

The Use of Geo-Questionnaire in Spatial Planning: Experience From Poland

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ABSTRACT

Changes in the attitude of local authorities towards the managerial processes of local governments have opened the area for cooperation of many actors in decision making processes. Taking into account the complexity of urban planning it is necessary to search for methods facilitating the participatory planning processes. Of potential use are internet tools based on GIS, supporting the engagement of the public in the processes of management and consolidation of local inhabitants. One of such tools is the geo-questionnaire developed within the project: Geoportal supporting public participation in urban planning (GEOPLAN). The aim of the article is to present these results of six pilot studies of e-consultations performed in Poznań and Łódź agglomerations (Poland). Subsequent sections of the article present characterization of Public Participation Geographic Information System (PPGIS) tools and assessment of the possibilities of their use for spatial management on the basis of opinions of local inhabitants and local authorities. Attention is also paid to the legal and organizational challenges related to implementation of internet consultation processes in Poland. Solving these problems may lead to increased contribution of local society and greater effectiveness of decisions made in spatial management at local levels.

KEYWORDS

Geo-Questionnaire, Governance, Poland, PPGIS, Public Participation, Spatial Planning

INTRODUCTION

At least two decades have passed since the change in the paradigm of management in public policy and administration in Europe and transition from the Weberian or neo-Weberian model of governing to the model of governance (Rhodes, 2000; Kettl, 2002). The essence of this transformation is the cooperation between the public and commercial spheres, participation of stakeholders in management, cooperation of government institutions, local governments and non-governmental organizations, decentralization of decision making, replacement of the hierarchic axis of dependencies by the horizontal links, including networks (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002; Armitage et al., 2007). The changes have been driven by the intention to eliminate from the managerial process the negative features of bureaucracy and reduction of social conflicts by inviting many subjects to decision making. A new and based on a larger platform model of inter-sector and partner management is implemented in smaller managerial structures, including local level (Geddes, 2006). The decision making at this level should involve different groups of actors. Unfortunately, in Europe the top-down approach to spatial development planning with minimum involvement of inhabitants of this space is still strong

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(Horelli & Wallin, 2013). Thus, it is very important to share the information between the stakeholders representing different needs and using the data for different purposes (Kahila & Kytta, 2009).

Changes in the paradigm of local management towards cooperation and consensus of many stakeholders also include the area of spatial planning (McCall & Dunn, 2012). According to Haughton et al. (2010), the premises for governance in spatial planning include increase in the number of spatial conflicts, stakeholders and complexity of the process of spatial planning (observed since the mid 1970) together with development of civil society. This author also points to the hermeticity of spatial planning systems and inflexible legal solutions, rigidity of administrative structures and formation of new type of flow-spaces or soft spaces.

Haughton et al. (2010) have introduced the term of 'new spatial planning' that is based on strong mechanisms of consultation of large social groups with a greater emphasis on solving problems of social integration within the spatial strategies. The above authors treat the spatial planning as a continuous process that does not develop according to one convention only. With reference to the earlier forms of spatial management the new spatial planning is characterized by the following features (op. cit.):

1. Devolution of ideas and approaches to spatial planning from the European and international level to the national, regional and local levels;
2. Departure from the sector (silos) approach to spatial planning to the integrated planning that combines the functional-space, economic, social and ecological elements;
3. Assuming the determining role of coordination and negotiations in the process of spatial planning even though the process gets longer and more complex;
4. Increasing significance of evaluation and monitoring of the effects of spatial planning decisions and their execution;
5. Increasing role of spatial planning procedures and instruments leading to deformalization, decentralization and socialization of the process.

Recently, also in Poland the trend towards increasing participation of stakeholders in decision making has been promoted. The notions such as co-management, participative management, cyberdemocracy, deliberative democracy, interactive democracy etc. have acquired some meaning (Jankowski et al., 2017b). On the one hand, it is a consequence of development of civil society, while on the other, it is a result of systematic adaptation of new methods of management worked out in western Europe. Commonly, in democratic societies public participation in planning and local decision making is legally regulated (Siemiński, 2014). This includes the right to vote, organize referenda, and to create citizen advisory bodies. According to one of the first Polish definitions of public participation in spatial planning, given by Wiench (1991), it is a legal action of individuals and social groups in order to influence the determination of spatial development plan. Public participation in Poland is a relatively young phenomenon, mostly present in the process of urban planning and regulated by the Act of 27 March 2003 on Planning and Spatial Development. According to the Act the participation of the public in urban planning is realized in the two steps. The first step begins with approval of preparation of local spatial development plan (local plan) and a study of spatial planning conditions and directions and includes collection of propositions. The second step is realized at the advanced phase of urban planning, when the first draft of the plan is ready and involves expressing reservations and participation in public discussion. Recently, legal backgrounds for public participation in urban planning in Poland have been developed to admit the use of electronic communication tools. At present, besides the Act on Planning and Spatial Development, the Act on Revitalization and on Infrastructure of Spatial Information have been in force.

The subsequent sections of this article are devoted to presentation of PPGIS (Public Participation Geographic Information System) tool and examples of its use for public consultations. The results presented were collected by the authors during the pilot implementations of the geo-questionnaire in

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