

Understanding Participatory Budgeting:
Lessons learned from Bratislava
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Abstract

Participatory budgeting is one of the current emerging trends in deliberative and participatory innovations in Europe and in the world. Despite the growing literature, number of analyzed cases from the post-communist countries is still unsatisfactory. This thesis tries to fill in the niche in the literature by presenting a case study of participatory budgeting in Slovakia. I collected unique data which show that a civil association can be a successful initiator of such democratic innovation. The conclusions regarding participation suggest that, on one hand, there are special supportive mechanisms for including young people and elderly who are considered to be underrepresented in the political process. On the other hand, there are high time and energy requirements placed on citizens who participate at the highest level, though having the largest effect on the final outcome.

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Introduction

Participatory budgeting is one of the current emerging trends in deliberative and participatory innovations in Europe and in the world. Several international organizations like the United Nations or the World Bank included the participatory budgeting into their objectives. Nowadays the spread of the participatory budgeting is worldwide¹. The most recent data estimate that in 2010 there were more than 200 cases in Europe, and around 1400 worldwide (Sintomer et al. 2010). Despite the growing literature, number of analyzed cases from the post-communist countries is still unsatisfactory. This thesis tries to fill in the niche in the literature by presenting a case study of participatory budgeting in Slovakia.

In the theoretical part, I present the positive implications of democratic innovation for decreasing the democratic deficit. I describe the democratic deficit by Fung's concept in four steps (Fung 2005). First, deficit is in the citizen preference formation. Deliberation, which is also one part of a participatory budget process, can increase people's knowledge and information on certain issues (Fishkin 2005). The second problem is in participation through election. In representative democracies the choice of a party candidate is the essential act of conveys voter's preferences. One further problem is in the frequency and nature of elections. Usually, elections take place every 4 or 5 year. In the meantime, voters need a way to express their preferences between elections and earlier than at the next elections. Moreover, elections provide overall alternatives in which parties provide a set of positions and proposals on a multiplicity of issues and specific input from citizens on particular problems of concern is necessary between elections.

Deliberative innovations can help in alleviating this problem. They can be used in the period between elections in order to bring into the political process citizens as well as to collect and

¹ Online map including many cases can be found at Tiago Peixoto, "Participatory Budgeting," Google Maps, September 9, 2008, accessed June 4, 2013, <http://tiny.cc/pbmapping>.

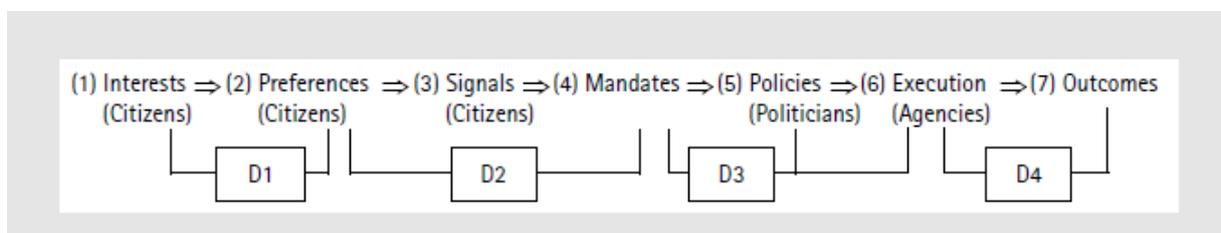
aggregate citizens' opinions and deliver these opinions to elected representatives. The democratic theory might find other channels for active civic participation. Many possible improvements are offered in the range of deliberative innovations (Fishkin 2005, Fung 2005, Smith 2009). The third deficit is present in low level of transparency. Including citizen into decision-making processes and monitoring processes increase the transparency and accountability (Wampler 2000). The fourth deficit can be overcome by including all the relevant actors into decision making, or the policy-maker needs to have specific information from various actors.

I collected unique data which show that a civil association can be a successful initiator of such democratic innovation. The conclusions regarding participation suggest that, on one hand, there are special supportive mechanisms for including young people and elderly who are considered to be underrepresented in the political process. On the other hand, there are high time and energy requirements placed on citizens who participate at the highest level, though having the largest effect on the final outcome.

1. Democratic deficits in the policy process

In this part I will present coherent approach to democratic deficit which distinguishes between 4 types of democratic deficits in the performance of democratic system (Fung 2005). Deliberative innovations can help in different stages of democratic process. There are various democratic innovations which might improve the current deficit. The biggest focus is placed on participatory budgets.

Figure 1: Democratic deficits in policy process



Source: Fung 2005.

The first deficit is in citizens' preferences formation is shown in Figure 1 in the first box. People often do not have enough information, and cost of information is high in comparison to the benefits that can be easily and evidently derived from it. Also, citizens' preferences are unstable and unclear. The institutional innovations should be focused on the increasing of quality of citizens' preferences. Here, the desirable outcome of the deliberation is gaining knowledge and information.

One democratic innovation for this deficit is deliberative polling that “convene(s) the citizens to deliberate with one another in the effort to improve public opinion and action” (Fung 2005, 672). The author has shown that if citizens are better informed they make better choices after they took part at deliberate polling (Fung 2005). Other study based on assessing the effect of participation revealed similar finding that citizen participation has a positive effect on individual's knowledge and skills no matter which democratic innovation is examined

(Michels 2011). More specific study of participatory budgeting concluded that people during the deliberation phase learn about local issues and they are able to make considered judgments regarding proposed projects (Nieuwland 2003).

The second deficit is in the phase where politicians get signals from their voters. This can be done through election which is illustrated in the D2 box. Election should connect, either directly or indirectly, the policy preferences of the citizenry to public policy (Costello *et al* 2012). The problem is in low voter turnout. Lijphart lists five reasons why low turnout might be a problem (1) It means unequal turnout that is systematically biased against less well-to-do citizens. (2) Unequal turnout spells unequal political influence. (3) U.S. voter turnout is especially low, but, measured as percent of voting-age population; it is also relatively low in most other countries. (4) Turnout in midterm, regional, local, and supranational elections-less salient but by no means unimportant elections-tends to be especially poor. (5) Turnout appears to be declining everywhere (Lijphart 1997).

Turnout and inequality can be improved by a participatory budget. The classic example of Porto Alegre confirmed that empowered nature of this democratic innovation attracts more underprivileged groups which are politically excluded (Talpin 2007, Baiocchi 2003).

On the other hand, politicians often do not have resources to collect opinion from their voters in order to fulfill their needs or demands. A study of opinion information politicians use in the context of the US concluded that politicians rely on public surveys on important issues. On less important issues they chose to follow the ideology of a party instead of public preferences. Voters' preferences on less salient issues are less likely to be represented in the decision-making process (Druckman and Jacobs 2006).

Designing a participatory budget can help to solve this problem. Regular budget meeting represent an institutionalized form of citizen participation. The outcome is directly

incorporated into the budget. There is an assumption that citizens understand better their problems than the government (Wampler 2000). PB can decrease the cost for government to collect specific citizen ideas. At the same time it increases the possibility of people to engage in decision-making process and deliver their message more often than once per four years. Other democratic innovations such as deliberative polls or civic assemblies can also produce information about the voters' interest, especially when people have unique information about the issue (Smith 2009).

The third deficit lies in difficulties holding politicians accountable for their actions. Lack of accountability can lead to the existence of corruption and patronage relationships which favor certain groups of people more than others (Wampler 2000). One of the possible solutions to increase accountability is through increasing transparency in the decision-making process. This can be done either by making public the state administrative spending, state contracts or any other documents connected with the state and its organization.

Similarly, participatory budgeting can increase the accountability and transparency. This is done by engaging citizens directly into monitoring processes (Wampler 2000, Baiocchi 2003). Corruption and clientelism decreased after implementation of the participatory budget in Porto Alegre (Baiocchi 2003). On the contrary, the effect on increasing transparency was less striking in Europe because the starting position regarding transparency was better (Sintomer 2010).

The fourth deficit, which is shown in Figure 1 as box D4, concerns political outcomes. Politicians cannot always control the administrative part of the political process which implements decisions. The decision-making process many times includes more actors and, similarly, the outcome of such policy process influence more actors. Politicians can not

control the whole political process and they need to include more non-state actors in order to achieve legitimate decision.

This fourth deficit leads the discussion to the normative issues, where people can open a discussion on a certain problem and involve more participants who should be concerned. Fung names the deliberate solutions as alternative governments and public solving capacity (2005, 679). If the problem requires including more actors, state might not have the resources or ability to do that. Instead, it can propose the new policy without consulting with stakeholders.

The prime example for this innovation is deliberation in Chicago schools councils and public security deliberations (Fung 2001). In the case of public schools in Chicago, the city in cooperation with schools proposed Local School Councils (LSC). This organ consisted of school principal, teachers, parents, local citizens and one student. The task of these councils was to elect the principal, decide on curriculum and school budget. This deliberative innovation was designed for a specific context. Families whose children went to the schools were of lower income and many of them were ethnic minorities. These social classes have higher barriers for entering the political arena or are excluded from the political process. The LSC gave them the possibility to express their preferences on education of their children (Fung).

In this part I have shown that democratic innovations, especially participatory budgeting could help with four deficits which can emerge in a political system. Participatory budgets proved to have an effect on preference formation, citizen participation and the level of accountability and transparency. In the following parts I will focus more only on participatory budgets.

1.2 The definitions of participatory budgeting (PB)

There are various approaches to defining a participatory budget. We can divide them according to whether they are normative or analytical. The first group of definition is formed by international organizations – the World Bank, the United Nations and the Council of Europe. The second group of definitions is proposed by scholars who study the phenomena of PB in comparative perspective.

The normative definitions are often given by international organizations such as the World Bank (WB), which have participatory budgeting in their objectives. Similarly, the United Nations HABITAT's² basic definition is: “Participatory budgeting is an innovative mechanism that promotes the engagement of local government, private sector and civil society alike in the allocation of municipal resources” (UN-Habitat 2004). The definition of the Council of Europe is more detailed than the previous one. In the study of legislative on participatory budgeting, the Council of Europe lists its following features: (1) financial and/or budgetary dimension is discussed; (2) city level or a (decentralized) district with an elected body and some power of administration is involved; (3) the process is repeated; (4) the process includes forms of public deliberation (specific meetings or forums); (5) some final decisions by the deliberative organs (municipal councils) are expected (Vodusek and Biefnot, Council of Europe 2011).

The definition of the WB is broader than of other scholars. First, they include all the actors into the process including the underprivileged groups as poor people or women, and also the interest groups, parliaments and donors (World Bank, 2004). The World Bank expands the definition of participatory budgeting into 3 different stages. The first stage is the actual budget proposal where citizens can express their comments and decide on various issues. This part is

² program focused on supporting governments in the formulation of policies and strategies with a view to creating and strengthening self-reliant urban planning and management capacity at both national and local levels and promoting sustainable urbanization

the same in other authors' definitions as well. However, the WB stretches the definition into two more stages – monitoring expenditures and public goods delivery. In the first monitoring phase citizens can track the resource allocation; in the second they check on quality of services in relation to government spending (World Bank, 2004).

The second big group of definitions is presented by scholars studying participatory budgeting from a general perspective. Sintomer (Sintomer et al. 2008, 2012) presents five criteria of participatory budgeting (1) discussions are about financial issues connected with the budget, e.g. participatory planning without direct discussion about the budget are excluded; (2) a city or a region is represented and involved in the project; (3) it is repeated over years; (4) public deliberation is included; (5) some form of accountability is present.

These were the definition of different approaches to participatory budgeting. I propose a minimalist definition in my thesis. Definition of a participatory budget will further help me to focus on relevant actors and procedures at the case study section in my thesis.

My definition of participatory budgeting:

1. Participants – people
2. Local Budget
3. Deliberation
4. Final outcome
5. Accountability

A participatory budget is a process where more actors are involved in discussing a budget proposal. The traditional budgeting procedure involves only representatives to decide upon the proposal. In participatory budgeting citizens are directly involved. There might be other actors – such as NGOs or organized interests, however these group are not required in this minimalist definition.

Second and the most important feature is to actually have decision power over the budgetary matters. There must be a budget, which is financed by government revenue through taxes and

other fees. This criterion excludes participatory budgeting which is sponsored by private investor or which is not connected with the local government and administrative body.

The third requirement for a participatory budget is deliberation procedure. In the definition I do not impose normative definitions about the level of deliberation included in the budgeting. Minimum deliberation about the proposal is sufficient according to my definition.

The fourth criterion is that the participatory budgeting process have some form of outcome connected to the budget. It might be a full budget proposal which will be implemented by government or a proposal which will be later discussed in parliament or more plausibly local assembly or the participants will make a recommendation about the budget issues.

Some authors emphasize that some kind of accountability on the output is essential (Sintomer *et al* 2012). Also the definition of the World Bank (2004) takes into consideration the processes connected with the budget after the final voting. Participants should be provided the relevant information about the possible implementations of their proposals. This might be a problem in participatory budgeting where the level of empowerment is low and the proposals of participants are only informative.

After defining a participatory budget I will present several cases of participatory budgets in different contexts. First example is the notorious case of Porto Alegre which was the first city where a PB was implemented. Later I will move to cases in Europe, describe their common features and stress what was different in Europe compared to Latin America.

1.3 Porto Alegre

Porto Alegre is the classic and a unique example of participatory budgeting. Most of the academic works on participatory budgeting refer into some extent to the Porto Alegre case

(Wampler 2000, Baiocchi 2001, Fung 2004, Sintomer 2008, Smith 2009). Fung (2004) concludes that the scale, sophistication and depth of the Porto Alegre case are not replicated in any of the other cases.

The exception of Porto Alegre can be explained by three differences from the European experience (Melo, Baiocchi 2006). First difference is in the importance of local governments. Authors point out that during the transition period in Latin America, the role of local government became more important than in the past. Local leaders have enjoyed legitimacy and there were high normative expectations about them. Second difference is in the economic effects of liberal reforms. The country experienced period of liberalization and deregulation which affected all sectors of the economy. The last difference between Latin America and Europe is the emergence of extreme poverty as a product of social dislocations and social exclusion.

The first project of participatory democracy was introduced in the city in the 1980's. Porto Alegre experienced a democratic transition in 1985 (Baiocchi 2003). Overall the economic situation was better in comparison with other Brazilian cities and the main problem was unequal highly society with high percentage of poor areas and poorer citizens living in slums were not equally represented in the government (Baiocchi 2003). However, in spite of the low socio-economic status of the citizens, they were highly politicized and politically mobilized (Wampler 2000). In 1989 The Workers' Party won the local election for the Mayor's office. Their campaign included the proposal of the Participatory Budget where citizens could deliberate on various policies. During the first two years in office, the Workers' party tried various experiments aimed to fight the corruption and patronage linkages and support the engagement of citizens. After the reelection in 1992, the participation increased to 20,000 people per year because of the implementation of the participatory budget (Baiocchi 2003).

The outcome of the participatory budget in Porto Alegre was according to Baiocchi positive. First of all, it was successful in steadily increasing the overall number of participants (Baiocchi 2003, table pp. 51). The initial number of participants went up from less than 2000 in 1989 to 15 000 people in first-round participatory budget meetings in 2000. What's more important, the participation rates were higher from economically poor and people with lower education. The candidates should level down the inequality of representation of poor people in the parliament. The participatory budgeting process should help them to articulate their needs and address direct support for their problems.

The participatory budgeting proved to have an effect on individuals' skills and personal leadership opportunities. The data show that one year of experience appeared to contribute by 25% of more likelihood to be elected as a delegate or a councilor. Also, one more tie in the society makes difference in the outcome with 55% more likelihood; being retired increases the odds by 200% and being self-employed by 80% (Baiocchi 2003).

In conclusion, Baiocchi (2003) identifies three most important outcomes of the PB project. First, empowered participation helped poorer citizens to represents their interest, the redistributive budget was more aimed to underdeveloped areas. Second, participants became more active and interaction within civil society was more intense. This outcome was not achieved directly rather by synergy of various effects. Deliberative meetings engaged people and provided them with a new network for cooperation. Third, gains for individuals were presented by the learning process about political institutions or participation.

1.4 Participatory Budgeting in Europe

After describing the first successful example of the participatory budgeting, I will move onto analyzing different regions where this democratic innovation emerged especially in Europe. I

will follow Sintomer (2008) in emphasizing that there are several differences in structural design of the participatory budgeting, especially that Europe the participatory budgeting usually relies on multiple procedures, in comparison with the Porto Alegre experience.

Analyzing outcomes of participatory budgeting in general is a rather difficult task for a researcher. The example of Porto Alegre has been for a long time the only case where such process was introduced and succeeded and the peculiarities of the context were already noted. Participatory budgeting in Europe increased only shortly after 2000; the total number of participatory budgets in Europe in 2000 was six, whereas in 2005 the number went up to 55 (Sintomer *et al* 2008). The most recent data show over 1500 worldwide. The lack of other examples did not allow researchers to conduct cross-country studies before described increase. More analytical frameworks have been only developed with the increasing number of cases.

Nowadays the spread of the participatory budgeting is worldwide³. The most recent data estimate that in 2010 there were more than 200 cases in Europe, and around 1400 worldwide (Sintomer et al. 2010) Yet, these cases are distinct from Porto Alegre as they are taking place not necessarily in contexts where citizens are politically mobilized, on the contrary, and it is used first as a mean to make people more interested in politics, to bring them back to politics and second as an accountability mechanism⁴.

The sudden increase of participatory budgets can be explained by globalization and democratization. The recent developments is connected with the development in political economy (Melo and Baiocchi 2006). There are trends towards decentralization and devolution which change power relations among various levels of government. Regions and cities are

³ Online map including many cases can be found at Tiago Peixoto, "Participatory Budgeting," Google Maps, September 9, 2008, accessed June 4, 2013, <http://tiny.cc/pbmapping>.

⁴ More info available at "The Participatory Budgeting Project," June 4, 2013, accessed June 4, 2013, <http://www.participatorybudgeting.org/>.

becoming more powerful players and therefore participation in local government is one of the emerging new democratic forms of partnership.

Other factors also contributed to the spread of participatory budget. The United Nations and the World Bank implemented these innovative mechanisms into their objectives. The UN presented the project UN-HABITAT where they highlight the potential benefits of participatory budgeting for good urban governance, for promoting transparency, citizens' participation, boost the revenues, strengthen social networks, benefit the poorest neighborhoods and mediate the differences between the elites and society (UN-HABITAT 2004).

Another international organization, the Council of Europe (CoE), is also focused on promoting and assessing participatory budgets. The CoE follows normative objective to increase the level of participation on the local level. The low level of participation on local and regional level was defined as one of the main challenges for years 2010-2013. They conducted a research where they mapped and analyzed legal regulation on the participatory budgeting.

In the research of legislation on participatory budgeting, nine of twenty-four respondent countries have adopted regulations at the national or/and regional level and/or at the secondary level: Belgium (Region of Brussels Capital), Bulgaria, Denmark, Georgia, Greece, Finland, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Ukraine. They conclude that citizens' participation in preparation and adoption of a budget has become an important issue to central and local authorities (Council of Europe 2011).

Their finding on the legislation is that there is no legal obligation for the member states to implement citizens' comments into the budget proposal. However, there are more and more participatory budgets emerging. Therefore, I conclude that the reason for starting up an

innovative tool for participation on a local level is not legislative. The local actors are not obliged to engage citizens into decision making process. Despite the no regulation, they do. The report of the Council of Europe suggests that is it not the legal obligation. Therefore one important question is who the promoters of participatory budgets are and why they do it.

1.5 Initiation of participatory budgeting

There are two different types of actors who initiate the PB process – a political party or a non-governmental organization. The top-down processes initiated by government are more common in Europe (Wampler 2000, Sintomer 2008). The elected governments tend to be progressive, with a focus on citizen participation and social justice. Wampler describes the difference between progressive and conservative in terms of different management power. Progressive political parties usually implement participatory budgeting while conservatives and center parties manage them after the initiation period. If the implementing party loses the election, the participatory budget could be manipulated (Wampler 2000). However, there are no empirical studies which analyze the continuity of participatory budgets after the election of a new government with opposing ideology.

Another type of implementation process takes places when the initiator is a NGO. There are fewer examples for this scenario. In a theoretical perspective Wampler (2000) supports the view that a NGO could be as powerful actor in initiation as the government. First stage of preparation – raising issues about public spending and transparency is done by a NGO. At the beginning it is advised to focus on budget spending and social justice, later on, more political and technical issues should be discussed. Second stage must be done with cooperation with governments. The author does not specify the necessary conditions that need to be fulfilled for a successful implementation of the PB initiated by a civil society actor. As I will show later in the Bratislava case, strong political commitment is needed from the government.

1.6 What are the requirements for successful participatory budget?

Answer to this question can be found in various different approaches. Brian Wampler (2000, 2007) from the World Bank identifies 4 factors which lead to successful participatory budget: (1) strong mayoral support, (2) a civil society willing and able to contribute to ongoing policy debates, (3) a generally supportive political environment that insulates participatory budgeting from legislators' attacks; and (4) financial resources to fund the projects selected by citizens.

Strong position of the city Mayor was one of the initial conditions in Porto Alegre. Due to continuing transformation and democratization of the country, power of the Mayor was superior to local assembly. Therefore, if the Mayor proposed any change the local assembly didn't have enough power to change the policy. Second, a civil society was remarkably strong. Third, there must be political support from the legislative body. Despite the strong position of the Mayor in Porto Alegre, local assembly could represent an opposition to implementing progressive democratic innovations. Wampler points out that if the Mayor and the legislative have different interest in participatory budgeting, the delegation of power to the participatory budgeting process would require more energy from the Mayor. The fourth condition conducive to PB is a good financial health. If the city budget is in good condition there are more resources which could be allocated to development projects.

2. Case study: Participatory budgeting in Slovakia

2.1 Bratislava. Political situation before the participatory budget

Most of the European experiments are top-down initiations (Sintomer 2008). In other cities the proposal for participatory budget was done by one of the political parties. According his data almost 50% of PBs was proposed by social-democrats and 36% by post-communist/alternative left parties; only 7% were implemented by conservative or liberal parties. The Slovak cases are rather unusual in Europe as they were proposed by civil society organizations in 2011 when Slovakia is an established member of the EU but issues of corruption and lack of accountability remain high on the political agenda, while most forms of citizen political participation register a decrease. Through a systematic analysis of the documents available and interviews with the organizers in Bratislava, I provide an understanding of the process and try to look at some possible explanations about it and its consequences.

The whole process of participatory budget in Bratislava was an initiation of civic association Utopia. Most of the members have either philosophical or social science background. They created a philosophical concept of community governance. The more practical features were copied from the Porto Alegre case. After creating the proposal, organizers made several workshops and presentations about their project for broader public audience. They did not cooperate or consult with other participatory budgeting cities. Organizers stressed that basically there were not any similar cities which could have helped them with the theoretical preparations. The only city with a similar post-communist context where participatory budgeting was implemented was Plock in Poland.⁵

⁵See Plaszczyk In Sintomer at all 2005: 591-599

The major difference between Bratislava and Plock is in including major oil company into participatory budgeting process in Plock. They created a public-private partnership among local politicians, citizens and representatives of the company and with the support of UNDP. They created The Forum for Plock where through deliberation and meetings all participants agreed on priorities and development goals. The initial proposal in Bratislava was made only by civic organization and they don't include business actors.

2.1.1 Participation

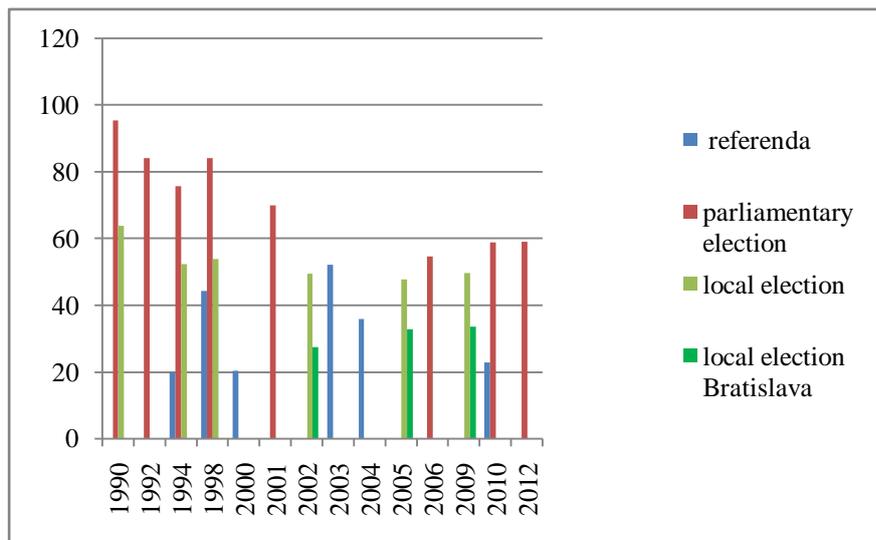
Firstly, I will describe participatory tradition in Slovakia and especially in Bratislava. There are two reasons for considering participation as relevant feature of a political system. First one is connected with the shortcoming of democracy regarding the decrease in voter turnout. If people are not voting, or the turnout is low, it means unequal turnout that is systematically biased against less well-to-do citizens (Lijphart 1997). There are sociological groups of people who are considered to be underprivileged and underrepresented such as women, young people and people with lower income. Similar problem is the frequency of election which enables people to express their opinions only once in four or five years. There are not many tools for them to change their representatives or express interest in between two elections. Democratic innovation such as participatory budget can help to overcome this democratic deficit.

In this part I will present the participation data before implementation of the participatory budget in 2011. As I argued in the theory section, participatory budgets could work as a complementary mean of participation to elections. The problem with elections is the low frequency and lack of specific issues in the campaign. Participatory budgets are held on regular basis and people can express their opinions on specific topics.

The Slovak Republic is a post-communist country where democratization process began in 1989 as part of the Czechoslovakia and continued after the two countries went their separate ways. A particular period of political mobilization was before the 1998 elections when civil society organizations rallied big campaigns against the incumbent Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar whose nationalist and authoritarian tendencies they feared (Butora *et al* 2012). Since then, integrated data from 1994 – 2008 show that there has been a certain decline in active civil participation (Butora *et al* 2012: 67). Explanations of this decline include growing individualism; decreasing of social trust or belief that people do not have power to achieve change.

Table 1 shows participation in elections and referenda in Slovakia since 1989. The first democratic election in 1990 had the highest voter turnout – almost 96%. The electoral participation at the parliamentary election has declined from 84% in 1998 to 60% in 2012. When we focus on the local election, participation is much lower. The national average voter turnout from 2000 to 2010 is under 50%, in Bratislava it was 31%. Similarly participation in referenda is low. The threshold for a successful referendum in Slovakia is 50%. There has been only one successful case in 2004 on joining the EU since independence of Slovakia in 1993. Participation in the successful referendum has surpassed the threshold only by 2.1%. The rest of the referenda were not successful because voter turnout was roughly around 20%.

Graph 1: Participation in Slovakia



Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

We can see from the Table 1 that a general voter turnout in recent years has declined. Participation at the parliamentary election or local election gives citizens the opportunity to express their interest with direct effect on choosing representatives. Despite the fact that people through election can directly influence the political situation, the level of participation is low. Moreover, participation at the local level, where representatives can propose more specific programs, is low; roughly 1/3 of the eligible voters participate.

Participation at referenda shows even lower turnout. Referendum as a tool of direct democracy gives citizens possibility to answer specific question and decide on issue between elections. Likewise, referendum can be used as a tool of empowerment of citizens when they have the right to initiate it with collecting 350 000 signatures according to the Slovak Constitution. However, analyzingg the statistics about participation, referendum is not often used as a mean for expressing citizen interest.

When it comes to other forms of participation – Slovak people are rather passive. Data from the European Values Survey 2008⁶ presented in the Table 2 show that 75% would never join a boycott, or 68% would never attend lawful demonstration. Signing a petition was the only form of non-electoral participation were more than 66% of people declared that they have done or might sign a petition. Overall, apart from voting, Slovak people use mostly petitions for expressing their opinion. Second probable mean of participation is joining a boycott. However, there is still quite high percentage of people who would never do so. Similarly, more than 90% of people would never join more unconventional actions like unofficial strikes or occupation of buildings.

Table 1 Other means of participation in Slovakia

	have done	might do	would never do
signed a petition	37,5%	28,6%	33,9%
joining a boycotts	2,3%	22,8%	74,9%
attending lawful demonstration	5,4%	27%	67,6%
joining unofficial strikes	0,6%	7,4%	92%
occupying buildings/factories	0,1%	4,4%	95,5%

Source: European Values Study 2008

There have been recently strikes of professional organizations of nurses and teachers in 2011. Early in 2012 mass civic protests took place in Bratislava and other major cities which were caused by revealed information about corruption and linkages between high rank politicians

⁶ 4th wave of European Values Study available at <http://www.jdsurvey.net/evs/EVSDData.jsp>

and business groups.⁷ Protesters demanded more transparency in politics and public life. However, the intensity of protests declined after the parliamentary election. Despite the high number of protesters the government did not make any changes which were demanded by protesters.

The aim of this part is to analyze whether the downward trend in electoral participation is valid also for the case of Slovakia. Low political participation can lead to inequality representation of underprivileged social group. By designing a participatory budget we can expect some correction of this deficit and there will be more people participation from poorer areas or from the underprivileged groups (women, young people, elderly).

2.1.2 Transparency and citizen accountability

One of the positive outcomes brought by PB in Porto Alegre was increased possibility for citizens to oversee public spending and project implementation. The effect on transparency is less striking in Europe. The difference is between cities and regions in various starting position regarding transparency in local administrative and bureaucracies (Sintomer 2010). Although transparency and accountability in European cities are better, there is still space for more and better mechanisms for open and accountable government. In following part I will focus on the level of transparency in Slovakia before implementation of the PB. The evaluation of possible change in transparency is done in the last chapter. The expectation is that Slovakia being a European city, the difference in transparency might not be as visible and big as in Porto Alegre. As I will describe more detailed, Bratislava had quite good starting position regarding the level of transparency. However, there are still many areas where improvements need to be made.

⁷ TASR, Protest: Dav Sa Vyzúril Na úrade Vlady, Pred Nr Sr Ho Stopla Policia, *Pravda // Slovak Journal // Bratislava*, February 3, 2012. accessed June 4, 2013, <http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/173229-protest-dav-sa-vyzuril-na-urade-vlady-pred-nr-sr-ho-stopla-policia/>.

The level of transparency in Bratislava was higher in comparison with other Slovak cities according to Transparency International Slovakia (TIS)⁸. Bratislava was 8th among 100 biggest Slovak cities. TIS measures the level of municipal openness with 11 indicators⁹. Most important for my thesis are indicators on access to information, public participation policy, public procurement policy, budgeting and grants policy.

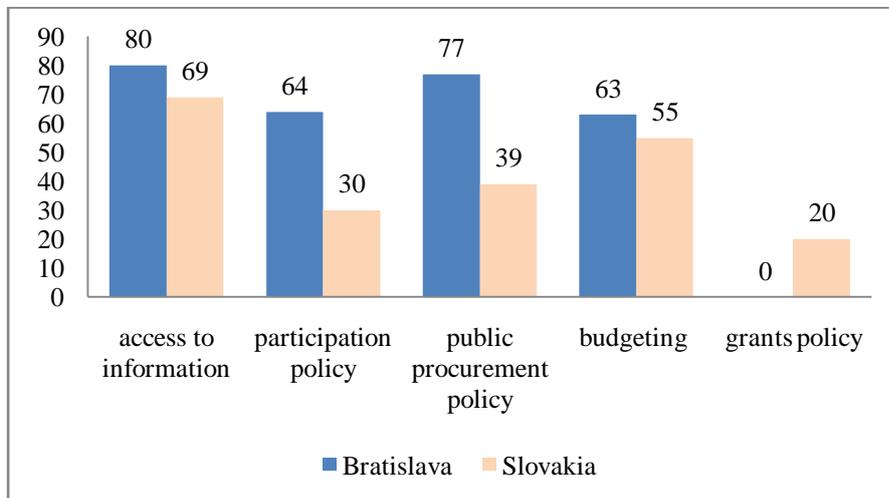
First, analysis of the TIS from year 2010 shows following results. The indicator measuring access to information shows that Bratislava scored 80% what is higher than was Slovak average. Second, participation policy indicator measures mostly what kinds of information on local assembly are public. Bratislava scored 64% what is similarly higher than the national average. Third analyzed public sphere is public procurement policy. Here, the indicator measures if all contracts are public or whether there is a database of all winner procurements. Bratislava received 77%. Fourth analyzed share is the local budget. Requirements on an open budget are including brief commentary justifying the entries, publishing yearly budget statements online from past 3 years and also the current budget. Bratislava got 63% and has fulfilled most of these requirements. Missing parts were public contracts, invoices, and orders which should be published in a way that allows for easy search options and use of data for further analysis. Fifth part shows very bad results for Bratislava – 0% while the national average was 20%. The reason for this poor score was because the city did not fulfilled any of the requirements: public cannot attend meetings of Grants Committees; decrees and results on grants awards were not published online evaluation assessments (e.g. tables) for awarded grants were not published online; grant awards from (at least) past 2 years were not published

⁸ Data from 2010 are available only in Slovak language <http://samosprava.transparency.sk/sk/city/11138>, data from 2012 are available in English <http://mesta2012.transparency.sk/en/sets/mesta-2012/Bratislava/info>

⁹ List of indicators: I. access to information policy; II. public participation policy; III. public procurement policy; IV. public property sales and policy; V. budgeting; VI. grants policy; VII. housing and social services; VIII. human resources; IX. professional ethics and conflict of interest; X. land use planning and construction policy; XI. municipal business and investments

online and Grants Committee's rules on its members' conflict of interest were also not published online.

Graph 2: Transparency in Bratislava in 2010



Source: Transparency International Slovakia

The overall situation in Bratislava in terms of transparency was better than the national average. The category where it got the highest score was access to information. The worst score was achieved in grants policy. In this last category Bratislava did not publish any of the required documents on selected projects or documents which included rules for selecting them. Public participation is also excluded from meeting of the Grants Committee. This low score shows very bad condition of transparency in awarding grants and funding for various projects. Participatory budgeting is aimed at this deficit. When local government cooperates with citizens and engages them in decision-making then the system becomes more accountable and transparent.

The lack of transparency and accountability was described above as one of the democratic deficits. Participatory budgets succeed in increasing the level of transparency in Porto Alegre and other cases (Baiocchi 2003, Sintomer 2010). I analyze the same type of data from 2012 after the PB was implemented in Bratislava.

2.2 Participatory budgeting in Bratislava

Data for the analytical part was obtained mostly from two sources. First one is the web page of Participatory Budget in Bratislava¹⁰ where documents about the theoretical concept and actual participatory process are published. Additional information was obtained from videos about public deliberations. Second important source of information was interviews with organizers and participants of the PB which I have done in May 2013.

In this part I follow according to the parts which form my definition of a PB (participants – actors; local budget; deliberation; final outcome, accountability/transparency). I will firstly introduce the actors involved in the participation budgeting process. Then I will describe the initiation process and what happened before starting the pilot year project in 2011. Then I will move to actual process of participatory budgeting. The final parts include focus on the outcomes and analysis of the level of participation and transparency.

2.2.1 Actors

The most important one is the civil association Utopia. Utopia is focused primarily in creating and implementing effective mechanisms of citizen participation in public decision-making. Most of its members have either philosophical or social science background. They created philosophical concept of community governance. Before creating practical proposal for participatory budget, they had worked on more theoretical issues about active citizenship and right to the city. Other founding members of Utopia have IT skills which they used in creating online platform for community interaction which will be described in following part.

Second important actors are the Mayor and the local municipality. The separation of power between them can influence the final outcome and success of the PB. In Porto Alegre, the

¹⁰ Utopia, "Participatory Budget in Bratislava," June 5, 2013, accessed June 5, 2013, <http://pr.bratislava.sk/liferay/participativny-strom-bratislava>.

Mayor of the city had more power than local assembly (Wampler 2000). The local assembly had only weak legislative power to change the Mayor's proposal of implementing a PB. Bratislava case is different. There are 45 local representatives who have the legislative authority. The Mayor can propose changes in the local budget but only the local assembly can vote and execute the budget. Local assembly is therefore the most important political body because it approves the money allocation for projects chosen in the PB.

2.2.2 Initiation of the participatory budgeting

In the previous part the analysis of the CoE concluded that there are no legal regulations on the implementation of participatory budgets (Council of Europe 2011). Next step in the thesis is to answer the questions who are the initiators of participatory budgets and what is their motivation.

The whole process of participatory budget in Bratislava was an initiation of civil association Utopia oz. They created philosophical concept of community governance. As one of the organizers Peter Nedoroscik said in the interview:

I created a philosophical concept before founding a NGO. That time we needed to come up with an idea how to change the society without using grenades. Instead of using violence we tried to create a solution for social interactions based on communities, which will adapt to functioning political institutions. We found out about the participatory budget in Porto Alegre. We thought that we can adjust this process to our political conditions.

More practical features of organization of the PB were copied from other cities such as Porto Alegre (Brazil), Saint Denis (France) and Lisabon (Portugal). Apart from getting inspiration from those mentioned cities, the organizers did not cooperate or consult with other participatory budgeting cities. Organizers stressed that basically there were not any similar cities which could have helped them with the theoretical concepts.

Practical information for designing a pilot year was obtained from three case studies mentioned above. Porto Alegre was chosen as a model of the first successful implemented case. Two other cities were chosen because they are similar to Bratislava in terms of size, number of inhabitants and they share similar problems concerning social justice and underprivileged social groups. The most troubling issues in Bratislava were worsening social situation, increasing income gap and missing long-term institutionalized form of citizen participation.

Initial preparation started in 2010. Organizers held several workshops and presentations about the project for broader public audience¹¹. They explained the process and objectives of participatory budget designed for Bratislava. Important step in the process development came when Utopia contacted a candidate for the City Mayor – Milan Ftacnik (independent candidate with support of social democratic political party *Smer-SD*). The civil association contacted candidate during his electoral campaign meetings. Utopia used the opportunity to attend these meetings and create public pressure towards the candidate. Milan Ftacnik agreed to cooperate and included the participatory budgeting into his electoral campaign documents.¹² Participatory budget was included in first section together with objectives such as increasing transparency and citizen participation. Ftacnik stressed that the idea of participatory budgeting came from citizens not from a political party. He promised to dedicate 1% of the budget (what represents approx € 2.5 million) for this process by the end of his electoral term.¹³

Local election took place in 2010 and Milan Ftacnik became the Mayor of Bratislava. The first official presentation of the pilot participatory budget cycle was held in July 2011 with the

¹¹ All the video from the workshops are available online Utopia, “Participatory Budget in Bratislava,” June 5, 2013, accessed June 5, 2013, <http://pr.bratislava.sk/liferay/projekt-porto-alegre>.

¹² Ftacnik, Milan. “Election.” June 5, 2013. Accessed June 5, 2013. <http://www.ftacnik.sk/volebny-program>.

¹³ This political promise is available “Press Conference” (video), July 22, 2011, 31:00, accessed June 4, 2013, <http://youtu.be/LkQwP8UYhF8>.

cooperation of the local municipality and Utopia. As I mentioned above, the Mayor's support of the PB is not binding for final budget proposal. He can only submit the outcome of the participatory project to the local assembly and they will decide whether to include it into the city budget or not. If the participatory budget is proposed by a political party, the probability of successful implementation will be higher.

2.2.3 Elements of the PB

The organization of the participatory budget in Bratislava created two types of structures which are in charge of the whole process. There is the Participation Community which represents the basic organizational structure; and the Coordination Committee which is superior to Communities and it is responsible for execution of the participation process. In the following part I will describe the formation of those structures, their objectives and responsibilities.

2.2.3.1 Participation Community

Community represents the essential part of the participatory budget. According to the formal framework concept¹⁴, participation community is defined as “Non-formal, but formalized civil structure, which takes part in the decision-making procedure of local municipality and enables the implementation of the PB”

Membership is open to the broad public. The number of communities is not fixed. At the beginning there were five thematic communities: transportation; culture; green city; elderly; and young people. Creation of three communities reflects the organization of specialized municipal bureaucracy communities; the other two are created reflecting the socio-

¹⁴“Framework Concept,” June 5, 2013, accessed June 5, 2013, <http://utopia.sk/liferay/web/komunitne-centrum-generacii-ymca-/ramcova-koncepcia-participativneho-rozpocitu-pre-bratislavu>

demographics – young people and elderly. Later on, there have been some changes - open data was added and cultural and transport communities were not active for year 2013. Communities differ in number of participants and overall activities. Utopia proposed the formation of territorial communities in the theoretical plan for the PB. However this plan has not been fulfilled until now. There were not enough people who would participate on a regular basis.

Founding new communities is not restricted. The only requirement for a new community is that it will be able to fulfill its tasks and work in line with six objectives: openness, transparency, citizen principle, democracy, cooperation and formal action. *Openness* requires members of a community to include broad range of citizens into community work. Anyone who expresses the will to be a member of community will be accepted. There is no special recruitment procedure focused on underprivileged social groups. *Transparency* in the community work requires publishing all documents related to project and community work online on the web page of the PB. *Citizen principle* means that each citizen/member represents only himself. NGOs or interest groups are not allowed to participate and promote joint interests. *Democracy and cooperation* are understood in terms of creating only horizontal relationships among members. Vertical relationships are created only on a temporal basis and with concrete objectives. All procedures and decisions should be done in a consensual manner. The last formal requirement for a community is to oblige the formal rules on redistribution, decision-making and assigning competences.

Every community has several tasks throughout the year. Members of communities meet every week and most of the work is done within them. The first task is to collect citizen opinions, ideas and concerns regarding their issue. This is done by several means. There is an online questionnaire and web page where people can submit their proposals. Second opportunity for

citizens to express their concerns and proposals is the Public Forum which is organized by a community.

At the same time, members of the communities work on projects which will improve public service or public space. Members use their own creativity and they include citizen concerns for the project initiation. The outcome of their work is projects which are later discussed in public deliberation.

Communities are responsible for communication with local representatives and promote the idea of the participatory budget. Communication with local representatives stands for cooperation between the participatory budget team and the local municipality. Communities contact and inform relevant section of the local administration and submit proposals from the community based on citizen demands. This cooperation should help local municipality to improve service delivery based on legitimate concerns from citizens. Participation in that case is not only connected with budget allocation but also with dialogue between the community and representatives.

Moreover, each community elects two representatives who will become members of the Coordination Committee. Participation Communities have also monitoring responsibilities of the implementation of the projects. The implementation phase takes place following year, after a project is supported in Public Deliberation.

2.2.3.2 Coordination Committee

Coordination committee is a formal structure formed by internal and external members. The internal part consists of two members from each participatory community. Delegates are appointed for a maximum duration of two years. The external part is formed by three representatives from Utopia, a person from the city controller's office and local

representatives. The difference between internal and external part is in voting rights. External part does not have the voting right. In reality, local representatives do not use the possibility to attend meetings. The future plan of Utopia is to withdraw from participation in the coordination committee and leave the responsibility for communities themselves.

The Committee meets every second week. According to the framework concept the Coordination Committee is responsible for communication with the local executive; helps with the organization of public procedures and everyday function of the PB; proposes processes and rules of the PB; controls the realization of projects; submits references and other necessary documents; submits the discussed budget proposal to local assembly; cooperates on workshops for members of the communities and is responsible for the framework concept document.

2.2.4 Tools of the participatory budget

Participation Communities and the Coordination committee are permanent structures of the PB. Most of the work and responsibilities are done by Participatory Communities. The broad public can participate in the Public Forum. The other structure – Public Deliberation is a final meeting of representatives of communities where best project are chosen. Apart from those two events, there are two other tools – Online webpage and Public Education which are designed to increase people's knowledge and encourage their participation. Further information on all four is given in the following section.

2.2.4.1 Public Forum

Public forum is an event where citizens participate in order to express their concerns and ideas regarding the thematic topic. Forums are open to wide public and internal members of

Communities should encourage people who are interested in the topic to participate. Each Participation Committee is responsible for organizing their own public forum. Usually, they do so in June.

This event gives citizens possibility to influence the content of prepared projects. They can do that by various means. The opening section of each Public Forum begins with information about the participatory budget. Then people can react and express their idea and proposal for priorities within the issue. Here the Community receives valuable information from citizens which they implement into projects. As a result, project based on citizen proposal will improve public services exactly where people need it. At the same time, project proposal is more legitimate and has a higher probability that it will be supported by local representatives.

Important part of the Public Forum is deliberation about priorities for future projects. Deliberation is according to the Conceptual Framework required as an objective itself before coming to conclusion in any event organized in the PB. Consequently, deliberation should help the Community and citizen come to consensus. Majority voting is used only when consensus cannot be reached otherwise. The final outcome of the Public Forum is a list of priorities which will be used as guidelines for projects.

2.2.4.2 Public Deliberation

The main aim of the Public Deliberation is reaching a consensus about which projects should be supported from the local budget. This event is considered to be one of the last organized by the participatory budget team. It takes place in at the beginning of winter time, before the local assembly vote on the budget. In other words, the final outcome of the deliberation is presented as legitimate outcome of the participatory budget cycle. This outcome is in form of list of projects which in total need agreed share of the budget. For instance, if the Mayor

promises € 15 000 at the beginning of a year, the outcome of the whole participatory budget cycle will be a list of projects for total amount of those € 15 000.

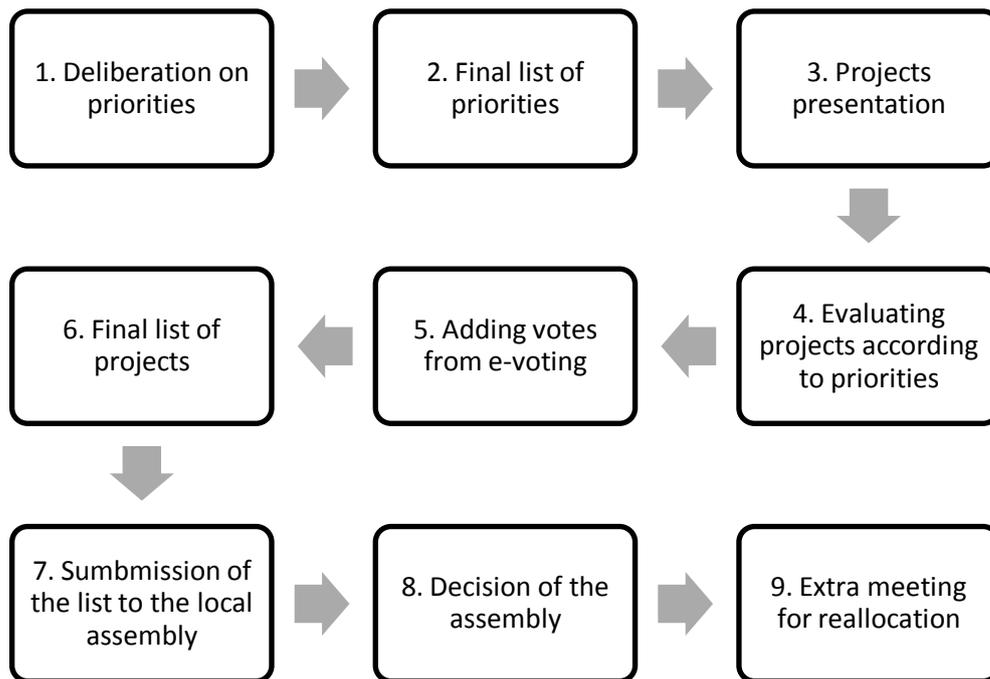
Before analyzing the outcome, I will shortly describe the deliberation process as shown in figure n. 1. First members who are present at the deliberation decide on priorities which will be guiding for that year. The whole deliberation process is led by two expert facilitators (boxes n. 1. and 2.). The pilot year participants agreed on following priorities: (1) the size of the beneficiaries and the overall benefit for them; (2) increase in the activity of communities and citizens; (3) effective use of resources; (4) benefit for the participatory budget. In the next year participants added one more point: (5) congruence with the priorities of the Community. Those priorities should be chosen after a deliberation process. As mentioned before, majority voting is used only when consensus is not reached. Complete list of priorities are binding only for one year. Next year's deliberation will reconsider the list and can come up with new priorities or keep the old ones.

After priorities are decided upon, each Community presents their projects (box n. 3.)¹⁵. Presentations of projects should stress if there is congruence between their project and priorities. Once all projects are presented, participants evaluate them how good they go along those chosen priorities. People individually grade projects on the scale 1-5¹⁶. Final score for a project is computed by adding points received from the e-voting. The score of a project is calculated by aggregation of votes from internet voting (weighted 20%) and voting / score given by present participants (80% weight). The final document including list of chosen project is then discussed in local assembly (box n.6.).

¹⁵ This is not the first time when projects are being presented. Usually one week before the Deliberation, public presentation of projects takes place. The reason for this public presentation is to inform broad audience about what have been done within communities and also e-voting is started. People can participate and express which project they want to support on the official webpage of Bratislava or on the webpage of the PB. Details about e-voting are explained in following section

¹⁶ 5 represents the best score

Figure 2: Process of the Public Deliberation



Source: Utopia, Framework concept 2012

The last 3 boxes shown in the Figure 1 are not part of the Public Deliberation but they are closely connected. The final list of chosen projects is submitted to the local assembly for discussion. Local representatives have the right to decide whether they support the proposal or not. The experience from the previous years shows that local assembly reduced the budget by half. Organizers had to come up with an alternative plan. They added one more Public Deliberation where projects were evaluated under restricted budget (box n. 9). Participants reevaluated which projects are the most beneficial and include chosen priorities.

According to Slovak law on municipalities¹⁷, only local representatives have the right to allocate money from the budget. The local assembly decides on the total amount of money for chosen projects. Until this stage local politicians or the Mayor cannot decide on the content of projects or on the ranking. The only tools available to them are decreasing or increasing the

¹⁷ Regulation on municipalities available in Slovak at: <http://www.minv.sk/?zakon-snr-c-369-1990-zb-o-obecnom-zriadeni>

share of the budget. In the pilot project, the Mayor declared that this evaluation process at the local assembly will not represent a problem and local representatives will support these projects with agreed amount of money. Milan Ftacnik (current Mayor) stressed¹⁸ that if the participatory process is transparent and legitimate, local representatives will not be against it. However, in year 2012 they used their right to decrease the total share for the PB to half. Because participatory communities did not receive enough money for their projects, there was one more public deliberation and voting on the projects that can be supported with limited amount of money.

2.2.4.3 Online web page

The web page of the Participatory budget is designed for citizen participation, community cooperation and providing information about the whole process called the *Participatory Tree*. The pilot project built up a platform where local communities (both thematic and territorial) will interact. Later on, other Slovak municipalities and cities where participatory budget is implemented can join.

This online community provides people with the possibility to express their opinions and fill in a questionnaire. There is an option to create online account within a certain community and participate and comment on projects online. Each community is responsible for their part of the webpage. Communities inform their members and other citizens about their activity and announce organization of the Public Forum through the web page.

Communities are required to publish all organizational documents, proposals or minute-books from regular meeting in form of *wiki-protocols*. Wiki-protocol is a type of document where

¹⁸ Video from the press conference from July 2011 is available in Slovak at “Press Conference” (video), July 22, 2011, 31:00, accessed June 4, 2013, <http://youtu.be/LkQwP8UYhF8>.

form and content can be changed after a discussion with all members. They represent transparency and democracy in communication and information about the work within the community and the whole process. There are several types of wiki-protocols including project documentation, expenses and proposals for implementation. Concept framework document which is binding for the whole team of PB is in form of wiki-protocol. The coordination committee is then responsible for evaluation of general comments and their implementation into concept framework.

The online web page is used for voting for proposed projects. After most of the work is done within the communities, projects with description are published online and also on the web page of municipality where people vote which they want to support. There have been some problems regarding security restrictions and inability to restrict people voting multiple times. Organizers are currently working on new voting software which will limit one vote for one person. However, e-participation and voting has a weighted effect in the final voting of 20%.

2.2.4.4 Public education

The pilot year was also unique in offering public education on various topics. In first ear citizens could participate in lectures on processes of participatory budgeting which took place from July to September and consisted of 8 lectures given by various experts on the PB. The content of the lectures were Basic definitions and philosophical context; foreign cases where the PB was implemented; the structure and processes; e-participation; concrete examples of the PB and political consequences of public deliberation; economic aspects of public deliberation. All those lectures were recorded and are available for citizens who want to get more information because lectures are no longer available. Also, several workshops were

prepared especially for members of participatory committees on process of PB and project management.

2.2.5 Timing of the process

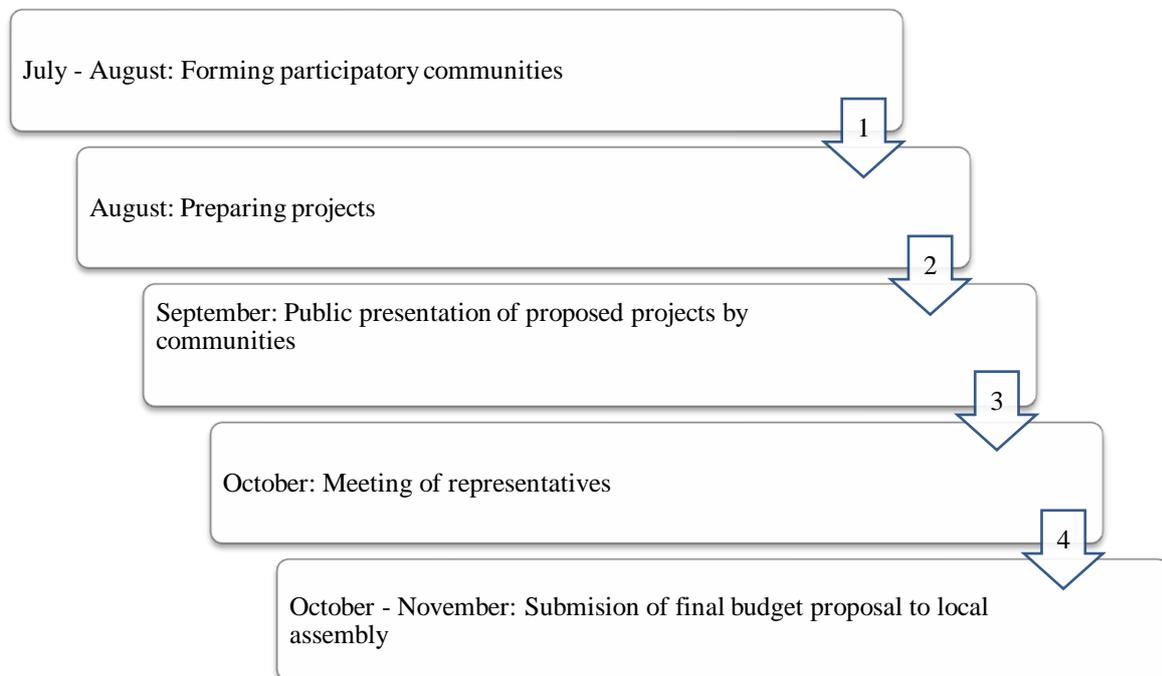
The next chapter is about the processes which are part of the PB. Each section is divided into two parts: the pilot year and following years 2012 and 2013. The reason for this division is that there have been changes within the years which were caused by several factors. The first factor is the power relations at the local municipality where local representatives changed the proposed financial support. Second is the absence of people willing to participate. Other factors for change are more practical, some features of the PB were changed after the trial year in order to adjust to local conditions and practices. The structure will begin with description of the plan, then in the second place the pilot year and the last part will be about the current budgeting year. The pilot project was created only as a trial version and it also received limited amount of money. Second proposal included more realistic plan which took into consideration limitations which occurred during implementation of the pilot project.

2.2.5.1 Pilot year

There are several differences in timing between various years. Organizers of the whole process are trying to create the best structure for given political conditions. The pilot year is described in the Figure 2. It started with a public conference in July where broad public was informed about the implementation of this project. The difference between the pilot project and following years is also in duration. The pilot project lasted only six months. First participation communities were formed with cooperation with several NGOs and active citizens.

During the time between July and December most of the work was done within communities. Each participation community chose two projects which were presented by delegates at the public deliberation in December. Public deliberation in the pilot project consisted of all processes including voting on priorities, evaluating projects and deliberation. The final outcome of public deliberation was submitted to local assembly. They agreed to support the participatory budget with full share of € 15 000. Realization of the projects started in January 2012.

Figure 3: Timing of the pilot process



2.2.5.2 Following years 2012 and 2013

The pilot year was designed as a test of the proposed participatory budget. Core institutions such as the Participatory Committee are kept onwards as in the pilot year. However, several changes have been made in the organization after implementation. The whole process began early in January. Participation community collects citizen concerns and work on projects which will improve public services. Final public deliberation is done in October/November.

More important is describing the procedure after the Public Deliberation. Once the final list of project is agreed upon at the Public Deliberation, this document is submitted to the local assembly as a proposal from the Mayor and from the participatory budgeting process. Members of Communities communicate with local representatives and try to find support for their project before the final discussion about Bratislava budget takes place. The total amount of money which is needed for projects is at this time only a promise from the Mayor. As I mentioned above, the local assembly have the final right to decide on the budget allocation according to Slovak law. They might have the proposal from the participatory budget, but they can change the total amount of money which will be allocated for projects. They do not have the power to change content or order of projects. This final decision can present limitation for the whole project. Real situation with decreasing proposed resources was solved with organizing one extra Public Deliberation where people assessed which projects can be implemented with lowered budget.

2.3 Participatory budgeting in other cities in Slovakia

Bratislava was the first city in Slovakia where PB was implemented. The civil association Utopia already in the pilot year designed a space where other cities can join the organization of PB. All participant cities would be connected in the *Participatory tree* – an online platform available at web page of PB Bratislava. Organizers included the possibility for other neighboring countries (Poland and Czech Republic) to participate. Even so, cooperation with other cities is still a long-term plan. In 2013 there was only one other Slovak city - Ruzomberok which implemented the PB for the first time in 2013. The civil association Utopia has gained skills and experience in the organization of the participatory budgets and they are offering consultations. There might be more Slovak cities with a PR. One such city where the PR will be implemented – Banska Bystrica is mentioned in the following part.

2.3.1 Ruzomberok case

In this part I will briefly describe the second Slovak city where the participatory budget was implemented. At the end, I will highlight some similarities and differences between Bratislava and Ruzomberok. Ruzomberok is a small city of 30 000 inhabitants in the Northern part of Slovakia. The initiator of the PB was civil association *Tvorivy rozvoj* (Creative Development eng. transl.). Share of city budget allocated for projects was € 5 000 from the total sum € 18 million. In comparison with the pilot year in Bratislava which has 500 000 inhabitants and more than 13-times bigger budget, Ruzomberok local assembly agreed to support the PB with a relatively larger amount of money.

Organizational structure is very similar to the Bratislava case¹⁹. *Tvorivy rozvoj* cooperated with Utopia and created a similar pilot project based on participatory communities. The pilot year 2013 included only one participatory community which was focused on various issues: Green City, Urbanism, and Culture. Objectives of PB in Ruzomberok are stated as: (1) participation of maximum citizens; (2) modernization and increase in effectiveness and flexibility of city administration which will be beneficial for citizens; (3) transparency and understandability of political processes for everyone who is interested. All documents are published in wiki-format which enables participants to propose a change in content. Also, there are many references stressing that Ruzomberok belongs to the *Participatory Tree* – an online platform for cities with PB created by civil organization Utopia.

Projects which were chosen for the pilot year are mostly dealing with culture and environmental issues. One of the current projects is creating the Interactive Map of Ruzomberok. Citizens and members of the community can identify *critical points* within the

¹⁹ Available online in Slovak at Tvorivy rozvoj, “Rámcová koncepcia PR pre RK - wikiprotokol,” June 5, 2013, accessed June 5, 2013, http://pr.ruzomberok.sk/liferay/Novinky/-/journal_content/56_INSTANCE_WsUjX5N476fI/348443/2252857.

region of the city. Critical points are places which are neglected or have a potential of future use or reconstruction which will be beneficial for all citizens. This project includes collecting citizen opinions and problems; moreover it defines problems and possibly creates space for creative solutions.

Many features in organization are similar if not the same as in Bratislava: grass-root initiation; community as a basis structure; online participation. Differences might emerge as the process will continue in the future. One coordinator Peter Nedoroscik expressed in the interview that one of the possible variations could be caused by the size of the city. Ruzomberok is a small city and personal networks are more present and strong among both local municipality and citizens. People who participate in PB in Bratislava are more anonymous.

2.3.2 Other cases in Slovakia

Bratislava and Ruzomberok are in 2013 the only cities in Slovakia where the participatory budgeting was implemented. However, there are some municipal districts within Bratislava who are also trying to include more people into decision making process. Petržalka, the biggest district in Bratislava, is one of the examples. The initial idea was explained by district representatives that the participatory budget and citizen voting was used because of the limited budget. District did not have enough resources to finance all proposals therefore they let people to decide.

Citizens living in this district could choose projects in three areas: sport playgrounds, reconstruction of public places and planting new trees. Proposals including areas which will be reconstructed were made by experts. People could express their preferences only in internet voting during three weeks' time. Total number of votes was 1033 what represents 1% of the population of Petržalka. Participation of citizens in this example is limited. First, they

cannot propose solutions or general concerns. They have only the possibility to choose from concrete given options. Also, they can participate only online what can present a problem for older generation or people with lower income who do not have the internet connection.

The plan of the participatory budgeting team in Bratislava is to connect as many cities as possible. For such purpose they offer consultations for other cities. One of the current cities where the participatory budget is prepared is Banska Bystrica with 80 000 inhabitants and total amount of budget 40 mil. €. Consultation with other cities in form of external partnership was present as one of the preconditions in successful participatory budgets in Cordoba and Sevilla (Spain) or Sao Paulo (Brazil). However the study of the UK Department of Communities and Local Government concluded that external partnership is not the crucial precondition leading to successful implementation of PB.

2.4 Outcomes of the participatory budgeting process in Slovakia

The main finding from the case study of Slovakia and the participatory budgeting is that it matters who is the initiator. In the case of Bratislava the initiator was civil organization Utopia. They created a whole plan and they are responsible for the organization. In comparison with other cities like Porto Alegre, in Bratislava they did not cooperate with any political party. The reason for that was that organizers wanted to base their project on civil society. This exclusion of cooperation with political parties seems to be the main feature which affects the implementation of the PB.

The initiator – civil association Utopia cooperated only with the city Mayor. The Mayor agreed to support the participatory budget in the local assembly. However, the local assembly is not bounded by Mayor's decision; they can freely decide whether to include participatory budget projects into the budget proposal. They decide on the final amount of money allocated

for chosen projects. Practical illustration of the municipality power could be found 2012 when the local assembly allocated only ½ of the amount of money proposed by the Mayor.

The second part of the conclusion is connected with the previous one. Despite Utopia did not cooperate with any political party, they managed to implement the participatory budget, though on a smaller scale. What is more, they offer consultation for other cities and use almost the same know-how as they did in Bratislava. There is one more successful case where the participatory budget was implemented and one more city is in preparation and consultation phase.

Findings regarding the “participatory” part in the budget show that the more effort is made the more effect is has. The least time and energy requiring type of participation is taking part in the e-questionnaire and e-voting. The most demanding is becoming a member of a Community. This drawback between effort and effect is rational. However, being a member of a Community resembles the work in a NGO. Community members dedicate a lot of volunteer work to collect citizen concerns and prepare and execute projects. These high requirements might be discouraging for people who want to participate and influence the outcome more than by deliberating only on priorities.

The last finding is that, despite the plan, there have been not been created territorial Communities. The creation of the first Communities was an initiation of the organizers from the civil association Utopia. Organizers in their theoretical proposal introduced also territorial Communities which should be formed later in the process. However, there are not enough people willing to participate as members of a Community which is the most time and energy requiring type of involvement.

4. From results back to the theory

4.1 Participation – who can participate and who actually uses this opportunity

Increasing participation is one of the main aims of participatory budgeting as a democratic innovation. Participatory budget in Bratislava offers citizens space to express their interests and concerns in time between local elections. Participation is open to anyone who expresses interest. There are more different possibilities how to take part. I listed these different forms of participation according to how much time and dedication are required.

First, least time and effort consuming is e-participation. People can fill in a questionnaire or submit their comments online through an online form. People can create an online account and become a part of an online community. Online members can propose priorities or projects or help with the organization. Later on, after projects are presented, internet voting on a project is available. The weighted effect of internet voting in the overall score has varied throughout the development of the PB. The average share of online voting was 20%. The questionnaire on general citizen ideas is available throughout the whole year. Online voting takes place once a year and last approximately one week. Total number of votes in 2013 was around 2000.

The second type of participation is at Public Forums. Public Forums are held several times per year and they are organized by thematic Participatory Communities. The purpose of them is to inform broader public audience about the work of the community, collect and discuss ideas and priorities regarding the issue. If a citizen participates at this event, his proposal can be included in a community project. In comparison with internet voting, participation at Public Forums gives citizens bigger power to influence the final outcome.

The third type of participation is becoming an active member of a Participatory Community. In this case, participating requires interest in the issue, time availability and ability to work in

a team and prepare projects. The first members in the pilot year were people who already had some experience with non-governmental work or were already active citizens. Moreover, they attended several workshops focused on project management and participatory planning which increased their expertise in given topic. All of their work is based on volunteering and activism.

Members of communities have the biggest power regarding creating projects, and voting and deliberating at the Public Deliberation. Among other forms of participation it is also the most energy and time requiring. Participatory communities held regular meetings which take place every week. During these regular meeting most of the time organizational matters are discussed. Precise number of participants varies throughout the year and communities. My estimate from interview is that average number of people in community is from 20. More people participate or help when a project is chosen and supported from the state budget. Important note is that, comparing with other cities, for implementation of chosen project is responsible the community. They are also in charge of presentation and transparency of the project. In sum, being an active member of a community requires a large amount of dedication and skills which also places this kind of participation on the top regarding the influence and power of their decisions.

What is more, the design of the participatory budget is focused especially on underprivileged groups of society. There are thematic Participatory Communities for young people and for elderly. When we refer back to the theoretical part, I argued that participatory budgeting can help to decrease the inequality caused by low voter turnout. The participatory budgeting in Bratislava created structures which can help subaltern groups in participation.

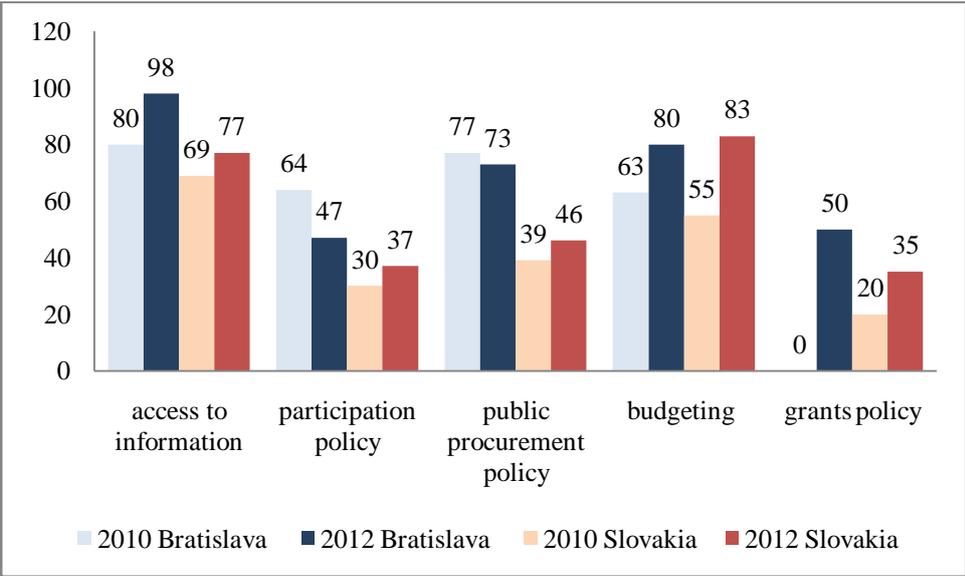
4.2 Transparency after implementing the PB

Transparency was at the beginning of the theoretical chapter connected with the third democratic deficit. Participatory budgeting should increase the level of transparency in the city by engaging citizens into monitoring mechanisms. For this part I used data from Transparency International Slovakia on the openness of municipalities (TIS 2012). One thing needs to be mentioned before the interpretation of the results. Those data are used only as an indirect measurement of the changes in transparency. The reason for this limitation is that the actual share of the city budget allocated in the PB was less than 0.0002%

TIS conducted the second wave of analysis of openness of local government in 2012. By that time citizens elected a new mayor who implemented the participatory budget. The overall ranking of the city increased by 1 place – Bratislava was 7th from 100 on the measurement of openness of local government. The increase was significant in 3 categories – access to participation, budgeting and grants policy. In the first category of access to information Bratislava managed to increase the number and types of public documents. One important note must be added, although government publishes those documents, it does not provide citizens space for a public discussion or a scrutiny.

Second category where Bratislava scored better in 2012 was budgeting. It got 80%, what represents an increase by 17 percentage points. More points were awarded for quality of published contracts online. Biggest difference in change happened in the category of grants policy. In 2010 Bratislava did not fulfill any of the requirements from the TIS. In 2012 the score increased by 50 percentage points. The national average was 35%. Better evaluation was due publishing decrees and results on grants awards and publishing Grants Committee's rules on its members' conflict of interest. More can be done by letting public attend meeting of Grants Committee and publishing online the evaluation assessments for awarded grants.

Graph 3: Transparency in Slovakia 2010 and 2012



Source: Transparency International Slovakia 2010 and 2012.

Web page of participatory budget published for both years 2011 and 2012 final lists of winner project which included project’s priority ranking and amount of money received. City budget statement includes item “participatory budgeting” in section Modern Office for People which is aimed on reliable service delivery for citizens. Commentary section on participatory budget includes the aim of strengthening openness, transparency and efficiency of Bratislava municipality. Participatory budget is one of the priorities of initiative Open Municipality. The city is planning to prepare a budget proposal with cooperation with citizens. The future plan is to dedicate 1% of the total budget for the participatory budgeting process.

However, since the beginning of the process, the local government allocated only small share of the budget. For the pilot year, public deliberation could redistribute € 15 000 which represented less than 0.0001% of the total budget expenditures. In next year, the share was increased to € 30 000 in 2012 and to € 46 000 in 2013. Each year there has been an increase by 50%, although compared to the total budget expenditures the share is still much lower that

1% promised by the Mayor²⁰. Government claims that its objective in the future is to increase the amount of money. This promise is however not included in the official budget proposals for years 2014 and 2015 where the government kept € 46 000 as an estimated expenditure for the participatory budget.²¹

Table 2 Share of the total budget dedicated to the PB

year	share for the PB	total budget	percentage
2011	15 000	282 067 341	0,00005
2012	30 000	223 541 228	0,00013
2013	46 000	241 785 188	0,00019

Source: Municipality of Bratislava. 2011-2013

Although less than 0.0002% of the budget was decided upon in participatory process, there has been an increase in number and quality of published documents. The web page of Bratislava publishes links for budget related documents. Moreover, it has a separate subcategory for participatory budget where some general rules are explained. For further information there is a link for web page of the PB.

The overall evaluation of increased transparency and openness of government cannot be attributed only to participatory budgeting. According to Transparency International Slovakia data, there has been an increase in the openness of government. In detailed analysis of the results, biggest positive changes happened in categories Access to information and Grants policy. Bratislava fulfilled almost all requirements regarding publishing government

²⁰ Public promise made online at a press conference. “Press Conference” (video), July 22, 2011, 31:00, accessed June 4, 2013, <http://youtu.be/LkQwP8UYhF8>.

²¹ „Budget for 2013 and proposals for years 2014 and 2015” June 5, 2013, accessed June 5, 2013 http://bratislava.sk/vismo/dokumenty2.asp?id_org=700000&id=11033808&p1=11050320

documents online. In Grants policy the increase was by 50 percentage points. In this area it is possible to link the change with the introduction of the PB.

Participatory budget proposal for year 2013 included two specific projects on transparency. First one will create a working group for creating a catalogue of public datasets. This project was 2nd in ranking from all the proposals and it received € 3 500 in budget allocation. Second one is connected with it and its aim is to make public these datasets. This project was supported with the amount of € 500. Data for evaluation of those projects are not available yet. It is supposed that they will lead to increase in the level of transparency and openness of local government of Bratislava.

Conclusion and discussion

The outcomes of my empirical part can be seen in a broader perspective. In the theoretical part I mentioned four democracy deficits and I argued that participatory budgeting can help to decrease the deficits. I will shortly evaluate the participatory budgeting processes in Slovakia against these theoretical implications and then I will focus more on the specific findings regarding the Slovak case and their implications.

The first democratic deficit was connected with citizen knowledge and creating one's preferences. Deliberation is said to increase the ability to make considered judgments (Fishkin 2013). I can only conclude from my research that deliberation was present in the Slovak case. I cannot assess whether there was an increase in individuals's skills or feeling of empowerment. The second democratic imperfections were the elections and especially low voter turnout (Lijphart 1997) and the absence of other tools available to citizens to express opinions between two elections. The Slovak case of the participatory budgeting offers thematic Participation Communities for young people and elderly which meet regularly but the context is relatively demanding and it is hard to tell to what extent there is a wider impact of PB on participatory culture. The third deficit was lack of transparency where Bratislava got a better score after the implementation of the PB, although it is not possible to show that PB was causally determinant. The last democratic deficit is related to policy outcomes which sometimes are not beneficial to all concerned (Fung 2005). The Slovak PB processes are trying to include all affected actors and Communities and to encourage people to express their concerns.

The empirical findings from Bratislava based on both secondary materials and interviews with the organizers and some participants, show that there are some features of the Bratislava case which are unique in the European or world context. First, unlike in most other cases in Europe

or Latin America, the participatory budget process in Bratislava was not initiated by politicians or local government actors (Wampler 2000, Sintomer 2008) but by a civil society organization and it is quite notable the relative strength of the civil association Utopia which was successful in the initiation of the participatory budget. The civil association Utopia managed to implement the participatory budget as a grass-root initiation in both Slovak cities Bratislava and Ruzomberok.

Since the support for the participatory budget came from civil society, local representatives were not supporting the idea. The civic association Utopia cooperated at the beginning only with the Mayor, who can submit the budget proposal to the local assembly for discussion. The final agreement must be done by the local assembly. This situation was different to Porto Alegre where success can be linked to the strong commitment from the city Mayor and weak legislative (Wampler 2000). On the contrary, participatory budget members in Bratislava negotiate with the representatives and argue in favor of more financial support. This difference shows that even if the participatory budget is a grass-root initiation and the legislative branch of the local assembly is strong, it is a successful case.

The following question is how successful the participatory budget was in offering new tools for citizen participation. In the Bratislava case, there are several means of participation including online voting, expressing opinions in a questionnaire through deliberating on priorities to becoming a member of the Participatory Community. All those possibilities differ in time and energy requirements and then also they have different effect on the budget allocation. Communities are the basic units of the participatory budget in Bratislava and Ruzomberok. People participating in the Communities are the most active and skilled and their activity has the highest influence on the final list of projects financed by the city budget. However, these demanding requirements present a limitation for higher number of active participants.

The work within the Community is very time and energy demanding also because the Community is responsible for collecting citizen opinions and interests, preparing projects, and overseeing the implementation. The difference in other cases in the world is that much of these responsibilities are taken by government as the organizer of a participatory budget. As I mentioned above, the local government in Bratislava is not strongly committed to the idea of participatory budgeting. Therefore all the organizational work is done by the Communities.

The plan of the civic association Utopia was to create two types of Communities: territorial and thematic. They helped to organize the first thematic Communities in the pilot year which are active until now 2013. Territorial Communities have not been created in the Bratislava yet. I propose two possible reasons why the plan was not successful in terms of territorial Communities. High requirements on work of Communities are one of them. The second reason is that the territorial Communities have not yet received any organizational support from the local municipality or from the organizers. There are no strong formal requirements for creating a new territorial Community, but as I have shown, there is also no support from the government. It is easier for people to take part in already existing Community than to create a new one.

Territorial participation and especially empowerment of underprivileged areas was one of the most striking outcomes in Porto Alegre. The success was achieved by securing high stakes for participants from the poor neighborhoods. People living in poorer areas managed to influence the budget allocation in their favor by showing up in large number and voting for specific projects focused on them (Baiocchi 2003). In the Bratislava case this territorial and social dimension is missing. One of the reasons is that there are no supporting mechanisms focused on social justice or underprivileged areas and the initiative thresholds for implementing them are high. It seems that support from the civil association Utopia is important for any major

structural changes in order to overcome the institutional barriers and the problem of low participation in the Communities.

Participatory budgeting started in Bratislava also with the intention to increase the transparency in the local administration. Available data allowed me to compare the change in transparency only indirectly. The overall transparency and municipal openness increased from 8th place to 7th best place out of 100 biggest Slovak cities (Transparency International Slovakia 2012). More direct effects are expected to emerge this year when two projects from the Community *Open Data* will be implemented. Both projects are focused on making public municipal datasets which include information about the public property, public contracts and grants public.

To conclude, the Bratislava and other Slovak cases of participatory budgeting reveal a special pattern, namely the central role in initiation and organization of a civil society organization. The fact that the civil association Utopia had the biggest contribution to the whole process has implications for how the process was developed as well as for what could be achieved. Their decision not to cooperate with political parties and pursue the initiation of the participatory budget as a public initiative influenced the further cooperation with the city government which kept all of its previous decision power. The central role of a civil society organization and their non-cooperative approach to political parties deserves further scrutiny in order to understand why this was their approach, why parties were not more cooperative and possibly what less active citizens made out of the existence of a participatory budgeting process.

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