FROM REPRESENTATION TO EMPOWERMENT: REFLECTIONS ON AND REVIEW OF THE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING BY CITIZENS' INITIATIVE MOVEMENT IN TAIPEI

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Abstract - The birth of participatory budgeting was inspired by efforts to correct the problem of a "lack of empathy" in local public sector governance. However, budget review following the completion of a citizens' initiative inevitably was a source of conflict, which caused the initiatives to stagnate or be voted down. Accordingly, the goal of this paper is to examine the effectiveness of implementation of participatory budgeting by citizens' initiative in Taipei, and it relies on a retrospective of participatory budgeting theory and international experience, and the application of content analysis and case analysis, to understand the results and difficulties encountered after implementation, and further submits principles and recommendations assisting participatory budgeting by citizens' initiative, budget assessment, and budget review.

Keywords - Representative system, participatory budgeting, citizen governance, empowerment, public participation

I. INTRODUCTION

Due to the rise of opposition to the government's signing of a service trade deal in 2014, the people's trust in the "unresponsive government" under the prevailing administrative system took a nosedive. At the end of the same year, Taiwan conducted nine-in-one elections for special municipality mayors and city and county heads. At that time, Taipei mayoral candidate Ko Wen-Je proposed his political philosophy of "open government and full participation." Although there is no information in the literature confirming that Ko was the first person in Taiwan to propose participatory budgeting, this was assuredly the first time a political figure in Taiwan had incorporated participatory budgeting in his chief political views and talked about the subject in public. Ko hoped that, after 2015, NT$10 billion could be spared from annual budgets for citizens' and experts' initiatives; in these initiatives, resolutions would be decided through online voting, and decisions would be implemented by relevant government bureaus and departments. This policy was exactly aligned with the expectations of citizens and society. To date, following the election of Ko Wen-Je as Taipei mayor, Taipei's 12 administrative districts have completed around 100 initiatives, of which half or more have received funding, and the results of implementation have a significant impact.

The adoption of participatory budgeting by citizens' initiative has given city residents a say in the use of city budgets, which has not only satisfied the public's wishes, but also indirectly improved the relationships between administrators and society at large, and further enhanced the public's appreciation of the government's administrative work. While this empowerment program has had systemic interdepartmental impacts and caused chaos in administrative affairs, it nevertheless represents a pragmatic effort to reform democratic politics, and is an important milestone in citizen participation in government. In order to maintain the people's trust, Taipei's district governments have been vying to hold initiatives and actively promoting citizen participation; as a result, participatory budgeting has been taking root and flourishing throughout Taiwan.

II. PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN TAIPEI

"This government upholds an administrative philosophy of "open government and full participation," and is striving to establish a system of participatory budgeting by citizens' initiative, which will enable open citizen participation, strengthen budget transparency, and let citizens supervise government administration, making citizens a part of the government, and enabling them to jointly participate in city administration." (Taipei Bureau of Civil Affairs, 2017)

2.1 Implementation aspects

A. Using the administrative system model to initiate participatory budgeting

Work objectives during the current stage: Supervision of existing budget compilation and implementation, review of the existing project citizen participation mechanism of city departments, and, most importantly, helping citizens to initiate budget initiatives.

B. Organization of a participatory budgeting government-academic alliance

In order to combine participatory budgeting theory and practice, Taipei city government is using the "local accompanying, active assistance, and sustainable management" concept to assist citizens' initiatives. The city government has also joined forces with scholars in organizing a "participatory budgeting government-academic alliance," which contains

representatives of relevant departments at nine public and private universities in Taipei, three outstanding community universities, the Bureau of Civil Affairs, and various district offices; it is expected that the alliance can guide local development in an advisory role.

2.2 Explanation of initiative procedures

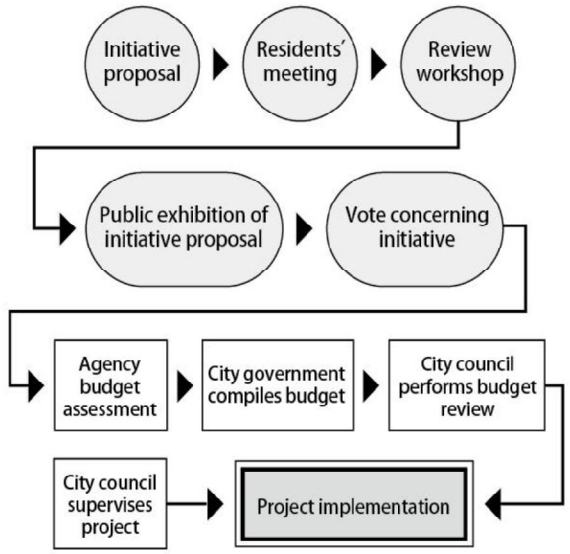


Figure 1 Simplified flowchart of participatory budgeting by citizens' initiative in Taipei

STEP01	Publicization
STEP02	Review of initiative
STEP03	Budget assessment
STEP04	Budget review
STEP05	Supervision by city council

(compiled by this study)

Table 1 Steps of participatory budgeting by citizens' initiative

Step 01: Publicization stage (all year)
Extension classes and explanatory meetings give the public an understanding of what participatory budgeting means, and explains the budgets and major administrative items of the city and administrative districts:

- Strengthening awareness: An explanatory meeting concerning the initiative, district affairs conference, and lin and borough chief workshop is held in each administrative district.
- Holding empowerment classes: Including basic classes (3H), advanced classes (6H), and controller classes (9H).
- Practice participation relying on existing projects: Begin adoption of participation mechanisms from infrastructure projects connected with city residents.

Step 02: Initiative review stage (Jan. - May)
City residents can submit conceptual proposals via the Internet or the project consulting desks of district offices. The city government also holds residents' conferences to discuss proposals. Legislators, city council members, and li chiefs are invited to sit in on the conferences, but should not lead the content or direction of the discussion. Residents' conferences vote on whether proposals should be forwarded to deliberation workshops for discussion. Agency representatives, experts, scholars, and initiative proposes are invited to the workshops to assess the initiatives. After revision, initiatives will be exhibited via the Internet for approximately 2 weeks, which gives the public a chance to express their views and vote on the initiatives.

Step 03: Budget assessment stage (June)
After the Bureau of Civil Affairs compiles accepted cases, it forwards them to various departments and bureaus for budget planning. After the responsible management agencies have submitted planning reports containing the accepted cases' implementation periods and budget amounts, the citizen participation committee participation budget section performs review of the budget proposals. Passed budget proposals are included in the current year's budget, and proposals that cannot be included in the budget are included in the following year's budget.

Step 04: Budget review stage (July - August)
Passed budget proposals are submitted to the citizen participation case task force of the annual plan and budget review committee for preliminary review and budget confirmation. The review results are provided to the citizen participation committee and submitted to the annual plan and budget review committee for review.

Step 05: City council supervision stage (all year)
Throughout the year, budget proposals and implementation results are submitted to Taipei's highest legislative body—the Taipei city council—for supervision. The mayor also reports to the city council concerning compilation of the year's general budget.

III. SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Since participatory budgeting by citizens' initiative was initiated in 2016, it has been implemented in the spirit of "choices must be made: courage is even more important than perfection." Nevertheless, numerous problems have affected implementation for example, administrative agencies have had differing opinions, coordination between agencies has been slow, different districts have had differing levels of cooperation, and differences in demographic structure and urban space have affected implementation. As a result, various problems have emerged as different districts have implemented participatory budgeting. As a consequence, a series of revisions were initiated at the beginning of 2017 implementation projects. This study perform statistical assessment and analysis of the state of implementation during all of 2016 and some of 2017 (this study is currently ongoing; the

2017 PB is still in the operating stage). The following two sections contain reflections on and review of implementation of operating processes:

Part 1: Effectiveness of revised implementation

a. Strengthening extension classes and addition of a consulting window; enlargement of participating groups: A total of approximately 174 initiatives were proposed during 2016. Of these, the Da-an District accounted for 60, which implies that more than one-third of the initiatives originating from a single administrative district, and further indicates that different districts displayed differing amounts of cooperation. As a result, participation was narrow, and the Wanhua, Neihu, and Shilin districts all provided fewer than 10 initiatives; the number of initiatives from these three districts was less than one-half of the initiatives received from the Da-an District. Since the start of implementation in 2017, the effectiveness of participation has gradually improved following the redesign of initiative planning classes, improvement of the government-academic alliance accompanying system, and establishment of case consulting desks at district offices. At present, 3,533 persons have passed basic classes, 802 persons have passed advanced classes, and 72 persons have passed controller classes. As a result, the number of initiatives and participants in 2017 have increased by several times.

b. Providing plenty of opportunities for discussion of initiatives ensures that they are even more representative: Explanatory meetings and residents' conferences are required during the initiative review stage. In 2016, only 37 of these meetings were held, most administrative districts held only one explanatory meeting and one or two residents' conferences, and some districts even combined these meetings. As a consequence, public enthusiasm for participation was noticeably quite low. Accordingly, the city government added more working conferences for li chiefs in various districts in order to achieve a consensus concerning promotion of the initiative system. To date in 2017 (the authors' cutoff date was April 5, 2017), a total of 67 meetings and conferences have been held, which was close to twice as many as in 2016. In particular, close to three times as many discussion meetings were held in the Shilin District, where morale had been at a low ebb, and the number of initiatives increased dramatically from 9 to 25.

c. Making initiative review processes simpler and more legitimate: To ensure that initiatives possess the legitimacy of city residents' representatives, in 2017 apart from instituting physical voting, the city also added online voting to its Internet platform functions. The city also established a participatory budgeting initiative dream map, incorporated the Google Map system marketing initiative proposals on a map of the city, and provided initiative report downloads enabling the public to easily examine and understand the state of initiative implementation.

d. Developing increasing systematization and empowerment: During 2016—the first year of implementation—the city's participatory budgeting expenditures were slightly more than NT$4 million. When the following year's initiatives pass deliberation, the general budget amount will surpass NT$60 million, and a second reserve must be set aside to make up the shortfall. The city government budget is precisely implemented in citizens' initiatives, greatly enhancing city residents' impression of government administration. Since the city government's citizen participation committee authorizes the participation budget section to review budget proposals, and top-down and bottom-up mutual supervision is performed, the effectiveness of implementation will be even better.

Part 2: Persisting potential problems

The city government's implementation of participatory budgeting faces many bottlenecks that remain to be overcome. Regarding the situation, this study investigates mechanism aspects and implementation aspects, and provides recommendations.

Mechanism aspects:

a. Budgets are two-sided, and the budget allocation system may neglect the needs of underprivileged groups: From the number of initiatives and 2016 and 2017, we can see that most approved cases were in the Da-an District, which happens to be an area for the quality of life is superior to that in other districts, and the content of these initiatives largely concerned environmental improvements. If we are to truly achieve the just and fair allocation of budget funds, resources must be used to create more opportunities. If individual or groups of administrative districts can be persuaded to show more concern for underprivileged groups, and organizations able to achieve mobilization can be persuaded to commit themselves to participatory budgeting initiatives and implementation, this would ensure that resources can be allocated so as to better meet the goal of social justice.

b. The compilation of budget proposals is included in citizens' participation to only a limited extent: After budgets have entered assessment and review procedures, the dominant role devolves to relevant city government management units. From compilation of budget proposals to submission to the city council for review and implementation, budget compilation processes retain procedures and standards that cannot be made public. As in the past, these processes must depend on the representative system and the bureaucracy, and the involvement of

citizens and community groups is relatively limited. Here the operating experience gained by Porto Alegre can provide guidance. From the start of implementation, the district conferences, representative forums, thematic conferences, city-wide budget committee, and the city government employee union and the largest community organic UAMPA, both of which assist with participatory budgeting operations, should select procedures for representative participation in budget assessment and deliberation. Furthermore, the representative forums should provide full-course supervision and report to city residents. Such an approach would be more systematic than the online direct broadcast participation format currently adopted by the city government.

c. If citizens' initiatives are vetoed after entering the budget assessment stage or have no appropriate accompanying measures: These problems are closely connected with the fact that the depth of participatory budgeting budget assessment and review is very limited. In 2015, Mayor Ko convened the "Taipei government citizen participation committee," whose 25 members consisted of the heads of government departments and bureaus, and also 12 persons from outside government (self-recommended city residents who had actually participated in public affairs). Nevertheless, although the committee members were not representatives of individual administrative districts, and were not required to participate in the citizens' initiative process, they still bore responsibility for supervision and review of budget proposals and budget compilation (the city government citizen participation committee authorizes the budget review section to implement these tasks). As a result, the committee has no official power to override the veto of any initiative budgets. However, decision-making power after budgets entered the deliberation stage is the most important empowerment conferred by participatory budgeting. As a consequence, the study recommends that citizens' representatives participate to an appropriate extent during the budget assessment stage, these individuals not be limited to initiative proposes, the representatives should jointly supervise the review process together with the committee, and should report the passage or veto of initiatives to city residents. This change would increase the legitimacy of the city government's citizen participation committee, facilitate the joint submission of revised initiatives in the wake of vetoes, and the drafting of a mechanism by which the city council can override vetoes.

Implement aspects:

a. The content of extension classes and explanatory meetings emphasize implementation concepts and processes, which does little to deepen the influence of citizens' initiatives: With regard to the basic, advanced, and controller training classes employed by the city government to promote participatory budgeting, although more than 3,000 persons completed the basic classes, there have been no increases in the number of trainees enrolled in the advanced and controller classes during 2017. In addition, the content of extension classes only focuses on the participatory budgeting concept and general operating procedures. Although the accompanying system was strengthened during the initiative review stage in 2017, the content of initiatives from initiative proposers who cannot accurately determine local needs or lack planning tools is typically wordy and confused. Furthermore, initiative proposers who lack a professional background often have a poor understanding of budget concepts. When initiative content is reported at residents' conferences, the budgets for such initiatives may be as high as NT$10 billion or as low as several tens of thousands of NT dollars. When these initiatives are passed by a residents' conference, they tend to cause great budget planning difficulties during the budget assessment stage, which will further impede estimation of the implementation period. During the initiative review stage, the city government may therefore induce community planners and community planning service centers to join the accompanying groups, strengthen the localization of initiatives, include community design tasks in extension classes and roundtable forums, and rely on planners' budgetary control skills to ensure that initiatives are feasible and suitable for users' needs.

b. Initiatives limited to persons with citizen status cannot provide a deep understanding of users' needs: Although residents' conferences do not put restrictions on participants' status, limited venue size and local awareness may account for the fact that, starting from the initiative review stage, increases in participants' attendance have been linked with the number of times residents' conferences are held. However, the age, gender, nationality, and income of participants cannot be determined from their frequency of attendance, and residents' conferences may often make hasty decisions in the face of time pressure, which can lead to the tyranny of the majority. This study therefore recommends that residents' conferences focus to a certain extent on the discussion of initiative content, and an online voting platform that can be used to vote on initiatives added. This would allow the views of many different city residents to be heard, and increase the proportional participation of underprivileged groups in public affairs.

CONCLUSIONS

Taipei's participatory budgeting by citizens' initiative represents a challenge involving a compromise between dreams and reality. Under the current wave

of globalization, we should pursue even more diversified cultural localism, we must learn the knowledge needed to become good citizens, and we need to understand individual responsibilities to society. Through participatory budgeting, we can evolve from confrontation and resistance to positive tolerance and mutual coordination. Participatory budgeting will make government more transparent, and enable the people to obtain power and realize the true meaning of empowerment.

There is an American saying that "If you want to know whether shoes fit, you should ask the person wearing them, and not the shoemaker." In other words, a successful system should chiefly reflect the public's needs, and not blindly pursue the system's own values. We do not wish to determine a design for the public, but rather to work with them in producing a design. Let the public participate, but the public decide, and let the public bear responsibility for their own rights and interests. We must speak on behalf of environmental justice, foster an orderly society, and promote common identification.

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