

Introduction

The aim of this volume is to fuel a discussion in the area of research on the multi-faceted phenomenon of governance, understood as co-deciding, multi-band and multi-level policy-making on the local level. The effective inclusion of a growing number of stakeholders into public affairs and decision-making – is one of the most important tasks for modern democracies. It is also a prerequisite for modern and effective management – recommended by international institutions and gradually engraved in cultural norms, procedural models and practical activities – specific and locally established. That is why governance is particularly important in the management of local affairs.

It is at the local level – where it would seem that the rulers are closest to the ruled – the chances of creating good and lasting relations between them should be relatively high. Yet it is often this level that lacks in participation, transparency, coalition building and responsiveness – all of the essential features of good governance. The local level is certainly closer to the people. Yet it is more vulnerable to a variety of deficits – of expertise, human resources, institutionalised civil society, as well as of money. It is also vulnerable to the power of local elites, idiosyncratic networks of interests and simple overwhelming power of the strong leaders. A variety of circumstances and particular conditions make instances of local good and – for that matter – bad governance practices particularly illuminating, making local-level governance a subject of particular interest to scholars.

Following the guidelines of the European Commission, we would like to jointly review the scope of validity – at the local level – of the five principles of good governance: openness, participation, responsibility, efficiency and coherence, which are to be the key components of designing public policies in line with the idea of governance (EU, 2001). The analysis of processes, procedures or the specificities of participation at the local level is important for at least three reasons.

1. First of all, it is indispensable to constantly evaluate the claim that institutions of participatory democracy serve to reduce the deficit of legitimacy of decisions made in the political system. Do institutions of participatory democracy (in local context) reduce legitimacy deficit?
2. Secondly, it is worth examining to what extent and in what circumstances increasing the number of active participants of the political system can actually improve decisions made in it. Does improving participation numbers (quantitative dimension of democracy) also serve the better quality of policymaking?
3. Thirdly, it is necessary to review the prevailing stance in the contemporary literature that efforts to build participative institutions permanently in the local political system serve to decentralize the processes of exercising public authority. Does institutionalisation of participatory methods on local level actually decentralise the political power?

To answer these questions, we invited scholars with valuable expertise in a variety of areas to contribute to this collection. Their papers provide a wide ranging outlook on different topics, yet together – with a common motive and goal – they draw a fascinating picture of many features of local governance all over the world. Overarching themes and threads lead to an interesting conversation between the authors.

Andrzej Piasecki (Pedagogical University of Krakow) in his paper *Polish Local Government vs. Central Government in 1990–2019. Selected Political Issues* provides a valuable summary of many twists

and turns in the evolution of Polish self-government. What is particularly noteworthy in this description is the presentation of this evolution on the background of Polish politics, highlighting the fact that the development of any institutions is determined by political struggle, conflicts and calculations of political prospects. This paper will be particularly useful for anyone who seeks a comprehensive summary of the historical and political background of our decentralisation model – for students and scholars alike. It aptly reveals how – to paraphrase Nietzsche – any system does not have essence; it has history. In this instance, it is the history of party-political struggle.

Dominik Sieklucki (Jagiellonian University) in his paper titled *Institutional Forms of Citizens' Participation in the Process of Making Public Policies* presents a scrupulous catalogue of citizens' participation forms on the local level. He describes their characteristics as well as limitations. Among many, particularly valuable insights of this paper is the highlighting of the unnecessary complexities of those forms; complexities that make them practically less useful and less empowering than they could have been. This is particularly amplified by a sort of 'assumption of competence' that plagues Polish administrative and policymaking system – where rules of the game are made with the presumption that all potential participants are familiar with them and are competent in their policies or/and policies in general. This detracts new participants of policymaking from actual engagement, profiting the pre-existing policy network insiders.

Aneta Krzewińska (University of Lodz) in her paper *Restrictions Related to the Use of Deliberation when Making Decisions at the Local Level* presents valuable critique of the classical concept of deliberation as an idea to be implemented in the Polish context. She observes that in many ways this traditional notion of deliberation – as oriented on consensus – is problematic, too abstract and even outdated as often barely compatible with more innovative public discussion techniques. The author creates a catalogue of Polish social and systemic determinants that limit the feasibility

of deliberation. This critique of supposed universal applicability of classical deliberation is supported by literature concerned with the issue of cultural differences in the default public discourse (Gambetta, 1998), since the very notion of deliberation is a product of a specific political culture. This author challenges the notion that quantitative expansion of deliberative participation is viable without its adaptation to the local context.

Magdalena Gurdek (Humanitas University in Sosnowiec) in her paper titled *Local Community Participation in the Debate on Commune Condition* provides an interesting analysis and discussion on the functioning of the relatively new institution of local governance in Poland, introduced in 2018 – the debate on the report on the condition of the municipality that precedes the municipal council's vote of confidence for the municipality executive (president, mayor or vogt). The paper provides a valuable insight into roles (and entitlements) of inhabitants in the functioning of local authorities. The author presents this institution as an inconspicuous yet very promising for local democracies, discussing its problematic aspects and proposing some remedies.

Michał Zabdyr-Jamróz (Jagiellonian University Medical College) in his paper entitled *Deliberative Governance for Health in Local Context: Prospects for Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in Spatial Planning in Poland* focuses on prospects of introducing the notion of health in all policies in Polish urban and rural planning. In so doing he aims at addressing the issue of Polish "ugly suburbs" (Sroka, 2018). HIA is a deliberative governance technique aimed at not only considering health issue in policies and investments that are not primarily oriented on health. It is also specifically designed to engage inhabitants in public participation and a sort of 'civic science' in order to search for potential health risks and health promotion prospects in all sectors of policymaking. The paper contains a detailed proposition for institutionalising HIA into procedures of establishing revitalisation programmes – basing on current Polish legal regulations and international good practices. The author also presents potential organisational design of HIA in

the Polish systemic context. Following prospects of HIA in Poland the author – sharing many of Aneta Krzewińska's concerns about public deliberation – presents potential threats and opportunities of implementing these and other forms of deliberative governance in the local context.

Dawid Sześciło and Bartosz Wilk (University of Warsaw) in their paper *Shaping Co-Production of Public Services through Local Laws. The Case of Local Initiative in Poland* deal with a very interesting form of governance, where the very production of public services is participatory. A local initiative functions in Poland since 2010 and supplements other instruments of direct democracy (such as Citizens' Budget). It involves citizens submitting an idea for a small project (e.g. fixing or upgrading public amenities) and declaring their own contribution: material, financial as well as their own labour. In this instance the initiative strongly resembles the original idea of 'subbotnik' (*czyn społeczny*) – voluntary unpaid work for the public benefit – that originated in the Soviet Union, but quickly devolved into compulsory burdensome labour. By this example the authors show how certain institutions associated with the socialist ideas (despite being not well-known) can actually undergo a renaissance in the democratic system by being allowed to fulfilling their original intent and values.

Przemysław Baciak (University of Humanities and Economics in Lodz) devoted his paper *ICT as a Tool for Engaging Citizens in Local Policy-Making and Decision-Making Processes* to the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in governance. Departing from the enthusiastic narratives about them, the author engenders a more sober approach that emphasises their character as a tool for good as well as bad practices. Particularly interesting are remarks on the Public Information Bulletin as "data smog", resembling the old practice (known in the UK since 1978 as "the Rhodesia solution") of "non-informing informing", i.e. of fulfilling the legal requirement of publishing public information but in a way that to the recipient is effectively inaccessible non-communication. The author, however, does not dismiss ICT and observes that its

many failures can indicate their shallowness or susceptibility to manipulation but are not the reason to neglect their usefulness to democracy. What is essential is to select tools carefully, make them user friendly and functional as well as avoid data smog, misalignment and exclusion.

Jacek Sroka and Joanna Podgórska-Rykała (Pedagogical University of Krakow) in their paper *The Inclusive Methods in an Exclusive Club – About the Character of Some Conditions Hindering Co-Deciding in Local Communities* deal even more with problematic issues of local governance. They describe Polish examples of the processes indicated by John Dryzek when a “more democratic state” leads to a “depleted civil society” and, effectively, “less democratic polity” (Dryzek, 2005). This includes, above all the “game trap” – the co-optation of social movements’ leaders into the local establishment, into the elites of power. These authors share cautiousness of the previous authors towards deliberative participation, observing that Poland still lacks in the area of social experiences, attitudes and social institutions of political participation that are pretty much essential to move local governance forward. The problem the authors observe is a sort of hijacking of social and political inclusion by the elites who consider themselves gatekeepers of “rational”, “intelligent” participation. These elites still persist in the outdated views on the supposed antagonism between rational policymaking and broad participation. They are not aware how much biases and irrationalities drive their own positions. And this social imaginarium persists and spills over. People themselves are overwhelmed with top-down media apparatus of “manufacturing consent” (Herman and Chomsky, 2010) that suppresses their meaningful political action.

Monika Augustyniak (Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University) in her paper *Participatory Management in Local Government in Poland and France – in Search of a Normative Model* compares the functioning of participatory budgets in these two countries. Interesting conclusions support the hypothesis of the decisional atrophy of deliberation (Zabdyr-Jamróż, 2019). It turns out that “merely”

consultative forms of participation – with properly developed practices and rules – may bring greater deliberative qualities in improving policymaking than many forms of citizens' co-decision that are too strict in their design. In this instance, French participatory budgets – despite being *de iure* less powerful than the Polish ones – contain solutions that guarantee better conditions for participatory governance. The author concludes that the aim of such institution should be a better collaboration between citizens and public officials and not a complete replacement of administrators with citizens in decision-making. These remarks correspond to the notion of pragmatic model of administrative responsiveness that goes beyond the traditional antagonism between strictly citizen-driven or expertise-driven approaches (Liao, 2018).

Justyna Wasil and Monika Sidor (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin) in their paper *Effectiveness of Chosen Participation Tools as a Form of Governance – Lublin City Case Study* present a very interesting and thorough description of participatory spacial planning practices. The authors observe that there are multiple factors that increase public participation in spacial planning, some of which are not considered consensus-oriented (as they should). Among these there is the actual conflict – antagonism between stakeholders that mobilises participation. “The case of Lublin supports the theory that the more imposed a solution in the process of consultations, and the more complicated the contention and the higher number of local actors (especially affluent ones), the greater the civic activity of ordinary inhabitants”. These conclusions can lead to a variety of interpretations but are undoubtedly important if we want to design our spaces in a way that is more conducive to a good life in our common spaces.

Karol Bieniek (Pedagogical University of Krakow) in his paper *State Centred Tradition in Turkish Politics* decided to tackle a supposedly divergent subject but in fact shedding light on the potential conditions of local governance. Long-lasting Turkish tradition of statist centralisation – combined with elitist secularism and military *coup d'états* as guarantees of the *status quo* – has been replaced

with populist religious regime that – even though still centralised – derives its legitimacy not from the military but from the will of the people. Judging on the political declaration of the current Turkish president, it appears that within this condition the secular elite’s unaccountability is supposed to be replaced with the doctrine of citizen-driven model of accountability of public administration (Liao, 2018). This does not mean that Turkey enters a state of true democratic governance but at least it enters a stage that Western countries passed decades ago – a stage of popular mobilisation as a basis for legitimacy. This might have interesting consequences for the future development of local administration in Turkey.

The collected papers provide an interesting and wide-ranging outlook on the current state of governance on the local level. The authors engage in an interesting discussion. While in some instances their observations and approaches are divergent, they mostly converge in many conclusions – reaching them even from different starting points. This very fact, as well as highly interesting descriptive content should make this book a valuable read for scholars, students and interested laypeople alike.

Editors of the volume

References

- Dryzek J.S. (2005). Deliberative democracy in divided societies. Alternatives to agonism and analgesia. *Political Theory*, 33, pp. 218–242.
- European governance – A white paper*. COM/2001/0428 final, Official Journal 287, 12/10/2001 P. 0001 – 0029.
- Gambetta D. (1998). Claro! An essay on discursive machismo. In: *Deliberative democracy*. Cambridge, pp. 19–43.
- Herman E.S., Chomsky N. (2008). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. London.
- Liao Y. (2018). Toward a pragmatic model of public responsiveness: Implications for enhancing public administrators’ responsiveness to citizen demands. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 41, pp. 159–169.

- Sroka J. (2018). *Współdecydowanie w wielopasmowej polityce publicznej*. Warszawa.
- UN. (2009). *What is good governance?* Poverty Reduction Section UNESCAP, Bangkok.
- Zabdyr-Jamróż M. (2019). Preventing the atrophy of the deliberative stance: Considering non-decisional participation as a prerequisite to political freedom. *Avant*, 10, pp. 89–117.