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**Between Legitimization and Deliberation.  
Participatory Budget in Dąbrowa Górnicza**

**Keywords:** direct democracy; participatory budget; participation; deliberation; legitimacy

**Słowa kluczowe:** demokracja bezpośrednia, budżet partycypacyjny, partycypacja, deliberacja, legitymizacja

**Abstract**

Even though participatory budgets have rather short history in Poland criticism of its unwanted side effects have pushed some municipal authorities towards quick reforms of their initial visions. Most of them have decided just for small adjustments, but some have tried to be innovative and have reformed the whole mechanism. In this article, author attempts to take a closer look at consequences that accompany changes aimed at more quality of the whole procedure. The article aims to examine how more deliberation affects legitimization of participatory budgets. It is also an attempt to find out whether it brings expected outcomes within quality and profile of selected projects. Finally, we may learn here how people deal with more advance procedures. The analysis should serve anyone who is willing to search for new solutions among direct democracy tools in Poland.

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**Streszczenie****Pomiędzy Legitymizacją a deliberacją. Budżet partycypacyjny w Dąbrowie Górniczej**

Pomimo faktu, że budżety partycypacyjne mają w Polsce dosyć krótką historię krytyka ich niekorzystnych skutków ubocznych zmusiła niektóre władze gminne do kroku w kierunku szybkich reform pierwotnych wizji. Większość z nich zdecydowała się na niewielkie dostosowanie, lecz niektórzy starali się być bardziej innowacyjni i poszli w kierunku głębokich reform całości mechanizmu. W poniższym artykule autor podejmuje próbę bliższej analizy konsekwencji, które towarzyszą zmianą ukierunkowanym na zmiany jakościowe omawianej procedury. Celem jest zatem zbadanie jak zwiększenie deliberacji wpływa na problem legitymizacji w ramach budżetów partycypacyjnych. Jest to również próba wywnioskowania czy przynosi to założone rezultaty poprawy jakości i charakterystyki wyłonionych projektów. Materiał służy również sprawdzeniu poddaje się również jak mieszkańcy radzą sobie z bardziej skomplikowanymi regulacjami. Przedłożona analiza winna być pomocna każdemu, kto pragnie poszukiwać nowych rozwiązań w ramach demokracji bezpośredniej w Polsce.

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**I. Participatory Budgets in Modern Poland**

Participatory budget (further as PB) is “a decision-making process through which citizens deliberate and negotiate over the distribution of public resources”<sup>2</sup>. In Poland it has a rather short history. First mechanism, which is considered as similar to solutions developed in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989, has been established in Płock in 2005, but it lacked many elements to be considered as genuine PB, and has been strongly criticised for its neoliberal profile<sup>3</sup>. Due to that the mechanism introduced in Sopot in 2011 is considered

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<sup>2</sup> B. Wampler, *A Guide to Participatory Budgeting*, [In:] *Participatory Budgeting*, ed. A. Shah, Washington 2007, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Y. Sintomer, C. Herzberg, A. Röcke, *Participatory Budgeting in Europe: Potentials and Challenges*, “International Journal of Urban and Regional Research” 2008, No. 1, pp. 170–174.

to be the first one<sup>4</sup>. Since then we could watch a rapid dispersion of this direct democracy tool among largest municipalities and now it continuous to be implemented in smaller units and also on other levels of local government in Poland. It had a very promising start since citizens and authorities perceived PB as a way to directly include everyone in the decision-making process, during which we decide upon the future of our neighbourhood, whole city, town or village. Unlike in Brazil and other South American states, where it has been a remedy for disparities<sup>5</sup> in Poland it was supposed to enhance general quality of local democracy. Other benefits, that usually accompany the mechanism, were also expected. In the literature we find many suggestions regarding the impact PBs have on our societies. That includes: better management of municipal resources, transparency, integration of local community, enhanced identity with local neighbourhoods and education<sup>6</sup>, and according to Brian Wampler<sup>7</sup> it also expands accountability of the government.

After the first excitement everyday practice revealed side effects that always appear with implementation of social projects. Reaction from local activists, the media and general public came quickly and they demanded necessary adjustments. Marzanna Poniatowicz<sup>8</sup> presents a catalogue of problems noticed within PBs in Poland. According to her: a) it has rather marginal role com-

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<sup>4</sup> I. Solecka, Ł. Dworniczak, *Obywatele kształtują krajobraz miasta. Aspekty przestrzenne i funkcjonalne inicjatyw zgłaszanych w ramach wrocławskiego budżetu obywatelskiego 2013–2014*, “Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu” 2016, No. 443, p. 220.

<sup>5</sup> L. Avritzer, *Living under a Democracy: Participation and Its Impact on the Living Conditions of the Poor*, “Latin American Research Review” 2010, No. 45, pp. 166–185; A. Novy, B. Leubolt, *Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre: Social Innovation and the Dialectical Relationship of State and Civil Society*, “Urban Studies” 2015, No. 11, pp. 2023–2036.

<sup>6</sup> B. Sorychta-Wojaszczyk, *Uwarunkowania wykorzystania Budżetu Obywatelskiego w administracji publicznej w Polsce*, “Zeszyty naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej” 2015, No. 78, pp. 421–430; M. Poniatowicz, *Kontrowersje wokół idei budżetu partycypacyjnego jako instrumentu finansów lokalnych*, “Studia Ekonomiczne. Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach” 2014, No. 198, pp. 177–188; A. Michaels, L. De Graaf, *Examining citizen participation: local participatory policymaking and democracy revisited*, “Local Government Studies” 2017, No. 6, p. 878.

<sup>7</sup> B. Wampler, *Expanding Accountability Through Participatory Institutions: Mayors, Citizens and Budgeting in Three Brazilian Municipalities*, “Latin American Politics and Society” 2004, No. 2, p. 75.

<sup>8</sup> M. Poniatowicz, *op.cit.*, pp. 181–183.

paring to the general budget, b) there is a great dominance of municipal authorities, c) methods of verification of projects are questionable, d) sometimes results are not implemented and e) the procedure is not inclusive enough. In this situation one may ask about possible solutions. Is there anything else beyond small changes available and should we not build it again from the start, using knowledge we already have. Some protagonists of political participation suggested and were able to convince people in power to take, what they believe was, a step forward and rearrange rules behind PBs in Poland. Now outputs of that innovative move shall be evaluated in order to deliver full knowledge of what one shall expect if we try to repeat that courageous path.

## II. Deliberation and Legitimacy

Changes that PBs have undergone since its introduction in Poland were the inspiration to take a closer look at possible consequences resulting from taking a different route than others did. Revolutionary reforms are really hard to find among Polish examples, since everyone tried to make just small adjustments to the first, most common model, but such an opportunity appeared when Dąbrowa Górnicza has decided to try something more similar to the first South American idea. Their version is a shift to deliberative democracy, within which citizens should work out plans, policy or strategies through fair and reasonable discussions, instead of just most common aggregation of preferences through voting. Here reasoning and competitive arguments come to the first place. As a result much effort is put to the quality of the process itself<sup>9</sup>.

Since there is a lot more emphasis on deliberation it should be analyzed whether that has some impact on legitimization. Theoretical models provide us with an information that participation, in general, should “increase legitimacy of a government and prevent social exclusion from public services”<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Wyniki głosowania V edycji Dąbrowskiego Budżetu Partycypacyjnego 2017, [https://twojadabrowa.pl/downloads/2018-04-10\\_09-23-12-895257/Wyniki%20D%C4%85browskiego%20Bud%C5%BCetu%20Partycypacyjnego%20V%20Edycja.pptx](https://twojadabrowa.pl/downloads/2018-04-10_09-23-12-895257/Wyniki%20D%C4%85browskiego%20Bud%C5%BCetu%20Partycypacyjnego%20V%20Edycja.pptx) (12.07.2018).

<sup>10</sup> J. Speer, *Participatory Governance Reform: A Good Strategy for Increasing Government Responsiveness and Improving Public Services?*, “World Development” 2012, No. 12, p. 2380.

Some examples from outside Poland are also promising<sup>11</sup>, but one shall not forget about more general context. Usually when more discussions and better arguments are necessary, greater becomes the effort from the citizens in order to get involved, and that might be a problem in countries like Poland, where political participation is rather poor. Numerous data shows that hardly ever Poles manage to reach acceptable (above 50 percent) voter turnout, and that is quite problematic<sup>12</sup>. According to William E. Scheurman<sup>13</sup> such deliberation without involvement is no longer democratic. In some cases greater effort may exclude large social groups and that diminishes quality of democracy and lowers public trust in government<sup>14</sup>.

In order to investigate the issue following hypothesis has been formed – introduction of more developed deliberation in PB in Poland seriously decreases the level of legitimization of the whole process. To test this hypothesis following research questions have been formulated:

- Is there a correlation between introduction of a new model and decrease of citizens participation in PB in Dąbrowa Górnicza?
- Has introduction of the new, deliberative model changed qualitative sphere of the outputs?
- Have the citizens been able to make decisions using the new model?

This study was based on both quantitative and qualitative methods. First of all legal situation of PB in Poland has been analyzed as well as local provisions from Dąbrowa Górnicza. Next, official reports, containing facts regarding previous and current model, delivered essential knowledge about strengths and weakness of the reform and that includes dynamics of level of participation as well as stability of selected projects profile. Collected data indicates current trends after changes were introduced and as a result – brings verification of both hypothesis and research questions.

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<sup>11</sup> Y. Wu, W. Wang, *Does Participatory Budgeting Improve the Legitimacy of the Local Government?: A Comparative Case Study of Two Cities in China*, “Australian Journal of Public Administration” 2012, No. 2, pp. 122–124.

<sup>12</sup> U. Panicz, *Frekwencja wyborcza a stan polskiej demokracji*, “Refleksje” 2011, No. 4, p. 110.

<sup>13</sup> W.E. Scheurman, *Critical Theory Beyond Habermas*, [In:] *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory*, eds. J.S. Dryzek et al., Oxford 2006, p. 89.

<sup>14</sup> A. Michaels, L. De Graaf, op.cit., p. 879.

### III. Current Model and Its Future

For years there was no single regulation in Polish legal system that would mention PB, so it has functioned according to general legislation on public consultations<sup>15</sup>. The situation has changed at the beginning of 2018 when all three acts on local government system have been amended. They will come into force during next term of local government authorities (2018–2023), but we already know that many local government units will have to introduce smaller or larger changes, within their local regulations. Their scope will be various, but one shall notice that most of those who carried out experiments – meaning municipalities that have introduced their own vision – will have to take a step backwards.

Although until 2018 local communities were free to introduce their own solutions, based on, already mentioned, really general provisions on public consultations, most of, if not all, municipalities adopted very similar framework. Multiplicity of shared elements, different from previously recognized types from other states has created an opportunity to call it a model, which includes certain features:

- it has a stable timetable and is repeated each year;
- in most cases money are divided between pots;
- projects are collected from citizens with an obligatory list of support signed by other people;
- projects are being verified according to legal and realizable criteria;
- winning projects are selected during direct and popular voting;
- the mechanism is based more on so-called gentleman's agreement rather than legal provisions.

The last aspect listed above probably needs more explanation. Until introduction of state provisions, regulating PBs in Poland, voting results had a status of public consultations outcomes and that means decisions taken in this form were not obligatory for local authorities and it has been just up to them whether they will respect these or not. It has been more a gentleman's agreement as no consequences, other than voters' anger, could stop authorities from infringement of such contract. As it is emphasized in the literature that such consultations, as an unilateral communication, is not enough to devel-

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<sup>15</sup> Meaning – Act of 8 March 1990 on local government (Dz.U. No. 16, issue 95).

op participatory democracy, since more actual dialog is necessary<sup>16</sup>. Although amended legislation imposes obligation to follow the results, PBs in Poland still have that weak status, but now it has been just called a special form of public consultations and the mechanism will have to include certain new elements. Following next term of office local government authorities will have to adjust their regulations in order to comply with following criteria:

- new name – ‘civic budget’ instead of ‘participatory budget’;
- obligatory introduction in ‘*miasto na prawach powiatu*’, which is a special kind of a municipality that also performs tasks of local government middle level unit – *powiat*;
- winning projects will have to be selected in direct and equal voting;
- has to be repeated annually;
- obligation to include winning projects into annual budget, without permission to remove them or significantly modify;
- assigning 0.5% of municipal expenditure to PB;
- two pots and one shall cover whole local government unit (just suggested)<sup>17</sup>.

Even a brief analysis of above listed regulations shows that the change in legislation should not be considered revolutionary as most of elements of the so far developed model have just been repeated. One shall notice that in none of the cases deliberation is given position important enough and that is definitely a serious weakness of the procedure as in-depth discussions are necessary for well-aimed and well-thought outputs of the procedure<sup>18</sup>. But in order to get the whole picture of the situation we should look deeper. During the time, when PBs have been introduced and conducted, based on more liberal provisions, municipalities had the chance to experiment with different solutions. Although most of them remained within already tested path – general model – some made use of that opportunity and tried introducing something else. One of them is Dąbrowa Górnicza – a municipality located in the south of Poland.

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<sup>16</sup> J. Łukomska-Szarek, *Budżetowanie partycypacyjne jako instrument współzarządzania sferą publiczną*, „Nierówności Społeczne a Wzrost Gospodarczy” 2014, No. 4, p. 141.

<sup>17</sup> Art. 5a, Act of 8 March 1990...

<sup>18</sup> B. Sorychta-Wojaszczyk, op.cit., p. 428; J. Łukomska-Szarek, op.cit., p. 142.

#### IV. The Case of Dąbrowa Górnicza

Dąbrowa Górnicza is a medium size town with about 120 thousand inhabitants. It is a part of the Silesian Conurbation – a group of neighbouring municipalities with industrial and mining profile. It is ruled by left-wing town's president and a politically mixed council. Process of introduction of PB had begun in 2012 and ended at the beginning of the next year when on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, local council adopted Resolution No. XXIII/457/13<sup>19</sup>. When this text is being written they have organized 5 full editions and 6<sup>th</sup> one was in progress.

First four editions had a standard form, based on presented earlier Polish model, with one exception as Dąbrowa Górnicza did not have municipal level pot, but just one – districts. The same as in most cases their procedure included:

- collecting projects;
- verification of projects;
- district citizens discussion forums;
- voting;
- presentation of results.

One shall notice that from the start authorities have put much emphasis on the deliberative aspect. Third stage of the process was discussion forums, where all citizens could discuss the projects. Officials claim that organization of such meetings was based on a strong assumption that exchanging ideas and opinions is the core aspect of a PB, so there has been much effort to perform that gatherings in a proper, effective and democratic manner. But municipality authorities suggested taking a step forward. During first four editions criticism was heard that some negative effects more and more accompany each new edition. First of all it has been said, that popular voting pushes citizens into rivalry, which most often has an unwanted scenario. There is a lack of empathy as people forget about needs of others, especially those who are weaker in terms of PB voting mechanism. Secondly, spatial planning shall be mentioned here. Representatives of Dąbrowa Górnicza said, that one of PB side effects is concentration of similar investments on a limited territory. That is somehow

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<sup>19</sup> Uchwała nr XXIII/457/13 Rady Miejskiej w Dąbrowie Górniczej z 30 stycznia 2013 r. w sprawie zasad i trybu przeprowadzenia konsultacji społecznych z mieszkańcami Dąbrowy Górniczej na temat Budżetu Miasta Dąbrowa Górnicza na 2014 r., <http://www.bip.dabrowa-gornicza.pl/BIP.aspx?Sel=16307&ident=61817&js=1> (20.07.2018).



a result of egoism mentioned before. It is against rational planning as such infrastructure as playgrounds or outdoor body building gyms should be located in some distance from one another, so the whole town is covered and inhabitants of all districts have a relatively easy access to that small infrastructure. Thirdly, on some point that model lacked creativity as most of winning projects were the same – just located elsewhere. Last, but not least – critics pointed out, that the procedure itself demands a deep and complex discussion that will first include recognition of local problems and challenges. Implemented projects should be a product of deliberation – an answer to needs diagnosed before, and that has been said to have been a serious issue<sup>20</sup>.

Collected data confirms presented trends. During first four editions the town hall received altogether 946 projects and 244 were selected for implementation. First edition had a budget of 5 million PLN and since second edition it is now 8 million. Just in the last edition before the reform citizens submitted 213 projects and 122 were successfully verified and were put forward to voting. More than 23 thousand votes were cast, including almost 17 thousand traditional paper votes and about 6 thousand in an electronic way. The turnout was similar as in most municipalities – 23%. The 2017 edition results were dominated by infrastructural projects and just one other appeared – a series of three outdoor concerts:

**Table 1. Categories of projects selected in PB in Dąbrowa Górnicza before 2017**

Type	Number
Road investments	26
Playgrounds	7
Construction or development of sports fields	7
Equipment for libraries and common rooms	7
Land development (revitalization)	4
Outdoor body building gyms	2

<sup>20</sup> *Co dalej z DBP 2.0?*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTeiI-zjoCs&t=2330s> (12.07.2018).

Type	Number
Street lights	2
Pedestrians security	2
Bicycle playgrounds	1
School computer labs equipment	1
Concerts	1
CCTV	1
Wi-Fi	1

Source: Own elaboration, based on: *Wyniki głosowania IV edycji Dąbrowskiego Budżetu Partycypacyjnego 2016*, [https://twojadabrowa.pl/downloads/2017-05-15\\_13-01-41-178227/Prezentacja\\_wyniki\\_IV\\_DBP.pdf](https://twojadabrowa.pl/downloads/2017-05-15_13-01-41-178227/Prezentacja_wyniki_IV_DBP.pdf) (12.07.2018).

Presented criticism and probably a lot of will to introduce innovation pushed authorities to make some major changes in the PB mechanism in Dąbrowa Górnicza. General framework had to meet following requirements for the future mechanism:

- concentration on consultations and cooperation;
- getting rid of rivalry;
- discussion about needs;
- lack of authors of projects;
- well thought out decisions;
- elimination of dialogue deficit;
- creating opportunity for citizens to make adjustments in the final project;
- voting only in extreme situations<sup>21</sup>.

Goals of the future model have been presented to citizens and went through a series of public consultations. It has resulted in adopting a new version of PB regulations that were first used in 2017 (called 2018 edition). In order to enhance new stage of developing this form of direct democracy it has been

<sup>21</sup> *Broszura informacyjna dot. Dąbrowskiego Budżetu Partycypacyjnego*, [https://twojadabrowa.pl/downloads/2016-04-06\\_13-08-24-521820/DBP\\_broszura\\_A5\\_2016\\_na\\_www.pdf](https://twojadabrowa.pl/downloads/2016-04-06_13-08-24-521820/DBP_broszura_A5_2016_na_www.pdf) (10.07.2018).

named 'participatory budget 2.0'. The procedure is composed of 4 basic and 5<sup>th</sup> additional stage:

- diagnosis;
- collecting ideas;
- initial verification of ideas;
- district citizens discussion forums;
- voting (if necessary)<sup>22</sup>.

PB 2.0 takes place in 35 separate districts and there is no all-municipal level. During the first stage – diagnosis – the goal is to gather information about needs that exist within the district. It is being conducted by a civil servant – district animator – a person appointed especially for PB 2.0 purposes. Each district has its own animator. You cannot be an animator and a resident of the same district. This person is being supported by the town hall's Non-governmental Organizations Department. Diagnosis lasts about a month. In 2019 edition (conducted in 2018) it starts on 3<sup>rd</sup> of April and ends on the last day of the month. During that time earlier investments, especially the ones which are outputs of the PB, should be analyzed. Besides that the animator conducts surveys, organizes discussion meetings with citizens and officials<sup>23</sup>.

Second phase – collecting ideas – is being conducted simultaneously to the diagnosis. In 2019 edition citizens are invited to submit their ideas between 9<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of April. It shall be made on a special form, which is said to be very simple. You should describe your idea and specify place of its location. The procedure allows submitting more than one proposal. There are multiple ways of proper delivery of the form. You may send it by traditional post, bring it personally to the town hall or to the Citizens' Initiative Centre or just send it by e-mail. It is important to have in mind that citizens submit ideas

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<sup>22</sup> Uchwała nr XV/360/2016 Rady Miejskiej w Dąbrowie Górniczej w sprawie: zasad i trybu przeprowadzenia konsultacji społecznych z mieszkańcami Dąbrowy Górniczej na temat Budżetu Miasta Dąbrowa Górnicza na 2017 r., <http://www.bip.dabrowa-gornicza.pl/BIP.aspx?Sel=17375&ident=89257> (20.07.2018); *Broszura...*

<sup>23</sup> Uchwała... 2016, op.cit.; Uchwała nr XXXVIII/788/2018 Rady Miejskiej w Dąbrowie Górniczej z 28 marca 2018 r. w sprawie: zasad i trybu przeprowadzenia konsultacji społecznych z mieszkańcami Dąbrowy Górniczej na temat Budżetu Miasta Dąbrowa Górnicza na 2019 r., <http://www.bip.dabrowa-gornicza.pl/BIP.aspx?Sel=17375&ident=112601> (20.07.2018).

not projects. These are two different categories described in local regulations since projects are supposed to be worked out later during deliberation.

Next, all ideas go through initial verification. It is supposed to give answers whether ideas that came from citizens can be handed over for further proceedings. Although it is described as just initial, different aspects have to be checked and that includes property rights, investment plans, spatial planning programs, etc. It is being conducted by proper town hall departments. In 2019 edition it takes place between 1<sup>st</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of May<sup>24</sup>.

The longest phase – lasting about 4 months – and the most important, are district discussion forums. In 2019 edition they begin on 19<sup>th</sup> of May and should end by 29<sup>th</sup> of September. Again the district animator has an important role as this person is moderating all debates. Discussion forums are not limited to one meeting in a district. As many as necessary are being organized. Citizens decide upon organization of such gatherings, including: number of meetings as well as time and order of discussed topics. Citizens are being presented initially verified ideas, they discuss and prioritize district needs, give more details to ideas and transfer ideas into projects and that includes designing. The role of the town hall departments is to further verify outcomes of district forums and, if necessary, deliver alternative solutions. Discussion forums should end with a list of projects for implementation. If there is a conflict over final conclusions and meetings end up with some sort of a failure three projects shall be selected. Value of each project must not exceed amount of money assigned to that district. Later, citizens select winning projects in a popular voting, likewise it has been in the previous version of the PB in Dąbrowa Górnicza. It lasts a week and each person may choose just one project. You may cast a vote either traditionally on a ballot, electronically or by regular post<sup>25</sup>.

One full 2.0. edition (2018) has been accomplished. According to official data types of projects presented in table 2 have been selected in the new procedure.

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<sup>24</sup> Uchwała... 2018, op.cit.

<sup>25</sup> Broszura...

**Table 2. Categories of projects selected in 2018 edition in Dąbrowa Górnicza**

Type	Number
Road investments, incl. sidewalks, car parks, street lights	29
Modernization of public space, squares, street furniture	20
Equipment for libraries and common rooms	15
Playgrounds	11
Outdoor body building gyms	5
Construction or development of sports fields	2
Social projects	1

Source: Own elaboration, based on: *Wyniki głosowania V edycji Dąbrowskiego Budżetu Partycypacyjnego 2017*, [https://twojadabrowa.pl/downloads/2018-04-10\\_09-23-12-895257/Wyniki%20D%C4%85browskiego%20Bud%C5%BCetu%20Partycypacyjnego%20V%20Edycja.pptx](https://twojadabrowa.pl/downloads/2018-04-10_09-23-12-895257/Wyniki%20D%C4%85browskiego%20Bud%C5%BCetu%20Partycypacyjnego%20V%20Edycja.pptx) (12.07.2018).

Altogether, 77 projects in 35 districts have been selected. Results have been worked out from 292 ideas during 171 meetings. Only 579 people took part in the procedure, which approximately is about 16–17 per distinct. In case of one district (Błędown) consensus had not been reached and a voting has been organized and here attendance amounted 44%, which is 540 citizens<sup>26</sup>.

## V. Affected Legitimacy

Reform of the PB in Dąbrowa Górnicza has been caused by many factors. First of all one shall assume that local authorities and their administration were ambitious and courageous enough to reach for new solutions, which itself shall be regarded very positive. In their declarations we may observe a strong will to get citizens involved in the decision-making process more than it had been in the past mechanism. Criticism of the previous model deliver us information that authors of the reform were strongly convinced that a greater emphasis on deliberation will bring better outputs and outcomes and they

<sup>26</sup> *Wyniki...* 2017, op.cit.

were right in many aspects. But if we go back to objectives of the new model we will notice that they have put a strong emphasis on the qualitative change and that has been achieved. But at the same time quantitative indicators of civic participation have dropped tremendously from 23 thousand participants to not even 600.

It is clear that more deliberation demands more effort. It imposes more obligatory discussions, enhances amount of necessary labour that has to be dedicated if someone is willing to get involved. But it is not only a matter of quantity. You also need certain skills and competences, including self-confidence and some education, in order to face other debaters, and that means the effort has to be greater not only in terms of quantity, but also as better personal quality of participants. In this case some people will self-exclude themselves, not because they are lazy or passive, but because they feel unprepared. Strive for quality transforms PBs from egalitarian to more elitist.

Another goal of the enhanced PB was a significant change within quality of selected projects, meaning their profile. That did not happen. Although more attention is put to details, people still decide to choose so-called “hard projects”. Again they discuss road investments, new equipment for schools, playgrounds and renovation of public space. More discussion, even if we begin with naming actual needs first, does not change what people want. They might be more careful how they spend public money, have more understating for others, but general categories remain almost the same. Positive effects can be probably found in the details, such as location, use of space or exact appearance.

The most positive aspect of the reform is that Dąbrowa Górnicza has managed to make people discuss about their needs and then to search for solutions that are acceptable for the majority of people involved. Solutions worked out during that process are definitely well-thought, since everyone had to listen to arguments of others and had much more time between getting to know possible investments and making a group decision. Within the PB 2.0 citizens had better contact with officials. That improves learning processes regarding state and local regulations as well as interpersonal skills. What also should bring satisfaction to local authorities is that citizens were able to actually make decisions within this new model. Numerous meetings have been organized and, as it has been reported, they have been full of interesting and

lively discussions, which at the end finished with constructive decisions. Only in one case, out of 35, the town hall had to organize popular voting. Nobody also denies that in terms of political science studies quality of deliberation around PB in Dąbrowa Górnicza has been upgraded, but it has definitely affected legitimatization.

## VI. Conclusions

“PBs are transforming the idea of a representative democracy, in which the citizen’s input is considered just at the moment of elections, to move closer to a participatory democracy, based on direct participation of citizens”<sup>27</sup>, but its implementation itself has to be a product of a deep study. Of course, we have many models of PB around the world and we cannot claim that there is one good for all<sup>28</sup>, so the search should never stop.

Presented analysis shows how putting emphasis on one aspect of participatory budget procedure affects other elements. Here authorities and administration of Dąbrowa Górnicza have decided to upgrade quality of the PB debate and the results are so far clear that demanding more effort, knowledge and skills forms a significant barrier. When citizens were invited to join discussion forums participation has dropped about 40 times, which is an incredible number. It went up rapidly when a voting in district had to be organized. One has to mention that almost the same number of people took part in this single voting as in discussion forums in each of 35 districts together. It could have been avoided with some more effort from its designers. For example local authorities have not prepared more advanced ICT’s, which have a large potential to be wisely used in democracy, since a lot of people use them every day. For instance, that could have been video streaming with a commenting function.

Finally, we should remember that deliberation itself is not a remedy for everything and it has to face various obstacles. “There is the problem of the absence of some groups from active participation and the consequence of such

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<sup>27</sup> J. Gómez et al., *On deciding how to decide: Designing participatory budget processes*, “European Journal of Operational Research” 2013, No. 3, p. 743.

<sup>28</sup> Y. Sintomer, C. Herzberg, A. Röcke, *op.cit.*, p. 175.

exclusion is that some quiet voices are never heard”<sup>29</sup>. Celina Su brings us an example from her studies when youth had experienced problems with communication with older members of the society. They were not strong enough to win oral battles<sup>30</sup>. That is somehow problematic since PBs are intended to broaden representation of marginalised groups<sup>31</sup>, so any situation that pushes people out from participation should be avoided at all cost. PB 2.0. in Dąbrowa Górnicza is not a failure, but indicates how pursuit for quality affects outcomes. The reform has opened PB for criticism, according to which social elites again have created a decision-making pattern for only a few. With very poor attendance and, in consequence, a little legitimacy some belief that PB is undemocratic might appear. That undermines position of this direct democracy instrument – still new in Poland.

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<sup>29</sup> A. Michaels, L. De Graaf, op.cit., p. 489.

<sup>30</sup> C. Su, *Whose Budget? Our Budget? Broadening Political Stakeholdership via Participatory Budgeting*, “Journal of Public Deliberation” 2012, No. 2, p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> L. Piper, *How Participatory Institutions Deepen Democracy through Broadening Representation: The Case of Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil*, “Theoria” 2014, No. 6, p. 52.



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