

Citizen-oriented Local Governance: the Correlation between Subjective Well-being and Citizen Participation in the Salaspils Municipality (Latvia) Case

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to present a possible citizen-oriented governance model and discuss the outcomes of empirical research, which are targeted to municipalities and are based on the approbation of a subjective well-being methodology.

The main findings of the study show that citizen participation in decision-making processes is crucial in order to improve the well-being in the municipality. The empirical research of the Salaspils municipality and comparisons with several other municipalities in Latvia and other countries demonstrated that the citizen-oriented local governance model provides wide opportunities for improved dialogue between the municipality and society, which in turn promotes the development of a co-responsibility approach in resolving different issues within the municipality.

Keywords: subjective well-being, municipality, citizen participation

Introduction

The concept of well-being is not clearly measurable due to its divergent dimensions, which can be evaluated both objectively and subjectively. Nowadays subjective measures of well-being have become the topic of heated discussion in the academia and beyond, as objective well-being indicators; i.e., GDP per capita, income level, etc., in reality do not reflect the level of living.

Many researches author referred to in this paper (see below) support the idea that citizen involvement closely correlates with the well-being of community. Nowadays local governments are using different administrative, political and financial instruments and it is becoming more and more important in terms of ensuring the well-being of society, implementing the co-responsibility approach in the decision-making and public participation process. And, when resolving those topical local issues, these problems are high on the research agenda also for academic scholars.

Recently at the EU level additional attention has been paid to the necessity to involve the management

level in more promoting the participatory democracy, e.g. “Europa 2020” strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive economy emphasis that national, regional and local authorities should build the partnership by closely associating the parliaments, as well as the social partners and representatives of civil society. That would contribute to the elaboration of national reform programmes and their implementation (European Commission, 2010). For adapting this strategy for local authorities, a special handbook was prepared as part of the follow-up to the Opinion of Committee of the Regions on the role of Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) in achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The Opinion stipulates that “... the Committee of the Regions urges the Commission to launch jointly with the Committee of the Regions (CoR) a broader communication campaign in order to raise the awareness of Europe 2020 on the part of local and regional decision-makers and the public. For this purpose, the CoR proposes that a “Handbook on the Europe 2020 strategy for cities and regions” needs to be drawn up together with the Commission in order to clearly explain how they can contribute to the implementation of the strategy, while showing the various sources of financing” (Markkula, 2012). Also in different scientific research (e.g. Morphet, 2004; Nzeadibe, & Anyadike, 2012; Council of Europe, 2008) the need of societal involvement is emphasized in order to ensure “the well-being for all”, providing different approaches for reaching an inclusive society.

During 2010-2012 in the Salaspils municipality (Latvia) the SPIRAL methodology for measurement of subjective well-being indicators using the co-responsibility approach was approbated, which was the basis for establishing the more efficient dialogue with citizens. This approach was developed and applied for local circumstances by building a model for citizen-oriented local governance with an initially low public participation, underling the novelty of the research. Taking into account the scientific actuality

to evaluate the subjective well-being of society, as well as the efforts of authorities of different levels to ensure public participation promoting participatory democracy, the provided research proves that it is relevant for local authorities to find out how to improve local governance leading to a citizen-oriented local governance model.

The research subject is the different approaches of citizen involvement into local decision-making processes promoting citizen-oriented local governance.

The aim of the paper is to present a possible citizen-oriented governance model for municipalities on the basis of the approbation of subjective well-being methodology.

In order to achieve the aim, the research tasks are formulated as follows:

1. to review the theoretical background for citizen-oriented local governance models;
2. to analyse different approaches of measuring well-being at the local level;
3. to present the results of the conducted empirical research using the SPIRAL methodology for assessing and improving subjective well-being in the Salaspils municipality (Latvia);
4. to propose possible citizens' oriented governance model for municipalities.

Research methods used were the study of scientific literature on well-being concept, its connection with the citizen participation and good practice of citizen-oriented local governance; several stages of focus group discussions organized in the Salaspils Municipality (25 focus groups); statistical data analysis; the SPIRAL methodology for the evaluation of subjective well-being developed by experts from the Council of Europe in the context of social cohesion.

The paper is relevant to the topic "Citizen-orientated local and regional governance" as it addresses issues with regard to the conceptualization, measurement and implementation of different types of citizen participation, focusing on the bottom-up participation approach approbated in the Salaspils municipality.

The concept of well-being and its connection with citizen participation

Well-being is the most relevant when defining indicators of impaction at the level of societal progress. However, the concept of well-being is not clearly measurable because it is not so easy to evaluate the level of living (Noordhoff, 2008). Well-being indicators could be divided into the subjective and objective. The objective indicators could be some measurable components or factors of well-being as income, consumption, capital, investment, savings,

stocks, import-export balance and other different economic aspects that are targets of every country and also individuals in making strategies for future actions (Blackman, 2001). The part of the components of well-being cannot be measured directly through objective indicators and therefore need subjective ones as well, which are developed from the point of view of the persons themselves. There are more and more indicators, and social and economic science should develop and estimate. There are still factors which are not explained; however, the influence is obvious (Digby, 1998).

Subjective measures of well-being are measures of well-being based on questions such as: "Taking things all together, how would you say things are these days – would you say you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy these days?" (Dolan et al., 2007; Frey & Stutzer, 2002; Layard, 2005). Subjective measures of well-being have become the topic of heated discussion in the academia and beyond. One of the reasons is that they are frequently presented as substitutes for or complements to traditional income-based economic welfare measures and to indicators inspired by the capability approach (Kesebir & Diener, 2008). Indeed, as to encourage the use of subjective measures for public policy purposes proponents have advocated National Well-Being Accounts (NWBAs), which track population-level scores on subjective measures over time (Diener & Seligman, 2004; Diener, 2006; Kahneman et al., 2004).

Most theories of citizenship and democracy discuss the importance of an informed citizenry aware of the current issues and can participate in democratic life, hold the state to account, and exercise their rights and responsibilities effectively. For many democratic theorists, such as Mansbridge (1999) and Pateman (1970), one important function of citizen participation is that it helps to create "better citizens", increasing their political knowledge, confidence, and their sense of citizenship – thereby the subjective well-being is increasing.

Understanding what kind of impact citizen participation and engagement make to overall development, well-being and more accountable and responsive governance has become a key preoccupation in the development field. It has been over a decade since participation moved toward being mainstream in development debates (World Bank, 1994) and a strategy for achieving good governance and human rights (UN, 2008). In the broader literature there are also numerous arguments supporting the importance of citizen participation and engagement in terms of building inclusive and cohesive societies, thereby promoting well-being (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006; Young, 2000).

Involvement of citizens in decision-making processes

The involvement of society in some decision-making processes of local governance has been laid down in different legal acts of each country. Citizens of democratic countries have the right to participate in national and local development policy-making and management. The right for public participation in Latvia is guaranteed by the Constitution of Latvia (article No 101), which states that “every Latvian citizen has the right to participate in state and local government” (Constitution of Latvia, 1993). According to the Rules No. 970 by Cabinet of Ministers “Public Participation in the planning process,” public participation is possible in the following stages of the planning process:

- in the initiation of the development planning process;
- in the development of planning documents;
- in decision-making processes within the order of the authority;
- in the implementation of development planning documents;
- in the monitoring and evaluation of development planning documents;
- in the updating of development planning documents (Law on Public Participation in the Development Planning Process, 2009).

In addition, citizens can also participate in the meetings of municipal council, committees and commissions in accordance with local government regulations.

Common practice is to involve citizens of municipality in the elaboration process of the development programme of municipality, which is a medium-term planning document, or development strategy, which is a long-term planning document. In the Bauska municipality (Latvia), a group of local actors (35 participants) commonly identified the main problems and threats of the municipality, as well as identified possible scenarios for future development. Furthermore, in the Tartu municipality (Estonia), 100 stakeholders participated in the elaboration of

long-term strategy of the municipality providing their point of view on how the municipality should develop within the next 10-20 years (Mūriņš, 2013).

Another method acknowledged for involving citizens in development planning processes is the so-called “Sketch & Match” approach, which is used to identify and visualise potential development paths and, thus, to facilitate the decision-making process for managers, policymakers and local stakeholders. It is a comprehensive and intensive procedure that organisations and other interested parties can employ in each of the area they represent. This method is also developed by the Government Service for Land and Water Management of the Netherlands and commonly used in spatial planning when dealing with sustainable village improvement, developing scenarios for flood-water retention (Dutch Government Service for Land and Water management, 2011).

Many municipalities are also employing various e-government possibilities in order to insure citizen participation in decision-making processes. The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in government has significantly increased in the last few decades. Countries around the world are now adopting different strategies for better use of these technologies with very diverse objectives: greater efficiency, deeper transparency, higher service quality, and more engaged citizen participation. What is now called “electronic government” has become a powerful strategy for administrative reform at all levels of governance. In addition, the use of information technologies in local governments is emerging; most of them use ICTs to display information and provide services, but very few have used them for promoting greater participation and collaboration (Sandoval-Almazan, Gil-Garcia, 2012).

The government portals should display certain useful information for citizens, provide certain services, as well as provide certain tools for interaction and channels for participation (see Fig.1). Collaboration is the last component and a desirable one for e-government websites. For example, the model to

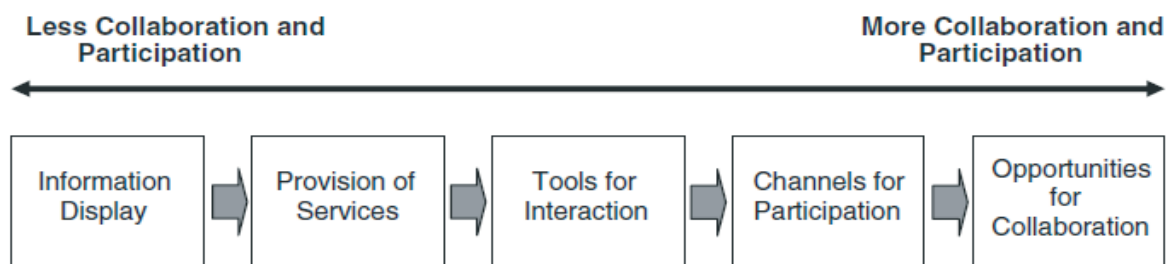


Fig.1. Different functions of government portals (Sandoval-Almazan, Gil-Garcia, 2012)

promote a participatory budget in case of Brazil is an online collaboration important to conceive as a way to connect citizen needs and local government issues (Matheus & Ribeiro, 2009). The cases of Porto Alegre, Ipatinga, Belo Horizonte, and Recife in Brazil and Miraflores in Peru present evidence of collaboration; they rely on high quality information and access to information technologies (Matheus, Ribeiro, Vaz, & Souza, 2010). Collaboration can also include NGOs, other agencies, and even the media – newspapers, television, or radio – as they also need to interact with the government. Sometimes more intense cooperation rises during different kind of emergencies, when government portals provide citizens with several channels to access information for quick decision-making and enables both parties – citizens and government – to collaborate in solving the emergency (Maldonado, Maitland, & Tapia, 2010). Tapscott and Williams (2010) assert that the new role of citizens in a connected world is to be a prosumer: a producer and consumer of information at the same time.

Good practice on citizen-oriented local governance

Several studies on “good governance” (Jordan, 2008) and numerous comprehensive comparative analyses (Ballas, 2013; Blackman, et al., 2001; Braun, 2010; Brereton et al., 2008; Coaffee et al., 2005; Nzeadibe & Anyadike, 2012; Wearing, 2011) formed the framework for evaluating the role of citizen involvement in the context of local governance.

Boulding and Wampler (2010) have stated that they are certain that participatory governance is made to enhance governance, citizen empowerment, and the quality of democracy, creating a virtuous cycle to improve the well-being of the poor. However, there is limited empirical evidence for this relationship. Research has been done using drawings from an original database of Brazil’s 220 largest cities. They assess whether the adoption of a participatory budgeting (PB) program is associated with changes in social spending or changes in several indicators of well-being. We find that PB municipalities spend a slightly higher share of their budget on health and education programs, but there is little evidence that this shift in budget priorities affects measurable outcomes.

Collaborative and multilevel governance approaches advocate the participation and involvement of a variety of stakeholders and local communities in conservation strategies and policies for the successful management of protected areas (Allendorf, 2007; Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996; Buono et al., 2012; Cihar and Stankova, 2006; Graham et al., 2003; Krott et al., 2000; Liu et al., 2010; Pedaditi et al., 2011). Participation is assumed to result in a

range of benefits including increased environmental awareness and knowledge sharing through social learning (Reed, 2008), whereas the failure to incorporate local perceptions to the institutional development of protected areas has been considered to lead to inflexible systems (Glaser et al., 2010).

At the local level the designation community governance has included collaborative processes where the arena of public decision-making involves the provision of public services as part of the community, or the representation of community interests to external agencies ensuring social participation (Edwards & Woods, 2004). Social participation may be understood to mean that stakeholders are (or have been) directly or indirectly involved, or are (or have been) impacted by development (Braun, 2010). In this context, Nzeadibe and Anyadike (2012) are of the view that the forms which the process of social participation can take may include a provision of information that can assist people in problem-solving; consultation and seeking and encouraging people’s feedback; direct engagement with the community and public; and collaboration by building a steady partnership with the community and initiating a process of inclusively developing ideas, decisions and alternatives. Such an approach can empower the local communities to contribute towards policy and decision-making. Local NGOs play an important role in the decision-making process. Through a community governance framework, NGOs become stakeholders responsible for working in partnership with other community members to bring about particular types of benefit to both their clients and the wider local community. Governance is seen here as both a technique of engagement and a moral commitment to full citizenship which include empowerment, local responsiveness and social inclusion (Romeril, 2008).

In 2000 the Council of Europe adopted a Social Cohesion Strategy; it was revised in 2004, 2007 and 2010. It defines social cohesion as society’s capacity to ensure the subjective well-being of all its members, ensuring public participation in decision-making processes, minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization, to manage differences and divisions, and to acquire the means of ensuring the social welfare of all its members. In this context the SPIRAL methodology for the measurement of the subjective well-being of society was developed which is approbated in more than 20 countries. The SPIRAL (*Societal Progress Indicators for the Responsibility of All*) methodology is a way to define and measure well-being from the subjective point of view of the persons themselves. It is a common basis of fundamental values, for society’s progress towards the improved capacity to ensure the well-being of all through the

development of co-responsibility. This methodology to secure such progress was jointly developed with inhabitants and other social stakeholders at the local level, tied with the regional, national, European and global levels. Involved in developing this methodology was a community of experimenters (governments and other local and regional players, companies, hospitals, schools, associations, NGOs, researchers, etc.), which expanded little by little in order to produce the methodology and make it available to as many people as possible (Council of Europe, 2008). In the next sections the results of approbation of this methodology in the Salaspils Municipality (Latvia) will be discussed, as well the elaborated model on citizen involvement, based on the approbated methodology (see more on results of the research in Grantiņš et al., 2011; Grantiņš et al., 2012; Jēkabsone et al., 2013).

Research methodology

As it was discussed above, citizen involvement closely correlates with the subjective well-being of the community. One of the most successful approaches of how to study well-being in municipalities is the

so-called SPIRAL methodology, recently developed by experts from the Council of Europe under the supervision and inspiration of Samuel Thirion. This approach provides the way for defining and measuring well-being from the subjective point of view of the persons themselves. The input data were gathered from different homogeneous groups (focus groups), which in general represent the society of the municipality. After the conducted research on the structure of society, 25 homogenous groups were gathered for further research. Table 1 shows the analysis of homogeneous groups in the Salaspils municipality.

By collecting the answers to open-ended questions such as “What is well-being for you?”, “What is ill-being for you?”, “What do you do or could you do for well-being?” the indicators and the value they represent in all groups analysed were gained; thus, they are the main outputs of the methodology. The collected indicators are divided in 8 main groups: (1) Access to means of living; (2) Living environment; (3) Relations with institutions; (4) Personal relations; (5) Social balance; (6) Personal balance; (7) Feelings

Table 1

The Analysis of Homogeneous Groups in the Salaspils Municipality

Society group	Homogeneous groups	Number of groups	Level of participation	Level of importance	Level of influence
Youth	The Student Councils of Salaspils First and Second High Schools	5	Medium	Medium	Low
Parents	School for mothers and babies; The board of parents of preschools; society of large families; Salaspils Women’s Club	8	High	High	Medium
Cultural/ sport/ religion workers	Russian song ensemble; middle age dance group; education, culture and sport department; sport club; Lutheran church; Roman Catholic Church	8	High	High	High
Science workers	Institute of Inorganic Chemistry, Institute of Physics and Institute of Biology	3	Low	Medium	Low
Municipality workers	Social service; the Union of municipality workers; council	3	High	High	High
Disabled people	The association of children and young people with disabilities; NGO of disabled persons	3	High	Medium	High
Seniors	Society of Russians; the Board of Salaspils retired people; club	3	High	Medium	Medium
Representatives from rural territories	Society “Partnership of Stopini and Salaspils”; Initiative group of the citizens of Dole island	2	High	High	High
TOTAL	25	35			

Source: author’s construction based on observations during meetings with homogeneous groups

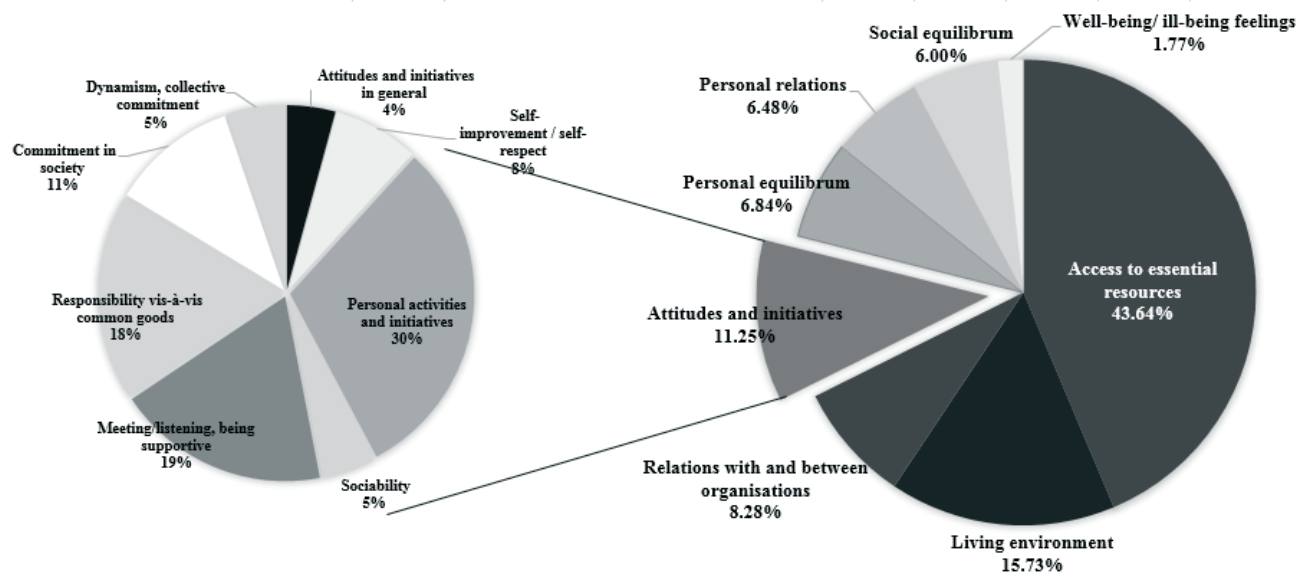


Fig. 2. Indicator Synthesis from responses in all homogeneous groups in the Salaspils Municipality in 2011, %

Source: Results of analysis of 25 homogenous groups in Salaspils – results gained from 3 meetings from September, 2010, until May 2011 (from 2867 answers)

of well-being/ill-being; and (8) Attitudes and initiatives (URBACT, 2009). The software designed by the Council of Europe updates the results of homogeneous group findings; the experts enter the citizens' written criteria data, allocating them in the right indicator group and giving estimates. The results of the conducted research are shown in Fig.2.

43.64% from all answers were included in "A" block – "Access to means of living". The most popular indicators were: "Education/training" (249 answers), "Health" (234), "Employment/economic activities" (216) and "Leisure/culture/sports" (177). This subjective well-being dimension concerns rather material circumstances. It relates to the basics of daily life ranging from food and shelter, clothes, education and work to money and information, and contains eleven different categories. Examples of the types of responses to the questions that fall into this category include: "a clean home"; "education you are happy with"; "having a job close to home"; "good health services"; and in response to the ill-being question "not able to find a job"; "bills"; "lack of money"; "no computer". The third most popular block is H – "Attitude and Initiatives" (11.25%). Indicators mentioned the most were the following: "Private activities and initiatives" (122 answers), "Engagement in civic life" (62), and "Responsibility" (46). This particular subjective well-being dimension relates to citizen participation. Its seven elements include self-improvement, personal/entrepreneurial initiatives, and behaviour and commitment within civic life. Examples of observations are such as "to have a goal in life"; "time to do things I like"; "show a good

example"; "take responsibility"; "encourage work in community"; "try to start up a small organisation"; "learn to take responsibility"; and on the ill-being side such as "without hope for a better future"; and "not being able to participate in society".

Thereby results showed that for citizens subjective well-being dimension as "Attitudes and initiatives" is very important (not only material dimensions of well-being – as it was assumed before the research by authorities of the municipality), which includes citizen participation aspect in decision-making processes, as well as in initiation process of different activities that in turn lead to better overall well-being. This research proved that civic participation and the possibility to participate in decision-making processes of the municipality and contribute to development of certain services or products highly corresponds to a higher level of subjective well-being.

Analysis of research results

As the conducted research showed the connection between citizen participation and subjective well-being, there is continuing investigation regarding the possibilities of how to improve the dialogue between society and municipality, contributing to more participatory democracy.

During the research the whole Salaspils municipality council was participating as a focus group, providing their opinion on well-being indicators. This factor was critical in order to get politicians' acknowledgment and acceptance for further steps in using gained data for the elaboration of an improved management model. After collecting



Fig.3. Scheme of researching and promoting well-being methodology in municipalities

Source: Elaborated by the authors

and processing the data they were presented to authorities of the Salaspils municipality to introduce the general situation of subjective well-being in Salaspils. It was agreed that it is needed to work on some certain well-being indicators in order to achieve better overall results on well-being in the municipality. In addition, politicians accepted that it is needed to improve the dialogue with citizens, promoting their engagement in decision-making processes, as research showed that citizen engagement correlates with overall subjective well-being. As a result, the municipality of Salaspils has agreed on the development of a citizen-oriented governance model described below (Fig.3).

The proposed scheme of researching and promoting well-being methodology in the municipality was proposed as follows:

1. Elaboration of Local Action Plan. During the research on subjective well-being the possible actions on how to improve the current situation were formulated. This means that all proposed activities should be collected and evaluated. For the purpose of convenience, a group of different stakeholders should be formed that would represent the interest of certain groups within the municipality and evaluate the possible actions to be implemented. It is proposed to organize a Local Support group (LSG), which would be formed from the leaders of homogeneous groups (NGOs, interest groups, unions and other organizations) and those participating in the research. This social organization can be used as a permanent organization which represents the interests and needs of the society. After presentation of the results to LSG, certain activities which need to be implemented in order to improve certain indicators of well-being should

be indicated. Those activities should be proposed by LSG in cooperation with the administration of the municipality. It is most important to ensure that LSG is co-responsible for the implementation of those activities; namely, those activities should be performed by the citizens. For example, “Organising the city festival” could be a proposed activity for improving the indicator “Culture events”, where the main organisers could be NGOs in coordination with certain municipality employees (for administrative and financial support). Activities can be indicated by also using the focus group method.

2. Approval of Local Action Plan. Afterwards, when all activities are indicated and approved by LSG, the Local Action Plan should be approved by the municipality government. In addition, it should also be incorporated in to the work plans of the municipality and municipal budget. The proposed incorporation in the context of Latvian municipalities is presented in Fig.1.

3. Implementation and monitoring of Local Action Plan. As for short-term and medium-term planning documents, the responsible persons, budget and time limit, as well as output indicators should be indicated. All activities should be implemented in close cooperation with the citizens of the municipality.

4. Assessment of results. By the end of the year all activities should be reviewed – which of them were implemented and if there were some delays. It is proposed that the Local Action Plans should be drawn for the medium-term, specifying the activities for the current year and updating the plan afterwards. After 3-4 years the research on well-being should be re-conducted to assess whether certain indicators of well-being have improved.

The methodology described above was developed, applied and approved in the Salaspils Municipality (Latvia). It has also been observed that the proposed methodology cannot be universal – researching and promoting civic engagement in municipalities should be adapted to local conditions. However, several principles, which should be taken into account in every democratic society, have been defined:

- focus on participation and process – dialogue on well-being is a key element of the process of community building and commitment to democratic participation; the process of maintaining dialogue on community well-being has the potential, in and of itself, to contribute to community well-being, and for participation in preparation of decisions of the municipality;
- agree on what is important to be measured – a joint selection of indicators reflects the community’s values;
- fairly report results – if the reporting exercise of community’s well-being is to contribute to decision- making and community enhancement, all generated information should be publicly discussed and reported;
- continually review the relevance of indicators – as the community tends to change over time, it may be necessary to develop new indicators to measure particular aspects of well-being or re-conduct the research;
- understand the level of possible resource commitment and agree on it – broader and longer-term projects will require a larger and on-going commitment of resources including money, time and personnel; it is necessary to decide what kind of level of commitment is right for your community;
- need to incorporate research results within planning documents – all principles and activities that promote civic engagement in municipality should be fixed in the planning documents of a municipality, including work plans of administration and municipality budget.

All those principles should be taken into account when the need to promote civic engagement, as well the well-being of community is acknowledged – in the beginning it is more effective to study the problems of a particular municipality, which does not demonstrate a high level of well-being, in order to define certain indicators that describe the situation in each area, and afterwards to implement a set of activities in order to promote well-being, involving the citizens of the municipality at every stage of the process.

Practical realisation of the approach in the Salaspils municipality described above indicated that it promotes mutual understanding among different groups of inhabitants, as well the management of the municipality.

Conclusions

1. Nowadays due to different administrative, political and financial resources, the local governments are becoming more and more important when ensuring the well-being of society, implementing the co-responsibility approach in decision-making and public participation processes, and resolving crucial local issues. Thus, these problems are high on the research agenda for academic scholars as well.
2. Research conducted in the Salaspils municipality proved that citizen involvement closely correlates with the well-being of the community – the well-being dimension “Attitudes and initiatives” with indicators “Personal activities and initiatives”, “Responsibility vis-à-vis common goods”, and “Commitment in society” being the 3rd most mentioned during the research after such well-being dimensions as “Access to essential resources” and “Living environment”.
3. As the conducted research showed the connection between citizen participation and subjective well-being, there is a continuing study regarding the possibilities to improve the dialogue between society and municipality, contributing to more participatory democracy. The proposed citizen-oriented governance model includes several steps of elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the Local Action plan, as well as the assessment of results after the model is implemented, involving a group of different stakeholders of the community in defining and implementing different activities aimed at improving the well-being of society. It is proposed that the methodological procedure of measuring subjective well-being should be re-conducted in order to evaluate the progress of different indicators of well-being and after the implementation of several actions the evaluation of the level of civic involvement should be carried out.
4. In order to lead to a more citizen-oriented municipality management model, several principles should be taken into account; namely, civic engagement principles should be incorporated in the different planning documents of municipalities. It is also crucial to focus on the participation and process of developing the dialogue with society, understanding and accepting the level of resource to be committed in order to implement the activities jointly with the community.
5. The practical realisation of the co-responsibility approach in the implementation of the jointly developed Local Action Plan in order to promote participatory democracy and subjective well-being in the Salaspils municipality indicated that it promotes a mutual understanding among different groups of inhabitants, as well the management of the municipality.

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Местное самоуправление, ориентированное на жителей, на примере самоуправления Саласпилса (Латвия)

Резюме

Вовлечение общества в процессах принятия решений местного самоуправления заложены в различные правовые акты каждой страны. Граждане демократических стран имеют право к участию в национальных и местных политических решений и управления. Кроме того, граждане могут также участвовать в заседаниях муниципального совета, комитетов и комиссий в соответствии с местным законодательством.

В последнее время на уровне ЕС было уделено дополнительное внимание необходимости вовлечения жителей в работу самоуправлений. Стратегия «Европа 2020» подчеркивает, что национальные, региональные и местные власти должны активно сотрудничать с населением в области разработки и реализации национальных

программ реформ (Европейская Комиссия, 2010). То же самое можно сказать и о различных научных исследованиях (например, Morphet, 2004; Nzeadibe, и Anyadike, 2012; Совет Европы, 2008). Многие местные самоуправления также используют электронное правительство: различные возможности для того, чтобы обеспечить участия граждан в процессах принятия решений. Использование информационных и коммуникационных технологий (ИКТ) в правительстве значительно возросло в последние несколько десятилетий. Во всем мире в настоящее время принимают стратегии для лучшего использования этих технологий с различными целями: для повышения эффективности, степени прозрачности, качества обслуживания, активности граждан.

Целью статьи является представление модели местного самоуправления ориентированной на жителей на основе апробации методологии субъективного благополучия. Основные выводы статьи: в целях повышения благосостояния в местном самоуправлении, участие жителей в процессе принятия решений имеет решающее значение.

В 2010-2012 годах в Саласпилсе (Латвия) была апробирована методология SPIRAL, разработанная для измерения показателей субъективного благополучия. В этой методологии используя подход совместной ответственности. На ее основе был достигнут более эффективный диалог с жителями. Этот подход был разработан и применен для местных условий, и способствовал созданию модели местного самоуправления ориентированной на жителей с низким первоначальным уровнем общественного участия. Вопреки ожиданиям результаты показали, что для граждан очень важным элементом субъективного благополучия является не только такой материальный фактор как доходы, но и возможность проявления инициативы на уровне местного самоуправления. Это исследование показало, что возможность принимать участие в процессе принятия решений местного самоуправления и внести вклад в развитие некоторых услуг или продуктов соответствует высокому уровню субъективного благополучия. Входные данные были собраны из различных однородных фокус-групп, которые в целом представляют общество местного самоуправления. После исследования структурного состава общества, были созданы 25 однородных групп для дальнейшего исследования. Исследования в самоуправлении Саласпилса показали и то, что модель местного самоуправления ориентированная на жителей предоставляет возможность для улучшения диалога между местным самоуправлением и обществом, способствуя повышению совмест-

ной ответственности в решении различных вопросов в местном самоуправлении.

Предлагаемая модель местного самоуправления, ориентированная на жителей, включает в себя несколько шагов разработки, реализации и мониторинга местного плана действий, а также оценку результатов реализации его, в том числе вовлечение группы различных заинтересованных сторон сообщества в определении и осуществлении различных мероприятий, направленных на улучшение благополучия общества. Предлагается повторить исследование субъективного благополучия, чтобы оценить прогресс различных показателей благосостояния после реализации ряда мероприятий, направленных на повышение уровня гражданской активности.

Для того чтобы реализовать модель местного самоуправления, ориентированную на жителей, необходимо соблюдать определенные принципы. Например, положения об участии жителей в решении актуальных вопросов местного значения должны быть включены в различные документы по планированию местных самоуправлений, необходимо сосредоточить внимание на процессе развития диалога с обществом, принять во внимание уровень ресурсов в целях осуществления мероприятий совместно с сообществом.

Исследование, проведенное в Саласпилсе, показало, что участие жителей в решении различных вопросов в местном самоуправлении тесно коррелирует с благополучием сообщества. В настоящее время местные власти играют все более важную роль в обеспечении благосостояния общества, в повышении совместной ответственности в процессе принятия решений и обеспечении участия общественности в решении актуальных вопросов местного значения. Эти проблемы также актуальны в научных и академических исследованиях.

Ключевые слова: субъективное благосостояние, самоуправление, участие граждан

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