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The Non-Participatory Budget? – analysis of four editions of the participatory budget in Łódź, Poland

ABSTRACT: Participatory budgets are usually understood as a decision making process. Residents of the city are given the opportunity to decide how to expend a particular pool of public funds. This form of public participation is gaining great popularity in Poland. This popularity is also accompanied by a lot of controversy. The first question is: to what extent so-called participatory budgets are really participatory? Taking into account the above arguments and opinions, the main goal of this paper is to take part in the ongoing discussion on the civic and participatory aspects of participatory budgets. The text will attempt to present results of synthetic analysis of participatory budgets in theoretical perspective as well as in relation to the literature of participation and civic engagement. The paper will present the experience of Łódź in the implementation of participatory budget.

KEYWORDS: Participatory budget, Łódź, city, participation.

Introduction

The main aim of this article will be to take a closer look at the mechanism of the participatory budget, both in terms of a theoretical and an empirical perspective. In the theoretical sphere, I will in particular try to refer the idea of the participatory budget to Stuart Langton's classic proposal (1978), in which he has distinguished four categories of public participation and the participation ladder proposed by Sherry R. Arnstein (2012). While in the empirical sphere, I will base my deliberations on the experience related to the

implementation of participatory budget¹ in Łódź, for this purpose I will use the data on the participation of residents of Łódź in voting in four editions to date, which I have received from the Łódź City Hall Office for Social Participation². Referring the theoretical considerations to the results of data analysis, I will try to answer the question to what extent the Łódź version of the participatory budget is a mechanism involving and activating the residents in the process of co-decision over the city? In other words, is this budget participatory or anti-participatory?

For several years now, Poland has seen a growing popularity of participatory budgets. This is confirmed by the statistics available on one of the websites devoted to civic budgets, which show that in Poland in 2013³, 8 such initiatives were implemented, one year later 48, and in 2015 this mechanism was introduced in 80 cities and communes (budzetyobywatelskie.pl). Statistics for 2016 are slightly worse, the information on the mentioned website shows that at that time only 58 Polish local governments decided to introduce or maintain a civic budget mechanism. However, it is worth noting that the above statistics should be treated with caution. Nonetheless, this does not change the fact that civic budgets have become quite common (“fashionable”), and their popularization is accompanied by a number of controversies. The broad debate conducted on participatory budgets highlights, among others, that “Polish” budgets are quite far from the original of this mechanism, which was launched for the first time in 1990 in Porto Alegre (Bluj, Stokłuska 2015, p. 7). The participatory budget in Brazilian city brought a new perspective on how direct local democracy can be and to which extent the residents can decide on public spending (Bluj, Stokłuska 2015, p. 7), some people think that the Polish budgets do not place enough emphasis on these aspects. Kacper Pobłocki (2013, p. 13), who in the foreword to Marcus Miessen’s book “The Nightmare of Participation” compares the participatory budget to a double-encountered game, is also quite critical about Polish participatory budgets. In his opinion, city authorities give residents one percent (or less) of the city’s budget at their dis-

¹ The literature of the subject adopted the term “participatory budget”, in Łódź the name “civic budget” functions, believing that it would be more understandable for the city’s residents. For the purposes of this article, both names will be used interchangeably.

² At this point I would like to thank Mr. Krzysztof Lechowicz from the Office for Social Participation and Aneta Krzewińska, PhD for their support in obtaining data.

³ The website does not take into account the civic budget of Łódź, although this results from the adopted methodology, in 2013 an education and information campaign was carried out in Łódź, proposals from the residents were collected and a vote was held, while the winning projects were implemented within the framework of the city budget for 2014.

posal in order to be able to decide more freely on the remaining ninety-nine percents. He also adds that civic budgets are in most cases not a tool for increasing the participation of residents in making important decisions, but rather something similar to a grant competition or TV-telephone game (Pobłocki 2013, p. 12). A similar (critical) opinion has Borys Martela (2013, p. 29) who notes that all participating budgets in Polish cities assume universal voting, in which one can participate without taking part in any meeting or discussion. He highlights that none of the local authorities has succeeded in introducing more deliberative mechanisms consisting in decision-making directly at meetings after the previous discussion (Martela 2013, p. 29). In his opinion, the mechanism of the participatory budget should be more firmly rooted in the idea of participatory democracy, although in this context the frank interest of the political class in the full involvement of residents in the co-decision process is questionable (Martela 2013, p. 29). The drawbacks of Polish participatory budgets are also highlighted by Wojciech Kęłowski (2014, p. 36), in the opinion of whom budgets are prepared authoritatively and without proper consultation with the residents. As he adds, they are often developed at an express pace based on the experience of other (experienced by assumption) cities without a deeper reflection on the purpose of copying certain solutions. In addition, he notes that “It is not common to organize meetings after the principles have been announced, where participants could cooperate in the elaboration of proposals and projects. Where meetings are organized, they are usually informative and devoid of any decision-making power. At the project submission stage, residents’ invention is very limited” (Kęłowski 2014, p. 36). Also Marta Siciarek (2014) draws attention to important issues in the functioning of “innovative” participatory tools, such as civic budgets, according to whom the active participation of residents in the participatory budget procedure requires specific competences. As a result, these initiatives are addressed mainly to people who are active, educated and present in the public space. As she adds, these groups are *de facto* favoured by the existing budgetary procedures.

To summarize the above mentioned preliminary considerations on Polish participatory (civic) budgets, several shortcomings can be pointed out. Firstly, the procedures adopted in our country differ to a large extent from the Brazilian original, which in literature is treated as a desirable model. Secondly, residents are allowed to have only symbolic amounts of money, often constituting less than one percent of the city’s budget. Thirdly, the execution and implementation are not accompanied by meetings with the residents, during which common projects would be developed by consensus. Fourthly, the procedures of adopted civic budgets are sometimes poorly thought-out cop-

ies of other cities that do not correspond to the Brazilian model. Finally, another weakness is the more or less conscious favouritism of certain groups of residents. The opinions presented on the Polish participatory budgets do not constitute an exhaustive list of their shortcomings, although they are sufficient condition for making an attempt to assess them both in terms of theory and practice.

Short history of participatory budget

The concept of participatory budget originates from the Brazilian Porto Alegre, where this mechanism was introduced for the first time in 1990 (Górski 2007, p. 71). The Porto Alegre was quickly followed by another Brazilian cities, including Belo Horizonte, Belem, Recife, Santo Andre and others. Subsequently, the idea of implementing participatory budgets was gaining popularity in other cities of South America, including Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia and Venezuela. Finally, the time has come to Western Europe and North America (Górski 2007, p. 44). According to Neslon Dias (2014, p. 21) the growing popularity of participatory budgets can be explained, among others, by a crisis of liberal democracy and some kind of “democratic disappointment”⁴. In his opinion, this crisis is manifested, among other things, by the lower and lower proportion of people taking part in the elections, increasing mistrust on politicians and institutions, as well as an increasing feeling of alienation. As he adds, it is common for residents to believe that they are not represented by politicians, and that their role is limited only to the act of voting – throwing cards into the ballot box. Similar phenomena in Polish conditions are emphasized by Rafał Górski (2007, p. 39), according to whom “the mass refusal to participate in the vote is the result of the ongoing changes”. In his opinion, this situation may stem from the simple fact that “councillors are anchored in parties, not in society, and the society withdraws from participation in election because they believe that there is no real influence on politics – limited to the struggle for positions and privileges for the few” (Górski 2007, p. 41). In his opinion, something completely new and different from the verticality of decision-making structures is needed, which means for example a procedure called participatory democracy. As he explains the “participatory democracy is a kind of a compromise between supporters of direct democracy and defenders of representative democracy” (Górski 2007, p. 43).

⁴ Original term: “democratic disenchantment”.

In this context, the participatory budget can be seen as a tool which puts to some extent the ideas of participatory democracy into practice. This can be the reason of their growing popularity also outside South America, in the years 1999–2006 participatory budgets were introduced in the following European cities: Córdoba, Jerez, Sevilla, Gerafe, Rubi, Saint Denis, Balsamo, Pienza and others (Górski 2007, p. 45). Finally, the “budget fashion” also reached Poland, although at the beginning no one expected that participatory budgets would become so popular. As W. Kębłowski notes (2013, p. 6) “When the first participatory budget in Poland was implemented in Sopot in 2011, hardly anyone expected that this isolated experiment would soon become one of the most popular initiatives in Poland aimed at involving residents in the process of city management. It turned out that already in 2012 such cities as Elbląg, Gorzów Wielkopolski and Zielona Góra followed Sopot” (Kębłowski 2013). According to B. Martel (2013, p. 24), in Polish circumstances, the publication by R. Górski *Bez Państwa. Demokracja uczestnicząca w działaniu*, published in 2007 quoted many times in this publication, has contributed significantly to the popularization of the idea of a participatory budget, in which the author described in details the experiences of Brazilian Porto Alegre related to the implementation of this kind of participatory innovation. And although, as B. Martel (2013, p. 24) points out, like the above-mentioned W. Kębłowski, in the first years after publication of the book only few people believed that a similar mechanism of participatory democracy could be applied in Poland, in 2011 it turned out, however, that the authorities of Sopot decided to try, and only a year later, other local governments joined the group of “innovators” (Martel 2013, p. 24.) In 2015, as results from data published on budzetyobywatelskie.pl website, participation budgets were introduced in 80 Polish self-governments. On the other hand, the information published on bp.partycypacjaobywatelska.pl website shows that in 2015 civic budgets were implemented in most of the Polish big cities⁵, including Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź, Olsztyn, Poznań, Warsaw and Wrocław.

According to B. Martel (2013, p. 24), apart from the publication of R. Górski’s book, the popularity of participatory budgets in Poland is due to several reasons. First of all, from the success of the Sopot budget, which inspired subsequent local governments to introduce similar mechanisms involving residents in the co-decision processes. Secondly, the introduction of partic-

⁵ More than 250,000 residents.

ipatory budgets could have been seen as a way to increase the public support for local politicians, which was important in the view of the upcoming local elections⁶. The third reason could have been the growing pressure from local civil societies, including NGOs, who considered the participatory budget an opportunity to gain the possibility to co-determinate on matters important for the city.

Participatory budget vs. participation

The aim of this section is to take a closer look at participatory budgets with reference to literature on the subject of participation in the broad sense, in particular Sturart Langton's classic proposal (1978) and the participation ladder of Sherry R. Arnstein (2012). At the beginning, it should be noted that participatory budget in literature is usually defined as a decision-making process, in which the residents of a given city or municipality can decide on their own how to spend a certain amount of public funds (see Kębłowski 2013, p. 6; Martel 2013, p. 25). The budget procedure, on the other hand, should consist of the following stages: residents submitting ideas; officials checking whether the city or municipality is able to implement ideas and define the final list of proposals; residents' choice of ideas by voting and then entering the selected initiatives into the city budget; implementation of the proposals by the city or municipality (Martel 2013, p. 25). As a result, the role of the city or municipality authorities is limited or should be limited to technical support of the process organization and verification of proposals submitted by the residents in terms of formal and legal aspects⁷ as well as cost-effectiveness⁸.

Bearing in mind the above definition, the description of stages and the fact that budgets are defined as participatory, it is worth to take closer look at them in order to determine their actual "participatory nature" in the context of reflection on participation. Participation term is defined as "...contribution, taking part, participation i.e. an individual's involvement in the issues of a wider community, interaction with others in a situation

⁶ This is the case of local government elections from 2014.

⁷ The submitted proposals are evaluated in terms of their implementation by the city (municipality) i.e. it is checked whether they are included in the list of tasks and competences of the municipality.

⁸ This verification consists in checking whether, in the near future, no other investment is already planned at the location indicated in the proposal of the task, which would generate additional costs.

of convergence of interests” (Surdej 2000, p. 83). Most often, however, this term is understood as more or less direct participation of citizens in the social life (public, political) (Kaźmierczak 2011, p. 83). In addition, there are three types of participation in literature: social, public (civic) and individual participation (Brodie, Cowling, Nissen, Ellis, Jochum, Warburton 2009 quoted from: Kaźmierczak 2011). Public participation, which is the main focus of this text, concerns the involvement of individuals in the activities of democratic state structures and institutions, as well as the management by them or their subordinate public sector organizations (Kaźmierczak, p. 84). As added by T. Kaźmierczak, such understood participation in Polish conditions is usually referred to as the civic participation (cf. Piasecki 2009) or social participation (cf. Długosz, Wygnański 2005). The mechanism of the participatory budget seems to be included in this kind of public (civic) participation. Using the above assumptions, it seems advisable to refer to the classic proposal of S. Langton (1978), who has distinguished four categories of public participation: public action, public involvement, electoral participation and obligatory participation. Public action should be understood as any action taken and controlled by citizens in order to influence the decision-makers (cf. Kaźmierczak 2011). T. Kaźmierczak (2011:85) cites, as an example of such action, the lobbying, protest, civil disobedience, civil disobedience, public education, etc. The public involvement, as the term suggests, is an attempt of the authorities to involve citizens in decision-making processes, although these activities are initiated and controlled by the decision-makers. Electoral participation, in turn, is the participation of citizens in both national and local elections, as well as in all kinds of referendums. The last category is obligatory participation, which is understood as a forced activity of citizens resulting from the law (cf. Kaźmierczak 2011) e.g. paying taxes. With reference to the above mentioned categories, the participatory budget should be classified to the category of public involvement, as the local authorities decide on launching of this mechanism and define the procedures for its implementation. On the other hand, however, it is worth noting that it is the residents themselves who formulate the proposition of their own opinions, and then as a result, decide which of them should be implemented during voting. Moreover, before voting, the authors of individual ideas may lobby the local community to vote in favour of their initiative, so it seems that the participatory budget also have features of public activity. On the other hand, the fact that the tasks to be carried out are chosen by the residents in a general voting determines that in this case we also deal with electoral participation.

When considering the “participatory nature” of the participating budget, an attempt to refer to popular participatory ladders should be made⁹. One example is the proposal of Sherry R. Arnstein (2012, p. 12), who is quite critical towards the decision-makers’ activities in involving citizens in decision-making processes, writing, among others, that “Civic participation resembles eating of spinach – in fact, nobody is against, because it is healthy after all. In theory, the participation of those in power is, after all, the cornerstone of democracy. This lofty idea is actually applauded by everyone. However, the applause weakens when the strategy of participation is praised by the excluded black people, Mexicans, Puertoiseans, Indians, Inuits, white people”. In her opinion, there is a huge difference between insignificant, ritual participation and holding real power that can be reflected in the decisions taken (Arnstein, p. 13). In order to be able to assess which actions could be considered as an empty ritual, and which as actual participation, she has proposed a typology in the form of the aforementioned ladder, in which she has distinguished eight possible levels. At the end there is manipulation, which can be exemplified by placing residents in insignificant committees and advisory bodies, where local officials educate and convince residents rather than vice versa. The second level is therapy, according to Sh. R. Arnstein (2012, p. 21) “helplessness is the same as mental illness”, so that citizens are treated with a therapy under the name of participation, these can be for example, meetings where residents have the opportunity to “complain”, although their requests are not taken into account anyway. The third level is information, and this can be exemplified by the late communication of plans by representatives of the authorities to citizens, which makes it impossible to correct them and make any changes. Usually in this case, a one-way communication channel consisting in providing information prevails. The fourth level is consultation, an example can be the request for an opinion on the given project, albeit without any guarantee that the proposals received will be taken into account. The fifth level is appeasement, and at this level the citizens are already gaining some influence, e.g. they are invited to the decision-making bodies (committees), although they are a minority, which makes it possible to outvote them easily. The sixth level is called partnership, at this level the decision-makers share responsibil-

⁹ The number of proposals of the so-called participatory ladders in the literature of the subject is quite significant, although the text is limited to the presentation of a proposal by Sherry R. Arnstein. However, it is also worth to look at the proposal of Długosz Dagmir and Jan Jakub Wygnański, presented in the publication entitled *Obywatele współdecydują. Przewodnik po partycypacji społecznej*

ity for planning and decision-making, for example through the organization of decision-making committees. The last level is pre-delegation, in this case the authorities delegate almost all authority over the project/programme to the inhabitants. And the highest level is civic control, within which residents can have full control over the exemplary project/programme. Sh. R. Arnsetein (2012, p. 35) gives an example of a social enterprise that could be independently controlled by, for example, a group of excluded people after receiving a grant. Moreover, the American researcher divides individual elements of the participatory ladder into three broader categories: lack of participation, apparent actions and social power. The participation ladder proposed by her is presented in a simplified form in the table below.

Table 1. Participatory ladder by Sherry R. Arnsetein

Civic control	Socialization of power
Delegation	
Partnership	
Appeasement	Apparent conduct
Consultations	
Informing	
Therapies	Lack of participation
Manipulation	

Source: Own study based on: Arnstein Sh. R., 2012.

To summarize the considerations in this part of the article in the context of the participatory budget, it can be said that it falls within the broadly understood public (civic) participation and within its framework into three of the four categories listed by S. Langton (1978) i.e. public participation, civic involvement and electoral participation. While referring to the participatory ladder proposed by Sh. R. Arnsetein (2012) it seems justified to classify the participatory budget as a category of social power, although it is difficult to clearly determine which subcategory it could be included to: partnership, delegating or civic control. Bearing in mind the importance of civic control as proposed by Sh. R. Arnsetein, it seems that partnership or delegation still needs to be considered.

Łódź and civil budget in Łódź

The aim of the following part of the article is to present the procedures of civil budget in Łódź and to try to evaluate it as a mechanism for involving

residents in the process of co-deciding about the city. The data obtained from the Łódź City Hall on the number of proposed tasks submitted by Łódź residents, as well as the number of votes cast, both in the traditional way and via the Internet, will be interpreted using the above mentioned categories of public participation distinguished by S. Langton (1978), which should allow for a preliminary assessment of the “participatory nature” of the civil budget in Łódź.

At the beginning, however, it is worth noting that Łódź has been trying to deal with numerous problems, including spatial chaos, loss of identity and numerous social problems for several years (Brzeziński 2011, cf. Zysiak 2011). Of course, we should be aware that in order to overcome the above difficulties, long-term, consistently implemented actions are necessary, and the civic budget is not a “magical” remedy, although it can be seen as one of the potential tools for at least partial improvement of the quality of life of the residents of the former “promised land”. First of all, it allows the people from Łódź to solve some problems important from their point of view each year. On the other hand, the possibility of co-decision (presenting proposals of tasks and voting) may be an important factor influencing the feeling of attachment to the city, and thus a higher level of identification with it. The higher level of identification may translate into greater interest in urban matters, as well as a higher level of public activity, i.e. one of the four categories of public participation mentioned by S. Langton (1978). When writing about the participation and civic activity of residents of Łódź, it is worth emphasizing that Łódź was one of the most important places of the revolution in 1905, which according to Wiktor Marc (2016, p. 15) “...was one of the few attempts of mass and grassroots democratization in Poland” Łódź also witnessed the so-called “February strikes in Łódź” in 1971, as well as the strike of students of universities in Łódź in 1981. It could be assumed that the high level of public activity is rather a characteristic of residents of Łódź, although this has not been confirmed by recent observations concerning, among others, participation of the city’s residents in public consultations or information and educational meetings on civic budget (Brzeziński 2016). Moreover, the low interest in urban issues can be deduced from the level of electoral participation, which is another category mentioned by S. Langton (1978). Electoral turnout in the last local government elections (2014) in Łódź amounted to 38.3%, while in Łódź voivodship slightly over 48%, and in the country 47.2% (pkw.gov.pl). An even lower turnout was recorded in 2010, when only 34% of citizens of Łódź decided to take part in voting, in Łódź voivodship the turnout amounted to about 48%, and in the country about 47% (pkw.gov.pl). In the light of the above considerations, it seems interesting to take a closer look at the civic budget in Łódź

as a new mechanism for activating and involving residents in the co-decision processes. For this purpose, “Langton’s” categories of public participation will be used, including in particular the involvement of citizens – it is the city authorities that decide on the final shape of the civic budget; public activity – which may refer to the number of submitted proposals of tasks to the budget and electoral participation.

The analysis of the above presented categories requires introducing into the context of the mechanism of Łódź. As a preliminary remark, it is worth noting that for the first time the civic budget was introduced in Łódź in 2014, although the decision to implement it was already made in 2012, when the city council together with the president of the city adopted a resolution to start actions to prepare the procedure and shape of the Łódź version of the budget. Subsequently, the president of the city has established a team for developing the rules of operation and implementation. The team consisted of 23 members and included representatives of the city council, non-governmental organizations, housing estate councils, Łódź City Hall and the University of Łódź (Gałęcki 2013). As a result of the team’s work, detailed rules have been developed, which enabled the introduction of the first edition of the civic budget in the city, which was additionally preceded by a promotional and educational campaign – addressed to the residents, aimed at familiarizing the residents of Łódź with the general idea of participatory budgets and procedures adopted by the city. The campaign was carried out in 2013 and its implementation was commissioned to a non-governmental organizations and, apart from traditional promotional forms (posters, spots, information in the local media), 36 workshop meetings have been held with residents (in each of the auxiliary units of the city – the so-called estates – one meeting) and 5 research walks (one walk in each part of the city – the district). At this point it is worth noting that within each of the previous editions, similar activities have been carried out, allowing the inhabitants to exchange ideas and discuss the budget in Łódź.

According to the annually adopted regulations of the president of the city, the civic budget takes the form of public consultations, the aim of which is to obtain a proposal for tasks from the residents and to make a selection, by the residents of Łódź who are 16 years of age or older, of tasks, which were previously submitted and positively verified by the appropriate units of the Łódź City Hall. At this point it should be noted that the local officials have not introduced any substantive amendments to the proposed tasks in any of the previous editions, whereas each of the ideas has been checked in formal and legal terms, i.e. it has been verified whether a given proposal is included

in the list of tasks of the city (powiat, commune) and whether the location of the given investment is planned in the area belonging to the commune and whether its implementation is possible within one year. In addition, the submitted tasks have been checked in terms of cost-effectiveness, i.e. it has been assessed whether no other activities were planned in the near future on the given territory. The scheme of the procedure for the previous editions of the civil budget in Łódź is similar to the stages described by B. Martel (2013, p. 25) i.e.: submission of ideas by residents; verification of their feasibility; selection of ideas to be implemented by voting of residents, implementation. An additional element in the case of Łódź is also the annual evaluation, which enables the assessment of the procedure and introduction of necessary changes aimed at adjusting the budget to the needs of the residents and a fairer distribution of funds between individual parts of the city. Within the framework of the civic budget in Łódź, residents may submit proposals and vote for two categories of so-called general urban tasks, whose aim should be to improve the quality of life in the whole city and the so-called local tasks, which should primarily serve the residents of one of the five areas of the city (districts)¹⁰. Each of these categories of tasks is granted a separate pool of funds. The issues of financing and division into regions of the city aroused some controversy, which resulted in some changes in particular editions. These changes are presented in the table 2.

After a synthetic presentation of the principles and procedures within the framework of the civic budget in Łódź, data allowing for a preliminary assessment of the budget, as a mechanism for involving residents in co-decision on the city will be presented in the next step. In the previous part I have mentioned that the turnout in local government elections in Łódź was relatively low in the last few votes. Referring to the S. Langton category (1978) in the form of electoral participation, it is worth noting that one of the highest voter turnouts among most Polish cities with over 250 thousand inhabitants, which introduced participatory budgets was recorded in Łódź in 2014¹¹. The only city in which, according to the data published on the website bp.partycypacjaobywatelska.pl, the turnout in the election of tasks to the civic budget was higher was the city of Wrocław.

¹⁰ With the exception of 4th edition, in which local (district) tasks were converted into housing estate tasks, see Table 1.

¹¹ Turnout in the civic budget in 2014: Łódź 24%, Wrocław 30%, Poznań, 13%, Cracow 10%, Katowice 4% (cf. bp.partycypacjaobywatelska.pl).

Table 2. Changes in the method of financing the tasks proposed by residents within the framework of the civic budget in Łódź in 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th edition

1st edition – 2014	2nd edition – 2015
<p>The pool of funds amounted to PLN 20 million.</p> <p>PLN 5 million was spent on the so-called general urban tasks.</p> <p>The cost estimates of reported tasks were not limited and could amount to as much as PLN 5 million, and the implementation of the task was determined by the result of voting, i. e. within the framework of general urban tasks, a project worth PLN 5 million, which received the highest number of votes could win.</p> <p>PLN 3 million for each area of Łódź (districts i. e. Bałuty, Górna, Polesie, Śródmieście, Widzew).</p> <p>Also in this case, there were no limits on the amount of the budgets for the submitted tasks. The only limitation was the total pool – PLN 3 million.</p>	<p>The pool of funds amounted to PLN 40 million.</p> <p>PLN 10 million was spent on the so-called general urban tasks.</p> <p>The cost estimates of reported tasks, as in the 1st edition, were not limited and could amount to as much as PLN 10 million, and the implementation of the task was determined by the result of voting, i. e. within the framework of general urban tasks, a project worth PLN 10 million, which received the highest number of votes could win.</p> <p>PLN 6 million for each area of Łódź (districts i. e. Bałuty, Górna, Polesie, Śródmieście, Widzew)</p> <p>Also in this case of local tasks within the framework of the 2nd edition, there were no limits on the amount of the budgets for the submitted tasks. The only limitation was the total pool – PLN 6 million.</p>
3rd edition – 2016	4th edition – 2017
<p>The pool of funds amounted to PLN 40 million.</p> <p>PLN 10 million was spent on the so-called general urban tasks.</p> <p>In the 3rd edition, restrictions were introduced concerning the amount of costs of a single task up to 25% of the total amount allocated for the general urban tasks. Therefore, the estimated cost of the task could not exceed PLN 2.5 million.</p> <p>PLN 6 million for each area of Łódź (districts i. e. Bałuty, Górna, Polesie, Śródmieście, Widzew).</p> <p>The principle limiting the amount of the budget of a single task was also introduced to local tasks, the estimated cost of a single item could not exceed PLN 1.5 million.</p>	<p>The pool of funds amounted to PLN 40 million.</p> <p>PLN 9.95 million was spent on the so-called general urban tasks.</p> <p>As in the 3rd edition, restrictions were introduced concerning the amount of costs of a single task up to 25% of the total amount allocated for the general urban tasks. Therefore, the estimated cost of the task could not exceed PLN 2,487,500.</p> <p>In the 4th edition, the local tasks were replaced with estate tasks. The amount for each of the auxiliary units of the city (there are 36 of them in Łódź) has been calculated according to the following formula: PLN 200,000 per each housing estate plus an additional amount depending on the number of residents. As a result, the amounts for individual housing estates ranged from PLN 230,000 to PLN 1.9 million.</p> <p>In the 4th edition in regard to estate tasks, no restrictions were introduced as to the amount of estimated costs of the task.</p>

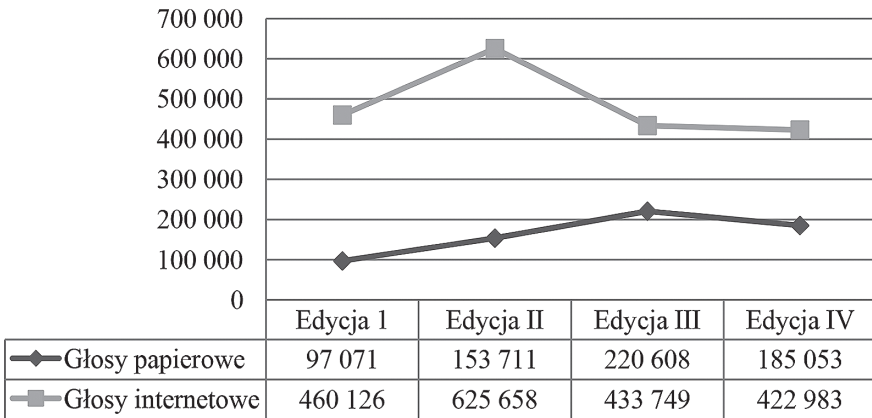
Source: Own study based on: Ordinance 3971/VI/13 of the President of Łódź dated April 2, 2013 on conducting public consultations on the civic budget for 2014; Ordinance 3837/VI/14 of the President of Łódź dated March 5, 2014 on conducting public consultations on the civic budget for 2015; Ordinance 644/VII/15 of the President of Łódź dated March 17, 2015 on conducting public consultations on the civic budget for 2016; Ordinance 2914/VII/16 of the President of Łódź dated February 19, 2016 on conducting public consultations on the civic budget for 2017; information materials placed on the website: www.budzet.dlalodzki.info.

After a synthetic presentation of the principles and procedures within the framework of the civic budget in Łódź, data allowing for a preliminary assessment of the budget, as a mechanism for involving residents in co-decision on the city will be presented in the next step. In the previous part I have mentioned that the turnout in local government elections in Łódź was relatively low in the last few votes. Referring to the S. Langton category (1978) in the form of electoral participation, it is worth noting that one of the highest voter turnouts among most Polish cities with over 250 thousand inhabitants, which introduced participatory budgets was recorded in Łódź in 2014¹². The only city in which, according to the data published on the website bp.partycypacjaobywatelska.pl, the turnout in the election of tasks to the civic budget was higher was the city of Wrocław.

It is difficult to unequivocally assess the data concerning attendance, on the one hand the level of electoral participation among the citizens of Łódź compared to other cities is impressive. On the other hand, when comparing the turnout in the civic budget to the local elections, not to mention parliamentary and even more – presidential elections, it is quite average. However, it is worth to remember that the civic budget is a some kind of a *novum*, both for the residents of Łódź, as well as officials and municipal authorities. Moreover, referring the level of electoral participation to the residents' interest in participation in other forms of consultation (cf. Brzeziński 2016), the number of people taking part in the budget vote seems impressive. At this point it is worth mentioning that less than 130,000 citizens of Łódź voted in the first edition, nearly 175,000 in the second edition and 135,000 in the third edition, and 149,000 in the last year (4th edition). When analyzing the electoral participation of residents of Łódź, it is also worth to present the voting data divided into traditional and Internet form.

As can be seen from the data presented in the chart above, the residents of Łódź are much more likely to vote online, over 625,000 votes cast during the second edition of the civic budget were made in that way. This situation can be interpreted by reference to the diagram below, which shows that among the three main age categories participating in the vote are people aged between 25–34 and 35–44. It can be assumed that these people are fluent in using both the computer and the Internet, so they probably voted online. Despite the significant domination of the online form of voting, it should be noted

¹² Turnout in the civic budget in 2014: Łódź 24%, Wrocław 30%, Poznań, 13%, Cracow 10%, Katowice 4% (cf. bp.partycypacjaobywatelska.pl).

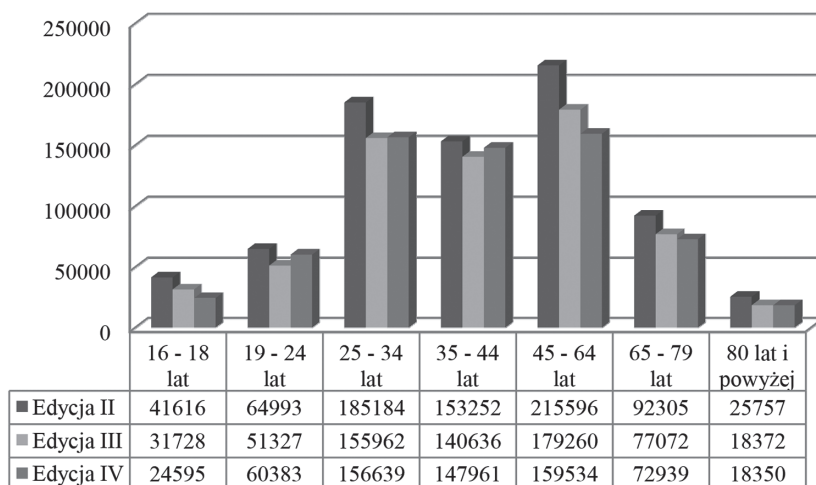


Graph 1. Number of votes cast in individual editions of the civic budget in Łódź divided into paper vote and online vote.

Source: Own study based on data obtained from the Łódź City Hall.

that a significant proportion of the citizens of Łódź still choose the traditional way of voting. In the first edition, less than 100,000 votes were cast in this form, but in subsequent editions this number exceeded 150,000, reaching a level of 220,000 in the third edition. Referring these results to the data below, it should be noted that the largest age group voting in the previous editions of the civil budget were people aged 45–64. It can be assumed that the majority of representatives of this age category could have chosen the traditional form of voting. Moreover, it is worth noting that the number of votes cast in the age group 65–79 exceeds the number of votes cast by young people, both in the age group 16–18 and 19–24. It may be assumed that residents aged 65–79 used the traditional form of voting much more frequently. The presented data also illustrate that the residents of budget in Łódź is less popular among young people from Łódź, which, considering that it is a fairly new and innovative mechanism, is a big surprise.

The presented data on electoral participation seems to give the right to state that the civic budget in Łódź is very popular among citizens of Łódź, also the possibility to vote both via the Internet and in paper form, which enables inclusion of different age categories should be assessed positively. Apart from the category of electoral participation, under widely understood public participation, S. Langton (1978) distinguishes also public activity, i.e. initiated directly by the residents (citizens). With regard to the civic budget mechanism, this category can be related to the number of proposals submitted by



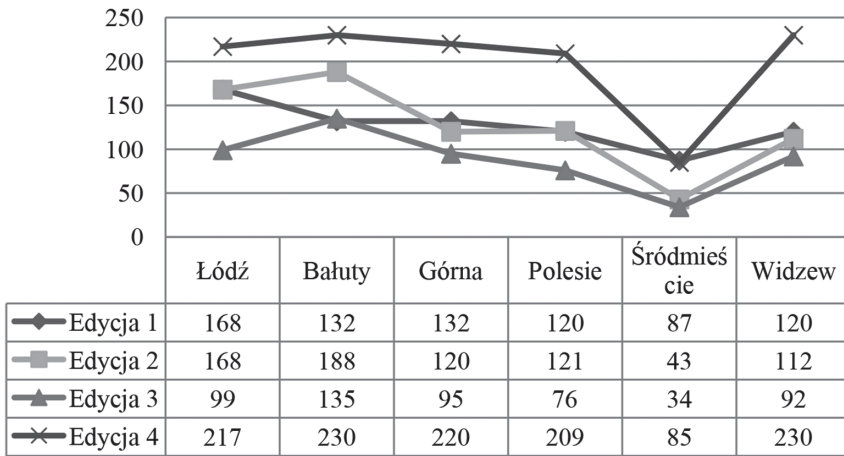
Graph 2. Number of votes cast in individual editions of the civic budget in Łódź divided into age categories (The graph do not include the data for the first edition, as the information received from the Łódź City Hall was incomplete).

Source: Own study based on data obtained from the Łódź City Hall.

residents. M. Siciarek's criticism (2014) regarding the exclusionary role of participatory budgets can be mentioned mainly in relation to this category of participation. Despite the fact that the application form for submitting a task contains only several pages, requires higher competences to fill it in, prepare the cost estimate, collect fifteen signatures of support than take part in the vote itself. This observation is somehow reflected in the number of proposals submitted by the citizens of Łódź, who have submitted 759 task proposals in the first edition¹³. However, it is difficult to assess unequivocally whether this number indicates a high or low level of participation within the category of public activity. For comparison, in the last edition (year 2017) of civic budget in Poznań, 121 proposals were submitted, however, it should be noted here that in the case of Poznań each resident may submit one proposal, while in Łódź this number is unlimited.

Analyzing the data from chart no. 3, it is also worth noting the number of proposals submitted by citizens of Łódź within the fourth edition, which is much higher than in previous editions. This difference may be due to the fact that local (district) tasks are replaced by district tasks. As a result, the city, in-

¹³ In the second edition 752 tasks were submitted, in the third – 531 and in the fourth – 1191 tasks.



Graph 3. The total number of proposals submitted to the civic budget in Łódź in particular editions, taking into account a breakdown by individual city area

Source: Own study based on data obtained from the Łódź City Hall.

stead of the division into 5 zones (districts) was divided into 36 zones corresponding to auxiliary units of the city (housing estates). This change has had beneficial effects and has also democratized the procedure of task selection. In the first three editions, the residents of smaller housing estates in a given district had to compete for votes for their own proposed tasks against housing estates with thousands of residents, which made it impossible for them to push through their own ideas at the voting stage. In this context, the division into housing estates seems to be fairer, which at the same time has resulted in an increase in public activity – a greater number of submitted proposals. It is worth noting that in the 3rd edition of the civic budget in Łódź only 531 tasks were submitted, the smallest amount among all the editions, which could be interpreted as an emerging tendency of reluctance towards this mechanism, resulting, among others, from the inability to implement initiatives proposed by residents of housing estates with smaller number of residents. The changes introduced have hindered this negative trend and further revitalized the civic budget in Łódź.

Summing up the considerations on the civic budget in Łódź in the light of the available data and in relation to the categories of public participation proposed by S. Langton (1978), it can be concluded that the initiative in Łódź matches the idea of involving the citizens. The Łódź City Hall, through the civic budget, made it possible for the residents to participate in

the process of co-decision on the city, in this context also the possibility of choosing a form of voting (traditional, online), which probably has a positive impact on the number of voters, both young and older citizens of Łódź should be assessed positively. Additionally, it should be emphasized that the City Hall have not interfered with the proposed tasks submitted by residents. Moreover, as the statistics confirm, the change of local tasks into housing estate tasks, as well as the increase of the amount from PLN 20 million in the I edition to PLN 40 million in subsequent editions should be assessed positively. On the other hand, one may wonder whether, taking into account the number of residents (less than 700,000), the funds allocated by the city to the civic budget are appropriate. According to the data included on the website bp.parcypacjaoobywatelska.pl, Łódź allocates 1% of the total budget of the city to the civic budget, and thus it is in the group of cities that allocate the largest amount of financial resources for this purpose. Only Białystok (1.4 from 2015) and Katowice (1.06 from 2015) allocates more than 1% of the city's total budget to participatory budgets. In terms of electoral participation, it is difficult to draw an unambiguous conclusion, on the one hand, the mechanisms in force in civic budget in Łódź contributed to the achievement of one of the higher voter turnout rates among the majority of large Polish cities, which have introduced their versions of the participatory budget. On the other hand, referring the results achieved to the voter turnout at local elections, the participation in the election under the civic budget achieves a relatively low level. The situation is similar with regard to public activity, understood in this case as the preparation and submission of one's own proposal of a task to the civic budget. In this situation, the number of applications in other cities or comparison of numbers between individual editions of the budget of Łódź can be used as a point of reference. In both cases, the aspect of public activity can be assessed positively, especially it is worth stressing the definitely higher number of applications in the last edition, which probably results from the implementation of housing estate tasks. However, it is difficult to decide whether the budget of Łódź is or is not civic, as the presented data rather authorizes its positive valuation, although these data should be supplemented with opinions of residents.

Conclusion

The main aim of the presented article was an attempt to join the ongoing discussion on the evaluation of "participatory nature" of the participatory budget mechanisms. Using the example of the civil budget in Łódź, I was try-

ing to confront the critical reflection dominating in Polish literature on the method of implementation of participatory budgets in Poland with theory and practice, in the form of the aforementioned version of the budget in Łódź. Opinions on the Polish participatory budgets include opinions that the mechanisms do not match the Brazilian prototype sufficiently well; they are often an unsuccessful copy of the experiences of other Polish cities. Moreover, only a fraction of the total amount of the city's budget is made available to the residents, and the adopted methods of implementation are far from the idea of participatory democracy. As noted by Katarzyna Kajdanek (2015, p. 30) the majority of Polish budgets resembles a plebiscite of ideas submitted by individual people, where the discussion of residents is replaced by voting. On the other hand, however, by referring the accepted understanding of the participatory budget to the theoretical reflection, it can be concluded that this mechanism is a part of three of the four categories of public participation mentioned by S. Langton (1978) and is also located on a high "level" on the participation ladder proposed by Sh. R. Arnstein (2012). The data provided by the Łódź City Hall prove, in turn, that the civic budget in Łódź involves a significant part of the city's residents. It should be borne in mind that this participation is far more related to electoral participation than to "Langton's" public activity. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that recent changes to the budgetary procedure have also had a positive impact on the latter category of participation.

Based mainly on the presented experiences of Łódź, it is worth addressing some of the allegations here. It seems reasonable to believe that the proposed procedure does not allow to draw up proposals for tasks within the framework of municipal consultative meetings, which would be in line with the idea of participatory democracy, although it may be considered whether the community of Łódź, as well as residents of other Polish cities, already have appropriate civic competences for such a form of participation. Experience (Krzewińska 2016) shows that deliberation, which allows for a collective "discussion" of a solution, works well in groups familiar with a given issue, interested in a given topic and motivated to open discussion. It seems to me that it will take quite long time for Polish society to learn this form of decision making, which requires undertaking numerous educational activities. I agree, however, with the argument that giving 1% at the disposal of residents, especially in smaller towns, is somewhat apparent participation. On the other hand, when raising the argument about deviations from the Brazilian original, it is worth remembering that the budgetary mechanism should be adapted to the local context. It should also be noted that residents as well as decision-makers in Porto Alegre also needed time to develop appropriate solutions for

their cities and mobilize residents to participate actively. To summarize, both the idea of the participatory budget and its version in Łódź, I consider it rather positive, although in the case of the latter, this assessment is mainly based on the analysis of statistical data and my own observations. While in order to achieve reliable verification of both the civil budget in Łódź and similar initiatives undertaken in other Polish cities, it is necessary to conduct in-depth qualitative research, which, as B. Martela rightly points out (2013), are rather not undertaken by representatives of the world of Polish science. On the other hand, as K. Kajdanek (2015) points out, the interest in this topic among social researchers, along with the activities improving the mechanisms of participation conducted by municipal units, critical media attention and the willingness of residents to take co-responsibility for the city, is one of the necessary conditions for improving Polish participatory budgets.

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