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Models of Participatory Budgeting. Analysis of Participatory Budgeting Procedures in Poland

Abstract: This paper presents a study on participatory budgeting in Poland, analyzing participatory budgeting procedures. We apply the typology of participation models proposed by Sintomer, and based on the previous research we investigate which model of participatory budgeting is characteristic for Poland. This study covered 49 cases of participatory budgeting implementation in Western Poland, mainly in the Wielkopolska Province and the neighboring provinces. The results show that none of the municipalities covered by the study had a relatively pure participatory budgeting model, as proposed by Sintomer. The procedures in the analyzed municipalities can be characterized as the patchwork participatory budgeting model.

Keywords: public consultations, public participation, public policies, decision making

Introduction

Criticism of the state of democracy and democratic procedures has been noted since the 1960s. In Europe, there was a democratic deficit and the so-called democratic dilemma in the European Union—the cost of submerging a national democratic government into a larger but more distanced from people transnational system (Dahl 1994; Majone 1998). At the same time, at the local level, demands were formulated for greater openness to citizens and their inclusion in decision-making processes (Magnette 2003; Melo and Baiocchi 2006; Pratchett 1999). Numerous social protests and the emergence of the so-called NIMBY Syndrome (Maczka and Matczak 2014; Wolsink 1994) have shown that the traditional democratic ways of decision making face barriers, while the electoral mechanism does not provide sufficient legitimacy for the actions of authorities, which are treated as technocratic and leading to social exclusion (Holdo 2020). It entailed development of various social activities—grass-root movements and non-governmental organizations. This bottom-up

pressure led to widespread public participation. Although the literature on participation is broad, there is neither a commonly used definition of “public participation” nor a common concept to measure its quality. In this paper, we defined public participation as a “set of processes that include representatives of different social groups organized by a third party to initiate a discourse and cooperative counseling process aimed at informing collectively-binding decisions” (Schroeter et al. 2016).

Since the 1990s, local governments worldwide have begun to implement new forms of involving citizens in decision-making processes (Michels 2011) and many methods of participation were developed and tested (Gregory et al. 2008). With time disillusionment concerning participation began to grow (Hickey and Mohan 2004). The practice of participation was not always able to meet expectations—perhaps set too high and unrealistic. It was pointed out, for example, that in developed countries, participation often took the form of public consultation, while in developing countries, it was more often associated with local involvement and consensus building at the community level (Reed 2008).

A phenomenon that focuses all the issues of public participation like in a useful lens is participatory budgeting (PB). In this process, citizens directly participate in allocating a defined part of the government’s budget (Malena and Khallaf 2006) or another type of provisional budget of public interest (Allegretti and Copello 2018). PB has been widely discussed in social sciences for the last 30 years (Dias 2018), expanding beyond the limits of local administrative policies to be also applied in regions, schools, universities, prisons, and even by national governments on some specific budgetary sectors (Allegretti et al. 2021; Dias et al. 2019). Pin (2020) argues that PB is not a non-partisan deliberative initiative but can be attributed to the strategic electoral interests of councilors. According to Kuo et al. (2020), PB can lead to deeper civic engagement and better urban governance. PB can be a catalyst of a variety of local bottom-up initiatives addressing public space due to the engagement of creative people at the local level that new functions which improve the quality of life are developed in cities. PB can prevent social exclusion (Holdo 2020). Furthermore, PB requires the administrative and legal context, but needs to reach an experiential quality (2020).

PB started in Latin America (Ganuza and Baiocchi 2012) and then disseminated worldwide (Dias et al. 2019; Oliveira 2017; Ward 2006). Until the year 2000, only a few European cities had implemented this tool, but their number grew fast so that in 2019 Europe was hosting around 4670 experiences of PB, out of the almost 11800 existing worldwide (Dias et al. 2019). This rapid expansion took place after 2010 when there were around 1470 PBs implemented all over the world, being almost 200 in Europe (Sintomer et al. 2013). Central and Eastern European countries (including Poland) started implementing PB later than other areas (Fölscher 2007), but they were faster in joining the community of practices so that today they represent almost 50% of the entire cases of European PBs. The weak tradition of participation and the long experience of centralized planning and decision making can be considered factors responsible for the delayed application of PB in those countries (Bednarska-Olejniczak and Olejniczak 2018; Primc 2018). However, it is likely that although the former communist and techno-bureaucratic tradition initially played as obstacles to PB’s enrooting, e.g., due to the cultural difficulty they created for people

to visualize “common interest” as something different from a mere concept of state-led development, in a second moment they could have provided incentives to PB diffusion. As literature shows, in fact (Oliveira 2017; Sintomer and Allegretti 2009) PB have been often imagined as a way of progressive governments to remark a different “style of governing” from experienced linked to authoritarian, techno-bureaucratic and corrupted approaches (as happened in Spain, Italy or Portugal); and—at the same time, as is the case in Russia (Shilov 2018)—also authoritarian political visions have been discovering the benefits of PB for consolidating their approval by citizens (Benton 2016).

PB in Europe is usually framed in various ways, ranging from considering it an important activity of “intensification of democracy” to a management technique for allocating resources more efficiently and relieving local debts, as is Germany (Dias 2018). Moreover, on the one hand, research up to date has revealed a great diversity of PB practices. It is a process with a specific and recognizable procedure (Cabannes and Lipietz 2018; Sintomer et al. 2016, 2008). This diversity among PB experiments is a relatively recent phenomenon and started after the 2000 year with the expansion of PB beyond Brazil, including Europe (Cabannes and Lipietz 2018). On the other hand, 15 years after this expansion, there are more and more PB evaluations initiatives that set standards, key metrics of PB, and toolkit for evaluators, which could lead again to standardization of PB (Public Agenda 2016). This situation raises the question whether, currently, we can observe more a diversification phenomenon among PBs or rather their standardization.

However, it is hardly possible to compare different cases of PB on a large scale and answer this question since recent studies have mainly been focused on particular cases of PB rather than on comparative visions (Bassoli 2012; Džinić et al. 2016; Holdo 2016). Rarely did the studies analyze organizational/procedural issues from a systematic and more comprehensive quantitative perspective (Sintomer et al. 2016; Spada 2012; Walczak and Rutkowska 2017).

Poland constitutes an interesting case for analyzing PB as in the last thirty years, after 45 years of communism and similarly to other Central and Eastern European countries, it has gone a long way towards democracy. The role of public participation in decision-making has rapidly increased, and various techniques of empowering the community have been introduced, with PB belonging to the most important ones (Bednarska-Olejniczak and Olejniczak 2018; Kamrowska-Zaluska 2016).

Participatory Budgeting: Definition and Typology

In order to describe models of PB, a definition of PB and its particular elements needs to be clarified. PB is a process of non-elected citizens participating in establishing the guidelines for achieving the main goals and directions of public finance policy (Sintomer uses the term “conception”) and/or allocation of public finances (Schneider and Busse 2015; Sintomer et al. 2012). In relation to other participatory processes, its specificity is putting an explicit discussion on resources in a “first stage”. Although not necessarily in the first place (Allegretti and Copello 2018) to better inform and empower those who participate in the public discussion. A PB process has to encompass four elements:

1. Discussion on financial/budgetary phase in order to deal with limited resources;
2. Involvement of a municipal or (decentralized) district-level administration with an elected body having power over administration. The involvement at the neighborhood level is not sufficient to constitute a PB process;
3. Deliberation means that discussion has to be organized, taking into account the inclusiveness of the process, the mutual exchange of arguments, clear rules, etc.
4. Certain level of accountability, i.e., feedback provided to the participants.

Although Sintomer et al. (2012) also add an element of recurrence/periodicity, presuming that one meeting on budgetary issues does not constitute a PB, according to Schneider and Busse (2015), it does not have to be a repeated process. They state that PB should be implemented with a long-term perspective, but it is inadequate to retrospectively deny the status of PB when it is terminated, e.g., by a new mayor, after the first year. Following Schneider and Busse (2015), we apply the definition of the four elements presented above in our study.

Based on this definition and analysis concerning PBs (Cabannes 2004; Sintomer et al. 2012), it is possible to distinguish five steps of the PB process design (Raudla and Krenjova 2013). We adapted this framework in our study—Table 1.

Table 1
PB: Process design steps and sub-steps

Steps	Sub-steps
Decision-making	Not applicable
Participation	Participation selection methods: self-selection; random selection; targeted selection Scope of participation: citizens from particular social groups e.g., unemployed; organized citizens (e.g., NGOs); single active citizens; ordinary citizens Participation mechanism: open meetings; closed meetings; mixed type meetings
Deliberation	Focus of discussions, such as: public investment; micro-local public investments or broad guidelines of town policy; overall budget or offer of services; specific community projects; specific projects financed by public/private partnership Mode of deliberation: developing preferences; listening as audience, expressing preferences; expressing and developing preferences Formality of the process such as: projects ranked according to the criteria of distributive justice, formalized rules; no ranking of investments or actions, informal rules; no ranking of services, possible ranking of priorities, rather informal rules; projects ranked, formal rules
Empowerment	Not applicable
Control and monitoring	Not applicable

Source: Based on: (Sintomer et al. 2012; Raudla and Krenjova 2013). Modified by the authors.

A PB process usually starts with a decision-making step that concerns a procedure. It needs to rely on a legal act that would set up the rules for the whole PB process. There are variations on who determines these rules. These can be set by local administration or in a dialogue with citizens, organized civil society, or private sector organizations. These rules regulate the criteria for allocating resources, prescribe the number of meetings,

etc. The second step is participation, which concerns the orientation of the PB procedure towards participants. It encompasses both submissions of and voting on a PB. Participation might be oriented towards various groups of citizens: single active citizens (e.g., formal or informal local leaders) or organized citizens (e.g., associations), etc. The third step is deliberation. It encompasses the subject of the debate (e.g., public investments), the model of communication (developing preferences), and formalities of the decision-making process (e.g., prioritizing projects). The fourth step is empowerment, which determines the decision-making power of the participants. PB can have a form of consultations (participants provide opinions which may be taken into account by the administration); decision-making power (i.e., participants can make the final decision—vote on projects); co-governing partnership (implies joint decision-making of the citizens and representatives of the private, government and non-profit sectors). The last, fifth step is control and monitoring of the supervision/evaluation of the PB process and implementation of the PB outcome. A control and monitoring body can be composed of citizen-elected delegates, local administration, or donors.

Models of Participatory Budgeting

Technically, PB could be divided into three general models: 1) territorially based (focused on particular space such as a municipality, district, etc.), 2) thematic based (focused on particular themes or sectors, e.g., environment, culture, etc.) or 3) actor based (focused on particular groups e. g. youth, elderly, etc.) and most of PB implementations represent the first model (Cabannes and Lipietz 2018). However, considering all criteria: discussion, involvement, deliberation, and accountability, one can also distinguish five models of PB (Raudla and Krenjova 2013; Sintomer et al. 2012, 2008). The authors (Sintomer et al. 2008) of this typology aimed to prepare a framework that enables researchers to compare PB systematically. These models are shortly described below.

Porto Alegre Adapted for Europe

The first model assumes that the rules of PB developed by a council composed of delegates elected from among the citizens are the basis for participation in the Porto Alegre (PA) model. The whole process of PB is oriented towards single active citizens. They participate in open meetings at the neighborhood level via self-selection, and their delegates (e.g. members of organizations and associations of residents) participate in the meetings at the municipality level. The deliberation is focused on the projects involving public investments, which the participants develop. The final list of projects is a ranking developed using the criteria of distributive justice and formalized rules (e.g., a division into small projects and big projects, district and municipality projects). This list is a participatory budget proposal discussed at the municipal level and then incorporated into the city budget. The decision-making power *de facto* belongs to the citizens. After the approval of the participatory budget proposal, the control and monitoring body is established. This council is composed of delegates elected from among the citizens.

Proximity participation

In the second model, the rules of PB developed by the local administration are the basis for the participation in the proximity participation (PP) model. Similarly to PA, the whole process of PBs in the proximity participation model is oriented towards single active citizens. They participate in open meetings at the neighborhood level via self-selection and their delegates participate in the meetings at the municipality level. The deliberation is focused on micro-local public investments (generally, smaller ones than in PA) or general strategic goals, e.g., the participants play the role of an audience who listens and expresses their preferences. Nevertheless, there are no rankings of investments or actions, and the process has an informal character. This PB model has a purely consultative function, which is based on selective listening. Notably, local administration can sum up the deliberation and cherry-pick those ideas and proposals which support their interests. Moreover, a control and monitoring body is also constituted of local authorities.

Consultation on Public Finance

Similarly to the PP, the rules of PB developed by the local administration are the basis for participation in the Consultation of Public Finance (CF) model. The participants in this model are ordinary citizens randomly selected (e.g., from the civil registry). Nevertheless, others who are interested may also participate. Similarly to PA and PP, the participants take part in open meetings at the neighborhood level, and their delegates meet at the municipality level. They focus on the overall budget (e.g., staff cuts, tax increases) or on offers of services (e.g., libraries, waste management, public swimming pools).

Similarly to the PP model, the participants play the role of an audience who listens to the local administration and expresses its preferences combining various possibilities. Although the services are not ranked, the priorities might be ranked. The whole process has a rather informal character. CF also has a purely consultative nature and is based on “selective listening,” similarly to the PP model, while the role of a control and monitoring body is within the responsibility of the local administration.

Community-Participatory Budgeting

The rules of PB developed by a committee composed of representatives of the municipality, NGOs, state organizations, and the private sector are the basis for participation in the CB model. The whole process of PB is citizen-oriented. Citizens participate in various kinds of meetings at the neighborhood level via targeted selection, and their delegates meet at the municipality level. The deliberation is focused on specific community projects, and the resources under discussion only partially come from the municipality. The money can also be provided by international organizations, NGOs, private companies, or the state government. The participants express and develop their preferences. Projects are ranked using formal rules (without using additional criteria of distributive justice). The final decision making has a character of co-governing partnership, which implies that the citizens and the representatives of the private, governmental and non-profit sectors make decisions

together. A control and monitoring body also has a joint nature. It is composed of local administration officers and donors.

Multi-Stakeholder participation

The rules of PB developed by a committee composed of representatives of the municipality, NGOs, and state organizations are the basis for participation in the multi-stakeholder participation (MP) model. Citizens organize the whole PB process in cooperation with the private sector and participate in closed meetings at the municipality level. This model has a lot in common with the CB. The deliberation is focused on specific projects financed by public/private partnerships. The participants express and develop their preferences. Projects are ranked using formal rules (without using additional criteria of distributive justice). Eventually, a co-governing partnership is developed, which implies joint decision-making of local government, citizenry, and the representatives of the private sector, etc. The control and monitoring body has a joint character as well. It is composed of local administration officers and donors. According to Sintomer et al. (2012, 2008) and Raudla and Krenjova (2013), this model is the most relevant for Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries.

The Context of Participatory Budgeting Implementation in Poland

When the idea of PB was adopted in Poland around the year 2005 (Kębłowski 2014), the fiscal situation of the Polish local governments was difficult. Facing the country budget tensions, the Ministry of Finance developed a policy limiting the local government spending and discouraging maintenance spending. This entailed a discussion on the control of PB proposals among experts and the local government administration officers when the first PBs were developed. Two options were considered. The first one was to allow any proposals fulfilling formal criteria and vote on them. The second proposal was to establish a controlling mechanism to eliminate proposals that could be difficult or impossible to implement (due to legal or financial reasons).

On the one hand, some local governments tried to choose the proposed projects to maintain only those according to the municipality's budget. In such a case, PBs would not mean additional spending (beyond the adopted budget of the local government). On the other hand, some local governments were ready to take a loan for PB projects. Moreover, the disproportions and dilemmas associated with the involvement of applicants (those who submit projects) were also quickly identified.

It revealed that the mobilization potential (e.g., in promotion or voting) of NGOs or district councils often proved to be much greater than that of individual residents (Matczak et al. 2015a). In some municipalities, there was a problem of unfair voting or manipulations (collection of personal data for the voting purposes or distribution of voting cards filled out in advance). PB also encountered resistance from the local authorities (councillors and mayors) as something completely new and not matching the existing indirect democratic system in Poland. The point of electing local authorities was questioned because the voice of the inhabitants was to be binding, and they were to decide on the budget or its parts.

The first PB was implemented in Płock, a mid-sized city in the center of Poland, wherein the years 2003–2005, a public-private partnership was formed between the municipality, local NGOs, the major Polish petrochemicals and gasoline company, headquartered in Płock, and Levi Strauss company, within the framework of the United Nations Development Programme. This allowed for establishing the Grant Fund for Płock, in which projects submitted by NGOs were evaluated by a jury (Kębłowski and Crikinger 2014). Next PB implementations in Poland, in other municipalities, did not follow the path designed by Płock. The first new procedure was implemented in 2011 in the City of Sopot and then modified (mainly concerning the voting process) in 2012 in Poznań and other municipalities (Maczak et al. 2015a). Then a rapid increase of PB took place. According to Pistelok and Martela (2019), in 2017, there were 322 municipalities in Poland that have implemented PB at least once. Until 2018 this number increased to almost 380 (Piech and Pistelok 2021) and probably still grow but there is no systematic new data available on that yet.

Moreover, from 2018 participatory budgeting in Poland gained also legislative support, as the 66 biggest cities in Poland had to implement PB obligatorily at least in the amount of 0,5% of total expenditures of a municipality (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland from 2018 item. 130). However, this regulation could be rather seen as a symbolic gesture or securing mechanism for the future maintenance of the PB as all cities covered by the act had already implemented PB, and few of them had to increase the amount of PB because of the new regulation. Previous PB studies in Poland showed that their rules were usually prepared in the top-down mode, without consultation with residents and at a fast pace, in a kind of competition with other municipalities. The whole process of PB planning lacked reflection and relied on copying solutions from another social or economic context and a broader vision of development (Kębłowski 2014, 2013).

In Poland, except for PB, there is another participatory mechanism called “solecki fund”. It is a fund separated from the municipal budget, guaranteed for the implementation of projects aimed at improving citizens’ quality of life at the level of villages (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland from 2009, no. 52, item. 420). The rationale of PB and “solecki fund” are similar, and some researchers treat “solecki fund” as a sub-type of PB (Sintomer et al. 2013). Nevertheless, there are also significant differences between them. First of all, the “solecki fund” usually concerns smaller areas that equal district. Secondly, decisions concerning projects are made by the village assembly. It is not as spectacular as meetings or voting—the most preferably participatory decision-making method by stakeholders (Alibegović and Slijepčević-Društvena 2018). Also, it is considered to be a blocked-up “channel” of public participation (Abramowicz 2011). Thirdly, because of that, “solecki fund” is not the subject of interest of the media and the public opinion. It could be assumed that it engages far fewer people than PB. However, there is no systematic data on that yet. We claim that the “solecki fund” is a rather parallel participatory mechanism to PB than a sub-type of it.

Research Aims

In this paper, we present an analysis of PB procedures in Poland. We apply the typology of participation models by Sintomer et al. (2012) and propose procedure how to measure PB procedure in practice, to answer the two research questions:

1. What is the dominant model of PB in Poland?
2. What trend concerning PB do we currently observe: diversification or standardization?

We refer to the case of Płock, which was the only place in Poland where PB was applied at the time Sintomer's (Sintomer et al. 2005) PB typology was first proposed. The PB in Płock differs significantly from the procedures of PB implemented after 2011 (Kębłowski 2014, 2013). There were theoretical discussions on the applicability of different PB models in the new democracies in Central and East Europe (Raudla and Krenjova 2013), which assumed that municipalities in Poland would apply the multi-stakeholder participation model. Nevertheless, it was not empirically verified in further, more comprehensive analyses, which would consider a dynamic spread of PB in Poland. By February 2015, at least 163 municipalities conducted at least one edition of PB (Związek Miast Polskich 2015). The rapid spread of PB and occasional evidence leads to the supposition that the multi-stakeholders model of participation may not fully and accurately represent the Polish PB model. Furthermore, the analyses based on a significantly smaller number of cases have led the authors to argue that the Polish model of PB is complicated and could be identified as a quasi-referendum. This conclusion, however, was drawn based on nine implementations of PB (Sześciło 2015). According to other authors (Džinić et al. 2016), the Polish model is close to the PA PB model. It was concluded based on the analysis of three PB implementations in each of the chosen countries: Poland, Slovakia, and Croatia. Our study aims to verify the assumption above using a larger number of cases.

Scope and Method of Analysis

Description of case selection

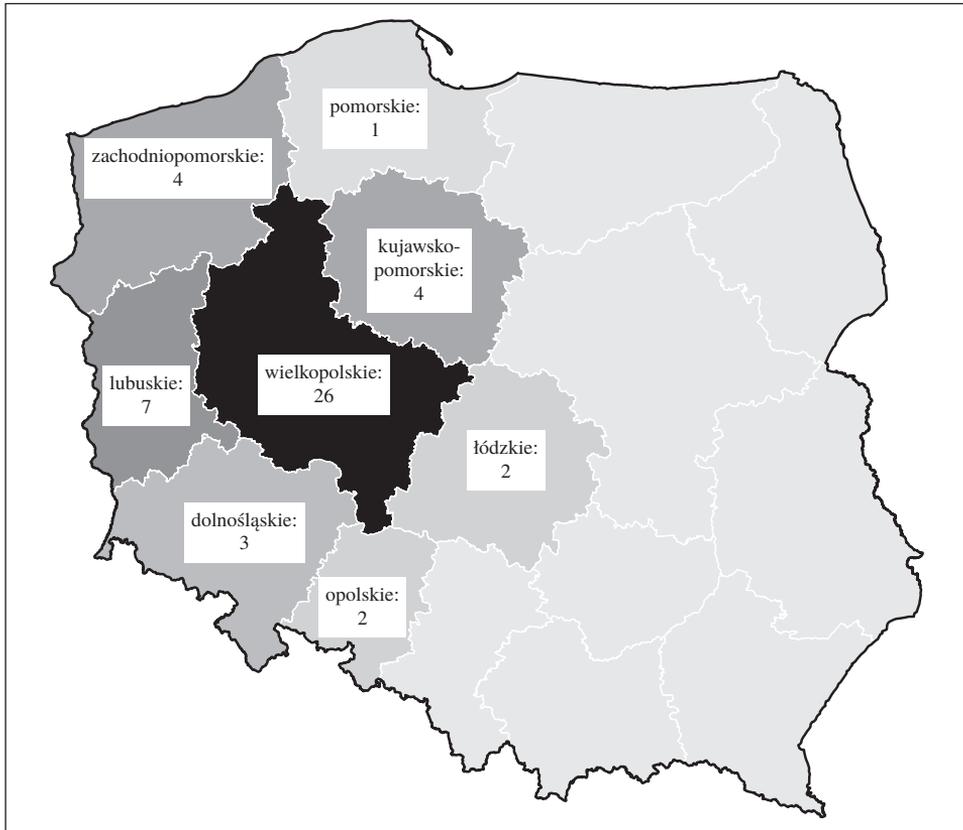
This study covered 49 cases of PB implementation in Western Poland—mainly in the Wielkopolska Province and the neighboring provinces—half of the cases were in Wielkopolska, as exposed in Figure 1. Poland is a unitary state, and differences between particular regions in Poland are not significant compared with other countries, so the chosen area is not particularly specific.

Procedure

In order to analyze how the collected cases of the Polish PB fit Sintomer's typology, we designed a research procedure comprising several steps:

1. Each of the five PB models was characterized by a five-step procedure. Two of the steps had additional three sub-steps. Thus, there were nine basic sub-steps altogether.
2. In each of the steps, a characteristic feature was defined with a question. The preliminary analysis revealed that the step participation with three sub-steps was not distinctive for our cases. Therefore, we decided to supplement the initial participation step and distinguish two participation components: participation in terms of proposal submission and participation in terms of voting. Thus, eventually, 12 sub-steps were defined by the questions as presented in Table 2. There was one question in one sub-step, and a filter question was added if necessary. For each of the questions, a set of

Figure 1
 Number of analyzed PBs in Poland



answers was predefined, allowing to attribute a case to a PB model (taking into account a given characteristic).

3. For some characteristics, each particular answer unequivocally attributed a case to a model. In the case of some other characteristics, an answer attributed a case to more than one model (e.g., participation selection method of self-selection was relevant for both PA and PP) or PB regulation contained two characteristics instead of one (e.g., participation selection method meant both self-selection of ordinary citizens and targeted selection of NGOs). Therefore, we attributed values to the answers to particular questions, taking this into account. If an answer attributed a case to one model, it got value 1. If a given answer attributed a case to two models, each got 0.5. With three cases, it was 0.33, and for four: 0.25. No other options occurred.
4. In the next step, we coded the answers to all the cases, assigning 12 characteristics to each case.
5. Cases were not equally described due to missing data. Therefore, in the next step, we standardized the data by calculating for each case the proportions of values of each model relative to the case sum of values. The standardized data were taken for analysis.

Table 2

Models of PB (grey colour indicates which PB model involving particular characteristic)

Step	Sub-steps	Question	Characteristic	PB model				
				PA	PP	CF	CB	MP
Decision-making	Not applicable	Is there a step that includes setting up the rules of PB? (filter question)	Council composed of delegates elected from among citizens					
			Local administration					
		Who sets up the rules of PB?	Committee composed of representatives of local government, NGOs, state organizations					
			Committee composed of representatives of local government, NGOs, state organizations, private sector					
Participation—submission	Participation selection methods	How are the participants selected to submit projects?	Self-selection					
			Random selection					
			Targeted selection					
	Scope of participation	Who is entitled to submit projects?	Single active citizens					
			Ordinary citizens					
			Organized citizens					
	Participation mechanism	Are there any organized meetings before project submission? (filter question) How are the meetings before projects submission organized?	Organized citizens together with private enterprises					
			Open meetings at the neighborhood level, delegates at the town level					
Different kinds of meetings at the neighborhood level, delegates at the town level								
Participation voting	Participation selection methods	How are the participants selected to vote for projects?	Closed meetings at the town level					
			Self-selection					
			Random selection					
	Scope of participation	Who is entitled to vote for projects?	Targeted selection					
			Single active citizens					
			Ordinary citizens					
	Participation mechanism	Are there any organized meetings before voting for projects? (filter question) How are the meetings before project voting organized?	Organized citizens					
			Organized citizens together with private enterprises					
Open meetings at the neighborhood level, delegates at the town level								
Deliberation	Focus of discussion	What is the subject of the projects?	Different kinds of meetings at the neighborhood level, delegates at the town level					
			Micro-local public investments or broad guidelines for town policies					
			Overall budget or offers of services					
			Specific community projects					
	Modes of deliberation	How is deliberation organized?	Specific projects financed by public/private partnership					
			Developing preferences					
			Listening as audience, expressing preferences					
			Expressing, develop preferences					
Formality of the process	How is the final selection of the projects organized?	Projects ranked according to the criteria of distributive justice, formalized rules						
		No ranking of investments or actions, informal rules						
		No ranking of services, possible ranking of priorities, rather informal rules						
		Projects ranked, formal rules						
Empowerment	Not applicable	How binding is the opinion of the participants to the local administration?	Decision-making power					
			Consultation					
			Co-governing partnership					
Control and monitoring	Not applicable	Is there a supervision/evaluation of the PB? (filter question)	A council composed of delegates elected from among citizens					
			Local administration					
		Who conducts the supervision/evaluation of the PB?	Local administration + donors					

PA—Porto Alegre adapted for Europe; PP—Proximity participation; CF—Consultation on public finance; CB—Community participatory budgeting; MP—Multi-stakeholder participation

Table 3

Distribution of PB models in the analyzed municipalities (after standardization)

No.	Municipality	PA	PP	CF	CB	MP
1	Bełchatów	0.25*	0.18	0.29	0.18	0.11
2	Bydgoszcz	0.29	0.36	0.36	0.00	0.00
3	Czarnków	0.63	0.13	0.00	0.13	0.13
4	Czerwonak	0.25	0.25	0.38	0.06	0.06
5	Głogów	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.00	0.00
6	Gniezno	0.43	0.21	0.36	0.00	0.00
7	Gorzów	0.29	0.29	0.42	0.00	0.00
8	Gostyń	0.36	0.29	0.36	0.00	0.00
9	Grodzisk	0.30	0.20	0.30	0.10	0.10
10	Jarocin	0.18	0.23	0.20	0.23	0.18
11	Jelenia Góra	0.34	0.23	0.31	0.08	0.03
12	Kalisz	0.36	0.29	0.36	0.00	0.00
13	Kargowa	0.25	0.18	0.29	0.18	0.11
14	Koło	0.25	0.18	0.29	0.18	0.11
15	Konin	0.33	0.17	0.28	0.11	0.11
16	Koszalin	0.19	0.14	0.22	0.31	0.14
17	Kórnik	0.37	0.20	0.31	0.06	0.06
18	Krobia	0.33	0.00	0.33	0.17	0.17
19	Krosno Odrzańskie	0.29	0.21	0.36	0.07	0.07
20	Kutno	0.30	0.20	0.30	0.15	0.05
21	Leszno	0.29	0.21	0.36	0.07	0.07
22	Międzychód	0.19	0.19	0.28	0.25	0.08
23	Nysa	0.22	0.22	0.31	0.16	0.09
24	Oborniki	0.33	0.00	0.33	0.17	0.17
25	Okonek	0.45	0.05	0.10	0.25	0.15
26	Opole	0.31	0.19	0.28	0.19	0.03
27	Piła	0.26	0.26	0.37	0.06	0.06
28	Pleszew	0.50	0.20	0.30	0.00	0.00
29	Pniewy	0.25	0.18	0.29	0.18	0.11
30	Poznań	0.33	0.28	0.30	0.07	0.02
31	Rawicz	0.43	0.21	0.36	0.00	0.00
32	Słupca	0.22	0.28	0.39	0.06	0.06
33	Strzelece Krajeńskie	0.29	0.21	0.36	0.07	0.07
34	Swarzędz	0.43	0.21	0.36	0.00	0.00
35	Szamocin	0.33	0.00	0.33	0.17	0.17
36	Szamotuły	0.39	0.18	0.29	0.11	0.04
37	Szczecin	0.18	0.28	0.30	0.18	0.08
38	Świnoujście	0.25	0.25	0.38	0.06	0.06
39	Tczew	0.26	0.37	0.37	0.00	0.00
40	Toruń	0.31	0.31	0.38	0.00	0.00
41	Ujście	0.30	0.20	0.30	0.10	0.10
42	Unisław	0.36	0.14	0.21	0.07	0.21
43	Wąbrzeźno	0.29	0.21	0.36	0.07	0.07
44	Wągrowiec	0.29	0.21	0.36	0.07	0.07
45	Wrocław	0.53	0.18	0.28	0.00	0.00
46	Wronki	0.29	0.21	0.36	0.07	0.07
47	Zielona Góra	0.30	0.20	0.30	0.10	0.10
48	Żagań	0.25	0.18	0.29	0.18	0.11
49	Żary	0.25	0.18	0.29	0.18	0.11

*Points (from 0 to 1)—it is a relative intensity of a particular PB model occurrence concerning the nine analyzed variable.

Results

There was no full implementation of one PB model among the analyzed cases of PB—see [Table 3](#).

In each of the analyzed cases, there were at least three models of PB. In 12 cases, these were characteristics of only three PB models, in four cases: four models, and in 33: all five PB models. The intensity of each PB model occurrence differs. By intensity, we mean scores obtained by each PB case within a particular PB model.

As shown in [Table 4](#), demonstrating the sums and averages of the intensity of PB models, there are two most distinct models: the PA and the CF. Moreover, the MP model, which was shown in the previous research as the most relevant for Eastern European countries, appeared the least frequent in the analyzed PB cases.

Table 4

Total sums and averages of values of each PB model in the analyzed municipalities

PB model	Sum	Average
PA	15.37	0.31
PP	10.08	0.21
CF	15.19	0.31
CB	4.86	0.1
MP	3.49	0.07

The relative intensity of the features of the two PB models dominant in the analyzed cases shows a large variety of configurations. We define dominance as a situation where a PB model obtains the highest score in a particular municipality. Most frequently, dominance has been identified regarding the CF model (in 21 municipalities), then the PA (in 14 municipalities), and the CB (in one municipality). There are no municipalities where MP and PP models obtained a higher score.

Moreover, in 12 municipalities, two models occurred with the same intensity: in 9 municipalities, it was a combination of PA and CF model, and in two municipalities—a combination of PP and CF, while in one, it was a mix of PP and CF. In the other 24 municipalities, a combination of PA and CF was the most intense model (with an even distribution: in one-half of the municipalities (12), PA was stronger than CF, in the second half, it was vice versa).

These results prove that although there is no one dominant PB model present in the analyzed municipalities, the combination of PA and CF characteristics dominates. Additionally, an admixture of the PP model also seems to be important. This model indeed was not dominant, but in six municipalities, a combination of CF, PA, and PP models was identified, with CF being the dominant one and PA and PP having equal intensity.

Conclusion: Participatory Budgeting Models in Poland

This research compared PB procedures in selected municipalities in Poland and aimed at identifying the dominant models of PB. Our study negatively verified the assumption, based

on the previous research (Raudla and Krenjova 2013; Sintomer et al. 2012, 2005), that in Eastern European countries, the MFP model of PB can be perceived as the most typical model. The study has led to two main findings. Firstly, none of the municipalities covered by the study is characterized by a “pure” PB model, as proposed by Sintomer. In fact, in the last 15 years, PB policy diffusion (Oliveira 2017) has been transforming a lot the original conceptions, generating trends of cross-pollination among different cities and producing a prevalence of “patchwork models” which want to balance the harmonization with other experiences with the attempt of incorporating “unique features” which could make each municipality recognizable for its specific peculiarities.

Secondly, considering the average relative intensity of the PB models, the PA and CF scores are the highest in the analyzed cases, and both share the top of the hierarchy. It shows that procedures of PB are partially diversified. They are characterized by an identical average intensity of the PB model occurrence. The PP occupies the third position, while CB and MP are the last ones, with a marginal presence. This generally means that in Polish municipalities:

1. Local administration has the leading role in PB initiation,
2. The phenomenon of self-selection of individual participants (anyone who wants to can participate) is increasingly significant both in the submission of ideas as in the voting part,
3. There are some open discussion during the whole process,
4. The diversity of proposed projects is relatively wide,
5. The role of citizens is limited to the role of the active audience, whose voice is usually respected but has no decision-making power (the municipality is not obliged by the law to implement the PB results).

Based on these characteristics, the “Polish model” of PB can be characterized as: “wide but shallow consultations.”

If being aware of the limitations resulting from the analysis of PB procedures only, we could also relate this model to the critical quality criteria of participatory processes proposed by Schroeter et al. (2016): 1) inclusiveness, 2) information exchange and learning, 3) influence on political decisions. Firstly, the “Polish model” is relatively inclusive because it gives a chance to participate in PB to all willing groups. Of course, individual groups of stakeholders are characterized by a different capacity to participate in public consultations (Maczka et al. 2021). They may also be exposed to factors that make their participation difficult, such as digital exclusion (Matczak et al. 2015b). Nevertheless, the “Polish model” is more inclusive than, for example, models based on a random or targeted selection of particular participants of a process as in CF, CB, and MP models.

Secondly, as far as the exchange of information and learning between different groups is concerned, the “Polish model” creates learning opportunities (higher than in the MP model, but similar to the other types), providing, for example, the presence of open discussions, or making it possible to implement various projects, which also has an educational value. However, the presence of discussions is not enough because the way they are organized, the common understanding of the PB process, and transparency are also important.

Thirdly, concerning the influence on public decisions, the “Polish model” of PB is characterized by consultative character, so we can only talk about advisory influence similar

as in the case of PP and CF models and weaker than in the case of the pure PA model which draws on Latin American experiences. Moreover, it does not include co-governing partnership as in the case of CB and MP models.

National policies of promotion of PB-like practices (as in the case of Solecki Funds) could have expanded the tendency to cross-fertilization and differentiation, that incrementally increased the distance of new experiences from the original Płock model, due to enlarged public investments on PB priorities to be co-decided by citizens (Bednarska-Olejniczak and Olejniczak 2018). The difficult pandemic period has revealed a tendency to increase these “light” forms of engagement through experiments of “contact-free democracy” (Popławski 2020), where the centrality of the use of communication technologies could have been responsible for reducing many community interactions and argumentative discussions and reinforcing the habit to forge public choices around simplified procedures for “summing” individual preferences about public policies and project. The most neglected and challenging PB element, the joint discussion (Sześciło 2015), will probably be even more difficult to implement after the pandemic period. We can also assume that some local governments, trying to find savings, will suspend PB implementation in the future.

The features of the “Polish model” also lead us to conclude that the PB model implemented in Poland was in 2016 in the process of crystallization. PB models undergoing dissemination are evolving, so we may have captured a particular stage of this process. Conducting analogous analyses covering data from subsequent years, especially in a panel scheme, would capture both the evolution process and its finalization. It will then be possible to determine whether the “Polish model” of PB is a patchwork model or whether we have captured a particular stage of reaching pure models. In the first case, this would be an important indication for the modification of Sintomer’s typology.

The case of the city of Płock, which was the basis for Sintomer’s (2012) and other authors’ (Raudla and Krenjova 2013) conclusions, was idiosyncratic. Płock is not typical compared to other municipalities, and the procedures of PB implementation in other Polish cities have been different.

A rapid increase in PB implementations has been observed worldwide and in Eastern European countries. The easiest way to implement PB was to become path-dependent (Pierson 2000) and follow the procedures tested and modified by big municipalities. It could lead to the ritualization and bureaucratization of PB. Currently, the PB procedures are no longer subject to such dynamic modifications as were observed before 2013. There is a real risk that PB will become “just another task to tick off” in many municipalities, implemented with little creativity and, as a result, with less and less public involvement. Moreover, PB’s actual condition and attractiveness depend on the individual approach of the public administration whether novelties are introduced, such as green PB focused on pro-environmental projects or school PB aimed at teaching democracy from the youngest age. There is also a question whether regulation of PB according to one scheme at the national level (currently only for the largest municipalities in Poland) does not do more harm than good to this initiative. It makes PB similar to deciding on other acts of local law, such as spatial plans, which are not very engaging for citizens (Kaczmarek and Wojcicki 2016; Matczak et al. 2016).

Limitations of the Study

Our study has two limitations. Firstly, the selection number of the analyzed PB procedure is not comprehensive. It was due to a lack of publicly available information for some municipalities in 2016 when we collected data. This was especially the case of smaller municipalities. Moreover, at that time, there were no systematic records of PB in Poland. Although the Association of Polish Cities collected basic information on PB in Poland in 2015: budget size, number of the implemented PBs in a particular municipality, and the age of participants, based on a mailing survey, the data were incomplete and insufficient from the perspective of our analysis. Because of that, we decided to limit the territorial scope of our analysis and browsed the municipalities' web pages using keywords for the Internet search of PB rules (Sadło 2017). We recommend that further studies encompass cases from the whole country based on the updated record of PB in Poland.

Secondly, ideally, an investigation of the PB model should triangulate information on how a PB was conducted. This study had small resources, and it was relatively hard to conduct a survey, including the citizens who participate in a public consultation process such as PB (a relatively small part of the general population participate in public consultations). Therefore, we chose to concentrate on the PB regulations as the data source and treated our research as a foundation for a more comprehensive research project. It is worth including a survey conducted among those citizens who participated and those who did not participate in PB, coupled with an in-depth interview with the representatives of each group of stakeholders involved in the PB (local government, NGOs, and citizens who participated and who did not).

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