

## PARTICIPATORY BUDGET IN POLAND AS A SMART CITY 3.0 TOOL IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND SAFETY OF RESIDENTS

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### Introduction

Rapidly progressing urbanisation is, among other things, the reason why the world's urban population has exceeded 3 billion and is constantly growing. At the beginning of the 19th century, less than 30 million people (2.5% of the world's total population) were living in cities globally, but over the next 100 years this number increased to 2 billion.<sup>1</sup> Around 1960, the number of city dwellers constituted nearly 25% of the Earth's entire population, in 1990 it was already 40%, and in 2006 more than 50% of the mankind were living in cities.<sup>2</sup> According to the World Health Organization, by 2050, the world's population will double, and 70% of the entire population will live in the cities [who, 2013]<sup>3</sup>. It was estimated that about 60 million people grow in these centres every year, and their share in global GDP is systematically increasing and currently amounts to about 80% [OECD, 2012]<sup>4</sup>. The direct cause of intensifying urbanisation processes was industrialisation, whose consequences in the form of rapid population growth were visible at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries first in the European countries, and then in North America and other continents of our globe. On the other hand, the consequences of urbanization most often include uncontrolled urban development, a decrease in the quality of life and in the safety of the residents, deterioration in the quality of the environment and rapid consumption of resources, or an increase in demand for utilities (water, gas, electricity) and transport services<sup>5</sup>. In order to tackle these challenges, cities are looking for the best solutions. These include the idea of a „smart city” (SC), which is based on the use of advanced technologies to improve the quality of life and safety of residents, as well as environmental protection.

Due to the multiplicity of definitions and the complexity of the problem, there are many SC concepts. One of them is the idea developed by Boyd Cohen, who pointed out three generations of SC: 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. SC 1.0 and 2.0 are based on the use of modern technologies. The first case, however, entails the most important role played by the representatives of IT and telecommunications companies, while in the second case, local authorities are the dominant entity. On the other hand, SC 3.0 is based on initiatives coming directly from the inhabitants. In Poland, the civic budget is used for this purpose above all.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Noga, *Smart City*, „Polska energetyka słoneczna” no. I-IV/2015, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Cities in transition. World Bank urban and local government strategy*, 2000, Washington, pp. 32-34, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/121041468739318219/pdf/Cities-in-transition-World-Bank-urban-and-local-government-strategy.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> WHO (2013), *World Health Statistics 2013*, [http://www.who.int/gho/publications/world\\_health\\_statistics/2013/en/](http://www.who.int/gho/publications/world_health_statistics/2013/en/)

<sup>4</sup> OECD (2012), *OECD Environmental Outlook to 2050: The Consequences of Inaction*, OECD Publishing, <http://www.oecd.org/environment/outlookto2050> (accessed: 15.07.2015).

<sup>5</sup> D. Stawasz, D. Sikora-Fernandez, 2013, *Sprawność zarządzania bezpieczeństwem publicznym w mieście zgodnie z koncepcją smart city*, „Przedsiębiorczość i Zarządzanie”, tom XIV, zeszyt 13, część 3, s. 337-339.

The aim of the article is to present issues related to the civic budget in Poland, which is not only a form of public consultations allowing the authorities to learn about the needs and problems of residents, but is above all a tool whose use translates into improving the quality of life and safety of residents. While writing the article, we have used the following research methods: review and analysis of literature, legal acts and data, as well as synthesis and comparative method.

### Smart Cities

The term 'Smart City' has been used for the first time relatively recently, since it was not until 1992 in the book titled *The Technopolis Phenomenon- Smart Cities, Fast Systems, Global Networks*.<sup>6</sup> However, the complexity of the problem, or the lack of uniform criteria that would allow for considering a given city as SC, are the reasons why there exist so many SC definitions. Initially, when defining the concept of 'smart city', the degree of use of technology in the functioning of cities was taken into account. Currently, this element is still important, however, the general concept has evolved towards a smart city as a model of a city based on human capital as well and friendly to its inhabitants, as well as helping to solve the most important social problems. In the literature, the term smart city is often used interchangeably with such terms as: 'smart city', 'sustainable city', 'green city', 'innovative city', 'knowledge city', 'digital city', 'high-tech' or 'wired city'. This is due to the fact that the assumptions regarding all of the above terms are largely similar, but it is the term 'smart city' that is most commonly used.<sup>7</sup>

According to Barrionuevo, being a SC entails 'using all available technology and resources in an intelligent and coordinated manner to develop urban centres that are at once integrated, habitable and sustainable'.<sup>8</sup> A different approach towards SC is taken by Hall, for whom smart city is a city that 'monitors and integrates conditions of all of its critical infrastructures, including roads, bridges, tunnels, rails, subways, airports, seaports, communications, water, power, even major buildings, can better optimize its resources, plan its preventive maintenance activities, and monitor security aspects while maximizing services to its citizens'.<sup>9</sup> In turn, according to Lazaroiu and Roscia SC, 'a community of average technology size, interconnected and sustainable, comfortable, attractive and secure'.<sup>10</sup> Another attempt to define the term in question was taken by Komninos, who identified smart city as an area with high learning and innovation abilities, creative, R&D

<sup>6</sup> D.V. Gibson, G. Kozmetsky, R.W. Smilor, *The Technopolis Phenomenon: Smart Cities, Fast Systems, Global Networks*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc. Maryland, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> T. Bakici, E. Almirall, J. Wareham, *A Smart City Initiative: The Case of Barcelona*, „Journal of the Knowledge Economy” 2012, 2:1, pp. 5–7; S. Dirks, M. Keeling, J. Dencik, *How smart is your city*, IBM Institute for Business Value, New York 2009, pp. 4–10.; A. Murray, M. Minevich, A. Abdoullaev, *Being smart about smart cities*, „Searcher” 2011, vol. 19, vol. 8, special section, p. 20; T. Nam, T.A. Pardo, *Conceptualizing Smart City With Dimensions of Technology*, „People, and Institution, Proceedings of 12th Annual International Digital Government Research Conference: Digital Government Innovation in Challenging Times”, ACM New York, 2011, p. 8; S. Zygiaris, *Smart City Reference Model: Assisting Planners to Conceptualize the Building of Smart City Innovation Ecosystems*, „Journal of the Knowledge Economy” 2013, 4:2, pp. 217–231.

<sup>8</sup> JM Barrionuevo, P. Berrone, JE Ricart, *Smart Cities, Sustainable Progress*, „IESE Insight”, Vol. 14, 2012 pp. 50-57.

<sup>9</sup> R. E. Hall, *The vision of a smart city. In Proceedings of the 2nd International Life Extension Technology Workshop*, Paris 2000.

<sup>10</sup> G.C. Lazaroiu, M. Roscia, *Definition methodology for the smart cities model*, "Energy", Vol. 47/2012, No. 1, pp. 326-332.

institutions, higher education, digital infrastructure and communication technologies, as well as high-level management efficiency.<sup>11</sup> The problems with defining the term also result from different perceptions of the essence of smart city in different territorial areas. In the European Union and its strategy papers, with regard to smart cities, the emphasis is mainly on clean energy, saving energy consumption and reducing CO2 emissions to the atmosphere. In the United States, on the other hand, cities are defined as „smart” when they have human and social capital, traditional and modern communication infrastructure, their development is consistent with the concept of sustainable development, and a participatory system of governance ensures better quality of life. In Australia, the smart city concept focuses on creative industries and digital media.<sup>12</sup>

In the literature, one can read that the term 'smart city' is abused and identified mainly with modern technologies. In addition, more and more cities describe themselves as 'smart' even when they have just started using intelligent solutions or technologies, doing so for marketing and promotional purposes.<sup>13</sup> In order to make the analysis of whether an urban area fits into the concept of a 'smart city' easier and more efficient, models and indicators are being developed so that an urban centre can be considered a smart city. One of them is the 'The smart city model' developed in 2013. Its essence is to evaluate a given city in six categories: smart governance, smart environment, smart mobility, smart people, smart living.<sup>14</sup>

The author of the theory of three generations of smart cities is Boyd Cohen, who has been dealing with issues related to smart cities since 2011. Cohen based his conclusions on research in both large and small cities around the world. Its concept is based on three entities: technology companies, city authorities and citizens. In his opinion, there are three stages in the development of smart cities.

Smart Cities 1.0 was the first stage in the development of smart cities. This stage was named by the author of the concept 'Technology driven'. The main entity in this case were the leading companies in the IT and telecommunications services sector. The policy of ICT giants was to artificially create demand for the products they sold by convincing the authorities and even residents that the use of a given technology or solution would be sufficient for the city to get the label of SC. It was characteristic that the purchases were made without reflection, i.e. without prior analysis as to whether the product was needed and in particular whether it would be applicable in that particular city.

In the case of Smart Cities 2.0 ('Technology Enabled, City-Led'), local authorities were the initiator of the changes, looking for appropriate solutions to improve the quality of life of residents and adapted to the needs and capabilities of a given city. The technologies and partners themselves are chosen in a much more thoughtful way. As an example of a city being at that stage, Boyd Cohen points to what the mayor of Rio de Janeiro did. He offered IBM to create a network of sensors that would be able to mitigate the role of landslides in favelas on the slopes of hills. This project has been implemented and beyond the original target (landslides) it is used for crime detection and prevention, because the system is

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<sup>11</sup> N. Komninos N., *Intelligent Cities: Innovation, Knowledge Systems and Digital Spaces*, Spon Press, London 2002, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> A. Murray A., M. Minevich, A. Abdoullaev, *Being Smart about Smart Cities*, „Searcher”, vol. 19/2011, iss. 8, Special section, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> Ł. Kowalski, *Inteligentne miasta – przegląd rozwiązań*. [w:] M. Soja, A. Zborowski (red.), *Miasto w badaniach geografów*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2015, s. 105, 108.

<sup>14</sup> *European Smart Cities*, <http://www.smart-cities.eu/model.html>

equipped not only with sensors, but also with video cameras that transmit the image to the emergency and security services.<sup>15</sup> It is this phase that is now considered to be dominant. It is characterized, among others, by the use of diverse technological programs and projects that are adapted to the needs of modern cities and solve many of their problems. The critics point out, however, that these smart cities still put more emphasis on the implementation of technology than on solving problems and meeting the needs of citizens.

The answer to the two previous models is Smart Cities 3.0, referred to by B. Cohen as 'Citizen co-creation'. The main difference here is that instead of an approach based on the technology of ICT companies (SC 1.0) or on the implementation of innovations that are the idea or decision of the authorities (SC 2.0), co-creation models by citizens are used. The SC model is based on the actions of all: companies, local authorities and citizens, but the last of the entities has the greatest impact on the tasks carried out in a given city. According to the assumption, the initiatives of residents, their ideas and opinions should translate into faster and tailored to the real needs of residents introducing innovations, and ultimately into their higher standard of living and increasing safety. There are various ways of involving citizens in the implementation of projects or in indicating ideas and problems.<sup>16</sup> The best example is Medellin, where the focus has been on bottom-up urban regeneration, involving residents of the city's most dangerous and neglected districts in transformation projects such as the construction of cable cars and electric stairs, or new schools using modern technologies and libraries.<sup>17</sup> Another example is Vancouver, where 30,000 citizens were involved in developing the Vancouver<sup>18</sup> GreenestCity 2020 Action Plan. Barcelona has carried out (BCN Open Challenge<sup>19</sup>) project, where the city published six challenges on the Citymart platform to obtain ideas for their solution from citizens. Another way of involving residents in the implementation of tasks, as well as gaining knowledge about the problems they face, is the participatory budget organized, among others, in Polish local government units.

### Participatory budgeting

The participatory budget is considered to be a tool of direct democracy. Its essence is to enable residents to decide by voting on the part of the budget of the local government unit allocated by the authorities. The tool, which is gaining more and more popularity in Europe and America, was first used in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre in 1989.<sup>20</sup> The procedure was started with an information campaign, the aim of which was to familiarize residents with the idea and principles of the participatory budget. Residents selected representatives of districts (delegates), who participated in training in budgeting and city management, also participated in the work of delegates and in talks with residents, and then presented the

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<sup>15</sup> B. Cohen, *The 3 generations of Smart Cities. Inside the development of the technology driven city*, 08.10.2015, <https://www.fastcompany.com/3047795/the-3-generations-of-smart-cities>.

<sup>16</sup> B. Cohen, *The 3 generations of Smart Cities. Inside the development of the technology driven city*, 08.10.2015, <https://www.fastcompany.com/3047795/the-3-generations-of-smart-cities>

<sup>17</sup> D. Amar Flórez, 2016, *International Case Studies of Smart Cities: Medellin, Colombia*, Discussion Paper No. IDB-DP-443, Institutions for Development Sector Fiscal and Municipal Management Division, Inter-American Development Bank. Available from: <https://publications.iadb.org/en/international-case-studies-smart-cities-medellin-colombia> [accessed 19.09.2022], pp. 5-6, 21-22.

<sup>18</sup> <https://vancouver.ca/greenest-vancouver/greenest-city-action-plan.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> <https://bcnopenchallenge.org/>;  
<https://bcnopenchallenge.wordpress.com/>

<sup>20</sup> B. Michalak, A. Sokala, P. Uziębło, *Leksykon prawa wyborczego i referendalnego oraz systemów politycznych*, Warszawa 2013, p. 25

demands and needs of citizens. The next step was to analyse the postulates and needs of the residents, compare them with the available resources and create a ranking list of tasks that will be implemented. This was handled by the so-called participatory budget council, which was elected by the forum of delegates. The final stage was meetings with the residents to discuss the shape of the budget and the tasks accepted for financing.<sup>21</sup> Over the years, the principles of the annually organised budget have been mediated, but the experience of more than 20 years of its application allows us to conclude that it has been a success. One of the most visible positive effects of the participatory budget is the increase in the number of inhabitants participating in the meetings from 976 in 1989 to over 50 000 in 2018. It is also highlighted that the meetings and voting sessions were attended by people with the lowest income, who usually do not participate in public life.<sup>22</sup> In addition, within ten years of the initiation of this mechanism, the city's revenues doubled; the share of taxes increased from 5.5% to 18% (gradually the number of tax evaders was decreasing); and own revenues constituted 60% of budget revenues (in the case of most local government units approx. 2/3 of the revenues were revenues from the central budget).<sup>23</sup>

In the first decade of the 21st century, this form was implemented by numerous European towns, including many Polish local government units.<sup>24</sup> Over the years, the model of the civic budget developed in Porto Alegre and imitated by numerous local government units has been modified. The instrument, the essence of which was to develop priorities that form the basis for the preparation of the budget of an individual and based on information meetings with residents and the process of deliberation, has become a mechanism enabling residents to indicate tasks (usually by voting), which will be implemented within a certain amount of funds (usually very scarce) allocated from the budget prepared by the authorities.<sup>25</sup>

Until 30 January 2018, there were no statutory provisions defining and defining the principles of the functioning of the civic budget in the Polish legal system. However, this does not mean that it was not used in Poland until then. It was first carried out in Sopot in 2011. Other cities in which this form of direct democracy was used over the next two years were: Bydgoszcz, Chorzów, Elbląg, Płock, Poznań, Tarnów, Toruń, Wałbrzych, Włocławek, Wrocław and Zielona Góra.<sup>26</sup> Due to the lack of statutory regulations, the councils of local government units decided whether it would be carried out in a given commune and on what principles. Most often, these regulations were adopted by a resolution of the council, in some municipalities there were provisions in the statute.

This situation posed many problems. Hence, the postulate of including the institution of the civic budget in the legal framework was put forward. This concerned in particular an

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<sup>21</sup> M. Serageldin et al., *Assessment of Participatory Budgeting in Brazil*, Harvard 2005, pp. 21-22, [https://www.mef.gov.br/contenidos/pol\\_econ/documentos/Presupuesto\\_Participativo\\_Brasil\\_Efectos.pdf](https://www.mef.gov.br/contenidos/pol_econ/documentos/Presupuesto_Participativo_Brasil_Efectos.pdf); B. de Sousa Santos, *Participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre: Toward a redistributive democracy*, „Politics & Society”, No. 4/1998, pp. 473-482

<sup>22</sup> C. Souza, *Participatory budgeting in Brazilian cities: limits and possibilities in building democratic institutions*, „Environment & Urbanization”, Volume 13, No. 1/04/2001, p. 165

<sup>23</sup> M. Burchard-Dziubińska, *Budżet obywatelski jako partycypacyjna forma współzrządzenia*, „Studia i Prace Wydziału Nauk Ekonomicznych i Zarządzania”, vol. 2, iss. 37/2014, pp. 200-201

<sup>24</sup> B. Michalak..., op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> E. Ganuza, G. Baiocchi, *The Power of Ambiguity: How Participatory Budgeting Travels the Globe*, „Journal of Public Deliberation”, vol. 8, No. 2/2012, pp. 4-6, <http://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol8/iss2/art8/>

<sup>26</sup> A. Żabka, H. Łapińska, *Budżet partycypacyjny, a rozwój lokalny*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Finansów i Prawa”, No. 4/2014, p. 67.

important financial aspect, especially issues such as the scope of the civic budget, i.e. the lower and upper limit of funds, and in large cities the distribution of funds between the city as a whole and its districts. The status of the budget was also important, i.e. whether the budget should be obligatory or optional, and in the case of optionality – determining the degree of binding of the local government units with it. Formally, the local government authorities were not obliged to implement the projects selected in the vote by the residents. So far, the institution has relied on the citizens' trust in the authorities as far as implementing the projects elected by the residents is concerned.

The statutory authorisation of this institution took place in Poland at the time of entry into force of the Act of 31 January 2018 amending certain acts. On its basis, very general regulations were introduced into the act on municipal self-government.<sup>27</sup> As part of the participatory budget, residents decide annually about part of the municipality's budget expenditure in a direct vote. Tasks selected by them for implementation must be included in the budget resolution of the municipality, and the council may not remove them or change them to a significant extent. According to the Act, the participatory budget is a special form of public consultation.<sup>28</sup> It can be carried out in all local government units, i.e. in the commune, district, voivodeship. However, it is worth emphasizing that the creation of participatory budget is mandatory only in municipalities that are cities with poviata rights, and the funds available to residents must be at least 0.5% of the municipality's expenditure included in the last submitted report on the implementation of the budget.<sup>29</sup> From 2022, the funds allocated to the implementation of tasks under the civic budget may be divided into pools covering the whole of the municipality and its parts or quota categories of projects covering the whole or part of the area of the municipality.

In addition, the Act requires the council to determine the following:

- the formal requirements to be met by the projects submitted,
- the required number of signatures of residents who support the project, however, it may not be greater than 0.1% of the residents of the area covered by the participation budget pool in which the project is submitted;
- the principles governing the evaluation of notified drafts in terms of their legality, technical feasibility, compliance with formal requirements and, in the event of an appeal, if the draft is not put to the vote;
- the arrangements for voting, establishing results and making them public.<sup>30</sup>

The above requirements, which should be met by the draft civic budget, are determined by the municipal council by way of a resolution. In fact, these are very general requirements, which results in the lack of a uniform model of the participatory budget in Poland. The disadvantage of such a solution is a departure from the implementation of the participatory budget due to difficult to meet requirements. However, a measurable benefit is

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<sup>27</sup> Act of 31 January 2018 amending certain acts, Journal of Laws: Dz.U. of 2018, item 130.

<sup>28</sup> The recognition of the civic budget as a special form of social consortia is problematic. The essence of the consultation is its non-mandatory nature, i.e. the authorities, after consulting the inhabitants, the GOGA, but they do not have to take into account their outcome. However, in the case of a participatory budget, the authorities must perform the tasks selected during the vote.

<sup>29</sup> Act of 28 April 2022 amending the Act on municipal self-government of 27 May 2022, Journal of Laws: Dz.U. 2022.1005

<sup>30</sup> Art. 5 of the Act of 8 March 1990 on municipal self-government (consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2022, item 559



the possibility of adapting it to the needs and capabilities of both municipalities and residents.

Despite the lack of a single participatory budget model, there are several stages that are common to most initiatives:

1. allocation by LGUs of the amount allocated to the participatory budget and preparation of the regulations,
2. submitting projects by the residents;
3. verification of projects carried out by LGUs in terms of financial, legal and policy compliance of LGUs;
4. open to all residents or other entities, voting for projects that have passed formal verification,
5. selection of projects that will be implemented from the LGU budget; the projects that received the largest number of votes of the inhabitants and fell within the pool of funds allocated to the participation budget in a given year are selected,
6. implementation of selected projects by the local government.

Going through the above stages takes time, which is why the main part of the civic budget, from the moment of opening the possibility of submitting ideas to the moment of selecting those that will be implemented, usually lasts a few months (depending on the number of inhabitants and ideas submitted by them). This means that the selection of projects takes place in one year and their implementation in the next (or later), so the entire participation budget cycle usually lasts two years or longer.

The analyses conducted by a group of researchers (B. Matela, L. Janik and G. Bubak) provide an insight in the use and shape of participatory budgets. The majority (72%) of the cities implement a participatory budget, based on multi-annual resolutions taken by municipal councils. This may indicate that local governments are thinking about this form of dialogue in a perspective that goes beyond one year. They noticed, for example, that following the COVID-19 pandemic, when a number of cities abandoned the implementation of participatory budgets, those participatory budgets are slowly coming back. While in 2020 31% of Polish cities over 5,000 decided to organize this particular form of public consultation, last year they were organized by approx. 42% of Polish cities with more than 5 thousand inhabitants, allocating a total of over PLN 627.5 million. Warsaw had the largest civic budget in 2021, which left the residents to decide how to allocate over PLN 93.5 million. The next in line were: Kraków (PLN 35 million); Łódź (PLN 26 million); Wrocław (PLN 25 million); Poznań (PLN 22 million); Gdańsk (PLN 20.8 million); Szczecin (PLN 16.7 million); Katowice (PLN 15.6 million); Bydgoszcz (PLN 15.4 million); Lublin (PLN 12.5 million); Białystok (PLN 12 million). Rzeszów, with a civic budget of PLN 8.2 million, ranked 14th.<sup>31</sup> The average cost of the winning project was PLN 155 thousand. However, the value of ideas increased with the size of the city and in the smallest centers it was more than three times smaller than in the largest ones. The most expensive project won in Warsaw. For PLN 4.8 million, the city will modernize the roads and repair the pavements on the streets indicated in the application.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The amounts quoted may be impressive. However, if we relate them to the entire budget, it turns out that they usually constitute approx. 1% .

<sup>32</sup> <https://partycypacjaobywatelska.pl/strefa-wiedzy/biblioteka/publikacje/barometr-budzetu-obywatelskiego-edycja-2021/>

Differences are also noticeable in relation to the categories of tasks reported and selected by the residents.<sup>33</sup> In the case of votes in small municipalities, the dominant tasks are those related to the current needs of residents (social), i.e. the construction of a playground will give children, the construction of a sandpit, or road repairs. The categories of tasks change with the change in the size of the local government unit. The larger the unit, the more tasks in the field of health protection, life and physical fitness. The principle of unit size also applies to the construction of the rules of procedure of citizens' budgets. The larger, the more detailed the provisions in the regulations. The regulations that are worth mentioning are the Regulations of the civic budget of the Małopolskie Voivodeship. The document regulates in detail the procedure and rules for submitting tasks and voting. What is important is that its final version was created after the annual analysis carried out in terms of erroneous or inaccurate records, and the pilot edition of the participatory budget in Małopolska took place in 2016.

### Summary

In the opinion of some researchers, the participatory budget is a form of co-management by residents of local finances. One can agree with such an opinion, as long as the budget takes the form of the Porto Alegre one, i.e. if the residents co-decide on the entire budget. In the majority of modern countries, however, the Porto Alegre model has undergone significant modifications. This happened, for example, in Poland. Residents decide by vote to allocate a small part of the budget for the implementation of their selected tasks. Normally, however, these funds do not exceed 1% of the total budget, so in this case it is difficult to talk about co-management of local finances. Attention is also drawn to the fact that the lack of detailed statutory regulations causes not only a large variation in the rules for conducting the participatory budget, but also generates numerous problems and errors. One of the most common disadvantages is subjecting tasks that do not fall within the competence of the local government or are not tasks concerning the entire local community to a vote. Another serious problem is the failure to carry out the tasks chosen by the inhabitants for a long period of time. Although the legislator imposed an obligation on the authorities to perform the tasks chosen by voting, it did not specify when this should be done. Therefore, it happens that the task chosen by the inhabitants a few or a dozen years ago has not been completed yet. These are, of course, not all the disadvantages of a participatory budget. At this point, however, it is more important than pointing them all out, to wonder whether it is worth and should be referred to as such a form of direct democracy? It is definitely worth it. First of all, it is a cheaper and better instrument than classic public consultations. Even if it is not possible to eliminate all its disadvantages, the benefits of carrying it out are definitely greater. Studies show that it contributes to the sense of co-decision on local finances and the influence on the decisions of the authorities. According to the residents, this is also proof that the authorities are counting on their opinion and the choices made during the vote. The involvement of residents in local affairs and the sense of identity and belonging to a given local government unit are also increasing. However, it is worth pointing out another benefit resulting from the implementation of the civic budget. The implementation of tasks also improves the quality of life or even the safety of residents. In addition, it allows dialogue between the residents and the authorities. By indicating tasks, the authorities clearly see the needs and problems of the local community. This is a good start for cooperation between the authorities and residents, and at the same

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<sup>33</sup> The categories of reported tasks: social, cultural, educational, sports, tourism, ecological. It also concerns the protection of health, life and physical culture.



time it is a response to the criticisms of SC 1 and 2, which focused on new technologies, excluding residents. However, it should be made clear that this is not a sufficient tool. It is worth referring to it, but we should also look for other solutions and opportunities for dialogue with the residents.

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