

Pesquisa FAPESP nº 2021/04556-0
ENTREVISTA COM L1
Cidade: Lodz (Lodzkie, Polônia)
Entrevistado: L1, 72 anos, professor universitário aposentado
Entrevistador: Rodrigo Sartori Bogo
Local de realização da entrevista: Estadia do pesquisador em Lodz

TRANSCRIÇÃO

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, L1. So, I'm already recording. The first thing for me to do right now is to ask your permission like, recorded, to use this interview.

L1

- I agree.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, great, thanks a lot. And the first thing to do is explain my research before we can share [with] each other. I'm studying the territorial impacts of participatory budgeting in different cities, right? My focus is mainly on cities in Brazil that are considered mid-sized. So, they have a size that is between the metropolitan areas and small communities. And there's the first part of the research that's more statistical analysis and spatial analysis. And the second part that I'm doing right now, there's more a qualitative approach. And in this more qualitative approach, I'm studying four cities, two in Brazil, two outside of Brazil, and one of them is Lodz... I always mess up the pronunciation of the city. I'm sorry, because... how is the... how is the...?

L1

- Lodz!

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Lodz, okay. Makes sense, Lodz. So... and the other three cities are Vallejo in California, and Araraquara and Maringá in Brazil. So, Lodz is the biggest one, with more population, but at the same time, it's the more recent one with PB, from a more recent PB, besides starting in the beginning of 2010s. As you know, PB started in Brazil, so normally our...

L1

- Porto Alegre...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, exactly. Yeah, that's started in Porto Alegre. But like Araraquara, the first editions were in 2001. And Maringá, the first are from 2008. So, it's a little bit after Porto Alegre, but they are like old for the pattern of Europe, especially.

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- Porto Alegre is the most known to Polish cities, because by chance the case of Porto Alegre was widely described in many articles. So, they were easily accessible, at least for me. So, the case of Porto Alegre of course was discussed widely during preparations for our first edition.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- That's amazing, because we always read about that in Brazil, how Porto Alegre is famous everywhere. And this kind of talk showed that and how Porto Alegre is like very well known, like worldwide. And right now, the case of Porto Alegre has been very weak.

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- By the way, the case of Porto Alegre was... let's say, the starting point, kind of ignition for the process in Poland. But the implementation was opposite to the solutions which took place in Porto Alegre. So, it's a paradox that something was, let's say, put forward. The topic was being only treated as an ignition and no follow-up of the pattern created in Porto Alegre was used in Polish cities. - **Nice.** - Not nice, but of course, reality.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, yeah, nice to understand that, right? To see these differences.

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- Yes, of course.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And that's my introduction. And I would like to have your... if you could talk briefly about your career and what is your experience with participation and participatory budgeting, more specifically.

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- So, you know, I'm already 72 [years old], so my life is full of turns in my career. I started being an academic teacher and I used to teach philosophy, aesthetics, sociology. Afterwards, I turned to be a clerk at the city office, and it was possible only due to the change in our system because in 1990, Poland changed its system from so-called "socialistic" to modern democracy, according to Western style. And that change made it possible to create independent self-government levels of authorities. And I was the pioneer with a group of my colleagues who started to create city office administration. And I started as director of the Civil Affairs Department, and I worked at that place for nine years. Then I had to move away from the city due to some political changes, new crew came to the office, and they wanted their own specialists. So, for the time, I was outside the city authorities. I created a local health service institution because at the end of the 1990s, new health institutions were created, national health service, something like this. It was divided into 16 regional national health systems. I was creating those systems which were based in Łódź and was responsible for the whole Lodzkie region, so for 2.700.000

inhabitants. So, we had to create the structures, the rules, and all the necessary preparations so as to keep care over that amount of inhabitants. After four years, I came back to the city office and stayed there till the end of my career. So, I came back in 2002 and stayed until 2018. I was as possible [incompreensível] for cooperation with NGOs, with local self-governments, with local leaders. And among others, I was also introduced from the very beginning in the process of participatory budgeting. And if you don't mind, I can show you the short preparation for those processes. It will be some summary of the progress and some data devoted to this process. By the way, this is a city newspaper published about the results of the last edition of participatory budgeting.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Last year, right?

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- This was published a couple of days ago.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Oh, okay, I was yesterday at the city office... No, not the city office, at the event, the ceremony.

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- Yes, it was the last event, the results.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I was yesterday there. Thanks a lot for that.

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- It is here on the second page, this information, half a million votes. This is almost about the end of voting in the 12th edition of Lodz participatory budgeting. 35 million zlotys, 848 projects to be chosen from, almost 70.000 persons participating in the process, and almost half a million votes. And the results, more or less this is the essence of this announcement. And if I mention that yesterday it was the, let's say, making to the public the results of the process. So, you took part in this.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yes, I was there.

L1

- So, what we have now... So, you know, the process started in 2012. But...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Can I ask you a question first? - **Yes.** - Okay, the process started in 2012, but why it started? Like, why it got here?

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- So, you will see the answer in the presentation. So, this is the... I was director till the 2011 and then I turned to be, I was degraded, in fact, but kept the role of the main specialist and the team for social consultations responsible for participatory budgeting in Lodz. So, let's take it a step further. So, a short history of participatory budgeting in Lodz. At the turn of 2011, 2012 came or showed up the first voices on site of NGOs pointing out that we should introduce participatory budgeting in Lodz. So many organizations put forward this idea and pointed out that it is necessary to create the grassroots democracy, deepen, let's say, involvement of average persons in the process of governing, of ruling the city. And it was accepted officially in May 2012. It was a bill passed by the city council which obliged the mayor of Lodz to introduce participatory budgeting in the city. So, in May 2012, it was official starting point for the whole procedure. Next month, it means in June 2012, the mayor of Lodz created a task team which was to prepare recommendations as to the way of introducing participatory budgeting in Lodz. It was rather a big team, more than 30 persons, and the composition of this task team was like this: the councilors of the city council, the representatives of various NGOs, I think that was more or less five councilors, let's say... six or seven representations of NGOs, among others Borys Martela. So, we met for the first time at that team, now it's 12 years ago. So, we used to discuss many problems together and from this we know each other quite well. Of course, he also graduated from university of Łódź, also a sociologist, so the same profession, the same area of interest. So, within this team there are also represented local self-government because Łódź is divided into 36 local districts and each district has its own body representing the citizens. So this type of organization creates, let's say, local ways of self-governing which are of course on a restricted scale but in any way it is closer to coming with some decisions downward and do it on the lowest possible level. So, in our case, these local self-governments represent entities which are from 1.000 up to 60.000 inhabitants because Łódź is populated in various ways. Some regions are very densely populated, some are very wide, very big, [incomprensível], but rarely populated. The history comes back to the late 80s when Łódź was extended by half of its territory and many of nearby villages were incorporated in the city area and it means that, for example, Łódź is still the biggest village in Poland as number of peasants is concerned, for example. So, it's a paradox but this incorporation of these suburbs made it possible that we have so many people living as farmers. So, representatives of those local self-governments were also introduced in this task force team and, of course, representatives of the university and other higher educational institutions... and, of course, there were also some clerics like me, for example, dealing with this area. So altogether it was as I remember a little bit above 30 persons and we met let's say every week, every two weeks for, more or less, half of the year and then created some recommendations. I have this recommendation in the file as well so we could look at this a little bit later. So, the calendar of this process is in this file, so I'll give you it you can write on your computer so as to have at least the Polish version, you can use it.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I can translate that, no problem.

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- So, it's no problem. So, we have the calendar of this process, so the task force started in June 2012 and till the end of October 2012 the recommendations were prepared and passed to the mayor of Łódź. And it gives the result on the 5th of December 2012, came declaration of the mayor of Łódź in front of the city council that the mayor plans to introduce in the next year the participatory budgeting in Łódź and it will be 20 million złoty prepared for that goal in the budget of the city for 2014. Because, as you see, our participatory budgeting is divided into two steps. The first step is one year, the implementation is in the next year, so the preparation lasts more or less half of the year, but in the first year before the year of implementation.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, it has to be approved on the budget and all.

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- Yes, because you have to introduce some money in the budget so that the money will be prepared for specified projects, because these projects are selected in the process of voting in one year and when they are selected, they tend to be a task introduced into the budget.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Just two questions about this beginning... so if it started with a demand from the NGOs, like for local NGOs...

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- You can say it.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, so then it goes to the city council, city council passes a bill, the mayor has to accept it and then starts a task team. So, if it started with the NGOs, you could say that it's like at least a bottom-up process, right? It did not start with the municipality?

L1

- You know, it's a little bit more complicated because in fact, as you know, so as to get some results it must be a good climate on at least both sides. So, it was also many of us [city officials] who were in favor of introduction of participatory budgeting. But of course, we were too weak to get this result alone. So, from my personal point of view it was a little bit of machiavelic method, so we used NGOs in certain in

a positive sense to magnify the impact on the mayor of which so as to do the next step. Because without this magnifying effect it wouldn't be possible.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Makes sense, that's interesting.

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- So, the background is much more complex than the explanation here [in the presentation].

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, of course.

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- Because we cannot let's say it openly that in fact, we did some "conspiracy" behind the back of the mayor, so as to get good results which are in interest, in favor of the same mayor. But, you know, the paradox is that the nearby co-workers of the mayor weren't so interested in this. They had other political priorities, so it was, let's say, something which was in the second plan so was of not so important for those persons, so it was a special challenge to persuade those people that they should incorporate this new idea in their priorities. So, it took time and, of course, it was done step by step and of course we cooperated with such a work persons like, for example, Borys Martela or professor Aleta Krzewińska from the Institute of Sociology, who wrote habitation work about participatory budgeting in Poland. So, I don't know if you have heard about this person.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- No, never. Never heard about her.

L1

- So, I had somewhere, the copy of her dissertation about this subject, among others, and I think it would be good perhaps for you talking to her, because perhaps she would be the most specialized in this area due to her professional interests.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, of course, makes sense for me. If you can, I can have her...

L1

- I can make a call to her and if I reach her, I will let you know what to do next. But at first we have to exchange our phones! - **Much easier [laughs]**. - It's much easier because mail is... let's say, the sure way but slow way...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, of course.

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- Much quicker is to use any communicator like WhatsApp signal or messenger, it's much quicker and much easier. So, coming back... this process wasn't so obvious because, you know, at that time only one or two cities in Poland introduced participatory budgeting. The first case was in Sopot, this is the city on the Baltic coast, and it is a town of let's say 60.000 inhabitants, so rather small one. But for some reasons they introduced this participatory budgeting... as I remember three years earlier than in Łódź. It was probably 2009, something like this, 2008, so it was the first city in Poland which introduced participatory budgeting. So, I was even in Sopot so as to talk to those who introduced this and the reality which we faced on site was much more different than the widespread opinion, a very positive one, it didn't look like that from first-hand knowledge. And they had also some problems so as to, let's say, introduce it in spite of strong opposition as well. So, there's was also a lot of tension there. So, these processes are never easy and obvious. They have to have supporters, they have to have those who will fight for some results, for creating steps to the main goal and, of course, it takes a lot of time, a lot of energy. So, combination of all those factors, all those environments involved in the process of NGOs, local leaders, academic people, and of course some of our clerks... I wouldn't underestimate this role, because in fact we created some conditions for making, for example, presentation of the NGOs possible. So, if they asked them to do this, they would do this, but of course they know that we they can trust us and we know that they use it in the right way, not against us. So it was, let's say, "conspiracy" based on mutual trust and fortunately it proved to be effective.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- That's interesting to hear. Especially because, like, when I was reading about the articles about PB in Poland, Sopot is always cited as the first case and it never goes deep down like saying "ah, it was very difficult, there were tensions, it was not like that", you know? Because, normally when you're reading like a 10, 15-page paper, you don't have time for that. So, the same thing happens when I read things from the foreigners about Porto Alegre or Belo Horizonte, the cities that are most famous in Brazil, the PB in Brazil. Because things are much more complicated, you know, even in Porto Alegre where we had incredible results, it was like a battle for getting that. And like the first years were very complicated and then it rose up, but then there was like some political struggle and now, like, in the last 15 years Porto Alegre has been like a very weak PB. So, it's interesting to see that everywhere things are much more complex than in the paper, right? So, the other thing I wanted to ask you about the beginning was...

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- So, I would sum up the first period of preparation, so the preparatory... about one year, one year and a half from 2011 up to the end of 2012. So, this declaration of the mayor in fact being a first move on her way, because it's a lady, was prepared throughout one year of hard work on both sides of the city, NGOs,

university, environments, local leaders, etc., etc. All those persons were sure that this is the right idea at the right moment. But the environment, the direct environment of the mayor wasn't so sure at the very beginning. So, it was the clash of priorities. Of course, in the city there are, in every case, a lot of things to be done. So, you can always make an announcement that something is more important than the other, because of this or that but of course, renovation for example, unemployment at the time, were the key topics. But, if we didn't start it in the right way at the time probably it would be put on the brink of collapsing of this idea, because as I mentioned, it wasn't the idea of the top priority for these main political supporters of the mayor of Lodz.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And that was before the national law, right?

L1

- Yes, of course, many, many years before. The bill passed in our parliament was introduced which created this stable base for these solutions, but of course it was the, let's say, reaction to the natural process which was growing rapidly all over Poland and, of course, the national politicians decided to make some profit on this and introduced the bill who, let's say, confirmed that you can do this with "our blessings". "We are so good for you, you can do it freely, we are glad that you are doing this". In fact, it wasn't totally true, but we can assume that politicians make use of such occasions, and they did it, in fact. So, for now we have some regulations which create the stable base, legal base, for this process. So, it was June of 2012 and, of course, it means that it was in fact the first decisive point which started the whole process. From this point onwards we couldn't change what was started. So, this breaking point, the starting point was reached and afterwards we could go only forward. So, the consequences were obvious. In February 2013 a tender for NGOs was published for preparing a promotional and information campaign about participatory budgeting. On the 2nd of April 2013 the mayor of Lodz passed the bill, starting the official consultation process of participatory budgeting, so it was officially an invitation for citizens to prepare projects for participatory budgeting. It was officially stated how much money was prepared for this task, what is division, what are the rules, etc., etc. So, from the 30th of April to 28th of June it was time for offering some... as for making some applications so some projects were gathered during this almost two months. On the 6th of November 2013, the list of positively verified projects was published as to the local tasks, local projects, and the city so-called city projects, so concerning the whole city, because these two types of tasks were introduced in the participatory budgeting. We have 25 percent of money for the task which has, let's say, general meaning for the whole city and each region of Lodz... Lodz was divided into five regions, [they] had the same money for local purposes. So, these two types of tasks had different lists and of course, the citizens were to vote for those projects they liked. And, of course, they had a certain amount of possibilities as far as I remember it was five projects which could be chosen from the list of the city projects and five from the regional.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, is it the same design since the beginning? Because it's still the same idea.

L1

- Yes, exactly. So, the first solutions proved to be very, very stable, and no one wants to change it until now.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And let me ask, why this idea of like voting in five citywide and five local projects?

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- You know, the problem was that there are some patterns which started which can start in new implementations. And the idea of voting started in Sopot, it was this drastic difference in comparison to Porto Alegre, for example, another Brazilian towns, and this idea spread it all over Poland and almost every participatory budgeting system in Poland, in many, many cities, is based on this idea. That there is, let's say, voting, selection by voting on local, on regional or whole-city level and I think that it's some inertia and lack of creativity in many cases. Because of making some results accessible through internet, on internet, you created the [incomprehensive] of follow-uppers who simply copied the idea, because it was the easiest way to get good political result. The product was checked, it was relatively stable, positive in reception, so all those who want to gain some political benefits, was for such solutions which were proved. So, introducing something new was introducing a risk of failure, no politician like to risk and, let's say, have a failure instead of success. So, in this case I think this, let's say, laziness and seeking for a sure solution was this possible in Poland for copying the main idea in various variants of course, but the basic solutions, basic ways of deciding about the results was the same. Preparing projects, analyzing and selecting the projects which are divided into those who are acceptable mostly on the legal base, and then those which are accepted are presented to the public and the public is able to select certain number of projects from the one list and from the other list. And the results of course are published and those which are selected as top selected projects are implemented in the next year.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Makes sense.

L1

- The one more thing is that the project is mostly limited to one year implementation time. So, this is the main restriction in this projects, because the budget is on a one year horizon. The city budget is prepared in one year horizon, so this project should be finished by the end of the year.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, this has a result that most projects aren't that huge. There are a few cases that I saw on the list that are like, the biggest, like the rebuilding of a street or changing a park or this, these are huge, or you have this kind of projects that are like just a street bump or a bench or so, there's a big difference...

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- Like a couple of trees or bushes, etc.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, and I was talking to Mateusz Piasecki, he is an employee in the city office... I was talking to him yesterday and he told me that from the 2000 projects that they had in the last, I think 2000 projects, in the last 10 years or something...

L1

- No, oh many, many more!

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, no, not in 10 years...

L1

- It's more or less about 800, 900 projects a year!

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- No, but that was they were selected.

L1

- Ah, oh yes, it could be! Yes, that's right. Because the number of selected is around 100 a year. So it could be, let's say, 1.500 or so during 10 years.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, something like that, yeah, he said that almost 2.000. So, it's probably like that.

L1

- It could be, of course.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, of this almost 2.000 projects, just 60 weren't done. So, it's a good rate, it's a good rate in my opinion.

L1

- Yes, that's right.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- But at the same time, they're, in general, small, right? Or not? What's your opinion on that? - **About what?** - The size of the projects.

L1

- You know, the size of projects are limited because, at the very beginning, the maximum sums for the project were higher and it made the results rather rare, as to the number, because if you had the limit for, let's say, a million and a half or two millions [zloty] for the projects... so if you had, let's say, 20 million zloty to be divided, it could be implemented only, let's say, five or six projects because of the this maximum size value. So, in the next editions this maximum sum was lowered so as to more initiatives could be implemented. And of course, the first biggest project was finished, one of them, one of the most successful was the first voneff [?] in which, I don't know if you know the idea of voneff.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Not really.

L1

- So, this is a type of street which is adopted to the use which is not only prepared for driving a car, but which is also prepared by pedestrians.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Oh okay, like multiple uses!

L1

- Yes, so yes, and this idea of this preparation of the street for multiple users with benches, with flowers, bushes, trees and slow down ride of cars was an extreme success. And we could see this idea on the street which is close on the opposite side of the ground hotel on Piotrkowska street. It's the big clock at the beginning of the street. It is the first voneff of the first edition of participatory budgeting in Lodz.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- The name of the street is 6 Snerpia? - **Yes!** - I walked there yesterday. In my opinion this project is very interesting, to have something like this.

L1

- Is the first example of this idea and, of course, the opposite side of the first part... now is the second half of the street also prepared in this style. So now both have, to the left and to the right of Piotrkowska

street are prepared in a style of vonaff. Vonarff is the dutch word and it means a kind of a yard, not a street simply. Some kind of backyard which is prepared for most users, for vehicles and pedestrians.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- This is a very good project; this one is very interesting.

L1

- So, in the next editions the limitations were even stronger, so it was for example, the maximum values for these regional projects were used due to other factors, because in the very beginning we had 25% for general tasks for the whole city and 75% for five regions. And at certain moment local self-governors appealed for more accents on underneath. So, from, I don't know exactly, but probably three or four years from the very beginning the modification was made and the first level was the, let's say, city level and the second level was not the level of five regions, but the level of 36th local communities. So, of course, if you divide the same sum of money not by five, but by 36 it means that the sums of money lower drastically and it means that the maximum cost of the projects will reduce up to something like 100.000 zloty instead of millions.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And what do you think about this change?

L1

- I know that it was in a positive direction due to, let's say, the pressure put by the local self-governments and according to my idea of how grassland democracy should be introduced, the more local initiatives could be pretty seriously and provided the better. Because if you want to have the people engaged in their local environments, you have to give them something they can decide about and if they have enough possibilities to decide about the environment and something which happens in this environment the more they are involved in this area, the social control strengthens the quality of life. And the positive results are the side effects of this process. So, if you see that you have chosen something and it was implemented, it was done, you feel "okay, it was done thanks to my part and it was my success as well, not your, not all of them, but also mine". So, each of us can say it is part of our common success, but this common success starts from our idea, which we wanted to be introduced, and it was implemented, and it sounds great for those people and I think that from this perspective, the broadening the possibilities of implementing this project was the good move. Of course, the opposition said that the money is wasted because this is dispersed on many, many subjects, but we cannot think only in this way because people should be ready to be active, and they only will be active if they see the results of the activity.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And let's talk about the investments. Like, this amount of money. It started with 20 million and now it's 50? 54? - **35!** - 35, okay.

L1

- As far as I remember is 35. It was... through certain time it was even more, it was 50 million, but it was reduced by the mayor. I think that it was something like 35, but it was it was more and...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, so it is between this range of 20 million to 30, to 50, and now 35. And do you think that's enough? Do you think that's a good amount of money for PB? What's your opinion on that?

L1

- You know, the problem is that there are some limits which could be, of course, treated more or less seriously, which are suggested as good for participatory budgeting. Someone say that let's say, 5% is a good amount of total budget of the city for this purpose, someone say that at least 1% is something which is stimulating for the citizens, you know, I think that it depends on the situation, and it depends on the state of the finance in a given city. Because in Poland, as you see, as you could read, we have a drastic reduction of revenues coming to the local government, because new regulation passed during last five years reduced revenues on the local self-government by 10%. So, this money was taken away from local self-government and is centralized, and the previous government decided on the central level what to be supported with this money. So, the procedure was reversed, the money, which was previously used on the local level, with probably the best knowledge, whether it is necessary or not, was deprived for part of this money and now they had to applicate for this money showing the goals they wanted for. So, of course, the decision was a meritocratic one to some extent and a political one on the other side, so it means that what was the problem with quite a natural solution, because you know the best what you need, what you need first, what you need second, etc., etc. Now, it was, let's say, the government authority which was to decide what is most necessary for you and it was stepped backwards, because the idea of centralization isn't my favorite idea, and I think that we have enough money for government to implement the policy. But in the case of self-government, probably the more they have the better they use this money.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Well, you talked about the percentage of the budget that goes into PB and these ranges that they're discussing...

L1

- The case of Lodz was something like close to 1%...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Of the total budget? - **Yes.** - But of the investments, you know?

L1

- At the peak moment, at the peak moment, it was when it was 50 million zloty, it was more or less 1% of total budget of incomes. Income sum.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- But do you know how this percentage relates to just the investments, or not? This is the ratio I'm using in my research.

L1

- You know, it's dependent on the year because, you know, you have to check the results, because I'm not so sure... because of the soft projects and, let's say, investment projects most in the range of projects you can select from. So, the results probably are for both purposes and I would only add that my impression is that most of this money it's hard to predict how it would be in a given year, but most, so more than 50%, probably 70% or 80% percent is for hard projects and, let's say, 20%, 15% for soft projects. So, it can vary in a certain time, but it would need to check precisely on the list of the project selected. I cannot give you any exact data in this topic.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- No, all right, I have the reports with all the projects.

L1

- So, each year is finalized which report. I have also a few examples of this year's report on the way there are complete results on the city-scale, local-scale, sums and of course the description of the projects. So, you can base on this as to gain the total numbers concerning this talk.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- That's good, that's good. And there's something more you want to show me?

L1

- Yes, probably I will, I will check if this is... So, we are in the year 2013, it was the voting time 21st-29th of September, 15 of October announcing the results. Then it was made an evaluation and in 2014 started the next edition of this participatory budgeting. This is the main assumption of participatory budgeting and perhaps you should know it. The projects proposed by citizens had to be within the range of competence of the commune and, of course, if it was outside this competency, it cannot be accepted. Because you can make use of the money in the city budget only for such types of tasks which are within the competence of the city, so in the competence of the commune. The possibility of applying with

projects for the city and local level tasks or projects, five regions, on the local scale the limit for the project is it had to be supported by at least 15 inhabitants who had to sign the application supporting this application as a necessary condition. And the support could be optionally stated by persons from 16 years upwards, so the lowest age was 16 years of life. Maximum implementation time [is] the budget year, so one calendar year. Implementation of the task in the place which belong to the commune, not on private grounds, cooperating grounds, etc. Voting is possible for those who are at least 16 years old. Voting is possible through the internet or on paper, and of course in the first edition majority who was done on paper. It was 100.000 persons voting on paper at that time. Now it looks quite different, but at the time it was like this, so we had enormous work to introduce the data from the sheets of paper to the base, which was of course created in the electronic program on the computer. And perhaps the final sentence about the first edition, the campaign, promotional information and educational was done by NGOs which were responsible for doing all the promotional activities in favor of the city, on behalf of half of the city.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Like a partnership?

L1

- Yes, that's right. They signed a contract and, of course, this contract had specified activities which had to be done at a certain time, and it was done with good results.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Let me ask you a question about the design, like the idea this... you already explained to me how it works, so you have the gathering of projects and voting directly on them, but you don't have in-person assemblies or discussion like in Porto Alegre. It's not just the Porto Alegre model, right, it's like mostly the Brazilian model... like Araraquara, it's one of the cities I'm studying use the same model. They have the assemblies and the in-person discussions, and it goes like from priorities to projects and all of that, and as I heard you in the beginning of our talk, you were like "it's a shame that doesn't use that way in Poland". Why do you think that it would be interesting to have this model here and what's your opinion on this change of design?

L1

- You know, the problem is that the idea of grassroots democracy could be implemented in various ways of course, as you know you can decide on the local scale, for example, who would be our representative in local self-government district level, so this is one way of deciding what's going to come around us. But, you know, at a certain stage you have to decide what is probably the simplest way of gaining results and the way which was used in Brazil, in Porto Alegre and other cities where the process of deciding was based on assembly discussions, has these positive and negative sides. The positive side is that the flow of discussion... the audience hears the full recommendation in favor or against some solutions. So,

the flow of arguments makes the decisions much more easier and, of course, it costs time and it costs money, because if you have to decide in this way about 20 million zlotys or 50 million zlotys, you have to organize, in the case of Lodz, at least 37 assemblies. And, of course, it must be prepared, it must be served, it must be recorded, analyzed, some final recommendations must be written, must be accepted, etc., etc. So, the whole process has two weak points. The first is selection of persons at this assembly level and it was something which we discussed and no one was so brave to risk that this idea will give the best results from the very beginning. Because, you know, in Poland, our societies through many, many decades were treated in a very special way. Under the communist system society had to be passive and, of course, proactive as so as the acceptance of the communist party ideas were involved. So, you have to clap your hands if somebody from the party side is speaking or proposing something, but you have to listen to others and not be active himself or herself. And this attitude spread deeply and widely during more than 40 years of being in the communist regime and that's why at the 1990 we started quite a new era. Because at the time both on the national level and local level we started a new democratic way of thinking and a new democratic way of ruling society. And of course, it was based on wider activity, but it's hard to believe, but at the very early the 90s, the number of NGOs in Lodz was limited only to those which were accepted by the communist party. It was, let's say, for 800.000 city it was 50, maybe 60 associations. Like the association of friends of Soviet Russia, or Hungarian-Polish friendship or something like this. So, everything was brought down to Soviet Russia and its allies. So, this type of activist was allowed. So, for such a big city, we had a small number of NGOs, and all of those NGOs were, let's say, politically correct. Because otherwise it would be suppressed and liquidated, simply. So, 10 years later we had almost 2.000 NGOs and now the number is probably three or four thousands of these organizations. It shows that the citizens' activity spread gradually, but we have to make up for the losses through four decades. And that state of social awareness it's sometimes hard to, at the time at least, it was hard to expect that this open discussion process would be without the downsides. So that's why it was easy to give the people the voting possibility, it was equal and many, many persons could take part in this process. In the first edition it was almost 130.000 of inhabitants taking part in the process. It was, let's say, 25% of grown-ups in Lodz. It was really a great number; it was a great success. If we decide to select, let's say, 25 representatives for each assembly in 37 environments... let's say 40, 40 and 30 persons [per assembly] it means 1.200 persons involved in the process. Compare 130.000 to a little more than 1.000, it's more than 100 times more. So, each of those 130.000 inhabitants had to think over what to do, what to select, had to be informed, had to search for information, had to look up the list of projects, had to consult something with family or friends, and it created some movement at this basic level of the society. So, I think that at that time it was a good solution, because it spread democracy really on the basic level. You know, in case if we started with this restricted to 1.000 participants process, probably we would cut off the rest of citizens from active participation in the process. So, we had to compare 1.000 versus 100.000, what is better? But of course, nowadays the trend is that the assembly solution, panel discussions are in favor. I talked recently to professor Alexa Szybiński, I mentioned already, from the Institute of Sociology, that consultation as, let's say, process which was implemented also in Lodz in various forms are not trendy nowadays. The panel

discussions are something which is on the top. So, in some political solutions concerning the involvement of the public into the common life, there are also some trends, some fashions and of course the impact of these fashions cannot be underestimated. We seek something new, so from time to time it's necessary to change the method, change the techniques, to get new vigor to have something, new energy. So, it's probably the reason why we experiment with new solutions in case the old one seems to be weird.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- That's really interesting to hear. And one thing that happened in Porto Alegre, in Brazil in a few cities, is this debate around the inversion of priorities. I don't know if you read about that at some point. That's the idea that now, if citizens have the role of deciding, you invert political power, right? So, now citizens have at least a little bit of political power and you can also like invert where the projects are. If just the city had the option to where to invest the money, it would be very different from when people decide that. Do you think that applies to the case of Lodz?

L1

- This is a very difficult question because, you know, the problem is that, as I mentioned at the very beginning, which out of this record, Lodz is a city which "unfortunately" wasn't demolished during World War Two. So, the old buildings are still to be seen in our streets and majority of those buildings are at least 100 years old. And it means enormous problems with revitalizing of those buildings and, to your surprise probably, Lodz is the biggest owner of buildings in Poland. Why? Lodz owns over almost 11.000 of buildings of various types, from very big ones and very old ones to the very modern. Why? By the Second World War, Lodz was the mixture of ethnic groups and almost 30% of those inhabitants living in Lodz it was jews. After the WWII, after the extermination of great majority of the Jews, those pieces of land, those buildings belonging... which earlier belonged to the Jews community weren't inherited, because nobody could inherit it. The whole families were murdered in extermination camps, concentration camps, by Germans during the WWII and according to international law, if there is no successor, so the estate comes to the State. In the case of Lodz, it comes to the commune. And out of sudden in 1990 Lodz was in a situation that it started with a big number of buildings of unknown origin... in long process it was decided that it was, for example, a estate which belonged to a Jewish family with no successors, so in this case it was given to the city as honor and in case of many of these analyzes it was shown that the city must take care about this building. And nowadays we have almost 80% of those buildings in a very poor state, which need drastically, rapid renovation and of course we haven't enough money to do this. So, in case of such priorities, other priorities, it's very difficult to prepare many variants of using money from the budget, because there is no free money which could be used in various ways. So, Lodz is in a very special situation, so buildings are a burden, because there are people living there, so if you have people living there you have to keep care about this building. And of course it's not easy to, let's say, so we can remove half of these old buildings, and it would be easier for the city because we will not be responsible for renovation... we cannot do this because there are people there, we cannot

offer them new building. So, what to do? The range of various scenarios is very narrow and the total reversing is, from my point of view and my state of knowledge about my city, is not possible because reversing is connected to deciding if we have to revitalize a building, if we have to support schools... because most of our city budget is devoted to supporting educational system, because the subsidy of the state is at the level of the 50% only, so the rest have to add the city itself from its own money. So educational system, estates belonging to the city, streets, communal expenses so sewage, water, waste, everything needs drastically money. Without this money the city would stop, simply would be stopped, blocked, with no possibility to live in. So, this idea is probably good in a situation where the margin of variability in investments is broader. In the case of this city, I think we are bound to our past, bound by the state's buildings, the state of our infrastructure, a very old one, so it consumes majority of the budget.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Makes sense. And here in the city, does the PB have any connection to other urban planning processes or other participatory programs, or is it just like a "by itself" process?

L1

- I think that it is something which is treated like an independent entity. I [didn't] saw any closer relations between the, let's say, wider planning and participatory budgeting. It was something treated by politicians maybe... it's my private opinion, like a toy for the public. It is a bonus for us, because we can say in a political campaign or campaigns that we offered participatory budgeting to the public. But it's a toy which cost 20 million zloty when it was... 50 million zloty it was, let's say, too high so it was reduced because this time it was too pricey. So, I think that, unfortunately, the manipulatory approach by higher authorities, not only in Lodz, similar all over Poland, became dominating. So, the ideas which are, let's say, beneficiary from PR [Public Relations] point of view are on the top and are promoted. And of course, we can sell everything which can give us a bonus profit, political profit. So, I'm not so optimistic as to the future of the participatory budgeting, because the resources are smaller, the needs are growing, the political situation is unstable, we are close to the war in Ukraine, for example. So, we have also to take good considerations... [there is] a lack of shelters for citizens in Lodz. It's hard to imagine, but we have probably a couple of thousand of persons in the shelters in Lodz. So, in case of Switzerland that everyone has a place in the shelter prepared for the atomic attack, for example, so we are far away somewhere in that place. I would like to name it properly.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, I have just two more questions, so we can finish the interview. Considering these contexts, do you think that PB here has any impact in urban inequalities or not? Like the inequality to access to services, to infrastructure, to... well.

L1

- You know, taking your point of view, answering the question... if there is a factor in the, let's say, reducing the inequalities? Yes, it is. Because, you know, in the case of a big city even the best authority has a point of view which is devoted to the one place and from the central place in the city you cannot see everything which is all over the city, especially in the distant areas. And it happened many, many times in the past that before participatory budgeting was introduced, small communities asked for some solutions, not very expensive, sometimes very cheap, but they had no chance to give the political results. So, in comparison to the time before the participatory budgeting, this new idea introduced some equalizations between the areas of Lodz, especially after introducing independent sums for each local self-government. So, after this move and also earlier, where the regions were also introduced, not only the whole city, the mobilizations of local communities made it possible to force some project which otherwise wouldn't be implemented in any case. So, for sure fighting inequalities in infrastructure, for example, is for sure the positive result of introducing participant budgeting in Lodz. I'm 100% sure that it was the step in the right direction with good results.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And so, do you think that PB, as an idea, as a program of participation, focus in territorial justice?

L1

- Yes, you are absolutely right. I would agree totally with you. Even if it is only a toy in the politician's hand who decide if there is 50, or 15, or 30, 35 [million zloty] and displaying is for me not fair, but of course it is the question of political tensions and bargaining... thinking, putting aside all this motivation behind introducing the participatory budgeting in Lodz, it's worth pointing out that the results are generally very positive, inducing social energy, inducing social interest in nearby environment, and all those results shows that with each year the number of active citizens is at least stable. In the first years it was growing, now it is stable, but it shows that we created at least a scene, but repeatedly active layer of citizens. So, these local leaders who are steadily interested in the neighborhood and each year create at least a couple of projects based on the local needs, very local needs, which are close to average citizens, close to their place of living, where they [are] shopping, where the kids are learning, etc., etc. So, it's a good step in mobilizing people in looking around themselves, seeking what should be improved, what would be beneficiary for the local community, and of course it means that, from this point of view, we expected developing this grassroots democracy, we expected to create local leaders and in couple of years we had these results seen quite visibly in a very obvious way.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Great, great! I am, like, fulfilled with our conversation. Everything is done for me, from my part, I don't know if you have any more comments, if there is anything that you think that it's you should... you wanted to talk, that it was not part of the interview or if you...

L1

- No, I don't know exactly what are your expectations or were your expectations. If you said that you are fulfilled, it's very nice and I'm glad I could be useful for your purpose. But, of course, out of record, if you don't mind and if you have time, I would simply propose another meeting and to share a little bit nearby places which are quite nice, perhaps not today and perhaps not tomorrow, because today I have some other things to do. Tomorrow, I have to participate in a burial ceremony out of Lodz so I will be the whole day out of the city, but maybe Thursday... - **It's an option.** - I look up my calendar to see what would be the most suitable idea, because... how long are you staying in Lodz?

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Until Saturday!

L1

- Until Saturday?

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah! Let me just finish here. In record I would like to thank you in name of my institution, my university, the São Paulo State University, in Brazil.

L1

- My best greetings for São Paulo, for Brazil!

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And also thanking in my name and saying that I will be available for this whole process. Of course, my dissertation will be written in Portuguese, but later after that I'm going to publish the work in papers, I'm looking for some partners here in Poland to write about the process and comparing some cases. So, I will publish in English my results too and that's it. Thanks a lot, L1. Thanks a lot for this talk.

L1

- Okay, thank you very much.

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