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CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN CITY GOVERNANCE

UDZIAŁ SPOŁECZNOŚCI W SPRAWOWANIU RZĄDÓW NAD MIASTEM

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Abstract: The author states that society itself is the most important stakeholder in a city. The reasons for such state were examined along with the implications what this means for both inhabitants and authorities. In the section that follows, the conscious city-changing actions of inhabitants were taken into consideration, with the emphasis on urban activism. The last part again concerns inhabitants' actions in a converse, passive way, which is perceived as a form of active but unconscious participation in governance in this research.

Keywords: society, participation, governance, city.

Streszczenie: Autorka zauważa, że samo społeczeństwo jest najważniejszym interesariuszem miasta. Rozpatrywane są przyczyny takiego stanu oraz implikacje wynikające dla mieszkańców i władz. W kolejnej części rozważane są świadome działania mieszkańców zmieniające miasto, z podkreśleniem miejskiego aktywizmu. Ostatnia część ponownie odnosi się do działań mieszkańców w odmienny, pasywny sposób, który w niniejszym badaniu jest postrzegany jako forma aktywnego, acz nieświadomego udziału w zarządzaniu.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczeństwo, partycypacja, rządy, miasto.

1. Introduction

Due to a city's complex structure, it can be perceived in the category of systems (social, political, infrastructural, mobile etc.). The stability of all systems is crucial – even if just one malfunctions, the whole city's system cannot function properly.[1] In this research, the author focused on the societal sphere, more precisely on civic engagement in city governing. The aim of this work was twofold: firstly, to identify the importance of the city's inhabitants in respect of other city's stakeholders, and to find out what does this means for them as well as for the city's authorities, and, secondly to divide and investigate the actions of the city's inhabitants concerning their participation in governing. Desk research, the author's observations and findings complemented the case study methods which were used.

In the first part of the considerations, society's prominent role and position concerning the city's stakeholders were examined. Significantly, their role in influencing the functionality of public spaces was highlighted, thus these spaces fulfil various roles in societal life – citizens spend their free time there, work, commute, play and simply live. According to Sangmoo, public spaces are the core components of every city (without any distinction as to small or large urban areas). The crucial citizen-centric idea of public value was then presented regarding the contemporary city concept – a smart city. The needs of inhabitants vary between cities, depending on the specific case of their city's conditions. To explain such relations, one can refer to the Hierarchy of Needs. In the final part of this section, reluctant behaviour of both residents and municipal authorities towards civic engagement were briefly examined.

The next part of the research concerned inhabitants placed in the 'centre of the action', examining issues such as urban movements and tactical urban planning. The last concept is understood as a quick, most often temporary, and inexpensive project aimed at transforming a small area into one more pleasant/lively, undertaken by residents. It is worth stressing, that it confirms the leading role of the citizen in the urban centre. However, the municipal authorities' approval (along with their participation) is crucial – the examples of such actions were indicated.

The last but not the least section raises another important, although often omitted, phenomenon, which is the participation of citizens in a *passive* way. The 'passiveness' for the purpose of this research is viewed not as a lack of activity but as an unconsciously monitored activity that contributes to changes and transformations of the city's parts, areas, systems etc. For example, analysing inhabitants' behaviour using satellite images provides information about the fulfilment of their needs.

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[1] It regards to achieving established city's goals.

2. Society as the most important stakeholder

A city's stakeholders are all entities that impact on the functioning of a city and those that are affected by the city itself. They mainly include the public, economic entities, municipalities, non-governmental and advisory organizations, energy and water suppliers, as well as representatives of academia, the most important of which is society. City dwellers know best what their actual needs are, so they should participate in planning the development of the functioning of the urban space in which they function – live, spend free time and work. Sangmoo stated that "public spaces are lounges, gardens and corridors of urban areas", they fulfil the role of a large, shared home. Choudhary pointed out, the inhabitants "(...) are the main components of every city. It is not about technology or infrastructure; infrastructure is a citizen's requirement, and technology is a stimulus" (Choudhary, 2018).

In the above context, the theory of public value is worth explaining, which also places the urban community as the most critical urban stakeholder. According to Grimsley, Meehan and Gupta, public value is a value that citizens and their representatives are looking for concerning public services' strategic results and experiences. As suggested by Harrison, Pardo, Cresswell and Cook, it focuses on collective and social interests served by specific institutional arrangements and government actions (Castelnovo, 2013, pp. 94-101). The fundamental determinant of public value in an urban area are its inhabitants, made up of government agencies. On the other hand, thanks to taxes, which constitute a financial contribution of city dwellers to the functioning of cities, they gain the right to influence the way public bodies function, which, thanks to the possession of appropriate methods, tools[2] and funds, create public value.

The contemporary concept of an urban centre – a smart city – expresses its fundamental value through its definition. Namely, a smart city is a city of a creative--thinking society that can use technical and technological innovations in its activities and use information and communication technologies (ICT). A feedback loop is visible – thanks to the creative social capital (inhabitants) which participates in, and for governance (Korenik, 2019, p. 19) – a constantly 'living' and 'thinking' city is created that is subject to constant changes (adjustments).

Considering the needs of inhabitants, and they naturally vary – they depend on the specific case of a city, or more precisely on the conditions (mainly economic) in

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[2] One of the basic tools used in managing (including creating) public value is Moore's "Strategic Triangle" (who, incidentally, is the author of the concept of public value). The triangle consists of:

(1) public value – the creation of which should take into account the characteristics of the executive (task) environment, i.e. the environment to which the value is directed;

(2) sources of legitimacy and support – these empower (a public organization) to act and use resources to deliver value;

(3) operational capabilities – guarantee organizational feasibility of the set goal; resources, investments, innovations. More in (Ćwiklicki, 2011).

which it is located. In some, the most essential needs to be satisfied first are the basic needs focusing on survival, and if these needs are met, new ones appear, e.g. related to communication or organizational. Thus, when the lower-order needs are satisfied, there is a need for higher-order needs. Considering the concept of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in terms of urban centres, the following levels of inhabitants' needs and the related exemplary needs (from the lowest to the highest) can be determined:

1) access to water, food, sanitary infrastructure, affordable housing;
2) low crime rate, street and transport infrastructure that does not endanger the conduct of everyday life, the possibility of employment that guarantees earnings, thanks to which the physiological and biological needs are met and it is possible to maintain savings – financial security, access to health protection;
3) the possibility of influencing the functioning of public bodies – influence on the public value for all, e.g. civic budget, lack of discrimination or segregation of inhabitants;
4) maintaining a balance between professional and personal life, the so-called work-life balance: no difficulties in daily commuting to and from work (Pfeiffer, 2019)[3], easy access to care and educational facilities, especially those located in the vicinity of the place of residence;
5) no barriers in the urban space to achieve personal goals, a sustainable urban environment, a city that 'supports' its inhabitants and cooperates with them.

Summarizing the above, residents should participate in local government because they, as the most crucial stakeholder of an urban centre, are the determinant of public value. It is in the interest of the city authorities to take steps to ensure that residents participate in governance. The essential features of the model inhabitant are awareness, openness to dialogue and willingness to act and cooperate. The problem, however, arises if citizens are reluctant to participate in such a way. This state may result, among others, from a lack of trust in the authorities or, on the contrary, from above-average trust in the authorities. Considering this issue "from the other side", various motivations of city authorities can be indicated not to encourage residents to actively develop their urban centre (SmartCitiesWorld, 2019). For example, authorities fear citizens requesting changes that they cannot make, and frequently, insufficient financial resources are also the reason. What is more, the emergence of a technological gap[4] can be stated.

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[3] As IVY EXEC points out, long journeys to work are also harmful to health and happiness. One study from England shows that adding just 20 minutes to commuting has the same negative impact on emotions as reducing the salary by 19%.

[4] Technology is still exclusive for some groups of society. If they cannot afford access to the Internet, they cannot communicate well with government in today's era of digitalization.

3. Inhabitants in the "centre of the action"

In the previous section, it was indicated what makes city dwellers key stakeholders. Therefore, since they can best determine their real needs, considerations should be continued in the direction of indicating the actions taken by current inhabitants of urban centres (often in a collective manner, through bottom-up initiatives) and what opportunities, often innovative (available thanks to technological progress), create today's urban centres.

Increased urbanisation processes in the world, unprecedented in history, have resulted in the emergence of a range of social problems which, in turn, resulted in the emergence of specific social actors, acting as social movements[5], through which residents try to influence various dimensions of the functioning of the urban centre in which they live, e.g. the environmental, political and spatial dimensions. At the beginning of the 21st century, Pickvance referred to them as "urban movements". This term was widely adopted in the subject literature (Pickvance, 2003), urban activism is used interchangeably, characterised primarily by grassroots and the principle of non-profit operation (...). They are also linked by their orientation towards matters happening in the city space.

The manifestations of urban movements are, among others, protests in the city space (Sagan, 2017, p. 153) pointed out that their revival has occurred since the financial crisis (and that of democracy) in 2008, using the example of Spain, where protests broke out in 2011 and were named the "indignant movement", which spread to other European countries (and even reached New York). Through their protests, residents expressed their dissatisfaction related to social and economic inequalities and injustice associated with the dependence of public authority on corporate interests. The critical role of modern information and communication technologies in the spread of social movements should be emphasised – the ease, speed, and relative availability of these technologies (especially for young generations) are essential.

One of the innovative activities of urban activism is the implementation of manifestations of tactical urban planning, which may be the 'purest' form of shaping urban space by residents (and therefore a response to their needs). These are all kinds of interventions in this space – quick, often temporary, cheap projects aimed at making a small part of the city more lively or pleasant, and their initiators are primarily the residents themselves. Cities are perceived as "spaces from people to people" – so changing public spaces appears as a right that residents have, which is, in a way, an extension of the right to the city, which is conceptualized within the

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[5] The PWN encyclopedia defines social movements as "deliberate large-scale activity of a larger or smaller part of members of society that do not fit, at least initially, within the existing institutional framework".

broader human rights agenda.[6] Sassen described tactical urban planning as open-source – this is a reference to kind of software, "(...) which is licensed legally and free of charge. In addition, it provides its users with the right to modify themselves, analyzing and expanding existing products" (*Polkas*, n.d.). Just like open-source, tactical urban planning can be created, adapted by anyone, and starts with a bottom-up initiative (Sassen, 2011). This mainly concerns urban public spaces.

Tactical urban planning originates from highly developed countries, and nowadays a wide range actions undertaken by citizens can be noticed in such countries, for example placing brightly coloured ramps in front of business entrances to make them wheelchair accessible (Matchar, 2015) or, creating temporary protected bike lanes with a sign in the end "Did you use this protected bike lane? Text betterbybike to a (telephone number given)" (Steuteville, 2017) – further collection of votes may establish a strong fundamental for perpetual change.

However, citizens' actions from medium and low-developed countries also need to be stressed, as they seemingly increased during the last five years. Examples include:

- Egypt, where a local non-profit organization prepared a street development project to support a marketplace for skilled craftsmen (Bolton, 2020);
- India, where, thanks to the actions of residents, temporary paths for bicycles have been separated during the coronavirus pandemic (in order to help maintain social distance) (Malagi & Metha, 2020);
- Indonesia, where local communities concentrated in crowded neighbourhoods during the coronavirus pandemic, prepared special banners reminding them of the principles of sanitary safety and conducted security checks (Kurniawati, 2021).

As indicated earlier, the permanent implementation of solutions proposed by residents is possible with the approval and participation of the municipal authorities. The relationship between municipal authorities and residents is changing; more and more municipal authorities are starting to treat urban activism as a resource (i.e. one of the basic components of economic growth (PWN)). As mentioned by Faehnle and Mäenpää, the inhabitants begin to be thought of as "(...) for example, service providers, service designers, community managers". This role is visible in relatively often organized social consultations, which have a formalized structure in statutory provisions, and their specific form is the civic (participatory) budget. Kłębowski defined it as "a decision-making process in which residents co-create the budget of a given city, at the same time co-deciding on the distribution of a specific pool of public funds" (Kębłowski, 2013). An interesting example of contemporary

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[6] The right to the city was originally defined and described by H. Lefebvre in 1967. He stated that "the right to a city can only be articulated as a right to a changed and renewed urban life, one in which the public meeting place will become the most important of all resources" (Marcuse, 2013).

resident-designers is the neurosurgical observation of their behaviour (changes in pulse or brain waves) using 3D models of urban spaces – this is how their perception and reactions are examined. Residents also become informants about the current situation of the urban centre e.g., a Boston map was created, through which residents report any inconvenience (such as the presence of rats, abandoned vehicles), which presents a constantly updated state of a given urban space (Harvard, Worldmap).

A practical example of a city's authorities engaging inhabitants to actively participate in governing is the San Francisco programme launched in 2015, called "Civic Bridge". Its aim is to identify and resolve problems emerging in the city in any sphere (infrastructural, societal etc.) by the cooperation of private and public sectors. Residents reach the "Bridge" in the form of volunteering by using their management, data collection and analysis and visual interface design skills, have already tackled problems like searching for affordable housing online and a surge in 911 call volume (Civic Bridge).

Around the world, many citizen-centred platforms have been established, among them the digital democracy platform Citizenlab, which is being used in over 300 communities across more than 18countries (e.g. Paris, Leuven, Vancouver, Brussels). It allows to easily "engage, consult, and deliberate with their residents and collectively move towards decisions" (CitizenLab). Another innovative online community engagement tool is Maptionnaire, which functions in a map-survey formula. On a virtual map, residents can express their opinion on the exact city spot or area in a simple commentary box. An additional option is the survey of preferences. Its overall aim is to bridge the gap between the public and urban planners, and it has been implemented in a range of US and European cities (CitizenLab).

4. Participation in a passive way

The actual needs of city dwellers can also be satisfied without their awareness, albeit with their active participation. This is possible thanks to observing behaviour, which can provide a lot of data, and then their subsequent analysis to obtain information. This tool is especially useful in spatial planning, where the observation of people's behaviour is relatively easy.

A frequent problem in urban space is the maladjustment of infrastructure, e.g. due to the lack of pedestrian crossings in places with heavy pedestrian traffic or providing pavements in desired areas. The second case can be observed when analysing, among others, satellite images where the paths 'trodden' by people can be observed, for example across lawns, who are looking for the shortest way to their destination – thanks to this, these people send messages about the way in which they want to use the space. Colville-Andersen calls these routes "desire lines" (Colville--Andersen, 2019).

Similarly, Gehl's methodology was used to define how public space is used, which helps to determine whether it is the correct, assigned way of specified space's

usage or that changes should be made to adjust it to citizens' needs. Activities taking place in such space are classified into categories based on criteria, namely:

1) purpose (e.g. jogging – a recreational type of activity; commuting – a purposeful activity);
2) repetition pattern (e.g. weekly garage sale – recurring event);
3) location attributes:
4) moving (e.g. walking, bicycling)
5) stationary activities (e.g. standing, reclining) (Hanzl & Ledwon, 2017, p. 653).

It should be noted that in every analysis external factors should be taken into consideration such as the weather, holidays etc., which can significantly influence human behaviour.

In particular, in the last decade the analyses and needs of a city's inhabitants have become significantly easier, thanks to the fourth industrial revolution (the so-called Industry 4.0). The combination of automatisation, machine-learning and innovative data-exchange techniques allowed for these analyses to be more accurate, especially by the Internet of Things' sensors, thanks to which an intelligent space is created by combining infrastructure (as well as residential buildings) and objects into a single network. This space is able to exchange information with each other without any interference of third parties (Ashton, 2009, pp. 97-114). Moreover, this combination makes the analysis more available (since smartphones can act as sensors). Moreover, it has become possible to measure activities that did not exist before (the so-called cyberactivity), as well as those that were hard to measure (e.g. bicycle traffic). Cyberactivity has become a source of much valuable information about, among others, the moods of city dwellers thanks to the method of qualitative sentiment analysis. Publicly available activities, mainly on social networks (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) are taken into account, and thanks to this method, it is possible to obtain a large research sample in a short time (depending on the computing power of computers), so it can be used constantly to study changes in social mood. A template example is a study which examined Wuhan (in China) residents who posted public comments on the Wu Han Comment Board (Zhe, Siqin, & Jiang, 2020). Thanks to the use of the open-source program "Houyi Collector" after filtration, more than 12 thousand data records were collected and then categorised. As a result, it was found that the city is struggling with five main categories of problems: security, housing, environment, infrastructure, and public services, which then were sorted and assigned to the relevant neighbourhoods.

5. Conclusion

Residents themselves possess the best knowledge about their own actual needs, thus they should participate in planning the development of the functioning of the urban space in which it functions. Citizens' rights to influence the performance of

their cities can be seen also to flow from their contributions, namely taxes. Modern city concepts, using an example of a smart city, suggest that their core is a creative social capital, which is obviously formed by its inhabitants. To sum up, residents are perceived as the city's most important stakeholders.

Society's participation can be considered twofold – active and passive. The most significant manifestation of active participation is urban activism which corresponds with urban movements, whose latest revival occurred following the financial crisis in 2008. Gradually more and more citizens from any developed status countries are becoming aware of their prominent position, and along with municipal authority's initiatives such as civic engagement online platforms, they are given the possibility to participate in governance. What is important is that municipal authorities are starting to treat urban activism as a resource. An example of such democracy-supporting initiatives is the Civic Bridge whose aim is to identify and resolve problems emerging in the city in any sphere by the cooperation of private professionals and the public sector.

Another view on society participation, namely passive, regards satisfying the needs of city dwellers without their awareness but with their (unconscious) active participation. Such participation can contribute to resolving numerous problems, especially on the spatial ground. A frequent problem in urban space is the maladjustment of infrastructure, which manifests itself in, e.g. the lack of pedestrian crossings in places with heavy pedestrian traffic. Simple action in observing human flow through satellite images can provide information about areas in need of improvement. Such investigations are often supported by the fruits of the fourth industrial revolution, for example, by the Internet of Things.

To sum up, several significant conclusions can be drawn. The city's inhabitants are its main stakeholder. They possess the right to participate in governance. Moreover, this participation is increasingly often perceived by the authorities as a resource. Without it, there is no existing way of forming a citizen-friendly, livable urban centre, and that is the reason why the authorities should enable, support, and develop public-private cooperation.

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