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Rozprawa doktorska/doctoral dissertation

**Rola kapitału społecznego w funkcjonowaniu społeczeństwa obywatelskiego  
w Łodzi**

**The role of social capital in the functioning of civic society in Lodz**

Nowadays, there is a large discussion about quality of democracy regime and the future of western culture. It is said that there is need to improve social participation in the public affairs and develop people's awareness of political decision-making process. Political decision-makers focus on the process of implementing instruments of direct democracy among self-government around the world (e.g. participatory budgeting). However, the biggest challenge is to develop the civic society which is defined in this doctoral dissertation as the area of people's involvement in public sphere which is constrained by experiences and traditions of individuals in the area of socio-political activities. By these actions people can enlarge their social capital, which is defined by three components: the level of trust, the extent of norms and values, and the network of citizen's cooperation and communication.

Nevertheless, the research about civic society and social capital have very short history and there is one important misunderstanding that affects methodological problems. The question is, does the size of social capital of people has the influence on their actions in the civic society area? Given the analyses and theoretical considerations an assumption was made that it's true and the social capital is an instrument of civic society development.

The goal of this dissertation was to analyze the social capital of local community and to find its impact on the area of local civic society. For this purpose, the first part was the presentation of the state of research about civic society and social capital. The second part was the presentation of the state of research about functioning and development of civic society in Poland in the field of history, legislation and functioning of institutions of self-government. The third part was the measurement of the size of social capital among



population of Poland and people living in Lodz by the use of data from Public Opinion Research Centre and from the publication and research made by Monika Mularska-Kucharek with a team.

The last part of this dissertation was based on a survey and an in-depth interview with the people who took part in the participatory budget in Lodz as designers of investment propositions on the area of Lodz. The research was based on the following list of hypothesis:

1. **First hypothesis:** *The designers in the participatory budget in Lodz have got a bigger size of social capital than others citizens of Lodz.*
2. **Second hypothesis:** *People's professions, place of residence and financial status are the variables which have the influence on the size of social capital.*
3. **Third hypothesis:** *People with bigger size of social capital are more willing to take part in the political activities.*
4. **Fourth hypothesis:** *The social capital is a variable that differentiates designers in the participatory budget of Lodz due to their success in the election.*

Firstly, a disproportion was noticed between size of social capital among designers and other residents of Lodz. In fact, the active part of population presents higher level of trust and the larger network of cooperation and communication in the local society. Unfortunately, there was not enough evidences to claim that there is a difference in the extent of norms and values between this two populations. The most important thing is that designers in the participatory budget of Lodz are involved in a wide range of organizations. Finally, the first hypothesis was assumed as true.

Secondly, analysis identified the difference between the size of social capital based on people's professions, place of residence and financials status of respondents. In fact, people who represents industrial sector, university lecturers, students from schools and universities as well as residents of the Polesie district and with the highest financials status have the biggest size of the social capital. However, there was no evidence found that people with bigger size of social capital are more willing to take part in the political activities. Perhaps if the research covered the entire population of Lodz the results would show that disproportion.

Last but not least thing was that the research allowed to positively verify the hypothesis that the social capital is a variable that differentiates designers



in the participatory budget of Lodz due to their success in the election. In this regard the component which showed the impact was the level of trust.

In conclusion, the research has shown that social relations are an important part of the process of development the civic society area and the political activation of people, especially in local dimension. Another important thing in the functioning of civic society area is the freedom of individuals in the field of public affairs. In this context there is need to improve the instruments of direct democracy on local level. Given the results: the level of trust, people's awareness of public affairs as well as their experiences and traditions of political activities are the most important indicators of civic society development. Without these elements there is a threat that people can use mentioned area (civic society) to reach a private aims, without getting involved in public affairs what doesn't lead to development of democracy and political system. So the last conclusion of my doctoral dissertation is that political institutions and politicians should work for development the instruments of people's engagement in the area of political decision-making process.

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