

Community empowerment and democratic innovation

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Why public participation?

(Involve 2005)

- Addressing **complex problems** drawing on untapped knowledge, experience and perspectives
- Making **better policies** and ensuring effective implementation
- Improving public **service design and delivery**
- Building **legitimacy and trust** in public institutions
- Developing **citizens' skills, confidence and ambition**
- Enabling **active citizens and communities**

Participation in local decision-making in Scotland

- **96%** of the Scottish population said that **people should be involved in making decisions** about how services are planned and run
- **80%** said that people should be **involved in deciding how money is spent** on services
- **86%** said that people should be **able to volunteer** alongside paid staff to provide public services

Source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2015

Policy context for community empowerment and democratic innovation

- Open Government Partnership
- Relaunch of the National Standards for Community Engagement (2016)
- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- Participatory Budgeting national programme (2014-2017)
- COSLA Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy (2014)
- Parliamentary Local Government Committee (2013, 2014)
- National Planning Framework 3
- Christie Commission on Future Delivery of Public Services 2011
- Audits of Community Planning Partnerships (2011, 2013), Review of Community Planning (2012, 2016)

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

[CEA]

Key developments in CEA (regarding community planning and engagement)

- Formalises CPPs and places new duties on a range of partners
- Strong focus on ‘improving outcomes’, tackling inequalities, and involving ‘community bodies’
- SOA > Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) + Locality Plans
- Participation Requests
- Participation in Public Decision-Making

International trends in participation



Evolving role of citizens: 2 stories can be told

Story of decline

- Declining...
 - Voter **turnout** in elections
 - **Trust** in & **legitimacy** of traditional institutions of public life (e.g. government, media, parties, unions, community associations, etc)
 - **Social capital**: community 'ethos' & networks

(Dalton 2005; Putnam 2001)

Story of progress

- What's happening is that **citizens are becoming**:
 - better educated, more knowledgeable and critical;
 - less deferential to traditional authority and elite-driven / hierarchical forms of governance;
 - dismissive of conventional channels and engaged in alternative mechanisms of political expression;
- The **myth of public apathy**

(Norris 2002; Castells 2012; Eliasoph 1998)

Debunking the myth of apathy: Civic participation in Scotland

- Record-breaking participation in the independence referendum
- A growing, vibrant civil society / third sector: social enterprises, development trusts, housing associations, transition towns, etc
- Civic participation on the rise:
 - 55% in 2009
 - 61% in 2013
 - 69% in 2015 (Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2013 and 2015)

But is all participation good?

- Paradox of **growing participation and growing inequalities** (Walker, McQuarrie & Lee 2015)
 - proliferation of traditional consultation and de-politicised forms of participation
- Inequalities in health, income, wealth, education... stemming from **inequalities of power and influence?**

unless **corrective measures** are taken “participation of all varieties will be skewed in favour of those with higher socioeconomic status and formal education”

(Ryfe & Stalsburg 2012)

In the last 12 months,

**have you participated in a forum to
discuss policy or community issues?**

Stay standing if at that forum there was a reasonable...

- ...gender balance
- ...mix of personal and professional backgrounds
- ...range of perspectives and opinions
- ... age range (i.e. 3 generations)
- ... income range
- ...sense that most participants felt included and influential
- ...sense that most participants enjoyed it
- ... sense that their participation would have a clear impact

Key challenges in organising public participation processes



What Works in
public
participation?



Democratic
innovations around
the world

3 components of 'what works' in public participation



The diagram consists of three rounded rectangular boxes arranged horizontally, each containing a component of 'what works' in public participation. The boxes are colored green, teal, and purple from left to right. They are set against a light green background that features a large, stylized arrow pointing to the right, which frames the boxes. The text inside each box is white and bold.

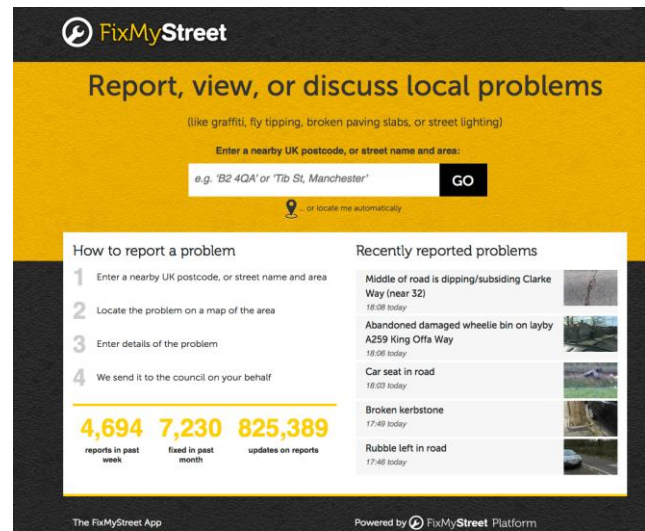
**Multi-
channel**

**Inclusive &
deliberative**

**Empowered &
consequential**

Multi-channel

- Accommodating a **variety of forms of participation**:
 - online, face to face, combined
 - light-touch vs. intensive
 - The power of '**crowdsourcing**': tapping into 'the wisdom of the crowds' (Surowiecki 2005)



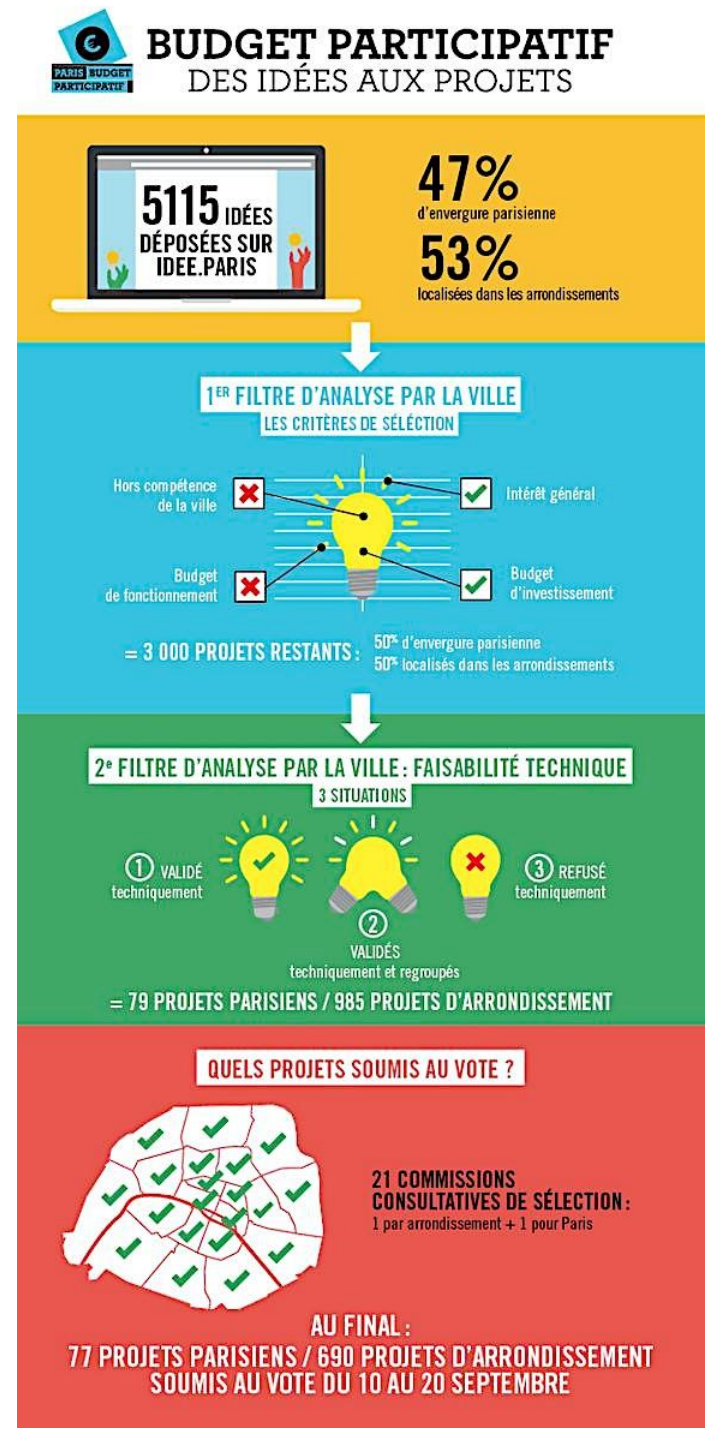
Inclusive AND deliberative

- **Inclusion and diversity** are crucial for meaningful, legitimate and effective participation
 - demographics AND perspectives
 - lowering barriers to participation
- **Public deliberation** is about:
 - learning about the issues
 - hearing & discussing different views
 - then, making informed decisions
- **Examples –‘mini-publics’:**
 - Citizens’ Juries on health inequalities and policy (UK)
 - Citizens’ Dialogue on Public Health Goals (Canada)
 - National Public Policy Conferences (Brazil)
 - Melbourne Citizens’ Panel on Finance (Australia)



Empowered and consequential

- Participation thrives when **important issues and resources** are at a stake, and citizens feel their contribution can actually make a difference
- **Example:**
 - Participatory Budgeting, from Porto Alegre (Brazil) to 2,700 localities around the world



<http://participedia.net>



Civic organisations must ask:

- Are we harnessing the power of **combining online and face-to-face platforms** for public participation and action?
- Are we creating opportunities that accommodate the **variety of ways** in which people may want to participate?
- Are we creating **inclusive** processes where everyone has an equal chance to participate and influence?
- Are we creating **deliberative** spaces where participants can learn, hear different views, and engage in dialogue to offer informed opinions and considered judgements?
- Are we fostering **empowered** processes, where people know that their participation can make a difference?

Thank you!



**WHAT
WORKS**
SCOTLAND

