

The role of social participation in the concept of good governance - a theoretical approach

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Abstract. *Nowadays, the concept of good governance plays a central role in debates in the area of social sciences in general and in the field of public administration in particular. The concept has been used frequently but often with quite different meanings and implications, moreover, one should underline the significant role of social participation in this concept as it involves citizens assessing their own needs and participating in local projects. Therefore, for social participation, transparency of government information is needed, as well as the inclusion of members in the decision-making process. Excluding the weak and powerless from decision-making is a cause of poverty because it denies them rights and creates unequal power relationships. This paper discusses a variety of meanings and different approaches to the role of social participation in the concept of good governance but its main focus is on the capacity of government to make and implement social participation policies and, thereby, develop knowledge based economies based on active participation of citizens and their well-developed bridging social capital.*

Key words: *governance, good governance, social participation, bridging social capital.*

Raktažodžiai: *valdymas, gerojo valdymo teorijos, socialinis dalyvavimas, viešasis administravimas.*

Introduction

Contemporary civilization processes, including the creation of the information society, globalization, Europeanisation, and urbanization, have made the old model of the functioning of administration cease to meet today's challenges. With the advent of the new public management concept, administration has become more open to the final beneficiary. Initially, one was a citizen only as a client and now, in the spirit of good governance, one has started to be treated as a partner (Sakowicz, 2009, p.3). Social participation is generally understood as the participation of citizens in managing the affairs of the community of which they are members. To a large extent, this concerns direct participation in political decisions and broadly covers the various forms of participation of citizens and other civil society actors in carrying out the tasks of public administration. Participation is one of the basic principles of good governance in European documents, including the White Paper on European Governance (Sakowicz, 2009, p. 8) Social participation is an integral part of a civil society which in turn is a derivative of a well-developed bridging social capital, which is high in well-functioning states. Governments in these countries clearly build bridges to excluded groups, thereby increasing the likelihood that marginalized groups have access to resources and services (Zakrzewska, 2016, p. 329). As an integral part of modern democracies, civil society has been studied with growing interest. If developed, modern democracies provide all the necessary conditions for the growth of political awareness and activism. Citizens – as representatives of civil society – influence the decision-making process. In other words, efficient civil society acts as a provider of interests in the relationship between the state and the public. The aim of the article is to summarize platforms of civil society in the context of the *governance* concept and at the same time compare it with the traditional model – *government*. Furthermore, the paper pays attention to the scope of civil society's influence in the process of democratization and good governance. As such, it can also be an introduction to further investigation of the practical approach to the role of citizens in policy making processes and in the concept of good governance.

Good governance as a part of the concept of governance

Governance means the functioning of institutions that should have social legitimacy and work effectively and responsibly. It also emphasizes the capacity of societies to create a system of representations, institutions, and intermediary structures geared to achieving the objectives set out above. *Governance* additionally refers to the way of social coordination or social order (Maynz, 1998). The basis for such a concept is to assume that the modern government needs knowledge that should be embedded in intelligent structures between the hierarchy, the market, and the networks of relationships. *Governance* refers not only to relations between individuals but also to political and power structures (Newman, 2000). As an example, the gov-

ernance definition given by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye considers the concept to be formal and informal processes and institutions that designate and limit the collective activity of a given group. The government (public authority) operates on a basis and creates formal duties (Keohane, Nye, 2000). According to Jan Kooiman (1993, p. 258), *governance* is a pattern of conduct or structure that emerges in the socio-political system as a common result or consequence of the intervention of all its active participants. The essence of the governance approach is, therefore, to bring about social change and the creation of social order (Wiktorska-Święcka, 2014, p. 150).

The descriptive approach to the concept of *governance* is linked to the normative trends in public administration, best characterized by the concept of *good governance* whose characteristics are participation, consensus building, strategic vision of development, response to needs, efficiency and effectiveness, responsibility, transparency, justice, and rule of law (UNDP, 1997). This approach is associated with the conviction that it is imperative to adhere to democratic values and standards as guarantors of social order, especially in the pursuit of universal standards such as professionalism, political neutrality, honesty, and the avoidance of conflict of interest. Consequently, the concept of *good governance* includes democratic and effective governance, effective public institutions, the right quality of public services, and the ability to adapt to new social needs. Practical translation of this concept requires observance of the principles of transparency, personal honesty, high ethical standards, respect for the law, responsibility, affordability, openness, and solidarity with the citizen. Effective implementation of the principle of *good governance* is also crucial in terms of building the state's potential for creating favorable conditions for the development of civil society and entrepreneurship, which nowadays is becoming a viable solution for overcoming an unemployed or migrant status for Europeans and contributes to driving innovation and competition in many economic sectors (Ahrens, Zascierinska, 2016, p. 1]. Therefore, the administration may be an active participant and act as a creator of conditions conducive to needed innovative activities (Biglieri, Kobylinska, 2015, p. 1). This principle sets the desired direction for changes in decision-making and governance, it identifies the areas of state reform and defines the instruments that should be created for the implementation of this concept (Wiktorska-Święcka, 2014, p. 158]. Consequently, *good governance* relies on instruments of governance that nurture and strategically utilize the self-governing potential of civil society under the strategic supervision of public authorities, seen in such diverse areas as employment policy, police power and crime prevention, health policy and biopolitics, employment policy, educational policy, accounting practices etc. (Bang, Esmark, 2007, p. 4), also between different actors of the socio-economic scene. E.g. the “University-Business Partnership” program of the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) which is intended to bring about a transfer of knowledge to foster close ties between universities and industry, thereby bridging the gap between university graduates and business communities

and strengthening the dialogue between higher education and industry, thus being able to better satisfy the requirements and developments of the job market in the future (Ahn, Gruenwald, 2015, p. 11).

The concept of *good governance* can also be seen as an improvement program. This approach has been defined by the World Bank and defines the method and desired effects of exercising power and its ability to carry out public activities. This principle advocates an improvement in the quality of management in institutions and strengthening of administrative capacity. A definition of “good governance” can be made of the following characteristics: open development policy, professional administration, acting for public good, the rule of law, transparency, and strong civil society (Schueler, Walther, 2003, p. 13).

Social participation in the concept of good governance

The term social participation in its shortest form can be used to describe citizens’ participation in managing the affairs of the community of which they are members. (Hausner, 1999, p. 41]. According to Długosz and Wygnański (2005, p. 12), social participation can be defined in the most general way as a process in which public representatives obtain influence and, indirectly, control over decisions of public authorities when those decisions are directly or indirectly influencing their own interests. Citizens, having an influence on the shape of regulation at an early stage of its creation, are more likely to be involved in its implementation. Moreover, this partnership should be understood as the participation of society in the process of governance which serves to build the capacity of institutions working to create partnership mechanisms, develop the competence of the administration to cooperate with the public in carrying out public tasks and stimulate the capacity of social actors to cooperate and cooperate with public administration and government (MRR, 2008, p. 90]. Social participation creates civil society and therefore enables citizens’ active involvement, enforcing the democratic preconditions via influence and pressure on decision-makers in public affairs. (Putnam, 2000, p. 50). So, when social engagement is growing progressively, the transformation process from government to governance can be made more effectively.

According to the scope of social participation in the concept of *good governance*, one should take into consideration the definition of Martin Potucke, whereby he underlines *good governance* as “a system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society, and private sector. It operates at every level of human enterprise.” (Potucek, 2006, p. 396]. Moreover, in the words of Göran Hydén, governance refers to the “formation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, the arena on which state, as well as economic and societal actors, interact to make decisions” (Hyden, 2004, p. 265). Consequently, citizens’ involvement in the decision-making process decreases the

power of the state, which is no longer acting as a single player (Wiktorska-Święcka, 2014, p. 166). In addition, the government is subsequently perceived not as a provider but rather as enabler for the existence of diverse actors of public policy making (Cavaye, 2005, p. 28).

Conditions for social participation

As discussed above, social participation is an essential part of civil society and contributes to good governance as a whole. In other words, if there is no social participation, no civil society can be developed and, therefore, the concept of good governance cannot be effectively implemented. The necessary conditions should be considered that would guarantee the existence of civil society and would lead to social participation. Analysis of civil society underlines several common characteristics (Ghaus, Pasha, 2005, p. 36) being a) existence besides the state and the market; b) existence of pluralism; c) participation of active citizens with common needs; d) interests and values; e) cooperation and joint effort; f) development through a fundamentally internal and autonomous process which cannot easily be controlled from outside (Wiktorska-Święcka, 2014, p. 172). Therefore, one should take into account various roles of civil society such as a) policy analysis and advocacy; b) regulation and monitoring of state performance and the actions and behavior of public officials; c) building social capital and enabling citizens to identify and articulate their values, beliefs, civic norms, and democratic practices. From this point of view, civil society fulfills corresponding roles with attention focused on transparency, effectiveness, openness, responsiveness, and accountability. In this way, a civil society acts as a counter balance to the state. Of all of its roles, the most important is building social capital and, in the opinion of the authors, this is the factor that contributes most to the development of social participation and has the biggest impact on good governance.

In spite of the many divergent definitions of social capital, it should be pointed out that it has a positive, merging character, emphasizing that “people who work are better connected” (Burt, 2000, p. 45) or “no matter what you know, it is important who you know” (Woolcock, Narayan, 2000). In other words, the more individual connections that exist within communities, the better they will function socially, based on the idea of *good governance*. Coleman also stated that social capital is a “special kind of resource that is embedded and developed in the structure of relationships” (Coleman, 1988, p. 96). In a similar fashion to his predecessors, Portes (2000, p. 3) noted that there is widespread agreement that social capital is defined as “the ability of individuals to benefit from membership in social networks or other social structures” (Portes, Landolt, 2000, p. 529). Positive social capital is the ability of people to cooperate, communicate, and collaborate (Woolcock, Narayan, 2000, Putnam 2000). According to Krzymieniewska, the essence of social capital is the creation of “the common good” and its main function “(...) is to reduce uncertainty in social and economic

life ...” (2003, p. 227). Thus, social capital reduces transaction costs and optimizes the use of resources in socio-economic life. Networks and interconnections which occur in bridging social capital will, therefore, be important because they give access to other resources accumulated in the network and promote social advancement (Słomczynski, Tomescu-Dubrow, 2005, p. 230). There is also an exchange of information about whether it is possible to trust other participants. The effective exchange of information, which will both enable access to resources and reduce transaction costs, will not be possible without built-in trust (Zakrzewska, 2016, p. 328). It can be reasonably argued that the economic backwardness of the world can largely be explained by a lack of mutual trust. (Krzymieniewska, 2003, p. 230). Trust drives cooperation; the higher the level of trust within the community, the greater the probability of cooperation and this is also true within *good governance*. In turn, cooperation increases trust. This constant accumulation of social capital is an essential element of positive feedback in civic societies and economies. It is, therefore, reasonable to focus on ways to build trust-based networks and generate phenomena that will change the behavior of the community, including relationships between actors.

Conclusion

1. The concept of governance and *good governance* opens up new intellectual space.
2. It provides a concept that allows us to discuss the role of government in coping with public issues and the contribution that other players may make. It opens one’s mind to the possibility that groups in society other than government bodies may have to play a stronger role in addressing problems.
3. Universal set of principles for defining *good governance* can be fashioned and that the strength of their universality rests to a large extent on the body of international human rights and laws.
4. The concept of *good governance* involves and also needs a well-developed civil society and high social participation.
5. *Good governance* cannot be made without developing social capital with its bridging type. This is the only opportunity by which society can easily contribute to policy making and state activities and in consequence built a society and state based on the concept of *good governance*.

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Socialinio dalyvavimo vaidmuo gero valdymo koncepcijoje - teorinis požiūris

Anotacija

Šiuo metu gerojo valdymo koncepcija užima svarbią vietą diskusijose bendrai socialinių mokslų ir ypač viešojo administravimo srityje. Ši koncepcija buvo dažnai naudojama, tačiau dažnai su gana skirtingomis reikšmėmis ir pasekmėmis. Be to, reikėtų pabrėžti reikšmingą socialinio dalyvavimo šioje koncepcijoje vaidmenį, nes jis įtraukia piliečių poreikių įvertinimą ir dalyvavimą vietiniuose planavimo projektuose ir biudžeto stebėsenoje.

Todėl siekiant socialinio dalyvavimo yra reikalingas vyriausybės informacijos skaidrumas, taip pat narių įtraukimas į sprendimų priėmimo procesą. Silpnų ir bejėgių išstūmimas iš sprendimų priėmimo tampa skurdo priežastimi, nes tai neigia jų teises ir sukuria nevienodus galios santykius. Šiame straipsnyje yra aptariama daugybė reikšmių ir skirtingi požiūriai į socialinio dalyvavimo vaidmenį gerojo valdymo koncepcijoje, tačiau pagrindinis dėmesys yra skiriamas vyriausybės pajėgumui vykdyti ir įgyvendinti socialinio dalyvavimo politiką ir todėl plėsti žiniomis pagrįstą ekonomiką.

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