

**Edyta Widawska**

University of Silesia

## **Participatory budgeting as a school of democracy and participation for children Case study**

There are as if two lives: one serious, respectful, the other leniently tolerated, less worthy. We say: the future man, the future worker, the future citizen. That they will be, they will start later, for real and seriously, in the future.

Janusz Korczak (2012, p. 26)

**ABSTRACT:** The ongoing discussions about the place and significance of the youngest members of society – children, often focused on the issue of the possibility of their real participation in social life. This topic will be presented on the example of actions involving the participation of persons under 18 years old within participatory budgeting. Transfer of knowledge about the possibilities of real participation in community life and decision making on expenditure from the budget of the city/municipality and the development of skills of participatory action among the youngest residents is the basis of pro-citizenship attitudes. The basis of considerations taken is how we can put into practice of social life this model of child participation.

**KEYWORDS:** Children's participation, participatory budgeting, sense of agency, civic society, democracy.

### **Introduction**

The ongoing discussions on the place and importance of the youngest members of societies – children – often focus on the issue of the possibility of their real participation in social life. (Jans 2004; Lockyer 2008). The defi-

nition of the “child” contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations on 20 November 1989 (this document came into force on September 2, 2000, when the 20th state ratified it, Poland ratified it on June 7, 1991) indicates that it is every human being under the age of 18 (Convention 1991) and this group of people will be referred to in this article. The undertaken reflections focus on the problem of participation of the youngest persons in decision-making processes, which are undertaken at the local government level and concern spending a part of funds from municipal budgets. The aim of this article is to present “good practice” in the field of active involvement of children and youths in participation in social life based on a chosen example – realized in the author’s life environment and with her participation. The presented case study is an attempt to indicate the possibilities of applying the assumptions adopted by the researchers of participation of children and youths on the grounds of civic budget. This article attempts to answer the question: How can we actually involve the youngest citizens in active participation in society in practice?

As part of the process of increasing public participation, a new formula for the participation of residents in co-deciding on their immediate surroundings has been introduced in our country. Participation is understood here as a process of redistribution of power and “inclusion in its control, evaluation, exercising of persons subject to power, who are ready to become involved in the socialization of power. Participation as the delegation of power to subordinates is aimed at allowing them to plan and take decisions that are crucial for their subordinates (members of a given community, nation, institution, etc.), to identify (diagnose) their most important needs, expectations and interests, to assess, control the extent to which they are satisfied, and to the implementation by those in power and to enforcement of the desired quality from them” (Śliwerski 2015, p. 20). This process can take place at different levels of advancement, and its actual implementation takes place through partnership, delegation of tasks and citizen control. These elements determine the socialization of power (Arnstein 2012). The inspiration for the introduction of such measures, relating to the disposal of budgetary resources at the local government level, was a project which was created and successfully implemented in one of the cities in southern Brazil, in Porto Alegre (Baiocchi 1999; Novy, Leubolt 2005). In 1989, on the initiative of the inhabitants, a system was introduced there, which gives the possibility of real participation of the most interested persons (citizens) in the decision-making process concerning public money spending. The idea of social participation within the framework of budget spending was born from the grassroots energy of members of the lo-

cal community. The individual idea of the citizen is a starting point for further action and for determining the scope, manner and duration of the tasks financed by the “common money”. Coalitions, interest groups that work together on an equal footing with each other are created for a given idea and the result of their actions is a solution acceptable to all participants in the process. Undoubtedly, this system gives participants a sense of perpetuation and responsibility for the decision made (Archer 2013; Bogunia-Borowska 2015). To become a participant (co-participant) in creating the social reality in which one functions, one only needs the willingness and readiness to be active in this area. Educational achievements, age, sex, fitness, qualifications or competences are irrelevant; of relevance is only the fact that you are a member of a given community, and that is a sufficient mandate. In this system of social participation, the emphasis is on the individual’s activity, its internal resources and the possibility to use them for the common good (Wampler 2007). The creation of a participatory budget, introduced as part of a specific experiment in Porto Alegre, has had effects that encouraged other cities in the world to apply these civic decision-making procedures in their own right (Cabannes 2004; Widawska 2009). It is currently estimated that there are more than 2 000 participatory budgets in the world, and this figure varies according to the way in which the process itself is defined (Sintomer et al. 2013).

### **Participation of children in social activities in practice**

Creating a participatory budget model and its popularization is connected with the trend concerning the actual realization of individual rights and freedoms. With the process of involving groups and people who are excluded or at risk of social exclusion in activities that are related to their daily functioning (Freeman 2007). “The challenge facing every defender of democracy and human rights lies in how to restore to the millions of people today considered to be «useless» a sense of participation, dignity and respect for themselves” (Osiatyński 2011, p. 158). This challenge also includes taking action against more than two billion children living in the world who, due to, among other things, the type of social discourse about the child and childhood, are at risk of being excluded (Jans 2004; Aries 2010; Jarosz 2013; Milne 2015). “Many animators of the democratization of social life and the processes of social inclusion emphasize that it is children who are today the last such vast social group that is affected by exclusion. The situation seems to be particularly visible in the Polish reality, where traditional ideologies of education, conservative attitudes towards the position of a child and its rights are relative-

ly strong. The orientation of «children should be seen and not heard» seems to constantly penetrate the children's environment of life, affecting their development and education – family, school and other institutions, but also social life as such. Meanwhile, what is most importantly «heard» in the current international discussion on the protection of children and support for their development is the promotion and implementation of child participation (Jarosz 2012, p. 180).

Roger A. Hart, one of the leading researchers and promoters of children's participation, defines the process as an opportunity to actually participate in decisions that have an impact on the lives of individuals (children, adults) and the life of the community in which they all live. Participation is therefore the right of every citizen, including children, and is a standard for the implementation of democratic governance (Hart 1992, p. 5). The importance of participation of children and young people in relation to the issue of citizenship and the right to be heard is nowadays analyzed, among others, on the grounds of social and legal research (Cockburn 2013; Lansdown 2011; Stern 2006) and refers to the main principle on which the specific philosophy of social relations is based, namely respect for the subjectivity of all its members.

This understanding of child participation is tantamount to an approach to the process of social participation for all members of the community, regardless of age, discussed earlier. (Śliwerski 2015; Arnstein 2012). However, it has its own specific dimensions for children. One of them is the issue of social inclusion, which was already addressed. As Ewa Jarosz points out, «participation» for the children of the Western world means the possibility of realising the deep meaning of «citizenship» and social inclusion through active participation in decision-making in their immediate environment, but also at the social level (local community, society)” (Jarosz 2012, p. 184).

A separate issue is the actual implementation of the process of participation of children and young people. Social experience is dominated by the belief that the participation of the youngest is reduced to consulting with them certain areas of their lives, chosen by adults, and the final decision on the issues at stake is taken by the decision-makers of the system (adults). This adult-centric vision, following Marc Jans' formulae, for the realization of the idea of social participation of young people, was confronted by R. A. Hart by developing the model called the ladder of participation.

Table 1. The ladder of participation – Roger A. Hart's model of participation of children and young people

Degrees of participation of children and youths	Co-operation initiated by children and young people	Children and young people are the initiators of activities that are carried out together with adults.
	Children's and young people's initiative	Children and young people are the initiators and implementers of activities.
	Co-operation initiated by adults	Adults are the initiators of activities that are carried out together with children and young people.
	Consulting and informing	Plans of adults are consulted with children and young people.
	Assignment of tasks and informing	Adults inform about the plans in which children and young people can participate.
No participation/ Token participation	Tokenism	Token inclusion of children and young people in decision-making bodies where adults actually decide.
	Decoration	Children and young people included in the realization of adult plans without the right to vote.
	Manipulation	Plans of adults presented as the plans of children and young people.

Source: own study based on: Hart R.A. 1992.

The model, based on the well-known participation ladder metaphor by Sherry R. Arnstein, presents the various levels of involvement of children and young people in social decision-making processes. At the first three levels/steps, there are situations of inactivity or token participation. R.A. Hart (1992) mentions the following areas here:

- manipulation – a situation where adults influence children and adolescents in such a way that they undertake activities that meet the needs of the manipulator without realizing it;
- decoration – which is the second step of the participation ladder in the field of token participation of children and young people in projects initiated by adults but without “informed” consent, the key is the lack of knowledge about the purpose of the actions and the inability to actually influence the course of events;
- tokenism – involving individual representatives of children and young people in the decision-making bodies in order to demonstrate that they are treated equally as partners in the social dialog, but this is a token activity and the young participants do not have a real influence on the decision-making process.

The next steps of the participation ladder refer to the actual participation and include:

- informed assignment of tasks – this type of participation can be called “consensual”, since it is based on informing young people about the nature of the activity, its purpose and the intentions in which it is implemented, and on informing them of who has made the decision to engage them in this type of activity and the justification for this, young people also have an important role to play in the whole process and can take a fully autonomous decision on participation;
- consultations and informing – the next step in the participation ladder refers to a situation where children and young people are informed about the subject matter and scope of their activities, and their participation is related to the consultation on the implementation of a given undertaking, the comments and suggestions of young people are analyzed, and the results of the consultation process are made public, with an indication of the accepted and not taken into account proposals for changes;
- adult-initiated shared decisions with children – at this level of participation we are dealing with an adult initiative, in the course and manner of implementation of which young people are included from the very beginning, at each stage of planning a given activity, they are in an equal position with initiators and have a real possibility of making binding decisions on the key issues for the whole project, their opinions are taken into account and are important for the final decisions;
- children’s and young people’s initiative – the qualitative change concerning the initiator of a given project takes place on the seventh level of the participation ladder, young people are a group of initiators and promoters of a given activity, children and young people learn from each other how to effectively pass through the different stages of actions, and adults, which may be a certain difficulty, do not play a leading role in these projects, but only a supportive one;
- co-operation initiated by children and young people – this highest level on the ladder of developing the idea of young people’s participation, which is extremely rare in the space of social life, as R. A. Hart points out (1992, p. 14), is a kind of reversal of level six, in the case of this type of activity, the initiators of the project are children and young people, they define the subject matter and the scope of undertaken actions educating each other (peer to peer education), while adults are invited to cooperate and jointly implement solutions developed through cooperation.

The scheme for the participation of children and young people discussed above is one of many concepts that describe this extremely topical issue. Other models referring to this issue (Fajerman, Treseder 1997; Shier 2001; Wong

et al. 2010) also stress the importance of the effective participation of young people. Establishing and implementing processes of power sharing and joint decision making between adults and children, in recognition and appreciation of the individual and collective contribution of the latter to social life, is a key objective for the development of young people's participation.

### **Methodological assumptions and research procedure**

One of the places where activities aimed at increasing the participation of residents, including children and youths, in decision-making crucial for their daily functioning were undertaken is Częstochowa, a city with the rights of a county of about 230 thousand inhabitants, of which about 16% are people under the age of 18. In 2013, a process was launched to implement the procedures for introducing the principles of public consultation within the participatory budget in the next calendar year (and subsequent years)<sup>1</sup>. In order to respond to the main research problem connected with the problem of the actual inclusion of the youngest citizens in active participation in social life, I used the case study. This method makes it possible to analyze the phenomenon on the basis of an easily specified case (Stake 2009, pp. 623–649), which in this article is the civic budget implemented in Częstochowa. A participatory budget, which is a specific quintessence of the process of increasing the participation of residents of a given community in decision-making on important issues.

Based on the area of research and referring to the main research problem, I formulated the following research questions: Are, and if so, how are children and young people involved in active participation in the civic budget? What forms does young people's participation in this process take? How is the participation of children and young people in civic budget stimulated?

The aim of the analysis is to try to describe the phenomenon of actual participation of children and young people in the local community and to find key criteria for understanding and explaining (Juszczyk 2013, pp. 118–128) the problems connected with the realization of the child's right to be heard. The research is a pilot one and may contribute to further in-depth studies on youth participation, whether it concerns the implementation of civic

---

<sup>1</sup> The author of this article, the founder of the Polish Institute of Mediation and Social Integration, the association which works, among others, to strengthen social participation and from the institutional level, was the initiator, animator and implementer of this process, from the level of participation in the implementation of the participatory budget in Częstochowa.

budgets in other cities or other areas of social life (e.g. family, mass media). In this article I have limited my analysis to the issues outlined in the research questions. They will be discussed in relation to the model of the levels of the participation ladder, associated with the actual participation of young people, which levels have been revealed in exploratory studies using the mixed research procedure (Creswell 2013). These levels relate to the degree of involvement of children and young people in the R.A. Hart's participation process and they involve: assignment of tasks and providing information, and consulting, co-operation initiated by adults, children's and young people's initiatives, cooperation initiated by children.

### **Assignment of tasks and informing** **– what you don't learn as a child you can't learn as an adult**

A broadly understood information campaign, which was aimed at providing knowledge about children's rights (including personal and political rights) and the importance of their full implementation for the effective functioning of young people in society, was conducted during the implementation of procedures related to the civic budget. These activities were aimed at both adult residents and children. For the latter group, targeted activities were prepared, which resulted in the dissemination of knowledge about the possibilities of active participation in the civic budget of citizens under 18 years of age. They were implemented by a non-governmental organization (the Polish Institute of Mediation and Integration) and by the City Hall (Social Policy Division, Department of Participation and Social Consultations). An important element in the activities undertaken, often jointly and in cooperation with young people, was the creation of a plan and strategy for public education.

Taking into consideration the issue of participation of children and young people analyzed in the article, it appears that it is extremely important to use the initial needs diagnosis during the preparation of individual information campaigns. The diagnosis was carried out among the interested parties themselves, i.e. the young inhabitants of the city, and the next steps were planned on the basis of the results obtained. Thus, in the years 2013–2016 in Częstochowa, the following activities were carried out, among others, addressed to persons under 18 years of age<sup>2</sup>:

---

<sup>2</sup> Most of the activities described above were carried out by the Polish Institute of Mediation and Social Integration thanks to the co-financing of the Civic Initiatives Fund Programme.



- competition for students from Częstochowa junior high and high schools for a film promoting voting for tasks within the framework of civic budget (the awarded works can be found on the website [http://pimis.pl/projekty/jasne\\_ze\\_razem/art,25,konkurs-na-najlepszy-filmik-promujacy-udzial-w-glosowaniu-na-wnioski-do-czestochowskiego-budzetu-obywatelskiego-prezentacja-prac-konkursowych](http://pimis.pl/projekty/jasne_ze_razem/art,25,konkurs-na-najlepszy-filmik-promujacy-udzial-w-glosowaniu-na-wnioski-do-czestochowskiego-budzetu-obywatelskiego-prezentacja-prac-konkursowych));
- art competition “I can change the world” for elementary school students from Częstochowa and pupils of Częstochowa’s nursing and upbringing institutions devoted to civic budget and finished with an exhibition of the competition works (information about awarded persons <http://konsultacje.czestochowa.pl/?p=9043>);
- classes on social participation and civic budget in high schools on the basis of scenarios developed and the information brochure “Częstochowa Civic Budget for Young People”. (Widawska et al. 2015);
- information meetings in the District Councils, which were also attended by young people;
- a telephone consultation and counselling point and stationary consultation and advice points, which were also used by young people;
- the happening “Let’s make a city”, in which children and young people took part in the role of volunteers and participants.

The actions undertaken were aimed at, on the one hand, disseminating knowledge about the possibilities of participation in decisions concerning public money spending and, on the other hand, pointing to a new participatory space for young people.

In 2017, further information activities aimed at young people are carried out at the initiative of the City Hall. In junior high schools, for first grade students, there are classes devoted to the issue of social participation. The participants have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge about local government and, as we can read on the website of the Department of Participation and Social Consultation, which deals with the implementation of Częstochowa’s civil budget, find out “what the principles are and what can be done to make sure that we make the most out of living in our local community. The Częstochowa City Hall prepared a strategic board game for young people. During the game, the students themselves, in an unusual way, can learn how to actively influence the quality of life in the local community. During the 2-hour workshops, young people discuss, argue and seek compromises. The developed game belongs to the so-called “serious games”, i. e. games that help solve specific problems or reach people with a certain targeted message. During the game young people play different roles and thus have an oppor-



Photo 1. Happening concerning the civic budget "Let's make a city".  
Source: own archive.

tunity to test themselves in new situations. They also improve their skills in the discussion, i.a.: formulating arguments, skillfully listening to others, finding compromises. By participating in the game, young people can experience that the best response to problems appearing during the group work is cooperation, empathy and equal care for all the participants of the game. After the 30-minute gameplay is over, the students themselves formulate the rules of harmonious community life. They also learn about what the citizen's budget is all about and that thanks to it they can take care of their own needs, in their immediate surroundings, at school, in their district and city. Equality is equal access to the city's resources – participation in workshops means that young people gain knowledge of how to become involved in the life of the local community on their own, in an active way" (Wygrajmy 2017). This is how the people involved describe the game.

Consulting the educational project "Let's win a city" at the stage of preparing the didactic game and cooperating in the implementation of subsequent editions of civic budget in Częstochowa, I undertook to carry out pilot studies, which will complement the case study. Their aim was to test the effectiveness of the undertaken information and education activities. The study was conducted in February and March 2017 and was conducted in two stag-

es. The questionnaire was completed by students before and after the end of the workshop classes described above. This peculiar pedagogical experiment was conducted in six Częstochowa junior high schools (the project and the research itself are to be continued), with a total of 112 participants (52 boys, 60 girls). These young people aged 13–14, working in teams of 4–5, were faced with a task which was a simulation of budget allocation.

In the research conducted among the participants of the game, I drew attention to several aspects related to knowledge and skills connected with the participation process. These include: willingness to participate in the discussion, knowledge of the civic budget, knowledge of the possibilities of participating in the life of the city and the feeling of being part of the local community. The respondents were asked to provide their opinions on the discussed issues on a scale of -2 to 2, where -2 meant a negative opinion, and 2 meant a positive one.

Table 2. The average results before and after participation in the game together with the difference of indications, N = 112

Indicators	Measurement "before"	Measurement "after"	Difference
I am reluctant to take part in discussions versus I am eager to take part in discussions	0.7	1.3	0.6
I don't know what the civic budget is versus I know what the civic budget is	-0.1	1.5	1.6
I don't know how I can participate in the life of my city versus I know how I can participate in the life of my city	0.2	1.3	1.1
I don't feel a part of the local community versus I feel a part of the local community.	0.5	1	0.5

Source: own studies.

Analyzing the data obtained in the research we can see in the responses of the students a declared increase of competences in areas important for active participation in the process of social participation. The highest indicator relates to civic budget knowledge (from -0.1 before the class to 1.5 after the class, with a difference of 1.6). Participating in the game and a mini lecture based on it, connected with the possibility of participating in budget activities, resulted in broadening the knowledge of the participants. This may be important for their real involvement in the civic budget process, or their deliberate failure to do so. It is a change important for participation because the variable is its unforced nature (Hart 1992).

Another area I have pointed out is the sense of community. Young participants of the game, when asked about this aspect of their functioning be-

fore taking part in the game, determined it at the level of 0.5, i.e. at the level of positive low. Encouraging the viewer to look at reality from the perspective of being part of a larger whole contributed to an increased sense of identification with the local community (increase of indications from 0.5 to 1). This element is important from the point of view of activities aimed at cooperation, which results in the achievement of goals important for the community (Ziółkowski 2015).

What does result from this sense of identification with the community for the everyday life of young people and how can they take an active part in what is happening around them? Giving concrete examples and indicating the space for community activity was also reflected in the didactic game with the students during the workshop classes. In their statements after the class, students declare that they know how they can participate in the life of their city (change from 0.2 before playing to 1.3 after the game, a difference of 1.1). The question is to what extent will these declarations translate in the future into real activities of students in this area and active citizenship, understood as participation (Jans 2004, pp. 38–40). However, the participation in classes itself, raising the level of knowledge in the field of participation and practicing tasks in which they can actively participate may be the first step towards effective social actions.

The last variable analyzed is the willingness to participate in discussions. The process of social participation is of a consultative nature and therefore requires the ability to search for arguments, negotiate positions and reach an agreement. During the discussions held during the didactic game, the students exchanged opinions, talked about their needs, analyzed their own position and the opinions of the game's co-participants. The process of resolving emerging conflicts was very dynamic and the negotiation strategies adopted were different, with a strong domination of the problem strategy. Students' statements create an image of people who not only know what they want, but are also able to look at the problem and seek new solutions. Their comments indicate a conciliation and solution-oriented approach to the discussed issues: "OK, I'll contribute to the dog food provided that I can name him", "we've resigned from individual needs because we decided that the needs of us all are more important", "we bought the dog food because we are responsible for him", "if we didn't get along, we'd have nothing". The students also said that they did not know that they could discuss without arguing with each other. The discussion gained value in their opinion, which translated into an increase in the willingness to participate in it (from 0.7 before the classes to 1.3 after the classes, a difference of 0.6).

The studies had a pilot nature and will continue. However, what comes from their initial analysis is above all the changes that have occurred in the students' opinions. The way they perceive themselves as being part of a larger, important whole with which they identify, the ability to work together with others and the knowledge they possess make up a subjective assessment of the quality of life. We are dealing here with a sense of real potential for development and purposeful activity, which is linked to the values recognized by a given community (Wysocka 2013). Giving young people the opportunity to meet their needs and express themselves in matters concerning them is one of the elements that constitute their well-being.

### **Consulting and informing – children should be seen and heard**

The participatory budget (also called the civic budget) is one of the forms of social consultations, conducted in order to allocate a certain part of the city budget expenditure to tasks indicated directly by the inhabitants, falling within the area of the commune's competence. The whole process of drafting the assumptions, principles and functioning of the civic budget was carried out in Częstochowa on the basis of a consultative model of environmental work. During the planned activities in several stages, residents of all ages could actively participate in the development of a draft resolution regulating the manner and mode of implementation of a part of the city budget expenditure, directly at their disposal (Widawska, Wieczorek 2014; Widawska et al. 2015). The consultation work was completed successfully and since 2014 the inhabitants have been able to take an active and direct part in the decision on the distribution of funds within the framework of the civic budget. The third edition of the public consultations ended in 2016. In subsequent years of civic budget execution, the amounts allocated for this purpose amounted to: 2014 – PLN 5,738,869, 2015 – PLN 6,661,679, 2016 – PLN 6,661,679 (according to the resolution, these funds constitute 1.1% of the city budget's own revenues and in the following year they cannot be lower than the amount allocated for this purpose in the previous year). In 2017, the civic budget in Częstochowa amounted to 8 million 735 thousand 830 złotys. The increase in funding for this may indicate the growing importance of public consultations. Are we ready, however, to involve the youngest in this process?

When considering the issue of children and young people's participation in decision-making processes at the local government level, it is worth noting the scope of their rights under the Częstochowa civil budget. In this respect, the key focus of the 2013 public consultations on the budget partic-

ipation strategy was to identify those who could be active participants in the process, both at the stage of submitting proposals for implementation tasks and at the stage of supporting individual proposals during voting. The controversy arose when the discussion concerned the age of people who could propose tasks to the civic budget. In the aforementioned Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 12 reads: "States-Parties shall ensure that a child which is capable of shaping its own views has the right to freely express its views on all matters relating to the child, with due importance, appropriately for age and maturity" (the Convention, 1991). The right to express an opinion on matters concerning the child is explicitly mentioned here. One of such spaces is, among others, functioning in the community of residents of a given locality (Parkes 2013). However, "many factors such as traditions of dealing with children, cultural attitudes towards them and political and economic barriers limit the possibility of social inclusion of children" (Jarosz 2012, p. 182).

These barriers have also emerged during consultations in Częstochowa on the rules of functioning of the civic budget. Many of the participants in the public consultations (it is worth adding that they were over 18 years of age) pointed out that the age of people who could submit proposals for implementation within the framework of the civic budget should be limited. The arguments put forward can be divided into three categories:

- legal – difficulties during the process of submitting a proposal for tasks due to a lack of legal capacity (individuals under 13 years of age) or limited legal capacity of applicants (individuals over 13 years of age);
- socio-cultural – reference was made to the traditional model of social structure and family structure (the city budget was compared to the household budget and financial decisions made by parents – adults; the Polish proverb "Children and fish do not have a voice" ("Children should be seen and not heard") was quoted as an argument;
- pertaining to competences – the child, because of its age, does not yet have such a background of knowledge, experience and skills to be able to define its needs (fear of the emergence of "stupid", "immature" ideas was repeatedly expressed in the debate).

During the consultations, the commencement of magical thinking which emanates from the belief that on the day when the individual turns 18, it becomes a full member of the community, and the day before, it does not have sufficient dispositions to do so, was apparent. Some of the participants of the consultations did not perceive the process-oriented nature of becoming a fully conscious inhabitant, or even demonstrated the desire to take away from



the youngest the possibility of learning new skills and acquiring knowledge in this field.

Finally, the arguments raised by the “opponents” of giving the widest possible access to submit proposals for tasks to the civic budget (irrespective of age) did not receive broad support and a point was included in the resolution where such rights are held by the “residents of the city” (the Ruling, 2015). The absence of age limits is in line with the general objectives of this form of social participation, such as (Widawska, Wieczorek 2014, pp. 45–46):

- initiation of community forces;
- improvement of the quality of life of the inhabitants made by the inhabitants themselves;
- making the inhabitants’ expectations more real;
- enabling the inhabitants themselves to make changes in their immediate surroundings;
- carrying out tasks that are not perceived by the City Hall;
- integration of the local community;
- identification with the city;
- direct increase of the participation of inhabitants in the decision-making process;
- transparency of public finances.

The result of informing and consulting, also with children and young people, the resolution concerning the civic budget in Częstochowa was to refrain from limiting the age for persons submitting proposals of tasks to be carried out and to introduce a census of 13 years of age for persons voting on proposals of tasks. It is thanks to taking into account the opinions of the youngest inhabitants of the city that each Częstochowa citizen can initiate the process of change, but most importantly, an institutional system of support for children’s and youth’s participation is being created (Hart 1992; Shier 2001; Jarosz 2013).

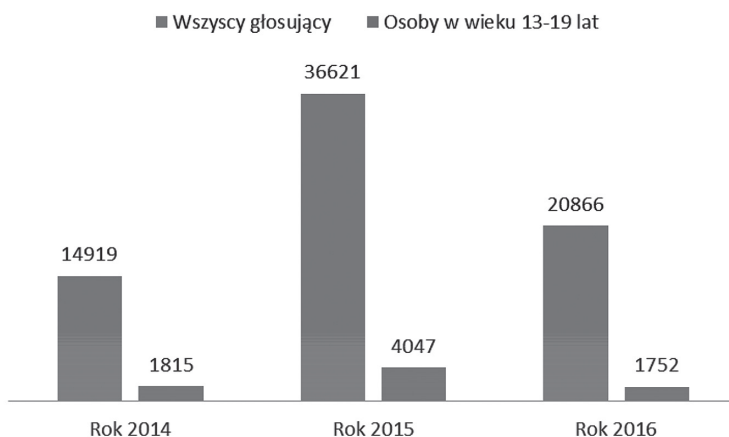
The success associated with the process of informing and consulting socially important issues with young people has become an incentive to involve young people in further consultation processes. After each subsequent edition of the participatory budget, an evaluation is carried out, in which children and young people take part. They express their views on the positive aspects of the budgetary process and indicate areas where changes are worth making. All interested parties may submit their comments electronically via the website [www.konsultacje.czestochowa.pl](http://www.konsultacje.czestochowa.pl) and attend a public hearing, which takes place annually. The evaluation reports are made public, which gives the opportunity to become familiar with the finally adopted solutions. As indicated by

researchers on issues related to young people's participation (Hart 1992; Jans 2004; Lansdown 2001), informing the participants of the consultation process about its results is a key factor in sustaining their further participation.

Also, the results of the vote on the tasks for the participatory budget are widely publicized, allowing young people who participated in it to have access to the results of their activities.

### Cooperation initiated by adults – I have a vote, I have a choice

Young inhabitants of the city can take part in voting for tasks related to the civic budget. In this case, the census of the age of eligible persons has been determined on the basis of the individual's limited legal capacity and amounts to, as already mentioned, 13 years of age. The results of this solution have been presented in relation to the participation of young people in the voting process for budget tasks (Graph 1.).



Graph 1. Number of persons voting in the civic budget in the years 2014–2016

Source: own study based on data obtained from the UMCz.

When analyzing the data, we can see that the participation of young people in voting is relatively low and ranges from 8.4% to 12.2% of all voters. This may be due to a number of factors that include:

- low level of knowledge among young people about the possibility of active participation and decision-making involving the local community;
- lack of experience or negative experiences with participation and community action (manipulation, decoration, tokenism);
- poor ability to analyze one's needs and generate various ideas for satisfying them;



- reproduction of a cultural script in which children are the object/subject of concern of adults, resulting in placing decision-making and perpetration beyond oneself.

Based on this preliminary diagnosis of the reasons for the limited participation of young people in the civic budget at the voting stage, it is worth to plan informational activities (returning to the previous levels of the participation ladder) in order to develop, together with children and young people, a strategy for involving young people in the action.

### **Children's and young people's initiative – this land is my land**

The possibilities of actual participation in the life of the local government community, which were created for the youngest children in Częstochowa, are used by the interested parties themselves. In the three Civic Budget editions, applications submitted by people under the age of 18 accounted for between 0.5% and 1.5% of all ideas submitted in 2016. The fact that the proposals prepared by minors are presented indicates the readiness and willingness of this part of the local community to participate in social life and co-decide about their immediate surroundings. The proposals made by children and young people for implementation within the framework of the civic budget concerned, among other things:

- creation of a sports and recreation park in one of the city's districts;
- building squirrel feeders in the city park;
- broadcasting programmes and music from speakers in Aleje NMP;
- construction of a square for the residents of the district and the school community of one of Częstochowa's high schools;
- purchase of a sailboat with a trailer for the Scout Water Team;
- purchase of lifejackets for scouts;
- construction of a beach volleyball field;
- construction of a playground;
- installation of door opening buttons in trams.

Suggestions made by young inhabitants and residents of Częstochowa, contrary to the fears of adults, are ideas indicating the ability to perceive social needs. All the ideas presented, and in particular the arguments put forward in the explanatory memorandum of the proposal, demonstrate the ability to take a broader view of one's environment and to take into account the needs of different groups. This ability to combine different perspectives and different points of view is particularly evident in the analyzed task proposals. Below you will find examples of detailed descriptions of tasks together with

a justification of social needs (in the justifications cited below, the abbreviations are made by the author, while the style and spelling are original):

- *Installation of door opening buttons for passengers in trams. [...] Advantages: – not all doors open unnecessarily; – in winter, heat will not escape from the vehicle;*
- *The city lacks a place where you could spend the evening outdoors. If one can find any, these locations are often not very safe due to low traffic in the surrounding area. In fact, it is difficult to find a place where a larger number of people can be encountered in the evening. [...] The aim of the whole project is to take people out of their homes, make it possible for them to also spend a nice evening outdoors in a friendly and safe atmosphere. Broadcasting music (but also news programmes) would make the atmosphere of this place change for the better. This would introduce a unique and extraordinary atmosphere that would draw people out of their homes, even out of curiosity. Thus, the number of people in nearby cafes/restaurants would increase, with a positive impact on the owners and the city. The same goes for safety. The more people there are, the smaller the chance that unwanted incidents will happen there. This can be achieved by using the loudspeakers currently found in the Aleje. [...]. What is also needed is a place from which it will be possible to control what is being broadcast (or if one already exists, it would be useful to reactivate it);*
- *Street workout, skateboard, squash are becoming more and more popular sports that are gaining a new group of enthusiasts. Unfortunately, in such a big district as Stradom, there is no place where young people could devote themselves to their unusual passions. They usually have to commute to other Częstochowa districts. We must not forget about senior citizens who complain about the lack of a permanent place to stroll with their grandchildren and leisure [...].*

In each of the justifications quoted we find a perspective of empathetic insight into the reality surrounding young people. The arguments referred to in the proposals refer to the profits of the community (city, senior citizens, all urban transport passengers). This sociocentric point of view and specific social sensitivity are determinants of the affiliation of the young generation. The goal of including children and young people in real participation in social life is profitable for the whole community.

Still another perspective of looking at the immediate surroundings was presented by an eight-year-old resident of Częstochowa, who in 2015 submitted a project of constructing feeders for squirrels in one of the city's parks.



Photo 3. Author of the project "Feeder for squirrels" and the result of the residents' decision – the implemented project

Source: <http://czestochowa.wyborcza.pl/czestochowa/51,48725,21043372.html?i=4> (10.01.2017).

The project prepared by the applicant included a justification with an indication of social benefits, a description of the use of the facility and an illustrative drawing. In this project we see a broad point of view, taking into account the ecosystem, which unfortunately does not often accompany adults in their actions. This is another reason why it is worth including children's optics in social activities – their ability to look at reality differently from that of adults – not only enriches the discourse, but also gives an opportunity to perform important community tasks (Lansdown 2001). After a formal and legal verification, the squirrel feeders project was put to vote. It gained nationwide fame, the support of the city's inhabitants and was the first and so far the only application submitted by a person under 18 years of age, addressed for implementation.

The number of applications submitted by children and young people is low and it can be assumed that without additional educational and informational actions it will still remain at this level.

### **Co-operation initiated by children and young people – start small, end up big**

One of the principles adopted in Częstochowa's civic budget is cooperation between departments responsible for the implementation of the project

and the applicant. We are dealing here with the highest level of participation indicated in the R. A. Hart participation model. The young person's initiative is implemented together with adults, and all key decisions are taken jointly and in agreement.

This is how the concept of a young citizen of Częstochowa was implemented, and the final result is an incentive to undertake similar initiatives for the next initiators.

### **Final conclusions**

The analyzed case of Częstochowa's civic budget shows the importance of introducing systemic solutions supporting participation of children and young people. The participation of young people is explicitly mentioned in the structure and procedures governing this process. This also undoubtedly has a symbolic meaning – children and young people are equal residents of the city – this is the message that stems from the resolution on the participatory budget. Another issue is the decreasing number of activities involving children and young people. It decreases along with the “climbing” onto successive levels of the participation ladder. Referring to Harry Shier's concept (2001), it is worth asking the question: are we adults open to the actual participation of young people, are we ready to share the power with children? In the analyzed case, we are dealing with an initial readiness which, once internalized by all participants of social life, may eventually result in a larger number of initiatives, which will be created by young people and to which adult persons will be invited. As a result, it gives them the opportunity to effectively cooperate and act for the benefit of the local community, and thus on a macro scale: making quality decisions, strengthening democracy and its better understanding, and efficient enforcement of children's rights (Lansdown 2001). These objectives are part of the mission of pedagogical action, which is to “restore human dignity and legitimize their autonomy” (Pilch, Lalak 2009, p. 514). The human dignity inherent to everyone, regardless of age, sex, degree of fitness or other distinguishing characteristics. The dignity that gives rise to human rights and freedoms, as well as the autonomy that determines the individual's independence and gives them the opportunity to experience a sense of cause. Perpetration that has a creative nature, reveals new areas for the operation and shaping of the social space of an individual (Archer 2013, pp. 254–307). However, it is important to take the first step up the participation ladder.

When analyzing the problem of the youngest children's involvement in activities for the benefit of the local community, through the civic budget,

I start with the perspective that Helena Radlińska (1947, 1961) introduced to social pedagogy by talking about the bottom-up creation of a social environment and awakening the forces of individuals, to which R.A. Hart refers to in his works on the participation of children and young people Hart (1992, p. 14). This is a situation where young people are given the opportunity to actively experience the world and shape their identity as a community member (Naumiuk 2007). Participating in decision-making processes at the local level allows to build identification with the group (I am a resident) and, which is important for the further activity of young people, it is a specific type of civic education. Children learn from the concrete example of what democracy is and how important in this system is the ability to verbalize needs, negotiate ways of meeting them and find solutions that take into account the interests of both majority and minority groups.

Indicators of the educational process include empathy, trust and hope (Pilch, Lalak 2009). In the course of active participation in social life, to which the civic budget gives an opportunity, young people have the opportunity to experience these dimensions of relations with other members of the communities in which they live. An understanding attitude towards co-residents (who are broadly defined, among others, in the context of deep ecology) and their needs, the ability to perceive problems in their immediate environment and the ability of creative approach to solving them, are competences necessary to be a part of the process of participation and which young people acquire through participation in social life. The same applies to **trust**, which is built during social interactions and verified by establishing rules of coexistence. Ontological safety can be achieved thanks to hope, understood as a tool for forming a responsible attitude towards the world, based on the principles of rational operation and rules of praxeology, the elements of which may include optimism, faith in the sense of undertaking pedagogical effort, work on oneself, creativity, building good relations with others” (Pilch, Lalak 2009, p. 516). These values are implemented, among others, through participation in social action. “Social activists and social activities are a model contrary to the process of marginalization and exclusion – they are an element of inclusive action, seeking solutions to the risk of exclusion and the factors that cause it, through activation and engaging in social reality” (Naumiuk 2014, p. 43). Therefore, by giving young people the opportunity to participate actively in real activity, in this case at the level of the civic budget, we are creating a space for social inclusion and the renewal of local communities (Putnam 2008). You can also look at this process as a prophylactic action, in which participation is a specific vaccine to protect the youngest from

marginalization and exclusion. The potential profit in individual and social terms is difficult to overestimate.

## References

- Archer M.S. (2013), *Człowieczeństwo. Problem sprawstwa*, Zakład Wydawniczy „NOMOS”, Kraków.
- Aries P. (2010), *Historia dzieciństwa. Dziecko i rodzina w czasach ancien régime'u*, Wydawnictwo Aletheia, Warszawa.
- Arnstein S.R. (2012), *Drabina partycypacji*, [in:] *Partycypacja. Przewodnik „Krytyki Politycznej”*, Krytyka Polityczna, Warszawa.
- Bogunia-Borowska M. (red.) (2015), *Odpowiedzialność*, [in:] *Fundamenty dobrego społeczeństwa. Wartości*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków.
- Cabannes Y. (2004), *72 Frequently Asked Questions about Participatory Budgeting*, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Nairobi.
- Cockburn T. (2013), *Rethinking Children's Citizenship*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke.
- Creswell J.W. (2013), *Projektowanie badań naukowych. Metody jakościowe, ilościowe i mieszane*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków.
- Fajerman L., Treseder P. (1997), *Empowering Children and Young People. Promoting Involvement in Decision-Making*, Children's Rights Office and Save the Children, London.
- Freeman M. (2007), *Prawa człowieka*, Wydawnictwo Sic!, Warszawa.
- Hart R.A. (1992), *Children's Participation. From Tokenism to Citizenship*, Innocenti Essays, 4, UNICEF, Florence.
- Jans M. (2004), *Children as citizens. Towards a contemporary notion of child participation*, „Childhood”, Vol 11(1), pp. 27–44.
- Jarosław E. (2012), „Uczestnictwo dzieci” – idea i jej znaczenie w przełamywaniu wykluczenia społecznego dzieci, „Chowanna”, 1, pp. 179–191.
- Jarosław E. (2013), *Spółeczne wykluczenie i dyskryminacja dzieci – marginalizowany obszar nierówności społecznych*, „Studia Edukacyjne”, 24, pp. 89–101.
- Juszczyk S. (2013), *Badania jakościowe w naukach społecznych. Szkice metodologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice.
- Konwencja o prawach dziecka*, Dz.U. 1991 Nr 120, poz. 526.
- Korczak J. (2012), *Prawo dziecka do szacunku*, Rzecznik Praw Dziecka, Warszawa.
- Lansdown G. (2001), *Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-Making*, UNICEF, New York.
- Lansdown G. (2011), *Every Child's Right to be Heard. A Resource Guide on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 12*, UNICEF, Save the Children, London.
- Lockyer A. (2008), *Education for Citizenship: Children as Citizens and Political Literacy*, [in:] *Children and Citizenship*, Invernizzi A., Williams J. (ed.), SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Milne B. (2015), *Rights of the Child: 25 Years After the Adoption of the UN Convention*, Children's Well-Being: Indicators and Research 11, Springer International Publishing, Switzerland.
- Naumiuk A. (2007), *Uczestnictwo społeczne młodzieży. Możliwości działań – opinie i postawy*, Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne „Akapi”, Toruń.
- Naumiuk A. (2014), *Edukacja – partycypacja – zmiana w doświadczeniach i wyobrażeniach działaczy lokalnych (animatorów społecznych)*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa.



- Novy A., Leubolt B. (2005), *Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre: Social Innovation and the Dialectical Relationship of State and Civil Society*, „Urban Studies”, Vol. 42, No. 11, pp. 2023–2036.
- Osiatyński W. (2011), *Prawa człowieka i ich granice*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków.
- Parkes A. (2013), *Children and International Human Rights Law. The Right of the Child to be Heard*, Routledge, New York.
- Pilch T., Lalak D. (2009), *Pedagogika społeczna wobec problemów współczesności*, [in:] *Pedagogika społeczna w Europie Środkowej, stan obecny i perspektywy*, Instytut Studiów Interdyscyplinarnych, Brno.
- Putnam R.D. (2008), *Samotna gra w kręgle. Upadek i odrodzenie wspólnot lokalnych w Stanach Zjednoczonych*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa.
- Radlińska H. (1947), *Oświata dorosłych. Zagadnienia. Dzieje. Formy. Pracownicy. Organizacja*, Ludowy Instytut Oświaty i Kultury, Warszawa.
- Radlińska H. (1961), *Pedagogika społeczna*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław.
- Shier H. (2001), *Pathways to Participation: Openings, Opportunities and Obligations. A New Model for Enhancing Children's Participation in Decision-making, in line with Article 12.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, „Children & Society”, Vol. 15, pp. 107–117.
- Sintomer Y., Herzberg C., Allegretti G. i in. (2013), *Participatory Budgeting Worldwide – Updated Version. Study*, Global Civic Engagement, Bonn.
- Stake R.E. (2009), *Jakościowe studium przypadku*, [in:] *Metody badań jakościowych*, t. 1, Denzin N.K., Lincoln Y.S. (eds.), Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
- Stern R. (2006), *The Child's Right to Participation – Reality or Rhetoric?*, Uppsala University, Uppsala.
- Śliwerski B. (2015), *O konieczności powrotu do subsydiarnej roli państwa w publicznej edukacji szkolnej dzieci i młodzieży*, „Pedagogika Społeczna”, XIV, No. 3(57), pp. 17–51.
- Uchwała nr 63.IX.2015 Rady Miasta Częstochowy z dnia 19 marca 2015 r. w sprawie tworzenia budżetu obywatelskiego.
- Wampler B. (2007), *A Guide to Participatory Budgeting*, [in:] *Participatory Budgeting*, A. Shah (ed.), World Bank, Washington.
- Widawska E. (2009), *Różne drogi dążenia do szczęścia*, [in:] *Szanse i bariery rozwoju człowieka*, Widawska E., Jagieła J. (eds.), Wydawnictwo Akademii im. Jana Długosza, Częstochowa.
- Widawska E., Wieczorek Z. (2014), *Metody prowadzenia konsultacji społecznych*, Wydawnictwo Akademii im. Jana Długosza, Częstochowa.
- Widawska E., Wieczorek Z., Wierny A. (2015), *Aktywność lokalna w teorii i praktyce. Przypadek częstochowskiego budżetu obywatelskiego*, Wydawnictwo Akademii im. Jana Długosza, Częstochowa.
- Wong N.T., Zimmerman M.A., Parker E.A. (2010), *A Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment for Child and Adolescent Health Promotion*, „American Journal of Community Psychology”, Vol. 46(1–2), pp. 100–114.
- Wysocka E. (2013), *Jakość życia młodego pokolenia – wyzwania i zagrożenia (wybiórcze peregrynacje teoretyczne i empiryczne)*, [in:] *Pedagogika społeczna wobec zmian przestrzeni życia społecznego*, Danilewicz W., Sobecki M., Sosnowski T. (eds.), Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warszawa.
- Ziółkowski M. (2015), *Współpraca*, [in:] *Fundamenty dobrego społeczeństwa. Wartości*, Bogunia-Borowska M. (ed.), Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków.

### **Internet sources**

- Baiocchi G. (2016), *Participation, Activism, and Politics: The Porto Alegre Experiment and Deliberative Democratic Theory*, <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/baiocchi.pdf> (date retrieved: 25.11.2016).
- Wygrajmy sobie miasto – czyli nauka przez doświadczenie*, <http://konsultacje.czystochowa.pl/?p=9559> (date retrieved: 10.02.2017).