

Citizens And Their Influence on Local Authorities. Research Methodology

Dr. Agnieszka Ziętek

Maria Curie Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland

Abstract

The effectiveness of citizen participation in (local) decision-making processes has been an area of research since the 1960s. A classic concept in this area was S. R. Arnstein's 'ladder of participation'. It presented eight levels of citizen involvement in decision-making processes: manipulation, therapy, information, consultation, mitigation, partnership, delegation and citizen control.

Nowadays, a number of studies can be found on the effectiveness of processes involving representatives of grassroots movements or local communities in activities and decisions implemented by authorities. The most important authors addressing this topic include: Marco Giugni, Edwin Amenta, David A. Snow, Kenneth T. Andrews, or Paul Burstein.

In the social sciences, there is also continuous research concerning the possibility of verifying to what extent socialisation of decision-making processes is effective, and to what extent it is a kind of fiction or apparent actions (Lutyński 1990).

At the same time, this is a question concerning the methodological aspect of the issue at hand. To what extent, using existing research techniques and tools, are we able to 'get to the bottom of the problem' and verify the real participation of citizens in the processes of making specific decisions taken, for example, at the local level? What research techniques and tools will help to answer such research questions? The proposed presentation attempts to answer the question of methodological possibilities of analysing the effectiveness of the influence of grassroots social movements on decision-making processes implemented by authorities. In other words - are there any tools (and if so, which ones) to obtain an answer to the problem question posed in this way?

Keywords: governance, efficiency of participation, public participation, decision-making processes