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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING. CASE STUDY OF KUTNÁ HORA (2019-2020)²

Abstract

Participatory budgeting (PB) allows citizens to be a part of the decision-making processes on public money expenditure. It increases citizens' participation in public affairs, strengthens deliberation and engagement. Active participation can strengthen the role of the citizen, and in addition it can create a common knowledgebase of collective issues and help to prevent and solve power-centralisation, leading to a democratic and equal society. In the academic literature, PB is often referred to as "traveling policy innovation", and since the original case in Porto Alegre, it has taken a path that originated in values such as reduction of corruption and empowerment of marginalized groups. Nevertheless, there is currently a lively academic discussion about PB it lacks a connection of its impacts on youth segment in general. The aim of this case study of Kutná Hora in the Czech Republic, where the youth segment was included into the process. In this case not only students at high schools but also primary schools' students with organizational help of student's councils were participating in the budget allocation decision process and such contributed to the innovative and inclusive local government. Paper gives an overview of PB process creation and its structure in Kutná Hora that led to youth engagement on local level (local PB).

Key words: participatory budgeting, participation, youth empowerment, inclusion

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1 INTRODUCTION

Many prominent thoughts of the 20th century shared belief that ruling (either authoritarian or democratic) is inevitably constructed by elites (Pareto 1916; Weber [1922] 1978; Mosca 1939; Sartori 1987), or that the parties and other influential actors are the entities who formulates the political conception (Putnam 1971), and participation of citizens should be rather peripheral (Dahl [1971] 1995, 1994; Schumpeter [1942] 2010).

This notwithstanding, normative democratic approaches have a critical standpoint towards this liberal approach to democracy and emphasize the role of participation (Pietrzyk-Reeves 2008), arguing that the lack of participation in a long term creates “weak citizens” (Barber 1984). On the other hand, deliberation on public matters gives people a power to act upon the cultivation of reason-based arguments, and by discussion expanding their imaginative limits (Fung and Wright 2003), deliberation forms a base of citizen knowledge of collective topics and issues. Moreover, actively executed participation can strengthen the role of a citizen, help to prevent forming power-centric constitutions and thus, it is leading to a democratic and equal society (Pateman 1970).

Standing on these values, the concept of participatory budgeting (hereafter PB) was introduced in Brazil Porto Alegre in 1989. Originally, it was implemented to give a voice to marginal segments of society, to empower them and give them a political strength, i.e., this innovation facilitated their direct participation in policy making and generated a significant shift in distribution of power at the local level (De Sousa Santos 1998; Abers 1999; Wampler 2007). PB embraces political concepts of inclusion, participation, and active engagement in public matters together with public administration core means, as co-creation and innovation, it produces greater changes in improvement of transparency, stronger civil society, greater accountability and social outcomes (Wampler, McNulty, and Touchton 2018). Moreover, PB gives to participants power of active decision making, as Goldfrank defined PB as a “process by which citizens, either as individuals or through civic associations, can voluntarily and regularly contribute to decision making over at least a part of a public budget” (Goldfrank 2007).

Since the first application, this concept has spread around the globe (Lehtonen 2021) and became one of the eminent research fields of scholars that are focusing on politics, public policy, and public management. The application of PB processes has been different in each region, self to local government customs (Ganuza and Baiocchi 2012). In the majority of cases, PB was focused on wide range of citizens that complies with the agreed age

threshold (in many cases lower than the age required for election participation), even though youth alone is rarely a target group.

People, who are now creating the segment of “youth” (15-24 yr.) and majority of “young adults” (25-35 yr.) in CEE regions have already been born and raised completely in democratic surroundings. This generation did not live through the conflicts nor turmoil fighting to achieve it.

Despite rooted democratic principles the turnout of youth is very volatile, and the question stands: are there ways to empower this segment to get actively included in public matters? The hypothesis on how to respond to this basic, yet crucial question would lead to opening academical discourse and itself in-se includes political implications.

2 STATE OF THE ART

The beginnings of conceptual definition of participatory budget and participatory budgeting are dated to the end of the 90’s of the last century (De Sousa Santos 1998; Fedozzi 1999). Since then, the literature has amplified significantly. The first researches were mainly focused on the description of the first cases in Porto Alegre (Giacomoni 1993; Fedozzi 1997; Genro and Souza 1997; Abers 1999, Becker 2001; Baiocchi 2001; etc.) and comparison analysis of later applications with the original case. As the theory spread across the globe so did the study of particular cases. The special attention gained Latin America, since it was the first one to experiment with PB (Novy and Leubolt 2005; Goldfrank 2011; da Silva 2014), North America (Stewart et al. 2014), and since 2000 we can see the spread of case studies also in Europe (Džinić, Svidroňová, and Markowska-Bzducha 2016; Gregorcic and Krašovec; 2016) and other continents (Lee 2012; Cho, No, and Park 2020; Zelalem and Waqgari 2020).

Literature on frameworks and delimitations on PB (Fung and Wright 2001; Baiocchi 2003; Sintomer, Herzberg, and Röcke 2008; Wampler 2018; Brandsen, Steen, and Verschuere 2018), and application of the concept in general, is rather well developed, where the research gap lies, is in the phase of practical implementation and effect evaluation, either in short or long terms. There is literature on “what is” and “how to”, but literature on “if” and “why” is still rather limited. That is what this project is aiming to study.

Even though CEE countries were amongst the first ones to experiment with participatory budget processes in Europe (Džinić, Svidroňová, and Markowska-Bzducha 2016; Kersting et al. 2016), and Poland was the first European country that incorporated PB into legislation at national level (Dias, Enríquez, and Simone 2019) relevant academic literature dedicated to experience of this innovation in region has remained fragmented to topics,

mostly focused on the setting of the early attempts of applications and developments of PB initiatives.

Up till now PB was studied either as a whole process or with the focus on marginalised groups, that especially in LA countries, but there was no study that would research the impact of PB participation on youth. There are very few studies mentioning the youth as a target group. Since PB often does not have a legal threshold on age for participation, it plays an inclusive role, not only for marginalised groups of people or those who won't be able to vote in national elections (people without address,...) but also to people who do not make it to the age threshold when it comes to local or national election.

Numerous plans and strategies on international level are leading to activities regarding development and inclusion of the youth segment, focused on empowerment and participation. The United Nations (here after UN) annual document World Youth Report (2018) draws concern that “[t]he youth development is assigned high priority in a number of national, regional and international instruments. However, young people continue to face structural and societal barriers to full and effective participation in political, economic and community life”. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, plans to enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries (UN 2015). Youth inclusion project funded by European Union (hereafter EU) and OECD is detecting and dismantling barriers of youth empowerment and inclusion, elaborated Guidelines Better Policies for Better Youth Livelihoods (OECD 2018, 10). UNESCO's (2012) Operational strategy on Youth (2014-2021) aims to enable youth to become key partners and when it comes to development, peace and policy formulation, participation of the youth is one of the axes of the strategy. The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (EC 2018) presents three core areas of action: engage, connect and empower and the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 (EC 2020) also presents empowerment as a core pillar.

Participatory budgeting by all means works as a tool for creating meaningful engagement and empowerment of all the segments across the society, moreover it can be considered as a part of the educational process (Cabannes 2004, Lerner and Schugurensky 2007) with qualities such as commitment and responsibility enhancement, but despite all the efforts that are being developed in the area of youth empowerment, participatory budget as a tool of achieving these goals was still not explored and researched.

Taking into account accessible literature reviews either those that stand alone (Van Helden and Uddin 2016; Gerlit et al. 2017; Verschuere, Brandsen, and Pestoff 2012; Scherer and Wimmer 2014) or literature reviews embedded in research papers (Wampler 2007; Van Cott 2008; Matheus et al.

2010; Goldfrank 2011; Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers 2014; Van Helden and Uddin 2016; Wampler 2012; Mancilla García and Bodin 2019; etc.), there is very scarce academic literature that would elaborate closer on the role of participatory budgeting as a tool of youth empowerment and vice versa impact of inclusion on process innovation, momentum building and the spread of democracy values throughout this segment by these processes. As Wampler stated in his overall overview of PB state “[t]he issue of who participates in PB and why some users are more active than others is extremely important and still under-developed“(Wampler, McNulty, and Touchton 2018, 27).

The main contribution of this research is grounded at this point. This paper is aiming to shed a light into above-mentioned research gap. It will contribute to discourse on youth engagement and its involvement in policy making at various levels, and participatory budgeting initiatives, that are, as demonstrated by previous research, aimed to ameliorate the engagement and empowerment across the spectrum of society (e.g., Fung and Wright 2003; de Sousa Santos 2004; World Bank 2007; Goldfrank 2011).

Work is aiming to draw connections, based on current initiatives, that have their proper characteristics in many cases different from the original case in Porto Alegre, since this concept is ever evolving. Work will connect two already elaborated points of research - participatory budgeting and youth empowerment to find the point when these arguments intersect and within draw the connections, result and recommendations to future.

3 METHODOLOGY

The interconnection between the concept of youth inclusion and enhancement of their participation, and the use of participatory budgeting, as above mentioned, is rather scarce and limited. Contribution of this paper to the argument would be a study of case performed in order to observe its connection and to offer a bases to hypothesis forming in this area for future research.

Paper will offer a response to question if inclusion of youth to participatory budgeting activities has an immediate impact on this segment in terms of their inclusion into public decision making, and if yes, how so.

Research question is based on questions „if“ „why“ and „how“ and will be performed as observation of action in its organic conditions, without stepping into the process or changing it for sakes of research. Therefor case study would be the optimal method to advance. Paper will offer „in-depth“ description of phenomenon of participatory budgeting and youth, under-aged on a engagement in public matters, without the control of behavioural events, based on methodological guidelines of Yin (Yin 2015) Case study would offer

a descriptive and explanatory overview.

From this academical standpoint data gathering is divided twofold into desk research of accessible materials and performing semi-structured interview to complement them and explain particularities that could not be traced backwards in accessible materials such as explanatory memoranda and municipal budget reports.

Qualitative interview will set bases to examine „intertwined sets of findings: evidence of the nature of the phenomena under investigation, including the contexts and situations in which it emerges, as well as insights into the cultural frames people use to make sense of these experiences. Combined, they offer important insights for theoretical understanding“ (Silverman 2016 [1997]). As Silverman states, in depth interview is especially useful, when it comes to examination and description the reality of the social world from the point of view of participants, who directly or indirectly got in touch with the observed phenomenon. It allows with authenticity to recreate for us a reality in which the phenomenon was placed and authentically understand the links. (Silverman 2016 [1997]).

Single case study of Kutná Hora paper will describe motivations that led to a creation of PB and its application in scholar environment, it would connect the youth participation and their engagement in public matters and explains the causality. To sum up, paper will search for a response on „why“ youth was included into participatory budgeting processes and „how“. It will closely link connection between youth engagement in PB to their engagement in decision-making on a local level.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Kutná Hora from perspective of Czech Participatory Budgeting

The case Kutná Hora in Czech Republic was selected, where the whole idea of PB setting was fuelled by the primary intention of providing schools with school parliaments and give them responsibilities to handle with.

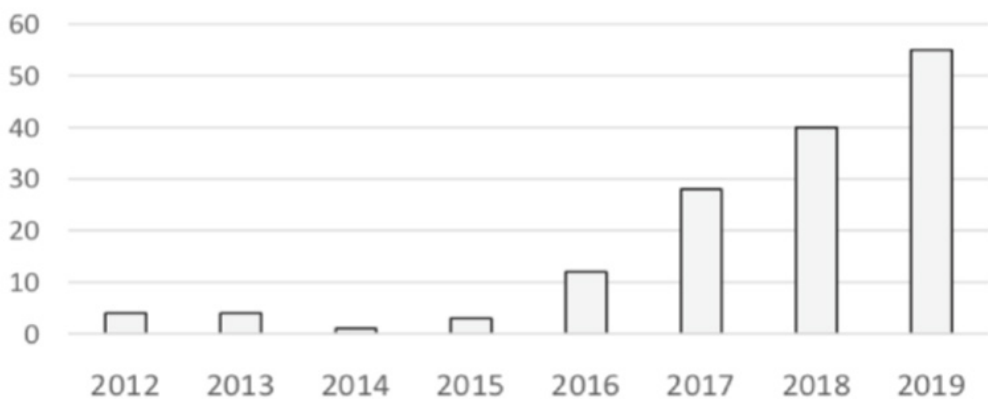
Participatory budgeting is an innovation with travelling character (Lehtonen 2016). That means that from its very first debut in Brazil, is spreading, traveling and modifying based on the local customs. Ganuza and Baiocchi (2012) described two phases of PB spread. First phase is a period right after the debut year in 1989, is extending in early 1990's, when PB was getting international attention and setting a ground rule on its concept. In that time PB was having a position of „centrepiece of a political strategy“ in Latin American states. Means it was not a support tool or tool for an efficient public administration, rather the tool of achieving a change and breaking up with

the democracy pattern allowing clientelism and corruption. Second phase is marked by the attraction of international importance and penetration to other continents. Especially in Europe, PB get moulded to a form that was necessary at that time and it shifted from a position of reform instrument, representing more the left-spectrum of political parties into more politically neutral instrument that had a role of improvement, improvement of administration, good governance and trust in public institution. For its second stage in European continent based on the needs and values, importance was given to participation, but its linkage to social justice and redistribution was not that crucial. The primal value of PB was rather shifting towards the „sensitive decentralising and localising of responsibilities” (Ganuza and Baiocchi 2012), underlining community linkages and trust building and making the (local) public policy more effective.

Central Easter Europe was affected by the second phase of PB spread, when the idea penetrated also within its institution, and the first attempts of its application took place. Despite the participatory tendencies in early years, the very first attempt to apply PB (in its whole) in Czech Republic is being considered the case in 2014, in Prague district Prague 7. (Černý) Even though the expected outcomes were not achieved; participation was rather low, and project overly ambitious to realise, it still served as a steppingstone to introduction of PB in country.

Even though the process is relatively „ young” we can observe the curve of rising tendencies from 2015. On the Figure 1. we can clearly observe that after the 2014 when PB go coverage, flattering or not, case the tendency started to rise.

Graf 1: Number of participating municipalities in PB in Czech Republic in years 2015 – 2019



Source: Rotbauerova 2017

Since 2015, 122 municipalities have tried at least one the PB process. The number of municipalities using PR in 2020 was 87, which is 24 more than that the previous year 2019. (platform: participativni rozpocet, 2021).

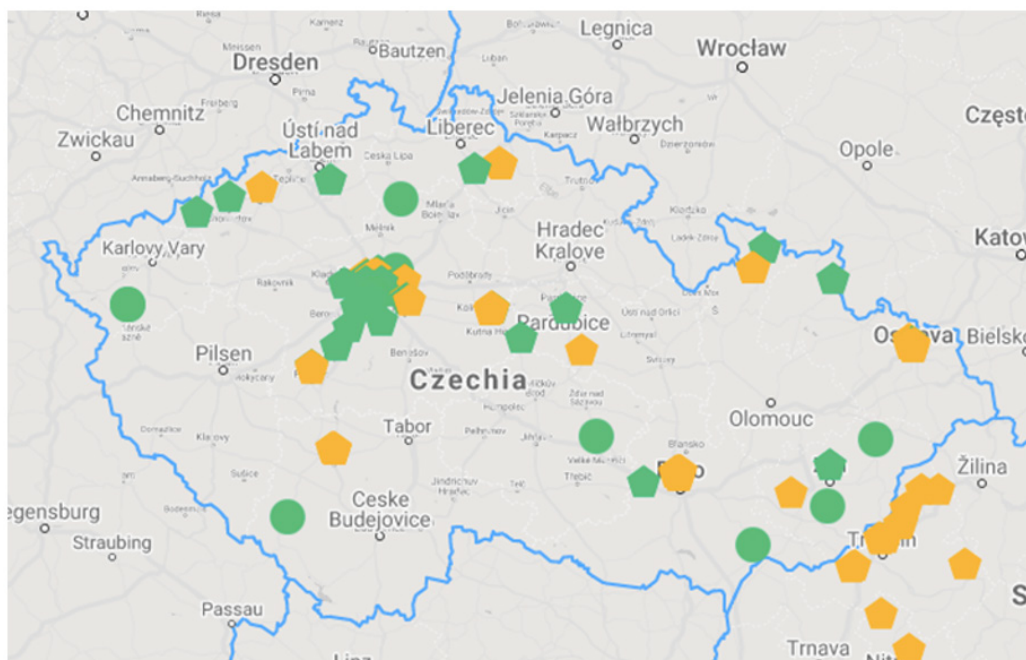
PB as an innovation is being adapted according to local customs and necessities. Latest PB Atlas to this date from 2019 named three main tendencies for Czech Republic, that are as follows:

- introducing digital practices
- innovative voting system
- Implementation of school participatory budgeting

In general, digital practices are connected to one-way communication, such as information portal, or both-way communication such as online deliberation or vote. Regarding the voting system an innovative system called Janeček method (hereafter JM) was created and introduced in Czech Republic. Its innovativeness lies in the possibility to cast multiple votes, and therefore support various projects. Like that, it decentralises the efforts to optimally chose one-and-only-one winner, into possibility to vote in more conceptual manner. Voters are voting more in conceptual way, for idea that they prefer, and does not matter how many projects are contributing to this idea. Apart of giving a possibility to give positive vote – vote „for” a project, the method gives also a possibility to vote „against“ – give a negative vote, only under the condition that voter gives at least twice as much positive votes than negatives, and gives only one vote, either positive or negative to one project. (Janeček, 2021) Giving more possibilities, system is trying to achieve better and more exhausting expression of voters towards the projects and in such a level of correctness and consistency.

Last but not least innovation is an expansion of scholar participatory budgeting encouraging also pupils of elementary and high schools be part of a decision-making force when it comes to public school budget allocation, until the 2019 in 40 school this version of school PB was experimented.

Picture 1: Spatial distribution of local governments and schools with PB in Czech Republic



Source: H21

In municipality of Kutná Hora this concept of School PB even evolved beyond the limits of school. A competence of pupils to decide over scholar budget was complemented and supported with two levels of decision making above, on a municipality scholar parliament level and in a level on a whole municipality (for scholars to be a part of a support system of process execution).

4.2 Origins of PB in Kutná Hora

Kutná Hora already had implemented student's parliament on a school level. The origin of PB is connected to idea of helping students to organise this student's parliaments on higher- local level, the very first idea was to create student's local parliament, including representants from each school. This was a root that grew further into the proposal of PB application. Based on the words of Deputy Mayor Mr., Vít Šnajdr, "the original thought was not only to "simulate" democracy, but also introduce it to the students" with responsibilities and possibility to be the part of the community in Kutná Hora. This led not only to application of PB on scholar level but also in the whole municipality.

On School Commission meeting on April 1, 2019, Chairwoman Mrs., Dana Vepřková and Deputy Mayor Mr., Vít Šnajdr presented to the members

a proposal for the establishment of a municipal student parliament. Student parliaments are already working on school level, in individual schools. The idea was to build amongst them a connection and unify them under the municipal student parliament (School Commission meeting on April 1, 2019). Goal was to create functional student parliament as an educational process for student itself, to help them not only to gather and share knowledge on the common ground, but also to understand a democratic processes and empower them to active citizenship. (Šnajdr, 2021).

Various institutions were invited to counsel the process. Centre for Democratic Learning (CEDU) was approached. They proposed a version of student parliament in rather traditional way, without the connection to PB. Agora Central Europe proposed of one-time simulated school parliaments with lower interconnection between young people and the city. Institute 21, successor to Democracy 21 supported by the Karel Janeček Foundation backed with experiences Říčany, Příbram, Prague 5 proposed to join school parliament with PB. At the end the process was organised based on the H21 proposal. The offer of the H21 Institute combined the work of school parliaments with the school's participatory budget. From this proposal the idea grew over the level of student's parliament on municipal level. Creating a municipal youth parliament, linked to the city's participatory budget and at the same time launching a civic PB. The big advantage, and the innovative thought was projected into the connection of youth activities with the activities of the city's citizens. And as mentioned in Explanatory Memoranda from 21 August 2019, this represented a unique pilot project that has not yet been implemented anywhere in the Czech Republic. (Explanatory Memoranda RM 21 August 2019).

By the Resolution no. 586/19 (from 21/08/2021) Student Municipal Parliament and the Participatory Budget - with 8 votes from 8 were concluded negotiations with the Institute H21 on securing the student city parliament and participatory budget according. (Vote from the Kutná Hora City Council, held on 21.08.2019)

Pupils of primary and secondary schools in Kutná Hora met for the first time on Friday 13 December 2019 at the first meeting of the Council of School Parliaments in Kutná Hora.

They had an opportunity to talk about the functioning and structure of their student governments. Project as such was being implemented for the first time in the Czech Republic and which aims to bring student parliaments closer and give their representatives space to take part in what is happening in the city through a participatory budget. After discussing the activities of school parliaments, students were introduced to the so-called „School city participatory budget“, which will consist in defending and voting for projects

to improve Kutná Hora for a total amount of CZK 150,000 from the city budget. Pupils and students were also informed that the council of school parliaments will meet even after the voting of participatory budget projects and will serve as a long-term student self-government.

Originally, an amount of 200 thousand was allocated in the budget for PB in general, projects including. After getting acquainted with the issue, it was reconsidered after deducting the costs of the process and the administration of PB, citizens would distribute a rather small amount that was assume would not be motivational to participate in public affairs. After a debate in the management, it was decided to modify the amount. After consultations with representatives' pilot project was crafted much robust than it was expected and interlinked with scholar activities.

It was first of its kind project of this magnitude in Czech Republic. Project was drafted to be active on three levels: 1) pupil PB at schools activating already existing student parliaments participation within the School, 2) Pupil City Parliament unifying student parliaments representants from each school and 3) Participatory budget for citizens for 2020 for which new budget was proposed in total amount of 1 million CZK (Response to the comment raised at the meeting of Kutná Hora on 7 December 2019).

4.3 Proces of PB in Kutná Hora

Participatory budgeting in Kutná Hora happened on three levels:

- School level
- Student parliament on municipal level
- Municipal level

PB on school level took place in year 2019, meanwhile in 2020 PB run on all three levels.

The first phase - The school involved a school part, a budget in which pupils and students decide on proposals and a certain amount of money within the school. All schools in Kutná Hora were involved (4 primary schools, 4 secondary schools. PB process was managed and brought to an end in each of this school with overall budget 20.000 CZK per year. Budget for this activity upon the agreement with the city, school derived from their budgets. Each school had an appointed coordinator, who was also responsible for spread the world and communicate, since there was no budget allocated into the communication within the school. Each coordinator together with appointed representants from each class took this responsibility on them. (Šnajdr, 2021) IH21 provided schools with an annual license for the „School Péběčko“ platform (online platform used for voting process), which is specially adapted

for the project. The goal is to take on everyone (platform: participace21).

Second and third phase started simultaneously on august 2020. Conditions were not optimal due to the global pandemic situation and the lack of possibilities to meet and discuss offline. Research on political situation of Czech Republic and Slovak Republic during the COVID-19 outburst was performed (Klimovský et al. 2021) depicting the situation and pointing out prompt but in latter development of pandemic situation chaotic and less systemic regulatory measures arriving top-down from government towards municipalities. Furthermore, research performed in Slovakia shown that during the outburst of pandemic in 2020 have decided to suspend or even cancel the implementation of participatory budgeting (Bardovič and Gašparík 2021) Also, as mayor of the city, Mr. Šnajdr mentioned in the interview it was one of the factors of a smaller slowdown in terms of times, since the meetings were very difficult to organise. Even though this difficult situation, Kutná Hora proceed with PB implementation in 2020.

The second phase - student parliaments. In this phase representants (2 people) from each school presented a project on behalf of their school, which had to be beneficial not only for the school and surrounding but in a higher sense also for the city and its citizens. Budget for this phase was being provided from the city and in the end an overall budget dedicated to projects was 150.000 CZK, that went split into two projects small one in value of 50.000 CZK and bigger one with value 100.000 CZK. A series of three consultations took place, in which representatives of schools defined and prioritize suggestions and proposals for improving Kutná Hora. H21 make the universal part license licensed to the city of Kutná Hora. „D21“ platform to ensure consultation with pupils' parliaments.

Third phase – whole city PB: Was opened to all habitants of Kutná Hora to apport with projects and include themselves with voting. Students (in between the age of 15 and 18) from the schools where PB was realised year sooner (in 2019) had a role of coordinator, where they were assuring smooth go of the process, and therefore, even in this way they were included into the moulding of the PB processes into the municipality. At the end the overall budget dedicated to projects in this phase was 1.000.000CZK (which went split into +-8 city parts, that makes overall budget for one project in between 90-150.000CZK) and every citizen of Kutná Hora, older than 14 years old can participate in the process.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Initiative of PB incorporation in Kutná Hora originated from the initial idea of allowing young people to experience the principals of democracy

on their own; by involving them into decision making. The primary request from the municipality side, was to think about the setting of an experience for young people, in which their role would not only be as observers but also executers. That led to introduction of local student's parliament. The PB process was executed on three levels: school level, local parliament level and local – municipal level.

What made Kutná Hora a unique case was, that the incorporation of youth into PB processes was not a consequence but rather a driver of the whole PB process. The local PB was nurtured from a previous experience of PB pilot in schools and student's parliament on local level. This experience also led to realisation, that the original budget that was thought for this activity is rather low and bigger amount of financial resources was dedicated to this process. The innovatory approach lies in not only setting a lower age threshold in local PB on municipal level for project proposal and vote (14 years) but also in allowing young people to fill the role of coordinators in local rounds of PB. The PB initiative met with the positive response from the students, their parents and most of the administrative personnel, anyhow it would be not true to say, that it didn't face the criticism.

The main branch of criticism was noticed thanks to the interviews with organisers. Its appearance was detected from the side of spontaneous public opinion on PB. It consisted of the belief that the project tasks (such as a web page design) were not well performed, because not only professionals but also unexperienced youth was involved in execution. This is a seed of deep misunderstanding of the expected outcomes of PB youth incorporation. This kind of exclusive "project orientation", rather than "process benefits orientation", may result into two-way evaluation system between the local government and the wide public. The communication strategies to achieve a goal consensus should be applied. As Mr. Šnajdr said projects are in process of PB just a cherry on the top, but whole cream lies in the original motive, to empower youth segment to participate in local matters and decision making.

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- ŠNAJDR, V. Interview on 27 August 2021 (online)