



CITIZENS' DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT-PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING. CASE STUDY: CLUJ-NAPOCA, ROMANIA

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Abstract: *THE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROCESS ORGANIZED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IS A TRANSPARENT PROCESS THROUGH WHICH CITIZENS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DECIDE ON HOW TO SPEND A PART OF THE LOCAL BUDGET. IT IS A WAY OF DIRECTLY INVOLVING CITIZENS IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AT THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL. THERE IS NO STANDARD DESIGN OF THE PROCESS, ALTHOUGH THE RULING PRINCIPLES ARE THE SAME. THE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROCESS SHOULD BE ADAPTED TO THE SPECIFIC NEEDS AND PROFILE OF THE COMMUNITY WHERE IT TAKES PLACE. THIS ARTICLE AIMS TO ANALYZE THE MECHANISMS OF FUNCTIONING OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROCESS, THE CHALLENGES THAT THIS PROCESS INVOLVES, ITS IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, AS WELL AS A CASE STUDY, THE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROCESS IN CLUJ-NAPOCA, ROMANIA.*

Keywords: *PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING, LOCAL COMMUNITY, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT*

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INTRODUCTION

Participatory processes have existed since the beginning of democracy as a form of government. Over time, these processes have evolved and adapted to the needs of an ever-changing society, but the basic principles have remained the same.

The level of direct participation of citizens in administrative affairs is directly proportional to the will of the leaders of public institutions, usually politically regimented, so we can talk about political will. In modern democracies, public consultation is required by law in certain situations and is therefore mandatory. In other cases, it remains at the discretion of the heads of public institutions.

At the local public administration level, the citizens' involvement in the decision-making process is an endeavor as beneficial as it is cumbersome and challenging. The citizens' participation in public



affairs ensures a high degree of transparency and legitimacy of the decisions taken by the public administration.

The participatory budgeting process gives citizens the possibility to decide directly on how to spend a part of the local budget. It has appeared in the 1980s in Brazil. The participatory budgeting process has been adopted, in different forms, by cities all around the world, including cities in Romania. It is a complex process that can involve stakeholders from the whole community, challenging for the public administrations, but which could lead to increased citizens' trust in public administration decisions and the appropriation of community projects.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL LOCAL CONTEXT

In the last few years, in Romania, the political class has experienced a considerable decrease in population confidence. Due to the poor performance and disappointment of citizens' expectations, more and more people are disinterested in politics and public administration. This phenomenon can be noticed in the low voter turnout during the elections. People go to vote especially for the local elections because the mayor, respectively the president of the county council (together with the local and county council) are the politicians the closest to people, the most popular public persons and, inevitably, the handiest to be held accountable. As an argument for our statement, here are some percentages representing the voter turnout at Romanian elections:

Voter turnout at European Parliament elections (<http://alegeri.roaep.ro/>, Accessed 25 May, 2021):

2007- 29.47 %
2009- 27.67 %
2014- 32.44 %
2019- 51.20%

Voter turnout at local elections:

1996- 56.47 %
2000- 50.85 %
2004- 54.23 %
2008- 48.81 %
2012- 56.26 %
2016- 48.17 %
2020- 45.64 %

Voter turnout at Romanian Parliament elections:

1992 - 76.29 %
1996 - 76.01 %
2000 - 65.31 %
2004- 58.51 %
2008 - 39.20 %
2012- 41.76 %
2016- 39.79 %
2020- 31, 84 %

Voter turnout at presidential elections:

1992- 76.29 %
1996- 76.01 %
2000- 65.31 %
2004- 58.51 %



2009- 54.37 %
2014- 53.18 %
2019 - 47,66 % (the first ballot)
-49.87 % (second ballot).

The figures presented above show that the local elections are of constantly interest for almost half of the population who has the right to vote. Politicians at the local level are interested in finding ways of attracting citizens at their side and gaining their vote. Times are changing and the voters are becoming more and more demanding and hard to please. The new means of communication facilitate the rapid spread of information, and citizens have access to presentations of the activities and projects of other public administrations in the country or from abroad. Therefore, there is a constant performance pressure on the local public authorities.

The elected public officials at the local level are held accountable for their activity every four years in Romania. In order to be reelected, they need to come in front of the citizens with a convincing activity report. This is why there is or it should be a constant pressure on the local elected public authorities to constantly develop projects and public policies. And this is a good thing. Changing and competition is very good for democracy. The public servants are not held accountable in front of the voters. This is why, in some cases, they tend to work out of inertia and no longer respond to the citizens' needs. They have no particular interest in developing major development projects that challenge them or their skills. Ideally, this could be the right mix for a performing public administration: elected public officials who set the priorities and give vision for a performing administration and the public servants that represent the institutional memory and the experts in public administration.

As we have mentioned above, citizens' demands are continuously growing, especially at the local level. People are becoming more and more aware of the importance of quality of life in their communities, which is why they feel free to make ever-increasing demands on the local public administration. Given the fact that the citizens' needs must be prioritized because it is impossible to meet all of them at the same time, to better legitimize their decisions, modern local public administrations involve citizens in various ways in the administrative decision-making process. One such method is the participatory budgeting process.

Involving the citizens in the public affairs is not historically very comfortable for politicians. As Tina Nabatchi and Matt Leighninger said, *despite the shiny cover of citizen participation and its widely recognized importance, rising citizen capacity is not a very comfortable issue for political leaders as they used to consider themselves as the experts in policy-making as well as in decision-making acts* (Nabatchi, Tin & Leighninger, 2015, p.3). Nonetheless, the modern democracies couldn't be imagined without a continuous increase of citizens' direct involvement in public affairs.

LEGAL ASPECTS REGARDING THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES IN ROMANIA

Romanian legislation gives the general principles to be respected as regarding the participation of the citizens into the administrative decision-making process. Therefore, the Romanian Constitution stipulates in Art.31 (2) that *the public authorities [...] shall be bound to provide correct information to the citizens on public affairs and matters of personal interest*.

Art.120 refers to the fact that *the public administration in territorial-administrative units shall be based on the principles of decentralization, local autonomy and deconcentrating of public services*.

Other Romanian legal provisions that refer to citizens' participation into administrative decision-making process:

- Law no.199/1997 which ratifies the European Charter of the Local Self-Government-CETS 207: *the right of citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs is one of the democratic*



principles that are shared by all member States of the Council of Europe; this right can be most directly exercised at local level (Preamble of the Charter).

- Emergency ordinance no. 57/2019 on local public administration, Art.8) The principle of transparency: *(1) In the process of drafting normative acts, public authorities and institutions have the obligation to inform, submit to public consultation and debate the draft of the normative acts and to allow citizens access to the administrative decision-making process, as well as to the data and information of public interest, within the limits of the law.*

Article 75 of the same Emergency ordinance refers to the principle of consulting the citizens on major local problems. Other stipulations of the Emergency ordinance that refer to citizens' involvement in local public affairs:

- the meetings of the City Council are public
- the mayor makes a draft of the local budget and the final annual account of the budget and submits them for approval to the City Council.
- Law no. 52/2003, on decisional transparency in public administration, provides the principles and the procedures needed to be respected by the public authorities in order to ensure the decisional transparency: informing the citizens on the issues debated by central/local public authorities, consulting the citizens and the legal associations in the process of elaborating the law, active participation of the citizens in administrative decisions and in the process of drafting the legislation.
- Law no. 544/2001 on free access to public information, in Article 3) stipulates that *Public authorities and institutions shall grant, ex officio or by request, access to the public information, through the department of public relations or the designated person.*

Law no.3/2000 on organizing the referendum gives the possibility to local authorities to consult the citizens on major issues.

As far as participative budgeting is concerned, there are no specific stipulations in the Romanian law. Still, Law no. 273/2006 on Local public finance refers to some principles to be respected on budget issues: transparency and publicity, public debate on local budget or consulting the public local administrations in the process of allocating the state financial resources.

Nonetheless, some local public administrations passed local laws that regulate the participatory budgeting process in their community. Considering the characteristics and particularities of each community, as well as its needs, the way in which participatory budgeting process takes place differ from one community to another.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING (PB): GENERAL ASPECTS AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Participatory budgeting represents a form of public participation. The public participation could be defined as *the process by which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into governmental and corporate decision making. It is two-way communication and interaction, with the overall goal of better decisions that are supported by the public* (Creighton, 2005, p.7).

The Participatory budgeting (PB) was defined as a *decision-making process through which citizens deliberate and negotiate over the distribution of public resources [...]. These programs create opportunities for engaging, educating, and empowering citizens, which can foster a more vibrant civil society. Participatory budgeting also helps promote transparency, which has the potential to reduce government inefficiencies and corruption* (Wampler, 2007, p.21).

The use of participatory budgeting goes back to 1989, when in the municipality of Porto Alegre (over one million inhabitants and labeled as wealthy, considering Brazilian standards), the capital of Brazil's southernmost state, Rio Grande do Sul, decided to implement a new method of engaging



citizens in public decision-making processes. This was possible due to the fact that in 1988 the Workers' Party won the elections for the mayor¹. The aim of participatory budgeting was to help poorer neighborhoods to receive more public money for their development.

Participatory budgeting in Brazil came to confront the traditional political practices characterized by corruption, clientelism and social exclusion establishing a transparent, open and inclusive way of spending public money (Wampler, 2000, p.2). It aimed at making the citizens aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens and in the same time it was a call for solutions at the economic and social multitude of problems in the towns and urban centers of Brazil (Wampler, 2000, p.2). At first, the number of citizens involved in the process was very little: under a thousand for the 1989 and 1990 processes. In 1992, the number went up to 8000 citizens involved, and following this year, the participation number increased to 20.000 citizens per year (Wampler, 2000, p.3).

The Porto Alegre example spread all over Latin America, therefore by 1992, 4.3% of the cities with more than 100.000 inhabitants experienced a form of BP and by 2008, 41%. Following our source, the geographical spread of the PB reached almost every region in Latin America (Röcke, 2014, p.55).

How does the Participatory budgeting (PB) process work in Porto Alegre? The entire process, described by Gianpaolo Baiocchi (Baiocchi, 2003, p.46-50), is a very complex one and has evolved from one edition to another. It starts each year in March. Regional gatherings take place in all the sixteen districts of the city. These meetings have two purposes: on one hand, delegates to represent different neighborhoods are being elected and, on the other hand, the participants to these meetings analyze the previous year projects and budget.

The number of the delegates of the neighborhoods is established by a specific formula (for the first 100 persons, one delegate for every 10 persons; for the next 150 persons, one for 20; for the next 150, one for 30; for each additional 40 persons after that, one delegate). In the same time, the neighborhoods associations or groups elect their own representatives.

The mayor, together with his staff, attends these meetings in order to discuss with the citizens about their concerns and about the projects in each neighborhood.

In the following months, the elected delegates meet in each neighborhood once a week or two times a month in order to discuss the technical issues regarding the projects proposed and to review the needs of each neighborhood.

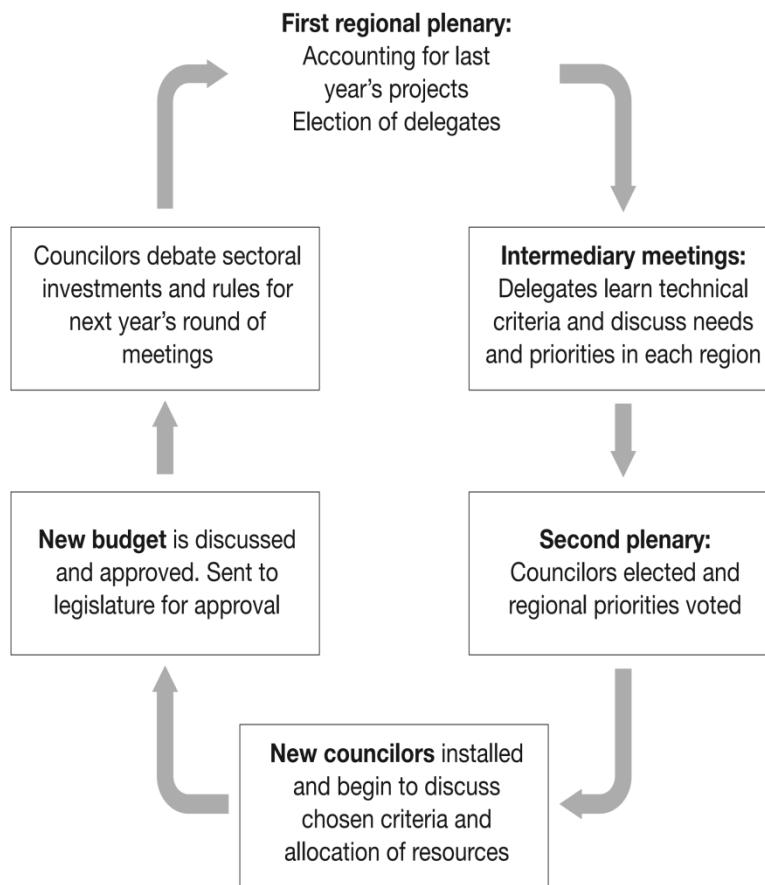
In the same time, in separate meetings, the delegates design projects for the entire city, as a whole. Both types of meeting are attended by representatives of the municipality from the departments involved in the future possible implementation of the projects.

The meetings mentioned above are called *intermediary meetings* and they come to end at the second plenary meeting where the regional delegates vote the ratification of the district's proposals and priorities and, in the same time, they elect the councilors for the Municipal Council of the Budget.

The Municipal Council of the Budget is composed by representatives from each district and from the five thematic meetings (two for each district and two for each thematic areas). The purpose of this discussion forum is to find a generally accepted solution (both by the councilors and the representatives of the public administration) based on the districts' demands and the available resources. In order to reconcile the divergent interests, twice a week the councilors, who, during the entire process, maintain the connection to the individuals and the organizations from their districts, meet with the representatives of the municipality. Moreover, the discussions within this forum regard even the rules to be applied to the entire process.

The steps of the entire process are presented in the following Figure (Baiocchi, 2003, p.49):

¹ A progressive political party which was founded during the military dictatorship (1964-1988).



The PB in Porto Alegre is a good example of combination between direct and representative democracy. Beyond the initial purpose of the process, the PB constantly evolves; the rules of the process are adjusted through negotiations between representatives and represented, continuously learning from the past editions and the mistakes they made along with the process.

The meetings within the PB process presently have wider topics such as social service or health issues, human rights or school policy (Baiocchi, 2003, p.50). Therefore, the PB became a useful and legitimate governance tool. Besides the direct effects that the implementation of the PB projects had in the quality of life of the citizens in the neighborhoods, the legitimacy of the decisions taken within the PB process helped the public administration take other public measures that usually are not very well accepted by the inhabitants such as property tax increases. In the same time, one noted a raise in tax collection (Baiocchi, 2003, p.50).

The PB in Porto Alegre is seen by some authors as a proposed social contract built from the bottom up, aiming to invert the priorities of the municipal budget through direct citizen participation (above all from the poor and working class) and based on the criteria of social justice (Baierle, 2010, p.51).

In 1989, only 49% of the population had basic sanitation service. After eight years of PB, 98 % of households had water and 85 % sewage system. Half of the city's unpaved streets were paved, and the number of students in elementary and secondary schools doubled. Also, the bus companies expanded its service to neglected neighborhoods (Lerner, 2011, p.30).

In France, the PB was first introduced by the members of the French Communist Party in the Paris region, and the concept was embraced by the Socialist party. Both parties thought that introducing



and supporting such an innovative process would help them renew their public perception by gaining citizens trust and support (Röcke, 2014, p.71).

In the US, the quality of life is better than in most world countries. City governments are relatively wealthy and well-staffed, the service needs are not that important and even though one might notice some kind of apathy, there are very old traditions of local participation (Baiocchi, 2007, p.8).

Chicago was the first city in the USA to test the PB. Here, since 1994, the council members have annually at their disposal \$1.3 million to spend, the so called “menu money”. The aldermen, as the council members are called, can spend this money in their wards as they want. Alderman Joe Moore, who represented Chicago’s 49th Ward, which includes the Rogers Park neighborhood and over sixty thousand residents, was the first one to introduce PB in his ward in 2009 (Lerner, 2011, p.31). In a letter to constituents, Joe Moor said about PB that *“it exceeded even my wildest dreams. It was more than an election. It was a community celebration and an affirmation that people will participate in the civic affairs of their community if given real power to make real decisions”* (Lerner, 2011, p.35).

There isn’t a standard model for participatory process for all the cities that organize such processes. The principles are generally the same, but the way of organization might considerably differ from one country to another, from one city to another. Therefore, there are different types of PB. For instance, in some cases, the PB is regulated by law, and in some case it is not. Some PB processes take place at the municipal level, others at regional level. Moreover, differences occur in terms of methodology of participation, form of participation (offline, online) or the administrations’ way of organizing the processes and spreading the information (Porto de Oliveira, 2017, p.40).

At first, participatory institutions were settled in the developing countries in order to integrate politically and socially marginalized individuals who lived in poor neighborhoods (Wampler, 2007, p.18).

In the context of participation, one aspect that is essential and at the core of participation is the dismantling of hierarchies based on gender, race or ethnicity (Ng, 2016, p.5).

Citizen participation processes aren’t an easy endeavor. The main challenge is to reconcile the ideal of citizen participation and what actually happens in practice (Callahan, 2007, p.223). There are two major opinions regarding the citizen participation. On one hand, citizen participation is seen as a means for building trust, increasing accountability and transparency, promoting mutual understanding, decisions legitimacy, social justice and democracy. On the other hand, citizen participation is seen as a big waste of time, a utopia, very costly and *politically naïve* (Callahan, 2007, p.223).

Hollie Russon Gilman said that, *It is common nowadays to bemoan the state of our democracy* (Russon Gilman, 2016, p.1). Promoting democracy requires everyday exercise and the citizens’ participation in public affairs gives legitimacy and better acceptance of the decisions taken, and therefore a better relation between the public authorities and the citizens.

By the late ’90s, the World Bank recognized the important role that citizen participation has in keeping state structures accountable as a key to effective local government (Mansuri, Ghazala & Rao, 2003, p.50). Therefore, for the World Bank specialists, the PB is a tool for good governance. The BP, that presently is organized in different forms in over 1000 cities all around the world (in some countries, like Dominican Republic, participatory budgeting is mandated by law), has received awards from the United Nations and the World Bank for best practice in local governance.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN CLUJ-NAPOCA CITY

The participatory processes have begun to develop in Cluj-Napoca starting with 2004. This year also marked the change of the public administration with the local elections that took place that year.

Starting with 2004, the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca has begun to organize regular meetings with the citizens in each of the city’s neighborhoods. The mayor participated in these meetings together with



City Hall officials and local councilors. The purpose of these meetings was either to set priorities for the current year or to discuss projects of great interest. In the background, within these meetings were discussed and collected administrative issues faced by citizens in their neighborhood.

There have been many public debates organized by the municipality on various topics of major interest to the city's residents. Following these debates, some of the municipality's projects have been significantly modified.

Setting the date for the City Days is a significant example of citizens' participation in public affairs. The City Days is an event that has become one of the most important and appreciated events by the inhabitants of Cluj-Napoca. This event has expanded with each edition and gathers around it the entire community. Regarding the date of organizing it, two opinions have emerged. On the one hand, the month of May was supported as the date of organizing the event; on the other hand, it was argued that October would be the most suitable month. In order to make a decision, the City Hall gave Cluj-Napoca residents the opportunity to decide by vote, therefore, 59.4% of those who voted decided May as the date of organizing the event.

In 2012, a group of civic organizations called on the mayor for a participatory approach to administrative decision-making processes. In response to this request, the mayor invited the signatories to participate in a working group attended by experts from Cluj-Napoca universities and representatives of several NGOs. The working group proposed a series of documents containing the principles of the process, the design of the process, participatory budgeting being considered an instrument of inclusive urban development and urban regeneration. These documents were presented to the mayor and the local council. They can be consulted on <https://bp.primariaclujnapoca.ro/> (Boc, 2018, pp. 57-73). Thus, the pilot project of participatory budgeting in the Mănăstur neighborhood has been implemented.

On 10-13 June 2013, at the request of the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca, the World Bank organized a conference on participatory budgeting, attended by international experts on participatory budgeting from South America, North America and Europe. The purpose of this conference was to train the local actors in organizing the participatory budgeting process (Boc, 2018, pp. 57-73).

The city of Cluj-Napoca is considered the heart of Transylvania, one of the most developed regions in Romania. Cluj-Napoca has a population of over 326,000 inhabitants. To this number are added around 80,000 students and several thousand citizens from neighboring areas who work in Cluj-Napoca. It is a university city, considered a hub of innovation and research, IT and medical center, these being the main strengths of the city.

Regarding the Mănăstur neighborhood, it has a population of approximately 100,000 inhabitants, and it is the neighborhood with the highest population density. The pilot participatory budgeting process in this neighborhood took place according to the following design: the neighborhood was divided into zones, the South area and the Center-North area. Separate meetings were organized in each area (an informative meeting, and then a consultation meeting on neighborhood priorities for each area). Then, a neighborhood-wide meeting was organized. The meetings were organized with the help of moderators, prepared in advance by experts in the field from the civil society and representatives of universities.

The meetings were promoted and organized by the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca in the gyms of the high schools in the neighborhood.

All participants in these meetings were able to speak and explain to the representatives of the municipality the problems they faced. Also, the citizens had the possibility to fill in a form with their administrative problem, on this form being indicated the contact data to which they subsequently received an answer from the representatives of the City Hall.



The results of this first participatory budgeting project carried out in Mănăștur neighborhood were the rehabilitation of *Dacia* cinema in the neighborhood, the rehabilitation of the main street in the neighborhood, Mehedinți Street, the rehabilitation of several alleys, but also the solving of several small problems in the neighborhood that the participants in the meetings presented to the administration representatives or passed on the notification forms. This pilot project received the special mention of the jury at The International Observatory on Participatory Democracy Awards, Madrid, 2015.

Participatory budgeting process has continued in Cluj-Napoca with COM’ON Cluj-Napoca 2015. This process has been organized by *Pont* group, together with *Share* Federation and supported by the Local Council and the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca. Its purpose was to engage young people in a participatory and deliberative process, an exercise to involve young people in deciding how to spend a part of the local budget. The whole name of the project was *Participatory Youth Budget in Cluj2015, the European Youth Capital*. It should be mentioned that the city of Cluj-Napoca was the European Youth Capital 2015.

The process consisted in the submission by informal groups of young people of maximum 3 of one or more project proposals (up to maximum 5) in the amount of maximum 9000 lei (out of which the participants' contribution was 4500 lei). The voting of the projects took place online. 451 project proposals were submitted, 102 were funded, and the number of registered votes was 18,782. This process was addressed to young people aged 14-35, without restrictions on domicile, training or professional experience. The City Hall of Cluj-Napoca financed this process through Law no. 350/2005 on the regime of non-reimbursable financing from public funds allocated for non-profit activities of general interest. The particularity of this participatory budgeting process was the fact that it was not the City Hall that implemented the voted project proposals, but granted a part of the money necessary for their implementation.

Over time, participatory processes have continued and developed in Cluj-Napoca. The development strategy of Cluj-Napoca 2014-2020 has included public participation among the priorities of public administration. Even the drafting of the municipality development strategy has been itself a model of public involvement and participation.

Also, the Center for Innovation and Civic Imagination has been set up. Here, the major infrastructure projects of the city and other important administrative issues are debated. These meetings are attended by representatives of the municipality, experts on different fields of activity and all citizens interested in debated issues.

Organizing online public debates by the City Hall or even the citizens' participation in the Local Council meetings has been also accelerated by Covid-19 pandemic, which has determined public administrations to rapidly develop new online procedures.

The technology development and its increasing use in the relationship between the public administration and the citizens determined Cluj-Napoca City Hall to design a new form of participatory budgeting process, which takes place exclusively online. The model of this new form of participatory process was taken over from the city of Braga, Portugal.

The first edition of the online participatory budgeting process took place in Cluj-Napoca in 2017. The process also took place in 2018, 2019 and has also begun this year. The entire process takes place online, on the platform www.bugetareparticipativa.ro. The platform has been constructed by a private company under the patronage of the Advisory Board for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in IT.²

² Advisory Board for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in IT is an informal discussions group composed by City Hall representatives, Universities, NGOs, IT clusters where future innovation and digitalization major projects are being discussed.



The principles and rules that guide the PB process are encompassed in the Regulation of the process that is available on the web site www.bugetareparticipativa.ro.

Citizens who live, work or study in Cluj-Napoca and have reached the age of at least 18 can participate in the participatory budgeting process. The process calendar involves the following stages: the period for submitting project proposals, the analysis of project proposals by the technical team within the City Hall, the first round of voting, the validation of the first round of voting, the second round of voting, the validation of the second round of vote, announcing the final results.

As mentioned above, the online BP process involves two rounds of voting. In the first round, each citizen registered in the participatory budgeting portal can choose six projects (one for each of the six established categories). In this stage, a maximum of 30 projects are selected; the first three projects ranked according to the number of votes in each category automatically enter the second voting round, and the others according to the number of votes, regardless of the category from which they make part.

In the second round, each citizen can choose a single project from the 30 projects established in the first round.

At the end of the second voting round, a number of 15 projects are selected. The first project in each category classified according to the number of votes is selected automatically, and the rest of the projects are selected in the order of the number of votes, regardless of the category they belong to ([https://bugetareparticipativa.ro/regulament/](http://bugetareparticipativa.ro/regulament/), Accessed 12 June 2021).

The citizens can submit project proposals in the following categories: Alleys, sidewalks and pedestrian areas, Mobility, accessibility and traffic safety, Green spaces and playgrounds, Development of public spaces (urban furniture, public lighting, etc.), Education and cultural infrastructure, Digital city.

The process takes place exclusively online, through the platform www.bugetareparticipativa.ro. People who do not have internet access or digital skills can submit project proposals and vote helped by the City Hall representatives at the Casino Urban Culture Center where, throughout the entire process, City Hall officials help citizens submit projects or vote.

The BP Regulation also provides the possibility of organizing participatory workshops. Cluj-Napoca City Hall has organized these kinds of workshops, but few people attended them.

Participative workshops are very important within the BP economy, but they must be very well organized, citizens-oriented and process-oriented. Otherwise, they can become simply meetings with officials, especially with the mayor, where is transmitted the information they want (Röcke, 2014, p.6).

In the tables below we present some statistical data related to the three editions of BP that took place so far.

	2017	2018	2019
Project proposals submitted	338	164	199
Project proposals eligible	126	46	40
Projects proposals to be implemented	15	15	15



No.Votes	2017	2018	2019
Round 1	29138	14920	14291
Round 2	11499	4112	2877
TOTAL	40637	19032	17168

	Categories	2017	2018	2019
Round 1	1. Alleys, sidewalks and pedestrian areas 2. Mobility, accessibility and traffic safety 3. Green spaces and playgrounds 4. Development of public spaces (urban furniture, public lighting, etc.) 5. Education and cultural infrastructure 6. Digital city	4574 4367 4643 4562 6869 4123	2325 1986 3094 2712 2539 2264	2415 2267 2524 2581 2230 2274
Round 2	1. Alleys, sidewalks and pedestrian areas 2. Mobility, accessibility and traffic safety 3. Green spaces and playgrounds 4. Development of public spaces (urban furniture, public lighting, etc.) 5. Education and cultural infrastructure 6. Digital city	1095 565 1148 888 7608 195	583 150 1350 1000 780 249	769 318 742 552 187 309

Participatory processes are dynamic activities that should be open to adaptation and flexibility. The PB should adapt to the particularities and needs of each community in which it takes place.



As the case for Cluj-Napoca, the analysis of the project proposals that have been submitted reveals that citizens are not familiar with PB, very few of them seem to have read the Regulation of the process, although it is a short and easy to understand document. Some participants have chosen to submit simple complaints instead of real project proposals. Without a reading of the Regulation, many projects exceeded 150,000 Euros, the maximum value of each project, provided by the Regulation.

Another peculiarity that we find is that, although the city of Cluj-Napoca is considered a city of innovation and IT, the Digital City category did not enjoy much interest from participants.

As far as the implementation of the projects is concerned, the City Hall managed to implement over half of the total projects. The reasons for not implementing all the projects are diverse, some related to cumbersome administrative procedures, others to the opposition of citizens. Some projects voted by the participants have been included in larger, multiannual projects of the municipality.

This PB process has been a pilot process so far. The previous editions have revealed potential changes that could be made in designing the process. We believe that, in order to determine a greater involvement of the citizens in the process, the number of final projects should be reduced from 15 to a maximum of 3, the amount of money allocated to each project should be higher. Within this new design of the process, during the participatory workshops, the project proposals could be better discussed, analyzed, redesigned and integrated into the major projects that the municipality is developing. As Joshua Cohen writes, deliberative democracy is at its best a process whereby participants reconsider and reconstruct their preferences (Cohen, 2003, pp.45-46).

Regarding the dissemination of information and information campaigns on the process carried out by the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca, we consider that they were sufficient and covered both online and offline.

Cluj-Napoca example of online PB process has been followed by other cities in Romania, such as Oradea, Sibiu, or even Bucharest.

CONCLUSIONS

The participatory budgeting process is a complex participatory endeavor, ruled by the same principles, but organized in different ways, depending on the needs and particularities of each local community. It is a dynamic process that requires adjustments from one edition to another. The design of the process shouldn't remain identical, but evolves with the evolution of society.

For local public administrations the participatory budgeting is a major challenge, patience and energy consuming, but it offers transparency, it leads to the increase of the citizens' satisfaction degree and the legitimating of the decisions taken by the local administrations. Also, participatory budgeting projects voted and implemented by the public administration are much more easily accepted and appropriated by the community, precisely because citizens had the opportunity to get involved in their proposal and debate, the implementation decision being taken through the mechanism specific to democratic societies, the vote.

However, the success of participatory budgeting processes largely depends on the degree of involvement of the local public administration representatives throughout the year, the constructive involvement of citizens and the adaptation of the process to the changing needs of the community, in line with local development plans undertaken by public administration.



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