

Civic capital of local communities in Poland as a subject of public debate after 2004

Summary

The thesis forms part of a wide array of texts in social sciences concerning a complex issue of civil society. Its main research goal is to verify the hypothesis put forward by the author that in Poland, together with the transformations of 2004 connected with European integration processes and the development of new communications technologies, the public debate concerning the civic capital of local communities has not become more dynamic and thus a significant development of this capital has not taken place. The analysis of the said debate is conducted from the perspective of its participants: citizens, central and local public institutions as well as the third sector milieu. But what determines the originality of the thesis is the fact that the starting point for all considerations in this thesis is the citizen — the subject. The notion of civic capital signifies the most desirable value that can result from the relations established between the subjects-participants in civil society. The best place for the development of civic capital are local communities. These are broadly understood in the thesis as civil communities providing context for the everyday life of citizens, which is why the author seldom refers to them in their traditional sense of geographic areas or administrative units.

Chapter One of the thesis focuses on the analysis of the concept of subjectivity from the point of view of political science and provides a review of different approaches to it in the subject literature. The author also presents its constitutive features drawing on the division into internal and external subjectivity and characterises the properties of both variants.

Chapter Two contains an outline of the theory of social capital as basic for the analysis of the concept of civic capital as well as for forming its definition. That is why it was necessary to analyse the ways of understanding social capital and its components (trust, social bonds, civic engagement) by the most prominent researchers. The significance of social capital for the development of local communities in the context of their functioning in a modern complex socio-political reality has also been discussed.

Chapter Three analyses both opportunities as well as challenges (connected with the experiences of economic, identity and migration crisis as well as with a great cultural, religious or moral diversity within the European community) for the establishment of social capital in Poland, resulting from EU membership.

Chapter Four provides a general characteristics of the condition and determinants of

civic capital as well as perspectives for its development, taking into account the main actors involved in the public debate on this subject. The chapter also contains a descriptive analysis of: various activities of citizens (political, electoral, voluntary etc.) in the public sphere in an era of European integration and internetisation of social life; the functioning of the third sector as a space for the development of civic capital; attitudes and opinions as well as functioning of the main political forces and local government administration with regard to EU membership and the issue of civil society.

Chapter Five analyses the attitudes, opinions, views, assessments and ways of thinking of citizens-subjects' concerning the public sphere, seeking in them the causes of the situation described in the previous chapter, i.e. weak civic capital. From these considerations it appears that it is the sociocultural and intellectual predispositions of individual subjects and the knowledge and competence they possess that are crucial to the success of the process of changing the quality of civic engagement in the public sphere, and as a result — to the building of strong civic capital.

The last part presents the most significant conclusions of the analyses conducted in the thesis. It also contains recommendations for further research into civic capital.

Natalia Palemba

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Natalia Palemba