A Comparative Analysis of Youth Participation in Policy Making in the United States and South America

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By

Alison Collard de Beaufort
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Advisors: Professors Crystal Brown and John Galante

Abstract

This paper compares four cities across the United States and South America in which youth participated in and impacted local policy making processes: Boston, Seattle, Rosario, and Bogotá. These case studies will highlight three methods of youth civic engagement: Youth Participatory Budgeting, Youth Councils, and Youth Action Groups. The implementation of each method within the case study cities are then compared through two lenses. The first analyzed why and how youth were involved. The second compared how each method was developed in each city. This paper also highlights the importance of youth involvement and suggests manners through which adults can sustainably and equitably build partnerships with, involve, and support youth.

Introduction

Jaime Lerner, one of the most influential urban planners, is known for his highly innovative mobility systems in his city of Curitiba, Brazil. Having also had a career in politics as mayor of Curitiba and governor of Paraná, Lerner was very familiar with the issues faced by cities, but also the role of cities in addressing societal issues. For example, Jaime Lerner once famously said that cities were not the problem but were instead the solution. He also believed that every city, no matter the difference in characteristics such as scale or finances, could be improved in a maximum of three years through their own, personalized equation of co-responsibility. In his 2008 TED talk, Jaime Lerner noted that this co-responsibility concerns living and working together, and specifically, including and teaching children. Through his efforts and public appearances such as this one, Lerner was a very vocal advocate for the inclusion of youth in developmental and policy-making processes.

This view, although historically unpopular, is starting to grow and become more accepted and implemented by countries across the world. The United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), three of which are particularly reflective of such: SDG 4, Quality Education; SDG 10, Reduced Inequalities; and SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities. Each of these SDGs, within their individual targets, relate to or focus on the inclusion of youth in society as an indicator of an improving society. The United Nations Secretariat defines youth, or young people, as those between 15-24 years of age, but note that each country and external organizations may have varying definitions.

Thus, youth involvement in society can be developed through a variety of actions, one of which relates to their participation in policy-making processes. This paper will focus on three methods: participatory budgeting processes, youth councils, and youth action groups.

The participatory budgeting process was chosen as a focal point because of its growing presence in adult-centric spaces. While adult-centric spaces are not the focus of this paper, the familiarity of the process in those spaces allows for communities to be more welcoming towards the same process but in a youth-led environment instead. Similarly, youth councils are a well-established form of civic engagement for adults, and thus highlighting it as a positive resource for youth as well is beneficial for all communities. Finally, youth action groups are a "catch-all." Youth action groups are also one of the most visible forms of youth involvement, as these groups tend to be more grassroots and directly involved with their local, national, and even global communities. Discussing this form of youth involvement is critical to understanding and analyzing how youth have shown up in policy-making processes.

Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a process that allows constituents to democratically decide how to distribute part of a government budget (Wampler, 2000; "What is PB?", 2021). More specifically, it "is a process by which citizens, either as individuals or through civic associations, can voluntarily and regularly contribute to decision making over at least part of a public budget through an annual series of scheduled meetings with government authorities" ("What is PB?", 2021). PB "is a process that is open to any citizen who wants to participate, combines direct and

representative democracy, involves deliberation (not merely consultation), redistributes resources toward the poor, and is self-regulating, such that participants help define the rules governing the process, including the criteria by which resources are allocated" ("What is PB?", 2021). Youth Participatory Budgeting is the same process but directed to youth, for youth. Only youth are invited to participated in each of the stages of the program, from brainstorming ideas to voting.

Participatory Budgeting was a result of Brazil's political turmoil in the late 20th century. In 1985, democracy was re-established in Brazil after a long period of military dictatorships. Despite this, "Brazilian politics [continued] to be dominated by traditional patronage practices, social exclusion, and corruption" (Shah, 2007). Because of the political turmoil, "two important demands emerged from civil society: (i) Transparency and openness through the decentralized and democratization of the state; (ii) Increased citizen participation in policymaking arenas" (Shah, 2007). Thus, "when the Worker's Party took control of the new local government of Porto Alegre in 1989, they experimented with different mechanisms to tackle the financial constraints, to provide citizens with a direct role in the activities of government, and to invert the social spending priorities of previous administrations" (Shah, 2007). These experiments resulted in the creation of participatory budgeting, and more specifically, PB was created as an anti-poverty measure (Wampler, 2000). However, while most literature states that participatory Budgeting was created in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989 following the timeline described above, its precise history is actually disputed, and the term "participatory budgeting" was not created until 1990 ("What is PB?", 2021). Nonetheless, PB was also thought to be able to "help [relegitimatize] the state by showing that it could be effective, redistributive, and transparent" ("What is PB?", 2021). This perspective was popularized through two factors which "appear to have contributed

to the adoption of participatory budgeting by the development community in the 1990s. One was the rising influence of the notion of participation in development; the other was the notion of good institutions, or good governance, as necessary for economic growth" ("What is PB?", 2021). More and more communities have turned towards Participatory Budgeting as a means to have citizen participation in local government, and nowadays, over 7,000 cities worldwide use the PB process (Wampler, 2000). Some of these cities include Youth-based processes, such as the Boston Youth Participatory Budgeting process which was founded in 2014. "Indeed, the United Nations (through its Habitat division), the Inter-American Development Bank, and numerous other international development agencies have promoted participatory budgeting in various ways, ranging from publishing books and articles to financing workshops and studies to requiring participation as a condition for aid and providing assistance to individual participatory budgeting projects" ("What is PB?", 2021).

Despite the globalization and popularity of Participatory Budgeting, it has not been implemented in the same way each time, as there is no exact model. "While there are similar tenets and institutional mechanisms, PB programs are structured in response to the particular political, social, and economic environment of each city or state" (Shah, 2007). Participatory Budgeting tends to follow a yearly cycle that incorporates the steps of process design, idea brainstorming, proposal development, a voting process, and the funding of the winning projects, that is then integrated into the regular budgeting process (Wampler, 2000). Additionally, "while the rules do vary from city to city, from state to state, it is possible to identify the typical building tenets of PB programs" which include the continued mobilization of stakeholders, the creation of municipal regions for the facilitation of meetings and distribution of resources, the creation of a

quality of life index by the government (which then ensure that worse-off neighborhoods receive a larger proportion of resources than those better-off), the discussion of resources and process structure between stakeholders, and the final approval of winning projects by elected representatives (Shah, 2007). "There is broad variation in how participatory budgeting programs function, which means that the effects of participatory budgeting on accountability, the decentralization of decision-making authority, and empowerment are conditioned by the local social, political, and economic environment" ("What is PB?", 2021). These factors are representative of the general consensus among scholars "that political will, sufficient resources, and political decentralization are necessary for successful participatory budgeting" but "many believe that preexisting societal organization is also necessary" ("What is PB?", 2021). Other helpful but not required conditions for participatory budgeting include social capital, bureaucratic competence, small size, and the legal foundation ("What is PB?", 2021). "There is less consensus on which features of institutional design are most important and even whether certain features facilitate or weaken participatory budgeting. [However], features that have been discussed include the following:" deliberation, centralized supervision, accessible rules and information, focus on immediate versus long-term planning, and informal versus formal structure ("What is PB?", 2021). These factors are discussed for the success of the process, but the adoption of Participatory Budgeting into local government considers different factors. "A combination of four factors makes it more likely that participatory budgeting programs will be adopted: strong mayoral support, a civil society willing and able to contribute to ongoing policy debates, a generally supportive political environment that insulates participatory budgeting from legislators' attacks, and financial resources to fund the projects selected by citizens" ("What is PB?", 2021). As a whole, these characteristics guide Participatory Budgeting towards success,

but "pre-existing networks of social movements, community organizations, and other voluntary associations provide important support for the experimental programs" (Shah, 2007). This is especially true "when governments are unable or unwilling to implement PB programs, [as] NGOs can play a vital role by disseminating information and monitoring government spending… [and] can work with governments to implement PB programs or they can set up parallel monitoring programs" (Shah, 2007).

The overall reasons for implementing Participatory Budgeting in local government are numerous. First, relating to the historical context of its creation, "participatory budgeting was intended as a means to help poorer citizens and neighborhoods receive greater levels of public spending" (Shah, 2007). Secondly, "it addresses two distinct but interconnected needs: improving state performance and enhancing the quality of democracy" ("What is PB?", 2021). Democracy is impacted because PB programs foster transparency and "act as "citizenship schools" as engagement empowers citizens to better understand their rights and duties as citizens as well as the responsibilities of government" (Shah, 2007). Additionally, "governments and citizens initiate these programs to promote public learning and active citizenship, achieve social justice through improved policies and resources allocation, and reform the administrative apparatus" (Shah, 2007). These reasonings apply not only to generally adult-centric Participatory Budgeting processes, but also to Youth Participatory Budgeting. There are also strong motivations from local governments, citizens, voluntary associations, NGOs and the business community, respectively, to implement participatory budgeting:

From the perspective of local governments, participatory budgeting programs "bypass the legislature and the multiple patronage networks embedded therein… it is important to note that the transfer of authority to citizens' forums bypasses the legislative branch" (Shah, 2007). Secondly, "the rules of PB favor the distribution of goods and resources to low-income neighborhoods" (Shah, 2007). Thirdly, "the mobilization of citizens provides educational opportunities that may influence the political and social consciousness of participants" (Shah, 2007). Finally, progressive governments implement PB programs to promote transparency in the hopes of reducing corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies. PB programs may reduce corruption by increasing the number of citizens that monitor the distribution of resources" (Shah, 2007).

From the perspective of citizens, participatory budgeting programs mean that "participants enjoy increased access to public decision-making venues" (Shah, 2007). Additionally, citizens also "[gain] access to information" and are incentivized to participate due to "the direct relationship established in PB between participation and the quality of services provided" (Shah, 2007).

From the perspective of voluntary associations, "such as social movements or neighborhood groups, [the motivation] to participate in PB is indirect. … The more citizens that voluntary associations mobilize, the more goods and resources their neighborhood is likely to receive" (Shah, 2007). "Secondly, associations participate because the programs provide the opportunity to build broader networks of supporters" (Shah, 2007). Thirdly, participation also means "the ability to influence policies" (Shah, 2007).

From the perspective of NGOs, "PB programs provide a mechanism for [them] to work with citizens and government in order to tackle the most pressing social problems" (Shah, 2007). NGOs can also act in an advisory capacity and provide support, as their separation from government gives them "the opportunity to promote the general values of the PB while also guaranteeing that the government is working on behalf of the citizens" (Shah, 2007).

From the perspective of the business community, "PB programs promote transparency and reduce corruption… Better financial health is an indirect consequence of PB programs" (Shah, 2007). Furthermore, "contractors and builders benefit directly. The selection of projects and the systematic ordering of the projects' implementation allow contractors to bid in an open and fair system" (Shah, 2007).

Putting aside the incentives for implementation, there are many related desired outcomes for the system related to the institutional mechanisms explored earlier. Three of these mechanisms include the establishment of district boundaries, the year-long series of meetings, and the creation of the Quality of Life Index. With district boundaries, desired outcomes include improved efficacy, accountability, and decentralization, in addition to intradistrict competition over resources ("What is PB?", 2021). For the year-long series of meetings, desired outcomes include a higher level of participation, which produces greater deliberation and potential for empowering citizens ("What is PB?", 2021). Finally, for the creation of a Quality of Life index, desired outcomes are the increased allocation of resources to low-income districts and the increased participation as citizens compete within each region ("What is PB?", 2021).

Through these positive functions and impacts, participatory budgeting has shown to be effective. "To examine the most promising cases, it is necessary to return to the three themes laid out in the introduction: (i) public learning and active citizenship, (ii) social justice, and (iii) administrative reform" (Shah, 2007). Researchers "have shown that participatory budgeting can achieve many of the goals envisioned by both the radical democratic and liberal perspectives, especially in terms of redirecting public resources toward poor neighborhoods; extending service provision; democratizing existing and spurring the creation of new civic associations; and increasing transparency and accountability, while reducing clientelism and enhancing democratic representation for the formerly excluded" ("What is PB?", 2021).

Despite the many positives, participatory budgeting programs also have their limitations and unintended consequences and have faced resistance. The first of which comes from "the focus on specific public works… The emphasis on specific goods diminishes the impact of the public learning or empowerment sessions" (Shah, 2007). Secondly, while part of its overall goal and a seemingly "necessary first-step to encourage participation, it associates PB programs with the distribution of specific goods" (Shah, 2007). In one community where participatory budgeting was implemented, "the community organization stopped participating" once the projects had been funded and improvements made (Shah, 2007). Thus "the downside, from the perspective of strengthening the PB program, was that the participants immediately exited the program and demonstrated little interest in working with the program" (Shah, 2007). Thirdly, the PB process is limited due to "the dependence of the participants on the mayor's office" (Shah, 2007). Another limitation is that "the role of long-term planning has a rather ambiguous place with Participatory Budgeting. Many of the PB participants are interested in securing short to medium

term public works. The focus on specific public works makes it more difficult to generate discussions on planning for the future of the city" (Shah, 2007). Finally, participatory budgeting programs "can be manipulated due to the central role played by the mayor's office… City agencies, bureaucrats, or elected officials may try to use PB programs to advance their own agendas" (Shah, 2007).

As for the positives of the three aforementioned institutional mechanisms, they each also may create unintended consequences. For district boundaries, such consequences include that "meetings at the district level may limit the formation of citywide … networks. Small groups within the district may be unable to mobilize sufficient numbers to secure projects" ("What is PB?", 2021). For the year-long series of meetings, "mobilization becomes an end in itself to secure resources and participation becomes inattentive, as people attend meetings with the sole purpose of voting for specific policy proposals" ("What is PB?", 2021). Thirdly, when it comes to the Quality of Life Index, "poor neighborhoods are not uniformly distributed, so small, marginalized populations may not receive benefits" ("What is PB?", 2021). Additionally, "well-organized groups benefit at the expense of poorly organized and small groups, discouraging participation among citizens unlikely to receive funding" ("What is PB?", 2021).

Because of the limitations and consequences of participatory budgeting processes, the decision-making mechanism has faced pushback. One reason against the PB process is that "unrepresentative volunteer participants are given greater power than democratically elected (Cnd therefore representative) municipal council members and technically trained professional municipal employees" ("What is PB?", 2021). Another popular contradictory perspective is that

"participatory budgeting participants are politically manipulated by the local ruling party and deceived into thinking that they have decision-making power" ("What is PB?", 2021).

Other pushback relates to the gaps in literature that explore participatory budgeting processes. "First, no rigorous, cross-national analytical testing of which design features and preconditions are most important for producing the desired outcomes has been conducted… Second, the design of participatory budgeting and the conditions under which it is introduced have not been linked theoretically. Though many scholars suggest generically that the design of participatory budgeting should be adapted to local circumstances, there is little theorizing about how context affects designs. Third, the competitive, or nonneutral, aspect of participatory budgeting has not been thoroughly examined. Insufficient attention has been devoted to opposition parties" ("What is PB?", 2021).

Any government process will have its pros and cons, but existing literature has shown participatory budgeting to have an overall positive influence on communities. PB has "increased civic engagement, [created] stronger and more collaborative relationships between residents, government, and community organizations, [fostered] more inclusive political participation, especially by historically marginalized communities, [encouraged the emergence of] new community leaders, [and established] more equitable and effective public spending" (Wampler, 2000).

The successes of Participatory Budgeting have been showcased "in some remarkably diverse locales—from small, poverty-stricken, indigenous, rural villages to large cities—with residents

with various ethnic and class identities" ("What is PB?", 2021). But, the participatory budgeting process in existence today is not the same as how it was at its creation. "The liberal approach to participatory budgeting is currently dominant: the open, informal, deliberative design pioneered by Porto Alegre's radical democrats seems to be out of fashion" ("What is PB?", 2021). While participatory budgeting has changed and progressed over time, one additional note is important for its future: "Even where participatory budgeting succeeds on some dimensions, it does not dramatically reduce poverty (especially income poverty) on its own" ("What is PB?", 2021).

Youth Councils

A youth council is an assembly of young people who represent and provide a voice to youth in their community. Youth councils make decisions to promote the well-being of the community, sometimes focusing on one specific topic or general social, cultural, environmental, and/or economic factors. Councils also facilitate the inclusion of youth in local decision-making process ("Youth Councils," 2016). For example, in New York City, each of the city's Youth Leadership Councils "is a space to team up with others, share ideas, create solutions, and put those solutions into action with the support from City agencies, schools, and community organizations" ("Join," 2021). Young people are already present in policy spaces, working with public agencies and involved through intergenerational partnerships, around a variety of issues. Youth councils are unique and, generally, distinguished from other forms of youth input due to their connection to governmental institutions. Furthermore, "there is evidence that initiatives are increasing and will continue in the future" (Richards-Schuster, 2010).

Youth councils are initiated for a variety of reasons, but are commonly assembled after a community crisis, such as a death or widespread outrage (Collins, 2016). While youth councils may start because of a certain issue, many evolve and reorganize to address new or wider topics, particularly in efforts to engage more youth (Collins, 2016). The target topics are "guided by the council mission as well as input from youth, input from parents, input from other community stakeholders, and youth surveys" (Collins, 2016).

Council participants can be considered experts on the youth issues targeted by the group, and as youth councils work to establish a connection with policymakers, they tend to focus on related youth-related policy issues (Collins, 2016). Depending on the origin and purpose of the youth council, they may be formalized as part of the government structure and/or authorized by statute or executive order.

That said, councils differ in their institutional structures, and thus also "the extent to which they have a substantive rather than symbolic role in governance" (Collins, 2016). Some may have agency advocates but temporary status, others with mayoral support and a formal government charter, or they may even exist through a community foundation that gives policy power to youth through activities (Richards-Schuster, 2010). Of course, each of these structures offer their pros and cons, where a permanent charter brings a form of stability, compared to the vulnerability of an informal structure (Richards-Schuster, 2010). In the United States, such variety exists because no overarching policy guidelines exist at the state or national level for the development of youth councils (Collins, 2016). However, "other countries are signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which requires the practice of youth

participation. This has resulted in the development of policy infrastructure in many other countries" (Collins, 2016).

When it comes to the implementation of youth councils, those with a more formal structure may have adult staff to support their work. The roles of these staff members may include leading "orientation sessions … about municipal governance and procedures, meeting facilitation, budget management, events planning, and public speaking" (Richards-Schuster, 2010). A more formal council structure could also mean that the council meetings followed "governmental procedure, with agenda, minutes, sub-committees, and other characteristics of government" (Collins, 2016). Less formal meetings could describe youth councils that chose to be more youth-centered, focused on "youth development programming rather than governmental procedures," such as "group building activities, facilitated discussions about relevant topics (e.g., drug use, bullying, and mental health), and brainstorming ideas for programming" (Collins, 2016). Examples of such variety in youth councils can be found in the research done by Collins, Augsberger, and Gecker (2016). Other youth councils, such as one in a Michigan municipality, "give voice to teenagers and bring youths and government together through regular consultation with the mayors to discuss policy issues, with administrators, and with staff of community agencies. For example, in response to a city ordinance that banned skateboarding, young people discussed the issue with city council and other local officials and then formed an intergenerational committee to design and develop a skateboard park as an alternative solution" (Richards-Schuster, 2010).

Furthermore, in addition to the differences in formality, "youth council meetings also demonstrated differences in regard to their frequency, the amount of time, and their location"

(Collins, 2016). This is because "the councils that truly aim to include youth require scheduling their meetings at a time and in a place that reduce barriers to youth attendance" (Collins, 2016). "In order for youth councils to meaningfully influence policy and programs it is important to have diverse representation, especially from underserved and marginalized populations, as well as "insider" knowledge of the communities represented" (Collins, 2016). Not only should those serving on a youth council appropriately represent their community, but other principles are also required in order for youth participation to be truly inclusive and meaningful (Collins, 2016). These principles include "(1) viewing youth consumers as advocates and educators, ("What is PB?", 2021) treating youth on advisory boards in the same way that other members are treated, (Shah, 2007) scheduling meetings at times convenient for youth, (Collins, 2016) valuing youth for their experience, and (Richards-Schuster, 2010) promoting equal partnership and respect. The youth-adult relationship and the institutional or organizational context in which these activities take place are critical. Adults' capacity to view youth as capable of being partners and decision makers is seen as essential" (Collins, 2016).

Youth are incredibly driven and motivated to create change – an observation that is "in contrast with views of today's youth as withdrawn from community and disengaged from democracy" (G, F). Given the opportunity, young people want to participate, express opinions and ideas, and make recommendations. Young people are also very capable of mobilizing their peers "to represent their views and plan programs of their choosing" (Richards-Schuster, 2010). This network, and the untapped energy of youth, has become increasingly powerful, particularly due to the connections and communication provided by social media.

There are many benefits for both the youth who choose to participate in youth councils, and the adults who work with youth and their councils. For youth, these benefits can include "feelings of empowerment, competence, and connection" (Collins, 2016). Youth may also benefit through "development of a variety of practical (e.g., participating in meetings, giving a presentation, planning an event) and social and emotional skills (working in groups, articulating a view point.) Additionally, there may be benefits related to civic engagement such as understanding how government works, how decisions are made, and how individuals and groups can engage with government" (Collins, 2016). Other benefits may also include connections for employment, education, and/or other opportunities. For the adults involved, "youth engagement may foster more efficient and effective policy allowing communities to make lasting improvements" (Collins, 2016). "Now, more than ever, community leaders are realizing the positive connection between involving youth in community activities and the increase in overall community vitality and engagement. Youth bring new energy and ideas to standard issues and concerns, often with a unique perspective as to how best to tackle challenges and opportunities" ("Youth Councils," 2016). Furthermore, "they should participate because it draws on their expertise and improves institutional decisions of municipalities. It increases their civic engagement at a time when the level of engagement is uneven, and strengthens democratic society with its basis in the rule of the people" (Richards-Schuster, 2010).

Various examples of such civic engagement can be found in policy change efforts. One youth council "worked to raise community awareness of the importance of transportation for youth and effectively worked with the local transit authority to create a "youth route" which linked some of the critical places that youth wanted to go" (Collins, 2016). Another youth council "worked on

passing tobacco regulations by making presentations to the Board of Health and the City Council" (Collins, 2016).

However, youth councils face various limitations and barriers to their ability to function and effectiveness. Three of these barriers are the diversity of members, limited community outreach, and overscheduled youth (Collins, 2016). A lack of diversity speaks for itself—the youth cannot adequately represent their communities if the members themselves are not representative of their communities. Limited community outreach severely reduces the impact that youth councils can have on their communities if their message(s) cannot be heard by their targeted audience. Furthermore, youth have many other commitments ranging from school to extracurricular activities. The time they can dedicate to participating in a youth council is limited, and constantly in competition with other events. Another barrier is the limited access to resources, despite possible accomplishments, particularly among youth councils that operate with an informal structure. The Grand Rapids Mayor's Council, for example, "has a growing record of activities and accomplishments [but] because of its ad hoc status … council advocates struggle to sustain the resources required" (Richards-Schuster, 2010).

The biggest barrier to youth councils, however, is the reluctance from adults to work with youth (Richards-Schuster, 2010). "While individual policy professionals may believe in the potential of youth voice and participation, there are prevailing cultural attitudes … that serve as barriers" (Collins, 2016). The dominant view towards youth is that they are disengaged and uninterested, and while adults may be impressed by specific youth, they often assume that they are not representative of youth as a whole (G,F). These cultural norms perpetuate the negative cycle,

where youth do not "view themselves as a group that can influence policy, adults do not view them as competent citizens, and public officials do not view them as central to their work" (Richards-Schuster, 2010). Additionally, further research "frequently acknowledges the imbalance of power between youth and adults that limits effectiveness and significant policy change" (Collins, 2016). "For example, it is difficult to promote participation when community agencies view young people as passive recipients of services rather than as competent citizens, when schools lack quality curricula to prepare them for civic leadership, and when adults treat them as inferior and disregard their potential because of their age" (Richards-Schuster, 2010). Youth can sense if their opinions and experiences are valued, and if not, that can translate into "disengagement in formal political participation (i.e., voting), but says little about the passions and interests youth have towards politics more broadly" (Collins, 2016).

Despite the barriers facing youth councils, they are still, in many cases, able to have an influence and positive impact on their communities. "The carrying out of activities [is], itself, a form of impact; … youth were involved, feedback was good" (Collins, 2016). Some specific examples of impact were described previously, but another example comes from a participant in an undisclosed council who "spoke about the many workshops the youth offered in various afterschool programs. For example, one of the workshops was for 7th and 8th graders, talking about what to expect in high school. Requests for the workshops are repeated and some of the work has been institutionalized as an on-going activity. This was considered evidence of the impact" (Collins, 2016). Another council "reported that youth do all of the planning, conduct outreach to city partners and vendors, and display artwork, for example, for their annual anti-violence event. The events have received great turnouts and the council has received positive

feedback from the community and its city partners" (Collins, 2016). Thus, it is clear that when given the opportunity, and with proper resources and guidance, youth councils can be extremely valuable to their local communities and have a positive impact and influence.

Youth Action Groups

Action groups are volunteer groups made up of engaged citizens, who mobilize their communities to create meaningful institutional change. These action groups can be created based on geography, faith, culture, sports, work, or other interests ("Start", 2021). The community representatives seek to create community action, also known as 'social action' or 'community engagement,' and work to "increase the understanding, engagement and empowerment of communities in the design and delivery of local services" ("What", 2021). Like community organizing, it seeks "to alter power relations, create meaningful institutional change, and develop leaders" (Conner, 2012). Some of these specific objectives they may aim to achieve include building community and social capacity by sharing knowledge, skills and ideas, raising awareness for community needs, creating community resilience by connecting stakeholders and community members, establishing stronger prevention activities through a focus on early access to services or support, and maintaining and creating wealth through employment opportunities or the development of local businesses (H, I). Examples of the creation of community services by action groups include the Flamura Initiative in Romania, which aims "to turn an abandoned movie theatre into an educational hub," and the UK-based group Abbots in Transition who "organize a community market that gives locals an opportunity to sell their home grown produce and goods" ("How to," 2018).

Youth action groups are youth-based and youth-led action groups. They focus on mobilizing their communities "to take the actions needed to create a society that is more positive for youth" ("Youth Action," 2015). These groups can vary in their objective, size, demographic, political issues, youth leadership, connection to larger movements, types of activities involved, and how they involve the larger community (M, I). "Youth come together to identify relevant and pressing problems in their communities, research the causes and outcomes of those problems, and then employ advocacy strategies and actions to address the problems and the underlying power structures that gave rise to the original problems" (Arthurs, 2018). Part of these efforts include influencing policies in government to be more informed on youth issues and to consider how they could influence youth, especially those in underrepresented, minority, or vulnerable communities ("Youth Action," 2015). It is important to note, also, that most youth leaders in the United States are people of color (Nicholas, 2019). "Emerging from the community organizing tradition, youth organizing is a strategy that builds the collective capacity of youth to challenge and transform the institutions in their communities to promote social and economic justice" (Conner, 2012).

Youth organizing originated from the field of youth development, which began in the 1980s but only became popular during the 1990s (Conner, 2012). Youth development "champions an asset-based view of young people and emphasizes the provision of key supports that will help youth build skills and competencies in various developmental domains" (Conner, 2012). In youth organizing, youth are the key actors, and in most cases, they focus on issues that are chosen by youth and that directly affect them (Arthurs, 2018). Furthermore, "participants advocate for policy and systemic change around local issues with global significance" such as access to education and immigrant rights (Nicholas, 2019). For example, "youth have led and won

campaigns to save vouchers that provide free transportation to and from school, to reduce school overcrowding, to increase access to college preparatory coursework, and to design and implement small schools" (Conner, 2012).

Youth action groups are created and implemented in a variation of ways, which is dependent on factors such as how involved adults in the community are and how the groups split their time between organizing and youth development goals, if there is focus on the latter (Nicholas, 2019). However, youth action groups also have common traits, including volunteer-based participation, real-world contexts, and developmental focuses (Nicholas, 2019). Most groups are initiated by citizens targeting a specific issue, but which then diverge in their evolution ("How to," 2018). Some may choose to affiliate themselves with schools or community organizations or instead "operate as independent initiatives" (Nicholas, 2019) sometimes by "organizing themselves as NGOs" ("How to," 2018).

Youth action groups also have a variety of strategies to implement their goals. The groups may testify in governmental public proceedings and advocate for issues in various legal arenas, conduct public awareness campaigns, mobilize both youth and adult community members into social action themselves, and even create their own services developed to respond to the community needs they have identified (Checkoway, 2003).

Along with these strategies, various factors facilitate the youth action groups' successes. For one, youth have most, if not all, leadership roles (Checkoway, 2003). Youth leaders bring strong energy, new ideas, and varying perspectives which serve as lenses for observation and critique. Youth can also serve as 'bridges,' "who build intergenerational [relationships] between youth

and adults, youth and the organization and youth and the community. They play roles as intermediaries, translators and matchmakers between diverse individuals and groups. They work well with people who are different from themselves, translate easily from one language to another and communicate easily across cultural boundaries" (Checkoway, 2003). These intergenerational exchanges can only happen with another facilitating factor: adult allies. These allies "include former youth leaders with extensive experience, staff members with special commitment to youth participation and parents who care about strengthening social development. They recognize youth as resources, bring them together, deal with bureaucracies and rally other adults to the cause. They respect their ideas, give group encouragement and have high expectations of them" (Checkoway, 2003). Another factor is also one of the common traits among youth action groups mentioned earlier – participation is voluntary. This reinforces the already-powerful energy as "participants make an intentional decision and commitment to join an organizing effort" (Arthurs, 2018).

Despite the effective action strategies and facilitating factors, youth action groups also face a variety of obstacles, both from within their organizations and externally. "First, youth organizers must confront the challenge of adultism, which manifests as the view, often used to dismiss them, that they are naïve, inexperienced, or incompetent" (Conner, 2012). Unfortunately, "many young people have been conditioned to view themselves as victims of poverty or as a group that is unable to create change" (Checkoway, 2003). Issues of race and class affect youth action groups in particular because, as mentioned earlier, most youth organizers are students of color. Conner, Zaino, and Scarola (2012) provide an interesting observation on the obstacle of adultism: "The viewpoint that youth are unprepared to assume important decision-making

responsibility is further instantiated in policies that restrict youth from voting until they are 18 and that make schooling compulsory until that age. Such policies limit youths' access to the instruments and institutions of power" (Conner, 2012). Voting restrictions are just one example of how deeply adultism has been internalized by society. "Because the popular media, social science and professional practice often emphasize troubled youth and the services they require, it is not surprising that adults often view young people as victims or problems, rather than as competent citizens capable of meaningful participation" (Checkoway, 2003). "So entrenched are adults' low expectations and paternalistic views of youth that to change their perspectives and encourage them to partner productively with youth requires adults to engage in substantial "unlearning." Adults must be prepared, even trained, to be able to listen to youth voice. Such training demands more than interest or willingness; it necessitates time and investment as well" (Conner, 2012).

While these things may be obtainable for adults looking to work with youth leaders, the same cannot be said for youth looking to do the work: "When they have ideas they are often unsure how to proceed, and when they take action they usually lack the resources available to adults" (Checkoway, 2003). Youth organizers face a variety of challenges simply due to being young, but these challenges are in addition to the many barriers that are also present for adult organizers. For example, "administrative turnover, policy churn, competing priorities from multiple constituencies, vague terminology, and entrenched bureaucratic structures, which limit access and accountability" (Conner, 2012).

Undeterred by such obstacles, youth action groups have proven to be impactful at various levels for the involved youth. Participation in youth action groups contributes to sociopolitical development along with supporting self-oriented and socially-oriented outcomes (Nicholas, 2019). "Beyond civic engagement opportunities, youth organizing groups are considered distinctive, potentially transformative learning environments" (Nicholas, 2019). Originating from activities such as consultation, project planning and project implementation ("Youth Action", 2013), these skills can increase "their substantive knowledge, practical skills, civic competencies and sense of social responsibility" (Checkoway, 2003). "Youth organizing work develops critically informed thinkers who are more tolerant, more capable of examining multiple and diverse perspectives, and more willing and able to lead than their peers" (Arthurs, 2018). Furthermore, "youth organizing offers a powerful antidote to the feelings of alienation, disempowerment, and apathy prevalent among many of today's youth and is a powerful way to interest disaffected and disillusioned youth in our political and civic processes. Youth organizing work can change how youth feel about their schools, their communities, and their futures while shaping lifelong commitments to the values and practices of democratic citizenship" (Arthurs, 2018).

Youth action groups are also of high value for the communities they represent and work with: "A growing number of case studies have documented how youth organizing groups have achieved both political and institutional change" (Conner, 2012). Youth action groups are effective at creating positive change. "When young people defend the rights of young people in public spaces, take actions against the construction of juvenile detention centres, raise awareness about racial profiling and housing gentrification, and defeat a policy to arm police in the schools –

when they do these type of things, there are community changes" (Checkoway, 2003). While popular rhetoric refers to youth disengagement, much documentation suggests the opposite—that youth care strongly about local issues (Nicholas, 2019). "Young people are mobilizing for civil rights, cleaning up the environment, rehabilitating houses for homeless families, and organizing against violence in the schools" (Checkoway, 2011). In another example from Conner, Zaino, and Scarola (2012), an external study documented "how two youth organizing groups operating in different cities [succeeded] in shifting institutional relations between youth and adults, shaping the civic agenda to reflect youth voice, and spurring educational systems to become more responsive to students' needs" (Conner, 2012). Thus, it is clear that youth action groups can enact high-level changes in response to adversity.

Case Studies

Boston, U.S.A.

Youth Participatory Budgeting

Boston's Youth Participatory Budgeting process was created in 2014 under the name "Youth Lead the Change." Youth Lead the Change (YLC) is led by and engages Boston youth between the ages of 12 and 25 and gives them control of over one million dollars. Youth Lead the Change is the first initiative of its kind in the country, and while it is youth-led it is also supported by youth facilitators. The initiative aims to increase youth power, ensure all voices are heard, build stronger, safer, and healthier communities, and strengthen relationships across the city ("Youth Lead", 2021).

During the initiation of YLC, one million dollars was allocated to the program in Boston's 2014 fiscal year capital budget (Grillos, 2014). However, because the funding was through the capital budget, eligible projects for YLC could only be capital projects as well (Grillos, 2014). Thus, the projects had to be for physical infrastructure or technology, to be implemented on city property, cost at least $25,000 each with a minimum lifespan of 5 years (Grillos, 2014). YLC is housed under the city's Department of Youth Engagement and Employment and is supervised by a steering committee made up of representatives from community and youth organizations ("Winning", 2016). An external organization, the Participatory Budgeting Project, oversees participatory budgeting programs across the country, including Youth Lead the Change ("Winning", 2016). Rules for YLC were written by the Steering Committee in order to establish the rules and responsibilities for all groups involved, in addition to eligibility for voting: "voters

must be between the ages of 12 and 25 and must be resident within the City of Boston" (Grillos, 2014). Thus, within YLC, young people were involved as "participants, beneficiaries, helpers, organizers, [and] managers" ("Youth Lead", 2021).

Each cycle began with idea assemblies, where young members of the community were invited to suggest and brainstorm projects and could sign up to be 'Change Agents'. "The Change Agents would take the ideas generated at the assemblies and turn them into actual proposals to be put up for the vote" (Grillos, 2014). Suggested projects were divided by category, including 'public safety', 'parks', 'health and wellness', 'community', 'culture', 'education', and 'technology' ("Winning", 2016). Once the categorized lists of project ideas were generated, the lists were then passed on to their respective Change Agent Committee (one committee per category) who "then met weekly for about eight weeks to … narrow down this list of ideas in order to generate specific proposals that could be included on the ballot" (Grillos, 2014). A group of researchers asked volunteers why they wanted to become change agents. 42% wanted to make a difference in their community, 34% wanted to help people see what youth are capable of, 18% wanted to learn skills, and 6% mentioned other reasons (Augsberger, 2016). Those who participated in the survey were able to check multiple answers, but responses show a commitment to the initiative's goals right from the start.

With the ballot finalized, voting was offered through a variety of methods, from online voting to in-person voting at various community locations and even during a "Vote Fest" in partnership with different city schools ("Youth Lead," 2021). Analyses of voter turnout showed that participation varied by type of voting center, with the largest portion from high schools followed

by community centers (Grillos, 2014). However, these analyses noted that some of the centers were open for multiple days while voting stations at T stops (Boston's subway system) "actually turned out more voters on average per voting session" (Grillos, 2014). Post-project selection, the phases of project development included distributing and reallocating the awarded funding, followed by the implementation process, the design process, and finally the construction process in order to achieve a completed project ("Youth Lead," 2021).

The most recent winners, from the 2019-2020 cycle include Plant the City, Boston Shelters, and Eat Local. Plant the City is described as "planting trees and plants around the City of Boston, especially in more urban areas along streets and sidewalks. The goal is to both beautify our City and help fight climate change" ("Youth Lead," 2021). Boston Shelters aims to "[invest] in the Woods Mullen Shelter, and [enhance] the physical space for everyone. This includes new furniture, facilities, and entertainment for those experiencing homelessness" ("Youth Lead," 2021). Finally, Eat Local will "[invest] in local urban farming in Boston neighborhoods to create food access and increase community bonding. Specifically targeting areas that are considered food deserts by creating more urban farms" ("Youth Lead," 2021).

Winning projects are a concrete example of YLC's accomplishments, but measures of success can also include qualitative data such as the total number of youth engaged, submitted ideas, how many of those ideas were eligible and/or aligned with a committee's goals, financially feasible, necessary, expected to have a positive impact, by or inspired by youth, in addition to the number of eligible voters and the number of votes cast (Augsberger, 2016).

During the first year of YLC, around 300 people attended the budget assemblies, and the voting cycle collected 1,531 votes (Grillos, 2014). The original proposal aimed to engage at least 400 youth during the assemblies and have at least 2,000 project votes (Grillos, 2014). Although those goals were not met, about 75% of each goal was achieved (Grillos, 2014). During its second year in 2015-2016, over 2,500 votes were cast ("Winning", 2016), and during its most recent year, the 2019-2020 cycle, 7,625 total votes were cast, indicating strong growth for the program ("Youth Lead," 2021). "While the program fell short of its initial goals for total turnout, it did a great job of targeting young people of color from low-income neighborhoods. In general, neighborhoods with high youth populations were well represented. Of those who participated this year, more than half said that they would participate again, and many would like to participate in more in-depth ways than they did this year" (Grillos, 2014). The diversity in participants was in part thanks to language translation and interpretation services, outreach efforts targeted specifically for youth who may face obstacles to participation, engagement from the public school system, and guidance from youth facilitators ("Youth Lead", 2021).

When looking at data, 67.9% of participants at idea assemblies, 77.4% of voters, and 92.3% of Change Agents were 14-19 years old (Grillos, 2014). Of those surveyed, 77.9% were Boston Public School Students (Grillos, 2014). Furthermore, YLC participants, and even more so the Change Agents, were more likely to be female (Grillos, 2014). In comparison to census data for Boston, this is particularly surprising since males outnumber females when looking at the age range below 18 (Grillos, 2014). Among voters, however, gender was more similar of the census data: 50.19% reported as male, 49.43% as female, and 0.4% either identifying with other genders or choosing not to answer (Grillos, 2014).

Another analysis of YLC's accomplishments comes from evaluating whether they have achieved their goals. Their first goal was to increase youth power, and data from participant surveys indicated that "many youth do feel empowered through the Youth Lead the Change process. However, without a pretest measure it is not possible to identify whether or not there has been an "increase" in youth power. Furthermore, the definition of "power" can be highly variable" (Augsberger, 2016). For the second goal, to ensure all voices are heard, "while it may not be possible for "all" voices to be heard, there was extensive evidence that many voices were heard. Additionally, there were robust efforts to encourage the participation of many constituencies" (Augsberger, 2016). For the goal of building stronger, safer, and healthier communities, "this goal suggests a long-term impact of the efforts described in this process. A logic model would likely identify this as the ultimate goal" (Augsberger, 2016). Also, "several pieces of data suggest a sense of pride, solidarity, and equality is developed through this process" (Augsberger, 2016). Finally, "there is little doubt that the project provides an entry point for some young people to become civically engaged and learn about the city and government" (Augsberger, 2016).

Despite YLC's many successes, they weren't without obstacles. One challenge noted by youth participants was access to transport in order to attend meetings which were generally held downtown in City Hall as opposed to locally to their neighborhoods ("Youth Lead", 2021). Furthermore, participants noted "there had been a failure to engage youth who are not already engaged in some way, and the data collected by researchers seem to support this" (Grillos, 2014). Additionally, there was a stark difference in how groups chose to allocate their votes, between

Change Agents and voters: "Change Agents made their decisions through deliberation and consensus, using a decision matrix which urged them to consider feasibility, impact and need. Voters, in contrast, were often hearing about the process for the first time when they arrived at the voting station, and there is some reason to believe that decision-making criteria of voters was more self-interested than that of Change Agents, raising some concerns around parochialism" (Grillos, 2014). Other concerns included feeling limited by the budget and capital eligibility, strengthening youth voices, the desire for continued involvement, the tension between need and impact, and the need for improvements in the voting process (Grillos, 2014). For example, "Many youth participants report being impressed by the million dollars budget initially. However, one of the most commonly cited pieces of knowledge gained through the process was learning how much things cost and how relatively little can be accomplished with a million dollars. For many, this was simply another aspect of the learning experience, but for some this caused real frustration with the process" (Grillos, 2014).

With these obstacles in mind, various recommendations can be made to Boston's youth participatory budgeting process, taken from participant feedback. The first set of recommendations are related to timing and organization. "In general, an expanded timeline is recommended" as "insufficient time was cited as being one of the major challenges of the process" (Grillos, 2014). The timing of the process could also be organized in coordination with the Boston Public Schools and their calendar. For example, one year "the vote took place when certain schools had already let out for the summer, inhibiting turnout at those locations" (Grillos, 2014). Additionally, coordination with the public schools could include "[establishing] YLC participation and discussion about the process as a formal part of BPS civics programming" and

"have all BPS schools participate as vote sites and perhaps idea assembly locations" (Grillos, 2014). The second set of recommendations discuss issues of communication and information sharing. Mainly, "better communication throughout all stages of the process, with respect to logistics, roles and responsibilities of various actors, and rules of the process" is recommended (Grillos, 2014). "By far the most consistent interview themes were the need for better communication and organization, often in relation to "the time crunch" but not always. Participants across different stages of the process reported a lack of understanding of their own role/responsibilities and confusion as to the rules of the process. Many Change Agents seemed unaware of the role of the Steering Committee, and as a result felt that certain rules had been created without input from youth" (Grillos, 2014). Furthermore, increasing information availability is central to the goals of the process, as would "enhancing the educational aspects of the program, which were [also] cited as major benefits of the process by interviewees" (Grillos, 2014). The third and final set of recommendations relate to engagement and turnout. One way in which YLC could improve is through their web presence, by making it more youth-friendly (Grillos, 2014). Additionally, "for the more intensive forms of participation, specific efforts are required to engage more young men, more traditional public school students and more youth who are not already involved with City programming or related organizations. These efforts might involve street outreach (e.g., canvassing) and better coordination with the public school system" (Grillos, 2014). Finally, to reduce risks of disappointment and disinterest, an increased budget for the initiative could be considered or re-establishing the committee themes to reflect need over impact and vice versa (Grillos, 2014). To assist with issues of access to transport, a travel stipend could be allocated to participants or alternatively, having committees organized by neighborhood or location. With this suggestion however, it "could improve turnout by allowing

meetings to occur in more convenient locations for many young people" but could "undermine the benefit of getting to know people from different parts of the City and learning more about the challenges they face" (Grillos, 2014).

All in all, "cities across the country should examine Boston's process for critical lessons about making urban governance more open, accountable and participatory" (Gilman, 2014).

Youth Councils

Boston's Mayor's Youth Council is a group of high school students who work with the Mayor's Office, city officials, and other community representatives. The council "connects, engages, and empowers Boston's diverse youth through government and civic participation" and aims to "find and put in place positive solutions through civic engagement and project management" ("Mayor's," 2021).

The Youth Council works out of the mayor's office and functions through a series of committees. These committees are Art and Culture, Education, Civic Engagement, Climate Action, Public Health, Public Peace, Workforce and Economic Development, and Youth Lead the Change ("Mayor's," 2021). The Art and Culture Committee works to improve access to the art community for Boston youth and engage them in cultural experiences. The Education Committee aims to increase access to resources and support initiatives through programming and advocacy. The Civic Engagement Committee's goal is to encourage participation and engage youth in local government and initiatives. The Climate Action Committee works to influence

Boston's climate change initiatives and ensure youth are present within those initiatives. The Public Health and Safety Committee advocates for residents' health and create initiatives and policies on violence intervention and prevention. The Public Peace Committee aims to increase youth's voice and involvement in community solutions. The Workforce and Economic Development Committee's goal is to increase job access for youth and connect youth to training, economic opportunities, and help establish financial literacy. Finally, the Youth lead the Change Committee is Boston's Youth Participatory Budgeting initiative, and they work to increase youth participation in local government and budgetary decision-making processes ("Mayor's," 2021).

The Youth Council hosts an "Impact Project" series for each committee and one winning project is selected for each, except for the Youth Lead the Change Committee ("Mayor's," 2021). The 2020 Impact Projects cycle targeted a variety of issues and initiatives in the community. For the Art and Culture Committee, their project was "Create the world" to promote the arts and celebrate diversity. "This year, we are hosting an online showcase for youth artists" ("Mayor's," 2021). The Education Committee will be hosting "Educate your mental", a virtual event "to educate youth about the impacts of COVID-19 on youth and mental health" ("Mayor's," 2021). "Secure the displaced" is the Civic Engagement Committee's project, and they will create a pamphlet with resources on shelters, food banks and meal sites, and youth organizations for displaced and homeless youth ("Mayor's," 2021). The Climate Action Committee will create a public service announcement on composting and other local resources ("Mayor's," 2021). The Public Health Committee will be doing "Fight for the flow," an advocacy campaign to have menstrual products distributed in schools and other public spaces ("Mayor's," 2021). The Public Peace Committee will be working with an external youth-led organization Bullets over Boston

for their "Bullets Over Boston collaboration" ("Mayor's," 2021). They will be creating a video highlighting Bullets over Boston, their work, and how youth can get involved with the organization and the cause ("Mayor's," 2021). Finally, the Workforce and Economic Development Committee will be hosting an "Unemployment help seminar" in order to "be the bridge that connects youth and parents to resources provided by the City" by hosting a webinar to answer questions and provide direct access to those resources ("Mayor's," 2021).

The Mayor's Youth Council has a strong positive impact on their community due to these Impact Projects, but also because of their overall presence. The Youth Council "increases voter participation from younger demographics, connects youth to city government, builds a youth's network with youth leaders from across the City, educates youth about the civic process, and encourages youth to prioritize social change and justice" ("Mayor's," 2021).

Over the years of a successful and impactful Youth Council, various lessons can be taken from Boston's efforts. First, having a dedicated and trained staff for support and funding for the Youth Council is extremely helpful (Augsberger, 2016). Second, the engagement of political leaders, whether local representatives or the Mayor themselves, are considered to be significant (Augsberger, 2016). Third, a diverse youth membership is necessary to ensure as many communities are represented, and that the membership also reflects the community/communities they are representing (Augsberger, 2016). Fourth, youth development opportunities are particularly helpful for participants (Augsberger, 2016). These can include an orientation session, presentation and public speaking workshops, opportunity for leadership roles, and networking. Fifth, having a breadth of meaningful activities, which can range from meetings and summits to

activities and community service, counseling, and policy-specific actions allow for youth participants to be engaged in ways that interest them most (Augsberger, 2016). Sixth, the Youth Council should have a clear but flexible focus and structure, so all participants remain on the same page and that efforts stay relevant and can adapt to their community and contexts (Augsberger, 2016). The seventh and final lesson is that efforts to dispel anti-youth attitudes and processes will be necessary (Augsberger, 2016). While most involved adults will be conscious of their roles as supporters and not leaders, youth participants will likely interact with adults who may be biased against youth and youth leadership (Augsberger, 2016). Through community education and continued engagement, the Youth Council is able to strengthen their influence on the communities they work with and represent.

Youth Action Groups

The Boston Youth Action Board is a group of youth who have experienced homelessness before the age of 25. They describe themselves as being "committed to preventing and ending youth and young adult homelessness within the City of Boston" ("Ending," 2012). They work with community stakeholders and local government to provide community education, influence policy, and improve public services.

In April 2018, the City of Boston and the Boston Youth Action Board launched the "Rising to the Challenge" initiative. Former mayor Martin J. Walsh had previously allocated $165,000 in 2017 to support the Board and their efforts ("Ending," 2012). To commemorate the launch of the initiative, over 170 community members attended an all-day event at a local Boston Public School ("Rising," 2019). Then over the next year, the Youth Action Board and their partners

worked to review available services and possible improvements for housing, health, education, and employment ("Ending," 2012).

The Boston Youth Action Board functions through an established set of Truths, which they use to guide their processes, goals, and activities. Their seven Truths are as follows: everyone deserves a home; homelessness is a symptom of oppression; invisible disabilities are real; all survival tactics are legitimate and valid; we deserve pleasure; we are entitled to privacy and boundaries; and respect and trust must be earned ("Boston," n.d.). To elaborate on the first Truth, the Youth Action Board states "it does not matter how we entered homelessness, what we did to survive while experiencing homelessness, or where we came from. Above all else, everyone deserves a home" ("Boston," n.d.). Second, homelessness is a form of oppression because "minority groups make up a disproportionately large percentage of people experiencing homelessness compared to the rest of the population. This is in direct relation to the oppression experienced by these communities and is especially significant for LGBTQ+, Black/POC, and Native Americans" ("Boston," n.d.). Third, invisible disabilities are real and "able-bodiedness does not equate to ability to work" ("Boston," n.d.). Fourth, "we do not judge someone based on what they do to get by, whether for income or for maintaining sanity. This includes coping strategies such as substance use or self-harm that may have negative long-term consequences, but serve a purpose in the moment. We recognize that all behaviors are an attempt to cope with the situation, even if we don't agree or wish the person wouldn't do it" ("Boston," n.d.). For the next Truth, the Youth Action Board holds that "homelessness is stressful enough without being denied pleasure. Self-care is extremely important when experiencing homelessness, and things that may seem frivolous or "a waste of money" are sometimes the things that get us through"

("Boston," n.d.). Sixth, in terms of privacy and boundaries, "no one is required to explain themselves or explain their choices to someone else. Accessing a service doesn't mean that people are entitled to our story" ("Boston," n.d.). Finally, respect and trust must be earned. "Simply because someone is in a position of authority does not mean that they deserve our respect and trust" ("Boston," n.d.).

Along with these Truths, the Boston Youth Action Board also has an established set of Values, which are especially useful in guiding the relationships they form with external organizations: a Safe and Affirming Environment; Respectful Language; Authentic and Transparent Process; Working with us is not charity; and We do not have to bleed for you. In terms of their environment, "members come from a lot of different backgrounds and have expertise in their lived experiences. You are entering as a guest in their space, and it is important to recognize that working with the YAB is a privilege" ("Boston," n.d.). In terms of language, "members on the YAB have gone to great lengths to advocate for themselves in terms of how they would like to be referred to. Language is a vital part of showing respect and validating someone's lived experience and an important part of professionalism" ("Boston," n.d.). In terms of process, "members are invested in working with you. That means we need to know the purpose of the work we are doing, and where the information that we give you is going. It is also vital for us to fully understand why you have come to us for this particular project, what sorts of information you are looking to gain, and what we are going to be compensated" ("Boston," n.d.). The Youth Action Board also makes it clear that they are not a charity; "We have professionally valuable insight to share, and are here to help you improve your programs and services. We expect to be valued for our insight, resilience, and resourcefulness, not pitied for the situations we are in"

("Boston," n.d.). Lastly, "in the YAB's line of work we are often sought in a way that feels tokenizing, decorative, or purely for our "sad stories." We have real advice and experience in homelessness that does NOT require us to re-traumatize ourselves for your benefit" ("Boston," n.d.).

As the Boston Youth Action Board works closely with the City of Boston and their local government offices, they have established a collaboration agreement with the City's Continuum of Care (CoC). This agreement ensures that the Youth Action Board members are seen, treated, and respected as equal partners. "The plan asks for time and resource commitments from public agencies and private organizations working in different fields, includes YYA as decision-makers who hold unique expertise, and asks us to coordinate our efforts in a way that holds the comprehensive and bold conversations side by side with the small but critical implementation details that experience tells us will be the difference between success and failure" ("Rising," 2019). For example, one of the points on the collaboration agreement is that "the BYAB will operate as a formal committee within the CoC and provide an authentic voice for YYA to advise the Boston CoC's Youth Homelessness Leadership Team, which is spearheading the development and implementation of a coordinated plan to prevent and end homelessness among YYA" ("Collaboration," 2018). The agreement also holds both sides accountable by stating "members of both the Boston CoC and the BYAB will mutually respect the valuable expertise that each person brings to this work" ("Collaboration," 2018). Furthermore, the BYAB has to ensure that any bias against youth will not impact their participation and thus the agreement includes that "the Boston CoC is committed to ensuring that YYA are involved in decision-making, including having key leadership roles and responsibilities in the development and

implementation of a coordinated plan to end homelessness among YYA, and also in facilitating Authentic Youth Engagement Trainings" ("Collaboration," 2018). Part of ensuring the presence of the BYAB during coordinated actions includes access to meetings, and thus "the Boston CoC agrees to hold meetings in the BYAB's internal meeting space as requested, or when necessary" ("Collaboration," 2018). Finally, the collaboration agreement also establishes that "up to three representatives from the BYAB are members of the City of Boston CoC's Youth Homelessness Leadership Team and are invited to participate in all Leadership Team meetings" ("Collaboration," 2018). The collaboration agreement makes it clear that "YYA need to share a seat at every decision-making table and need to be joined by partners from our schools, state systems of care, members of the business community, community development corporations, foundations, and others who may be seeing themselves in this work for the first time. We need the talent, skills, and knowledge from a broad range of committed stakeholders to take on such a comprehensive array of outcomes" ("Rising," 2019).

Through the BYAB's Truths, Values, and their collaboration agreement with Boston's Continuum of Care, they are able to function smoothly and work towards their goals of addressing youth and young adult homelessness ("Collaboration," 2018). For the "Rising to the Challenge" initiative, BYAB also established eight committees that generated and prioritized recommendations for the city: Executive, Funders, Data, Community Engagement, and Prevention and Intervention which was "divided into four subcommittees—stable housing, health and wellbeing, education and employment, and permanent connections" ("Rising," 2019).

Additionally, the plan for "Rising to the Challenge" is targeted at five outcomes, four of which are congruent to national goals and one of which is unique to the Boston community ("Rising," 2019). The first outcome is the identification of youth and young adults (YYA) experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability ("Rising," 2019). The second is establishing stable housing for youth and young adults ("Rising," 2019). The third focuses on health and wellbeing: "YYA need access to quality physical health, mental health and substance use services and supports, basic needs like food and clothing, and training in key competencies, attitudes, and behaviors that will better equip them to successfully transition to adulthood" ("Rising," 2019). The fourth relates to education and employment, to assist YYA with economic mobility and help them participate in civic life ("Rising," 2019). The fifth discusses permanent connections: "YYA need access to lifelong, kin-like connections with emotionally secure adults that provide love, a sense of belonging, advice, mentorship, counseling, a safety net, guidance and other support and resources that are needed over a lifetime" ("Rising," 2019).

In order to accomplish these outcomes, "Rising to the Challenge" uses four key strategies: developing a collaborative system, improving early identification and outreach, increasing access to and effectiveness of existing resources, and investing in new housing and services resources ("Rising," 2019). Each strategy is then broken down into different objectives, each with their own outcomes and actions. Some of these actions are more direct, such as Action 1.1.1 which is to "define the role and responsibilities of a YYA homelessness executive board and coordinating lead person or agency" and others are more long-term actions, such as Action 3.2.1 which is to "work with the YAB, Y2Y, Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Boston adult shelter providers, DND,

and the shelter consulting team to determine which strategy best meets our YYA shelter needs. Integrate this strategy with the outreach outcomes proposed" ("Rising," 2019).

While the Youth Action Board has very strong initiatives and actions, they are aware of the vast levels of challenges they face. The YAB states that they have to "be comprehensive and bold in order to solve a decades-long challenge that crosses multiple sectors, including housing, education, employment, and health" and simultaneously "be specific and realistic in order to serve young people quickly in the world we currently live in and respond to the unique needs and nuances that our data have identified" ("Rising," 2019). YAB and the "Rising to the Challenge" initiative are working to target an issue that has both national and local implications, and must adapt their strategies to work through such a multifaceted issue. Because of this, they cannot work by themselves and their efforts will take a community effort to enact. As the YAB states, "we not only need a large number of partners to join us but also a diverse group of partners willing to organize and share responsibility in often new and challenging ways" ("Rising," 2019).

Seattle, U.S.A.

Seattle has been the site for a variety of youth activism and larger youth movements. Various protests have taken over the streets of downtown Seattle, whether against the Global Trade Agenda and Big Oil or in favor of the legalization of marijuana and a $15 minimum wage (Ostrander, 2020). Seattle is also the birthplace of the international nonprofit Zero Hour, which targets climate change (Brunner, 2019). Particularly in the mid- to late-2010s, youth involvement exploded in Washington State's capital. Thus, in context of the larger youth mobilization happening in Seattle during the early 21st Century, a more institutionalized system of youth involvement in policy-making processes is expected.

Youth Participatory Budgeting

Seattle's youth participatory budgeting program is known as the "Youth Voice, Youth Choice" initiative, and began in 2015. Through this democratic process, Seattle youth would have power over $700,000 of the City budget. This process was created to "engage people who have historically not been involved in government or budget processes" ("Youth Voice," 2015) and "to address the immediate needs of community as well as long-term goals by reducing police violence, reducing crime, and creating true community safety through community-led safety programs and new investments" ("Participatory," 2021). Interestingly, it was not until after the youth participatory budgeting process was created that the Participatory Budgeting process was then opened up to all Seattle residents in 2017 ("History," 2021).

Youth Voice, Youth Choice has four goals: build youth skills and knowledge to create new leaders, give youth a meaningful and lasting voice in city government, fund projects that create

equity in our city, and forge a more inclusive democracy ("Youth Voice," 2015). For the first skill, the initiative aims "to empower young people with the tools they need to reach their potential and shape the future of our city" ("Youth Voice," 2015). In terms of giving youth a louder and more sustainable voice, the participatory budgeting program "aims to increase civic engagement by young people, while creating a new platform for them to collaborate with government and develop solutions to the challenges facing our city" ("Youth Voice," 2015). Through youth participatory budgeting, the city also hopes to "address the deepest needs in our communities and ensure City resources go where they will have the greatest impact" ("Youth Voice," 2015). Finally, Youth Voice, Youth Choice hopes to forge a more inclusive democracy by "[engaging] those who are typically excluded from decision-making, building bridges among diverse communities and creating a new model for how to govern in our city" ("Youth Voice," 2015). The initiative also hopes that all community members and stakeholders become involved to help achieve these goals ("Youth Voice," 2015).

The rulebook for the process was created by its Steering Committee in 2015 ("Youth Voice," 2015). Seattle's Steering Committee for Participatory Budgeting is made up of both youth and adults from various organizations around the area ("Participatory," 2015). "While participatory budgeting is inspired by experiences elsewhere, the Steering Committee created these guidelines to reflect the unique needs, issues, and interests of young people in our city" ("Youth Voice," 2015).

Run in coordination with the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, the participatory budgeting has four steps ("Youth Voice," 2015). First, youth community members will brainstorm ideas for

community projects from early January to late February ("Participatory," 2015). These brainstorming sessions, open to all, occur during large public assemblies and smaller events targeted for the participation of traditionally underrepresented youth ("Youth Voice," 2015). Community members can then submit ideas in-person at process-specific events, community gatherings, or other public places, online and through social media ("Youth Voice," 2015). Each individual project must cost a minimum of $25,000 and no more than $300,000 ("Youth Voice," 2015). It is also during these assemblies that youth can volunteer as budget delegates for stage two. Budget delegates must be between 11 and 25 years of age, and either live, work, attend school, volunteer, or participate in a program in the City of Seattle ("Youth Voice," 2015). Then from March to late April, youth participate in committees to review and transform the project ideas into full proposals ("Participatory," 2015). The committees are typically issue-based and can include topics such as Arts & Culture, Education, Health & Safety, Environment, and Community Services ("Youth Voice," 2015). "Constituency-based committees may also be created to ensure maximum participation from youth who might not otherwise participate, such as homeless youth and youth in foster care" ("Youth Voice," 2015). This second stage is supported by the Department of Neighborhoods and other City staff ("Youth Voice," 2015). The third stage is the voting process. It typically occurs in May and includes informing youth community members on the various projects listed on the Participatory Budgeting ballot, so they can make an educated choice ("Participatory," 2015). Eligibility rules to vote are the same as volunteering as a budget delegate in terms of voters' age and residency/occupation, and as with traditional democratic processes, each voter can place only one vote ("Youth Voice," 2015). Additionally, similar to the project idea collection process, "voting will take place on multiple days, locations, and formats, which may include schools, community centers, and digital/online

voting" ("Youth Voice," 2015). The fourth and final stage, beginning in June, is when "winning projects [are] funded and implemented by the City of Seattle and other local agencies as appropriate" ("Youth Voice," 2015).

The Seattle Youth Participatory Budgeting Process involves youth, adults, and other community stakeholders through a variety of roles. Seattle youth can identify and discuss local issues, propose and vote on projects, participate as Budget Delegates, and join the Steering Committee ("Youth Voice," 2015). Budget Delegates research and discuss local problems, needs, and further analyze and prioritize project ideas. They also learn about the City budget and budgeting process, evaluate the participatory budgeting process, and develop project proposals ("Youth Voice," 2015). Adults can participate as facilitators, who "help youth and adults participate effectively in PB assemblies and budget delegate meetings. They are neutral parties that do not advocate for particular projects" ("Youth Voice," 2015). They also "ensure that all participants are able to contribute," "serve as the main point of contact between [Department of Neighborhoods] staff and delegates, helping to coordinate communication and resolve conflicts," "connect delegates with information and resources" and take and distribute meeting notes ("Youth Voice," 2015). Finally, facilitators also "support delegates in researching, assessing and developing proposals, based on criteria that include feasibility, need and benefit" ("Youth Voice," 2015). The next roles in Youth Voice, Youth Choice are in the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee has many important administrative and organizational tasks: design and guide the participatory budgeting process; help plan and carry out idea collection efforts; recruit volunteers; distribute educational and promotional materials; develop and execute outreach plans to ensure community participation is broad, inclusive, and representative; serve as facilitators

and spokespeople; monitor project implementation; and evaluate and revise participatory budgeting process rules ("Youth Voice," 2015). Finally, the Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) is an external organization that oversees and supports the City of Seattle with the process. PBP "[facilitates] participatory workshops for the PB Steering Committee to write the rules of the process," "[develops] materials for key stages of the PB process," and "[provides] ongoing technical assistance to Department of Neighborhoods and lessons learned from PB around the US and internationally" ("Youth Voice," 2015).

Youth Councils

Two youth councils exist within Seattle: the Seattle Youth Commission and the King County Youth Advisory Council.

The Seattle Youth Commission is made up of 15 teens from across the city and appointed by the Mayor and City Council ("Seattle," n.d.). As youth who must be between 13 and 19 years old and living or attending school in Seattle ("Seattle," n.d.). Of the fifteen representatives, there are seven who represent each of the City Council districts and eight who are commissioners at-large ("Seattle," n.d.). They serve two-year terms and connect youth with local government ("Seattle," n.d.).

The Commission functions on an advisory basis only and carries out a variety of duties for youth and government. First, they "[organize] forums of Seattle youth to better educate the City about the opinions of youth on civic issues affecting both their specific communities and the city at large and to inform youth about the City's policies, programs and processes for public

engagement" ("Ordinance," 2010). In addition to forums, the Youth Commission also organizes annual town halls for youth, the Mayor, and the City council "to discuss issues affecting the city and the perspective of youth on these issues" ("Ordinance," 2010). Third, the Youth Commission drafts policy proposals on topics of their choice and presents them to government officials, including the Mayor and City Councilmembers ("Ordinance," 2010). Fourth, members of the Youth Commission have the opportunity to testify during City Council meetings and public hearings. Finally, the Youth Commission "[provides] an annual report to the relevant Council Committee about the Commission's activities" ("Ordinance," 2010).

Through these activities, Youth Commissioners are able to grow as community leaders through a multitude of ways. Participants "develop public-speaking, facilitation, organizing and communication skills," "cultivate a deeper appreciation of cultural competency and inclusive civic engagement," and "plan an annual event (or several events) that connects youth to local government and topics they care about" ("Seattle," n.d.). Youth Commissioners also "learn from key community and City leaders and build new relationships," "advise the Mayor, City Council and City departments on issues that impact youth in Seattle," and "discuss issues and solutions with other Seattle youth and develop projects that address those concerns" ("Seattle," n.d.). Last but not least, Youth Commissioners may also "collaborate on a community project with other Youth Commissioners" ("Seattle," n.d.).

The King County Youth Advisory Council (KCYAC) is made up of youth between the ages of 16 and 24, most of which have faced educational or work barriers, from Seattle and South King County ("King," 2020). KCYAC was formed in 2013 and its goal is "to influence county wide

youth initiatives, programs, and advance the rights of our most marginalized populations"
("King," 2020) The Council's area of focus is to cultivate youth leadership in order to develop
community brilliance ("King," 2020).

The Youth Advisory Council works towards their area of focus through three methods: project
development, community building, and professional development ("King," 2020). When it
comes to project development, the Youth Advisory Council states that "those closest to the
problem are closest to the solution. This is why all of KCYAC projects are focused on
community needs and driven by our youth leaders" ("King," 2020). For community building,
KCYAC "is dedicated to strengthening our community network by partnering with youth and
youth serving organizations" ("King," 2020). KCYAC members exemplify this commitment by
facilitating workshops, table sitting at local schools, and advocating for their communities
("King," 2020). Finally, for professional development, KCYAC "helps [their] young leaders
acquire long lasting skills and feel empowered in their communities" ("King," 2020).

One of the ways in which KCYAC supports their young leaders is through a program called
Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (Y.E.L.L.), where they learn about leadership, public
speaking, facilitation, advocacy, and teamwork ("Youth Engaged," 2020). Overall, Y.E.L.L. is
"a framework where community invests in the development of young people" ("Youth
Engaged," 2020). Y.E.L.L. participants can organize their own projects such as block parties,
movies, and open mics ("Youth Engaged," 2020). KCYAC states that the benefits of Y.E.L.L.
for their members include an increase in confidence, developed leadership skills, encouragement
"to reflect on changes they want to see in their community," assistance with the tools to address

those changes, and the support to "become researchers in their community [by] gaining data collection and analysis skills" ("Youth Engaged," 2020). The second way in which KCYAC supports their members is through a separate program known as YPAR, or Youth-Led Participatory Action Research. The YPAR framework "allows young people to practice self-agency… identify issues in community, conduct research, and implement solutions driven by youth voice" ("Youth Participatory," 2020).

An example of a youth-led project is the School to Prison Pipeline Film which is being created in partnership with Blanket Fort Films ("School," 2020). This film "[highlights] how youths of color are disproportionately affected by incarceration," a topic which was inspired by KCYAC conversations ("School," 2020). Since the project is "a documentary examining how the education and juvenile punishment system disproportionately impact students of color in King County," the project's goal is "to engage … in a way that is personally meaningful while educating and informing our community and decision makers on the school to prison pipeline" ("School," 2020). In addition to the film, KCYAC provides various statistics on the project's website: "Black and Brown students account for 55.8% of out-of-school suspension despite representing one-quarter of the Seattle Schools District population" and "nearly 50% of youth incarcerated in Seattle are Black, and 19% are Latino" ("School," 2020). Additionally, "using predicted probabilities, Black students are over 20% more likely to receive exclusionary discipline than their white peers for fighting" and "data shows students suspended or expelled for a discretionary violation are three times more likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year" ("School," 2020). Through the School to Prison Pipeline Film, youth most impacted by the issue are able to take on the role as story tellers, video producers, critical

thinkers, and project planners and managers ("School," 2020). The project gives youth a creative outlet through digital media to create social change, engage critically, and have their voices uplifted, thus supporting the mission of KCYAC ("School," 2020).

Youth Action Groups

FEEST is a youth-led organization working to ameliorate health and equity in the community through food. FEEST works on systemic change and empowers the voices of youth of color in advocating for food justice ("Home," 2021). They believe "systemic change is necessary for young people's mental and physical well being" and "are building power toward policy changes that increase food access for all students" ("Home," 2021). FEEST focuses on schools in South Seattle and South King County, and on the need for more healthy and affordable meal options that are also culturally relevant to the communities they are feeding ("Home," 2021) FEEST has centered youth leaders because "change is not effective unless those most impacted by the health inequities are the decision makers. When young people lead the way with creative solutions, the whole community benefits" ("Home," 2021).

FEEST aims to build youth power by encouraging youth leadership and ensuring that youth lead and are involved in all decision-making processes, from running school campaigns, hiring staff, vetting organizational decisions, and later, as alumni, joining FEEST's Board of Directors ("Home," 2021). With this, FEEST seeks to achieve health justice through the elimination of barriers that prevent physically, mentally, socially, and culturally healthy lives ("Home," 2021). "FEEST works toward a liberated world where young people, people of color, immigrants, low-income and other marginalized folks can determine their own lives and futures" ("Home," 2021).

Through FEEST, youth can gain leader experience in building community, skills, youth power, and analysis techniques ("Home," 2021). When building community, youth "share our joys, experiences, and delicious food," "assess community needs through direct outreach," and "share our successes to inspire others" ("Home," 2021). Youth leadership skill building includes "[learning] about community organizing," "[practicing] facilitation, public speaking, and peer outreach," and being able to show off "cooking skills and experiment in the kitchen" ("Home," 2021). In order to build their youth power, participants "create [their] demands and strategies to improve school food," "negotiate [those] demands directly with decision makers," and as a result, "win concrete changes in school food policy" ("Home," 2021). The last set of leadership experience comes with analysis building, where youth can "learn about systemic oppression and food access", "get inspired by other youth-led movements," and "identify powers structures in [their] school systems" ("Home," 2021).

Through community surveys, FEEST identified quality, cost, and distance as the biggest barriers to food access. FEEST "surveyed over 650 students across Chief Sealth, Rainier Beach, Tyee, and Evergreen High Schools. The results were clear: 1 in 4 students do not eat school lunch, and most cited poor food quality as the reason" ("Research," 2021). Then, in 2018, "FEEST's Healthy Food Round Table committee gathered feedback from over 320 community members in White Center, WA and found that cost and distance/transportation were the biggest barriers for young people to access fresh and nutritious food in their neighborhood under food apartheid" ("Research," 2021). FEEST also conducted two additional projects in two High Schools where they provided students with free and nutritious snacks during their 6th period, the period where

students reported feeling most hungry post-lunch ("Research," 2021). The projects were slightly different in their execution, but both resulted in a clear demonstration that students' ability to learn and focus was improved by reducing hunger ("Research," 2021). Because of these surveys and project results, FEEST chose to prioritize schools for their food quality campaigns so that students can access fresh food and "have the nutrition they need to be healthy and successful" ("Research," 2021) Thus, FEEST's campaign goals defined a fight for fresh, free, and culturally relevant food ("Take," 2021).

FEEST has also participated in a variety of successful actions, food and non-food related. In partnership with the Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE), they were able to add new water bottle filling stations within schools ("Take," 2021). In another project with the OSE and the Seattle Public Schools (SPS) Nutrition Services, FEEST established a youth-design snack program in schools ("Take," 2021). With the Nutrition Services Directors in Seattle and Highline Public Schools, FEETS was able to have culturally relevant foods included on schools' lunch menus ("Take," 2021). This was in addition to including youth-designed items on school menus ("Take," 2021). And finally, in partnership with the external organization Black Minds Matter, FEETS was able to assist in removing police from Seattle Public Schools ("Take," 2021).

Rosario, Argentina

Youth Participatory Budgeting

Rosario's youth participatory budgeting initiative, known as Presupesto Participativo Joven, or PPJoven, began in 2004 through the support of the Municipal Youth Centre, established by the city of Rosario in 1998 (Del Felice, 2007). The Municipal Youth Centre "aims to develop the recognition of the rights of young people; to stimulate their participation in community life; to promote spaces of expression, communication and dialogue that help prevent social risks that affect young people and finally, to coordinate with other departments of the Municipality the involvement of young people in their programmes and offering accurate information about themes of interest and the needs of young people" (Del Felice, 2007). PPJoven is "intended to engage youth in the democratic decision-making process" ("Youth," n.d.) particularly by "[involving] young people in deciding the use of part of the municipal budget for youth issues" (Del Felice, 2007). It was initiated with "the goal of providing all of the city's various sectors with the possibility of active participation. Accordingly, the youth sector has been particularly emphasized as they have been traditionally excluded from the decision-making process" ("Youth," n.d.). "PPJoven is a tool of participation for youth between 13 and 18 years old of Rosario, secondary school students, participants of youth organizations and associations, and youth who participate in the spaces supported by the Directorate of Youth Public Policies" ("Presupuesto," 2017). Additionally, participation is free in order to reduce any barriers to participation for youth "who should be part imagining and building a city and society that we cherish" ("Youth," n.d.).

PPJoven was first implemented in the southeast district of Rosario and only later was extended, and thus financed, using a Municipal Ordinance (No. 7326/02) ("Youth," n.d.). Rosario is

divided into six districts: Center, North, Northeast, East, Southeast, and South (Berretta, n.d.).

"The criteria that are used for the division, respond to questions of demography, geography, as

well as culture and the history of each of the zones of the city" (Berretta, n.d.). Up until 2008,

each district had an assigned budget of $40,000 per year, and then it was raised to $50,000

("Youth," n.d.). "Projects implemented in 2014 had a budget of 2,310,000 pesos or 283,470 US

dollars" ("Participatory," 2014) and in 2017, the total budget was $6 million ("Youth," n.d.).

There were two main reasons for the implementation of PPJoven: "low turnout among the youth"

and "the representative political crisis which has affected the country since the end of the 90s.

This especially affect[ed] the youth population, thereby generating widespread apathy and lack

of motivation concerning participation in political matters" ("Youth," n.d.). In 2001-2002,

Argentina's economy collapsed due to the collapse of Neoliberalism in the country. Argentina

also went through a long period of political turmoil defined by dictatorships during the late 20th

Century. It is thus understandable that building a strong democracy and financial transparency

within government is a priority for the country. "Then, through [stories], the difference between

living in democracy and in a dictatorship was marked so that the youth could reflect in relation to

themselves, taking into account that these youth belong to a generation that were born within a

democratic regime" (Berretta, n.d.).

PPJoven has defined an additional set of general objectives which are to "enlarge the capabilities

of the youth to achieve social and political inclusion starting with the recognition of their rights

as citizens" and "strengthen relations between the local state and youth civil society

organizations to generate connections which aim to ameliorate the quality of life among the

youth in particular and society in general" ("Youth," n.d.). Among these general objectives are more specific objectives, which are to "promote and diffuse the [Presupuesto Participativo] of Rosario among the youth" and "create discussion and debate spaces concerning the problematization concerning participatory democracy, citizen rights, and management controls on municipal matters" ("Youth," n.d.). Furthermore, "the objective of these spaces is to satisfy the debate of ideas, proposals and iniciatives that will support following projects, putting emphasis on the local character of the initiative" ("Presupuesto," 2017).

The PPJoven process is divided into three steps. The first round is a series of assemblies, with each district hosting three to five assemblies ("Youth," n.d.). "The objective of this first round is so youth can do a first diagnosis of their neighborhood's necessities and elect the councilors that will represent them in following steps of PPJ" (Berretta, n.d.). For the first part, of which the objective is "to focus on finding the first diagnosis of problems in the neighborhood from the perspective of the youth," ("Youth," n.d.) youth "are invited to attend meetings organized in schools per district. During these meetings municipal youth workers organize trust-building exercises and present the aims of the project to the participants" (Del Felice, 2007). This step is critical to PPJoven because this is when youth are able to prioritize what to focus on as active citizens. They are able to consider a variety of questions to analyze their quality of life and the respective conditions for development ("Youth," n.d.). "Each forum was designed so the youth could find themselves in the same district space and exchange ideas, expectations and worries in rounds of work, dialogue, debate and participation, to then continue working in smaller groups according to four axes: the environment, culture, health and sports" ("Presupuesto," 2017). "Youth know a new reality and become actors in changing those aspects that bother them or that they believe are unfair.

Needs and problems are analyzed and solutions are planned as a group. Discussions often start with sharing of negative experiences but projects to change reality have to be developed. Youth understand that they are contributing to avoiding negative experiences for other youth in the future, and develop socially responsible attitudes" (Del Felice, 2007). "As such, this is the moment where the youth begins to recognize its rights and obligations as citizens within the framework of the management of their own city" ("Youth," n.d.). As previously mentioned, the first round also includes to election of youth councilors, who will participate on their respective district's youth participatory council and act as delegates ("Youth," n.d.). Because PPJoven is committed to creating spaces of gender equality, the process promotes gives each person in attendance at the assemblies two votes for councilors; one for a man and one for a woman ("Youth," n.d.). Additionally, during the 2004 cycle "the number of councilors elected for each of the districts depended on the quantity of participants and how many candidates chose to run" (Berretta, n.d.).

The Youth Participatory District Council works "to systematize and re-elaborate the demands made by their peers, by additionally identifying the responsibilities which each one of the jurisdictions of the state (municipal, provincial, national) in each given demand. Accordingly, the councilors can develop projects which, in the first place, were presented before the city mayor and the municipal cabinet for its technical and financial evaluation which will be discussed between all of the youth which participates in the second round" ("Youth," n.d.). At the end of the first round, the councilors unite to determine how the council will operate, with the support and coordination of a technical team from the Municipal Youth Center ("Youth," n.d.). "The councilors elected in the first round will make a report for all those present during the process to

explain the prepared projects, taking into account the viability of each project as fundamental data when considering each of the projects" (Berretta, n.d.).

The second round begins three months after the Youth Participatory Councils have been formed ("Youth," n.d.). During this round, delegates inform the youth participants of what has been achieved within the Council and present a list of projects which represent "a final product of reunions with municipal functionaries and technicians as well as to the debate between the same members concerning what they believe to be relevant and most urgent for the district in which they live" ("Youth," n.d.) The general youth participatory body then conducts an election for projects to be "incorporated into the budget of the following year" ("Youth," n.d.).

Following the second round, each district's priorities are reviewed by the Executive Department's Secretariat of Finances, who then draft a budget ("Youth," n.d.). This budget includes the priorities elected and demanded by youth. Finally, "once the Youth Participatory Budget process is finalized, members of all youth organization which participated in it come together, particularly youth councilors who, together with the technical team of the Youth Center and the Participatory Budget, create workshops that assess the experience" ("Youth," n.d.).

PPJoven is supported through a variety of partnerships with local government and schools. For example, the process is "mediated by … the provincial government to articulate the experience in secondary schools in the city that wish to incorporate this exercise in direct democracy as part of their curriculum" and only at the "at year's end, [can] schools that so choose … become headquarters of the voting process" ("Participatory," 2014). "To carry out this partnership, the

Youth Directorate of the Ministry of Social Promotion, produces educational materials that guide the process in schools and provides advisory teams to accompany principals and teachers who lead the youth debates on the projects" ("Participatory," 2014). Furthermore, PPJoven is also implemented through the participation of youth social organizations and neighborhood social centers ("Participatory," 2014).

The PPJoven process is also externally supported by its relationship to Rosario's regular participatory budget (PP), open to all Rosario residents, which was implemented in 2002 ("Youth," n.d.). PPJoven uses much of PP's methodology but to be conducted with youth ("Youth," n.d.). Additionally, "the chronology of the PPJoven assemblies were planned in conjunction with the Secretary General and were conducted on the same days and at the same times as the adults' Participatory Budgeting" (Berretta, n.d.). It is important to note that this relationship with higher government was particularly influential (Avis, 2015). "The CSO Youth Working Group notes that for this initiative to be successful, a significant and sustained investment was required in administrative support and political will on the part of the Argentinian government" (Avis, 2015). Lastly, there is also a slight overlap in ages for PPJoven and the general Presupuesto Participativo, as "every citizen of Rosario over the age of 16 is able to participate in the participatory budget" and PPJoven is open to those 13-18 years of age ("Participatory," n.d.).

PPJoven was brought to Rosario with the intent of creating an inclusive and transformative space in government. PPJoven made a specific effort to include disadvantaged groups: youth and women ("Participatory," n.d.). "The PYB is an excellent example of how public space and policy

can become spaces for conflict transformation, especially in an urban setting where large amounts of the youth population are unemployed and more young people become involved in gangs. Youth have an opportunity to identify the problems in their neighbourhood and in their city in a way relevant for them. Youth are not manipulated, they are consulted and mobilized, but most importantly they are in charge and participate meaningfully and exercise their citizenship rights. In this way, youth public policy promotes spaces where social conflicts become opportunities for constructive change" (Del Felice, 2007).

Additionally, PPJoven also has a variety of protocols in place to promote gender equality, such as the previously mentioned rules for electing Youth Participatory District Councilors (Del Felice, 2007). Furthermore, PPJoven has also targeted the strengthening of democratic capacities ("Participatory," n.d.). "The city of Rosario, that already had multiple participation spaces in different areas of the administration, decided to move forward to this model of co-management which incorporates some new elements regarding citizen participation" ("Participatory," n.d.). Such elements, embodied by PPJoven's characteristics, include: improving government transparency; involving each area of municipal administration; ensuring that information about government actions spread among citizens is reliable and up to date; and sharing the decision-making responsibilities of concrete and tangible, but also sensitive, issues such as resources and how they are allocated ("Participatory," n.d.). PPJoven "is part of the municipal state decentralization process that allows closer proximity between the local government and the citizenship" ("Participatory," n.d.). Another specific example of such strengthening of democratic capacities can be found in specific rules, such as for the District Youth Councilors.

"Regarding seniority, delegates are generally not allowed to serve for more than two years, to democratize leadership" (Lerner, 2005).

Since 2005, Presupuesto Participativo Joven has led to a variety of results and accomplishments. "The most valuable result of the pilot program thanks to the contributions of GTZ, is that it generated at the beginning of 2005, the definitive institutionalization of PPJoven on behalf of the Municipality in the entire city, designating a total of approximately $300,000 to be assigned to projects for youth" (Berretta, n.d.). To many youth and youth advocates, the creation of PPJoven itself was a huge accomplishment. Other marks of a successful initiative can be seen by the rate of participation. During the pilot program of PPJoven in the southeast district in 2005, 76 youth participated ("Youth," n.d.). By 2008, 3,500 youth were involved (Avis, 2015). In 2009, that number increased to 4,027 across the six districts ("Youth," n.d.). The 2018 PPJoven had a participation rate of about 2,000 youth from 97 secondary schools along with 245 teachers ("Presupuesto," 2017).

Another criterion for analysis of PPJoven's results are the project themes created and selected by the youth participants. For example, "a worrying and recurring theme that came up in all the assemblies was the theme of security (or insecurity), making youth the most preoccupied about this problem in the neighborhoods" (Berretta, n.d.).

"The CSO Youth Working Group (2010), in their compendium of case studies, note that these budgeting schemes that involve young people at the municipal level have enabled young people to become more integrated into decision making processes" (Avis, 2015). Furthermore, these

participatory budgeting initiatives "show a great outreach capacity to youth, especially those marginalized. These examples show that peer-to-peer activities can be effective and reach young people that government or adult-oriented NGOs cannot reach" (Del Felice, 2007). Additional results from PPJoven identified by the CSO Youth Working Group included: "gaps in service provision were identified and addressed; funding was allocated to new music and dance workshops, recreational sites and a community library; the scheme inspired new youth projects in adult participatory budgeting processes; and the scheme saw the development of new democratic skills, knowledge and attitudes" (Avis, 2015). PPJoven's success also comes thanks to its strength in numbers and high mobilization power (Del Felice, 2007). Because of this, the programme continues to grow (Avis, 2015)—another indication of the initiative's success (Del Felice, 2007). "Similarly, we can see that the municipality can become one of the institutions that quickly and effectively proceeds with programs of citizenship and participation for youth, but also for programs or projects that provide a material basis for the enormous efforts made by youth in the prospect of reaching a better quality of life" (Berretta, n.d.).

Youth Councils

Rosario, Argentina has been one of the leading innovators in participatory governance. Rosario's Children's Council was created in 1998 and is a youth-run group that works to develop and influence local policies on behalf and for the benefit of Rosario's youngest community members (Rahman, 2014). In true encouragement of the Children's Council's goals, it has power over a variety of policy areas (Rahman, 2014). The Children's Council is open to children between the ages of eight and eleven who want to think about, analyze, love, and transform their city ("La," 2021).

This is unsurprising considering Rosario's strong history in progressive politics. In the mid-1990s, the Socialist Party came into power, initiating a wave of health, sanitation, infrastructure, and social improvement programs and reforms (Rahman, 2014). The new administrations supported participatory democratic initiatives and thus, the presence of external political support, one of the most important factors for the implementation and effectiveness off participatory programs, was put into place (Rahman, 2014).

In 1996, Rosario adopted a new initiative called "The City of Children," created by an Italian pedagogue, Francesco Tonucci ("La," 2021). The project emerged "as an attempt to incorporate children as active citizens to the improvement of their cities through the designing and planning of urban areas. The project aims to provide real value to the children´s voice and thus, to materialize their ideas" (Corvera, 2013). Its objectives are quite straightforward: "the objective of the proposal of The City of Children is that the children's voices be heard and influence public policies" ("La," 2021). Furthermore, the project's priority is "the relationship of the human being with the city, and raises that if the city space is good for its weakest inhabitants, then it will be good for all" (Corvera, 2013). With this in mind, Tonucci's main perspective was that "a city is in good health when in it you can see and feel the children in the squares, riding bicycles, playing, living outside their homes" (Corvera, 2013).

Through "The City of Children," or "La Ciudad de las Niñas y de los Niños," results show "the importance of local government along with, the role of community, which becomes involved in the actions and receives the impact from the changes in the physical and social space" (Corvera,

2013). "The City of Children" then inspired Rosario to create the Children's Councils as a form of achieving that each city's decision makers listen to the children who live there ("La," 2021). As of 2021, Tonucci's now-international political project is celebrating its 25th year in Rosario (Bonato, 2021).

The Children's Council currently functions through a hybrid format, with online meetings once a week and in-person meetings one Saturday each month to visit parts of the city ("La," 2021). The hybrid format is an evolution from the fully virtual format that was implemented in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which required isolation and social distancing ("La," 2021). Whether in-person or virtual, the weekly Council meetings encouraged the children of the city to unite and reflect on coexistence, space and time ("La," 2021).

For in-person events and meetings, it is important to note that children of lower-income families and neighborhoods were picked up from their homes in a minibus, many times in marginal and dangerous areas (Corvera, 2013). This transportation not only ensured that the Children's Council would be more accessible to all communities, it also made the initiative feel more important and assure the families that the initiative was a serious one (Corvera, 2013). Furthermore, "these participatory forums also benefited from political, technical, and financial support from the state and possessed real decisional power—making participation in them more worthwhile and more likely" (Rahman, 2014).

However, the Children's Council has faced a variety of challenges and limitations. First, initial observations described difficulties from institutions, media, and particularly citizens to

understand the goal of the Council, their role as a group or even the role of the children (Corvera, 2013). This led to negative rhetoric within the community, including doubts and misinterpretations (Corvera, 2013). Additionally, "for the adults it is very difficult to really listen to the kids; they have to guide them, bring them towards the adult path, to condition the questions and answers, to mold what they say to the language and logic of adults. Listening is the most important, but it is also the most difficult. They need to let the children speak, regardless of what you as an adult expects or wants" (Corvera, 2013). Because of the potential for influence from adults, the Children's Council has a coordinator/monitor, whose main job is to simply just listen (Corvera, 2013). "In addition to the role played within the Councils themselves, the coordinators have to transmit the ideas of the children to the Intergovernmental Commission, to make them a concrete reality" (Corvera, 2013).

Another protocol in place to limit adult influence is precisely a limit to the presence of adults during Council meetings (Corvera, 2013). "Notwithstanding the aforementioned, there are limits to the participation of adults, to ensure that the Councils are a real space for girls and boys. For example, various parents who left their children at the Councils wanted to enter and stay, to which the monitors had to explain that they must wait outside, as it is an autonomous space for girls and boys" (Corvera, 2013). Furthermore, another fundamental aspect to youth participatory governance is, per the name, youth representation. "Many times, adults believe they represent children well, a situation that makes them take all important decisions for the children without consulting their points of view" (Corvera, 2013).

As Tonucci has affirmed, "nobody can represent children without worrying about consulting them, involving them, listening to them. Making children talk does not mean asking that they solve the problems of the city, created by us. Instead, it means learning to take into account their ideas and proposals" (Corvera, 2013). "What made these programs work effectively as channels for representing the interests of marginalized groups stems from how the participants engaged with one another and with policymakers in the room. In both cases, participants developed collectively shared goals and rules for resolving disagreements. This made the forums themselves more legitimate, and participants more willing to invest in the process" (Rahman, 2014). Through these factors, the opportunity for growth for individuals and government structures alike, is one of the great characteristics of a participatory governance initiative such as the Children's Council. "Regarding children's rights, projects such as those described here incorporate in a very good way the new paradigm of girls and boys as subjects of rights, stimulated by the [U.N. Declaration on the Rights of the Child], which equates to seeing boys and girls from their potential and not only their deficiencies" (Corvera, 2013).

The creation of the Children's Council, among other forms of youth participatory governance, can also have broader benefits. "In fact, incorporating childhood can be highly educative and preventive, since the earlier one begins to live the social values shared by a community, the more likely to internalize them for later in life. Much of the problems of delinquency, apathy, disinterest and rebellion of adolescents and youth, are related to feeling alien to what is happening in cities, where no one ever asks them anything, where they don't have instances of real participation" (Corvera, 2013). Thus, the Children's Council can impact its participants and their respective communities both directly, through the Council's accomplishments and by

influencing community perspective on youth, but also long-term, by providing youth with an outlet for participation.

Over the years, the Children's Council has implemented a variety of projects, programs, and events. In 2018, the project was "Habitar el Tiempo," during which the children put on skits for adults to bring happiness ("La," 2021). The youth noted that news and current events that adults listen to are very sad, and while it is good that people stay informed, it is important to remember happier things as well ("La," 2021). In 2019, the project was "Alerío…paradas amigables para pájaros urbanos" ("La," 2021). This project aimed to deepen community knowledge of local bird species and involve community members in caring for them ("La," 2021). Such activities involved bird watching, design and construction workshops for birdhouses, and monitoring the needs of each species so that citizens who were interested could help bring communities of birds to schools, hospitals, public buildings, and even private homes, and ensure their survival ("La," 2021). These efforts were also aimed at recovering the natural bird sounds within the city, despite the loud city noises ("La," 2021).

In 2020, the project was titled "Abrazar recuerdos" or in English, "Hugging memories" ("El," 2020). Created during virtual sessions of the 2020 Council, the project is an tribute to grandparents, a social group which was particularly harmed by the isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic ("El," 2020). In this sense though, the youth made it clear that the project was for all elderly community members, not just those who are grandparents ("El," 2020). The project "proposes different actions in the public space to honor grandparents in such a difficult year, where they had to be away to take care of themselves and others" ("El," 2020). One of the ways in

which the youth wanted to implement "Abrazar recuerdos" was through physical installations in public spaces. The youth of Rosario proposed to install "in plazas and other meeting spaces, large cement tiles which would signal a meeting point and refer to childhood stories of grandparents, a spatial mark that recognizes the value of intangible transmission of grandparents in this society" ("El," 2020). With this in mind, the Councilors stated that they should be joyful tiles with a lot of color, and installed next to benches, under trees, or near the locations of outdoor games such as hopscotch ("El," 2020).

"Abrazar recuerdos" was also brought online, through a map that geolocates each of those tiles by district and proposes that the tiles be a used as a "treasure hunt" tour of the city ("La," 2021). Additionally, the councilors proposed an online space for the sharing of stories through recorded audios ("La," 2021). In these audios, the elderly community members could talk about their games, the city and their favorite spots, and invite other grandparents to share their stories as well ("La," 2021). "In this way, creating a library of the human, a virtual space" ("La," 2021).

The physical and virtual attributes of "Abrazar recuerdos" were complemented by an additional proposal to create "meeting days" for the elderly to unite in public spaces, teach their community about topics of their choosing, share stories of their childhoods and adventures, and share the history of the city ("La," 2021). The councilors were able to obtain a municipal ordinance for "The Day of Games and Coexistence," inviting people to dress colorfully, paint the playground slides, and plant various plants to attract butterflies, among other communal activities ("La," 2021).

Other initiatives from the Children's Council included a "Monument to Ideas" and a "Theater of the Oppressed" which brought art and drama to public spaces for communities to reflect on children's rights (Rahman, 2014), in addition to the installation of new benches for a project called "Siéntense, siéntase parte del juego" (sit down, feel part of the game), and the expansion of green spaces across the city for "La Línea Verde" (Corvera, 2013).

Through these wide range of initiatives by the Children's Council, it is clear that Rosario goes above and beyond in youth participatory governance. "Rosario, for her part, goes several steps further, mainly because a large number of ideas that have emerged from the Councils have materialized, affecting the public space and remaining in time. This sets a qualitatively different precedent. Many works are already part of the city, intervening in a physical and social way, which makes possible, on the one hand, new uses of public space; and on the other, new interactions between neighbors, as could be seen in the description of the initiatives" (Corvera, 2013).

Youth Action Groups

In Argentina, youth are joining forces for the protection of the environment. "Children, teens, and youth have taken a protagonist role to generate consciousness and propose a responsible look at the climate crisis that affects the planet" ("Rosario," 2021). In Rosario, one of the most famous evidences with multiple consequences is the historical lowering of the water level of the Paraná river, in addition to examples of deforestation, droughts, toxic waste, and open-pit mining ("Rosario," 2021). In the case of the environment, "it is the youth who are taking charge of contributing their grain of sand, developing diverse campaigns in goal of reducing environmental

contamination" ("Jóvenes," n.d.). Furthermore, Rosario was chosen as the national headquarters of the global Youth Climate Summit by the United Nations, where dozens of youth between 18 and 35 years of age from different regions of the country were expected to arrive in Rosario in the first few days of September 2021 ("Rosario," 2021).

Rosario has presented itself as a strong community of youth activists, among which exists a variety of youth action groups. For this reason, and thanks to the arrival of the Youth Climate Summit, there was an intensification in mechanisms for the active participation of youth with the issue in addition to the creation of a network of youth across continents ("Rosario," 2021). Specifically, in Rosario, the international movement Fridays for the Future was also chosen as the organizer of the Conference of Local Youth ("Rosario," 2021). Inspired by Greta Thunberg, a youth activist from Sweden, Fridays for the Future has been very active across Argentina, with more than 30 groups across the provinces, including Rosario ("Rosario," 2019). The Rosario chapter has organized many protests and marches, along with a "Sustainable Festival" in 2019, where there was a variety environmental workshops led by different NGOs in addition to live bands and a fair ("Rosario," 2019).

Thanks to Fridays for the Future: Rosario's leadership with the Youth Climate Summit, a final official document was developed, expressing that youth are asking the world to avoid the climate crisis, with a focus on regional questions in Argentina ("Rosario," 2021). The dedicated youth of Rosario are making their marks on the world and international environmental efforts, as based on the outcomes of the Summit, the youth declaration would be later shared with other Latin

American and Caribbean youth summits in addition to being presented at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Glasgow, in November 2021 ("Rosario," 2021).

Working alongside the youth of Rosario's Fridays for the Future is a more local youth action group, the Grupo Versova. Created by Lucas Zothner and Luz Estol, the organization takes on the problem of pollution with help from environmental engineers and other experts in the field ("Jóvenes," n.d.). The team volunteers every day, and with the help of yet another group, Yorío, and other environmentalists and people interested in caring for the environment, they have dedicated themselves to collecting waste on the coasts of the Tigre and San Isidro rivers ("Jóvenes," n.d.). "During its first day of cleaning, in august of 2020, 20 volunteers came together to help with the work. Currently, they have more than 600 people interested in restoring the coastlines" ("Jóvenes," n.d.). Grupo Versova coordinates the meetups, calculates how many volunteers they will need, and assign the cleaning and collection tasks ("Jóvenes," n.d.). "Among the waste that they find the most, there are Styrofoam plates, nylon bags, all kinds of bottles, and even chinstraps" ("Jóvenes," n.d.).

Bogotá, Colombia

Youth Participatory Budgeting

Bogotá's Participatory Budget has been around since 1990, with the objective of improving connections between citizens and the state and its services (Pogrebinschi, 2017). "Successful participatory budgeting processes have been described in the literature as a complex process of decision making in which decisions are reached through intensive negotiation, conflict, and debate within citizens themselves and the state making power relationships visible; rather than through a general consensus where power relations are more likely to be neutralized and obscured" (Brugman, n.d.). Bogotá's Youth Participatory Budgeting process, which began in 2012, thus became spaces for youth and decision-makers from government to work together in the creation and execution of initiatives that would guide a portion of the public budget ("Somos," n.d.). "This process of citizen participation of youth opened the concrete possibility of the exercise of rights and local direct democracy, and it is perhaps the most significant experience of youth participation and effective decision on public budget that has been possible in the city" ("Somos," n.d.).

Through an overview of Colombia's political history, both recent and more ancient, it can be understood why participatory policy-making processes are important to their country and prioritized. In recent history, Colombia has had a rich history of radical leftist movements and youth. For example, Colombia's Liberal party has been very active since the 19th Century. In the mid-20th Century, the Colombian Liberal Party faced some internal conflict, which caused groups to split off into groups such as the Liberal Revolutionary Movement and People's Power.

But shortly after, those dissident groups then later either rejoined the Colombian Liberal Party and/or disappeared.

Despite this particularly notable history of radical leftist activity, Colombia has also been the site of extreme political turmoil. "Since the nineteenth century, bipartisan violence between the Liberal and the Conservative Parties dominated society" and in 1948, the assassination of a Liberal politician "unleashed an enormous violent riot that can only be identified as the start of the contemporary violence era known as "The Violence." This period cost thousands of lives and caused the displacement of many citizens living in rural areas of the country and the destruction of business, institutional, and family networks" (Pogrebinschi, 2017). In 1958, leaders from both parties attempted to end the violence by creating the "National Front," through which both sides agreed to share the presidential terms for 16 years (Pogrebinschi, 2017). This agreement was not received well by Colombian citizens, particularly since the settlement "denied access to political power to nontraditional parties and political groups" (Pogrebinschi, 2017). This led to the creation of various guerrilla groups, and "as the political crisis worsened, civil society demanded a constitutional reform with a non-formalized plebiscite during the local and congressional elections of 1990" (Pogrebinschi, 2017). While this is a very general overview of the political chaos in Colombia during the 20th Century, "many laws proliferated after the 1990s, addressing particular policy areas and mainly focusing on social policies, security and peace, culture, minorities and rural development. All of the laws include participatory mechanisms, consisting of councils, committees or commissions. Many of these laws have had complementary regulations and modifications added in the 2000s and 2010s, including the articles related to the participatory mechanisms" (Pogrebinschi, 2017).

Participatory budgeting has evolved within the city, through its changing socio-political dynamics. "Participatory budgeting in Bogota has been consolidated slowly through different exercises implemented at different times and scales, and through different actors and methodologies. These processes have grown as part of the trajectory of participatory planning in the city pushed forward by the political will of mayors and local government agencies" (Brugman, n.d.). From the first attempts in the late 1980s, each new mayoral administration has taken the initiative into their own hands (Brugman, n.d.).

The administration of Luis Eduardo Garzón (nicknamed "Lucho") (2004-2007), a political leftist and former president of Colombia's largest labor union, created the Bogotá sin Indiferencia (Bogotá without Indifference) plan (Brugman, n.d.). Through this plan, participatory budgeting, or Participación para la Inversión 2007, was allowed in "the allocation of resources corresponding to the social dimension of the city plan, generating an initial methodology for PB in the city" (Brugman, n.d.).

Under Samuel Moreno (2008-2011), Bogota Positiva (Positive Bogota) strengthened Garzóns initial efforts (Brugman, n.d.). "PB was then taken forward by the mayor Gustavo Petro (2012-2015) under his city plan named Bogota Humana (Human Bogota) which proposes the implementation of PB at the city scale as a strategy to tackle social, economic, cultural, and spatial segregation in the city" (Brugman, n.d.). It was under La Bogotá Humana that youth participatory budgeting was officially launched ("Somos," n.d.). "For this, starting from the recognition of youth diversity and above all their autonomy, it generated a process of

Participatory Budget Initiatives in all Zonal Planning Units exclusively for the youth of the capital to define, plan, execute and invest according to the scope of their dreams. As a result of this exercise of direct democracy, the Subdirectorate for Youth of the District Secretariat for Social Integration, financed and accompanied, in agreement with the Center for Research and Popular Education CINEP/PPP, 51 youth initiatives from all localities of the District" ("Somos," n.d.).

In Bogotá, the most current process is divided into three phases: "The first one corresponds to the 'precabildos', which are realized in all the localities where the necessary information is presented and the process to be followed is defined" (Pogrebinschi, 2017). Then, the Local Cabildos, divided first by neighborhoods then by localities, and the District Cabildos, made up of various Local Cabildos, are organized (Pogrebinschi, 2017). It is at the level of the District Cabildos where the city's important issues are defined. "The decision-making bodies of the Cabildos act by voting for the participants in the different boards created in relation to the topics on which it is going to be prioritized" (Pogrebinschi, 2017). "In the councils, the youth proposals arising from local organizational processes, youth groups, or associated youth are prioritized for a common objective: a) Organization and participation; b) Expression, creativity and awareness; c) coexistence and construction of peace; d) Equality, diversity, and NO discrimination; e) Entrepreneurship and popular economy; f) Citizen unlearning and, g) identities and new trends" (Shah, 2007). "Although the Participatory Budget has been developed with a wide participation in the last years and the city offers an important institutional structure for its development, it is still necessary to improve the processes of strengthening and approaching the citizens, in the hopes that the results are more satisfactory" (Pogrebinschi, 2017).

The first stage, where cabildos and neighborhood groups are organized, and the methodology is agreed upon, occurs in February and March (Vásquez, 2016). Coordination groups by theme are then organized in April (Vásquez, 2016). The second stage begins in May, for the deliberation, elaboration, and prioritization of proposals and analysis of the pre-feasibility of projects (Vásquez, 2016). Then in June and July, voting by community members occurs, project proposals are chosen along with possible alternatives (Vásquez, 2016). Finally, all chosen projects and initiatives are then executed ("Somos," n.d.).

Data from past Participatory Budgeting cycles have shown the strong inclusion of traditionally excluded groups, including youth. With the participation of 21,600 people during the 2007 Participación para la Inversión, it had a high degree of participation from youth (14-17 years old), at a rate of 22.8% (Brugman, n.d.). The 2009 "Participatory Budgeting in the IDPAC" had a youth participation rate of 28%, and an incredible 68% for the 2011-2012 "Participatory Budgeting in the SED" (Brugman, n.d.). "The results from the different PB experiences show that in most cases these allowed the inclusion of excluded groups and minorities. Thus, the experience of the IDPAC 2009 [where "a different process was implemented…applying a sectoral approach, focusing specifically on minority and excluded groups"] made these "invisible" groups more visible and provided the opportunity to deepen attention to the demands and needs of specific populations, as well as revealing the difficulties face by these groups in the city such as racism, violence, and discrimination. This was a pioneer and important experiment which methodology and lessons should be considered and developed further. Finally, the

experience managed by the Education Secretariat shows a high involvement of youth in decision-making and is consider as other important process of PB in the city" (Brugman, n.d.).

One of the most inspirational parts of youth involvement in participatory budgeting processes is "the faith and commitment to education present in almost all initiatives. They are young people who are committed to educational processes, to train others and to train themselves" ("Somos," n.d.). Secondly, "in this process of youth participatory budgeting, in which state mediation and the youth population organized at different levels are fundamental axes, a concrete proposal is manifested on how to build governance through interactions between citizens and the District, thus achieving levels of trust, cooperation and joint responsibility among actors" ("Somos," n.d.). These interpersonal characteristics are particularly important when trying to build a culture in which adults listen to young people. "This means having spaces for conversation and mechanisms in which their interests are expressed, in order to achieve a full insertion in the social and political life of a population that feels excluded. Having spaces for youth participation brings with it the need for a receptive attitude to their messages, which are expressed with their voice but also with their action, as they tend to articulate them" ("Somos," n.d.).

However, youth participation in such processes also faces many challenges and limitations. Among these include fierce criticism from older generations, inequity and social inequality, exclusion and segregation, violence, exploitation, and double morals in which false discourses do not correspond to actions ("Somos," n.d.). These are in addition to the "myth of equal opportunities that is proclaimed so much and so often denied" and "the resistance to not stop

believing that other worlds and other forms of life are possible in our city and in our country" ("Somos," n.d.).

Furthermore, the participatory budgeting processes described above have also shown evidence of fragmentation. Such evidence can be seen through "a) the discontinuity of youth and state actors throughout the phases, from the formation of precabildos and councils, to the execution of initiatives, which caused the initially set objectives to have to be reformulated on different occasions, affecting the solidity and permanence of the original proposals. b) Breaks in communication between youth organizations, SDIS and later CINEP / PPP, translated into the difficult effective transmission of information and complex management of regulations for the execution of public budgets ... c) Difficulties to reconcile in a single dynamic of participation, citizen training and the execution of public money. d) Obstacles in the articulation of youth organizations that are part of an initiative, either due to the fragmentation previously described or due to conflicts of interest between youth groups, and between these and the local teams of the SDIS" ("Somos," n.d.).

Despite these challenges, they are not roadblocks, and there is strong diversity in the initiatives of Bogota´s youth. "You will find young people concerned about freedom of expression and the need to create; They will also reach out to those interested in defending and promoting cultural and environmental heritage, and fighting for new relationships with our traditions and with nature. There are those who rebel against the logic of the market that dehumanize human relationships, making human dignity a simple form of consumption; Those who consider it a priority to make the experience of human rights and the realization of the dream of equity and

social equality a purpose and collective action will appear. Those who face prejudices and preconceptions that lead to intolerance, exclusion and segregation will pass in the same way" ("Somos," n.d.). Particular initiatives chosen as part of Bogotá's 51 winning projects included "Parks for all" along with the creation of other public spaces, a community center for popular education, various forms of arts and youth festivals such as a "Fiesta juvenile por la diversidad" (Youth party for diversity), and sports ("Somos," n.d.). Through these projects, it is evident that allowing young people to propose and create transformative projects that aim to improve the quality of life of those around them and themselves, and to use their creativity and knowledge, and helping them create what would have otherwise seemed impossible without a large budget, results in huge successes for the city and its participants ("Somos," n.d.). Overall, "the Youth Councils of participatory budgets promoted a great youth mobilization[.] This experience leaves achievements to be maintained and challenges to improve, therefore, it is key that the youth of Bogota take ownership of this political commitment, develop it and make it the best instrument of its civic exercise, since the greatest punishment for those who are not interested in politics and the public is that they will be governed by people who are interested and will not always represent the popular will of young people" ("Somos," n.d.).

Youth Councils

The implementation of Youth Councils among Bogota's government is very new. In 2021, for the first time in Bogotá's history, youth community members have been given the opportunity to elect youth to municipal, regional, and national youth councils (Perez, 2021). The Youth Councils are "autonomous mechanisms of participation, agreement, monitoring and public

management, and a dialogue of young people in relation with the territorial agendas of youth"
(Vásquez, 2021).

The Youth Councils have a variety of functions: "act as mechanisms of dialogue and agreement
with the administration on youth issues; Arrange the inclusion of youth agendas with the
respective political and administrative authorities; [and] Exercise oversight and control over
public management" ("Colombia," 2021).

Law 1622 of 2013 held that "this, before the public institutions of each territorial entity to which
they belong, and from which the agreements of young people on alternative solutions to the
needs and problems of their contexts and the visibility of their potential and proposals for their
social, political and cultural development before the territorial and national governments"
(Vásquez, 2021). This law, the Youth Citizenship Stature, was modified by Statutory Law 1885
of March 1, 2018. Although it should have been implemented in 2020, this law launches the
National System of Youths, of which the Youth Councils are part ("Consejos," 2021) . The
National System of Youths addresses "this context of adversity, of demands and proposals from
young people, of demanding scenarios for dialogue and negotiations with public authorities to
guarantee a dignified life, as any Colombian deserves" ("Consejos," 2021) . In principle, the
Youth Councils have been adopted as a form of citizen participation because of the direct
election of their representatives ("Los," 2021) .

Following the legal creation of the Youth Councils, Bogotá then initiated the election process.
Starting in June through August of 2021, youth were invited to register to vote, and from the end

of July to the end of August, youth were invited to register as candidates ("Abecé," 2021) . In September, the voting juries were notified and appointed ("Abecé," 2021) . In October, additional seats were appointed, particularly for representatives of ethnic and rural communities ("Abecé," 2021) . To further support the initiative, the local government developed a variety of toolkits to be disseminated virtually with all the information on the electoral process, including infographics, FAQs, the electoral calendar, and more ("Abecé," 2021) .

Finally, on November 28, 2021, youth between the ages of 14 and 28 were invited to vote for their Youth Councilmembers ("Colombia," 2021). Candidates were required to fit the same age range, and demonstrate that they live, work, attend school, or participate in community work within the area they would like to represent ("Los," 2021) . Candidates were also required to be enrolled with a public political party with legal standing, through a youth organizational program, or as an "independent youth", in addition to not fitting any of the disqualifications noted by the Youth Citizenship Statute ("Colombia," 2021). Furthermore, candidates needed to provide "a job proposal that would indicate the guidelines to be followed as youth counselors during their term" ("Colombia," 2021). Each Councilmember would hold their position for a four-year term ("Colombia," 2021).

Dependent on population density, each Youth Council, whether municipal, local, or district, were given 7, 13, or 17 councilmembers ("Colombia," 2021). The seats for the entirety of the Councils will be distributed as follows: "30% from procedures and organizational practices; 30% from political parties or movements; [and] 40% from the list of independent young people" ("Colombia," 2021).

"Because it is the first time that young people between 14 and 17 years of age are going to vote for their direct representation in government, it is a process of utmost importance that, according to experts, will generate incremental political change. Despite the fact that young people were already doing politics in one way or another – being circumscribed through different movements or doing activism on social networks – this is the first time that an institutional space of such magnitude has been opened for them" (Perez, 2021). To put the scale of this initiative into perspective, Municipal Youth Councils are being elected in 1,097 municipalities across the country, and Local Youth Councils are being elected in 33 cities ("Colombia," 2021). With this in mind, "the youth councils are called to become the first of many steps that the country must consolidate in terms of youth inclusion. In Colombia, the task of adding young people to the labor market is a debt that cannot continue to be postponed" ("Los," 2021) .

Youth Action Groups

The city of Bogotá is a local hotspot for youth political action. According to the Bogotá Government Secretariat, the city has been the location of over 950 protests, marches, and blockades, with over 283,000 protesters in just over a month, from April 28th to June 2nd 2021 ("¿Qué," 2021) . "A notorious aspect of the demonstrations consists of the high participation rate of youth, which denies the popular knowledge of the political apathy of the Young" ("¿Qué," 2021) . The reasons behind such high youth involvement and what they propose are many: they do not feel considered when decisions that could affect their future are made; they don't feel safe in their neighborhoods; they are frustrated with the uncertainty of being able to pay for their

education; they have less job opportunities regardless of their level of education or experience; they some feel that poverty is inherited; and they see corruption getting worse ("¿Qué," 2021) .

One of the Youth Action Groups that is highly active in Bogotá is Redkolumbien. "We promote and support the strengthening of the capacity of Colombian youth" ("Inicio," 2021) . Redkolumbien works toward their mission through various nodes. The first node, Political Action and Leadership, "works to promote youth participation within policy areas, striving to strengthen the leadership capacities of its members and thus always building a better country from the differences" ("Inicio," 2021) . The second node, of Environmental and Climate Action, creates and executes various programs and projects to strengthen youth leadership, particularly by establishing alliances with other environmental organizations, targeting the care of natural resources, focusing on the mitigation of environmental impacts caused by bad socio-political and economic practices, and advocating for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal ("Inicio," 2021) . The final node, Peace and Human Rights, works on strengthening the country's social fabric ("Inicio," 2021) . This year, they reflected on projects for a project titled "La Paz en tiempo de COVID-19" (Peace in times of COVID-19). Redkolumbien members involved with this node proposed actions such as candlelight tributes for those killed by the pandemic and workshops against gender violence ("Inicio," 2021) . Some of Redkolumbien's other projects included "Ruta por las regiones" ("Route through the regions"), "Invitación de la Red: ¡avancemos desde casa!" ("Invitation from Online: Let's move on from home!), and "Ser por la Paz" ("Be for Peace") ("Inicio," 2021) .

Various other Youth Action Groups have appeared around specific issues. One of these is road safety. The first program, Hackathon Escolar, is "an educational space that seeks to strengthen leadership and youth innovation capacity through pedagogical spaces to design technological solutions and strategies of citizen culture for problems of mobility in Bogotá or during their journeys to school" ("Tres," 2021) . The 2021 cycle of the program focused on three challenges: CamiAndo Seguro, Al Colegio en Bici, and TransmiAventura ("Tres," 2021) . CamiAndo Seguro focused on pedestrians, for Bogotá to become a more walkable city ("Tres," 2021) . Al Colegio en Bici targeted teen bicyclists and on designing road safety solutions for them ("Tres," 2021) . TransmiAventura consisted in designing strategies that positively transform citizen interactions within Bogotá's bus rapid transit system, the TransMilenio system ("Tres," 2021) .

Another educational space is the "Innovadores escolares en seguridad vial" ("Innovative scholars in road safety) competition ("Innovadores," 2019). To mark Bogotá's eight Road Safety Week, the second cycle of the competition encouraged middle school students from public and private schools to create technological projects that will strengthen safety and road safety education ("Innovadores," 2019). This cycle's winning school developed a project titled "Ángel de mi Guarda Soluciones" ("Guardian Angel Solutions") ("Innovadores," 2019). This project was an electronic system for bicycles that would detect whether the user was using safety measures such as helmets and reflective vests ("Innovadores," 2019). Overall, competition participants have created projects on a wide range of road safety themes including road actors, city and public space, infrastructure, safe vehicles, regulations, education, and sustainable and active mobility ("Innovadores," 2019).

A third group that works towards road safety is Despacio. While Despacio is not a youth-only group, a large portion of their members are youth and the organization is a member of the Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety ("Youth," 2021). In 2021, they won the "Innovative Local Actions" competition sponsored by the Coalition, for a project on "Youth influencing bike policy change in Bogotá" ("Youth," 2021). Through this youth-led project, Despacio "will strengthen the capacities of members of the Local Bicycle Board Members and provide them with tools to advocate for better bicycle policies to decision-makers. The project aims to develop road safety, gender, and mobility capacity building workshops for bicycle representatives, implementing symbolic interventions (tactical urbanism or mural painting interventions) and providing support for the formulation of a specific request to decision makers" ("Youth," 2021). The main goal of "Youth influencing bike policy change in Bogotá" is to "make visible the voice and relevance of the youth in the decision-making process around the improvement for bicycle use in Bogotá between April and November 2021" ("Youth," 2021).

Another popular theme for Youth Action Groups is that of the environment and climate change. In 2018, 25 youth activists (11 of which were under the age of 18), won a historic lawsuit in Colombia's Supreme Court against the Colombian government, on the basis that the Colombian government had failed to protect the Amazon rainforest (Mila, 2019). The Supreme Court ruled that "the State had failed to protect citizen's rights to a healthy environment and had not complied with international greenhouse gas and deforestation agreements, including the 2015 Paris Accords" (Mila, 2019). "Deforestation in the Amazon, considered a major carbon sink, is known as the main source of greenhouse gas emissions in Colombia, and therefore stopping logging is considered vital to protect the climate" (Mila, 2019). Despite the youth's historic win,

they are still fighting the government, but this time to pressure them into following the ruling (Mila, 2019). The youth activists continue to criticize the government's lack of action on the Court's ruling and for not following up on their own deforestation targets (Mila, 2019). "While a recent government press release affirmed that deforestation diminished by 10 percent compared to the year prior, the youth activists consider that the 197,000 felled hectares in 2018 are too many" (Mila, 2019).

These youth climate activists are not only taking legal action, they are also present online and in-person around their cities. For one, "youth activists signaled that the media's attention has opened up a space to communicate about the importance of Colombia's tropical rainforest, both for the planet and Colombians themselves" (Mila, 2019). Other activists conduct educational workshops and raise awareness through community projects (Mila, 2019). Finally, "the youth activists are working on proposals for an intergenerational pact, including a mandatory lecture on climate change in schools and an application that shows deforestation in the Amazon in real time" (Mila, 2019).

Discussion

The topic of youth involvement in policy-making processes is relatively new, and not a lot of information is currently available for analysis. But each of the cities described in the case studies provide a variety of real-life examples that showcase the different ways in which youth can be meaningfully engaged in civil society. The four case study cities were chosen due to the presence of each of the three methods of involvement, and through these, we can extract multiple lessons.

Research question 1: Youth Priorities

For the comparison of each of these case studies, it is important to note the priorities identified by youth through their areas of focus, projects, organizational structures, and audiences.

In each case study, there were a variety of themes that were apparent, which reflected the needs youth identified of their communities. In Bogotá, youth-created and youth-led projects indicated that younger community members were particularly concerned with issues of freedom, culture, human rights, inclusion, equality, and the environment. Among these issues, additional scholars also noted that youth in Bogotá are also passionate about their safety, education, job security and opportunities, poverty and general financial wellness, and corruption within government. In Rosario, a recurring project theme was security as well (or lack thereof.) Protocols for their participatory processes, such as youth participatory budgeting, also showed that gender equality was of high importance to their community. Furthermore, the Rosario processes showed dedication and commitment to ensuring their processes were accessible to diverse communities, both physically and financially. Not only did the City of Rosario provide transportation to their Children's Council meetings, participation in participatory processes was available at no charge

to community members. Additionally, youth in Rosario showed care and concern for their neighbors, choosing to host and run a variety of projects and events that would address community happiness, such as skits for adults, the "hugging memories" project for grandparents, and a Day of Games and Coexistence. Finally, Rosario showed immense leadership both for the country of Argentina and internationally, particularly in relation to issues of the environment. This was particularly demonstrated by Rosario being chosen as the location for a United Nation's Youth Climate Summit.

In Boston, the Youth Participatory Budgeting categories were: Public Safety; Parks; Health and Wellness; Community; Culture; Education; and Technology. The winners of the 2019-2020 Youth PB project cycle were "Plant the City," "Eat Local," and "Boston Shelters." Their Youth Council Committees included: Art and Culture; Education; Civic Engagement; Climate Action; Public Health; Public Peace; and Workforce and Economic Development. The Boston Youth Action Board, identified as Boston's Youth Action Group, focuses solely on youth homelessness within the city. In Seattle, the Youth Participatory Budgeting process' long term goals were to reduce crime and police violence, in addition to creating true community safety. While the Seattle Youth Commission functioned on an advisory basis, working to educate local and city government and youth on community issues, the King County Youth Advisory Council had a broader scope of work. KCYAC hosts youth-led projects, partners with other youth serving organizations, facilitates a variety of workshops, and supports professional development for youth. KCYAC's Y.E.L.L. program focuses on creating a framework of support for youth, whereas Y.P.A.R. encourages youth to identify issues and problem solve. An example of such was a School to Prison Pipeline Film, which highlighted the racial disparities of the prison

system. Seattle's Youth Action Group, FEEST, focuses on food justice and equality. Their successes included providing snacks, culturally relevant foods, and fresh produce in certain schools, in addition to successfully advocating for the removal of police presence in schools.

Overall, concerns of safety were particularly present among the two South American case studies. Both North American cities, on the other hand, included a focus on food access and food security. Youth in both Bogotá and Seattle noted interests in the theme of "freedom," and Bogotá, Rosario, and Seattle had themes related to equality or inclusivity.

Themes	Bogotá	Rosario	Boston	Seattle
Safety/Security	Y	Y	Y	Y
Food Access & Security	N	N	Y	Y
Public Health & Wellness	N	N	Y	N
Freedom, Healthy Government, & Political Engagement	Y	N	Y	N
Poverty, Economic/Financial Security and Job Opportunities	Y	N	Y	N
Equality, Inclusivity, and Accessibility	Y	Y	N	Y
Gender Equality	N	Y	N	N
Environmental Issues	Y	Y	Y	N
Culture	Y	N	Y	N
Education	Y	N	Y	N

Figure 1. Themes of youth involvement by case study.

Needs of youth are regional, so it is understandable that the themes within cities, countries, and even continents, differ. Even more so when taking into consideration the social, political, and economic histories and current states of each case study. For example, the chart in Figure 1 shows only one theme whose presence may be correlated with the case study's region. Food

access and security is a theme of high importance to youth in Boston and Seattle, the two case studies in the United States, but not in Rosario and Bogotá, the two case studies in South America. While youth in Rosario and Bogotá may care about this topic, the processes analyzed in this paper did not show a particular focus on it. For the United States, studies have shown that food justice has a close connection to racial justice. Because there is an understanding of this connection, and because racial justice is a significant issue in the United States, it is comprehensible that food access and security is thus an important topic as well.

On the other hand, there is also only one topic which all four case studies have identified as a key theme: safety and security. It expected that this theme has a different meaning in each case study, but with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in mind, it is understandable that every community is worried about safety on a constant basis.

Furthermore, while no specific study has been made to confirm this, it is likely that the differences in age groups for each of the case studies and their respective participatory processes had an effect on the projects created and implemented. For example, Rosario's Children's Council was open to a much younger age group and coordinated projects on much lighter topics, such as playtime. In contrast, Seattle's KCYAC oversaw an independent film project which highlighted the racial inequalities of the prison system. All topics are worthwhile and crucial to society, and particularly to the respective youth involved with each, but the nature of age differences suggests a difference in process outcomes.

These themes also provide a bridge between the types of youth involvement in each city, as each of the processes are not disconnected from each other. While they may function independently for the most part, they may choose to combine forces in pursuit of solving a mutual issue.

Another indication of youth priorities can be seen by the form of involvement each organization chooses to focus on through its organizational structure. They key factor lies in determining whether the process prioritizes the empowerment of youth, the impact of youth, or whether they accomplish both. These varying priorities may also be related to the differences in institutionalization or formality between each.

In Bogotá, the Youth Participatory Budgeting process focuses on local direct democracy and on creating comfortable spaces for conversations and education at a much larger scale than ever seen before in the city. It is institutionalized, financed, and supported by the Subdirectorate for Youth of the District Secretariat for Social Integration and the Center for Research and Popular Education. For this process, there is direct impact of youth, who can identify, vote, and experience the implementation of their projects. For the Youth Participatory Budgeting councils, which are a part of the overall YPB process, the effect is both impact and empowerment, as it involves youth in the general YPB process but also strengthens their skills as leaders and communicators. Bogotá's youth council is primarily empowerment. This is because Bogotá's new system of youth council can almost be seen as a parallel government to its existing government, on local, regional, and national scales. There is a direct election of youth representation and youth are encouraged to present themselves in the public political sphere. The YC conducts dialogues with administrations, arranges the inclusion of youth agendas, and

oversees and controls public management. Finally, as is the nature of youth action groups, Bogotá's Youth Action Groups achieve both impact and empowerment. As with most Youth Action Groups, Bogotá's groups are youth led and thus anything that youth want to see happen, then they have to make it happen themselves. With this, Bogotá's youth action groups are institutionalized to the level that each organization would like to be, within itself, as they operate independent from government.

In Rosario, the Youth Participatory Budgeting and Youth Council prioritize the impact of youth. The YPB process creates discussion spaces and works to develop youth skills such as their awareness and knowledge of democratic processes and is institutionalized through its Municipal Youth Center. Similarly, the Youth Council aims to simply create and implement the ideas of its members and is hosted by the city and has constant communication with the local intergovernmental council. Rosario's Youth Action Groups, for reasons similar to Bogotá's, encourage both empowerment and impact. Rosario's YAG are informal and function independently from government.

Like the previous Participatory Budgeting processes, Boston's Youth PB is youth impact-based. In Boston, the Youth Council focuses on youth development opportunities, and thus prioritizes providing them with the tools they need in order to have an impact, therefore indicating the council focuses on youth empowerment. These tools include orientation sessions, presentation and public speaking workshops, opportunities for leadership roles, and networking. Boston's Youth Action Board has both direct impact and youth empowerment, as they target a very specific community issue through direct actions in coordination with city government. The YPB,

youth council, and youth action group present in Boston have a high level of formality and institutionalization, as they are each hosted by either one of the City Government Departments or by the Mayor's Office.

Finally, in Seattle, the Youth Participatory Budgeting goals are both impact-based and empowerment-based. The YPB process aims to build youth skills and knowledge, give youth a voice in government, fund projects, and create a more inclusive democracy. Seattle's Youth Commission is more on the youth empowerment side of the spectrum, as they function on an advisory basis only. They conduct educational sessions and town halls and propose policies and testify in government. Furthermore, the Youth Commission looks to develop their members' public speaking, facilitation, and communication skills, in addition to building relationships with external entities. Similarly, Seattle's Youth Advisory Council is also more youth empowerment-oriented, as they provide their youth with a range of professional development opportunities through programs such as Y.E.L.L. and Y.P.A.R. Similarly to Boston, Seattle's processes have a high level of institutionalization and formality as well. Its participatory budgeting is hosted by its Department of Neighborhoods, the KCYAC is hosted by the district, and while its YAG is independent, it functions with a Board of Directors and closely with local schools.

Across the four case studies, it can be noted that the Youth Participatory Budgeting processes were primarily impact-based. For Youth Councils, all case studies except for Rosario focused on youth empowerment. Rosario is differentiated from the other case studies in this case because its Children's Council had an element of Participatory Budgeting, in which it focused on

materializing youth project ideas. And across the board for all case studies, Youth Action Groups incorporated both youth empowerment and the impact of youth.

With this, each of the types of participation have exemplified different strengths. Once again, as discussed in the comparison of issue themes, these strengths provide involved youth an opportunity to work together when targeting a mutual issue, as each method of involvement has a different perspective on how to move forward.

The third criteria in comparing the youth priorities among the four case studies comes from the rate of participation from their intended audiences.

In Bogotá, there was a high youth participation rate for both their Participatory Budgeting and Youth Action Groups. However, because of how new Bogotá's Youth Council structure is, there is currently no data available on youth participation. In terms of ages, the rate of participation in the participatory budgeting process for 14-17-year-olds rose from 22.8% in 2007, 28% in 2009, to an incredible 68% in the 2011-2012 cycle. Youth Councils were structured for 14-28-year-olds, and Youth Action Groups did not define a specific age range. For term lengths, participatory budgeting runs on a year-by-year cycle and thus any appointments ran on the same cycle, whereas Bogotá's Youth Council elections were for 4-year terms.

Secondly, in Rosario, while participation in the Youth Participatory Budgeting process was slow at first, they currently have a high youth participation rate. Similar can be said to the city's Children's Council, which also attracts youth from a diverse set of background. Rosario's Youth

Action Groups is also a marker of great success, as not only are they able to have influence over their local communities, but they have also attracted youth from across the country for a Youth Climate Summit. Rosario's Youth Participatory Budgeting was exclusively for 13-18-year-olds with two-year terms, while its Children's Council is open to 8-11-year-olds for appointments of one year.

Like Rosario's Youth Participatory Budgeting process, Boston's YPB only met 75% of its participation goal during its first year. However, turnout later skyrocketed in following years and did a good job of targeting low-income neighborhoods. This was in part because YPB conducted outreach directly to students who were less likely to originally participate, with the help of Boston schools and other facilitators. Additionally, YPB offered translation and interpretation services. In Boston, Youth Participatory Budgeting was only open to 12-25-year-olds, and for which those elected as Change Agents were appointed for a one-year term. Its Youth Council is open only to high school students, and Boston's Youth Action Board to those under the age of 25.

Finally, Seattle's Youth Participatory Budgeting process is successful in encouraging the participation of its target audience as the process is still ongoing each year. While the Seattle Youth Commission is closed to a certain number of youth representatives, who have to be appointed by the Mayor and City Council, KCYAC is less strict, and its members have generally faced educational or work barriers. Seattle's Youth Participatory Budgeting is open to youth 11-25 years of age, and budget delegates serve one-year terms. Its Youth Commission is for those 13-29 years old, who can serve two-year terms, and KCYAC for those 16-24 years old.

Participatory Budgeting

	Ages	Budget	Institutionalization/ Formality	Term Lengths (if applicable)	Creation date
Boston	12-25	$25k/project, $1M total	Dept. of youth engagement and employment. Steering committee. PBP	1 year (Change Agents)	2014
Seattle	11-25	25-300k/p	Steering committee. Seattle Dept. of Neighborhoods. PBP.	1 year (budget delegates)	2015
Rosario	13-18	$6M pesos total (2017)	Supported by Municipal Youth Centre	2 years (councilors)	2004
Bogota	n/a but high participation of 14-17-year-olds	51 projects	Financed & supported by Subdirectorate for Youth of the District Secretariat for Social Integration. & Center for Research and Popular Education (CINEP)	1 year (precabildos / cabildos)	2012

Figure 2. Comparing Youth Participatory Budgeting processes by case study.

Youth Councils

	Ages	Budget	Institutionalization/ Formality	Term Lengths (if applicable)	Creation date
Boston	High school	Unknown	hosted by mayor's office	Unknown	Unknown
Seattle (1) Youth Commission (2) KCYAC	(1) 13-29 (2) 16-24	Unknown	(**1**) 15 reps (7 district, 8 at-large), appointed by mayor & city council (**2**) Hosted by district	(**1**) 2 years (**2**) not specified	(**1**) Unknown (**2**) 2013
Rosario	8-11	Unknown	communication w/ intergovernmental council	1 year	1998
Bogota	14-28	Unknown	(7, 13, or 17) council members per district	4 years	2021

Figure 3. Comparing Youth Council processes by case study.

Youth Action Groups

	Ages	**Budget**	**Institutionalization/ Formality**	**Term Lengths** (if applicable)	**Creation date**
Boston	<25y	$165k (2017)	hosted by mayor's office	n/a	n/a
Seattle	n/a	n/a	Board of Directors. Work with schools.	n/a	n/a
Rosario	n/a	n/a	Informal	n/a	n/a
Bogota	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Figure 4. Comparing Youth Action Group processes by case study.

Interestingly, Argentina and Colombia signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the

Rights of the Child (UNCRC) but the United States only signed it and did not ratify it. Of the

193 nations who ratified the UNCRC, Colombia was one of 40 countries to sign on the first day

in 1990, followed a few weeks later by Argentina, also in 1990. The US is one of three countries

to not have ratified the UNCRC, along with Somalia and South Sudan.

The UNCRC defines four fundamental principles, one of which is the Principle of Inclusion and

Participation, which establishes that children have the right to having and expressing views and

opinions, and that they be respected. The presence of the UNCRC within the two South

American countries shows a drastic contrast with the United States as to how seriously youth

participation is taken by each government. Certain cities in the United States, as exemplified by

Boston and Seattle, are starting to catch up with the level of youth participation in South

America, shown by Rosario and Bogotá. But the lack of involvement in the UNCRC from the

United States may explain why certain processes are underdeveloped or not yet present across

the country, and in contrast, why the same processes are more established in countries who have

ratified the UNCRC. And, for example, why there is no overarching structure or guidelines for youth participation in policy-making processes at the state or national level in the United States.

Research Question 2: Process Improvements

The second format for comparison of the case studies comes from how each process has developed in each city. This analysis also provides a source for suggestions for improvement to each case study, as they can each learn from one another.

Structural Themes	Boston	Seattle	Rosario	Bogota
Physical access / transport to meetings	N	N	Y	Y
Engagement of youth not already involved	N	Y	Y	Y
Coordination with schools	N	Y	Y	N
Good communication	N	Y	Y	N
Engagement of political leaders	Y	Y	Y	Y
Diverse youth representation	Y	Y	Y	Y
Youth development opportunities	Y	Y	Y	Y
Anti-youth sentiments	Y	Y	Y	Y
Structural / Organizational issues	Y	Y	Y	Y

Figure 5. Comparing structural themes for the combined processes in each case study.

A variety of beneficial and detrimental factors were identified across the four case studies, and each structural theme, if it was present or absent, was then located among the cities, as depicted by Figure 5.

As noted in the earlier case studies, processes in Bogotá and Rosario took into close consideration the physical access their youth had to the available democratic participatory processes, and in some cases even provided transportation to meetings to reduce accessibility barriers. Taking into account the themes in Figure 1, where youth in Bogotá and Rosario were worried about equality, inclusivity, and accessibility, it is unsurprising that their process structures reflect similar concerns. The same structural factors were not identified within the Boston or Seattle case studies, despite Seattle youth being worried about equality, inclusivity, and accessibility as well. However, the case studies in the United States are, for the most part, younger than the two in South America, which may explain why it has not implemented similar structures to support physical access to participatory processes.

Among Seattle, Rosario, and Bogotá, they each took extra steps to break further barriers in order to engage youth not already involved in civic or social processes. A similar observation was not made in the case of Boston.

Interestingly, some of the structural themes present (or not) in some of the case studies did not align with which issues youth saw as a priority. For example, Seattle youth noted "Equality, Inclusivity, and Accessibility" as a top concern (Figure 1), but intent to provide physical access to participatory spaces was not present in Seattle (Figure 5). This could be because some of the youth participatory processes were originally created by adults for youth or inspired by adult-centric processes, such as participatory budgeting or councils. While the opinions of youth expressed in these spaces may express certain concerns, even the processes in which they

participate themselves may not be reflective of them. Another example of such is the "Coordination with schools" criteria in Figure 5. These participatory processes are for youth who, for the most part, can be expected to be attending some form of schooling. Thus, it is interesting that an effort to coordinate with the school calendar was made in Seattle and Rosario, but not in Boston or Bogotá. If the processes had truly been organically youth-created or led, it is likely that schools would have been the first resource they turned to for assistance.

Seattle and Rosario were also thought to have strong communication between youth, government, and external community members. The same was not said from participants in Boston or Bogotá, as discussed in cited research.

Additional differences were specific to term lengths for participatory budgeting delegates or appointments to the local youth council, in addition to the wide range in ages for each of the processes across the four cities. Some being only available to youth as young as 8-11, open to most teens and even for participants into mid-twenties in some cases, and other processes open to youth as old as 28 and 29 years old. Not to mention, each of the youth councils across the four case studies had different term lengths for appointees, ranging from 1- to 4 year-terms.

Despite these differences, all four case studies also had a lot in common. Each established relationships with and engaged their respective political leaders, whether through projects or hosted by a governmental office, accomplished diverse youth representation within their processes, and provided opportunities for youth development. For example, the participatory budgeting processes in each of the case studies was hosted and/or supported by the appropriate

local governmental office or department. Additionally, each case study also faced a similar limitation, present through forces of anti-youth sentiments and/or adultism (described more in-depth in the general description of Youth Action Groups), which was detrimental to each of the three types of participatory involvement in each city.

And thus, with these differences and similarities, each of the case studies can thus be described to have some form of structural or organizational issue(s). And therefore, five opportunities for improvement across the case studies have been identified, each with respective solution suggestions.

The first is to improve physical access and general accessibility to processes. For the cities which have not implemented such systems, providing transportation or a travel stipend could be beneficial to youth participants and the process as a whole, as it would reduce financial and/or geographical barriers. A separate or additional solution would be to host meetings or events at various locations throughout districts and communities, and at different dates and times to accommodate different lifestyles and the diversity in communities. A third solution for accessibility would be to incorporate meetings or at least a portion of the process, into school curriculums or the school system. For example, projects to be voted on during that year's participatory budgeting cycle could be presented in school, during a related class (such as Social Studies, Government, or an equivalent class), or as an extra-curricular activity available at the school.

The second opportunity for improvement is to improve the timing of the youth participatory processes. One fix would be to coordinate processes with the local school calendar. This would allow students who may live relatively farther away or have familial obligations to participate. For better results, this would be particularly effective if meetings or events were to be incorporated into the school system. Similarly, youth participatory processes could be coordinated with the adult-oriented programs, such as the participatory budgeting processes. With this, families could travel together to their respective meetings or voting sessions.

The third is to increase the diversity in youth representation and engagement. As noted in the first opportunity, this could include ensuring physical barriers to access for events are reduced and, as noted by the second opportunity for improvement, through scheduling and coordination with other pre-existing youth systems or groups. Increasing the diversity of youth representation and engagement requires a shift in culture. By providing positive role models in each process, who the youth can relate to and identify with, is likely to make the youth feel safer and more welcomed in those environments. Furthermore, this could also be done by diversifying events, either for the process(es) themselves directly or their related outreach, in order to increase its appeal to youth. For example, providing a variety of voting options, social media presence, or canvassing around neighborhoods to raise awareness and education for the process in question.

The fourth is combating anti-youth sentiments. Taking inspiration from one of the case studies, it could be beneficial to implement a monitor or coordinator that would be present at all youth process gatherings to ensure adults remain separated from youth participants. The responsibility

cannot be solely placed on youth and monitors, however, and thus educational programs and training sessions should be implemented. These trainings would combat biases that older generations may have internalized over time against youth. In conjunction with these trainings, entire communities could be invited to participate in the implementation of youth-led programs and projects, so they are able to witness first-hand the creativity and knowledge of their local youth.

The fifth and final opportunity for improvement comes with communication. Incorporating a monitor or coordinator, as noted in the fourth opportunity for improvement, could ensure information is accurately transmitted during and after meetings events, such as through minute-taking and the tracking of action items. For each process, however, it is also crucial to clearly describe the tasks, roles, and rules that are expected prior to the onset of the process, and with all stakeholders, whether that be the participants themselves or the general public. Furthermore, communication could be improved by increasing communication with the general public, through progress reports, media toolkits, or media exposure. Not only would this increase transparency, but it would also raise awareness for each of the processes and combat anti-youth sentiments, as the many benefits of youth participatory processes would be highlighted.

Finally, the last recommendation is specifically for the United States: to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and encourage each state to come up with a regional plan to increase meaningful youth involvement in policy-making processes.

Conclusion

Boston, Seattle, Rosario and Bogotá have shown us that communities put a lot of emphasis on local action. Understandably, people care more about their communities and the issues that impact them directly as opposed to giving their attention to what is happening at higher levels of government on issues that may not. Of course, this is not the case for all policies or all people, as some policies attract a lot of attention from general society, particularly surrounding current hot topics such as the environment.

Local action is also especially noticeable when the top, the people with power, is "rotten" but the bottom, general society, is very "ripe" and tries to counteract what they see as negative policies or actions from their government by organizing, mobilizing, and participating in a lot of progressive actions.

In the United States, local actions have defined much of our political participation, especially on issues such as racial justice, women's rights, immigration, and also the environment. Citizen involvement has presented itself on all scales, from local town halls and campaigning, to city-wide protests, to nation-wide marches and boycotts.

However, as a member of the youth population, my personal experiences have shown and taught me that adults tend to not be interested in involving us or care about our opinions or experiences, no matter the subject. As youth, becoming civically engaged can be extremely frustrating, not knowing where to start, who to talk or reach out to, or how to engage with previously-existing

organizations, among other things. These experiences are why it is so important for governments to create an infrastructure of youth involvement in policy-making processes.

As a society, we have put all our focus, time, and energy on technological innovation, but we have let social innovation fall behind. There is a common saying that "history repeats itself," but I would argue that this is because it is always the old(er) voices making the decisions. The older generations are set in their ways thus political outcomes follow those mindsets. The younger generations, who are excluded, are then unable to include their newer perspectives. Excluding a whole demographic from civil society is a detriment to our growth as a whole. Thus, youth involvement in policy-making processes is the social innovation we have been waiting for and that we so desperately need in order to progress.

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