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Citation for final published version:

Trowbridge, Hayley 2024. Democratising futures, reinvigorating democracy? Participatory futures as a tool for citizen voice and influence in local decision-making. *Foresight: The journal of future studies, strategic thinking and policy* 10.1108/FS-09-2023-0195

Publishers page: <https://doi.org/10.1108/FS-09-2023-0195>

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Democratising Futures, Reinvigorating Democracy? Participatory Futures as a tool for citizen voice and influence in local decision-making

Tables

Table 1: Context and participants of the PAR studies

Municipality	Description of municipality	Activity 1 participants	Activity 2 participants
Municipality 1 (Southern Europe)	Municipality 1 is relatively experienced in implementing participatory democracy measures. With a population of 172,000 inhabitants, the city has been developing a model of urban governance focusing on neighbourhood level decision-making for over a decade. They use open citizens' labs to identify projects that will be undertaken in the locations. The municipality's current focus is on upscaling these neighbourhood level interventions to city level.	Mixed gender citizens who are involved in participatory democracy and voluntary associations within the area. Total: 13 participants.	Citizens, policymakers, civil society activists, newly-elected members of a decision-making structure. A relative even mix of genders, with the average age of attendee being 48 years old. Total: 110 participants.
Municipality 2 (Eastern Europe)	Municipality 2 is a larger city with 450,000 residents and contains districts that have a degree of autonomy when making local decisions. The municipality has been using participatory budgeting as a mechanism for resident voice in decision-making but has found that it is not inclusive of those residents without a high degree of social capital and implemented it in a relatively top-down manner. Their current work focuses on experimenting with more deliberative tools with citizens in specific locations in a bid to determine the political conditions that are needed to create such work to scale across the city.	Heterogenous group of citizens - represented demographics including people from different social classes, different education levels, people with intellectual disabilities, people with different political views, ages, genders and nationalities. Total: 12 participants.	Young people aged between 15 and 26. The majority were high school or university students. Total: 13 participants.

Municipality 3 (Northern Europe)	Municipality 3 is a regional group of municipalities consisting of five local entities. It is a relatively marginalised rural area with a population of just 34,859 people across the five areas. Previously, the municipality has used social hackathons as a means of identifying solutions to complex social problems with residents. This was framed within the domain of public service delivery and the municipality now wants to utilise this approach on a political, decision-making level and use hackathons as a means of supporting deliberative decision-making in the area.	Young people from rural communities. Total: 10 participants.	Officials from 5 local municipalities, citizen representatives, council members of the development centre, leaders and members of a county development strategy working group and residents. Total: 50 participants.
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Table II: PAR Study Data, Processing and Analysis

Data gathering method	Processing and analysis	What this provided
<u>Participant Feedback:</u> At the end of each activity, participant feedback was collated. This focused on their experiences of activities around specific questions and was captured either by (1) written post-it notes or (2) oral feedback circle (notes taken by municipality team).	Municipality teams collated the feedback and summarised it in the activity questionnaires (with direct quotes from participants included).	Participants experiences of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity • How the activity related to previous involvement in democracy and decision-making activities
<u>Activity Reports:</u> A standardised report template was provided to the municipalities for each activity that collated information on activity context, participants, participant feedback, application of the method and insights on democracy. This was completed as a municipality team.	Manual coding and topic analysis of qualitative data, ascertaining similarities and differences across locations	Municipality perspectives on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant feedback • Participant recruitment • Socio-political context of activities • How they applied the method • Insights on citizen participation in democracy
<u>Activity Questionnaires:</u> Directly after each activity, the individual municipality team	Cross-tabulation of quantitative results by	Individual municipality workers' perspectives on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What worked well

<p>member completed a questionnaire that assessed the effectiveness of the activities. It also identified any local adaptations of the activity. It contained both quantitative questions (i.e., ratings) and qualitative questions (i.e., personal reflections, explanation of ratings).</p>	<p>respondent type and location</p> <p>Manual sentiment analysis on quantitative and qualitative responses</p> <p>Manual coding and topic analysis of qualitative data, ascertaining similarities and differences across locations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What didn't work well • Local adaptations • Usefulness of training and support materials • Changes they'd make with hindsight
<p><u>Follow-Up Questionnaire:</u> 6-9 months after the activities, a follow-up questionnaire was completed by the municipality team. This focused on the impact of the participatory futures on the municipalities decision-making processes post-delivery. It contained both quantitative questions (i.e., ratings) and qualitative questions (i.e., personal reflections, explanation of ratings).</p>	<p>Cross-tabulation of quantitative results by location</p> <p>Manual sentiment analysis on quantitative and qualitative responses</p> <p>Manual coding and topic analysis of qualitative data, ascertaining similarities and differences across locations</p>	<p>Municipality perspectives on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If/how the outputs from the activities had been used • If/how the methods had been used since • If/how the work is situated in wider plans/structures of the municipality • If/how the insights from the activities had influenced decision-making • Reflections on similarities and differences between participatory futures approaches and existing knowledge creation practices in the municipality • Understanding of current state of play with participatory and deliberative processes in local democracy within their municipality

Table III: Future visions of local democracy

<p>Municipality 1</p>	<p>Local community, connection, trust, and open exchange are key to our future city. Residents have a range of opportunities – from public assemblies to focus groups – in which to voice their perspectives, and active measures are being taken to include</p>
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	<p>diverse voices in such activities. Apathy is decreasing because residents are aware of how they can affect change in their community. Residents are becoming more motivated to create neighbourhoods that are better places to live. There has been an increase in volunteering and youth participation in civil society.</p>
Municipality 2	<p>In a future dominated by long working hours, the destruction of the natural environment and an oppressive surveillance culture, young people are leading the resistance via educational workshops and activism. We are showing our communities that another way of life is possible – one that values humanity and people’s wellbeing. We are promoting active citizenship and are speaking up about issues that affect our lives in an environment, where decisions are made for the benefit of people, not for financial gains. Slowly this activism and education is changing the tide.</p>
Municipality 3	<p>We celebrate our local cultural heritage and are a place of optimism. We have adopted a set of mutual goals and a shared commitment to contributing to them from residents, local companies, civil society and the municipality has been established. We are ensuring that better living conditions are created for residents; we feel pride in our local area. Whilst the achievement of the goals is based on collective action, the local development centre is pivotal.</p>