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Civic e-participation in the activities of the self-government of the city of Lublin in 2010-2016

Summary of the PhD thesis

The subject of this dissertation is the analysis of e-participation processes carried out by the City of Lublin in 2010 - 2016. The rationale of the research included in this work is the dynamics of the development of modern technologies and a high degree of their use in Lublin's e-participation processes. Interest is aroused by involving residents in co-decision processes and giving citizens a voice about the community, which is an important element of city management policy. Remembering that the city is the inhabitants who build its space and future, and effective co-management is the implementation of a policy based on social participation, I decided to choose the topic of the dissertation in its center by putting the process of engaging citizens in the policy of creating public life by the self-government authorities regulating the principles of cooperation self-government with the public in the provisions of local law. My research also included a long-term process of education and participatory involvement of citizens, who is not indifferent to constantly developing modern forms of communication. In addition, the subject of the analysis is also the new media and the use of their opportunities in social participation, especially their positive impact on the increase in the level of social involvement in co-decision processes and the emergence of a new form of civic participation, based on modern technological tools: e-participation.

In research conducted in the dissertation, I have also subjected the presence of new media and their impact on changing the style and character of the conducted dialogue, and, above all, how the local government cooperates with the residents. I devoted my attention to the role of new technologies in opening up the possibility of fast, effective and cheap acquisition of information, both from the point of view of the organizer and participant of the

process. The role of internet communication, the use of communicators, participation in social consultations and codecision processes with the use of modern communication techniques as well as easier access to participation tools allowing for greater public participation in co-decision processes is of interest. Information technologies that support social activities, the development of economic services and the service of state and local government administration also aroused interest.

Krzysztof Żuk, during the election campaign for the Mayor of Lublin in 2010, inaugurated the Policy of Participatory City Management by introducing changes in the quality of local government communication processes with residents and including new activities involving society in co-decision processes. Changes in the information and communication policy implemented by the Office have activated social activity of residents, thus influencing the increase of civic engagement. My research included activities in the field of social participation, conducted by the local government in 2010-2016, and the process of implementing new media in social participation, ensuring fast and cheap acquisition of information, both for the organizer and participant of the process. I have also analyzed the Lublin e-participation processes that have transferred civic activity to the virtual plane, thereby initiating new social engagements for Lublin residents and online tools facilitating the implementation of the main Lublin self-government processes such as communication, exchange of views and opinions, and finally, decision-making.

My research included social participation processes of the Lublin City Hall based on modern technologies, and the subject of the content, quantity and quality analysis carried out are the tools, techniques, procedures and social practices of e-participation used in the Lublin city self-government activities in 2010-2016, and tools used by residents in the processes of co-managing the city. The work has a research and analytical character.

I start my research with the contextualization of the analyzed issue, precisely defining various forms of civic codecision process. Next, I analyze the categories of e-participation by meta-analysis of theoretical expansions of civic activity, conducted through new media, perceived as tools and spaces of the civic participation process. I analyze the tools used by the Lublin City Hall in the process of e-participation, maintaining the division into own tools and social media. I analyze the role of the Internet in the process of social consultations with the inhabitants of Lublin in a separate analysis. At the end of the research, I analyze the content of

self-government websites, mainly Facebook profiles and profiles created by residents, having the character of social practices aimed at civic integration with activities undertaken by the City Hall.

The cognitive goal is to determine the level of use of new media in the e-participation processes carried out by the City of Lublin in 2010-2016 and to determine the involvement of Lublin residents in processes initiated by the local government. The aim is also to indicate factors shaping the activity of residents in e-participation processes and analysis of the relationship between the use of new media and active civic participation in the processes of e-participation of the City of Lublin.

I have defined the following hypotheses and research questions. The first hypothesis assumes that modern technologies used in e-participation processes are a tool for effective participation of Lublin citizens in the field of civic activities. The second hypothesis assumes that new media enable effective implementation of the assumed goals of civic engagement, both on the part of the self-government and the citizens themselves. The third hypothesis, of a specific nature and resulting from the previous hypothesis, is: Facebook is an effective tool enabling the inhabitants of Lublin to initiate activities in the field of social participation and the implementation of joint initiatives. The last one accepts that the Internet is an effective tool in conducting public consultations by the Lublin City Council.

In addition, I have specified research questions:

1. To what extent has the codecision been regulated legally?

2. What is the level of detail of legal provisions in the field of civic participation at various levels of regulation: international, national, local?

3. What relation exists between the provisions of international law and national provisions in the field of civic activity?

4. What is the attitude of the Lublin authorities to using modern technologies
in the processes of civic participation?

5. What is the level of interest of the inhabitants in the profiles of the Lublin City Hall in social media?

6. What is the relation between civic activity of the inhabitants of Lublin
and the level of use of modern technologies in the processes of self-government participation?

7. What is the use of the Internet in the processes of participation of the Lublin City Hall and what are the objectives pursued through it?

8. What channels and tools are used in the Lublin region's self-government participation activities in 2010 - 2016?

9. Do the personal interests of Internet users influence the way and scope of Facebook in the implementation of own initiatives?

10. What is the attitude of the inhabitants of Lublin to the city authorities and their initiatives and their own subjectivity in shaping urban space?

In the subject literature, the issue of e-participation in the local government is addressed in an insufficient manner, and the available studies and research results focus only on the fragment of widely used techniques and tools of e-participation. There are studies dealing with the issues of social participation, new media and civil society, but address the issue in a general way. As part of the conducted research, there are few examples of considerations on the use of tools and techniques of e-participation in self-government activities and the relationship between the use of new media in the Office's participation processes and active involvement of residents in co-decision processes. The undertaken issue of e-participation ignores the initiation of participatory processes with the use of new media by the residents themselves and the significant role of the Internet in the processes of civic e-participation. Literature covering all these areas together, which corresponds to the subject of my research, is still insufficient.

The dissertation is of analytical and research nature. The research material was chosen in a targeted manner. I have tested the e-participation tools used by the City of Lublin in the processes of social participation. The analysis concerned a comprehensive strategy for the use of new media by the City of Lublin Office and its implementation. I chose all self-government tools in the field of e-participation and social media used by the Lublin City Office in communication processes. I have analyzed the effectiveness and efficiency of generally available tools in comparison with my own, created for the needs of specific procedures.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis has been given to Facebook profiles created by residents, having the character of social practices and oriented towards civic integration with activities undertaken by the City Hall. In the analysis, I use a case study of civic profiles and the use of social media in citizens' involvement in co-decision processes. The comparative technique turned out to be necessary to identify the profiles with the highest effectiveness.

I used the individual case method, the diagnostic survey and the method of analysis. Among the techniques used, I used field research involving the study of the behavior of

Lublin residents during the processes of e-participation carried out by the Lublin City Hall as well as narrative and non-targeted interviews. I used the technique of overt and covert observation, participatory and non-participating, depending on the e-participation process studied. Documents and legal acts have been analyzed in terms of content. Quantitative and qualitative research methods enabled the selection of numerous profiles that meet the criteria for presenting tools and techniques used in social participation processes, and the interpretation of the content made it possible to analyze the use of specific communication channels. In addition, in research I conducted interviews and in-depth interviews to organize the collected data and obtain answers to questions asked at work.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, five chapters, an ending, a bibliography, a list of illustrations and tables. During the analysis of the research problem, I separated two chapters with a theoretical character. In the first chapter I present the terms of civil society and participation, which form the basis for the functioning of e-participation tools and techniques. An approximation of the concept of civil society allows us to position the inhabitants as a subject of social participation processes, and the presentation of the development of civic participation in Poland after 1989 illustrates the changes in civic engagement occurring in society at the turn of the last thirty years.

I have analyzed the basic acts of international and national law and local, in terms of public involvement in co-decision processes, in the context of radical structural changes of participative processes resulting from the development and dissemination of new media, constituting instruments of civic participation. Analysis of legal regulations made it possible to present the possibilities that citizens gained in terms of active participation in e-participation processes. The approximation of individual documents and legal acts created an image of the involvement of residents in the participation processes in an optional and obligatory way and the principles of law implementation by authorities of various levels.

The second chapter contains reflections on the media and their role in participation processes. I have analyzed the possibilities of new media in shaping civil society. I devoted my attention to the definitions and classifications of the media as well as the concept and characteristics of e-participation, which is an expression of new civic commitment to the processes of codecision. I approached the e-participation tools used by the City Hall in the communication processes.

The three remaining chapters are empirical. In the third chapter, I submitted theoretical considerations to the tools used in the e-participation process by the City of Lublin

in 2010-2016. The self-government's own tools were subjected to research to facilitate participation processes with the use of new media and active inclusion of citizens in city management. Among the own tools I analyze, among others Dialogue box, on-line forms and mobile applications. The second element of considerations includes the Lublin City Hall's presence in social media. I presented the use of such tools as: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat by the local government of Lublin. The use of such a selection of research material made it possible to broadly cover the subject of analysis and to achieve reliable research results.

In the fourth chapter, I analyze the use of the Internet in the public consultation processes with the inhabitants of Lublin. For the analysis, I chose the procedure of the Citizens' Budget of Lublin, the PAS Self-Government Activation Program and the meeting of residents with the mayor and representatives of the local government. In the area of civic budget, I present a tool in the form of a dedicated internet portal and the impact of its implementation on civic engagement within the framework of three editions of the procedure. Another element of the research is the analysis of an interactive platform, enabling residents to actively participate in the implementation of the PAS project, which is part of the monitoring system of public services in the field of effective response to the voice of citizens. The transparency of the system made it possible to get to know the quality of life and the needs of residents as well as to effectively support and solve the problems of the local community. The last element of the chapter is the analysis of the impact of using the Internet on civic involvement in the participation in meetings with the city of Lublin. At this stage, I indicate the activity of district councils and residents as well as changes in the public perception of self-government thanks to the use of the Internet in consultation processes.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the analysis of selected Facebook profiles in the selection process, constituting the medium of civic e-participation. Structural and functional analysis includes 20 profiles in four categories: urban space, environmental protection, culture and sport, and social activity. The analysis was conducted in terms of the ability to build a community of engaged citizens and the effectiveness of achieving the assumed goals. Each of the profiles played a significant role in the processes of social participation in Lublin. The profiles selected for analysis are an example of civic engagement in e-participation processes.

The culmination of the dissertation is the presentation of the results of quantitative research and qualitative analysis, which are the subject of the dissertation. The bibliography

attached to the dissertation is a review of the subject literature and sources being the subject of the analysis.

The submitted dissertation is the answer to the question about the nature and image of civic e-participation in the activities of the self-government of the city of Lublin in 2010-2016.

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