward
	Improved accountability to community
Delivery	Wide range of projects delivered in communities
	Projects delivered which otherwise might not be
	Community members benefit from projects delivered
	Community groups delivering projects linked up with service providers
	Range of spin off benefits of project delivered
Negative impacts of PB case studies on projects	
	Community's expectations frustrated by delays in project delivery
	Project proposals sometimes not fit for purpose or deliverable

Project proposal

Making project proposal a wide and well supported part of the process impacted on both the number and range of proposals that were put forward. Having them presented in a public forum helped increase the informal accountability of the need for the projects to the community, as the following participant suggests.

> *'I spoke to a lot of people who had projects in and it was so interesting finding out more about their ideas for we'd seen the presentations and just learning more about how they'd come up with their ideas and how it was going to benefit people.'*
>
> *(Participant, U-decide)*

The participatory processes, which both raised awareness and showed need for particular projects, had some impact in overcoming some of the obstacles which might prevent them from otherwise being seriously considered. The fact that an eventual agreement was reached to fund the pedestrian crossing – the participants' top priority in the Village Spend - demonstrates this.

> "*The council had already considered the pedestrian crossing and dismissed it, so it's quite interesting that the residents were so insistent on having it. At previous council meetings the councillors had said, 'oh we can't have that it's too costly. We can't get involved in, it's unfair but we can't afford it.'*"
>
> *(Steering Group member, Village Spend)*

Project delivery

The participatory grant-making processes had a particular impact in terms of delivering a wide range of projects, partly due to their flexible criteria as pots of money. This included projects such as: a tea dance for older and younger people, a recycling scheme, a mini motorbike track project, an allotment training scheme, play equipment and a cross-community football project, all innovative ideas that have been stimulated by the process. Project delivery and development has itself been shaped by networking at the events themselves, showing how even the process itself can help kick-start successful delivery.

> *'There were 2 or 3 projects about football, and they've arranged matches with other groups, that they met on the day. One of the groups wanted to do a campaign around mini-motorbikes, so they've then sent a questionnaire, that they've designed with the money they got, out to all the groups that were there on the day.'*
>
> *(Council officer)*

Negative impacts on projects

There was some evidence that the delivery of projects in the U-Decide Liveability pilot was slower than had been hoped and that this had led to frustrations within the community. This was due to factors such as it taking longer than was envisaged for departments in the council which had ordered the materials needed for projects to arrive. In this pilot there were also a couple of examples when it turned out the projects were not really deliverable after a decision had been made to fund them, due to individuals, rather than properly established groups having applied for them.

Impact on learning

The following table summarises the impacts of PB so far on learning.

Positive impact of PB case studies on learning	
Learning of community	Community learnt how to make choices about money
	Community learnt about each other
	Community learnt how council works
	Community learnt how budgets are structured and spent
	Community learnt they have lots of abilities
Learning of service providers	Council learnt that people can make 'responsible' choices
	Council learnt that community has sometimes different knowledge and views about their own needs
	Councillors learnt that others have knowledge about community too
Skills developed	Council developed new skills in community engagement
	Community acquired new skills in project development, presentation skills, project management
	Range of people developed skills in implementing PB process
Wider learning	New ideas and thinking stimulated
	Learnt PB is viable process
	Reflection and systematisation of learning from process
	Learning from process captured and shared with others

Learning of community

'It's been very enlightening to see other areas having the same problems.'

(Claremont and Weaste PB event participant)

'Sometimes you feel that you are working on your own and that to come to an event like this where there are different community groups and then you're not on your own there's lots of other people doing interesting things and that builds the spirit I think.'

(Participant at Safer Cleaner, Greener event, Bradford)

There were many impacts on learning during the PB events themselves. This included learning about others issues, such as those in the examples from participants in Claremont and Weaste and Bradford's Safer, Cleaner, Greener event. This learning can, as the quotes suggest, help bring the community closer to others with the same problems and therefore find solutions. Participation in the different parts of the PB process also impacted on the community's confidence in their own abilities, such as in the U-Decide pilots in Newcastle.

Learning of service providers

'I've learnt that the community can make their own, complex, decisions for themselves.'

(Council officer)

The community are not the only ones who have learnt from the PB processes, as the comment above suggests there is much that service providers can learn about the views, perceptions and decision making ability of local people. This impact clearly can reach beyond the PB process itself and potentially influence the entire approach of community development taken by service providers.

Skills developed

A wide range of actors in the PB processes have developed new skills. Those involved in the project proposal and decision making will have acquired skills in project development, presentation, deliberation and listening. Those involved in designing processes have had the opportunity to learn skills such as event organisation, communication and evaluation, whilst many of the service providers involved have had the opportunity to develop new and existing skills in community development.

Wider learning

The PB case studies are impacting on wider learning in an ongoing process. All of the case study areas have made videos about their processes which they are using to share knowledge and advocate further development of the processes. Probably the most important outcome of this is that, as one formerly sceptical council officer was heard to say at a recent event,

'I think now we've finally seen that PB can work in this city, after all'

(Council officer)

The impact of this learning about PB and community participation in decision making in general will hopefully lead to ongoing impacts as the process develops.

Other impacts

The following table summarises the other impacts of PB so far.

Other positive impacts of PB case studies
Strong PB brand developed
Partnership buy-in to PB idea developed
Community ownership and awareness of PB idea built
Relationship between service providers / council and voluntary and community sector built
Vision for future development of participation in budget setting developed

There are a range of other notable impacts which are the result of the PB pilots studied. Firstly, in many cases a strong PB brand has been developed which is recognised by the community and service providers. Secondly, there is evidence of partnership buy-in to the PB concept developing in areas such as Newcastle and Bradford, as well as increasing awareness about it within the community. Participatory grant-making events such as those in Bradford and Newcastle have enabled the delivery bodies to build their relationships with the voluntary and community sector, which provides a good platform from which to develop future PB processes.

Perhaps most importantly a strong vision and will for the future development of community participation in budget setting has been developed, built relationships to enable this, and capacities to progress it. All of those involved in the study had ideas or plans as to how the PB processes they had developed could be extended or mainstreamed. Most hope to either develop the process with major service providers using mainstream budgets or bring it to new areas and communities, although all are at different stages in achieving this. What is certain is that the impact of developing and participating in the PB processes has changed those institutions and communities involved, so that hopefully, in the words of one interviewee:

'Local democracy might never be the same again.'

(Community sector worker)

Summary

Although it is still early days to know all the impacts of the PB processes studies, it is clear that there have already been many positive ones on society, democracy and learning, as well as resources, project proposal and delivery, and many other areas. They include more immediate and longer-term impacts and will reach service providers and elected members as much as the community themselves. Although there were a few negative impacts recorded, these were generally minor and easily remediable with small changes to the process. The most important impact overall is probably to have developed models of PB that have been popular, successful and delivered in terms of participation, projects, and process. From this a strong vision for deeper and more extensive community participation in budget decision making is being developed, which is likely to have lasting impact on both service providers and community members alike.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and recommendations for further research

Conclusions

This study has explored some of the key experiences of the first examples of PB in the UK. Although there are important differences in the PB examples studied in terms of size, aims, context, money used and outcomes, some conclusions can be drawn which should help inform the future development and growth of PB processes. These conclusions and suggestions for further research are sketched out below.

PB in the UK has, so far, had a strong social agenda: of inclusion, participation, learning, capacity building, community cohesion, and meaningful involvement in decision making. Of secondary concern only has been using PB as a tool to reshape public finances, develop accountability between different levels of government and the community, and use or redistribute resources more efficiently and equitably. This is unsurprising given that most of the models studied have involved relatively small amounts of non-mainstream money in specific areas. These aspects could be more fully developed as PB processes are deepened and developed. Starting small-scale at neighbourhood or community-of-interest level has been a necessary first stage in developing understanding and knowledge of the process amongst the community and service providers. Further developments into this 'second stage' will require political will, a supportive national policy context and organisational backing, including resourcing where necessary.

PB has a strong reputation from international experiences as a way to achieve the social agenda described above. However, experience from the case studies shows that inclusion, opportunities for learning, community building and meaningful participation need to be built into the PB process at every stage, because they will not just 'happen' automatically. Indeed, there is evidence that badly planned and unmanaged participatory processes will have the undesired effect of increasing community divisions and leaving the disempowered still powerless. Learning from this study shows that with effective capacity building, community engagement and a carefully planned process, PB can strengthen community solidarity and provide a way to both value the experiences and opinions of excluded groups, and engage them in influencing budgetary decision-making.

Participation in different stages of the process can help develop a PB in which learning is maximised, processes are community-friendly, a strong sense of ownership and vision is built, and skills are developed. Although extensive participation can be resource intensive, it is a long-term investment which develops capacities in both the community and service providers, which remain long after the process has finished. Whilst many of those developing PB processes have emphasised mass participation as an aim, it is also important to remember the value that diverse participation can bring, both in terms of social inclusion and in terms of improving the quality of decision making. Those designing PB processes need both to be aware of this and be prepared to put resources aside to support it.

The PB processes that have taken place show that community members make complex decisions when taking part. Although self-interest does play a part, so do other considerations such as the quality of proposal, community benefit and relative need. Processes which include good opportunities for deliberation and discussion seem to increase the range of factors and information which participants take into account. Although more research is needed in this area, it is clear that this is important learning for those designing PB and other participatory processes. It is conceivable that under certain political conditions the development of PB could proceed as something characterised by 'service users' making individual 'choices'. The evidence suggests that such processes would leave a lot to be desired in terms of providing opportunities for community members to learn about each others' needs and in facilitating decision making which is informed and based on common interest, rather than individual preference.

The role of political actors in most of the PB processes studied was barely noticeable. Although some may see this as a desirable consequence of a shift towards more participatory forms of democracy, it is still the case that, as elected representatives, local councillors have both an important role and power in their communities, which represents both an opportunity and barrier for those developing PB. As a barrier, councillors have the ability to block the development of participation in budgets, if they so wish. As an opportunity, the involvement of councillors in PB is potentially a chance for them to re-establish local legitimacy, credibility and accountability, as well as deepen the PB processes themselves. The role of local advocate would see the councillors connect with communities to animate participation in order to better articulate local needs, ensuring a fairer share of resources and better delivery of services locally.

PB requires resources to develop a process, engage the community, deliver and learn from. In addition, there are hidden costs which are borne by community members, officers and others. However, in the main part, PB in the UK has been delivered using no or very little extra resources. The issue of resourcing PB suggests several important issues. Firstly, it is clear that when engagement and participation have been well resourced it has delivered immediate and potentially longer lasting benefits, particularly in terms of developing skills and ownership. Secondly, although hidden costs have been absorbed so far by enthusiasm and commitment, it is important that these costs are fully recognised if the processes are to be sustainable in the long-term. Thirdly, whilst the start-up costs of developing a PB process may be relatively high compared with other decision making processes, they will drop both over time and relative to the size of budget decided on in the PB. When the size of the pot is increased and the process repeated over time, delivery costs do not increase greatly and the process becomes more cost-efficient. This is because the main costs of the process are designing and communicating it, learning how to do it, and training community members in it. None of these costs are scale dependent and in the main part, will only have to be met once.

Despite PB processes in the UK still being very new, they have already had clear and observable impacts on local democracy, learning, community cohesion, service providers, resources and local projects. These impacts are both short-term and long-term and include expected and unexpected ones. Service providers, as much as the community have felt these impacts. Further tracking should help to both evidence other impacts and find out what is needed where impacts are less than hoped or negative. A particularly important impact has been to develop a breadth and depth of knowledge about PB and its implementation into the UK context.

PB was first introduced into the UK as a radical, novel solution from the global south, but its growth has been shaped and nurtured by local contexts which already had an existing commitment to community development, devolved decision making or meaningful participation. The development of PB has been led by the efforts of small and sometimes isolated groups of people, rather than through a clear policy or political agenda. In this way, it is not yet evidence of broader social or political change but is rather another tool by which those with an agenda of social and democratic change can develop the spaces and processes necessary to bring it about. This does not preclude a shift in the future, but at the moment PB in the UK can be described as a 'cottage industry' of local innovations leading to small, but significant changes in communities and services, rather than a mass technology bringing about major shifts in social and political structures. This stage of local innovation has been very important in testing PB out, learning how to do it, and finding context appropriate solutions. However, it will require resourcing, opportunities to share learning, local political will and shifts in the relationship between local and central government, if the potential of PB is to be further developed. It is hoped that policy developments such as Local Area Agreements and the forthcoming review of local government finance might help in this regard.

Although a 'mainstreaming' stage of PB is to be welcomed, a note of caution should be taken so as not to lose the richness and diversity of approaches that have made the PB pilots successful by attempting to implement a 'one size fits all' UK model. Attention to local detail, context-appropriate design and maximising of learning throughout the process are some of the key features that have made PB models in this study successful. Just as the Porto Alegre model could not, the case studies in this study cannot be simply 'replicated' in different areas and contexts. Therefore, a key ingredient needed in supporting the future development and 'mainstreaming' of PB is the opportunity to co-ordinate and share learning horizontally, that is between and across areas, and between different actors in the process. Experience of the case studies suggests that attempting to transfer or impose a PB model, either from 'expert' to 'community' or 'strategic' level to 'local' would fail to recognise the crucial role both local workers and community members play in bringing their own knowledge into the development of a successful process.

Although this study has focused on what has happened with PB in practice so far, rather than propose a future agenda for its development, it is clear that

many of those involved are now exploring opportunities to develop and mainstream PB processes. Work continues to explore how participatory processes could be developed with mainstream budgets and larger regeneration funds, such as how PB could be used in a Local Area Agreements context. However, the case studies and other experiences point to many other directions in which PB processes could develop, including with communities-of-interest, housing providers and health bodies, and even internally within community organisations themselves. As there are many budgets not controlled by local authorities, developing thinking about how PB processes could be developed here is potentially valuable. From a grassroots level, budget literacy training and participatory research about budget setting could add another dimension to work that links community knowledge to decisions about resources. In general, thinking widely about where PB could find a 'home' can only help to create a wider vision and will to develop community participation in budgetary decisions.

Recommendations for further research

I have focused on issues of implementation, process, decision making, power and impact in this study. I recognise that there are many other areas of PB which are of interest, but have not been within the scope of this research. Briefly, I would propose that research into the following subjects would enrich and continue to constructively challenge thinking about PB in the UK:

- How do participants' experience PB processes?

- How do participants make decisions in PB process? What factors influence their decision making? What is the role of deliberation and learning?

- How do real and imagined geographies of neighbourhood, identity and community shape PB processes, and in what ways does PB shape them?

- What are the limits and opportunities to developing PB with mainstream money across whole communities? (*This would be based on empirical evidence as this work develops rather than on purely theoretical ideas)*

- How does the current public policy context shape opportunities for participation in budgetary decision making?

Appendix 1: Methodology

This chapter explores the methodology used in this research. It looks at what research material was collected, methods used, reasons for choice of case studies, and problems encountered during the course of the research. It also examines how the research was shaped by both the nature of the material itself, and interactions between myself and those taking part in the research.

Relationship of the researcher to the project

This study was a Practitioner Fellowship which means that as well as being a traditional piece of research, my primary relationship with the 'researched' was a practitioner and colleague, rather than researcher.

Having worked on the PB project, for over two years, I began the research with existing knowledge about the topic and strong work relationships with practitioners. So although I don't claim to be an objective, dispassionate researcher of PB, I have been able to have insights about the processes concerned which more traditional researchers would have possibly found more difficult to access.

Research materials used

The main research method used was semi-structured face to face interviews, supplemented with other primary and secondary materials. A table can be found at the end of this chapter which shows what primary research material was collected by case study area. The following list details all the research material I collected during the course of this study:

Primary materials:

- 16 face-to-face interviews
- 9 telephone interviews
- 19 face-to-face mini-interviews
- Focus group discussion with 3 people
- Notes from 7 meetings in which I was a participant-observer
- Observations of 2 PB events
- 1 workshop with PB Practitioners
- Reflections in my own research diary

Secondary materials

- Meeting notes
- Videos
- Transcripts of video interviews
- Reports
- Internal evaluation materials
- Communications and publicity

I also used the following material collected by Heather Blakey of the ICPS:

- Interviews with participants at Keighley Decision day, Keighley, November 2006
- Municipal Innovations in Non-Governmental Public Participation project 2006-07 field diary of Bradford case study

Research methods used

Interviews

The main research method was in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews which I carried out and recorded on a digital recorder for later transcription. A mixture of practitioners, policy makers, local participants and elected members were interviewed. Topics on which interviewees were questioned included: aims, objectives and definitions of PB; the background to the case study; involvement of the interviewee in the process, the process itself; the political and policy context; plans for the future; and specific local issues. Questions asked also varied according to area and role. Most of the interviews lasted on average an hour or more in length.

Telephone interviews of around thirty minutes each were carried out with those who could not be interviewed face-to-face due to time considerations. Semi-structured mini-interviews, which lasted on average five minutes each, were carried out face-to-face with participants and implementers at PB events.

Other research methods

I also used a number of other research methods including participant-observation, focus group and workshop. As a member of the Claremont and Weaste PB Steering Group, I was a participant-observer of the process and directly involved in developing it. I participated in, and recorded, planning meetings and informal conversations, and observed the final PB process, after which I carried out a focus group session with Steering Group members. I also observed the Safer Cleaner, Greener PB process in Bradford.

I was a participant –observer at a number of other meetings, including with the National Reference Group and Practitioner Group, where I carried out a workshop with PB practitioners.

Whilst carrying out the fieldwork, I recorded as much as I could of meetings and conversations in fieldwork and research diaries. These notes have then been used to supplement other sources, as well as jog my own memory.

Anonymity

To encourage honest and open discussion, interviewees were assured that all interviews would be confidential amongst the ICPS team and any quotes anonymised in the final report. Because the interviews contained highly

localised information about the different experiences of quite distinct pilots, this has led to challenges in the writing of this report. To preserve anonymity it was felt necessary to not reference both case study and role at the same time, unless too much meaning would be lost. For a similar reason the material has been analysed thematically, rather than by area. To ensure that the richness of local experiences was not lost, a snapshot of each case study can be found at the start of the report.

Choice of case studies

Several areas of the country have now carried out PB processes or shown an interest in developing them. Because this study was time-limited I decided to concentrate on case studies where the development of PB is currently 'live' and to ensure that those chosen were different enough from one another to make comparisons interesting. The case studies chosen were: Newcastle, Bradford, Salford and Coedpoeth. Although PB processes have taken place in Sunderland and West Dunbartonshire they are not the focus of this study because of considerations of time, travel and the fact that they are very similar to processes in both Newcastle and Bradford. There are two case studies from Bradford: a city-wide 'Safer, Cleaner, Greener' process and processes in Keighley, a district of Bradford. All the materials relating to Keighley have been collected by Heather Blakey of the ICPS as part of the Municipal Innovations in Non-Governmental Public Participation project, as is referenced in the research.

Challenges encountered in the course of the research

A number of challenges were experienced during the research which affected both the type of knowledge produced and the scope of the questions which could be answered.

Time

This project was carried out in three-months full time equivalent. Although this was a valuable and well-appreciated opportunity to systematically document and reflect on PB, it was still a short amount of time in relation to the size of the topic. It would have been quite possible to spend 6 months or even a year collecting information, interviewing actors and observing processes.

Interaction with research participants

Working from my position in the PB Unit gave me excellent access to some of the key actors in PB processes, mainly regeneration and council officers. Many of these participants were generous with both their own time and in assisting with the arrangement of interviews with others. However, this did mean that some PB practitioners had a strong influence over the selection of interviewees and therefore the view of the processes presented. Some practitioners participating in interviews attempted to steer the direction of both what was researched and what was written, either because they saw it as an opportunity to promote their work to others or because they were fearful that it

might be overly critical and undermine their work. This reflects both a strong commitment to the work and difficult and sometimes unsupportive institutional contexts in which practitioners work. Having a longer timescale for the project could have helped here, as this would have allowed time for both the co-production of knowledge and ongoing feedback to take place.

Difficulties of reaching PB process participants

Both the nature of the case studies themselves and the practicalities of when the research took place caused difficulties in accessing community members who had participated in PB processes. For example, the PB processes in both Newcastle and Coedpoeth had already taken place a few months before the research began which made it difficult to find participants to be interviewed.

The role of participants in most of the case studies was mainly to participate in, and attend the PB event itself. This made it both difficult and inappropriate to carry out the same kind of in-depth face to face interview as was carried out with practitioners. Accessing local people who took part in past events would have relied on the organisation who had implemented the process, which places a burden of time on already over-stretched practitioners. Additionally, organisations which have invested time and effort into building trust and relationships with local people are sometimes reluctant to allow even researchers access. With these considerations in mind, it is still hoped that as PB processes continue to develop, more in-depth research will be carried out with community members who participate in PB processes.

Difficulties reaching politicians

As well as local people, it was also difficult to reach local politicians. The data collection period of the research took place in May when many local councillors were either up for re-election themselves, or assisting party colleagues with campaigns. Along with a busy workload and the fact that politicians may sometimes be suspicious of researchers, the election timing no doubted contributed to the difficulties of accessing local politicians.

Simultaneous interviewing

All except four interviews were conducted one-to-one, where, at the request of the interviewees, two people were interviewed at once. This was challenging and enriching, both practically and in terms of a subversion of the traditional power relationship between researcher and researched. For example, this was difficult when two council officers were interviewed at the same time, as there was less opportunity to probe their answers, but creative and enlivening when interviewing two voluntary sector workers who had worked together on a process simultaneously.

Table to show primary information collected by case study area

Case study	Area	Primary information collected
Safer Cleaner, Greener, Bradford	Bradford	• 1 PB process observed • 3 telephone interviews with PB implementers (Bradford Vision officers) • 11 face-to-face mini interviews with PB participants • 1 planning meeting observed
The Village Spend	Coedpoeth, Wales	Face-to-face interviews with: • Community Councillor • 5 voluntary and community sector workers
U-decide Children and Young People's pilot	Newcastle	Face-to-face interviews with: • 1 councillor
U-decide Liveability pilot	Newcastle	• 1 participant • 4 council officers Telephone interviews with: • 1 youth worker • 2 councillors • 1 council officer
Claremont and Weaste PB	Salford	Face-to-face interviews with: • 3 council officers Face-to-face mini-interviews with: • 6 PB process participants • 2 PB process observers • Focus group with PB Steering Group • 1 PB process observed • 5 PB Steering Group planning meetings attended as participant-observer

Appendix 2: Measuring the correlation between presentation skills and PB scoring

The following section gives more detail of how the correlation between presentation skills and PB scoring was calculated at the Bradford Safer, Cleaner, Greener event.

Each presenter was observed at the event and given a rating of 0-3 for factors by which 'presentation bias' can be measured such as loudness of voice, dynamism of speaker, length of presentation and overall confidence. An overall score out of ten for quality of presentation was also given. The correlation between these factors and the total score awarded by participants was then measured to explore whether 'presentation bias' was associated with scoring.

The table below shows the correlation co-efficient of each of the factors with the overall score. A figure of one would represent a perfect positive correlation, where high values of one variable are associated with high values of another. A figure of minus one would represent a perfect negative correlation, where high values of one variable are associated with low values of another. If one factor, such as confidence, was positively related to higher scores awarded by participants, that is the louder the participant, the more marks they got, then we would expect to see a score of 0.6 or above to be certain that there was a correlation. As the table shows, the correlations found are in all cases very week, and in two cases unexpectedly negative. Most surprising of all is that there is a negative correlation between overall presentation skills score and the final score.

Table to show correlation figures between 'presentation bias' and participants scoring of project presentation

Factor	Correlation with final score
Confidence	-0.04
Loudness	0.15
Length	0.17
Dynamism	0.03
Overall presentation skills	-0.22

Given that these were such surprising results it is worth pointing out that the correctness of the data was double checked and separate correlations also carried out to compare morning and afternoon sessions, in case one data set was simply wrong. This check did not show any significant differences between morning and afternoon correlations, which were within a similar range to those above. Further evidence for the conclusion that presentations are not such an 'unfair' method as some suppose come from observations of an early PB process in Sunderland, which showed that although those who presented for longer and more confidently than others received on average slightly higher points for projects, these differences were small, and in any case, quiet presenters had a higher average score than loud ones.

Appendix 3: Participation figures from selected PB events

Claremont and Weaste PB event*

Gender of participants at CW PB event		
Male	11	38%
Female	18	62%
Total	29	100%
Unknown	**18**	**38%**

*Figures from evaluation carried out by organisers

Age of participants at CW PB event		
18 or under	0	0%
19-24	1	3%
25-34	1	3%
35-44	3	10%
45-54	2	7%
55-64	15	52%
65+	7	24%
Total	29	100%
Unknown	**18**	**38%**

Village Spend, Coedpoeth, 2nd Public Meeting**

Gender of participants at VS 2nd mtg		
Male	12	41%
Female	17	59%
Total	**29**	**100%**

**Figures from evaluation carried out by organisers

Age of participants at VS 2nd mtg		
35-50	4	14%
50-65	10	34%
65+	15	52%
Total	**29**	**100%**

Safer, Cleaner, Greener PB event***

Gender of participants at SCG, Bradford		
Male	34	59%
Female	24	41%
Total	**58**	**100%**

***Figures from observation carried out by Kezia Lavan

Age of participants at SCG, Bradford		
24 or under	6	10%
25-34	13	22%
35-44	10	17%
45-54	7	12%
55-64	11	19%
65+	12	20%
Total	**59**	**100%**

Sunderland People's Fund event 1****

Gender of participants at Sunderland People's Fund event 1		
Male	17	46%
Female	20	54%
Total	**37**	**100%**

Age of participants at Sunderland People's Fund event 1		
Under 25	8	22%
26-54	18	49%
55+	11	30%
Total	**37**	**100%**

Gender of project proposers at Sunderland People's Fund event 1		
Male	9	53%
Female	8	47%
Total	**17**	**100%**

Age of project proposers at Sunderland People's Fund event 1		
Under 25	4	24%
26-54	7	41%
55+	6	35%
Total	**17**	**100%**

****Figures from observation carried out by Kezia Lavan