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**IF NOT THE WAY OF VOTING ORGANIZATION,
THEN WHAT? IN SEARCH OF THE CONDITIONS
FOR THE TURNOUT IN THE PARTICIPATORY
BUDGET VOTING – THE CASE OF THE SIXTEEN
LARGEST POLISH CITIES**

**JEŚLI NIE SPOSÓB ORGANIZACJI, TO CO? W POSZUKIWANIU
UWARUNKOWAŃ FREKWENCJI BUDŻETU OBYWATELSKIEGO
– PRZYPADEK SZESNASTU NAJWIĘKSZYCH POLSKICH MIAST**

Streszczenie

Głównym celem artykułu jest systemowa analiza uwarunkowań frekwencji głosowań przeprowadzonych w ramach budżetów obywatelskich szesnastu największych polskich miast. Oparta na wykorzystaniu kilku komplementarnych metod badawczych (analiza porównawcza, analiza danych zastanych, analiza treści), sprowadza się do testowania sześciu wyszczególnionych czynników. Artykuł dowodzi, że sformułowana hipoteza, zgodnie z którą o poziomie frekwencji decyduje sposób organizacji głosowania (weryfikowany za pomocą tych sześciu czynników), nie może być potwierdzona. Okazuje się, że zaledwie jeden z nich determinuje ten poziom. To z kolei skłania ku stwierdzeniu, że przyczyn wysokiej lub też niskiej frekwencji należy upatrywać po stronie innych uwarunkowań. Prezentowane rozważania wypełniają lukę w badaniach poświęconych aktywności obywatelskiej mieszkańców traktowanej jako warunek *sine qua non* prowadzenia polityki miejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: budżet obywatelski, miasto, Polska, frekwencja, aktywność obywatelska

Introduction

The inclusion of residents in the process of voting on the issues from their immediate surroundings, treated as one of the pillars of contempo-

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rary urban policy¹, can take various forms. The participatory budget (PB) is one of them.

The largest Polish cities, that is those with at least 200,000 inhabitants (*cf.* *Miasta największe...*) according to the classification of the Central Statistical Office, can be regarded as a particularly interesting cognitive subject of research. It is in these local government units having the status of a city with district rights [Pol. *powiat*] that the participatory budget is organized annually.

The turnout in the participatory budget voting measured by the number of the residents selecting projects is certainly an element which differentiates the cases under discussion. The question concerning the reasons and motivations of participation (or lack of it) in the procedure of selecting citizen projects is important in the sense that it encourages the search for the catalogue of the factors which condition this participation.

For the purposes of the article, the following hypothesis (H.1) is formulated: the turnout in the voting in participatory budget is determined by the way it is organised. This way will be analysed using the following six factors: the number of the previous editions of PB voting (F.1), the form of PB voting (F.2), the number of days dedicated to PB voting (F.3), the types of projects submitted for PB voting (F.4), the directory of persons entitled to vote (F.5), and the general value of PB (F.6).

The analysis of the catalogue of the factors seems to be crucial as it allows one to determine if the actions undertaken by the local government units in the field of voting organization are reflected in the number of voters (if they increase the voter turnout). It shows therefore a kind of potential which, being the participation of local government administration bodies responsible for the implementation of the participatory budget, is associated with stimulating civic activity of the members of the local community and reversing the negative trend associated with lowering the level of trust in public institutions, including local government institutions (*cf.* Levitas 2018).

The justification for the hypothesis should be sought not so much in specific legal solutions (although they are certainly important), but in local government practice being a function of the implementation of generally applicable regulations. On the one hand, a cursory analysis of media reports presented, for example, via the official websites of Polish cities, suggests that the implementation of the idea of the participatory budget may take

¹ The postulate of the active participation of residents in the process of voting on the issues from their immediate surroundings is clearly formulated by the National Urban Policy (NUP). Participation is one of the ten main thematic threads (urban policy areas) characterized on the pages of the document (see: Krajowa Polityka Miejska).

place in various ways, taking into account both the expectations of residents and motivations of local government authorities: the council and the president. It can therefore be assumed that the organization of voting, understood through the prism of strictly technical solutions, is a function of the past experience of the residents and authorities of local government.

The method of verification of the above hypothesis, the catalogue of the applied research methods as well as the justification of the choice of the six factors are characterized in the next parts of the article.

Local democracy and participatory budget

The institutionalization of the participatory budget clearly distinguishes it from other often “ephemeral” participatory mechanisms (Joss: 293). It does not mean, obviously, that the voting dedicated to the projects proposed by the members of a local government community can be treated as a universal remedy for a relatively low level of civic activity in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (see: Rose-Ackerman 2007, Guasti 2016; Shaffer, Black 2018), including Poland (see: Łabędź 2015). Nevertheless, the local government practice of the past few years shows that it is the participatory budget that becomes the instrument which, to the greatest extent, reflects the scale of expectations and aspirations presented not only by the residents of the Polish cities, but also by local authorities. In this sense, it becomes an instrument of urban policy defined through the prism of the purposeful and pro-participatory activity of the local government administration aimed at meeting the collective needs of residents (see: Sintomer, Herzberg, Röcke, Allegretti 2012). The extensive literature on the subject, as well as the national and local level legislation, provides a number of definitions of urban policy. Apart from the basic distinction between pro-development (directed at local development) and electoral interpretation (reflecting the dynamics of the competition for power in a city), it seems justified to emphasize such a way of understanding urban policy which forces us to perceive the civic activity, including the participatory budget, as an important link of the processes of programming, implementing and evaluating the pro-growth and pro-social activities (see: Kłębowski, Crieckingen Van 2014; Martyniuk-Peczak, Rembarz 2016; Cook, Dayot 2017).

It is hard to disagree with the statement that voting is an essence of local democracy, regardless of the fact whether one speaks about the election of executive or legislative bodies or the selection of projects within the participatory budget (Tybuchowska-Hartlińska 2012: 126). This Schumpeterian and therefore procedural approach seems to be important in the sense that it emphasizes the importance of the act of voting not only for the legitimacy of

the political system (in the case of the local political system in question), but also for shaping the sense of subjectivity (and therefore agency) of voting citizens (1995: 336–337). A much more extensive and comprehensive approach to the analysis of representative democracy is presented by Robert Dahl, who, characterizing its essence, states explicitly “(...) all members are to be treated (...) as if they were equally qualified to participate in the decision-making process (...)” (2000: 38). In this sense, democracy is to implement the principle of political equality (see: Dahl 2006). As Paulina Sekuła aptly notes, Dahl’s approach “thus introduces a normative element to the concept of procedural democracy” (Sekuła 2009: 24). The participatory budget, due to its inclusive nature, implements this Dahl’s postulate.

The extensive literature on the subject, including the official studies (reports) published by specialized analytical institutions, provides a range of data concerning the manifestations of local democracy. The works which allow the comparison of the case of the Polish local democracy with the situation on the “old continent”, especially in Western European countries, seem to be particularly interesting. The analysis shows that the voter turnout level in elections in Poland (see: IDEA), including the local elections in Poland, is generally lower than the one recorded in the countries of the “old” European Union (see: Gendźwiłł, Górecki 2019; *cf.* Morlan 1984). On the other hand, the turnout in the voting in the participatory budget seems to be clearly higher in Poland than it is in other European countries (*cf.* Brzeziński 2016).

It is difficult to unequivocally point to the reason for this. Especially if one takes into account the objective differences between the political, economic and socio-cultural systems of European countries (see: Hope for Democracy...). The systems create a context for analysing citizens’ electoral activity which is difficult to classify and compare but, at the same time, very important (Wiszniewski, Babińska, Glinka 2017: 53–54). The specifics of local government elections and participatory budget can be treated as an implied explanation for this difference.

In the first case (local elections), one needs to emphasize only thirty years of Poland’s experience in shaping representative mechanisms and more than fifty years of experience in functioning under the Soviet system (Wojtasik 2013a: 55–59). This mosaic of experiences seems to explain the situation in which Poles do not perceive local elections as the mechanism of representative democracy having a direct impact on their functioning. These elections are “too distant” and insignificant for them. Moreover, they cannot be clearly classified in a similar way to the election of the President of the Republic of Poland².

² There is an exception, namely the election of commune [Pol. *gmina*] heads, mayors and city presidents held since 2002 in a direct mode.

In the second case (participatory budget) the attention is drawn to a kind of “tangibility” of the manifestations (results) of the participatory budget in the form of the numerous infrastructural investments (road, recreation, cultural, etc.) or public services which appear shortly after the voting (Leśniewska-Napierała 2017: 112–117). A direct, everyday “contact” with these facilities or services created as a result of residents’ decisions seems to strengthen the sense of their real impact on the matters of the immediate environment, especially when compared with the election of local government authorities (*cf.* Pytlik 2017: 121–122). This, in turn, seems to explain the relatively high level of voter turnout accompanying the selection of projects within participatory budgets and the low interest of Poles in the local government elections.

The participatory budget can therefore be perceived as a mechanism which illustrates some kind of priorities in the field of local public policies, regardless of which urban policy area is covered (health, transport, social security, culture, sport, recreation, education, etc.). This is due to, not only the possibility of the wide participation of residents but also, and perhaps above all, the possibility of “bottom-up” submitting (proposing) projects. Therefore, it shows the deficits in the field of the functioning of local government communities which require elimination and, consequently, some kind of intervention on the part of local government authorities (see: Michalska-Żyła, Brzeziński 2017).

The participatory budget in Poland

The participatory budget is a mechanism which has a lasting, cyclical effect on the functioning of local government communities. It gives the opportunity to involve residents in the selection of projects which implementation is likely to improve the quality of infrastructure or services, regardless of the fact in which specific area of urban policy they are embedded in (see: Cabannes 2015).

The essence of the participatory budget results from the fact that, due to the decision of local government bodies, a part of the budget of the local government unit is allocated to the implementation of the projects of social importance, regardless of which unit is referred to (Harkins, Egan 2012: 4). What is particularly important, the projects are put to the popular vote of the residents who choose the initiatives (e.g. in the field of organization of public space, construction of infrastructure, or provision of public services) which best meet their expectations and needs (*cf.* the fifth model of participatory budget according to Sintomer, Herzberg and Rocke, 2008: 168). The right to submit (propose) individ-

ual projects also belongs to residents. In this case, local government authorities perform the function of an inspirer and organizer, starting from the promotion of the idea of participatory budget, through the definition of legal principles for its implementation, acceptance and verification of project submissions, organization of voting on projects, and ending with the implementation of those projects that have received the support of residents from the criterion of the largest number of votes obtained (Rytel-Warzocha 2013: 67). The local government units may be differentiated using the following criterion. Namely, the fact whether the projects which are submitted, subject to voting, and, consequently, implemented cover the area of the entire local government unit (e.g. the whole city) and perform socially useful functions for all residents, or are limited to specific parts of the city in question (e.g. district, housing estates) and meet the collective needs of a certain group of residents (*cf.* Szaranowicz-Kusz 2014).

Considering the Polish experience in implementing the participatory budget, it should be stated that it does not even cover a decade (Sopot was a precursor of the participatory budget, having implemented it in 2011, while Poznań and Łódź implemented the idea in 2012). However, this does not change the fact that an increasing number of local government units decide to organize voting on the projects submitted by residents (see: Radek 2018). The cities in question are a special category of these units. The cities, in addition to having the largest demographic potential, also enjoy the status of a *powiat*.

The importance of the participatory budget is evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of the Polish cities with the status of a district city organize, in a cyclical formula, voting on the projects proposed by residents. Taking into account the officially announced data from 2018, it can be concluded that all the sixty-six urban cities implement this participatory mechanism³.

The resolution of the council, which defines the rules and procedures for conducting consultations with city residents, is a legal basis for the implementation of the idea of the participatory budget. Each time the president (mayor) who is responsible for the technical (organizational) dimension of the voting process is an executor of the applicable resolution (on the relations between the council and the president see: Glinka 2016; 2018a; 2018b). Although local government practice shows that the residents' preferences are reflected in the projects implemented and fi-

³ The above statement is confirmed by the author's analysis including the information on the participatory budget published on the official websites of cities with district rights.

nanced by the city, the vote itself is in fact optional. This is confirmed by the verdict of the Provincial Administrative Court in Gliwice, which states that: “(...) consultations are only consultative; they do not create law. Their results do not bind the commune [Pol. gmina] authorities in contrast to the institutions of the local referendum or elections. That is why the legitimization for participation in the local referendum and in the elections has been regulated differently. Consultations are only aimed at familiarizing with opinions (wishes, expectations) on a given topic (...) (Wyrok WSA w Gliwicach...)”.

The inclusive nature of participatory budget needs to be emphasized. Its participants can be all members of the local community, which was confirmed by the Provincial Administrative Court in Kielce. The verdict stated explicitly: “(...) the legislator, granting (...) to the municipal council the right to determine the rules and procedure for consultations with the inhabitants of the commune, by no means limited the number of entities entitled to participate in the consultation. The only statutory requirement is the fact of being a member of a given community, and thus being a resident of a given commune (...) (Wyrok WSA w Kielcach...)”.

The significant changes in the field of organization of voting were introduced by the amendment of the Act of 8 March 1990 on local government (Ustawa z dnia 8 marca 1990 r...). In accordance with the adopted solutions, the projects selected in the course of voting must be included in the budget resolution, and the council should not modify them “to a crucial degree”. What is more, cities with district rights are faced with the obligation to organize voting, and the total value of the participatory budget must be at a level not less than 0.5% of the expenses borne by these cities. The amendment to the Act thus raises the rank of this participatory mechanism (Ustawa z dnia 11 stycznia 2018 r..., Art. 1, par 1).

Due to the fact that the above changes come into force in 2019, they do not refer directly to the voting of 2018 which is the subject of this article. The introduced regulations may, however, be perceived in the category of a kind of the summary of social and environmental (expert) discussion which origins should be seen already in 2011, when Sopot, as the first city in Poland, implemented the idea of the participatory budget (see: Pytlik 2017; *cf.* Shields, Shields 1998).

Methods and data

In order to verify the formulated hypothesis, the author applies a multifactorial comparative analysis (comparative method) of the ways of organization of voting in the sixteen largest Polish cities.

As indicated by Barbara Sorychta-Wojczyk, the organization of the participatory budget is of fundamental importance for its success defined in terms of the participation of residents in voting. Especially if one assumes that in Polish conditions a voter turnout of 10% is considered high (2015: 426–427). Therefore, a key role is played by determining such elements (distinctive features) of participatory budgets which meet the two basic criteria. First of all, these are the elements that characterize the participatory budgets of the vast majority of the cities in question. Secondly, one needs to consider the elements which allow us to presume that they are the ones which determine the participation of residents in participatory budgets due to their rank. The various technical and practical amenities that are designed to encourage the participation in the selection of projects seem to be worth pointing out. According to this fact, the following issues are analysed: the number of the previous editions of PB voting (F.1), the form of PB voting (F.2), the number of days dedicated to PB voting (F.3), the types of projects submitted for PB voting (F.4), the directory of persons entitled to vote (F.5), and the general value of PB (F.6) The compilation and comparison of the sixteen cases has a chance to show which factors determine the turnout in the voting in the participatory budget.

As results from Table No. 1, each of the six factors analysed is accompanied by a strictly defined assumption which illustrates its impact on the voter turnout level.

Table No. 1. Factors determining the voter turnout within the participatory budget – conceptualization attempt

Factor	Assumption
F.1. Number of PB previous editions	With the increase in the number of PB editions, the level of voter turnout increases
F.2. Forms of PB voting	With the extension of the traditional catalogue of voting forms (voting via the Internet), the level of voter turnout increases
F.3. Number of days dedicated to PB voting	With the increase in the number of days dedicated to voting (extending the voting period), the level of voter turnout increases
F.4. Type of projects submitted for PB voting	With the extension of the catalogue of projects subject to voting, the level of voter turnout increases
F.5. Entitled to vote in PB	With the extension of the catalogue of the people entitled to vote, the level of voter turnout increases
F.6. General value of PB	With the increase of the overall value of PB increases, the level of voter turnout increases

Source: author's own compilation.

As illustrated in Table 1, in each of the cases in question (factors from F.1 to F.6) the relationship has a positive character, i.e. a change consisting in a broadly understood increase or extension translates into a higher level of voter turnout. This assumption requires a detailed justification.

In the first case (F.1, the number of PB editions), the key to justifying the assumed dependency seems to consist in the fact that with each subsequent voting edition the inhabitants get to know the PB idea and the benefits associated with it. The choice of projects ceases to be something new and not worth interest. The residents get used to its essence. In other words, the members of local communities experience the real (tangible) and, importantly, positive results of PB in the form of infrastructure and services located in their immediate environment. They are therefore convinced that participation in the voting brings measurable results and PB itself is not ephemeral.

In the case of the forms of PB voting (F.2), the possibility to choose projects via the Internet naturally increases the number of voters, especially when the two elements are considered. The first element consists in the growing number of Internet users in Poland (GUS, 2018), especially among young people, including minors (these people, as will be shown later in the article, may also participate in voting). The second element relates to an incomparably more convenient and faster (in comparison with traditional voting at the ballot box) procedure related to voting.

The analysis of the third factor (F.3, the number of days dedicated to PB voting) is justified in the sense that the extension of the voting period for projects excludes the situation in which a resident is obliged to cast a vote within a strictly defined, restrictively limited period (as in the case of local elections). Therefore, the extended voting seems to be more comfortable and available also for those who, for various reasons (e.g. professional ones), could not participate in the selection of projects if it lasted, e.g. just one day or several days.

Another factor (F.4.) seems to be important for at least one reason. Namely, due to the possibility of choosing two types of projects (urban-wide project *versus* partial project) residents can simultaneously decide on the initiatives of significant importance not only for the entire city and the entire urban community, but also, and perhaps above all, on such proposals that translate into the improved quality of their immediate surroundings. This, in turn, increases the attractiveness of the voting.

In accordance with the assumption accompanying the penultimate factor (F.5), the participation in the voting of all interested residents, including minors and persons not registered in a given city, clearly

broadens the potential catalogue of voting participants. This in turn determines a higher level of voter turnout.

The significance of the sixth factor in question (F.6) results from one fact. Namely, due to the increase in the total value of PB both the quality and the number of implemented projects increase (higher financial investments allow for the implementation of projects on a larger scale). By using the infrastructure and services offered, the residents perceive this change in a “tangible” way, which in turn determines their participation in the voting.

Obviously, there is no doubt that civic activity is a complex and multifaceted problem which goes beyond rigid (one-sided) classifications and diagnoses. The catalogue of the factors determining decisions about involvement can be analysed, for example, in the psychological context (individual decisions), the social, biosocial or even anthropological one (the level of political culture of voters). The author of this article recognizes and emphasizes the importance of these variants of searching for the answers to the question about the reasons for civic activity (*cf.* Nishishiba, Nelson, Shinn 2005).

However, narrowing the research down to the six strictly defined factors is an intentional procedure. It results from the system perspective adopted by the author, which, emphasizing only the selected manifestations (results) of the functioning of the local political system, allows to capture nodal dependencies between the turnout in the voting in the participatory budget and the way of organizing this procedure (see: Easton 1965; Stewart, Ayres 2001). The “detachment” from the broad, socio-cultural context, therefore, favours, in a sense, a model, universal view of these dependencies.

In addition to the aforementioned comparative method (Della Porta 2008: 199–202), the research procedure is based on the use of the comparative analysis of existing data and the content analysis of official documents and data. The key role is played by the data made available by municipal offices and state institutions, including Central Statistical Office and National Electoral Commission.

Analysis

Turnout in the participatory budget voting

Although the idea of the participatory budget is successfully implemented in all cities in question, the turnout, expressed both in absolute numbers and in percentages, is at a different level. The analysis of the

data presented in Table No. 2 presents that Łódź remains a leader. It happens regardless of the fact if one takes into account the number of voters (113 490), or voter turnout (21,3%). What is worth emphasizing, Łódź is the only city which exceeds the limit of 100,000 voting participants. The last position, however, reflects the situation prevailing in two different cities. In the case of absolute values (12,437 people), we refer to Radom, whereas in the case of voter turnout it is Kraków.

Table No. 2. Turnout in the participatory budget voting in the sixteen biggest Polish cities (2018)

City	The number of people entitled to vote in the local elections of 2018	Number of voters in PB	PB turnout (%)	Position of city according to PB turnout
Łódź	536 488	113 490	21,3	1.
Katowice	229 865	46 889	20,6	2.
Bydgoszcz	265 597	55 218	21,0	3.
Białystok	222 722	43 584	19,7	4.
Sosnowiec	162 828	25 529	15,7	5.
Gdynia	187 396	30 301	16,2	6.
Wrocław	482 037	68 670	14,3	7.
Gdańsk	349 385	48 760	14,0	8.
Częstochowa	178 727	<u>20 047</u>	11,2	9.
Poznań	399 290	45 151	11,4	10.
Lublin	263 628	25 318	9,7	11.
Toruń	151 252	<u>12 720</u>	8,4	12.
Radom	165 357	<u>12 473</u>	7,5	13.
Szczecin	299 810	21 591	<u>7,2</u>	14.
Warszawa	1 345 685	89 807	<u>7,0</u>	15.
Kraków	580 759	34 641	<u>6,0</u>	16.

Source: author's own compilation on the basis of sources acknowledged in the bibliography, i.e.: Największe miasta...; Wybory samorządowe...; Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Częstochowa, Gdańsk, Gdynia, Katowice, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań, Radom, Sosnowiec, Szczecin, Toruń, Warszawa, Wrocław. **Bold** refers to the best results and underline to the worst ones.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of the data on the voter turnout made available by the cities in question. In other words, in the vast majority of cases, cities do not estimate the voter turnout but only provide the number of voters. This is hardly surprising taking into account the two facts⁴. As shown in Table No. 2, the level of voter turnout is determined on the basis of the total number of people entitled to vote in the local government elections of 2018 (this is the same year in which the participatory budgets in question were carried out). The highest level of voter turnout is marked by the participatory budget in Łódź (21.3%), Bydgoszcz (21.0%) and Katowice (20.6%), while the lowest – in Kraków (6.0%), Warsaw (7.0%) and Szczecin (7.2%).

Organization of the participatory budget voting

According to the already-mentioned assumption, testing the hypothesis is based on the use of the six most important factors which relate to the organization of voting. These factors are summarized in Table No. 3.

The first one (F.1, number of editions) illustrates the previous experiences related to the implementation of the idea of the participatory budget. The comparison of the data allows one to formulate an opinion that in the half of the cities in question (8) the experience comes down to six editions of voting. This is the case not only in the cities where the level of voter turnout is high (e.g. Łódź), but also those in which the level is lower (e.g. Radom). By far the smallest number of editions (only 4) was carried out in Gdynia.

The second factor (F.2) refers to the three possible variants: in the first one voting takes place in a traditional way (T, cards thrown into ballot boxes), in the second – via the Internet (I, electronic form), while the third variant combines the both previously mentioned options. As can be seen from Table No. 2, the vast majority of cities (as many as 12)

⁴ First of all, all current residents of the cities in question can participate in voting. It often happens that people who are not registered in the cities (e.g. students) are their residents. As it is known, only registered residents are included in city registers. Secondly, as can be seen from Table 2, minors can also participate in voting. This additionally complicates the estimation of voter turnout. The cities in question do not keep the statistics showing the number of minors who are entitled to vote. It is hardly surprising, since the residents who are not registered in cities also are the voting participants, and thus they defy official classifications conducted by officials. Considering the above, it should be emphasized that the presented way of measuring voter turnout is certainly imperfect. However, it does not change the fact that it indicates the clear (observable) differences between the cities.

allow the option of choosing the form of voting – traditional (T) or Internet (I). One can speak in this case about such extreme voter turnout cases as Łódź and Kraków. Other cities (4) implement an electronic voting system.

Table No. 3. The organization of participatory budgeting (2018) in the sixteen biggest Polish cities

City according to PB turnout	F.1	F.2	F.3	F.4	F.5	F.6	
	Number of PB editions	Form of PB voting	Number of PB voting days	Type of PB projects	Entitled to vote in PB	PB value (PLN)	
						General	Per inhabitant
Łódź	6	T, I	16	P	NR, <18*	40,0	58,2
Katowice	5	I	13	U, P	R, <18	23,0	77,8
Bydgoszcz	6	T, I	31	U, P	NR, <18*	13,0	37,0
Białystok	6	T, I	14	U, P	NR, <18	10,0	33,6
Sosnowiec	5	I	10	P	NR, <18	8,0	39,4
Gdynia	4	I	15	P	NR, <18	6,0	24,4
Wrocław	6	T, I	18	U, P	NR, <18	25,0	39,1
Gdańsk	6	I	14	U, P	NR, <18	20,0	43,0
Częstochowa	5	T, I	22	U, P	NR, <18*	9,5	42,5
Poznań	6	T, I	21	U, P	NR, <18	20,0	37,2
Lublin	5	T, I	28	U, P	NR, <18	15,0	44,1
Toruń	6	T, I	10	U, P	NR, <18	7,0	34,6
Radom	6	T, I	30	U, P	NR, <18*	5,0	23,4
Szczecin	5	T, I	15	U, P	NR, <18	9,0	22,3
Warszawa	5	T, I	16	P	NR, <18	64,0	36,2
Kraków	5	T, I	15	U, P	NR, <18	12,5	16,2

Source: author's own compilation on the basis of sources acknowledged in the bibliography, i.e.: *Miasta największe...*; Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Częstochowa, Gdańsk, Gdynia, Katowice, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań, Radom, Sosnowiec, Szczecin, Toruń, Warszawa, Wrocław. The abbreviations used in the table should be read in accordance with the following explanation: T – traditional form, I – Internet form, U – urban-wide project, P – partial project, <18 – the possibility of voting by minors; NR – no obligatory registration, R – obligatory registration, * – age restriction (Łódź, Bydgoszcz, Częstochowa, Radom).

Another factor (F.3, number of voting days) enables one to determine those cities in which the period dedicated to the selection of projects is even one month and those in which it is shorter than two weeks (see: Table No. 2). The first group includes Bydgoszcz and Radom which are the cities with a high (15.8%) and low (5.8%) voter turnout. The second group also includes extreme cases, such as Katowice (being

second in terms of the level of voter turnout) and Toruń (in which the voter turnout is only 6.3%).

The type of projects is the fourth factor (F.4) that differentiates the cities in question. As in the case of the voting form, the three possible options draw attention. These are: the selection of city-wide projects, the selection of partial projects (e.g. city district, housing estate etc.) and the simultaneous selection of both urban and partial projects. It turns out that the authorities of only four cities in question (Łódź, Sosnowiec, Gdynia and Warsaw) have introduced the voting rule only for partial projects. As can be seen from Table No. 2, these are the cities characterized by both the highest (Łódź) and almost the lowest level of voter turnout (Warsaw). In the remaining twelve cases, voters express their opinions on the projects of the two kinds.

Taking into consideration the catalogue of persons entitled to vote (F.5, fifth factor), it can be stated that almost all cities (except Katowice) allow voting for submitted projects by persons who do not have adequate registration of residence (see: Table No. 3). What is symptomatic, in every analysed case, minors may participate in voting. However, the situation is not the same in all the analysed cities⁵.

The development potential and, consequently, the budget possibilities of the cities in question translate into the level of financing projects submitted to participatory budget (F.6, sixth factor). On the one hand, by far the largest amount (around 64 million PLN) is allocated to the implementation of the Warsaw participatory budget. The second place, with a value of approx. 40 million PLN, is occupied by Łódź. On the other hand, the residents of Radom (about 5 million PLN), Gdynia (about 6 million PLN), and Toruń (about 7 million PLN) decide about the division of the smallest amounts.

Another way of looking at the value of participatory budgets (value per one inhabitant) allows one to observe certain regularities. Namely, this value is definitely the highest in Łódź (56,2 PLN) and Katowice (77,8 PLN), so in the two cities which clearly enjoy the highest level of voter turnout. Although the value of the participatory budget of Bydgoszcz is not at such a high level (37,0 PLN) as it is the case of the two cities mentioned above, it should be emphasized that it is “in the middle of the rate”. On the other hand, Krakow and Szczecin, which are “anti-leaders” in voter turnout, vote on the projects with clearly the lowest value. In the case of Kraków, it is 16,2 PLN per one inhabitant, in

⁵ In twelve analysed cities no age limit has been defined – the choice of projects is then made by the minors entitled to vote. In three cities (Łódź, Bydgoszcz, and Radom), the age limit is 16 years old. What is more, in just one city (Czestochowa) voters must not be less than 13 years old.

Szczecin – not much more because it is only 22,3 PLN. The amount of funds dedicated to the Warsaw participatory budget (36,2 PLN) is definitely higher. Nevertheless, as many as nine cities in question have the higher value than the capital of Poland.

In search of other factors

An analysis of the way the participatory budget is organized is obviously not the only option to look for the factors which determine (or may determine) the turnout in voting in this mechanism. There is no doubt that due to the subject of the presented considerations (sixteen largest Polish cities), capturing all of the factors becomes impossible. This is also not the intention of the author of this article. However, the cities which have, respectively, the highest and lowest levels of voter turnout seem to be particularly interesting from a cognitive and explanatory point of view. For this reason, the reflection devoted to other factors can be considered justified. In this case, it concerns the factors indicating the importance of the financial component (F.7 and F.8) and the participation of residents in local elections (F.9).

Table No. 4 compares two other factors which could, to varying degrees and extent, condition the turnout in the voting in the participatory budget, and which are not related to the way it is organized. The first of them (F.7) is related to the overall wealth of the city. Taking this factor into account may be explained by using the theory of economic voting, according to which the satisfaction (or lack thereof) with the economic situation of citizens is an impulse to participate in elections (see: Wojtasik 2013b; Tybuchowska-Hartlińska 2013). Another (F.8) factor relates to the financial support which cities provide to NGOs. The conviction about its importance results from the assumption that the support for non-governmental organizations may affect their potential related to shaping pro-civic attitudes among members of local communities (see: Gliński 2007).

Table No. 4. Sixteen largest Polish cities according to wealth and support provided to non-governmental organizations (2018)

The wealth of the city per capita (in PLN)		Support for non-governmental organizations (% of city expenditures)	
1		2	
Warszawa (15)	7 747,11	Poznań	2,6
Wrocław	5 805,25	Wrocław	2,6
Gdańsk	5 617,72	Lublin	2,5
Kraków (16)	5 605,84	Kraków (16)	1,9

1		2	
Poznań	5 592,46	Białystok	1,9
Katowice (2)	5 411,84	Gdańsk	1,8
Gdynia	5 142,21	Katowice (2)	1,7
Białystok	4 768,84	Toruń	1,7
Łódź (1)	4 661,47	<u>Szczecin (14)</u>	1,6
<u>Szczecin (14)</u>	4 572,63	Bydgoszcz (3)	1,5
Lublin	4 567,07	Łódź (1)	1,4
Bydgoszcz (3)	4 498,59	Gdynia	1,4
Toruń	4 423,26	Sosnowiec	1,1
Częstochowa	4 341,21	<u>Warszawa (15)</u>	1,0
Radom	4 161,15	Częstochowa	0,8
Sosnowiec	3 737,51	Radom	0,7

Source: the author's own compilation on the basis of sources acknowledged in the bibliography, i.e.: Gumkowska 2018; Wspólnota. **Bold** refers to the highest level of voter turnout, while underline to the lowest level. The numbers in brackets (1, 2, 3, 14, 15, 16) reflect the extreme (three highest and three lowest) voter turnout values within the participatory budget.

As it results from Table 4, the level of the city's wealth per capita (F.7) in no way corresponds to the level of turnout in voting on the projects submitted within the participatory budget. For example, Warsaw, which occupies the penultimate, fifteenth position in terms of voter turnout, is at the same time by far the richest local government unit among all the cities in question (PLN 7 747.11). On the other hand, Łódź, which is an undeniable leader in voter turnout, occupies a distant, ninth position in the wealth ranking of the largest Polish cities (PLN 4,661.47).

Similar conclusions are provided by the analysis of the data relating to the financial support provided to non-governmental organizations (F.8). It turns out that Krakow, which ranks last in terms of voter turnout (the sixteenth position), is a city that supports the activities of these organizations to a relatively large extent (1.9% of the city's annual expenditure placing the capital of Małopolskie voivodeship in the fourth place). On the other hand, Łódź, which has already been mentioned, supports the activity of non-governmental organizations to a much lesser extent (this is demonstrated by the 1.4% indication giving only the eleventh position).

Similarly, as evidenced by the data presented in Table No. 4, the list of indications related to voter turnout within the participatory budget and the turnout in local elections (F.9) does not allow to observe positive regularities (see: Table No. 5).

Table No. 5. Turnout in the participatory budget voting (2018) and in municipal elections (2018) – comparative analysis

City according to PB turnout	PB turnout (%)	City according to local election turnout	Local election turnout (%)
Łódź	21,3	Warszawa	66,59
Katowice	20,6	Gdańsk	60,67
Bydgoszcz	21,0	Gdynia	59,84
Białystok	19,7	Kraków	58,43
Sosnowiec	15,7	Łódź	57,45
Gdynia	16,2	Poznań	57,19
Wrocław	14,3	Częstochowa	55,86
Gdańsk	14,0	Lublin	54,74
Częstochowa	11,2	Wrocław	53,94
Poznań	11,4	Toruń	53,79
Lublin	9,7	Białystok	53,47
Toruń	8,4	Bydgoszcz	53,03
Radom	7,5	Radom	52,84
Szczecin	<u>7,2</u>	Szczecin	<u>52,01</u>
Warszawa	<u>7,0</u>	Sosnowiec	<u>51,51</u>
Kraków	<u>6,0</u>	Katowice	<u>51,44</u>

Source: Source: author's own compilation on the basis of sources acknowledged in the bibliography, i.e.: Największe miasta...; Wybory samorządowe ...; Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Częstochowa, Gdańsk, Gdynia, Katowice, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań, Radom, Sosnowiec, Szczecin, Toruń, Warszawa, Wrocław. **Bold** refers to the best results and underline to the worst ones.

For example, Łódź, which is a leader in the voter turnout within the participatory budget (21.3%), is only fifth in the ranking showing the turnout in local elections (57.45%). What is symptomatic, Katowice, which occupies the second place in the ranking (PB turnout is 20.6%), is the city with the lowest turnout in local elections (only 51.44% which translates into the sixteenth place). A slightly better result was recorded in Bydgoszcz. With a turnout of 21.0% in voting within the participatory budget, the turnout in local elections is 53.03%, which puts Bydgoszcz in thirteenth position.

On the other hand, Krakow, which occupies the last place in the list of the cities implementing the idea of participatory budget (voter turnout at 6.0%), enjoys an incomparably higher position in terms of voter turnout (fourth place at turnout at 58.43%). What is more, the penultimate Warsaw (PB turnout at 7.0%) is an absolute leader in the turnout in local elections (up to 66.59%). Only one case (Sosnowiec) reveals an analogy between the two analysed turnout indicators (the participatory budget and local elections).

Summary and discussion

The comparison of the cases in question leads to the statement that the participatory budget, despite a number of occasional and environmental differences, becomes a permanent component of the practice of the functioning of the largest Polish cities. This is evidenced by the abrupt increase in the number of citizens' voting from eight in 2013 to sixteen in 2018. It can be assumed that the already mentioned amendment of the Act of 8 March 1990 on municipal local government only "preserves" or strengthens the previously observed tradition of organizing voting on projects initiated by local social actors, both individual and group ones.

The comparison of the analysed data prompts at least a few remarks that allow the verification of the hypothesis (H.1).

Taking into account the analysed factors, which refer to the method of organization of voting, it can be stated that only one of them differentiates the cases in question. It is the participatory budget value per capita (F.6). As can be seen from Table 3, the cities that allocate the most funds to the implementation of participatory budget projects have the highest voter turnout. This is confirmed by the cases of Łódź and Katowice, and to a moderate extent – Bydgoszcz. On the other hand, one can state that the relatively lowest level of financing of participatory budget projects (per capita) is associated with the lowest voter turnout. This is evidenced by the data reflecting the situation in Krakow and Szczecin and, to a lesser extent, in Warsaw.

The only partial confirmation of the formulated hypothesis provokes the search for other factors determining the turnout in the participatory budgets voting. It turns out that the wealth of the city (F.7), just like the amount of funds allocated by the cities to the activities of non-governmental organizations (F.8), does not differentiate the cases in question. It is also difficult to grasp the relationship between the turnout in local elections (F.9) and the turnout in the participatory budget voting. The data presented in Table No. 5 do not allow one to observe any positive relationship. In other words, the cities with the highest turnout in the participatory budget voting are not the cities with the highest turnout in local elections. This is confirmed, on the one hand, by the cases of Łódź and Kraków, and on the other hand, by Warsaw and Katowice. Therefore, it is impossible to state that the reasons for high or low voter turnout regarding the projects of participatory budgets are a part of the wider, high or low context of citizens' civic involvement, which is also manifested in participation in local elections.

As it was emphasized in the earlier parts of the article, due to its clearly systemic, and thus synthesizing character, the presented research procedure does not allow one to discuss all the meanders of civic engagement that, undoubtedly, affect the residents' decisions. Therefore, it seems reasonable to state that this problem, due to its importance for the development of local democracies, requires further, in-depth research.

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