

Hadyn Kihm

01/04/10

Participatory Budgeting in Córdoba: Preliminary Results

Participatory budgeting is being hailed by academics and policymakers alike as a tool for promoting greater citizen participating and civic awareness, but has been implemented across Latin America to mixed results (Wampler 2007)¹. Simply put, it is a governing mechanism whereby citizens decide how to allocate part of a local budget, although the methodology of its practice can vary widely. The primary goals of participatory budgeting are straightforward: greater participation and greater efficiency at meeting citizens' needs (Wampler, 40). The challenge rests in the fact that there is significant diversity in the types of structures and processes that fall under the definition of "participatory budgeting." Myriad "interpretations of PB, especially as practiced in Porto Alegre, the Brazilian city that named and publicized it, abound. Yet studies of how PB is practiced, especially outside of Brazil, are only beginning to emerge" (Goldfrank 2006: 1). Because the number of cities implementing participatory budgeting is relatively low, and it has only existed for at most twenty years, there is little consensus about what determines its success or failure, or even which structures and practices guarantee a greater likelihood of success. The experience of the city of Córdoba, Argentina provides a point of departure for an analysis of participatory budgeting and its challenges. Such an analysis, including the city's successes and failures in implementation, will hopefully be of use to cities considering adopting participatory budgeting.

This paper will briefly review the literature surrounding participatory budgeting, focusing on participation and efficiency; look at how it has been implemented in Latin America and Argentina; and

¹ This working paper has been prepared for the 2010 ILASSA Student Conference to be held at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas from February 4-6.

then examine Córdoba's case in particular. I will locate Córdoba's example among similar cities in the developing world that have adopted participatory budgeting and make comparative statements to rank Córdoba's approach against approaches taken elsewhere in Latin America. Finally, I will make recommendations for improvements in the participatory budgeting methodology of Córdoba that will be useful to other cities examining if participatory budgeting would work in their jurisdiction. This paper provides an introduction to the research I have done and will continue to do for my Public Policy and Latin American Studies Professional Report.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

As mentioned earlier, greater citizen participation and greater efficiency are the twin goals of participatory budgeting. Citizen participation is a cornerstone of democratic governance. Participatory budgeting, by bringing citizens in contact with government officials and giving them some degree of decision-making power and authority to voice their own needs, has the capacity to increase participation, particularly in countries that have only recently implemented democratic institutions and structures after a dictatorial past (Vásquez, 2). Measuring participation rates involves more than just counting individuals, although this is also important. Citizens obviously will not participate in activities they feel are a waste of time. Greater participation also demonstrates to the government what concerns are really important to the community when deciding how to allocate funds, making them more efficient overall.

EFFICIENCY

Greater efficiency at meeting citizens' needs requires two sub-goals to be successfully met: greater accountability to citizens by building trust, and greater transparency of governmental processes through dissemination of information (Caddy 2007: 18). Citizens must feel not only that their needs are being heard but that feedback results in effective solutions being implemented. Most participatory budgeting structures adopt a "project-based" model so citizens have visible evidence of actions the government has taken in response to citizen input (Shaw, 2). If implemented correctly, the process reinforces efficiency and trust by completing the projects citizens wanted in a timely manner. It is

obvious that greater efficiency and greater participation can and should be mutually reinforcing—as citizens witness projects being built, they will feel greater trust in the government and will be more likely to participate and voice their own needs. These two goals are not exclusive to participatory budgeting; democratic governments have struggled to achieve both since antiquity, and there are endless ways to achieve them.

While the individual characteristics and culture of municipalities make a single universal rubric of participatory budgeting impossible, the ideal participatory budgeting structure will promote both greater participation and greater efficiency. The difficulty is in determining the perfect balance between participation and efficiency. Focusing on the goals of participatory budgeting also provides a simple means of evaluating and measuring when a city is successful or not. Using this rubric, Córdoba has not achieved either greater participation or greater efficiency in the two years since it adopted participatory budgeting. Instead of feeling greater civic awareness, Córdoba residents feel disillusioned and frustrated. While some amount of this failure can be attributed to timing and bad luck, I will demonstrate that the complicated PB structure chosen by the administration, declining political will, and some extenuating circumstances were deciding factors in Córdoba’s disappointing experience with participatory budgeting. Before detailing the case of Córdoba, a general introduction to participatory budgeting is necessary.

A HISTORY OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

While there is some dispute over when participatory budgeting began and who developed the idea, most agree that the first experiments took place in Brazil, and the most famous case, in Porto Alegre, Brazil, began in 1989 (Goldfrank, 5). It was implemented by the newly-elected Workers’ Party, who sought a means to tackle financial constraints, provide citizens with a direct role in the government’s activities, and invert social spending priorities (Wampler, 24). Over the years, Brazilian citizens formulated and modified the structure of participatory budgeting to better engage residents at the local level. Since then the process has spread all over Latin America and undergone various changes along the

way (Cabannes, 27). Participatory budgeting was attempted in Argentina in years past but has only recently achieved critical mass, growing quickly and across the country due to greater communication between municipalities (Clemente: 2004). Democratic structures in Argentina have only been in place for 26 years, after a violent and tumultuous dictatorship, and public figures at all levels of government are experimenting with mechanisms for greater professionalism, transparency, and continuity (Tecco 1997). Since the return to democracy, several economic and political crises have led to a deep sense of cynicism on the part of the populace towards elected officials (Echavarria 2006). At the same time, voting is compulsory, and candidates are chosen through a party-list system, so there are few ways to participate in a truly voluntary and direct way through, or in cooperation with, the bureaucratic governmental channels (argentina.gov.ar). In the past few years participatory budgeting has spread rapidly among municipalities across the country; by some counts there are currently 25 municipalities using participatory budgeting (rapp.gov.ar). How each municipality has adopted participatory budgeting does not follow any specific rubric and the differences between municipalities in terms of structure, funding, and participation rates are often striking. Participatory budgeting has struck a chord among public officials and non-governmental organizations as a way to promote cooperation and civic participation in a population that feels protesting the government's actions is the most effective way to voice their grievances (Echavarria: 2006).

CASE STUDY: CÓRDOBA, ARGENTINA

Córdoba was the third municipality in Argentina to adopt participatory budgeting, which it did in 2008 (La Voz del Interior: 2008). The two cities that preceded it, Rosario and Morón, are considered models of success and provide the basic blueprint for many of the Argentine municipalities that have since adopted participatory budgeting, including Córdoba (hcdsantarosa.gov.ar). Why these cities had success and Córdoba did not will be explored further in this study. I chose to study Córdoba because it is a midsize city (approximately 1.3 million inhabitants) that demonstrates many of the typical characteristics of city governance 30 years after the 1976-1983 dictatorship: a decentralized structure and

division into zones, well-educated and trained civil servants, and a progressive political climate with significant political will in favor of participatory budgeting (cordoba.gov.ar). The structure of participatory budgeting in Córdoba also mirrors that of the municipalities of Rosario and Morón with a few modifications. In short, it is an average city with an average participatory budgeting structure. Because it lacks significant idiosyncrasies that must be taken into account when explaining the process of participatory budgeting implementation, Córdoba is a useful example. However, it cannot be understood without recognizing the influence of Córdoba's political structure and history.

CÓRDOBA: A POLITICAL OVERVIEW

Argentina's history has been one of tension between the government and its citizens, allowing for civic engagement only insofar as it did not challenge the status quo as defined by the military. The years following the dictatorship saw a return to representative democracy and the rise of several related institutional and administrative arrangements meant to consolidate a framework of representative democracy and civic participation (Delgado 1997: 5). These arrangements, which took place primarily in cities, demonstrate a new urban administrative philosophy that sees citizen participation not as a hindrance, and not even as a positive means to an end, but as *an end in itself*. The arrangements included a mix of decentralization measures tied to the strengthened role of the city mayor and city council positions, the articulation of strategic city plans to identify short and long-term goals, and an increased focus on governance and civic participation at the local level (Delgado, 6). The greatest improvements to governance in Argentina that have taken place since the country's return to democracy are at the local level: they include the strengthening of the municipal government, the professionalization of the positions of mayor and city council members, and a willingness to allow administrators the flexibility to develop their own governing systems and programs (Delgado, 7). The municipalities have made significant inroads in solving some of the major urban problems of Argentina.

The process of decentralization in Córdoba from the municipal to the sub-municipal level began ambitiously and with significant political will: in 1994 the government inaugurated the first of what would eventually be eleven zones, forming a radiating pattern out from the city center that created jurisdictions that contained portions of the inner city and portions of the periphery, each sporting a beautifully designed cultural center called a Community Participation Center (Centro de Participación Comunal, or CPC)². The CPCs were intended to be centers of public participation and civic development, where neighbors could engage their government at the local level and carry out strategic planning goals (Tecco 1997: 115).

Córdoba had always been associated with a single political party, the Unión Cívica Radical. However, during the past decade the political scene has changed significantly at the national and local scale. The financial crisis of 2001 led to civil unrest around the country as people took to the streets with pots and pans protesting corrupt officials and demanding their resignations. At the national level, the two major political parties, the Partido Justicialista and the Unión Cívica Radical have split and re-emerged as new coalitions in recent years, with implications for local politics as well. Mayor Daniel Giacomino's party is the same coalition, the Frente Cívico y Social, of his predecessor Luis Juez. While national politics in Argentina has always leaned heavily towards personality politics, the new coalition format is exacerbating this tendency, leading to allegiances to "kirchnerismo," "juecismo," and the like.

The churning of the political atmosphere at the national level has exacerbated cracks in the provincial and municipal levels. Politicians at the lower levels must carefully determine where to form alliances to recoup the greatest benefit from clientelism at the national level. Because the Frente Cívico in Córdoba has only been in existence for five years, Giacomino is in a position to expand the party's flexibility and send the message that he is not merely Juez's pawn. In a way, Giacomino is in the same position the mayor of Porto Alegre was- the head of the opposition to the national and provincial parties. Giacomino faces Partido Justicialista politicians in the governor and president's seats. He cannot be too

² A list of Spanish terms and acronyms is located at the end of this paper.

partisan if he wants to appeal to them for help or financial support. Party loyalty is highly praised in a country where representatives are chosen based on proportional party lists

Córdoba has historically enjoyed strong public participation and civic engagement, albeit in the form of reactionary measures such as protests, petitions, and road occupations. The period following the financial crisis saw a rise in participatory movements, emerging around issues such as participatory budgeting, impeachment of particular government officials, and a general sense of consolidating a network of citizen participatory channels for representation and engagement with the government (Echavarria, 2006).

While Argentina's urban civil society is strong, it is unable to engage in the political process. However, one cannot bemoan the lack of creative strategies employed by the protestors. During the 2001 financial crisis, piqueteros (picket-liners) teamed up with caceroles (protesters who bang on pots and pans to get attention) to form a massive protest on the Casa Rosada. Even though it is heartening to see Argentine citizens playing a political role beyond the occasional election vote and adopting these clever protest strategies, local governments thus far have not been able to integrate the population into the political process through meaningful structures where they can voice their grievances but also enact real change and feel like they are a part of the process.

PROCESS TOWARDS ADOPTING PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN CÓRDOBA

Events taking place before and during Giacomino's candidacy created the necessary political will for implementing the practice. Most importantly, there was increased understanding on the part of non-profits and watchdog groups that they would have to gain allies in the government to bring about the changes they wanted instead of standing outside and protesting. In response to the 2001 financial crisis and the general frustration over corruption at all levels of government, Córdoba saw the emergence of the *Red Ciudadana Principio del Principio (The Beginning of the Beginning Citizen Network)*, a network of local NGOs and community activists to bring about greater responsiveness of political officials to the

public (Echavarría 2006). Many current bureaucrats in Giacomino's administration, and particularly within the Department of Citizen Participation, are friendly with members of *Red Ciudadana*, which has drifted apart into smaller groups and is now more of a "spiritual network" (Echavarría 2006). One such splinter group that formed from the *Red Ciudadana* is the Grupo Promotor de Participación Ciudadana (GPPC), a group of four retired teachers who have made the promotion of citizen participation their mission. The perception of openness in the administration is very important and former *Red Ciudadana* members are often personally invited to attend meetings and the get-togethers that follow. Since then, former *Red Ciudadana* groups have been watching Giacomino's administration closely to keep the participatory agenda on track.

Faced with the same decentralization process as Porto Alegre, Córdoba's government decided to engage in micro-planning in 1994 (Tecco 1995: 5). The first attempt to enact participatory budgeting ended in failure when the mayor, Germán Kammerath, was impeached for corruption in 2002 (Guillermo Marianacci, 6/9/08). Later, during the Luis Juez administration (2003-2007) there was also an attempt to engage in micro-planning (Fernando Pacella, 5/27/08). However, this micro-planning approach was highly controlled by the municipality and lacked a participatory element and was only practiced in specific regions, not throughout the city (Diego Bedacarratx, 6/02/08). It was implemented through the neighborhood associations which shut out the NGOs and general citizenry (Valeria Perez, 5/21/08)

During the 2007 mayoral campaign, the members of GPPC asked all of the candidates to sign a transparency pledge, "For a Sustainable Córdoba," with several promises, one of which was participatory budgeting (Ricardo Bellagarde and Carlos Scicolone of GPPC, 5/15/08). All the candidates signed, and it was ratified by the mayor, Daniel Giacomino, on December 19th shortly after he was sworn in (La Voz del Interior, 12/19/07). From that point, Giacomino set about creating the team which would bring participatory budgeting to Córdoba.

When Giacomino was picking his citizen participation team, he looked for the right combination of experience and loyalty. Jorge Navarro, his campaign chief of staff and former director of one of the

CPCs, had also worked as a journalist and then assisted in the development of participatory budgeting in a small section of Buenos Aires (Jorge Navarro, 6/27/09; Rodgers 2007). Navarro strongly favored experience, and he tapped Diego Bedacarratx, a member of a young militant contingent of the Partido Justicialista party, to the position of Director of Participatory Budgeting. Bedacarratx studied the participatory structures in Rosario and Porto Alegre and determined that using the CPCs would be the easiest way to incorporate PB in Córdoba. Navarro convinced Giacomino to hire Jorge Guevara as the sub-director of Political Project Management. Guevara had been a political staffer and active member of Córdoba's Socialist Party, and would now work with Navarro and Bedacarratx to design, monitor, and evaluate projects (Jorge Guevara, 6/26/09). He and Navarro had met through involvement with the *Red Ciudadana* and participated in budgeting training sessions together in 2007 (Jorge Guevara, 6/26/08).

Jorge Navarro's choice to favor experience over party loyalties resulted in a well-designed ordinance and a dynamic team. It did not earn him many friends in the administration. "It's very difficult for politicians to understand the point of participatory budgeting," Bedacarratx explained. "They just see it as taking their power away" (Bedacarratx, 6/02/08). Even as it was constructed, the Department of Citizen Participation was looking like a department set apart from the rest of the administration. This "apartness" would become a liability for participatory budgeting in the months to come.

Jorge Navarro's career in Córdoba's participatory budgeting process would be short-lived. On April 23, 2008 the city council approved a municipal executive order to create *juntas de participación vecinal* (JPV), which were tasked with the responsibility of "operating the participatory budgeting process" (Ordinance 11448, Article 12, clause 2). The ordinance passed by a vote of 25 in favor and only 3 against (Ciudad de Córdoba, 4/23/08). Once the vote had been settled and the *juntas de participación vecinal* were underway, Mayor Giacomino engaged in a thorough "cleaning" of his administration, releasing several Juez sympathizers from their secretarial positions and replacing them with more obvious supporters (La Mañana de Córdoba, 6/4/08). In perhaps the biggest upset, Giacomino asked Jorge Navarro to step down from his position as Secretary of Citizen Participation, even though he was not a

Juez supporter. Navarro still controlled most of the initial *junta* meetings as they progressed during June and July 2008 but has since left Córdoba's political scene (Echavarría, 12/5/09). Navarro's departure left a participatory budgeting department lacking in practical knowledge of the PB process.

THE STRUCTURE OF CÓRDOBA'S PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

At the end of July 2008, the city council approved an ordinance that laid down the structure of participatory budgeting and the relationship between the *juntas de participación vecinal* and Córdoba Participatory Budgeting (Regino Lopez, 12/9/09). The structure of Córdoba's participatory budgeting has two parts, which loosely interact. I will describe both separately and then together.

Juntas de Participación Vecinal (Neighborhood Participation Groups)

1. The first step for participatory budgeting was to convene and set up the *juntas de participación vecinal* (JPV). Each Centro de Participación Comunal (CPC), approximately one 10th of the city, gets one JPV.
2. Zonal Assembly #1: At the beginning of the year, a zone assembly is held at the CPC of registered neighborhood associations and social organizations. Delegates to the Mesa Coordinadora are chosen for the coming year, as well as representatives for various thematic commissions. According to the ordinance, social organizations and neighborhood associations get equal numbers of representatives on the Mesa Coordinadora, as well as gender parity of the titulares and suplentes. Members of the Juntas must be at least 16 years old.

Activities: The Mesa Coordinadora meets throughout the year with the commission representatives and carries out various projects, including working with the participatory budgeting delegates.

3. Zonal Assembly #2: At the end of the year a second assembly is held to discuss the work of the JPV and make any modifications to the internal rules of the JPV. The Mesa Coordinadora also drafts and presents a report on the group's activities to the mayor.

The second step for participatory budgeting is the participatory process itself.

1. Neighborhood Assemblies (April, May, June): each CPC area is further subdivided into two or three neighborhoods. In these assemblies residents discuss problems in the community. Participation in the assemblies and voting privileges at the neighborhood council is limited to residents 18 or older.
2. Neighborhood Council (July, August): residents vote for four neighborhood projects to send to the Zone Workshop (Taller de PP). Residents also vote for four delegates (two women and two men) to act as representatives to the Zone Workshop. However, publicity documents from the CPC Ruta 20 say that the number of delegates from each Neighborhood Council is dependent on the number of participants at the Council, in a ratio of one delegate for every 20 participants.
3. Zone Workshop (August, September): At the Zone Workshop delegates work with municipal staff and CPC staff to develop and finalize the projects that will be presented to the city council.
4. Incorporation of Projects into the Budget (October, November, December): The Zone Workshop projects are incorporated into the General Municipal Budget to be enacted the following year.

How the *Juntas de Participación Vecinal* and Participatory Budgeting fit together:

1. Before the Neighborhood Assemblies meet, the JPV Mesa Coordinadora directs a survey of possible problem areas and presents them at the Neighborhood Assemblies, where they are debated.
2. JPV will assist in the organization of the Neighborhood Assemblies and Councils.
3. JPV will oversee the development and completion of projects through the Oversight Commission (comisión de seguimiento).

4. The Mesa Coordinadora of the JPV can propose its own projects to the municipality without requiring input or a vote from residents.

PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIRST AND SECOND CYCLES OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN CÓRDOBA

I believe that my field work was comprehensive enough to allow me to make the following observations on the participatory budgeting process in Córdoba. From these observations, recommendations can be drawn to improve participatory budgeting implementation.

While I was only about to observe the activities of CPC Monsignor Pablo Cabrera, I noted several positive elements. The JPV of CPC Monsignor Pablo Cabrera has regular meetings, sometimes meeting several times a week, to discuss business. While participation rates could be higher, there was regular attendance of at least 12 participants at each JPV meeting I observed. Talking to several members of the JPV, I learned that the JPV has facilitated better distribution of information from the municipality and CPC to the general public. Members were able to hold meetings with Jorge Guevara, the Director of Participatory Budgeting to discuss concerns, and solicited guidance from Carlos Scicolone of the GPPC, who assisted all meetings I observed. Several members presented concerns to the city council audiencia publica on 12/14/09, and met prior to the audiencia publica to strategize and draft comments. While I was not able to observe the activities of the participatory budgeting process, it is heartening to note that the second cycle of projects has been deliberated by delegates, finalized, and accepted by the city council for inclusion in the 2010 general budget.

At the same time, I noticed several negative characteristics. Participation has declined in the JPV assembly of CPC Monsignor Pablo Cabrera from the first time I observed them on 6/23/08. At 12 months since the first round of projects was approved and included in the municipal budget, less than 10% of projects have been completed (a figure confirmed by Corina Echavarría 12/5/09, Carlos Scicolone 12/6/09, JPV meetings, and the city council audiencia publica 12/14/09).

Why the projects have not been completed is not entirely clear. I will address a few of the explanations or justifications that emerged in interviews, reserving my personal judgment on the utility of these explanations until the end:

- ***External circumstances.*** The city government was shaken up by yearlong protests and strikes by municipal employees for higher wages (Bedacarratx, 12/4/09)
- ***Citizens lacked sufficient training.*** The projects were poorly designed and lacked feasibility (Guevara, 12/14/09).
- ***PB Structure is too complicated.*** The government implemented an incredibly complicated structure without sufficient training for anyone, including the mesa coordinadora, the JPV members, the delegates, or the municipal staff (citizens, JPV & PP meeting with Jorge Guevara, 12/14/09).
- ***Municipal employees lacked sufficient training.*** Based on this lack of training, municipal staff was unable to provide sufficient guidance on the projects, allowing delegates to draft projects that were too complicated, too costly, and lacking feasibility. This led to a situation where projects were finalized in the Zone Workshop, then left out of the final report prepared by the municipality to be approved by the city council (JPV meeting 12/9/09, meeting with Jorge Guevara 12/14/09).
- ***Municipality does not actually want to implement participatory budgeting.*** The oft-repeated ‘because the city government is dragging its feet and wants us to pretend the structure is participatory’ (citizens at audiencia publica, 12/14/09).

Whatever the case, the fact that 2009 projects are not even close to being realized has caused frustration and as a result, meeting turn-out is very poor. When an emergency meeting of the participatory budget was called with Jorge Guevara, only 5 of the eight delegates to the Zone Workshop showed up. When meetings were called, it was difficult to determine if they were JPV assemblies, mesa coordinadora meetings, thematic commission meetings, or PB delegate meetings because the same people

showed up to each, a group of about 12 people including the CPC sub-director and Carlos Scicolone of GPPC.

WHERE CÓRDOBA'S PB PROCESS FITS WITHIN THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT

Looking at the list of negative observations, Córdoba's structure and lack of implementation of projects does not classify it very highly on the list of approaches taken by other Latin American and Argentine municipalities. The one element that appears to be a beacon of light in the midst of disappointment is the fact that through their participation in the *juntas de participación vecinal*, the neighborhood associations and social organizations through this process have grown closer together. The social links established after 2001 through the *Red Ciudadana Principio del Principio*—even though the links eventually only became “spiritual” links after *Red* dissolved—remained, even as people shifted around the Córdoba political scene (GPPC, 5/15/09). Some people became city council members, others became journalists, and others joined the municipality. There is some debate regarding the benefits of such pre-existing social networks to participatory budgeting. While some authors think the use of the already existent social frameworks prevents the creation of new forms of representation (which perhaps it does), I believe, in the case of Córdoba, the use of social organization and neighborhood associations gives citizens a supportive crutch through the process, knowing that the familiar organizations are representing them. The situation in Córdoba is similar to the one described by Rodgers in Abasto, Buenos Aires as “a very particular constellation of competing actors, interests, and practices that articulated together in such a way as to hold each other in check, thereby permitting the emergence of an effective and representative PB process, against the odds” (Rodgers 2007: 14). Rodgers calls this “organized disorganization,” the creation of “spaces of autonomy” that afford “multiple possibilities for independent behavior, whether by neighborhood inhabitants, *punteras*, or *referentes*” (Rodgers, 14). In any case, such a network underscores the possibility for success in Córdoba's PB process. Future research will reveal whether such predictions hold true.

The case from CPC Guiñazú underscores the importance of political will and strategically-placed liaisons and citizen advocates demonstrated in my observations in CPC Monsignor Pablo Cabrera. I met specific individuals, including Carlos Scicolone of the GPPC, who worked tirelessly on the basis of the belief that what they were doing was important. Jorge Guevara was another such person. After a meeting in which the JPV and delegates of the PP gave him a verbal thrashing over the course of two hours, one of the delegates suddenly became somber and said to Guevara, “You know, you’re the only one who really takes us seriously. Everyone else in the municipality, you say you’re a member of the Mesa Coordinadora of the JPV and they just laugh you off. You actually listen to us, and we appreciate everything you’ve done” (meeting, 12/14/09). However, the actions of Mayor Giacomino have only reduced the number of such liaisons. I mentioned the firing of Jorge Navarro earlier in this paper, but CPC Guiñazú Director Fernando Pacella told me that of the 11 original CPC directors at the time the JPVs and participatory budgeting process were being set up, nine have since been replaced (Pacella, 12/18/09). While the CPC directors do work at the discretion of the mayor, such turnover prevents the directors from being advocates and earning the trust of the citizens. It also prevents the creation of institutional knowledge, which is particularly important for such a complicated PB structure to function. It is common knowledge that many of Giacomino’s hiring and firing decisions regarding participatory budgeting were politically-motivated (interview with CPC director). The lack of people across the board who know and are comfortable with the rules, as well as memory of what has been attempted and what has been successful of project proposals, is troubling. Just as at CPC Monsignor Pablo Cabrera, only about 10% of the projects from the 2009 budget had been completed at the time of my interview with the Director of CPC Guiñazú (Pacella, 12/18/09).

LESSONS FROM CÓRDOBA

1. ***Importance of promoting institutional knowledge and advocates between citizens and government.*** While it is impossible to hire people anticipating their ability to fill this role,

removing advocates and experts for political reasons undermines the apolitical role of participatory budgeting and undermines the generation of deep institutional knowledge.

2. ***The JPVs make the system unnecessarily complicated.*** As it stands, they serve no real purpose beyond having yearly committees and calling the neighborhood assemblies together. If the JPVs were two-year positions, they could provide true leadership. As it stands, the requirements of membership (must be a representative of a registered social organization or neighborhood association) prevents interested citizens from taking a more at-large role in participatory budgeting.
3. ***Political will is crucial.*** As others have stated before me, political will is necessary not just at the point when participatory budgeting is approved but also throughout implementation. The municipal government must be willing to transfer power from the central hub to the decentralized units, which the Giacomino government has not been willing to do.
4. ***Non-PB-related political situations can complicate the adoption and implementation of PB.*** The non-stop bickering between former mayor Juez and current mayor Giacomino, as well as the conflicts between Giacomino and the municipal workers' union distracted him from the participatory process and led him to fire and replace municipal employees at a rapid rate, removing any semblance of institutional knowledge.
5. ***Córdoba's structure does not provide enough opportunities for participation and/or voting.*** Residents are consulted, but don't have the final say in the projects that get chosen. They should be able to vote up or down the projects that come out of the Zonal Workshop.
6. ***PB loses legitimacy when few or no projects are being completed.*** When projects are left unfinished, residents cannot see any benefits to participation.
7. ***Training is important for everyone involved.*** Training for government directors and bureaucrats would prevent infrastructure projects from going through and being approved at the Workshop level. Such mistakes increase the frustration felt by citizens and feelings of the system's futility.

Training for delegates and citizens means they will know the steps of the process and won't think that voting automatically means projects will be approved or implemented.

RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION SUGGESTIONS

The following recommendations and evaluation measures have been developed on the basis of my research conducted in 2008 and 2009 as well as insights on public policy developed through coursework at the LBJ School of Public Affairs. Evaluation measures to determine improvements in participation rates and efficiency have been developed as well and are included in the following section. While non-PB-related circumstances contributed to its lackluster performance in Córdoba, I have focused my recommendations on the participatory budgeting structure and process itself to facilitate adoption elsewhere.

1. ***Keep project-based budgeting, but focus on social projects, not infrastructure.*** By focusing initially on social projects, you could harness the enthusiasm and ingenuity of citizens as well as give them a sense of ownership and awareness. Social projects that only require funding, no bureaucracy, can be implemented quickly as a means to gain legitimacy.
2. ***Develop training programs to familiarize everyone with the rules.*** This includes public figures, delegates, and associations.
3. ***Develop a system for modification of the structure, allowing for citizen input.*** Many cities, including Porto Alegre, allow annual citizen input on possible improvements to PB.
4. ***The funding level of projects currently in Córdoba can stay the same, but must be channeled into the projects.***
5. ***Strengthen the JPVs as at-large oversight bodies, or get rid of them and give PB delegates greater power.*** PB structures elsewhere in Argentina and Latin America include thematic commissions as part of the structure, which could replace the JPVs.
6. ***Continue to increase engagement of traditionally marginalized groups.***

EVALUATION MEASURES

Evaluation measures can be used to determine any increase in civic participation or efficiency through participatory budgeting. While cost/benefit analysis remains the preferred method of evaluation of government initiatives, PB is difficult to measure on a monetary basis. Therefore, other techniques must be used to determine the effectiveness of the participatory budgeting program. Because the goal of the program is citizen engagement, effort must be made to increase participation at every step of the PB process. Evaluation measures should include:

1. Input Measures:

Number of citizens participating, by total number and number of first-time participants at each meeting. Also compare change in number of citizens present each year.

Measure percentage of female to male participants and number of leadership roles filled by women. Despite the fact that women often outnumber men in these forums, there is a tendency for elected leaders to be men. Some municipalities have attempted to correct this tendency by requiring equal numbers of men and women serving on governing boards.

2. Outcome Measures:

Number of projects funded and successfully completed.

Satisfaction of participants and citizens can be measured by voluntary survey.

CONCLUSIONS

I hope that this brief report provides some preliminary conclusions about how Córdoba's PB situation has fared in the 18 months since its adoption, and in comparison to other examples in Latin America. I would argue, if there had to be a single take-away from this experience, that Mayor Giacomino implemented participatory budgeting without fully supporting or understanding the institutional changes it would require. This resulted in a complicated structure, uneven training, and lack

of political capital to push projects through. Even though Córdoba in 2008 fulfilled Wampler's four pre-conditions for successful participatory budgeting (strong mayoral support, civil society willing and able to contribute to ongoing policy debates, generally supportive political environment, and financial resources), in the 24 months since the *juntas* were set up, and 18 months since the first Neighborhood Assemblies, Córdoba has realized the minimum of projects. The structure itself, despite the JPVs, was sound, and there were many people in place who wanted it to succeed. The decline in political will and inability to construct the projects is likely due in part to circumstances that had nothing to do with PB: it was in part the product of the distraction of the municipal employee strikes, political infighting that polarized the city council and executive branch, and the lack of training or recognition of the complicated nature of realizing the infrastructure projects that citizens proposed. By identifying the goals of participatory budgeting as greater participation and greater efficiency, I was able to construct measures to evaluate the success of Córdoba's participatory budgeting process. To some degree, PB failed due to 1) extenuating circumstances, and 2) anticipatable complications. However, I believe that this report also provides a sense of hope: where liaisons with the community have been allowed to flourish, significant goodwill and trust is generated, leading to higher participation rates. There is still time for Córdoba's participatory budgeting to be successful, and there is potential for greater research in the city.

WORKS CITED

Cabannes, Yves. "Participatory budgeting: a significant contribution to participatory democracy." *Environment and Urbanization* 2004; 16; 27. <http://eau.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/16/1/27.pdf>

Caddy, Joanne, Tiago Peixoto and Mary McNeil. "Beyond Public Scrutiny: Stocktaking of Social Accountability in OECD Countries". OECD/World Bank Institute Working Paper. 2007. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/3/38983242.pdf>

Echavarría, Corina. 2006. *Urban Participation and Transnational Space: The Córdoba Case Study*. Delivered at the Workshop "Transnationalisation of Solidarities and Women Movements" of the Political Science Department of the Université de Montréal, 27-28 April 2006.

García Delgado, Daniel. “Introducción: Nuevos escenarios locales. El cambio del modelo de gestión.” *Hacia un nuevo modelo de gestión local: Municipio y Sociedad civil en Argentina*. Daniel García Delgado, ed. (Buenos Aires: Flacso, 1997).

Gobierno Nacional Argentino. www.argentina.gov.ar

Goldfrank, Benjamin. “Lessons from Latin American Experience in Participatory Budgeting”. Presented at the Latin American Studies Association Meeting, San Juan, Puerto Rico, March 2006.

La Voz del Interior, “Giacomino ratifica acta de transparencia ante ONG.” 12/19/07.
http://www.lavoz.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=145483

LaVoz del Interior. “Avances para buscar una ciudad más abierta y participativa.” 7/25/2008.
http://www.lavoz.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=225063

Municipal Ordinance 11448, Article 12, clause 2

Red Argentina de Presupuestos Participativos. <http://www.rapp.gov.ar>

Rodgers, Dennis. “Subverting the spaces of invitation? Local politics and participatory budgeting in post-crisis Buenos Aires”, in A. Cornwall and V. Coelho (eds.), *Spaces for Change: The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, London: Zed, 2007.
<http://www.crisisstates.com/download/argentina/Chapter9.pdf>

Shaw, Anwar. “Overview”. Participatory Budgeting. Anwar Shah, ed. (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2007).

Tecco, Claudio. 1995. *Desconcentración y zonificación: propuestas metodológicas para el mejoramiento de la gestión urbana*. Cuadernos de Trabajo del IIFAP, Nro. 4, Córdoba, Octubre de 1995.

Tecco, C. 1997. *El Gobierno Municipal como promotor del desarrollo local-regional*. Hacia un nuevo modelo de gestión local: municipio y sociedad civil en Argentina. Daniel Garcia Delgado, ed. Oficina de Publicaciones del Ciclo Basico Comun, Buenos Aires.

Vásconez, Jaime and Miguel Angel Bossano. *Los Presupuestos Participativos en America Latina: de la Legitimacion Social a la Legalizacion Institucional*. Centro Internacional de Gestión Urbana, Quito, September 2006.

Wampler, Brian. “A Guide to Participatory Budgeting”. Participatory Budgeting. Anwar Shah, ed. (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2007).

Personal Interviews Cited:

Corina Echavarría, Professor at UNC, former member of Red Ciudadana Principio del Principio 5/21/08

Diego Bedacarratx, 6/02/08

Jorge Guevara, Director of Participatory Budgeting 6/26/09

Jorge Navarro, former Secretary of Citizen Participation 6/27/09

Guillermo Marianacci, various positions in the Marti and Juez administrations, former city council member and former state legislator. 6/9/08.

Fernando Pacella, Director de CPC Guiñazú. 5/27/09

Regino Lopez, secretary of the Mesa Coordinadora of the CPC Monsignor Pablo Cabrera Junta de Participación Vecinal, 12/9/09

Ricardo Bellagarde and Carlos Scicolone of Grupo Promotor de Participación Ciudadana, 5/15/08

Valeria Perez, sub-director CPC Centro America 5/21/09

APPENDIX I: LIST OF SPANISH TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Audiencia Publica: Annual public hearing of Córdoba's City Council regarding the budget. The hearing is held in December before the next year's budget is approved.

Centros de Participación Comunal (CPC): Community Participation Centers. These are the decentralized administrative units of Córdoba city. Most politicians use CPC directorship as a stepping stone to higher offices and make their political connections here. The creation of the Juntas de Participación Vecinal is a huge increase in the governing power of the CPCs and will likely have the effect of increasing the prestige of CPC directors.

Frente Cívica y Social: Social and Civic Front. Political party that emerged in 2003 when Luis Juez was elected mayor of Córdoba and is the party of current mayor Giacomino.

Grupo Promotor de Participación Ciudadana: Promoting Group of Citizen Participation. Four former high school and university teachers who have as their mission to serve the common good by participating in political meetings and events. They joined together formally as the *Red Ciudadana* broke apart in 2005.

Juntas de Participación Vecinal (JPV): Neighborhood Participation Assemblies. These are public institutions at the CPC level, formed by ordinance in 2008, to undertake studies and make recommendations for allocation of participatory budgeting funds. The coordinating board, elected by JPV

members, is composed of equal numbers of delegates from neighborhood associations and community groups.

Mesa Coordinadora: Coordinating Board. Leadership body of the Juntas de Participación Comunal. The members of the Mesa Coordinadora are evenly split between representatives of community organizations and neighborhood associations. They meet continually throughout the year to develop their own projects within the CPC and to organize the neighborhood assemblies of participatory budgeting.

Partido Justicialista: Peronist party. Named after Juan Domingo Perón, president of Córdoba during the 1950s; generally neo-conservative in character.

Red Ciudadana Principio del Principio: The Beginning of the Beginning Citizen Network. A network of local NGOs and community activists that developed during the economic crisis of 2001 to bring about greater responsiveness of political officials to the public.

Union Cívica Radical: Radical Civic Union Party. Very popular party in Córdoba; has its roots in the Socialist party that formed during the turn of the 20th century with the arrival of Southern Europeans to Argentina.

APPENDIX II: METHODOLOGY OF FIELD RESEARCH

Between May 2008 and July 2008, I conducted 21 interviews with members of GPPC, other NGOs, CPC directors and sub-directors, municipal civil servants working on drafting participatory budgeting legislation, current and former municipal directors and secretaries, neighborhood association leaders, community leaders, and city council members.

In June and July 2008 I attended the first meetings of the Juntas de Participación Vecinal in several CPCs. They include CPC Guiñazú, CPC Monsignor Pablo Cabrera, CPC Villa Libertador, and CPC Ruta 20. In December 2009, I had the opportunity to attend the second annual meeting of the Argentine Network of Participatory Budgets, held in Córdoba. I spoke with and had the chance to observe public servants from all over Argentina discussing various aspects of their participatory budgeting structures and the challenges they faced.

Also in December, I observed 4 meetings of the Mesa Coordinadora of the Junta de Participación Vecinal of the CPC Monsignor Pablo Cabrera to discuss the matrix of projects to be included in the 2010 budget. On December 14, 2009 I attended the City Council yearly Audiencia Publica on the Budget to observe members of the GPPC and the mesa coordinadora of JPV of CPC MPC confront the city council on the lack of action on the 2009 projects and the possibility of modifying the participatory budgeting structure.

I received a great deal of help from the members of GPPC, the Junta de Participación Vecinal of CPC Monsignor Pablo Cabrera, municipality civil servants, and city council members and their staff in obtaining documents related to the participatory budgeting process, including drafts of ordinances, meeting minutes, transcripts, publicity materials, and project matrices. Archival research also included newspaper clippings from La Voz del Interior newspaper.