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A Civic Budget as a form of civil participation, or an institutional PR tool. The Civic Budget in the City of Poznań

Abstract: The paper discusses the Civic Budget of the City of Poznań (CBP). The analysis focuses on the nature of the CBP and the extent to which it is a participatory budget or rather a PR instrument. The hypothesis is proposed that participatory budgets in Poland are more of a PR instrument than participatory budgets in the strict sense. In order to verify this hypothesis the example of Poznań is analyzed, including the evaluation report of the CBP16. It is concluded that such civic budgets as the CBP can hardly be described as participatory budgets in the strict sense. They do not involve enough consultation, deliberation or actual co-deciding. Too few people are involved in the idea of civic budgets and a clear majority of those who do, only take part in the vote. There are only a few people involved on a long-term basis. All this makes the CBP more of a contest and plebiscite, rather than a participatory budget, which is confirmed by the comparison of the principles and practice of the CBP with the definitions of participatory budgets.

Key words: participatory budget, Civic Budget of the City of Poznań (CBP), public relations of local governments, city promotion

The first edition of the Civic Budget of the City of Poznań (hereinafter referred to as CBP) was launched in 2012. The initiative of the then President of Poznań, Ryszard Grobelny, and his officials appeared to have been well received by Poznanians. The incumbent President, elected in 2014, Jacek Jaśkowiak, has continued the project. Actually, in his election platform he promised to reinforce the instrument of CBP and increase the resources dedicated to the CBP up to PLN 30 mln (Lipoński, 2016). The CBP resources increased from PLN 10 to 15 mln in the fourth edition of the CBP16 project (*Poznański Budżet Obywatelski zwiększony...*), then to PLN 17.5 mln in the CBP17 (*Zasady Poznańskiego Budżetu Obywatelskiego 2017*) and to PLN 18 mln in the current CBP18 edition (*160 projektów do...*). The CBP regulations have also changed. It can actually be stated that they were written from scratch within the CBP17 framework. The new principles were intended to facilitate the procedure of project submission and selection. They also took into account the conclusions from the evaluation of the CBP16 edition.

The instrument of civic budgets appears to have been firmly engraved in local governments at the municipal level in Poland. Poznań is an excellent example here. The analysis of successive CBP editions illustrates the principal difficulties encountered when implementing this instrument, as well as its advantages and drawbacks. An interesting research issue emerges in this context, namely the attempt to identify the nature of civic budgets in Poland. The question arises of how to classify them in their present form. There are opinions (or even accusations) by journalists, among others, that civic budgets, such as the CBP, are only an instrument (element) of public relations for the city

hall, or rather for the head of the municipality, the city's mayor or president (*Jakie efekty konsultacji?*). It is therefore worth posing a research question of whether civic budgets in their present form, as exemplified by the CBP, are truly participatory budgets as their name suggests, or rather yet another instrument of local government PR, as has recently been pointed out. In answering this question, a hypothesis should be proposed that the civic budgets implemented in Poland (including the CBP) have the features of participatory budgets and exert an advantageous impact on civic activity of residents but, due to their campaign character and the involvement of city (municipal) halls in their promotion, they are more of a modern PR instrument.

In his definition of a participatory budget, Rachwał (2013, p. 174) indicates that it is a "bottom-up process in which budgetary priorities are identified and citizens indicate which investments and projects should be implemented in their locality." In his opinion, the notion 'civic budget' used in Poland does not fully render the complexity of this process; therefore this scholar is of the opinion that the notion 'participatory budget' appears more appropriate to describe an extended process of citizens influencing the shape of their city's budget. He says that a participatory budget is "an instrument of civil participation in the process of making decisions on public financial resources." He remarks that, in order to talk about truly participatory budgets, specific minimal conditions have to be fulfilled for such a procedure of civil participation. Rachwał lists several principles here. First, the discussion should concern financial (budgetary) issues and the division of limited resources. Second, participatory budgets should be designed for a town/city or its districts, that is for an area with distinct administration and elective decision-making bodies. Third, it does not suffice to have a single meeting or referendum. Fourth, the procedure has to be cyclical. Fifth, participatory budgets should entail the element of public debates, held in the course of special sessions or fora. Sixth, the ideas approved during the meetings should be accounted for. Last but not least, the results of the procedure should be binding, which distinguishes participatory budgets from social consultation (Rachwał, 2013, p. 175).

It is worth emphasizing that some studies indicate that civic budgets have a considerable impact on the growth of social involvement and specific decisions made by city councils. In the surveys conducted among city councillors in the towns of Lublin and Rzeszów, Radzik-Maruszak and Pawłowska noted that when asked about the influence different forms of civic participation have in their opinion, the respondents pointed to civic budgets, coming second only to local elections. Councillors believe that this form has a strong influence on the decisions they make even though the municipal councils as such are barely involved in civic budgets, the researchers stress (Radzik-Maruszak, Pawłowska, 2017, pp. 90–91).

Paweł Głogowski's analysis entitled "Poznański budżet obywatelski 2017 – rekomendacje" [Civic budget of Poznań 2017 – recommendations] observes that "every civic budget should encompass the following: decisions of city residents are binding for the authorities, the process of designing and managing a civic budget is transparent and open, it provides for discussions, facilitates involvement of residents, it is planned for several years and its amount is reasonable" (Głogowski, 2016). His definition of civic budgets is actually similar to that of participatory budgets, yet using the two notions synonymously seems to be an excessive simplification.

This is particularly true when the notion public relations is taken into account. Public relations (PR) are defined as an element of business management as concerns the communication between an institution and its surroundings (Akademia Predu). For instance, Scott M. Cutlip, Allen H. Center and Glen M. Broom define PR as this management function which establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relations between the institution and those groups in the audience that are decisive for its success or failure (newsline.pl). Olędzki stresses the fact that the original, classical approach to PR (the normative variant) is related to managing the image of an organization. In this context, PR is defined as the “ability to manage the image of an organization and shape this image while communicating with its internal and external environment” (Olędzki). He goes on to add that PR is “the name of the art of communication, interpersonal dialogue and avoiding conflicts” (Olędzki, 2006, p. 18).

In the analysis of the importance and role of civic budgets it is worth referring to Barber’s recent observations concerning participatory budgets. In his book *If Mayors Ruled the World* Barber writes that the “city is the only hope for democracy. The neighborhood, the town, and the city and thus the cosmopolis they compose also share the potential for strong democratic participation. [...] participatory budgeting has become a notable urban instrument of both democratization and social justice. It opens the realm of democratic participation and community building [...] at the municipal level, citizen participation is feasible [...] debate among citizens can [...] open the way to common ground. [...] citizen democracy [has become] one of the most significant initiatives in the world in the domain of eDemocracy and eParticipation” (Barber, 2014, pp. 249–257). Interviewed by the “Rzeczpospolita” daily, he says that “the growing strength of cities and their independence from central authorities raises some hopes. Given the dysfunctional central governments, local governments are becoming the mainstay of normalness, progress, tolerance and even combating climate change. This is true about the USA and the rest of the world, including Poland [...] Even if the central government in Warsaw attempts to introduce the wildest and most backwards changes, the authorities of such cities as Gdańsk, Wrocław, Katowice and Warsaw will ensure the survival of progressive values” (Barber, 2017).

It should be emphasized that local governments, in particular those in large regional cities, are increasing their outlays on local marketing and broadly understood promotion. Socha states in his article “PR za PRL” [PR in the Polish People’s Republic] that “promotion has become fashionable in local governments” and “the PR sector has unexpectedly discovered this client – a good client who is resistant to market turbulence.” He makes an interesting comparison of how many people are professionally involved in the promotion of selected cities. In 2012, he wrote that “36 people deal with PR, or – briefly speaking – with promotion, in Gdańsk City Hall, 24 in Poznań, 31 in Wrocław, and in Łódź and Kraków – 44–45 workers each.” Socha rightly notes that “the PR of local government frequently has the face and name of the local ruler. President of Zielona Góra, Janusz Kubicki, who ran for reelection in 2010, advertised the annual grape harvest with his own face featuring on several dozen enormous billboards. His employees told the media that ‘our campaign was preceded by a thorough analysis which showed that personalized advertising is more effective.’ Yet one year later, the ‘thorough analysis’ was forgotten and the invitation did not make use of the president’s portrait and was more moderate. Inhabitants of towns and cities are frequently irritated when local awards or

scholarships are referred to as the president's or mayor's awards, instead of the awards of their respective towns. They point to huge advertisements being purchased in the newspapers by local authorities to give the president an opportunity to wish the readers a happy holiday of this or that kind. The closer the elections, the greater the format of those wishes. Flickering through the publications issued by local authorities they count the pictures featuring the mayor or head of their municipality in the foreground and name it a feudal manner of self-promotion." He concludes by yet another example: "Members of local authorities are ready to make different sacrifices. In late December of 2011, the town of Strzelce Opolskie was not so much excited about a new roofed swimming pool opened in the Strzelec Recreation and Sports Center but about their mayor, who was the first one to test the pool diving in fully clad in a suit and bow-tie. 'It's a good thing he took off his glasses and shoes' journalists said" (Socha, 2012).

Such examples appear to confirm that, in the practical operations of local authorities, local marketing is combined with political marketing. The city's promotional activities typically benefit its president (mayor). A skillfully implemented information strategy of the city hall should translate into the support city residents give to the city authorities, and ensure their positive assessment of the executive power – the president. It is difficult to believe it has been a coincidence that promotional activities have intensified after the electoral principles pertaining to county heads, mayors and presidents changed in 2002, when they started to be directly elected. The numbers of officers in charge of information and promotional activities have been on the rise along with the budgets allocated to them. The Supreme Audit Office (NIK) has reviewed cities' promotional expenditures. NIK auditors have noted that "the analysis of reports by local governments performed by the Ministry of Finance over 2005–2010 has revealed that their promotion expenditures increased six times in this period (from PLN 109 mln to PLN 651 mln). The greatest increases were recorded in cities with county rights and in regions – by 654% and 781% respectively. Cities with county rights and municipalities spent the greatest share of their budgets on promotion, accounting for 46% and 39% respectively in 2010. In 2011–2013 the following cities with county rights had the greatest promotional expenditure: Warsaw (PLN 85.8 mln), Gdańsk (PLN 59.3 mln), Bydgoszcz (PLN 52.6 mln), Łódź (PLN 49.1 mln) and Gdynia (PLN 46.3 mln). High outlays on the promotional activities of the public administration, financed from public resources, attracted the attention of NIK as early as in 2011. An audit of local governments in regions, counties and municipalities revealed multiple faults (such as a lack of appropriate supervision of local authorities over the implementation of promotional services rendered, and failing to define the expected, measurable outcomes or benefits of marketing activities planned)" (*Działania promocyjne wybranych miast na prawach powiatu*).¹

We should therefore consider the nature of civic budgets in Poland: are they more participatory budgets, or rather PR instruments employed by the authorities? Taking into consideration the above-quoted definitions of participatory budgets, civic budgets in Poland seem to lack participation which is replaced by communication. The CBP is an excellent example here. The principles of the CBP are presented on a website dedicated exclusively to it (<https://budzet.um.poznan.pl>). Poznań City Hall announces there that

¹ It was not the first such audit. Cf. *Działania promocyjne jednostek samorządu terytorialnego*, Informacja o wynikach kontroli, Nr Ewid. 25/2012/P/11/005/KAP.

the “civic budget is a process allowing the residents of a local community to make direct decisions on how to allocate a portion of public resources. It is therefore a tool facilitating the submission, discussion and implementation of projects for the benefit of your city and its residents. The civic budget means public money whose purpose is decided by city residents. It does not involve any additional resources, but specific amounts which are embedded in the overall city budget.”

In 2016, the whole city of Poznań had PLN 17.5 mln at its disposal, followed by a further 18 mln in 2017. Civic budgets offer a unique opportunity to city residents to truly and directly participate in deciding on how a portion of the city budget will be spent. Every resident of Poznań can take part in the Poznań Civic Budget. They can submit projects that pertain to any field of life: sports, leisure, education, culture, transportation, environmental protection, social aid, public space, urban greenery, and so on. “A proposal for a project to be implemented under the Civic Budget of Poznań may be submitted by any resident of Poznań – a natural person residing in the territory of the city” (budzet.um.poznan.pl).

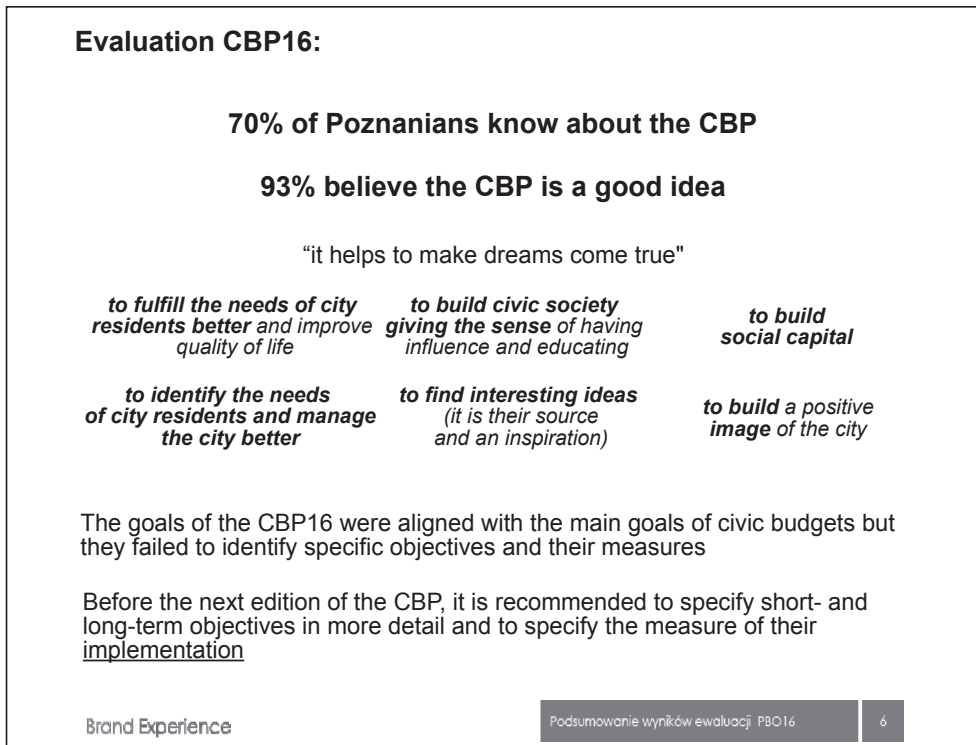
The evaluation of the CBP16 by the above-mentioned Paweł Głogowski stresses that “discussing the Civic Budget of Poznań we primarily concentrate on numbers. We are electrified by the amount of the budget, the number of projects submitted and votes cast. So far, however, we have been lacking a serious discussion over the issue of what participatory budgets should be to the city and its dwellers. [...] Failing to define the horizon and objective we want to pursue together, designing the CBP, makes it difficult to build an instrument that city residents will understand and trust” (Głogowski, 2016). Another important issue Głogowski stresses concerns the legal basis of the CBP. Analyzing the legal basis, it is worth bearing in mind that civic budgets should not be identified with social consultations which, by principle, are not binding for the authorities. The decrees the president has issued so far have in no way guaranteed that the projects submitted and selected by the inhabitants under the CBP procedure will be implemented. By this token, the current status of the CBP fails to meet one of the fundamental elements of participatory budgets, namely being legally binding” (Głogowski, 2016).

Yet it should be stressed that the instrument of civic or participatory budgets is absent from Polish legislation. From the formal point of view, the activities implemented by municipalities constitute social consultations since they are founded entirely on Article 5(a) of the law on municipal governments, which stipulates that, in the cases specified by the law and in other matters that are important for the municipality, consultations with its residents may be carried out. The principles and mode of consultations with the residents of the municipality are stipulated in a resolution of the municipal council (*Ustawa o samorządzie gminnym*). Therefore, in compliance with Polish legislation, civic budgets are not, and cannot be binding, the more so as the resources they allocate are part of the municipal budget.

Thus, it should be assumed that both the CBP and other civic budgets in Poland to a large extent are an element of the PR activities of city halls, including Poznań in this case. Taking into account how public relations are defined and perceived, this should not be viewed critically, however. When analyzing the differences, it should be stressed that if the CBP is a PR instrument of local authorities that Poznań City Hall addresses at the city residents, the best assessment of its effectiveness, including the quality of this tool, is expressed by the opinion of Poznań residents as the recipients of these activities. Therefore, the selected results of the evaluation made of the CBP16 are worth presenting.

The CBP16 is frequently considered to be the least successful of all. Rafał Janowicz, who was in charge of the first such comprehensive evaluation of the CBP, stresses in the report evaluating this edition of the city budget that “the implementation of social innovations (such as the CBP16) always poses a challenge, requires permanent monitoring and reviewing, thereby making it possible to pursue the goals set for such a civic budget. The evaluation of the CBP15 allowed us to identify which elements needed to be changed and draw up the recommendations for further editions. Some of them were included in the CBP16 whereas others still need to be considered before being introduced. The process of finding the right model for the CBP continues as both the city and its residents constantly change, which creates the need to adapt the model of the civic budget in Poznań to a changing reality and future challenges. The aim of the almost two month-long evaluation process [...] was to provide the data allowing the civic budget of Poznań to be improved in the editions to follow, so that it addresses both social needs and the goals of such a budget” (*Ewaluacja Poznańskiego Budżetu Obywatelskiego* 2016).

The study was conducted in order to evaluate the Civic Budget of Poznań 2016 and develop an improved model for the next edition – CBP 2017. The study applied methodological triangulation, among other things, which is understood as “carrying out studies and analyses using mutually complementing methods and techniques adjusted to different

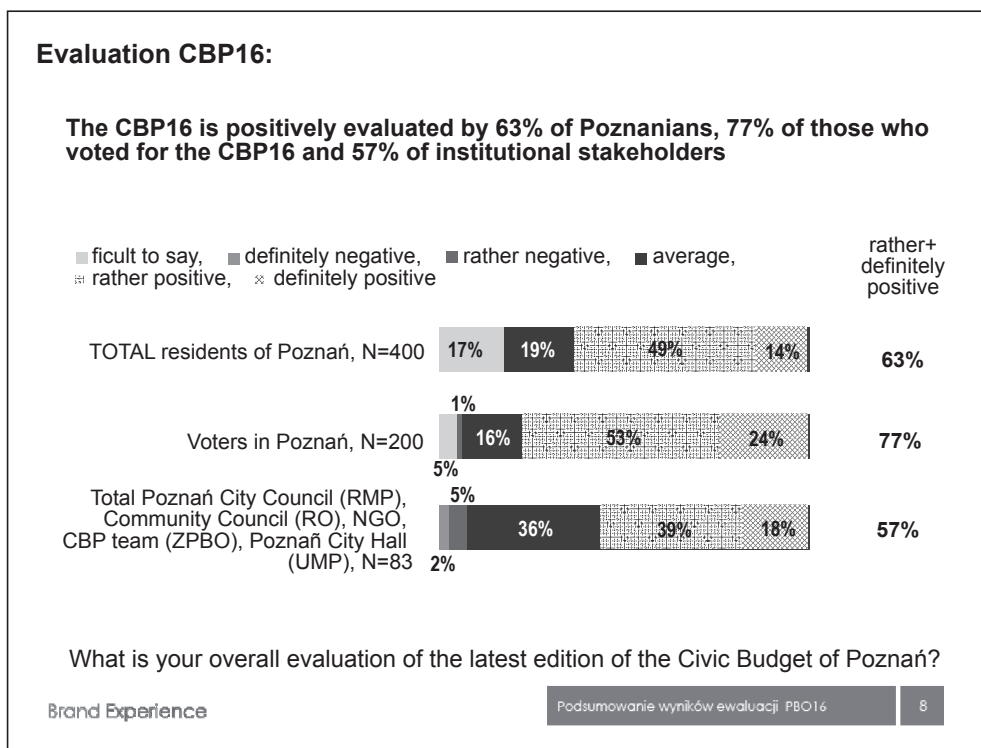


Graph 1. General evaluation of CBP16

Source: *Ewaluacja Poznańskiego Budżetu Obywatelskiego 2016*, Prezentacja głównych wyników badania ewaluacyjnego dla Gabinetu Prezydenta Miasta Poznania, Poznań, 8 kwietnia 2016 r.

stakeholder groups, budget capacities and the time allowed for the project.” The team from Brand Experience ran an evaluation study, comprising 251 online interviews, a representative telephone survey on a sample of 600 Poznanians and eight in-depth interviews with City Councillors. All this accounted for 1,000 stakeholders taking part by means of 851 online interviews, 149 interviews given during 12 evaluation meetings and 8 in-depth interviews. The study results clearly indicate that as many as 93% of respondents from Poznań (including 99% of voters for the CBP16 and 99% of the representatives of institutional stakeholders) believe that the CBP is definitely or quite a good idea. In the opinion of the respondents “the CBP is a good idea allowing the needs of city residents to be met, improve quality of life and create civil society, giving the sense of having influence and educating. Additionally, it builds social capital, offers an instrument for needs analysis, is a source of interesting ideas and a way to build the image of the city.”

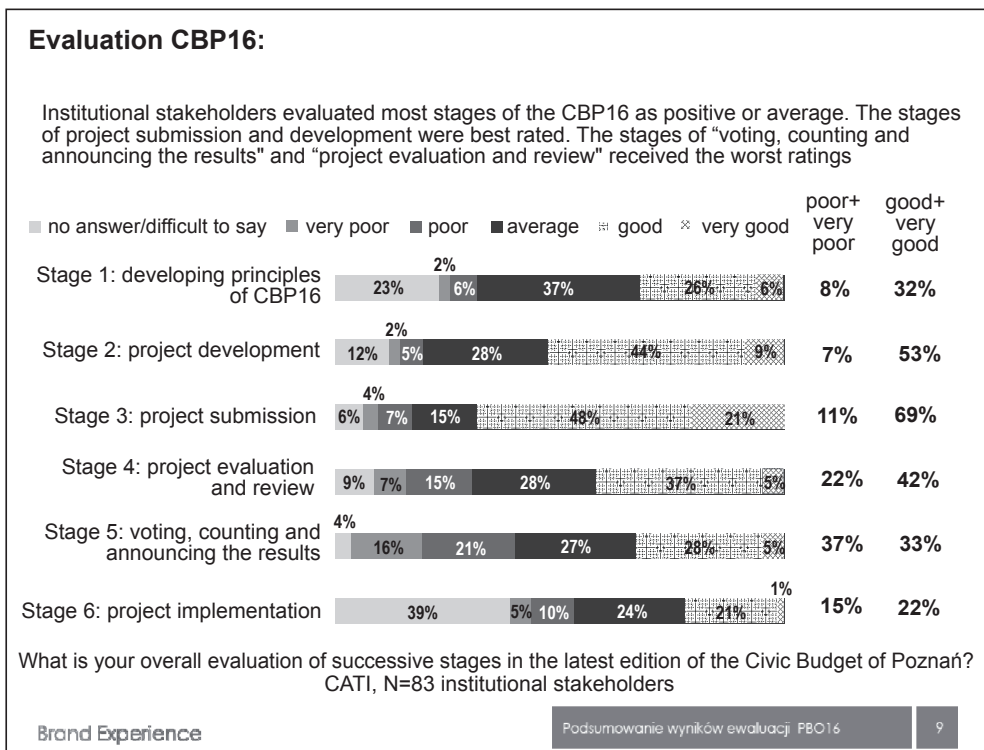
The above graph demonstrates that as many as 70% of city residents know about the CBP. It can therefore be said that it is a familiar and recognizable ‘brand,’ which is a sufficient reason to continue it. At the same time, the respondents found it difficult to identify CBP objectives, which resulted in such general and imprecise replies as “to make dreams come true,” “to find ideas,” as well as “to build the image of the city,” “to identify the needs of residents and manage the city better.”



Graph 2. CBP16 evaluated by different groups

Source: *Ewaluacja Poznańskiego Budżetu Obywatelskiego 2016*, Prezentacja głównych wyników badania ewaluacyjnego dla Gabinetu Prezydenta Miasta Poznania, Poznań, 8 kwietnia 2016 r.

Graph 2 shows that the CBP is best evaluated by the residents who voted for it (77% of positive opinions). The evaluation of residents in general was slightly lower, which is the consequence of a high proportion of respondents who had no opinion (17% of replies: “difficult to say”). Thus, Poznanians appreciate the possibility of taking part in the vote. The greatest criticism was expressed by the respondents most involved in the CBP, who are aware of the organizational difficulties related to the whole procedure – city councillors, officers and applicants (57% of positive replies). It is worth emphasizing that there were no undecided respondents in this group – everybody had a clear opinion on this matter.



Graph 3. Assessment of successive stages of the CBP

Source: *Ewaluacja Poznańskiego Budżetu Obywatelskiego 2016*, Prezentacja głównych wyników badania ewaluacyjnego dla Gabinetu Prezydenta Miasta Poznania, Poznań, 8 kwietnia 2016 r.

Whereas the evaluation of the CBP as a whole was more or less unified and generally positive, the individual stages differed considerably in terms of their assessment. The respondents were definitely most appreciative of the submission (69% of positive opinions) and development stages, and most critical of the voting stage, counting of votes and announcing the results. There were also many negative opinions concerning the stage of project evaluation and review. A considerable proportion of respondents was not able or did not want to evaluate the last stage, namely project implementation (as many as 39% did not respond to this question). This may partly be explained by the fact

that, at the time of the evaluation study, a majority of the selected projects had not been implemented yet. Nevertheless, these results are quite a clear indication that whereas the evaluation of the CBP as such (or as an idea) is overall positive, its course and organization are definitely rated lower.

Evaluation CBP16:

The greatest successes of the CBP16:

- The amount of the CBP increased by PLN 5 mln
- The CBP was divided into district and general urban projects
- CBP principles were established together with society and the CBP team was established
- The number of submitted projects increased from 207 to 272
- Project value was limited, thereby allowing a larger number of projects to be implemented
- A larger number of projects was admitted for vote: from 30 to 168
- The number of voters increased from 54,000 to 73,000; one of the reasons for this was
- Abandoning the criterion of voters' registration of residence which increased the opportunities of non-registered residents to vote
- 38 projects were selected for implementation, which is six times more than in the previous edition
- Broader information campaign than in the previous editions (including the mini-guidebook, school workshops, TV Map of Dreams).

Brand Experience

Podsumowanie wyników ewaluacji PBO16

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Graph 4. CBP16 greatest successes

Source: *Ewaluacja Poznańskiego Budżetu Obywatelskiego 2016*, Prezentacja głównych wyników badania ewaluacyjnego dla Gabinetu Prezydenta Miasta Poznania, Poznań, 8 kwietnia 2016 r.

Indicating the advantages of the CBP16, respondents primarily pointed to the amount which went up by PLN 5 mln, and the division of the CBP into projects addressing individual districts and general urban projects. The fact that the number of submitted projects increased from 207 (CBP15) to 272 (CBP16), and that the number of projects admitted for vote rose from 30 (CBP15) to 168 (CBP16) was also seen as a positive development, as was the number of voters, which went up from 54,000 to 73,000, and the implementation of as many as 38 projects, which was six times more than in the previous edition. It was noted that, regardless of organizational drawbacks, the CBP opened to residents to a larger extent, arousing higher interest levels, which translated into a higher participation of city residents in all stages of the process.

Evaluation CBP16:

The greatest weaknesses of the CBP16:

- The principles were not sufficiently transparent and clear,
- CBP regulations were imprecisely formulated,
- The principles changed in the course of the CBP,
- The circulation of information was poor and communication incoherent,
- The division of resources between city districts was unfair,
- Some regions of the city were excluded (housing estates on the outskirts and small housing estates),
- The organization and principles of the voting process and counting of votes aroused controversy,
- There was no guarantee that the projects would be implemented vote results were not binding,
- The roles of community councils, applicants, project evaluators, process managers and persons in charge of the CBP16 process were mixed,
- There were no clear principles and procedures for project evaluation,
- The amount of the budget and the CBP was insufficient,
- The system of project monitoring and evaluation was weak and the outcomes of the CBP were poorly promoted.

Graph 5. CBP16 greatest drawbacks

Source: *Ewaluacja Poznańskiego Budżetu Obywatelskiego 2016*, Prezentacja głównych wyników badania ewaluacyjnego dla Gabinetu Prezydenta Miasta Poznania, Poznań, 8 kwietnia 2016 r.

The greatest drawbacks of the CBP16 edition involved insufficient transparency and unclear rules and regulations of the CBP; the resulting changes of principles introduced during the CBP; according to many residents, an unfair division of resources between the districts;² non-transparent procedure of project evaluation; the controversies arising in the process of voting and counting of votes; and – perhaps most importantly – the lack of guarantees that the winning projects would actually be implemented. Due to negligence, the winning project turned out to be impossible to implement for formal reasons (such as the lack of a conservation officer’s permit) even though the City Hall had issued a positive opinion at the verification stage, stating that there were no formal barriers and admitting the project for vote. There can hardly be something worse for the city, or more discouraging for applicants, than the knowledge that the project that wins support from city residents will not be implemented through the fault of officials.

² Poznań is administratively divided into 42 estates, but in the CBP16, the city was divided into five parts corresponding to the historical city districts. Therefore, the winners were projects enjoying the support of people residing in multifamily buildings (in the city center and on cooperative housing estates).

General recommendations:

1. The CBP should become "a common civil good" and a tool for building civil society as well as the social capital of Poznań
2. The entire process needs to be prepared better, which includes more precise principles and planning of each stage of the CBP to ensure its clarity and transparency
3. A change of the CBP timeline should be considered so as to allow project evaluation to finish in June and carry out voting in the early October
4. Each stage should provide for the involvement of citizens
5. It should be considered expanding the CBP model to include the following:
 - the stage of project discussion
 - organized monitoring of the project implementation stage
 - the process of running CBP evaluation
6. Further editions should aim to improve the outcomes of the CBP in terms of the following:
 - the extent of social agreement on the CBP implementation principles
 - facilitating discussion on the projects by ensuring appropriate conditions and education



Brand Experience

Rekomendacje dla PBO

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Graph 6. Recommendations for the future (successive CBP editions)

Source: *Ewaluacja Poznańskiego Budżetu Obywatelskiego 2016*, Prezentacja głównych wyników badania ewaluacyjnego dla Gabinetu Prezydenta Miasta Poznania, Poznań, 8 kwietnia 2016 r.

The evaluation brought the following principal conclusions which, to a large extent, were taken into consideration in the following edition of CBP17. First, in the opinion of the respondents, the CBPs should become a "common civil good" and an instrument for building civil society and social capital. These quite vague, yet highly ambitious objectives appear to respond to residents' needs related to increasing the role of the CBP. The experience has additionally shown that the entire process should have been prepared with more care, the principles should have been described in more detail and the course of the CBP planned at every stage. In the opinion of the respondents, only then could the transparency of the process have been ensured. Additionally, a change to the timeline has been suggested, where successive stages should be accelerated, and residents' involvement increased, among other things by means of introducing a stage of discussion over the projects. The evaluation study laid the foundations for a comprehensive review of the entire CBP procedure once more and facilitated the work on the CBP17 which was much better designed and, consequently carried out.

In conclusion, it can be said that civic budgets, such as the Civic Budget of Poznań, do not quite fall into the category of participatory budgets. They lack consultation, discus-

sion and the actual co-deciding practice. Too few people get involved in this idea, and a majority of them merely cast their votes. There are only a few long-term activists. For these reasons, the CBP is more of a contest, a kind of plebiscite rather than a participatory budget as confirmed by the comparison of the principles and practice of the CBP with the definitions of participatory budgets. The CBP is more reminiscent of urban contests for grants dedicated to city residents rather than to community councils and entities of the third sector (NGOs). It is a contest or a PR tool employed by the city hall and president of the city. The hypothesis posed at the beginning appears to be confirmed. This does not mean, however, that criticism of the idea of the CBP is justified. After all, the conclusions show that the CBP is a highly valuable, needed and appreciated initiative which deserves to be continued. In 1930, Arthur W. Page wrote that the first principle of PR is “tell the truth,” the second one is “prove it with action” and the third one says “listen to the customer” (Page). The CBP is a nearly pure example of PR. Yet if PR is about telling the truth (communicating data and facts), there is nothing wrong about it at all. The principles governing the CBP17 showed that a considerable portion of conclusions from the evaluation of the CBP16 were included. Thanks to this, the later edition was a definite improvement on the CBP16, maybe the best edition of the civic budget in Poznań ever. The only shortcoming was the lower turnout, which resulted from abandoning paper ballots and going only for online voting. On the other hand, this meant that nearly 100% of votes cast were valid, in contrast to earlier editions when even up to 20% of votes had to be invalidated.

As concerns the hypothesis proposed, the conclusion is that the initiative of the CBP has considerably more in common with the PR instruments of the City Hall than with the true and in-depth participation of city dwellers. Yet the conclusions drawn from the observations and studies raise hopes that the CBP as a PR instrument may conceivably transform into a participatory budget in the strict sense. The CBP continues to evolve towards increasing the involvement of city residents at every stage thereby making this scenario possible in the future. Maybe even after several years, the answer to the question asked in the title of this paper will be different than today. The CBP will transform from a PR tool of local government into a true participatory budget. On the other hand, once the CBP meets the criteria allowing it to be classified as a participatory budget, it should not lose its PR features. After all, definitions of PR demonstrate that the motto of this form of communication boils down to saying “do good and talk about it,” and PR as such is about “communicating the truth” (Goban-Klas, 1997, p. 19). Maybe a paper will be written in the future entitled “The evolution of the CBP – from being a PR tool (contest) to a strategy (dialogue with city dwellers).”

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Budżet obywatelski jako forma partycypacji mieszkańców czy narzędzie PR urzędu? Przykład Poznańskiego Budżetu Obywatelskiego

Streszczenie

W artykule omówiono instytucję Poznańskiego Budżetu Obywatelskiego. Przeprowadzona analiza dotyczy istoty PBO – ile w nim z budżetów partycypacyjnych a ile z public relations. Postawiona hipoteza uznaje polskie budżety partycypacyjne w większym stopniu za narzędzie PR niż budżet partycypacyjny *sensu stricto*. Weryfikując hipotezę posłużono się przykładem poznańskim, w tym raportem z ewaluacji PBO16. W efekcie należy stwierdzić, że budżety obywatelskie takie jak PBO trudno zaliczyć do budżetów partycypacyjnych *sensu stricto*. Za mało w nich konsultacji, deliberacji, faktycznego

współdecydowania. Za mało ludzi angażuje się w tę ideę, a jeśli już to zdecydowana większość tylko podczas głosowania. Osób dłużej działających jest niewiele. Dlatego też PBO to w większym stopniu konkurs, rodzaj plebiscytu, niż budżet partycypacyjny, jeżeli zestawimy zasady i praktykę PBO z definicjami budżetów partycypacyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: budżet partycypacyjny, Poznański Budżet Obywatelski, samorządowe public relations, promocja miast