

Pesquisa FAPESP nº 2021/04556-0
ENTREVISTA COM L6
Cidade: Lodz (Lodzkie, Polonia)
Entrevistado: L6, 30+ anos, urban planner
Entrevistador: Rodrigo Sartori Bogo
Local de realização da entrevista: Cafeteria

TRANSCRIÇÃO

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- For the bureaucracy of the research, the first thing I need to ask you is to state your full name and say that you are willing to participate, and you agree for being recorded.

L6

- My name is L6 and I agree to be recorded for the purposes of the research.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- You know the thing. So, I think the most important thing to start is to give you an introduction to my... I already mailed you about that, but the idea is that as a geographer, my interests are in the territorial outcomes of participatory processes, more specifically participatory budgeting. So that's why I'm comparing four types of cities. Actually, four cities that we can consider mid-sized, like Lodz is the biggest one, but I'm comparing Lodz, Vallejo in California, that's a city in the Bay Area, Araraquara that's in the state of São Paulo, and Maringá that's in the state of Paraná. All of them have PB, but the most interesting thing is that they have four different types of designs of PB. So, I'm trying to look at how these different designs bring different territorial outcomes. So that's my main focus, right? And well, this part of the research is more qualitative. I already seen by it that talking to people is much better in the look at the data, in my opinion. And I like the data too, but it's good to mix them both. And to start, I would like to know if you can talk about your personal career and how did you get here, how did you work with PB, and your trajectory.

L6

- Okay, so I'm an urban planner, and urban planners like to look at the cities from the perspective of space, of the public realm, of the environment, etc. So Łódź was one of the first cities to actually introduce participatory budgeting in Poland. It was not the first one, but probably it was the most exemplary in a way, the rules that were adopted in Łódź early on, its kind of inspired other cities to introduce their own. And I don't remember when I actually submitted my first project, it was probably, I don't know, probably 2017 or 2018. So, it was already five years in.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Are you born here, right?

L6

- Yes, I'm born and raised in here. I went to study in the UK, but I was still coming back a lot, so I was still kind of present in the city. So, I started submitting the projects because I felt like it's a way to change some aspects that you would like to. And there are obviously several challenges related to how the city

office works, how they kind of deal with the process, what are the rules, if all the stakeholders are kind of equal in the process or the rules are made to make various stakeholders equal. And now, I kind of was like an activist and kind of still am, because no matter where you are, if you do something to change things, you can consider yourself being an activist. I got to the city council this year in April. So, from April I am the member of the city council, one of 37 in the city.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And how did that happen? Like, the process of being elected, being part of the city council?

L6

- Well, basically I established an NGO, like this urban social movement called "Wucała Naprzód" and we kind of got notice and we did a lot of things, so the public kind of knew about us. And even before that I was kind of invited to the media several times to speak. And one of the subjects where the media and the public noticed me was the participatory budgeting debates between 2019 or 2020. And then one of the local parties kind of invited us to run with them. So, members of our kind of association ran from their lists, but it turned out that I was the only person to actually make it to the council from everyone. So yeah, I am the independent councilor as it stands right now.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- What are the biggest challenges you see with participatory budgeting?

L6

- There are a lot. And I think they are related to a wider kind of challenge of public participation, how to design it and how to manage it. The main issue is the budget itself, the amount of money that's available. At this moment it's the minimum that the nationwide legislation allows the cities to set. Because all the cities above certain administrative level...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- The powiats, right?

L6

- The powiats, they have to, by law, introduce participatory budgeting. This is, you know, it was based on the success of this tool in several cities, including Łódź. So actually, the right-wing government introduced this into the legislation. At this moment it's only 0,5% of the city budget, which is not a lot. It's around 37 million złoty, which is less than... it's like 9 million euros. So, it may seem like it is a lot, however you need to think about the distribution of the money. The money is distributed between 36 neighborhoods. There is also this pool of money that is available for projects that are citywide. The issue is, if you have 36 neighborhoods and you divide 30 million złoty between the 36 neighborhoods, each neighborhood gets 1,5 million the most, and it's for the big neighborhoods. And the more peripheral,

less populated neighborhoods get way less than 1 million złoty. What's the issue is that you cannot meaningfully participate in and submit the project with such a low budget, especially following the inflation outbreak post-COVID. The costs went massively up and this creates a challenge, because in 2014-15 you could actually properly renovate and change the whole street in the city center. How did 6th of August street, Trawbuta street, Piamowice street, Zatisza street, all kind of introduced the so-called "Wonef" [?], which is like this kind of home zone type street where all modes of transport are equal in theory. And this was also like this groundbreaking achievement of Łódź participatory budgeting. It actually introduced things to Poland that weren't present at all before in the country and then later on, other cities started to follow the example. Łódź got famous because of the first "Wonef" it had in the country; however, this is mostly because the residents were kind of brave enough to submit it and they kind of knew that there is a concept and they also managed to convince the residents, which is another thing. Currently you cannot even renovate the street using the pool of money available in participatory budgeting, which creates an issue, because it really allows you to do very small projects, which makes people less motivated to submit them. Also, the process sometimes is not clear on how they are allowed or not allowed to be kind of implemented before the voting process. It happens that one year someone submits a project, and it's approved [by the technicians] and the next year it submits exactly the same project because it didn't win, but it is being rejected by the city office because of unspecified reasons. Sometimes people lose trust in the process, especially when schools kind of overtook the neighborhood pools of money, because schools have a very strong community that they can use to win. So, what they were doing, back then participatory budgeting had two modes of voting, online voting where you needed to give your phone number and your national kind of ID number. This was the basis for your voting. Or paper one where you did the same, but you didn't have to confirm your identity in a way. And several schools were sending kids out to basically gather the votes. So, they were... kids were running around the city and asking people for their personal numbers, and this is how they were voting for the projects. And this was highly unethical, if not illegal in terms of gathering of public data, the GDPR [General Data Protection Regulation] legislation. But thanks to actually including my analysis and publications about this, this was first schools were moved from the neighborhood pools to the citywide pool, which makes it harder for them. And also, then last year, I believe, the paper voting was severely restricted, so that you only get one ballot paper per person. So before, you used to have something in the region of 80.000 or 70.000 votes on paper when everyone could print ballot paper. Well now, this year you only had 16, one six. So, this really shows the scale of how many votes were gathered by organizations, institutions, etc. Rather than actually willingly casted by the population, by the residents. So now, you know, the rules kind of change every year because you have to be receptive to the changes that happen. And schools, for example, overtook the local amounts. It took them some time to do it because they found a way to do so. And it's kind of understood why they started doing this, because the education department is not giving enough money for their needs, and some of the schools are in a state of disrepair. So of course, the head teachers tried to find additional funding, and this turned out to be a successful tool. However, it raised some... well, how they did that raised some ethical questions. Yeah. Another thing is sometimes the projects can be disorganized, especially in geographical

sense. In a way, there is a park and people want something to be located in the park. And if residents just keep adding whatever and whatever location within the park, it starts to create a chaos with the master planning, so it raises a question whether you actually need the master plan for each of the parks. And, you know, there is a plan of what infrastructure you would like to include in the park or just keep adding things that don't match up together and kind of trade chaos to a certain extent. This is one of the issues. Yeah. If you have any other supplementary questions...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, of course. Now you opened a lot of windows for me. The first thing is about the investment, talk about the amount of money. First, there is this rate of 0.5% of the total budget that comes from the law and everything, and in the peak was 50 million zloty...

L6

- 50 million and the mayor actually promised it's going to be increased to 100 [million]. This was pre-COVID, so effectively it was way more. Back then, 50 million was like more than 1% of the city budget. So, it was a much higher amount than it is. I mean, yeah, it was much higher even if it was 50 right now, it would need to be probably like 70 or 75 to match, kind of the proportion of the budget.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, you had increasing inflation and decreasing investments, so PB lost a lot of power, after COVID especially.

L6

- Yes. Yes, because also the city council during COVID when the local governments got hit because of the finances. At one point they said "okay, we are actually not going to do the participatory budgeting this year". However, they realized they have to. - **By national law?** - By national law, so they back then it was probably I think 25 million in 2020. So, it was still... I mean, still the costs in 2020 didn't go as high because the inflation started a year or two after. But still it was a small amount. And what also is important to mention is that the neighborhood councils, they had their amount of money that they could designate for local projects and investments. Kind of with consultation with the residents, but like the neighborhood councils as each kind of neighborhood has like this council, which is not very, it's not a political thing, it's a very low key, you know, supplementary body to the city council. They could designate certain projects without voting. In 2019 when Hanna Zdanowska [mayor] won for the third time, they got rid of that amount, because they said it's undemocratic that the neighborhood councils are just, you know, doing things as they want. And the 20 million lot was there were back then available for them. 10 million was put into participatory budgeting and 10 million was put to actually fulfill the electoral promises of the mayor. Because she said she knows better what the residents want, not the neighborhood councils. So, for one year, participatory budgeting was, you know, actually took the

money from the neighborhood councils. So, it was at 50 million, but then it was slashed by half and hasn't recovered since.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, and about this 0.5% budget, it's the total budget, right? But normally, PB in general, it talks about investments, new infrastructure, even that small, or small programs or buying some stuff for like libraries or, you know, so it's about new investment in general.

L6

- In most of the cases.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Most of the cases. So, do you know or have an idea of how much this 35 million zloty is in percentage to the investment of the budget? Just the investment?

L6

- The investment budget in Lodz is, I would say something around... at this moment is around... I don't want to lie to you right now and my memory is not very good with numbers, but I would say it's around one... because the total city budget is nearly 6 billion zloty. I would say the investment budget is around one billion, one point something.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, probably like 3.5% of the investment.

L6

- Yeah. However, it's also important to mention that several projects of participatory budgeting are supposed to kind of cover the maintenance costs as well. So it happens that several public bodies unofficially submit projects to participatory budgeting because they are unable to get this from the usual city budget. For example, the city police. They, for example, get money for additional pay troops on the streets. So, because they need more money for their staffing, but they cannot get it from the usual way, so they take, you know, get it the other way around.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I saw some guys with like police suits in the gala.

L6

- Yeah, that's the voluntary fire brigade. - **Oh, Okay.** - And they get, they buy something every year as well. I don't know how they get a lot of the votes. They're usually on the outskirts of the city, the former kind of villages that got incorporated into the city. I'm not sure how they get so many votes. But yeah, it

is quite an interesting case. But they mostly is like is a capital expenditure, not like revenue, I would say. And so, yeah, so most of the cases are for the hospice. So, for, like, basically kids in very bad health state, they also get the money from the participatory budgeting... How do you call it? Place where the animals are kept?

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Like animal care.

L6

- Yeah, animal care also gets a lot of money every year. - **Shelters, I mean.** - Yes, shelters. Yes. Animal shelters. So, there are a lot of places actually get their kind of maintenance money through sometimes as well.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, it's interesting that you said about the investment. The first thing you said was about, like, the money isn't enough, because if I'm not wrong from the papers I read... like, I got to Lodz because of the process is famous in Poland. And I wanted to study Poland because of this national law. And I don't know if you ever read the Atlas of Participatory Budgeting, they published it... It was a huge research about PB in the world. In the 2021 edition, Poland was considered one... They asked a question to the local petitioners, "what are the cities or countries that are more influential in your opinion"? Poland was one of the most cited ones. - **Oh, really?** - Behind Brazil, Portugal, United States. So, Brazil and Portugal are very huge in PB.

L6

- I mean, yeah, PB started in Brazil.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, exactly. And United States has its influence because it's the United States, you know? And I studied PB there too. And they're starting, but they're very below Brazil and Portugal. And Poland was the fourth because it has a strong influence in the East Europe. Ukraine, Romania, all the countries here that were part of the Soviet Union, including parts of Germany... Germany has its own type of PB, but it's also the influence there. So, yeah, I was like "OK, let's go look for a city in Poland." And Lodz appeared to me from the data, there was a lot of participation and a lot of investment. Comparing to other cities in Poland.

L6

- So, it turns out that a lot of the participation is actually fake participation. - **OK.** - And you can see it in the drop of the turnout when they got rid of the paper votes. It got slashed massively, but everyone expected this because these people were not actually voting willingly, they were used to getting the

votes. So, in a way, yeah, the participation dropped. But I don't think it actually had a negative impact. In fact, it had a good one because people felt like "OK, now we can compete with the schools, now the schools, you know, don't have this extra advantage". And the schools were doing crazy shit, they were like making competitions for the kids. Whichever class gets the most votes, they will get a free trip to the theme park. To this extent, right? So, yeah, so it's mostly stopped. But yeah, and it's very interesting. I'm going to give you an example from my own primary school. I went there, I was invited by the history teacher to give a small talk to the students, the pupils. And I asked them "OK, do you know what participatory budgeting is?". And they were like quiet. And then the head teacher was sitting at the back and the history teacher, and the head teacher was like "Hey kids, how do you not remember? Don't you remember last year where, you know, trying to get the renovation of the sports pitch?". So, it made me realize that it's kind of executing the school in a way that the kids don't even know what they're participating in. So, they didn't know they were participating in PB. And I don't think it's the right thing to teach in schools, pretty much. I mean, as part of, let's say, the civic education, they should say "oh, look, there is participatory budgeting, and you can do stuff with it". Not that you just vote for whatever schools tells you to.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, it looks like more a competitive approach than a cooperative approach. - **Yes, yes.** - Do you think that this relies on the type of design that was chosen here? Like, because this design that... I know the national law explains that you need to have the projects and you need the voting and it has to be transparent and open and everything. But do you think that this approach, like a digital voting that you have a pool of projects, maybe...? What's your opinion on this design?

L6

- I think it serves a purpose. And clearly, it still makes people get involved, even though there are several ups and downs. And even though I think, I feel like 10% is a fairly decent turnout. However, the older I get, the more I feel like we could even have, you know, 10% of the budget as participatory budgeting. However, it would need to be done in a slightly different way. Like, I'm not sure how the name was. It's called the Civic Panel in Poland. So, it's like this kind of a bit of a focus group, so there were two like this in Lodz, one about the decarbonization plan and one about the greening plan. So, there were something around 50 participants invited from representative backgrounds in terms of age, education, etc. to the average population. And they went through... it lasted a month, for four weeks, four weekends. They were paid to participate, and they were to get the solution for, let's say, the decarbonization plan, etc. So, several researchers were invited. I was actually invited as well to speak about sustainable transport. And then later on, everyone came together and started drawing, writing the recommendations. I feel like something like this should be used in participatory budgeting as well. But in a way, you don't need the whole kind of voting and preparation of projects to this extent. What you need to do is better gathering of the needs and actually picking, let's say, the streets to renovate or like any other issues. So, a wider group of residents who are educated well enough or informed well enough to actually pick what

they actually consider the most important. Having been informed about various priorities and not only "oh, I want my street to be renovated", but actually, oh, "maybe these people need this more because this, this and that, because of how many people walk there and there is a bus running, etc." So a couple of weeks ago, Carlos Moreno was in Lodz and he was giving a talk in one of the conferences about 15-minute cities. And there was the mayor of the city as well, Hanna Zdanowska, in the same panel as him. And he mentioned something "oh, in Paris, 20% of the city budget is under PB." I was like "whoa, 20% is a lot, even for Paris." So, I was like, I'm curious how they do it. This is what he said.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- I'm not sure if that number is right.

L6

- Probably not, but...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- But I know that, sorry, I know the Paris PB is 100 million euros. It's a lot. But I don't think that's 20% of their budget.

L6

- Anyway, it's a lot. And Paris area-wise is a small city. It's smaller than some medium sized cities in Poland in terms of area itself. However, I'm curious how the PB is done there and whether maybe it's similar to the civic panel where it's not like a, we have this word in Polish that you probably understand, *plebiscity*.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- *Plebiscito*, like in Portuguese.

L6

- Which is just like this kind of cheap voting for whoever is the prettiest. And sometimes the projects, this is how the projects are chosen in PB. Whoever gets the sector name for the project, whoever gets it, I don't know, yeah, in more interesting content, not what's actually the most important. And one of the things, another thing that I just realized is about some trends in terms of what projects are submitted. It's, I can see whenever there is something interesting submitted and it gets published in the media, in the following years, all the neighborhoods want something of the same. There was this, I don't know how it was the term in English, it's this Polish invention actually. It's like this saltwater kind of fountain. It's something like this [shows in the cellphone]. *Tetźnia* [?]. Yes. So, you have this kind of wooden structure.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- I saw that in a park!

L6

- Yes. So once in one neighborhood, they wanted this to be... because usually they have this like this patterns.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And what's for that? What does it do?

L6

- You have salt water, a brine dripping from the, you know, on the branches and it kind of helps your lungs and everything. - **Okay.** - So, people in one neighborhood got it, they submitted it, they won and then it got built and people across the city started submitting this. Then the so-called summer cinema. There is a summer cinema festival in Łódź called Polówka and it was mostly in the city center in the standard locations. Now people submit their applications to have the summer cinema in their neighborhood. So, they don't have to go to the city center, but they can just stay where they live. And it's cool, because they repurpose some of the areas that normally wouldn't be like this. So, from city urban planning perspective, it's great as well. Or like, I submitted this project on the street where I, I mean, close to where I live. And it got published on several... so basically along the tram line [shows in cellphone]. Actually, if you go further down on Zachodnia [?], there was this kind of unused green patch. And then I submitted the project to plant tulips there, so every spring it looks just amazing because for like 500 meters we have this line of tulips. People saw it and said, "oh my god, this is amazing, I want it in my neighborhood as well". So now I realized that so many people submit projects for tulips along their street because of the success of this project. And just, you know, so it also shows that people are receiving... they see, look at good practice, hey look what's happening elsewhere. They want to implement it in their area, which is great. I feel like, you know, purely for this kind of informative purpose, PB is doing a great job.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- It looks like a spontaneous public policy, that way.

L6

- It is. It is. It is really spontaneous. I need to get some water.

[brief stoppage in the interview]

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- So, you're talking about the needs of the population, right? You think that... and you're talking about also the citizens' panels. You think that a more face-to-face approach, complementary to the digital voting, would be a good idea?

L6

- Yeah. I would say when actually you construct the actual budget of the city. You know, there are several investment projects as well and you can actually involve the residents more, like which streets or area, like what intervention should be included in the plan for this year. Because at this moment it's done offeratively [sic], kind of politically based on... you know, pretty much politics. So, a more direct approach would be better.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And do you think there's a certain population, I mean like, specially or regionally or a social group that benefits more from PB or not?

L6

- I feel like it used to be kids to some certain extent, because of all the school projects.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And the playgrounds...

L6

- There's a lot of playgrounds. That's a very interesting one because I don't think there is... I think the projects are quite diverse in terms of their audience. Actually, when I was doing my analysis, I did... because of the personal number you can see how old the person is voting and what's their gender is. So, what I actually analyzed... I can send you the links.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- It's in your personal blog? - **Yeah!** - I got it.

L6

- So, what sort of demographics were voting for certain projects? I find it quite interesting. You know, just to understand who is more likely to vote for something than something else. I don't think there is a substantial gender division, but there is obviously an age division.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Younger people vote more?

L6

- I would say... I was doing research when the voting included paper, so it was distorted. Because the kids were a significant part, the parents, people around the parental age and kind of people around 60. But again, I would need to redo the research this year, which I don't exactly have time for, to actually see how it works with...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- This new type of paper voting?

L6

- I mean, basically no paper voting. - **Very limited.** - With electronic votes only, yeah.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And there is this concept about PB there when it started in Brazil that was called the "inversion of priorities". That this idea that with PB you could change the political power to the peripheric population and the investments from the center of cities to the peripheric areas. And we have strong evidence that happened in some cities in Brazil. Do you think that happens in Lodz?

L6

- Ok, so initially, for the first couple of years, I mentioned there is a city-wide poll and a neighborhood poll. It used to be slightly different. It used to be city-wide and district wide. So, Lodz is, in theory, divided into five districts. Basically central, north, east, west and south. However, the issue is, within the big districts, apart from the central one, you have areas that are very densely populated and areas, or like neighborhoods in fact, that are very sparsely populated. So, if one neighborhood has, let's say, Bałtydowy [?] has 25.000 people and, I don't know, let's say, Zniesienia Łódzkie [?] have 2 or 3.000. Obviously, people from the bigger estates were outvoting the people from the smaller estates. So, one of the first changes was to actually get rid of district polls and divide it into neighborhood polls. Because it was easier to compete within certain geographies. It was like consistent in terms of urban form, right? So that peripheral areas are not disadvantaged. And I feel like it was a great idea. However, it had a knock-on effect on the actual amount available for each neighborhood. Because when the polls divided into districts, it was, you know, the amount was substantial, right?

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And now the amounts are like...

L6

- It's smaller. It depends on the population.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Good. And do you think that if the design changes, the territorial outcomes would also change?

L6

- The design? You mean the... - **PB design**. - Into more kind of collaborative, right? In this sense.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- For example, or the design of the... where the investments should go, it should go by like sectors or by parts of the city. Or the investment should go more to poorer neighborhoods instead of high-income neighborhoods. I don't know, maybe, any possibility of change in design.

L6

- I mean, poor neighborhoods certainly have lower turnout. That's like, that's standard. And more wealthy neighborhoods have higher ones. That's like typical for everywhere. But because kind of, because the neighborhoods, they don't have to compete with each other rather, and they're relatively small. In general, I feel like it works well because, for example, Górnica, where you stay, this is one of the poorer neighborhoods. Yet it doesn't have to compete with the central areas or anything else. So, in a way, the current design is resistant to that. I feel like in principle, it's better than district-wide one. And obviously for city-wide projects, even if you submitted like a local project, it's not going to get far. Because for a very local thing in your neighborhood, you're not going to get enough votes to get past the massive projects that win kind of every year. Which are like the animal shelter, the hospice, the libraries. So, I think it's a fair system in terms of geographical terms.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay. And one thing that is interesting for me, is the role of the technicians, right? Like the people who work for the municipality, people who work in the city office. Do you think that they have a strong role?

L6

- No. When I was trying to push for some changes in the rules, the employees actually were supporting my ideas. But they needed to get this kind of the political agreement on this from the political leadership. And even though they were right, they couldn't really get through with their agenda. So, I feel like they are not listened enough. But it's not only the case of this kind of the participation side, but a lot of the kind of parts of the public office, the city office in Łódź. But not only Łódź probably.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- There are conflicts?

L6

- I mean, it's just the political aspect wins over the kind of professional, let's call it.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay. Makes sense. And I went to the participation office, and I saw everything there. I know there's a lot of other programs beyond PB. There's PB, there's the local initiative, there's the citizen panels, the consultations, etc. But do you think they are well connected? Like PB is alone or is it connected to the other [processes]?

L6

- PB is quite alone. I mean, the local initiative, the amount is quite small. And in a way, it's not published well enough in terms of how you can do it. And somehow it doesn't work that well. I think also it includes this kind of personal participation, so you need to participate financially or like you need to do some work as part of the value that you bring to the project. So maybe this is why not everyone wants to do it. But yeah, it certainly could be promoted a bit more. And the neighborhood councils, they should get their money back to be able to kind of complement, for example, projects that didn't win because they didn't have 20 votes or so. They still should be implemented because they still have this public support. Sometimes it happens that they actually bring the successful-unsuccessful, you know, the projects that got high support, but they didn't make it. They bring them to the actual city budget. But it's not always the case, so it would be so good to make use of the ideas that people bring because they're valuable.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And PB has any connection to the urban planning?

L6

- No. I mean, it has to comply with the zoning plans and special plans, but not the other way around.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- It's not like a... do you think that is it seen as an urban management tool here?

L6

- I would say it's seen as too small to be considered management, the projects are too small in value to be considered management.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- OK, good, good answer. And OK, I have two more questions about PB on itself. Do you believe that PB in Lodz tackles urban inequality?

L6

- I would say so. I would say so, because again, it can be better. But in principle, it helps also because of the division by neighborhoods and kind of being so democratic that everyone can submit the project. And you can even get support from the activity office, etc. And it doesn't cost anything to vote, and you can go around your neighbors and get it done. And yeah, and it kind of allows you to bring nice things

to your neighborhood that wouldn't really get nice things otherwise. However, obviously there are issues with how it's implemented. But this is the whole... this is not related to PB itself, but to how the public sector works in Lodz. But yeah, what can be done better? It is to motivate and kind of... What is the word? Empower people, especially from the more disadvantaged backgrounds or like the more disadvantaged areas. And actually, as we say in Polish, take the things into their hands and do stuff. But yeah, I think in general, in that sense is a very useful tool.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- OK, and moving beyond just inequalities, do you believe that PB in Lodz has the objective of focusing on territorial justice?

L6

- What do you mean?

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Like spatial, distributed social justice, focusing on how access to services or the higher quality of life, but in like a territorial sense.

L6

- Yes, for reasons I've mentioned before. However, the funds available don't allow to bring meaningful change in recent years. For example, with schools that were disadvantaged, they could get money to do some renovations, which public schools, which, you know, helps the quality of life. However... but nowadays, you know, the projects are usually too small to make a substantial difference because, of course, like this, the *Telznia*, the wooden thing, it's a great thing. It probably supports your health, but the impact compared to, like, if you had regular prophylactic checks, medical checkups for the local population, you know, this would have better impact than the *Telznia*.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- OK, makes sense. And one thing that is very important in PB in general is political will, because, of course, we know it's an urban democracy tool, in its sense. But at the same time, it's a very political one, because it's directly connected to the mayor's or directly connected to city management. So, what's your interpretation on the political will of the mayor with PB?

L6

- Lodz has no mayor right now, she is not doing anything, she's hardly appearing anywhere. It's mostly...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- She is in her third term?

L6

- Fourth term! And she's already old and she clearly doesn't want to do this anymore. She wanted to go to European Parliament, but her party leader didn't allow her. But I feel like she keeps saying how important public participation is for her, but that... and how she wants to empower residents to change their neighborhoods. But participatory budgeting, which is one of the most important tools, is totally neglected. Some changes are not happening fast enough, for example, to get rid of the paper votes, we had to wait like three or four years since it was raised that there are substantial misconducts, let's call it. And yeah, the amount it was back then in 2015, it was promised we'll get to a 100 million but hasn't happened. I think we should. And it's just the needs and the other issues dimensions are quite clear that it needs to be higher.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And in Polish law, like a mayor can be elected forever? - **Not anymore.** - Not anymore.

L6

- The previous government introduced the rule that's only for two terms, that doesn't count backwards. So now it's having her second term of when, you know, when counted. She won't be able to run later on unless they change it, which I hope they don't.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- And the term is five years?

L6

- Five years.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- OK. And you are an urban planner, right? So there's a few things I wanted to understand about the city if you have time, like 10 minutes. - **Yeah, yeah. 10 minutes, yeah.** - OK. What do you think are the most important changes that have happened here in Lodz in the last 10 years?

L6

- What sort of changes do you want me to say?

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Like the urban changes.

L6

- I think the regeneration program actually brought a lot of investment. It could have been better in terms of how it's executed, how it's consulted, but in general it attempted to bring some new life to the

spaces. I mean, we are on the street that was like, you know, recently finished. Last year was still all in mess. So, I think it's a change in attitude towards Lodz, because Lodz is the most different city of all in Poland. Any other city you go to, it looks different, it's different to Lodz. Lodz is the 19th century boom town. At the beginning of the 19th century there were 700 people. It was a small town. This [shows through the window of cafe] is where the old town market is. This is where the old Lodz was, 700 people. Within 100 years, it grew to more than half a million. Just the fastest growing city in Europe at that time. Without having this medieval core like Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław, Poznań, Gdańsk have. For that reason, it's... I mean, even people didn't like the city because they felt like, oh, it has no history or anything. But recently people realized that actually Lodz has history. It's just different, but we have our heritage that we can be proud of. So, I feel like this is one of the most important issues. I feel like these two things are certainly the most important.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay. And what's the role of the real estate market here? In sprawling or creating new development or...

L6

- So, when Zdanowska came to power, she brought this one architect who became the urban architect, the main architect. And he introduced the rule of development to the center, let's call it. So, he said "look, Lodz is depopulating, and we need to focus on the city center, because it's necessary for survival of the city". And the revitalization program is a direct consequence of it. And it wouldn't be the case without the kind of involvement of private investors and real estate developers. Actually, if you compare Lodz to other cities, Lodz probably has the most new housing built within the city center of all Polish cities, which is great. I mean, first of all, we have a lot of space to build within the city and it's good for city development. However, there is still some suburbanization that you cannot really... I mean, you can avoid it, but... Lodz in some places is too late to avoid that. I mean, we're not as bad as Poznań, as I showed you [in the smartphone]. But the suburbanization is still a problem. Also...

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Car-driven suburbanization, right?

L6

- Yes, yes. And the state of public transport in Lodz is absolutely horrible compared to other cities and how it was before. I would say public transport policy is the biggest failure of this administration. But yeah, real estate developers' kind of got... they followed the policy. They kind of didn't have to, but they did. I think it was mostly market forces. The land was just... the center was quite cheap. And obviously the regeneration, etc. kind of made it somewhat trendy. I can see... I was running from the city center. My constituency was in the city center. And I realized how many of my friends live in the city center, because I was asking them to hang my banners or something on their balconies, and I realized how many

of them live in the center. So, it's kind of successful in that sense. And even my friends who have kids, they move to the center as well, so it's a good idea... Some of them are moving to the suburbs as well, but many of them stay in the center.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- That's an interesting process, interesting dynamic.

L6

- And it's cheap to live in the center of Łódź, much cheaper than in any other city. So, there's also this trend of people moving... it's not substantial, but noticeable, people moving from Warsaw to Łódź, especially with the rise of remote work. You live in Łódź and you work in Warsaw, you go once or twice per week. And you can afford a lot more in Łódź, probably twice as much as you do in Warsaw. And you live in the center, not in the poor suburbs. So, it's also this very interesting case.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Nice, nice. One last question. About this idea of Łódź being a big city or a mid-sized city. Because I know in terms of population it's the fourth in Poland, but there's this idea about the role of the city in the network. So, because Łódź is big, but it's... how could I say this? Is in the influence of Warsaw, it's very close to Warsaw, so Warsaw is the most important city in the center of Poland. And then you have, of course, Poznań is in the west...

L6

- Poznań is an interesting case because, economically, it was for a long, long time... it has one of the highest GDP per capita in Poland. Probably by agglomeration, by the metro area, it's higher than Warsaw. But it's stagnating, it's massively stagnating. Even though it has very good potential and is quite rich, it's stagnating. On the other side, Wrocław is massively developing. Krakow is... and Gdańsk as well. Łódź is... I mean, for Łódź it is a success that we are where we are right now, that we kind of survived. Because Łódź was the highest unemployment in Poland. The textile industry, which was the backbone of the economic system, just got destroyed pretty much in 1990s. And this city was going through a massive economic crisis, incomparable to any other big city in Poland. But we managed to... we didn't catch up with other big cities yet, but we are not that far off in some respects. But you can see that in terms of job market we are worse than other big cities. I mean, just the number of my friends who are well-educated and work in Warsaw is very common, but the transport system and especially the high-speed railway to Warsaw may kind of make things a bit easier to live in Łódź and work in Warsaw.

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay. Well, if there is anything more you want to comment on, talk about?

L6

- Not at this moment [laughs].

Entrevistador (Rodrigo)

- Okay, nice. So, well, thank you so much. - **No problem.** - Thank you so much for your time, for being here, for talking to me. I thank you also in the University of São Paulo State University, of course, in the name of my institution. And reinforce that this is all scientific information. You are very aware of how that works, right? You're going to be anonymous in my work and everything. And if you need anything else, man, you can just talk to me.

L6

- Yeah, sure, sure. Thank you.

Fim da transcrição