

Protest participation - an unplanned way to create urban policy in Poland?

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Abstract

Nowadays, the idea of co-management is present in European politics, which emphasizes the opening of the decision-making process to citizens and their organizations when creating public policies. We can already see the reflection of this idea at the level of local government, where there are many instruments that allow residents to influence the affairs of their municipality. Concentrating on the urban self-government, one can indicate one of the most popular - participatory budget. However, the question arises whether these types of instruments significantly change the policy of municipal self-government. For years, the existing participatory budget, with the possibility of electronic voting, has not attracted a very large number of inhabitants. For example, in Warsaw, the largest number of residents voted (mainly via the Internet) in 2015 - 9.88%, but in 2020 it was 6.13% (Sidor).

Therefore, when observing the involvement of residents in public affairs, it seems that what can activate them the most are matters that cause some controversy. As noted by W. Jacher, although the management of local affairs is felt by the average inhabitant, because he is closest to himself, central issues are noticed by him (Drzonek, p. 57). When it comes to participation in protests, more masses also gather cases from the central rather than local political level. However, there are local problems that particularly activate the inhabitants. In the opinion of the author of the article, this is caused by an ecological conflict, which forces residents to participate. According to R. Bartłomiejski, the ecological conflict is a dispute resulting from the shortages of environmental resources or the degradation of the natural environment in a given area caused by human activity, disrupting the natural renewable process of these resources and leading to a short circuit, e.g. local community - local authorities or community - investor (p. 16).

The article attempts to answer the question whether the activated residents are able to change the decision of the authorities. How high is the turnout in this type of conflict? And finally, is protest participation (as the author of the article calls it) an effective tool of influence? In order to answer this question, the following research methods will be used in the work: institutional-legal method, descriptive method and case study method.

References:

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