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## Participatory Budgeting in Surakarta, Indonesia: Pro-Poor Approach

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the pro-poor orientation of Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Surakarta, Indonesia, with a focus on its effectiveness in enhancing socioeconomic conditions for impoverished and marginalized groups. Using a qualitative methodology involving observations, legal document analysis, and interviews with underprivileged citizens and key stakeholders, the research seeks to address two core questions: To what extent is PB in Surakarta truly pro-poor, and what key challenges hinder its role in poverty alleviation? Findings indicate that Surakarta's PB system has made notable strides in inclusivity, prioritizing budget allocations that enhance access to essential services like healthcare and education for disadvantaged communities. Additionally, the village-delegated budget system empowers local residents to address specific needs, supporting efforts to improve quality of life. However, persistent challenges remain; despite PB's inclusive design and community participation, poverty rates have seen limited reduction. This study underscores the need for an increased delegated budget alongside strengthened social accountability mechanisms and enhanced community empowerment programs to achieve sustainable poverty alleviation. These findings contribute valuable insights into the dynamics of pro-poor governance and highlight critical areas for strengthening participatory frameworks in Indonesia's local governance.*

**Keywords:** Participatory budgeting; acceleration for inclusion; poverty reduction

### ABSTRAK

Studi ini mengeksplorasi pelaksanaan Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan (Musrenbang) di Surakarta, Indonesia, dengan fokus pada efektivitasnya dalam meningkatkan kondisi sosial-ekonomi bagi kelompok masyarakat miskin dan termarginalkan. Dengan menggunakan metodologi kualitatif yang meliputi observasi, analisis dokumen hukum, dan wawancara dengan warga kurang mampu serta pemangku kepentingan utama, penelitian ini berupaya menjawab dua pertanyaan utama: Sejauh mana Musrenbang di Surakarta benar-benar berpihak pada kaum miskin, dan tantangan utama apa yang menghambat perannya dalam pengentasan kemiskinan? Temuan menunjukkan bahwa sistem Musrenbang di Surakarta telah mencapai kemajuan berarti dalam inklusivitas, memprioritaskan alokasi anggaran yang meningkatkan akses ke layanan penting seperti kesehatan dan pendidikan bagi komunitas yang kurang beruntung. Selain itu, sistem anggaran yang dilimpahkan ke tingkat desa memungkinkan penduduk lokal untuk memenuhi kebutuhan spesifik, yang mendukung upaya peningkatan kualitas hidup. Namun, tantangan yang berkelanjutan masih ada; meskipun desain Musrenbang yang inklusif dan partisipasi masyarakat, tingkat kemiskinan hanya mengalami sedikit penurunan. Studi ini menekankan perlunya peningkatan anggaran yang dilimpahkan, bersama dengan mekanisme akuntabilitas sosial yang lebih kuat serta program pemberdayaan komunitas yang ditingkatkan untuk mencapai pengentasan kemiskinan yang berkelanjutan. Temuan ini

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memberikan wawasan berharga mengenai dinamika tata kelola yang pro-kaum miskin dan menyoroti area penting untuk memperkuat kerangka kerja partisipatif dalam tata kelola lokal di Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci:** Penganggaran partisipatif; percepatan inklusi; pengentasan kemiskinan

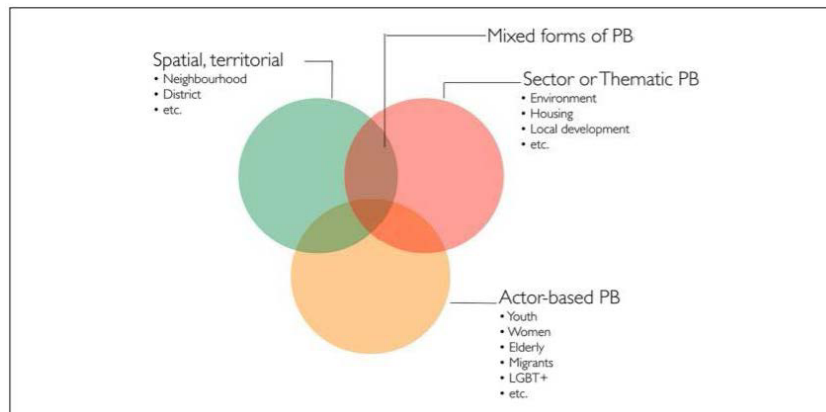
## INTRODUCTION

After it was first introduced in Porto Alegre about 34 years ago, people from various corners of the globe are now seeing practices of Participatory Budgeting (PB). Dias mentioned that PB diffused to almost every part of the globe, reaching a total of 11-12 thousand cases (Dias et al., 2019).

Many cities implementing PB celebrate how dialogues (Urszula K & Zawadzka-P<sup>1</sup>k, 2022) among citizens have increased in day-to-day democracy. The dynamic issues among countries however diverse and often un-comparable. "Providing a single definition of participatory budgeting is difficult, as approaches to the practice vary widely and often depend on local contexts. PB experiences can also vary over time with a majority being adapted in both design and methodology in response to changing circumstances and of mutual-learning opportunities." (Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA), 2022).

In Surakarta city, the location of this study, PB is recognized as Yearly Participatory Planning - YPP. Citizens gather yearly to decide what the agenda of development they want to do in the following year. Local people also recognize their PB as *musrenbang* or a deliberative development planning forum. The citizens believe that deliberation is the key to their development planning.

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a concept that ties the normative values of non-elite participation and deliberation to specific budgetary decisions. PB has been implemented in various countries and cities, with some notable differences in design and process. For example, the adoption of PB in the US has several distinct differences from the original Brazilian cases, most notably the district-level adoption in US cities like Chicago and NYC and the municipal-level adoption in Brazil (Gilman & Wampler, 2019). Surakarta, on the other hand, employs both territorial as well as thematic or sectoral adoption. Additionally, some current PB implementations have been implemented in support of digital technologies, such as in Cracow, Poland (Urszula K & Zawadzka-P<sup>1</sup>k, 2022) and Helsinki, Finland (Tseng, 2023). Yu-Shan Tseng sees PB in Helsinki as a practice of digital urban democracy, while Urszula finds PB in Cracow as digitally supported dialogue.



**Figure 1. Basic Typology of Participatory Budgeting**  
**Source: Cabannes as in UN CEPA (2022, p. 4)**

Numerous studies have been conducted on PB, exposing both celebrations and criticism over it. A study (Carolina et al., 2023) celebrates PB's positive impact on electoral voting in New York City, showing that individuals who participate in PB activities are more likely to also participate in electoral voting. Another study (Cabannes, 2014) finds the contribution of PB to the provision and management of basic services. In addition, a study (Subhanullah, 2019) also finds an optimistic outcome of PB: "Simultaneously budget participation, budget goals clarity, and internal control systems implementation have a positive effect on the performance of local government agencies."

Nevertheless, Lewandowska & Justyna Chodkowska-Miszczuk (2022) in their study express their grievances with PB, finding that the participatory budget is asymmetrical, with infrastructure investments dominating. They argue that support is needed for pro-social activities and those activating residents, and for the diversification of projects in the budget, including setting aside a pool of funds for pro-social and cross-district projects.

A research study (Kurkela et al., 2023) conducted on PB in Lahti City, Finland criticizes its implementation as being too individual-centered. They argue that the institutionalization of PB in a local government organization requires organizational innovation capacity, not just individuals who are keen, motivated, and committed to working on PB. The authors found that successful PB results from the citizens' viewpoint can be reached while simultaneously ensuring the sustainability of PB through more organizational commitment and support that materializes into managerial activities. They also found that adequate resourcing is a key question in the institutionalization of PB.

As a common interest of PB studies, researchers are interested to see if PB has its significance to the lives of the people. (Hagelskamp et al., 2020; Haussy, 2021) In its origin country, PB has been about less successful in bringing wealth to the people. A

relatively loud grievance is delivered as “PB has spread from 12 Brazilian cities in 1990 to several hundred cities across the country, but the process differs in actual implementation and generally fails to achieve measurable improvements in welfare. (Haussy, 2021) A similar concern is addressed in this research to PB practiced in Surakarta city, Indonesia. Does PB or YPP in the city change the lives of low-income, poor, and marginalized people? What are available opportunities and challenges?

Like most practices of Participatory Budgeting (PB) in the world, PB or yearly participatory planning (YPP) in Surakarta city has its significance in how people get involved in a decisional dialogue from the grassroots to its city hall plenary meeting. The PB process starts at the neighborhood meetings, which are usually attended by family representatives. Representatives from neighborhood meetings attend village meetings, and respectively representatives from village meetings attend sub-district meetings. Finally, representatives from sub-district meetings attend a city hall meeting. Conclusive meetings are taken at each level of the meetings. Each year, PB in Surakarta involves many people. According to Yanuar Sugiri, one of the city development planning staff, “If we calculated the attendances from neighborhood meetings to city hall meeting, our yearly participatory planning meetings involve about 10,000 participants each year.” (interview 23/10/23) Compared to about 118.000 families in Surakarta city, yearly PB in this city has been attended by about 8% of all family representatives.

The dominant discourse that guides PB in Surakarta city is pro-poor budgeting. Thus, a more inclusive process has been created to ensure that poor and marginalized people have their representation in the PB. According to Eko Setiawan, executive director of an NGO named KOMPIP, “Around the latest 10 years, we have sectoral representative meetings in our YPP. Marginalized people representatives can attend these city-level meetings. So, participants of this YPP are not only coming from territorial representatives” (interview 23/10/23)

**Table 1. Poor People in Surakarta City**

Year	Number of Poor People in Surakarta
2021	42.773
2022	44,620
2023	44,973

**Source: Regional Development Planning Agency**

Despite the massive participation of the people in yearly participatory planning (YPP) and the pro-poor budgeting discourse in Surakarta city, there is a continuous grievance of stagnancy in the number of poor people in this city. According to the Bappeda Kota Surakarta (The Surakarta City Regional Development Planning Agency), in 2021, there were 42,773 poor people officially recorded by the local government of Surakarta. In the following year, 2022, the local government of Surakarta recorded an increase in the number of poor people to 44,620. In 2023, the number of poor people has slightly increased again to 44,973.

## **METHOD**

The method used in the article is qualitative. The researchers collected data by conducting observation, legal document study, and interviews with key, main and supporting informants. The researchers chose NGO activists as key informants as activists are believed to have their long reflection on the PB Processes. Their interaction with government elites had been a plus informing mastery of the field dynamics. The authors chose the Community Based Empowerment Institution (LPMK) leader as the main informant as he is essentially the host of yearly PB implementations at the village level. Finally, the authors chose participants of the PB as supporting informants. This supporting informant was chosen based on their capacity to inform the voice of the poor and marginalized people during deliberation in PB.

Qualitative analysis was then conducted by presenting the findings in a descriptive report. The researchers aimed to find barriers to the participation of poor and marginalized people in Yearly Participatory Planning (YPP) in Surakarta City, Indonesia. Surakarta was chosen as it is believed to be one of the most advanced in practicing YPP in Indonesia. The researchers departed from an assumption that it is not just because regulation has been there, the inclusion of poor and marginalized people has been in practice, and poverty reduction to happen accordingly.

Based on this assumption, the researchers studied whether any regulations have been there guaranteeing access to these lower groups. Researchers also reviewed data and programs related to poor people. Researchers tracked through interviews whether and how the accesses have been used by the marginalized groups. Finally, the researchers disclosed gaps and barriers that hinder poor and marginalized people from participating in YPP processes and made recommendations from there. Discussions with previous researchers enrich directions on how to advance PB in Solo and its promise to bring prosperity to low-income people, poor and marginalized ones.



## FINDINGS

### PB Cycles in Surakarta City

Yearly Participatory Planning (YPP) in Surakarta City, Indonesia has its cycle. In October, citizens start the cycle by conducting neighborhood forums. Based on a community strategic planning document, people in the neighborhood discuss proposed program activities. The following stage of PB is village forums. This forum is essentially a panel of neighborhood forum documents.

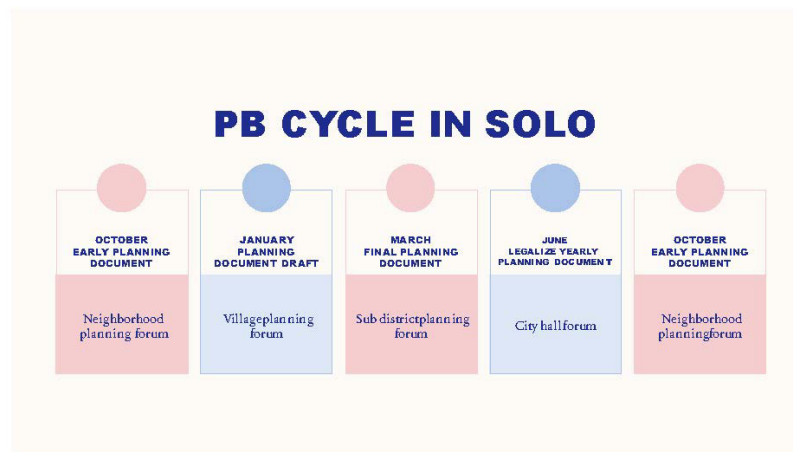


Figure 2. PB Cycle in Solo

Source: The Surakarta City Regional Development Planning Agency

Programs and activities as proposed by neighborhoods are synchronized and finalized at this level. Programs and activities at the village level are also discussed and proposed at this level. This activity takes place in January.

Synchronized documents from neighborhood forums and proposed programs at village levels are then discussed at sub-district levels. Like village forums, these sub-district forums are essentially a panel of village meetings. Participants in this sub-district level also discuss and propose programs and activities at the sub-district level. This activity takes place in March. Synchronized documents from sub-district forums are then finalized at the city hall meeting that takes place in June. Representatives from sub-district forums and city issue representatives, including industrial and academic representatives, are often invited to this city hall meeting. Participants at the city hall meeting can propose programs and activities that need to be implemented at the city level. Like lower forums, essentially this city hall meeting is a panel of sub-district forums.



**Figure 3. Scenes of Village Development Planning Meeting 2023 in Mojosongo, Jebres District, Surakarta**

**Source: KOMPIP Documentation**

People are very enthusiastic to attend PB/ YPP in Solo (See Figure 3). Various data are exposed during the Yearly Participatory Planning (YPP) processes in Surakarta City. The most often presented data are on poverty and human development index. This expose is aimed to show existing problems but also to compare with neighbouring cities and higher government.

### **Do Local Regulations Guarantee the Inclusion of Poor and Marginalized People in YPP?**

The local government of Surakarta has issued regulations that pledge to foster collaboration among citizens for development. Mayor Surakarta (Gibran Rakabuming Raka) and Vice Mayor (Teguh) have articulated the city's missions for their administration from 2021 to 2026. They emphasize the imperative for the local government and citizens to engage in collaborative and inclusive efforts. Specific missions aligned with this collaborative spirit include in the Mayor Surakarta Regulation No 6- year 2021:

*Mission no 5: To develop agile and collaborative governance and public services based on a spirit of cooperation and diversity.*

*Mission no 6: To achieve prosperity and well-being with city residents that is just and inclusive.*

Despite its compact size of approximately 42 km<sup>2</sup>, this city is home to a diverse population comprising various ethnicities, including local Javanese, Chinese, Arabic, and

others like Maduranese, Banjarnese, etc. As this city is also famous as an education city, it attracts youths from across the nation. Given this diversity, it is fitting that City Mission No. 5 tackles issues related to agile and collaborative governance, as well as public services. These efforts are grounded in a spirit of cooperation and recognition of the city's diverse demographics.

As a commuter city, Surakarta is believed to be inhabited by its original population of about 500.000 people at night time. In the daytime, people who live around this city but work or earn their living come to this city causing an increase of population up to about 1.500.000. It is about three times its original population.

Not only working in formal sectors such as government officers, bankers, or other jobs, many of those people who enter this city work in informal sectors such as street vending, pedicab drivers, parking attendants, and others. These informal sectors sometimes are considered as serious problems by local government as many of those who work as street vendors for instance often occupy areas that are not allowed for selling activities.

With increases in the load of city issues, it has been appropriate that this city's missions address issues of collaboration, inclusion, prosperity, and well-being. At its internal issues, it is the reality that the number of poor people in this city is still relatively a lot.

### **Problems of Poor and Marginalized People's Representation**

PB or Yearly Participatory Planning (YPP) or local people call it *Musrenbang* in Surakarta has been running for about 22 years. Since its founding, Yearly Participatory Planning- YPP in Surakarta has been guided by pro-poor discourses. It is that since the first participatory planning took place, the general meeting was led by a representative from marginalized people. It was in the early year 2000, that the presence of a marginalized community representative that led a general meeting surprised most of the people because the community could hardly believe that the city hall forum would be led by a disabled person who had been daily working as a parking attendant. Semmy Samuel Rory, the plenary head of the first YPP at the city hall meeting, did not represent the educated people. Rather, he represented disabled and parking attendant groups.

Since its inception, YPP in Surakarta has consistently prioritized the participation of marginalized poor. However, this research, encompassing data from 2020 to 2023, reveals that the involvement of the marginalized poor has persisted in an elitist manner. This elitism is evident in the low representation of poor and marginalized individuals in both numbers and vocal contributions within the spaces. Observations conducted in two villages, Mojosongo and Pajang, the scarcity of marginalized community groups in the YPP during the years 2021 and 2022.

Due to the intervention of the Madani project, supported by USAID, there has been an increase in the attendance of marginalized participants in YPP in the two villages in the year 2023. However, for the remaining 52 villages not directly impacted by Madani and other CSOs, it is suspected that the participation of poor and marginalized individuals continues to remain low. Eko Setyawan (5/10/23) from KOMPIP, the lead partner of Madani USAID in Surakarta, states, “Over the past three years, we have actively encouraged and facilitated the involvement of poor and marginalized people in the two villages (Mojosongo and Pajang). In the third year of our facilitation, representatives from disabled and single-mother groups were able to participate in the development planning meetings in Mojosongo and Pajang. However, we cannot confirm the attendance of participants from poor and marginalized groups in the village development planning meetings in the other 52 villages in Surakarta.”

The issue of poor and marginalized people’s representation is not solely quantitative but also qualitative. Budi, the chair of a community empowerment institution in Mojosongo, notes, “We used to invite representatives from poor and marginalized communities to our village meetings. Unfortunately, most of the time, they remain silent during their attendance.” (04/11/23) Budi’s remarks imply that there is a need for significant empowerment to enhance the capacity of poor and marginalized individuals to actively participate in local participatory budgeting.

The restricted capacity of poor and marginalized individuals to participate fosters an environment conducive to the practice of elitism. However, it is not solely a result of the low number of participants from low-income groups, nor is it solely a matter of their ability to voice concerns. In practice, all actors within these spaces fundamentally contest their interests, contributing to a scenario where the voices and demands of the poor are overshadowed by more dominant forces. It is very easy to see meetings in villages are dominated by the participation and voices of male participants. (Syukri, 2023) Frequent extinction of realities of poor leads to critiques of participatory institutions that they are prone to elite capture (Conning & Levine, 2002; Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

### **Current Performance of Pro-poor Budgeting**

The city government of Surakarta has allocated budgets for low-income, poor, and marginalized people. Two of the most famous and routine allocations are education and health services for the poor. In 2021, the PB in Surakarta secured an allocation of Rp.6.650.550.000 for education and Rp.51.050.176.300 for health insurance, which benefited 42,773 poor people. In 2022, the PB in Surakarta secured an allocation of Rp.9.745.500.000 for education and Rp.53.973.514.452 for health insurance, which benefited 44,620 poor people. In 2023, the PB in Surakarta allocated Rp.4.551.800.000 for

education and Rp.53.973.514.452 for health insurance, which benefited 44,973 poor people.

The uniqueness of the yearly participatory planning (YPP) in Surakarta City can be seen in the allocation of the delegated budget to the village community institutions. The local government of Surakarta has established Village Community Empowerment Institutions in each village, which are independent to plan community programs and disburse the delegated budget to activities agreed upon in the village-based YPP forum. The delegated budget policy has essentially opened a space for poor and marginalized people to accelerate their quality of life and prosperity. The practice of delegated budget is parallel to the spirit of the higher hierarchy of participation, where the fund is deliberately released under the control of the citizen. In the ladder of participation, delegated space is the highest position among the existing ladders. The PB in Surakarta provides a promising avenue for improving the lives of the poor and marginalized in the city. The local government of Surakarta needs to increase the size of the delegated budget and create a stronger inclusion mechanism to ensure more participants from poor groups have access to the budget and can accelerate their wealth and prosperity.

**Table 2. Budget and Basic Services for the Poor in Surakarta City**

Year	Free Education Budget (BPMKS)	Health Budget	Number of Poor People in SURAKARTA
2021	6.650.550.000	51.050.176.300	42.773
2022	9.745.500.000	53.973.514.452	44,620
2023	4.551.800.000	54.540.933.800	44,973

**Source: Mayor of Surakarta Number 401/109 Year 2021**

Surakarta city, through Mayor Regulation No. 10 of the year 2019, eloquently articulates the purpose of village delegated budget allocation by stating:

1. The management of village development funds intended to enhance development in villages based on community participation so that creating community welfare in the village;
2. The village development fund aims to provide a stimulant for society to play a role in the development of the village that derived from people's aspirations;

**Table 3. Performance of City Budget Surakarta/ Surakarta**

Year	Total City Budget	Delegated Budget to Villages	Average per Village	Percentage
2023	2.365.326.507.727	14.904.300.000	276.005.556	0,6%
2022	2.135.619.961.790	10.000.000.000	185.185.185	0,4%
2021	1.938.004.441.798	9.400.000.000	174.074.074	0,4%

\*all in IDR

**Source: Surakarta Government budget (APBD) 2021, 2022, 2023**

The city budget increases every year from the year 2021 to 2023. The size of delegated to 54 villages in the city also increases every year from 2021 to 2023. In the year 2022 to 2023, the delegated budget increases 49,04 %. The sizes of delegated budgets however are always below 1% of the total city budget.

Accordingly, each village receives 174.074.074 IDR in the year 2021, 185.185.185 IDR in the year 2022, and 276.005.556 IDR in the year 2023. Compared to the total city budget, the size of delegated budget allocation remains too small in percentage.

## DISCUSSION

Democracy is frequently portrayed with two distinct facets. One is formal democracy, exemplified by-elections, while the other is day-to-day democracy. Participatory Budgeting is often characterized as the embodiment of day-to-day democracy in action. At times when disillusionment prevails with formal democratic processes, particularly elections, people tend to cultivate hope in day-to-day democracy, exemplified by initiatives like Participatory Budgeting. "Local political leaders as well as international organizations have embraced participatory budgeting in response to problems of political exclusion and citizens' dissatisfaction with representative democracy." (Holdo, 2020). Thus, as practices in its origin the Porto Alegre process, PB has been recognized as building citizenship and changing society's relationship with the state. Abers describes left-wing parties, such as the Partido dos Trabalhadores, or Workers' Party-which governs Porto Alegre-have also promoted greater citizen control over all aspects of government decision-making (2000). Cabannes on PB says this creates new spaces of dialogue between public bodies and social organizations and often develops into new joint decision-making bodies. (2014) PB is also believed to be workable as a mediatory instrument positioned between the city management and the citizens (Box, 2001; Miller & O'Leary, 2007) As its nature to improve the quality of public services, satisfy the growing growing needs of the community, and addressing multiple societal challenges, citizen involvement has been considered a valuable element (Michels A, 2011).

In an era where scholars posit that Participatory Budgeting (PB) processes can mend a fractured relationship between the state and its citizens, local governments may adopt PB for various reasons. Kubler, D., Ruchat, P.E., Woo, Y.S., Heiden, N.V.D (2019) contend that the proliferation of participatory governance is motivated by a desire to enhance governability, particularly in contexts marked by adversarial relationships and strong, fragmented group interests. Conversely, contemporary studies also provide evidence that PB contributes to the augmentation of democratic practices.

PB processes can create an intersection between ‘less political’ volunteering and civic engagement and formal political behaviors. With its community focus and emphasis on the public co-design of projects with a direct impact on local neighborhoods, PB is uniquely positioned to bring in residents who may not typically vote or engage in formal electoral politics. (Johnson & Carlson, 2023).

In this day-to-day democracy, non-elected citizen decides what they need to budget and not to budget. Participatory processes allow citizens to take part in decision-making and to give impulse for change. “Broadly speaking, participatory budgeting allows the participation of non-elected citizens in the conception and/or allocation of public finances.” (Sintomer Y & Röcke A, 2008).

This day-to-day democracy is conceptually vital. Through its mechanism, people can prioritize budgeting and access its benefits. In terms of one of the most expected outcomes, PB is expected to bring a guarantee to citizen economic security. Tomashevskaya, A. et. al say it is a public mechanism for diagnosing the priorities and needs of the population. This mechanism for financial decentralization allows for attracting additional funds from the budget for community development and helps strengthen its economic security. (2023, p.1)

Despite its level, the PB practice has established a basis for collective decision-making in day-to-day democracy. There are reasons to appreciate the PB in Surakarta, as it provides a promising avenue for economic security, especially in terms of its potential to improve the lives of low-income, poor, and marginalized people in the city. The delegated budget (see the delegated concept in Arnsstein) in Surakarta creates an avenue for robust poverty alleviation, as it leaves the allocated budget under the full control of the citizens.

The YPP in Surakarta has been quantitatively inclusive to the citizens and it has normatively guaranteed the participation of low-income, poor, and marginalized people. The low-income, poor, and marginalized people can take part in the forums either through territorial or sectoral representation. In practice, however, the number of poor people who attend this PB in this city still needs to be increased in both quantity and quality as (Hagelskamp et al., 2020) state problems of PB regarding low participation levels amongst low-income people.

This article can be viewed as a complementary and nuanced dialogue to the research conducted by Grillos (2017). This article however studies participatory non-infrastructure budgeting. The difference from Grillos's study is that she investigated participatory infrastructure budgeting. Grillos in particular investigated bias in multiple stages of processes in PB infrastructure in Surakarta city.

The analysis presented in this article suggests that the infrastructure spending derived from the Kelurahan Block Grant process does not effectively target the poor. Surprisingly, areas within a neighborhood with a higher concentration of households below the poverty line are prone to receiving disproportionately fewer infrastructure projects (per capita) through this process. Importantly, this bias is not attributed to interference by the management committee during the implementation process, as initially suspected by local officials. Instead, the skewed distribution favouring the less poor areas originates in the proposal phase, which is open to the public (Grillos, 2017).

The infrastructure project examined by Grillos was terminated by the national government around 2019. In contrast to the projects investigated by Grillos, this article aligns with the evidence found by Grillos, suggesting that the ineffectiveness or procedural deficits in decision-making may also explain why the poorest of the poor are unlikely to have access to resources. If Grillos concludes that participatory budgeting (PB) infrastructure projects do not effectively target the poor, this article supports that notion, stating that PB non-infrastructure projects, as studied herein, similarly do not target the poor.

Grillos appears to express hesitation in confidently identifying elite capture during deliberation. She acknowledges this uncertainty by stating, "It is possible that elites deliberately exclude the poor from the proposal process, but since my analysis was based on regional targeting, and since each RW is mandated to have a representative in the process, this seems an unlikely explanation." Another instance of her uncertainty is evident when she mentions, "The preferences of the facilitator who moderates a participatory meeting may also substantially influence voting results (Humphreys et al., 2006; Platteau, 2004; Spada & Vreeland, 2013), suggesting a method through which elites could capture the outcomes of a public meeting without directly excluding anyone from the process." The authors of this article assert that there is validity in the claim that elite capture begins with neighborhood processes. Furthermore, they argue that deliberation processes have pitted actor-based proposals against public programs. According to the authors, public project proposals consistently demonstrate greater reasonability when compared to proposals specifically targeting individual actors.

Future research could be valuable in exploring how elites employ various strategies to capture deliberative processes and influence overall priorities and decision-making. Despite the high regard and pride that Surakartanese have for their deliberative decision-making,



there is a need to examine whether these processes can be vulnerable to elite capture. Surakartanese citizens rarely criticize and often accept the possibility that deliberation may be hijacked by elites. The citizens of Surakarta must engage in the study and development of institutional designs that not only foster inclusivity for lower-income, poor, and marginalized people but also ensure that their participation yields meaningful social change. As pointed out by (Fung & Wright, 2003), “Institutional design failings could explain lower citizen engagement since there were no processes to directly involve citizens,” emphasizing the importance of designing institutions that encourage and facilitate the effective involvement of all citizens in the decision-making process.

The current setting of PB in Surakarta appears to parallel the early practices of PB in Porto Alegre. Despite its initial intention to promote social justice by allocating more resources to poor neighborhoods, the poorest of the poor in Surakarta may not be well served due to significant organizational hurdles. As noted by Wampler (2007), “PB rewards those who can mobilize, and there are few mechanisms in place that recognize that certain groups face even greater challenges as they attempt to organize.” Observing the implementation of PB in Mojosongo and Pajang villages, it becomes evident that many disabled individuals at the village level are fragmented and unorganized, leading to their exclusion from the village-level Youth Public Parliament (YPP). Additionally, substantial participant groups, such as single women groups, also remain excluded from the PB processes.

To enhance the participation of more low-income, poor, and marginalized individuals in PB forums, these groups need to organize themselves. Administering their organization at the PB levels they wish to attend is crucial to ensure that representatives from their groups are invited. Equipping them with the capacity to effectively articulate their realities and concerns in these forums is equally important. Therefore, the current challenges in the Surakarta case can be viewed in terms of PB’s capacity to not only attract more low-income individuals but also to bring forth more qualitative voices representing their concerns in the forums.

Nowadays, the presence of low-income, poor, and marginalized individuals in the forums has been permitted. However, few of them realize that they represent their respective groups. As they are mostly personally invited, they often fail to bring the agenda of change from their organizations to the forums. Consequently, there are deficits in the quality of their voices. Participatory (PB) has created opportunities for citizens to be involved, educated, and empowered, thereby encouraging civil society to be more enthusiastic. In the Surakarta context, while low-income, poor, and marginalized people have been involved, it seems that their participation does not necessarily bring along the capacity to effectively voice and negotiate with other actors.

Currently, the presence of low-income, poor, and marginalized individuals in the forums is permitted, but there is a realization deficit among them regarding their representation of their respective groups. Since many are personally invited, they often do not bring the agenda of change from their organizations to the forums, resulting in a deficit in the quality of their voices. Participatory Budgeting has created opportunities for citizens to be involved, educated, and empowered, fostering increased enthusiasm in civil society (Shah, 2007). In the Surakarta context, while low-income, poor, and marginalized people are involved, their participation seems to lack the capacity to effectively voice and negotiate with other actors.

There are two factors influencing an individual's participation or lack thereof in the political process (Surbakti, 2005). The first factor is political awareness, and the second is trust in the government or the political system. Political awareness refers to an individual's understanding of their rights and obligations as citizens. In Surakarta's case, there is a notable absence of anticipated participation by low-income, poor, and marginalized people. Despite having higher trust in Participatory Budgeting (PB) as part of the political system, these groups exhibit low political awareness. Considering the reality that these groups have attended PB sessions in Surakarta city, their presence is predominantly due to invitations rather than a proactive engagement driven by political awareness and the intention to influence the processes (Gaventa, 2006).

The level of participation among low-income, poor, and marginalized people in Surakarta's PB is at an invited level, with their attendance primarily attributed to invitations rather than a proactive political awareness leading them to attend and influence the PB meetings.

Low-income, poor, and marginalized individuals must empower themselves to interpret data and engage in negotiations with other actors in the forums. They must liberate themselves from a sense of subordination and adopt a less submissive attitude within their groups. Instead of advocating for an increase in the village delegated budget size, for example, a representative from the Village Community Empowerment in Bumi Village expressed during a city hall meeting in 2023: "The delegated budget is small, but it has been regulated, meaning it has all been decided properly. We can only accept the size allocated to us. We are grateful for the budget provided."

**Table 4. Ratio of Delegated Budget Compared to the Number of Poor People**

Year	Delegated Budget to Villages	Number of Poor People in Surakarta	On Average Budget that Each Poor Person Receives	In US\$
2023	IDR 14.904.300.000	42.773	IDR 348,451	21.86
2022	IDR 10.000.000.000	44,620	IDR 224,114	14.06
2021	IDR 9.400.000.000	44,973	IDR 209,014	13.11

**Converted to US\$**

In the given table, the delegated budget to villages, the number of poor people in Surakarta, and the average budget that each poor person receives are presented for the years 2021, 2022, and 2023. The delegated budget to villages for 2021 is IDR 9.400.000.000, and for 2022 is IDR 10.000.000.000, and for 2023 is IDR 14.904.300.000. The number of poor people in Surakarta for 2021 is 44,973, for 2022 is 44,620, and for 2023 is 42,773. The average budget that each poor person receives for 2021 is IDR 209,014 or US\$13.11, for 2022 IDR 224,114 or 14.06, and for 2023 is IDR 348,451 or US\$21.86.

The size of allocated delegated budget to villages that have been too small for years shows explicitly “how and when a novel idea either successfully moves through the entire journey, ultimately changing the field, or gets ‘stuck’ in any one phase or loop between phases” (Perry- Smith JE & Mannucci PV, 2017). PB in Surakarta is about ‘stuck’ in its substantial mission. Despite its massive number of participants, the forums from neighborhood to city hall fall into routine. It loses its energetic spirit of change.

The city government of Surakarta needs to evaluate its PB more radically. An evaluation benchmarking can be taken by visiting some suggestions by (Silvia & Lutfi, 2022) to say that the Indonesian government needs to; (1) Increase public political awareness by increasing the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), improving social networks and empowering academics. In addition to the formulated policies, they must have a real impact according to the needs of the community itself; (2) Involve all levels of society including minorities and marginalized communities; (3) Increase the government’s commitment to delivering projects based on community options; (4) Give citizens the right to design participation procedures; (5) Improve communication between citizens and the government; (6) Involve the community from the beginning of Participatory Budgeting implementation; (7) Provide adequate budget allocation for Participatory Budgeting in the community; (8) The use of budget of Participatory Budgeting for things which are needed by the community; (9) Encourage participation not only through voting but through dialogue and community communication with the government; (10) Develop clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and dedicated and trained staff; and (11) The projects are implemented and monitored by the elected delegates.

At fundamental attitudes, local government needs to recognize the potential of the delegated budget as an avenue to citizen prosperity more than what is on paper. On a tangible plot, it is an urge to ensure that the budget is delivered directly for the economic security of the low-income, poor, and marginalized people. Showing its political will, the city government needs to increase the size of the delegated budget to villages. However, to avoid misleading the purpose of economic security, the city government needs to create social control, empowering schemes, and quality assurance systems. An inclusion mechanism is also needed to ensure that more low-income, poor, and marginalized families have access to the budget. Social and economic preparation is necessary to ensure that the investment plan has been well-prepared.

Reflecting Surakarta in the past, the inclusion of low-income, poor, and marginalized people cannot be placed and practised as routine. The stagnancy of poverty reduction must be responded to seriously by stakeholders including the middle class in the city.

Bagi saya, kemajuan yang semakin mencolok melayani kelas menengah bisa mengancam kelas menengah sendiri. Ingat Solo (Surakarta) adalah kota sumbu pendek. Refleksi atas 'kutukan' itu kota ini seperti hidup dalam aksioma: jika yang di atas semakin meraja dan yang kecil diposisikan semakin mengerdil. Sumbu kotapun memendek. Siapa yang terancam jika sumbu memendek? Kelas Menengah! (Arif 2019)

“For me, the increasingly prominent progress serving the middle class can threaten the middle class itself. Remember Solo (Surakarta) is a short-fused city. Reflection on the ‘curse’ of this city is like living in an axiom: if those above become more dominant and those below are positioned smaller. The city’s fuse also shortens. Who is threatened if the fuse shortens? The middle class!” (Arif, 2019 - Translation).

The city government needs to consider optimizing social modality from civil society groups in the city. According to Local Unity and Political Affairs Agency, there are 170 civil society organizations in the city. Only very few of them have been partners of Surakarta city’s lower offices. They need to be invited to be counterparts of the local government. Energies from these groups have been so massive. They mostly are very good at community organizing, empowerment, and development.

Additionally, comprehensive social accountability mechanisms need to be prepared to make all necessary information, including successes, bottlenecks, or failures, accessible to the public. The city needs to set a medium-term target when it wants to celebrate its enhancement of civic participation as a way to substantially engage people in political processes that are parallel to the increase of economics of the lower-income people.

Tujuan akhir kebijakan dan strategi penanggulangan kemiskinan adalah membebaskan masyarakat dari kemiskinan dan mengangkat harkat dan martabat mereka agar menjadi warganegara dengan seluruh hak dan kewajibannya. Untuk itu salah satu strategi mendasar yang patut ditempuh adalah memberikan kesempatan seluas-luasnya bagi orang miskin untuk berpartisipasi sepenuhnya dalam proses pembangunan ekonomi. (Mawardi, S and Sumarto, S – Smeru 2003)

“The ultimate goal of poverty reduction policies and strategies is to free society from poverty and elevate the dignity of its citizens so that they can become citizens with all their rights and obligations. Therefore, one of the fundamental strategies that should be pursued is to provide the widest possible opportunities for the poor to fully participate in the economic development process” (Mawardi & Sumarto, 2003 - Translation).

## CONCLUSION

The Participatory Budgeting (PB) process in Surakarta city has demonstrated a commitment to inclusive governance and pro-poor policies, allocating resources to enhance access to health and education services for the impoverished. This approach provides opportunities for marginalized communities to improve their quality of life and prosperity. However, despite these efforts, the number of impoverished individuals in the city remains relatively stagnant. This highlights the need for continued improvement and refinement of PB mechanisms to better address the needs of low-income and marginalized populations. Broader Implications for Participatory Budgeting and Pro-Poor Policies Enhancing Community Empowerment and Social Accountability:

1. Implementing community empowerment and social accountability mechanisms can help ensure that the delegated budget is effectively utilized and that the needs of marginalized communities are adequately addressed.
2. Aligning Budget Allocations with Social Return on Investment:  
Aligning the delegated budget with the city’s Social Return on Investment (SROI) can help ensure that budget allocations are optimized to maximize social benefits.
3. Inclusive Governance and Representation:  
Ensuring that marginalized communities have a strong voice in the budgeting process through inclusive governance and representation can help ensure that their needs are adequately addressed.

Based on the findings, the authors would suggest areas for Future Research:

1. Evaluating the Impact of PB on Poverty Reduction:

Conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of PB on poverty reduction in Surakarta city can help identify the most effective strategies and areas for improvement.

2. Exploring Alternative Budgeting Models:

Investigating alternative budgeting models, such as bottom-up budgeting approaches, can help identify more effective methods for involving marginalized communities in the budgeting process.

3. Addressing the Role of Elitist Behavior in PB:

Examining the role of elitist behaviour in PB processes can help identify strategies for mitigating the influence of powerful groups and ensuring that marginalized communities have a more equal voice in budget decisions.

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