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ENTREVISTA COM L4
Cidade: Lodz (Lodzkie, Polônia)
Entrevistada: L4, 30+ anos, arquiteta
Entrevistador: Rodrigo Sartori Bogo
Local de realização da entrevista: Urban Activity Office, escritório da entrevistada

TRANSCRIÇÃO

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, Agatha, the first thing to do is... for our start, for the bureaucracy of the research, I need you to state your full name and say that you agree to be recorded.

L4

- Okay, so my name is A4 and I agree to be recorded.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, great. And okay, normally I make an introduction about the research. So even that I emailed you about that, but the first thing, just for the record, is that I'm studying especially the territorial impacts of PB, how this design of participatory society can make any difference in cities because I'm a geographer, so I'm more interested in the territorial outcomes of this process. I'm studying these four cities, Lodz, Vallejo in California, and Maringá and Araraquara, both in Brazil, and all of them have different designs of PB. So, in there like, of course, different sizes, but all of them are, I could put in the same framework of analysis, they are comparable cities. Lodz is the biggest one, but it's also in the same criteria that they're using. But the thing is to compare these cities that are comparable, but with different types of PB. So, this is the main idea, how these different designs change space, change the territory. So, the first thing to do is thank you for your availability, for being here today, for having some time for me. And I would like to ask you to start, so you can talk a little bit about your career, your professional experience, where you were born, and well, this kind of stuff, like a personal profile.

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- Okay. So, I was born in Lodz. I studied in Warsaw, at the Warsaw School of Economics. I studied urban design, but it was economics, not architecture or geography. So, then I worked for three years as an urban planner. And seven years ago, I joined the municipality of Lodz, first as a coordinator of urban revitalization projects. And now for, I guess, three years, I've been the deputy director in the Urban Activity Office, responsible for the participatory budget. But in the meantime, I was also responsible for the first citizen assembly in Lodz. So, my field of interest is also sustainable development and environmental issues. I also am a PhD student in Lodz - Nice! -, in the middle of the process. Two years have passed and two years are still ahead of me. And I am writing my thesis on land trusts, because there is no such type of organization in Poland.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Community land trusts, right?

L4

- Yeah.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay.

L4

- No, not community, because community would be about housing.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Oh, it's not about housing.

L4

- It's not about housing. It's about environmental issues. - Okay, nice. Okay. - Yes. So this is basically it.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, so you are responsible not just for PB, but also for other participatory programs?

L4

- At the moment, I am responsible for PB, but also for the local initiative. This is probably the name that refers to something else in other countries, maybe. But the process where people say that they are going to give some of their involvement to the project and we are going to put some money and do it kind of together. And I'm also responsible for NGOs, cooperation with NGOs, but this is more like a legal thing, because we need to monitor the NGOs in Lodz and things like this. We are starting with the platform for volunteers. So yes, mainly this, but in our office, there is also public consultations, some granting programs for giving grants to people who want to be active in our cities. So, this is what we do here.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Nice. Okay. So, what are the biggest challenges and difficulties are you seeing here in the job?

L4

- I would say that the place in the municipality where we are right now has challenges from both sides. So, first of all, we are responsible for much of the contact with the people who want to do something, to change something in our city, who want to be active. So, of course, you can imagine all kinds of troubles in here. The main may be trust, the issue of building trust between us and the citizens. And the other side of the job is, you know, you have to make the other parts of the city office more eager to cooperate with the people, which they are not. And we are somewhere in the middle getting kicked by both sides, you know, nobody's really happy with what we do most of the time because we are pushing other coworkers from other departments to, you know, make some more effort, be more flexible, show your best, what you can show the people and don't be just an awful person to them. And the people are

always, you know, they always want more, which is normal because they deserve what is the best and we are here for them, so they push us a lot. And they also have sometimes, of course, the citizens are just people who have some ideas or some needs, but sometimes they are people who are developing their careers or, you know, so it's getting a bit political in the moment. So, this is an interesting place that gives you an overview of what is happening in the city. But it is not a very easy job, I would say.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Of course. And I imagine there's a lot of work to do, right?

L4

- Yes, there usually is. This is not a steady amount of work during the year because it has its ups and downs. If you want to meet people and talk with them about things, of course, you have to design the processes in the times when they are available. So, you mostly work in the spring and in the autumn because summer is... we do some other work in the summer, like internal, our internal work mostly. But if you want to have the people involved, you really have, you know, you look at the calendar and you say "so, this is Christmas and then this, so no. Then there is winter break, no." Then there are some weeks until Easter you can use. Then there is in May we have holidays, so not around these holidays because people will go for a holiday, and then so you have to plan it. So, there is like a peak in the spring and a big peak in the autumn.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, that's why I also came here at that time, because when I talked to Mateusz [Piasecki] about the schedule, he was like "OK, maybe do you have two good options: August or November." - **Oh, yeah.** - And because every August has like the local meetings, the locals, with the meetings of the leaders about the process, right?

L4

- It was the council.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- The council, exactly. The leaders with the council. And in November you have the end of the process, the gala and everything. So, August was impossible for me. So, November is a good spot.

L4

- It's a great month to visit Poland too [laughs].

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- To be honest, the city I live in Brazil is so hot that, like, I'm loving the weather. - **Yeah?** - Yeah, you have like one sun for every person [laughs], it's very hot, so I like it here. And ok, so you are 17 years in city office, right?

L4

- No, seven.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Seven, okay. So, you didn't get the beginning of the PB here. - **No.** - Okay.

L4

- No, the beginning was some 12 years ago, and we were the second city in Poland to do this. It was before the country level regulations told the cities that they have to do it. So, we kind of were in the group of leaders who started before and in the first two editions, we were much more flexible, because there was no regulation on how to do it. But then the regulation came, and it is a mandatory process for the city as big as ours, and it is also told how it has to be done. And the bill states that every person in the city, for example, can be involved, can be part of the process. So, this includes even every child in the city, no matter how young the child is, and also that there needs to be an open voting for the projects. So, there are some frames in the bill that tell us how the process should look like, and this is what we need to follow. And we've been following. So, there is not much flexibility, although different cities do it in different ways in Poland, of course, because there are some ways where you can look for your own way to do.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And what is your personal opinion on the national law?

L4

- I think that it is a success that it is a mandatory process. I think that during the pandemic times, we maybe, we would have resigned because there was even communication from the mayor's office that we might not do the budget, the participatory budget. It is the biggest process, the biggest participatory process in all of the cities. It involves about 10% of the population, so there's nothing else you can compare to it. In public consultations, you will never have that kind of, you know, amount of people. So, it is a success in terms of really being here, being mandatory, which doesn't give space to resign from it. And since it really involves a lot of people in the cities, and I think that they do feel that the involvement in this process brings results. I hope they do. After that many years and the involvement being here, well, I think it is a success, although it has... it may, after all these years, it may have to be a bit revised. But you know, we should always keep in mind that the more strict we make the law and our also our local regulations, we have some, of course, the fewer people probably will take the more open the formula, the more people are, you know, can find their place for the ideas in the process and the kind of

activity. So, it's not an easy task, and if a minister asked me what should we change, I was really not be sure what would be beneficiary for change. I mean, there would have to be a lot of analysis.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And you said that you are a bit... stuck is not the word, but you don't have a lot of flexibility because of the national law. - **Yeah.** - And from the interviews and from my readings, I know that the process has changed a little bit, but the like the main frame of the design is the same in the last 10 years, 12 years, right?

L4

- Yes.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- But here in the planning office, do you discuss any changes?

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- Yeah, we, every year after the process is over, we try to evaluate and we do it by, of course, our own reflection, not very structured way. But of course, we reflect on the process. But we also ask people who took part in what they liked, what they didn't like, what they would change. But this is the problem with public consultations that you get answers mainly from people who didn't like because they are more motivated to tell us... even if there were more people who did like, you will hear the voices of criticism. And of course, we consider them. But it is the challenges, you know, they usually represent the same small group of people that have their voice and, you know, can take part in the public consultation process. It's also not for everybody. Let's say it. And so, you know, to weigh the interest of people who even didn't speak, you know, and those who speak, those who don't speak... Every two or three years, we try to make a bigger evaluation process. And then we try to... we usually change our local rules a little bit to adjust to cut the biggest problems out of the process.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- OK, and how do we evaluate the participation from the citizens, like the quantitative side and the qualitative side?

L4

- We don't do any research on the quality. So, we mainly look at the number of people who took part. But this is not just a problem of participatory budget. This is generally the attitude that we don't... for example, Warsaw, each year they buy the research and the analysis of many different aspects of living and of Warsaw being a city. I know they check how many people were volunteers, how many people... whatever. And we just don't. So, this is kind of the attitude. So, we mostly look at the numbers, we can analyze who voted, like, geographically, because we have the budget cut into 36 parts, representing 36

districts or whatever. So, you can geographically see who is more active, who's not. We can do some demographic analysis because we also have the number, the person numbers which have this data. We always know that women vote more than men. I mean, this is about the voting, of course, because this is not about the first phase where you design the projects. So, we have some basic knowledge about who is active more or less in the process.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And is there a district where the participation is much higher than the others or much lower? Or there is no, like...

L4

- I would say that it's... like the districts have a very different number of people. And this is from 40,000 to 1000, so this is a very big difference in the number of people. And it is kind of, but it is not reflected if it's 40 times, you won't have 40 times more people in the in the biggest districts. So, I guess that, maybe, the smaller districts are more motivated. There are fewer people, but maybe they live in houses, maybe are more... - **Closer to each other?** - Closer to each other, maybe they have some community, also, they have to, you know, in the central districts, you have the infrastructure, you don't have to fight for the lamps on the streets or the pavements. Well, you do maybe. But in there, you have to fight for everything because what you have is a dirt road. So, maybe they're more together. And they are also, in the last years, they have been very critical of our city and even wanted to go to other, you know, to be detached from the city of Łódź and to be included in some nearby whatever city, other smaller, to have some better opportunities for development. So, this may also be reflected in this process. I've had no... I gave it to somebody, because we could take a look, but generally you won't have the 40 times difference in voting that would reflect the number of people. So, based on this, I would say that the smaller communities are more maybe organized, but they also have bigger needs. But also, what they have is they have fewer public spaces and generally the chances for the municipality to do something, really. There is also what may be specific for Łódź or for Poland, is that in these peripheral districts, you have you have this volunteer fire brigades, as they used to be small villages that were included into the town in the 1970s or 1980s. So, they have like, you know, they're kind of village voluntary fire brigade or whatever. So, they are like... and they can be part of the process. So, they are also a center of their local leaders, on the center of local life in the districts. So, they have a lot of votes for their projects because there aren't parks, you know, there aren't many schools in there, many parks, many... I don't know, that there are roads that need to be done and some infrastructure, basic infrastructure. But also, if you cut the city into 36 small districts and you try to assign money, you don't have much money for each of them. So also this process doesn't give them the chance to get a big road done, the street being paved or whatever, because there's too little money. So, these peripheral districts are some, you know, an interesting part of the participatory budget that is certainly needs some ideas. What can they get from it. And the central are easier to imagine what can be their parks, streets, everything.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, there are geographical patterns of different types of needs from the population.

L4

- Yes, of course. Yes, they are. It's very easy to be observed in here.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, this like, peripheral areas, are more rural?

L4

- Yes, more rural, they used to be villages. They have, you know, different structures of housing and stuff.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- OK. And this is interesting because considering that the way the voting is done and the way the process is done, do you think that PB promotes integration between the population of the city, the different social classes?

L4

- It's difficult to say about social classes. I don't think that we look at it this way, ever. Of course, you know, because the big... maybe not the big, how to put it... in this participatory budget, we used to have an amount of money assigned to that, and we used to have an amount of money assigned to the local councils, so to say, we have 36 of this, in each district. It's also something that needs to be done. They are, like, fifteen to twenty representatives of every district and they should cooperate with us, because we, you know, they are also being voted for in local elections. And this group of these local councils, they should cooperate with us. But, so, we had a certain amount of money assigned to the PB and a central amount of money assigned for these local councils to be spent. But after years of local councils working in a very untransparent way, there was a political decision that I am not very... well, I cannot judge if it was good or bad, but the money was transferred from these local councils to the PB. So, like "you are doing it in an untransparent way, so let's give people the chance to decide on this money". So, there was 50 million Zloty in the process after this change in PB. But the local councils were included that they give their opinions on the projects and they should be really there, you know, the people that they... they are a center of local life. These people should play this role. But since there are so many problems with them, they don't use this right to, you know, to... It is a very problematic part of our city's functioning, of the participatory processes and also of participatory budget, that these people don't want to cooperate with us because they are still... although they have changed twice since the money was transferred to the PB, but they still feel offended and feel resentment towards us. So, they don't really want to cooperate, and they don't play the role that they should. But of course, there are very many different other local leaders who try to. And of course, the natural leaders that are school communities, these fire brigades, readers of libraries or some NGOs that, you know, or they like the cats or dogs or whatever.

So, they integrate people in the PB around their interests or whatever, what they are doing. So, this is how it works. It basically relies on individuals or small groups of people who are determined to do it. And they are determined usually if they have already had positive experiences and they have won and they know that it is available for them, it is possible for them to win in this process. Yeah, so this is how this integration works, around some interests. I wouldn't say that we have a part of this process where people negotiate, where people come to conclusions that "let's do this this year and next year we do that" and have a plan or whatever. It's just particular groups have their interests and they are able to gather people around it.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Makes sense. Do you think there is a region of the city or a certain type of people who benefits more from PB?

L4

- It used to be the school communities, but it was fixed, sort of by us. There was a moment in Lodz where schools would get most of the funds, because they had it easiest to organize people to vote. So, there used to be schools. Now I would say it is more inclusive for others, I wouldn't know who would benefit most. I think that it is still an issue, it is that that the institutions, you know, kind of take part in the process.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I saw some policemen, for example, with the uniform in the Gala.

L4

- Yes, yes. So, they think it's cool that they do it. But the truth is that the institutions take this low hanging fruit. They have so many other options of getting funds from any... you know, but they would have to write a real project and then be responsible for the funds or whatever. So, they don't want to do it. Now they would have to ask the mayor for additional money and the mayor would say "no", or whatever. They would have to make a lot of effort, and they pick this low hanging fruit, and it is being hanging so low because so that people can take it. Not so that institutions can. But also, if you have like 10% of people who vote, their perspective is not that there is something wrong in it, because they like voting for the libraries. They don't see that the head of the library did not go to the mayor and did not say "we need new books". They didn't even try; I can assure you. Because people so much love voting for books and for the general public, it is not a problem, but it somehow is a problem. But also, if you cut the institutions out, you may, you would generally have the drop in the number of people being engaged. I'm convinced that it would work this way because people really love the project for schools, also for the animals... not schools, libraries, animals also. The dog shelter also doesn't apply for the funds, it just knows that it will be voted on by the people because people feel like "oh, the dogs". They feel that this is cool that they can help the dogs. However, I think the idea was... should be a bit different, but it has to

be weighed. Not to exclude so many people because if the people liked and they have 10 votes altogether in our process, so if they vote primarily for the library or for the dog shelter, but they also vote for some other things. And so maybe it's okay if they have the chance to vote for the books, if they do make some other decisions too in the process.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Let me use your... what you're talking about the 10 votes. Why this decision? Why designing the process like this? Why not like two votes, for example, or one vote? What do you think about that?

L4

- I think it was from our first editions; we've had this and it stayed with us. It gives the opportunity for the smaller projects and not only the infrastructural projects or big investments to be made, but also, we have, as you saw, we have had more than 250 winning projects. So... - **It's a lot.** - It's a lot. In Wroclaw, we have just had a meeting with an institute that makes an evaluation for Wroclaw. They are the same kind of city when it comes to the amount of inhabitants. They are like us, and they have the participatory budget, is also like 30 million zlotys or whatever. And they only have 17 winning projects, because they only have one vote for projects, for the general city projects and one for the local projects, like two votes all together. And if you have only one vote, you will vote for the road... So, they mostly have big infrastructural projects winning. So, although they are very similar to us, the outcomes are very different only because of the number of votes that you have. And in Lodz, you have very many small projects like Yoga in the Park or for, I don't know, like 10,000 zlotys or something. So, this is a different approach. And although it is very difficult for us to monitor 250 projects, to get them done, to keep track on them, we have not decided to change it because we think that there are more people who are engaged, who can have their kind of small idea being realized.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, when I was looking at the data, I could see there are projects for almost 2.000.000 zlotys and projects that are 3.000. - **Yes, yes.** - Like a street bump, or books for a library. And at the same time, you have the remodeling of a whole street in downtown and this kind of stuff.

L4

- Yes. So, you have different chances for different projects. But also, what is different between Wroclaw and us, although they have the general city part of the budget and the local districts budget, they have more even local districts than us, because they said 46 or 48. But they don't have the amount of the money assigned to the district. And we do. So, in our case, in every district, there are winning projects because they have had the assigned money, and they have the general sum for the local projects. So, there are districts that have never had a project from the participatory budget being realized in there [Wroclaw] because they compete all together. And in our case, they don't. So, it also makes more of the projects, you know, being voted for.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And yeah, like you have smaller projects, but at least they are in all districts.

L4

- Yes, yes. So, this was the idea, and we would be very unhappy to change it. I mean, not maybe unhappy, but it would be very politically difficult because of the money being transferred from these local districts to the PB. So, now we have to look closely that PB is being transferred all over the city. So, there are votes that, I mean, voices that we should, I don't know, take two local districts together so that they have more money, and they can, you know, have some more important investment being made from PB. But I would... each time we try to do something with the local districts, there is like in the media or whatever, there is such a lot of criticism and hate. And these local leaders are kind of politicians, like rising or falling. They are either very young, you know, trying to show something or this is like retirement for them so that they can still do something. So, it is a very delicate process.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- There is a lot of tension.

L4

- Yes. And so, this is why we are staying with these 10 votes. So, then you can choose and have the city covered with the projects generally.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And you talked about the other thing that I think is interesting, is the amount of money. - **Yeah.** - In the peak was 50 million, now it's around 35, right? And what do you think about that? Do you think that's enough? That should be more, should it be less? What do you think?

L4

- There were 50 [million] after this money was transferred, but then we had the pandemic and the local government wanted even not to have the PB at all one year, but they couldn't because of the national law. So, they decided that they give the minimum money. So, then we cut it from 50 to, I guess, 25 or something. And we are still, we left it on this obligatory half percent of the city budget because this is what the law says, that you need at least half percent of the city budget. So, we have the half percent. And before that, the mayor even promised 100 million zlotys for the process, but it was never realized. And I'm not sure that it would be that great because there would be projects with very small support being realized, you know? Because right now it's sometimes, it's enough to have a hundred votes - **Even less?** - For the small projects. Yeah, even less. So, if you had three times the money, like it would all go in kind of. So, I'm not very sure. Maybe if it would make people... I also am not sure that we can jump very much above this 10 or 15% of people being engaged. I don't think that you can have like a third of

the city being engaged in this. I don't believe it. I think it was possible in the first two editions when it was so new, and people were still hopeful that their ideas were... But then, you know how it works, you know that this won't work in the PB, this won't work in the PB. So, you are not that much interested in taking part. So, if it was to raise the number of people being engaged three times, it would be worth it. But if it stayed with the 10% people taking part and deciding on this big amount of money, I think we can have other processes of people deciding. I think that these local districts can decide on their investments, not have the money that they say we give this amount for this and this for that. But they are included in the decisive processes, and you can work with people in other ways, so that they get their needs addressed, not only through the participatory budget.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- OK, makes sense. And one thing that is interesting for me is to understand this amount of money into like the city, the city framework, if I can say that. I know that you have half percent of the total budget. But you do know, PB normally relies on investments, right? It's like new projects or new programs. From what I see from the data is mainly infrastructure projects, even there are small ones or big ones, just a few programs. And do you know how much that like this 30 million, this 50 million, the peak is in percentage of the investments of the city?

L4

- No, I don't know. I would have to check. I'm not sure. But I know usually if this building was being renovated, it [would] cost about 10 million Zloty. So...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Just for one building, right?

L4

- Yeah. So, if you make this street, it will cost two or three million to put something new on it. So [PB] it's not that big an amount in the scale of the city, because now they are doing the renovation of the streets and they have a budget of 100 million for just renovating streets, not big infrastructure projects. But you know, that's just changing the surface, the pavement, because they had holes. So, they have like 100 million for that. But the city is big, of course. So, the needs are big. 40% of our city budget is education. Something like 40%. Now it's maybe smaller because we since there's this European funding, it changes the budget because you have some more investment because of the European funds. And so, the proportions change, and we are just finishing the big European Union perspective of funds being spent in our city. So now probably the investment is going to go down. I don't know.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And the European funds changed a lot, I imagine like here.

L4

- Yeah. In which especially the revitalization projects were one of the, I don't know, maybe even the biggest in Europe in here, because we've had the... if you look in here [showing the window], it's like this building, is this street, is then this part, and that part and this building, that building, the street that... I mean...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Everything. - **Yes. So...** - because it was an industrial city, so these whole big buildings and...

L4

- Yes. And also, because Lodz has very big needs, because we used to be the textile industry city and after the collapse of the, let's say, communist system, you know, the city mostly populated with hardworking women, we were just left alone, and we collapsed dramatically. Unlike, for example, Katowice, which is a city on coal mining where you have known men who can go to the prime minister and, you know, put fire on tires for weeks to get what they want. No women in here were able to make any pressure. So, the city just, you know... and the infrastructure was in a horrible state for this reason. We had very high unemployment rates and generally we are the city that, you know, does not have the best opinion. If you choose a city to live in Poland, not very many people will decide on Lodz.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- OK, that's interesting to hear because from a perspective from someone from Latin America, you walk around, you seem very safe. The infrastructure is good.

L4

- So, generally Poland is very safe compared to other parts of the world, I guess. But, you know, there are many challenges in Lodz, and, for example, we are the fastest depopulating city in Poland among all the big cities. We used to be the second one for a very long time. We used to have almost 800.000 inhabitants. Now it's like 620 [thousand].

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- It's the fourth, right?

L4

- I guess it's third, but maybe fourth even now. So, you know.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- OK, that's interesting. And one thing that... considering these changes in infrastructure, these differences between the... how do you call the city center, is like Srodonie? How do you say that in Polish? The region of the city center?

L4

- Śródmieście!

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Is probably that [laughs]! Because reading it seems something...

L4

- Yeah, it's impossible for somebody.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I know. Yeah, the city center has, like, the difference of infrastructure in comparison to the peripheric areas is great, as you said. And there is this concept that was born with PB in Brazil that is the idea of inversion of priorities. That's two types of inversion of priorities, political and investment ones. So, it's the idea that now the decision is with the citizens, not the politicians and now the investments go from the center to the periphery. So, this is one of the ideas that born with PB in Porto Alegre and in other cities in Brazil. Do you think that this happens here?

L4

- It's a completely different thing because in Lodz where you have most social problems and lowest incomes, it's the city center. And you have people living in, you know, detached houses in the suburbs on these peripheral districts. So, they... on one hand, they don't have the infrastructure, but on the other hand, they are buying land and building big houses. They are buying cheap land, building big houses and then they are surprised that there is no infrastructure. You know, it is not like this. We are fighting very hard to make Śródmieście like a quality place to be living, because it used to be the very much degraded part and people would, you know, run to the peripheral districts, to the other smaller cities around. They would come to work, but nobody, but few people wanted to live here. And we had an enormous social problems in the city center. So, the revitalization projects that were being made here have had this very aim. The goal was to address the social problems that is, you know, to make it a better life quality in here because we have... Lodz is also a place, a city that has very many municipal buildings in an awful state, with no toilets sometimes and things like this. And very poor people used to live there, just right in the city center. And everybody who had some money would run to the peripheral districts. So, it is different. Although these peripheries are not mainly new big buildings of rich people. They also have this village kind of, you know, people who... So, this is also a conflict not very much maybe related to the PB, but that they used to be like farmers. So, they think that it's their land, they can decide, they will cut it to pieces, they will sell it to everybody. And also, what you have on that is a very poor spatial planning system in Poland, where we have places that don't have the plan, and you can do basically whatever you want in there. So, people are used to that. "Nobody will tell me that"...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- There is no zoning, no master planning...

L4

- Yeah, yeah, [actually] there is, but it's very poor and the country is not covered in the in the plans, so that you know that you will have a neighbor or not. You don't know that. You buy a place, you see the forest, but then the farmer says it is my forest. He cuts it. He puts new blocks in there, you know. So, it is a difficult, generally from the geographic point of view, a very difficult place with a lot of problems from different perspectives. Like the city center is more... it is here. You can more or less see and expect what is being here. And also, we have the policy of the city coming back to the city center. So, the center is more dense and you restrict buildings in the periphery, so that you have some environmental... that the place is the natural place, some rivers that we have that you don't see because they are under the streets and under the buildings. So yes, this is also some context.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Good, good. So, there's a complexification of the peripheral areas. - **Yes.** - For example, there's farming, the people who are buying new houses, like new development, this is all appearing together.

L4

- Yes.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And this, do you think that like this has increased in the last 10 or 15 years?

L4

- Yes, of course. It's been since... I would say 2000, since we joined European Union and some years after, you know, it's been a very good time for our country generally, and also a time of our city trying to get up from the ashes basically. So yes, and it is intensifying. And there is also the context of that in Poland, you've had very few houses or flats per capita. So, I mean, very many people living in small apartments all together, like grandparents, cousins, somebody. So now there are very many big developments being built and sold. So, it's like, you know, probably also some speculative capitalistic things right now. But yes, people still choose the peripheral areas because for the price of an apartment in here, you can have a house in there, you know, that kind of idea. But then, oh, there is no road.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- But are there also gated communities appearing?

L4

- It's a Polish thing that we love, I guess, fences. So, there are there are many like... if you go to Stoki [?], my cousin bought. So, you have like, this peripheral, you know, farms. Usually in Poland you have a house in here, then some for the pigs, for the cows, for the whatever, this kind of square. And then you had a field which was long. So, they sell these long plots, and they build like house, house, house, house, house. And they build a fence all over it, all around it, and there is maybe a road inside. Yes. But there is a dirty road in here because it is so you have like a farmer in here. Then you have some fancy houses with fences and sometimes there are detached houses and sometimes it's, you know, blocks of flats that go like this. And you have like two. So, it's a complete disaster from the urban planning point of view. - **Of course.** - It's total chaos.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And this happens here in Lodz, for example, in the area. - **Yeah.** - OK. That's interesting. And do you think that impacts, for example, the public transportation system because all these people are using cars?

L4

- Of course, of course it does. They use cars, but because they have no other option. I mean, basically, public transportation is an issue in Lodz because also an interesting context may be for you is that compared to other cities, our size in Poland compared to Kraków, which is a little bit bigger than us, we have only two thirds of their budget, because we are a poor city. So, things that need big investment, like public transportation, are weaker in Lodz generally. But also, these people have not moved here. They have, you know, their garage. They have not moved here to use public transportation. Come on, they are rich people. So, that's what they at least think about themselves. But it's like social context, also sociological context that, you know. They mostly expect the roads to be great, the parking places to be all around so that they can move with cars. They don't very much expect public transportation. Not these people. These, yes, these people do.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- The farmers, right?

L4

- The farmers, the people who have been living here, maybe now they are not using this, but they still have, you know, this and they are hoping to sell in some time. They are hoping that their children will live here... of course, they won't. But it's yeah, it's chaotic and you know.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, this process is more related to private real estate, like the real estate market. - **Yeah.** - And do you think that the real estate market here in Lodz is moving more the city than the public housing, for example?

L4

- Yeah, the public housing is... since we have a very big amount of municipal buildings for the public housing already, we have to renovate them. So, we are not that much expanding the number, although there are some moves being made due to the fact that the prices of the credits are so expensive that young people cannot afford and stuff like this. So now they are trying to build some new... They're looking for some kind of models where you pay some money and the city builds it, but you then the city builds the blocks. But then you can somehow buy it out for several years, but you don't have the credit in the bank. So, some, you know, some different kinds of models that would not be so expensive for the city, because for the city is extremely expensive. And also, because we have very many people not paying. You know, they are staying in these houses, rotting houses, and they are not paying, so you cannot renovate. So, they say that they are rotting, so you say "but your neighbors have not paid for five years", "but I've paid", you know, so it's very difficult too. So, the city is trying to expand somehow the amount of the flats or whatever, but not very much, because we have to really remodel what we already have. And in these revitalization projects, we've had many buildings being remodeled. So, I was in many of them. And you know, you had flats without bathrooms, that's obvious. But you also had flats in the attic, you know, very small spaces, so now they were remodeled. So they are, you know, all you had very big flats and people, the old lady living in 100 square meters or something, not being able to take properly care of it. But since it was cheap or she wasn't paying or whatever, she was there. So now we are cutting it to, like, the regular, normal, kind of medium-sized and it's being remodeled so that it has the heating, the bathrooms, of course, everything. So, this is our housing issue.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I'm staying in a place that I imagine that would pass through something like that. I am in Senatorska Street and there's a place where I'm staying, it's probably like it's Airbnb. But it's not that, I got it from Booking, not Airbnb, but it's the same idea. And it is like a huge apartment, very huge. And they cut it like, it has a kitchen and basically... a kitchen that is for everybody, and they cut it into like six small rooms. - **Yeah.** - And it's huge. If you imagine this is an apartment for one family, it's a very big one.

L4

- Yeah. And there are a lot of investments, like the old buildings are being bought by investors or... - **Developers!** - And the big apartments are being cut like this for this Airbnb. But since Lodz is not a very big touristic attraction or whatever, it's not a major problem. Although it sometimes is if, you know, you have a very nice old building and somebody does it, you have normal neighbors and then somebody starts buying big flats and cutting it into like hotel rooms. But this is like outside of what we can do as a city because everybody can buy whatever they want and remodel it as they wish.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah. In Barcelona, for example, the prohibited Airbnb. You can't have Airbnb there anymore, for example. But of course, for there is like a huge different problem. And one thing last about the city. I will come back to PB. But the one last thing that I'm curious about the city is: do you consider that Lodz is a large city or a mid-sized city?

L4

- In Polish, you know, among Polish cities, we consider ourselves to be big. But if you compare it to any other European cities, also we are medium sized for a European city.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Like in the European context.

L4

- Yeah, in the European. But for the global context, like a small community of happy people probably [laughs]. Yeah.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- To be honest, like in Brazilian context would be a mid-sized city. - **Yeah.** - In my opinion, if like 600.000 people, it's not a small one.

L4

- Yeah. It used to be thought that we are going to reach a million because Lodz very rapidly developed in the 19th century from 2.000 [inhabitants] to, you know, 600.000 within 50 years or something like this. So, this was the lead development due to the industrial textile. But, you know, it didn't happen. It never happened. But Lodz has some... we have the cultural institutions that are for our Polish context, but also for the global context, like the film school from Lodz is very renowned worldwide. And also, we have had some artists from Lodz that were also very important in the global context, so we consider ourselves important.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Of course!

L4

- In many contexts [laughs].

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah. That's why there's the stars in Piotrkowska Street?

L4

- Yes. There are stars in Piotrkowska Street and... yes.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Makes sense. Well, the last three questions I have about PB. PB here, does it have any connection with other urban planning or urban management tools?

L4

- No, there is not a direct link. Although when the projects are being brought by the citizens in the spring and we work on the projects, of course, all of the departments that are responsible for urban planning are being consulted. So, in this way, but not in any other formal way.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- But with other participatory processes?

L4

- No.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- No? But like PB with other participatory processes. There's no... like, you said the other one is...

L4

- We do public consultations on PB. So, this might be it because each time we change our local law, we have to have the public consultation process. So, this is another process that comes into it. And maybe if you are looking for...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- The local initiative, for example, it's not connected?

L4

- No, no. But we've had the citizen assembly on environment and one of the recommendations from our citizens was to have a green participatory budget.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Just like in Lisbon, for example, they had one.

L4

- Yeah? But we couldn't cut the amount of money which would be the easiest from the existing budget and say this is the amount of money for the green projects with some other rules or whatever. But we couldn't do it. So, this in 2025, we are starting the eco budget. We have the one million złoty for another

participatory budget thing, but it won't be regulated by the national law. So, we have more flexibility and we will offer something that is a merge between the PB and the local initiative, so that people will come with their projects and we'll work on these projects. But they will also have to say what they will do, what they will bring into, maybe some maintenance afterwards, or they want to plan some plans by themselves. So, they have to show that there's a community who's going to take care and this is going to be the criteria and there won't be voting, but we'll have a panel of experts, NGOs, that will decide who gets, which project gets what amount of money. It's not a lot of money, one million złoty, but we are also looking not for heavy investment in these green areas, but increasing biodiversity or retaining water, things like this, like more natural spaces. So, we are starting this, so you have PB, Public Consultation, Citizen Assembly, that also addressed it and the new process of eco-budget, something like this.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- But here in the in the building you have all the participatory processes combined, right?

L4

- Yes, but not for urban design because they have their own way and their own legal requirements to do the participatory processes, and they do it by their own.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, so you already talked a little about this, but do you believe that PB in Lodz tackles urban inequalities?

L4

- No. No, I don't think, I think it was... it was never the narrative nor the aim. I think it mostly is a process that is supposed to be empowering for the people. - **Okay.** - No matter what the outcome, let's say. There is no outcome that we want more investment, or we want it more in here or in there, or we imagine. We kind of go with what happens. There is not a big idea, is just so that the people can really feel that they are able to have something that they need done and they have some influence on what is happening in the city. I think that this is mostly it.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, you don't think that PB in Lodz focuses on territorial justice?

L4

- No, I don't think. Other than the context I gave you about these 36 local districts that we are very much looking into it, that the city is covered with the projects, and everybody has the access to the money from the PB in the process.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- But the focus on justice is not on the process?

L4

- No, I don't think so.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, okay. L4, do you think that... like, we just finished, but if you want to do any comment, something that you think that is not part of the script or is there something not just about PB, but about the city that would like to talk, feel free to comment anything.

L4

- I think that one of the challenges is with this group who is always using their opportunity to criticize, and you asked if we are a small or a big city. In this aspect we are a very small city. There is a very small group of people who have the narrative from the social side about... because as I told you, I think that people are generally satisfied and that's why there are so many [participants]. But there is a group of people who think that they are specialists in... you know, they're from NGOs and they know better than us. They are extremely critical, which is obvious, they write, but they have the narrative in the public space because the majority is not speaking anything. So, they have the narrative. So, if you look into the papers or whatever you will only see critical voices. But, somehow, the reality is that it is happening. People at the gala were happy and then they continued to be engaged in the process. So, this is difficult, because sometimes you would have to personally say "you are not telling the truth". In this aspect it's a very small city, you know. Very small group. They know us, we know them. We have... sometimes we used to work in NGOs. We came to the city office or other way around or whatever. So, it's like a very small community with a narrative around the process and also what was not said yet, that in every Polish city the engagement is declining. It is... Wrocław showed us their data. They had about 85.000 people, 82 next year, 70 something last year and 68 or 9, very close to us this year. So, we are very close to Wrocław now. We've had bigger differences, year to year, because we were like 70 [thousand] something, then 115, because our inhabitants are extremely smart and they know how to use every gap in our process. So, then they adjust to additions. Then they make you know, like, an attack on the system and then we cut the possibility to use it in the wrong way and then we have some other, maybe like this. But generally, in all the cities, the trend is a bit declining so it's not always a very bad thing, but in our case it was the difference when we had the paper voting, because voting in paper gave a lot of votes, but a lot of questions whether people really voted and knew what they were doing or if the numbers were not written off some lists of people that the other people have. So, you have problems with the narrative because first the NGOs would press "cut the paper, it's only... you know, it's a fraud with the paper, people are unfair", and stuff. And when we cut paper and, of course, the numbers decline, they say, "nobody wants to play with you", I mean "look what you did, there are fewer and fewer people". If we had paper again, there would again be, like, I know, additional 30.000 people who didn't know they voted maybe. So, you know, the general is declining and with other cities we are meeting and discussing

maybe what should be changed in the national law, but I personally think that 10% of people being involved is a lot.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And I just remembered that. Do you think the digital model is a good idea?

L4

- The digital voting? Yeah. I think it is. Because the paper was very much... didn't build trust between people, it built distrust. Because people came and said "I want to see my vote", "Oh I think this number is not... maybe I didn't sign it, maybe somebody put other numbers of the projects that I wanted" it was like... and now it's, you know, you have the person number and connected with the telephone number, so it is more difficult to say "it wasn't me, I don't know what it was, maybe somebody cheated"...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- There's more transparency to it.

L4

- More transparency to it and people were really using. They love quarreling, so they would quarrel about this paper a lot.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And there was no demand from a face-to-face approach, like with assemblies, deliberative sessions, something like that?

L4

- Now you have a lot of this. At the beginning you can come to us, and you can, you know, develop your project with us, but then you come to the city council commissions, L7 is going to tell you about, and people come, and we negotiate about the project, we meet a lot. And we also meet in what Mateusz does, the participatory planning, small processes, and we meet in the districts to kind of... we've put a lot of smaller opportunities. Of course, there are not many people taking part in them, but we have put many opportunities to come, meet and talk. Many promotional activities, like we've had picnic in October to promote, so you can reach us in many different ways.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, okay. I'm done, I'm fine. Thank you so much for your time here, thank you so much for this conversation. I also have to thank you in the name of my university, the São Paulo State University, and I also have to reinforce that all our conversation has a scientific character, you know, you're doing your PhD, so you know how it works. And all this information, I will not have your name in my dissertation and... Okay, and I will be available for any further questions you have in the future.

L4

- Please send me once you've published!

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Of course!

L4

- I will be very much interested.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Of course, of course, okay, let me just finish it here.

Fim da transcrição