

PRO-CIVIC REPRESENTATION? CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN THE OPINION OF FINNISH AND POLISH LOCAL COUNCILORS*

Katarzyna RADZIK-MARUSZAK
Arto HAVERI
Agnieszka PAWŁOWSKA

Abstract

In the recent years we have witnessed the growing criticism of the representative framework and the way it operates in many European countries. At the local level, numerous authorities try to answer the shortcomings of representation by applying new participatory agendas. This, however, not only influences the governing process, but also often leads to the clash between elected politicians and citizens. By examining the attitudes of local councilors from Finland and Poland toward citizens' involvement, the present article contributes to the discussion on the coexistence of representative and participative schedules. The analysis draws on empirical data gathered in selected municipalities of both countries. The research findings demonstrate that, in spite of different governing models, the Finnish and Polish local representatives have quite similar, positive attitudes towards increasing the citizens' direct involvement. However, they still consider voting in local elections the key instrument of civic engagement. The results of the research also display the barriers the expanded participative framework encounters and this can be interesting for local practitioners who design participative instruments and monitor their operation.

Keywords: representation, participation, representative democracy, participative democracy, municipality, Finland, Poland.

Katarzyna RADZIK-MARUSZAK (corresponding author)

Associate professor, Institute of Political Science and Administration, Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland
Tel.: 0048-81-537.6015
E-mail: katarzyna.radzik@umcs.pl
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2147-0872

Arto HAVERI

Professor, Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland
Tel.: 00358-40-190.4020
E-mail: arto.haveri@tuni.fi
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1646-2990

Agnieszka PAWŁOWSKA

Professor, Institute of Political Science, University of Rzeszów, Rzeszów, Poland
Tel.: 0048-17-872.1058
E-mail: apawlowska@ur.edu.pl
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0033-3833

* **Acknowledgement:** The article presents the partial outcomes of the research funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (Mobility Plus Programme) and the National Science Centre Poland (project no. 2013/09/B/HS5/04403, entitled 'The Representative Body as Co-partner in Local Governance. The Cases of England, Finland, Poland and Slovenia').

1. Introduction

In numerous countries, the voting turnout and trust in political parties have been declining during the last three decades (Dalton, Scarrow and Cain, 2004, pp. 124-138; Baba *et al.*, 2009, pp. 5-13; The World Bank, 2017). Another important trend is that governance-type reforms have become a popular way of transforming institutions of public administration. These developments have influenced the 'standard-account' of representative democracy in two major ways (Urbinati and Warren, 2008, pp. 387-412). Firstly, on national and local arenas emerged many new stakeholders, *inter alia* NGOs, organized groups of citizens, who want to have more to say and be more directly incorporated into the governing process. Secondly, we can observe the mushrooming of democratic innovations such as new forms of consultations, participatory budgeting, citizens' juries etc. that support the operation of traditional, representative-based instruments (Smith, 2009). As a result, the operation of political representation has been influenced by a growing complexity of issues, which gradually strains the power of elected politicians, and their capacities to stand for and act in the interests of those they represent (Urbinati and Warren, 2008, p. 390; Hendriks, 2009, pp. 689-715).

The above-mentioned tendencies are also present at the local level, depending on a given country, its political traditions and culture, as well as on openness to reforms (John, 2001). Despite these uncontested differences, many individual municipalities and cities share similar experiences. Elected representatives are not necessarily the main channel for communicating grassroots views anymore, and local power relations are irreversibly changed.

The main goal of this article is to analyze the issue of coexistence of representative and participative mechanisms at the local level. Being more specific, we aim to investigate the attitude of councilors from two European countries – Finland and Poland – towards citizens' participation, including democratic innovations that allow residents a more direct engagement in the governing process. Behind our curiosity lies the conjecture that formal institutions, like the model of local governing, have a strong impact on the attitudes of the councilors. By studying councilors' attitudes in different countries, we can gain understanding – not only of the relationship between representation and citizen-induced indicatives (Røiseland and Vabo, 2016, p. 122) – but also of the significance of particular institutions.

We did not choose the countries under discussion at random. Whereas Finland is considered a country with almost perfect democratic institutions (Kubka, 2016), Poland – for some time in the vanguard of democratic reforms in Central and Eastern Europe – still wants to catch up with the West and looks for suitable solutions. This attitude is also reflected in the field of citizens' participation. Therefore, firstly, we are interested whether councilors perceive citizens' participation as a way of improving representative practices, making them more open, effective and fair (see Plotke, 1997, pp. 19-34; Papadopoulos and Warin, 2007, pp. 445-472; Stănuș, 2016, pp. 124-144), or as a threat to their status and role, an unnecessary burden that com-

plicates the governing process, or – finally – perhaps as a buzzword that does not provide any real-life impact. Secondly, we are interested in the importance of country-specific institutions and attitudes towards participation – whether Finnish and Polish councilors share their views and attitudes or, on the contrary, have a different perception of these issues.

In the first part of our paper, we present our principal theoretical framework, which consists of representative and participative democracies, and the participative agendas of Finnish and Polish local governments. In the following sections, we present the hypotheses, research questions, research methods and techniques. It is followed by research findings and finally, conclusions.

2. Representative and participative democracy – an inevitable merger?

Representative (RD) and participatory democracies (PD) constitute the theoretical framework of the present study. Basically, we follow the Schumpeterian way of understanding representative democracy as ‘free competition among would-be leaders for the vote of the electorate’ (Schumpeter, 2003, p. 285). This definition, reduced to repetitive and competitive elections, is usually supplemented by values of individual liberties, human rights, political pluralism, and control over the ruling classes. Participatory democracy (PD) – along with other more ‘engaging’ forms of democracy – pays special attention to citizens’ involvement into political process, and intends to supplement the shortage of traditional representation.

RD and PD are supported by different sets of arguments. They are also typified by diverse shortcomings (Sørensen and Torfing, 2019, pp. 27-32). On the one hand, it is said that RD strengthens the technical efficacy of the decision-making process. It also allows for a systematic alteration of leadership. Moreover, it undoubtedly provides regimes with modern, complex functionality, as presently many citizens not only are unable to effectively communicate with each other, but, more importantly, they often do not have enough knowledge to make decisions. The so-called ‘realistic’ democrats raised the latter argument by indicating that ordinary citizens are incapable of understanding complicated political issues (Schumpeter, 2003). In this context, some scholars call into question general citizens’ willingness to engage into political affairs and claim that most of them are content to leave politics to ‘professionals’ and spend time performing more satisfying activities. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse indicate, for example, that people desire the so-called ‘hidden democracy’, a political system that does not need constant attention, but through appropriate mechanisms of accountability allows individuals to intervene when necessary (2002, pp. 1-2). RD contributes also to output legitimacy, as through elected representatives it is easier to achieve planned goals (Heinelt, 2010).

Despite these strengths since the mid-1960s there has been increasing criticism of modern, representation-based democracy (Arnstein, 1969, pp. 216-224; Pateman, 1970). Many notice the lack of adequacy of representation, both as an idea and prac-

tice, when confronted with the challenges set up by the modern world. In this context, attention should be paid to several issues. Firstly, as Pitkin indicates ‘[t]he representatives act not as agents of the people but simply instead of them’ (2004, p. 339), thus in numerous cases there arises a discrepancy between the will of the electorate and the actions undertaken by elected politicians. In this context, some scholars also raise the argument that it is difficult, or even impossible, to get to know the citizens’ preferences when based only on election results. Secondly, as Urbinati and Warren point out that the so-called ‘standard account’ of representation seems to be increasingly inadequate (2008, p. 389; see also Rehfeld, 2005). Since the mid-20th century, more and more issues, such as religion, ethnicity, nationalism or environment-related problems, have gone far beyond single constituency. Contemporary representatives, however, often seem to be ‘insensitive’ to informal negotiations and deliberations and, as a result, do not respond properly to the complexity of the modern world (Urbinati and Warren, 2008, p. 388; see also Hendriks, 2009, pp. 689-715; Dobson, 1996). Thirdly, as Alonso, Keane and Merkel indicate, there has been progressive criticism towards political parties that constitute the core of RD (2011). In many countries, a constant decline in confidence in parties and the ensuing lowering of voter turnout can also be witnessed (Dalton, 2004; Schmitter and Trechsel, 2004; Dalton, Scarrow and Cain, 2004, pp. 124-138). In addition, Andeweg challenges the representativeness of present representation, claiming that the political parties – composing the legislative bodies – are not able any more ‘to aggregate citizens’ demands into more or less coherent political agendas’ (2003, p. 150).

Numerous researchers see the cure of the above shortcomings in participative democracy. By the early 2000s, wider citizens’ involvement became actually a staple and was acknowledged as the expected future of policy-making (Quick and Byrson, 2016, p. 159). Indeed, PD has many advantages that influence both democratic and technical aspects of the governing process. On the one hand, participation not only appeals more to ‘thick’ democracy, allowing residents to have a frequent voice, but also significantly contributes to civil society-building (Geurtz and van de Wijdeven, 2010, p. 533). The latter is strongly connected with input legitimacy and has been especially important in countries undergoing democratic transformation (Baba *et al.*, 2009, pp. 5-13). PD also provides citizens with an opportunity to make informed choices, which closes the gap between those in power and the ruled, as well as fosters transparency of decision-making (Michels, 2011, pp. 277-279; Radzik-Maruszak and Mieczkowska-Czerniak, 2013, pp. 154-155). On the other hand, through citizens’ involvement the higher acceptance for undertaken decisions can be extended in practice. Additionally, politicians are able to collect more information and points of view, which in turn should affect the ‘quality’ of final decisions (Michels and de Graaf, 2010, pp. 477-489).

Nevertheless, the merger of representative and participative democracies seems to constitute an uneasy process. Both democracies have a different logic of operation,

values, and *raison d'être*. For RD, the core is comprised of elected representatives, while PD values citizens' contribution into governing. Representation is sensitive to output legitimacy, while enhanced participation (either by the number of participants or by the quality of participation) strengthens the input and 'at the same time inject[s] more 'throughput' legitimacy by generating widespread beliefs about procedural fairness' (Papadopoulos and Warin, 2007, p. 450). The combination of RD and PD also calls into question the roles attributed to elected politicians, local officials, and citizens (Torfing *et al.*, 2012, pp. 145-165).

Therefore, we can conclude that self-restraining participatory democracy – the participation of citizens 'in at least some public matters at least some of the time', as Barber puts it (Florida, 2013, p. 11), can be an accurate response to the shortage of representation, without undermining its core meaning for contemporary democracy. At the same time, it can pose a serious problem as well, particularly in those democracies where increased civic engagement breaks the monopoly of political elites, based upon the belief that the legitimacy derived from direct elections no longer needs people's participation in public affairs.

3. Finland and Poland: two models of local governing

Finnish and Polish local governments represent different models (Loughlin, Hendriks and Lindström, 2012, pp. 1-23). Both local democracies have diverse axiological systems, *raison d'être*, notion of legitimacy, as well as adopted leadership models.

Finland belongs to the Nordic model, which highlights the importance of service provision, values constant search for consensus, maintains quite complex relations between the state and local level authorities, and a collective form of leadership (Haveri, 2015, p. 139). Municipalities in the Nordic system enjoy relatively high autonomy, but at the same time it is appropriate to consider them as integrated part of the state administration (Dente and Kjellberg, 1988). Hence, the *raison d'être* of Nordic local authorities is in service provision. The side effect is that local government is often perceived as nothing more than 'a service machine'. A typical feature of political culture is consensus politics and avoidance of open conflict. In many cases there is no clear-cut division into the ruling-coalition and the opposition, so any conflicting issues are negotiated till all partners show their approval. Finally, the engagement of civil society associations constitutes an important pillar of the local policy making (Hall *et al.*, 2009, pp. 515-538).

The local government praxis in Poland belongs to the Central-Eastern European model, labelled also as 'New Democracies' (Loughlin, Hendriks and Lindström, 2012). The model is much less coherent than the Nordic one as CEE countries display significant differences, both in terms of democratic transformation as in adopted reforms (more in Swianiewicz, 2002, pp. 49-67; 2014, pp. 292-311). Short experience in developing democracy, welfare state and focus on local self-government are the only indisputable common features of these states.

The present Polish local government can be characterized by autonomy¹ and strong, individual political leadership². In contrast with Finland, the division into the ruling coalition and the opposition constitutes the key element of the overall governing process. The *raison d'être* of local authorities can be seen both in service provision and community development.

The mandatory governing bodies in Finnish municipalities are the council, the board, as well as the audit and election committees. Statutorily, local councils are key decision-making bodies, responsible for the municipality's activities and finances, determining the principles of local policy and administration. Different from many other countries, only a handful of municipalities have mayors, but the chief executive officer has an exceptionally strong status. Although officially apolitical, many of Finnish CEOs have tight party connections and act like political leaders (Haveri, Airaksinen and Paananen, 2015, pp. 117-128). The situation sometimes creates tensions between political and administrative sides and translates into important issues connected with local citizenry: firstly, the CEOs are not elected and cannot be directly held into account by municipal residents; secondly, citizens are perceived as an important but also a weak link of the governing process.

With regard to Polish municipalities, the legislative power belongs to the council. As in the Finnish case, the body creates committees, of which the most important is the auditing one. Statutorily, the municipal council is a legislative and supervising authority, performing all the competences not reserved for other public authorities. Formally, it takes decisions on municipal policies, finances, property and administration. The dominant position of the council was, however, undermined as a result of the 2002 reform, when the post of the directly elected mayor replaced the board elected by the council. The reform reflected the need for strong, visible, and easily accountable political leaders. Presently some researchers indicate that mayors dominate the decision-making process to a considerable degree, while the council has only a formal, token say (Bober *et al.*, 2013, p. 29). The Finnish and Polish local government models are displayed in Table 1.

Despite the differences, Finnish and Polish municipalities use quite similar participative frameworks. In addition of the local elections, citizens have the right to submit initiatives on local matters, to initiate and take part in referenda³, and to actively engage in the work of political parties and local associations. Both in Finland and Poland local authorities are obliged to provide residents with other possibilities of civic involvement, such as consultations, creation of residents' panels, and different ways

1 This, however, is being undermined by the government of the Law and Justice Party, which tries to change this pattern subordinating local authorities.

2 In municipalities.

3 Local referenda in Poland are, in certain cases, obligatory (recall of local bodies and self-taxation) and binding (if turnout reaches the required level), while in Finland they are only of advisory character.

Table 1: Finnish and Polish models of local democracy

	Finland	Poland
Local government model	Northern	New Democracies
<i>Raison d'être</i> of local governing	Welfare service provision	Consolidation of democracy; community development + welfare service provision
Dynamics of change	Medium/low	Medium/high
Approach to the reforms	Top-down + Small scale local projects	Bottom-up + Reforms on a large scale
Political trust	High	Low
Leadership model	Council-manger	Council-mayor
Character of decision making-process	Professional and consensual	Non-professional and competitive
Forms of citizens participation	Traditional + Experiments with methods of improving services e.g. co-production, co-design	Traditional + Experiments with methods of direct involvement e.g. participative budgeting

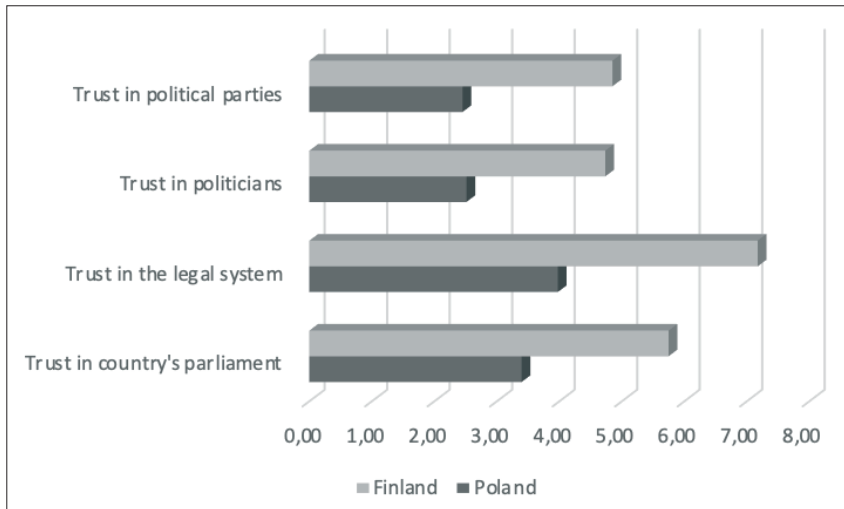
Source: Own preparation

of public engagement in the planning process. To secure the opportunity for specific social groups to have a visible say, they may create social councils that support the work of the municipal executive and the council. In both countries, many municipalities decide to 'experiment' with other citizen-induced involvement. In Finland, the noticeable trend is to introduce modern, often electronic forms of consultation, as well as to apply co-production and co-creation of local services (Tuurnas, 2016). In Poland, there is an observable interest in participative budgeting and other deliberative solutions such as citizens' juries.

Despite quite similar participative framework, the difference between Finland and Poland can be witnessed in political attitudes, such as political trust. We consider this as an important factor for further discussion since: (a) the council members might share the beliefs and attitudes of their constituents; (b) council members have to deal with beliefs and attitudes of their constituents – both factors may affect the assessment of civic engagement by councilors.

Finland achieves high scores in terms of generalized social trust – in the European Social Survey of 2016, the arithmetic means of respondents agreeing with the statement 'most people can be trusted' is 6.76 for Finland, while for Poland it is 4.08 (ESS, 2016). The level of political trust, i.e., trust in the country's parliament, the legal system, politicians and political parties, corresponds to those values (Figure 1).

The aggregated political trust for Finland is 5.6, while for Poland it is devastatingly low – 3.1. In both cases, however, we observe a higher level of social trust than the level of aggregated political trust.



Note: Mean value spans from 0 (the lowest) till 11 (the highest).

Figure 1: Political trust in Finland and Poland

Source: European Social Survey, 2016

4. Data, method and the characteristic of the research

We are investigating attitudes towards citizens' participation as evidenced by councilors representing two European countries. We are also interested in how (if) enhanced civic involvement influences the role and status of the local representative bodies. Based on findings of Lowndes and Wilson (2001), the authors assume that institutional design determines social and political attitudes. In respect of the discussed issue we believe that orientation of local government towards either the provision of services, or the implementation of democracy and building a local community, determines the role of the municipal council and councilors, as well as their feelings about civic engagement in local decision-making. However, the results of other research in this area are not ignored. In the study (2013) on notions of democracy of councilors in different European countries, Heinelt found that 'there is not only a significant correlation (...) between a broad participatory notion of democracy and an interaction with local society, but also a significant (...) correlation (...) between a representative understanding of democracy and behaviour focused on city hall.' (Heinelt, 2013, p. 654). However, the same author concluded no relation between councilors' notions of democracy and country-specific institutional conditions (Heinelt, 2013, p. 658). Lowndes and Wilson's, as well as Heinelt's, inferences were taken into account when formulating the following hypotheses:

H1: The model of local governing determines the attitude of the councilors towards civic engagement in local decision-making.

H1a: The more technocratic model of local governing makes Finnish councilors more output-oriented.

H1b: The participative model of local governing makes Polish councilors more input-oriented.

H2: Enhanced civic participation does not change the role and status of the local council in the governing process.

The empirical input was gathered in the municipalities of two regions – Pirkanmaa in Finland and Lubelskie in Poland between March 2015 and December 2017. Firstly, a survey was distributed among municipal councilors. In Finland, the questionnaire was sent through e-mails to councilors from all 22 municipalities of the Pirkanmaa region (N = 625). In Poland, a paper questionnaire was distributed among councilors from 21 selected municipalities located in the Lubelskie region (N = 410)⁴. The final return rate in Finland reached 24% and 23% in Poland. Secondly, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with councilors from selected municipalities in Finland (N = 17) and Poland (N = 20)⁵. The interviews clarified and refined the data collected in our quantitative study.

5. Research results

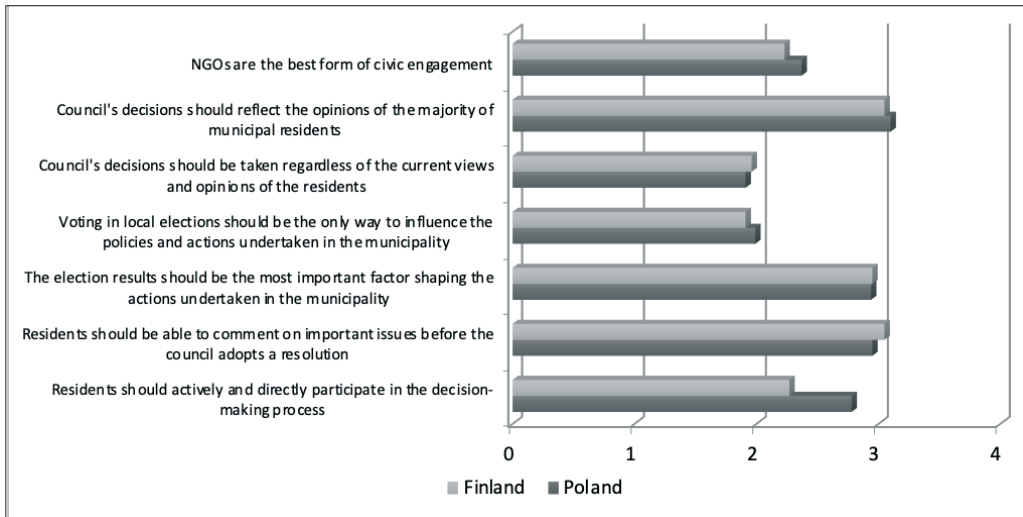
Our research results indicate that Finnish and Polish councilors have relatively similar attitudes towards the forms of civic engagement (Figure 2⁶). In both countries, elected representatives think that the results of elections should constitute the most important factor that shapes local actions (Finland = 2.95; Poland = 2.94). At the same time, both the Finnish and Polish councilors are convinced that the council's decisions should express the opinion of the majority of municipal inhabitants (Finland = 3.05; Poland = 3.1); nevertheless, residents should be able to comment on issues before the council decides upon them (Finland = 3.05; Poland = 2.95). Councilors from the two states slightly differ in their attitude towards active and direct citizens' participation in the decision-making process. This statement is supported more by the Polish than the Finnish representatives (Finland = 2.27; Poland = 2.78). Moreover, the Polish councilors more often agree with the opinion that NGOs constitute the best form of civic engagement (Finland = 2.23; Poland = 2.37).

The primacy of the 'representative framework' is visible in the councilors' estimation of individual institutions and tools that inform them best about residents' opinion (Figure 3). Voting in elections constitutes – especially for the Finnish representatives – the main source of information about the inhabitants' preferences (Finland = 3.41; Poland = 2.64). Figure 3 clearly indicates that the Finnish councilors value more almost all the tools that provide them with information about residents' opinions than

4 In total there are 213 municipalities in the Lubelskie region.

5 The councilors' statements were coded as follows (1) FI – Finland, PL – Poland; (2) T – Tampere, L – Lublin; (3) numeral – interview number e.g., FI/T/5 and PL/L/7.

6 In the questionnaire distributed among councilors we used a scale from 0 (minimum value) to 4 (maximum value).



Note: Mean value 0-4 where 0 means 'strongly disagree', 1 'disagree', 2 'neither agree nor disagree', 3 'agree', and 4 'strongly agree'.

Figure 2: The attitude of Finnish and Polish councilors' towards citizens' participation

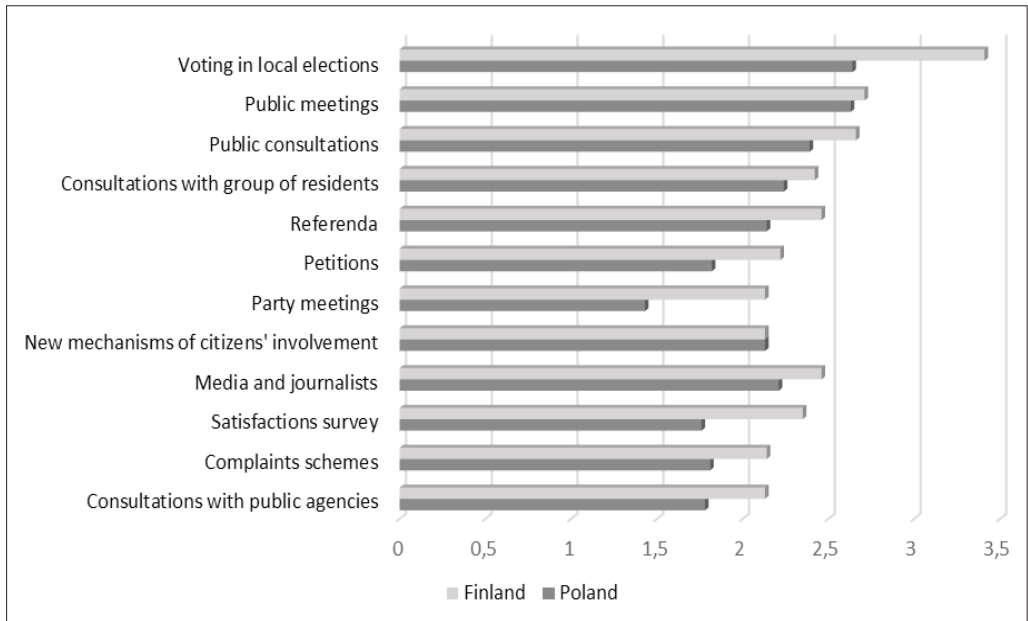
Source: Own preparation

their Polish counterparts. We attribute this result to the practice of civic participation in both countries. In Finland, local elections undoubtedly constitute the main channel of citizens' say. Other forms of participation, such as referenda and consultations, are not binding, and thus, first and foremost, they provide information on the residents' preferences, i.e., in terms of spatial planning or services. Councilors may perceive them as an important source of information that, in consequence, strengthens output legitimacy of local authorities. In the case of Poland, local referenda are binding (if turnout reaches the required level) and in many cases local consultations are obligatory. Still, they usually gather much less attention than elections – turnout is low and consequently their results are not taken into account⁷. Thus, the councilors might value them neither as representative for all the residents nor as fully reliable. Interestingly, both the Finns and the Poles equally value new mechanisms of citizens' involvement, such as participatory budgeting (Finland, Poland = 2.13).

The analysis of interviews' content shows that although the Finnish local representatives value participation, they are generally cautious, as proved by the following commentary provided by a councilor from one of the examined municipalities:

'(...) in regard to citizens' participation, we are a bit reserved in Finland, I think a change is on its way now, but it does not go so smoothly and maybe so fast (...) I am pro' more involving people but it takes time and [it means – KRM, AH, AP]

⁷ Turnout in the 2018 municipal elections in Poland reached 48.83% (PKW, 2019); for comparison – turnout in the 2017 municipal elections in Finland reached 58.9% (Statistics Finland, 2019).



Note: Mean value 0-4 where 0 means 'not effective', 1 'not sufficiently effective', 2 'moderately effective', 3 'effective', and 4 'very effective'.

Figure 3: The effectiveness of individual institutions in informing the council about residents' opinion

Source: Own preparation

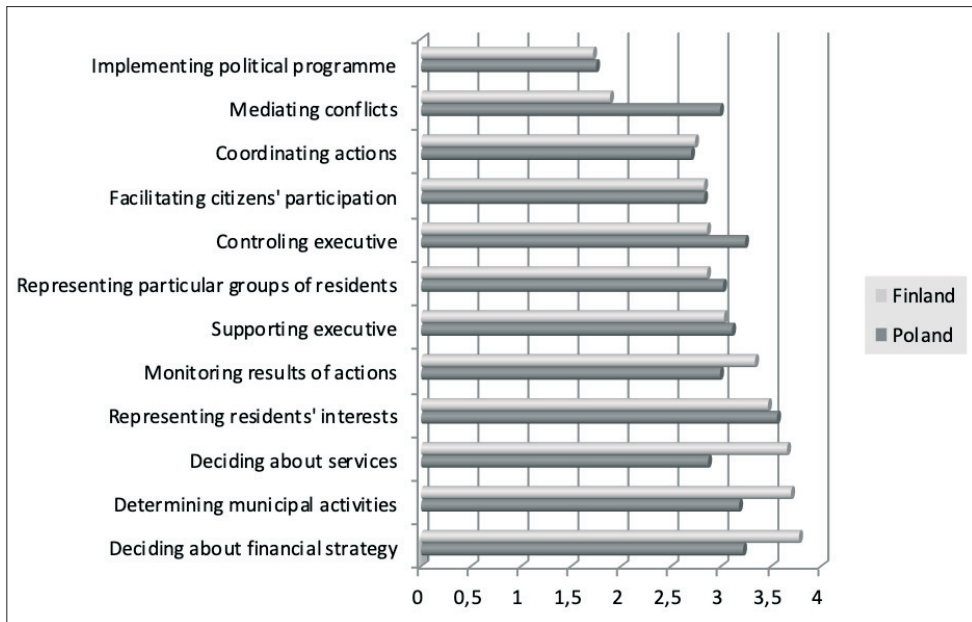
also that the city council and the board give power to the people maybe in some decision-making (...) it also takes time for the people to want to get the power (...)' (FI/T/16).

This quotation illustrates the situation that in Finland more direct citizens' participation is perceived as a long process that is connected with mindset change of both local authorities and citizens. But in Poland, the implementation of the extended participative framework is seen as a process that follows, develops and cannot be stopped any more (PL/L/8). Nevertheless, some councilors treat it with a dose of skepticism. One of them comments on this in the following way:

'There is no going back to the old days, but practice will show whether these new forms of participation are utopian, it will be verified sooner or later (...)' (PL/L/22).

There is a difference between Finnish and Polish councilors on how they weight specific tasks of the municipal council (Figure 4). According to the Finns, the main task of the council is to decide on matters regarding the financial strategy (3.78), to determine actions undertaken in the municipality (3.70), and to take decisions regarding local services (3.66). The Finns are also more oriented towards the monitoring of undertaken actions (Finland = 3.34; Poland = 2.99). In comparison, the Polish councilors attach a particular importance to the representation of municipal residents (3.56), to the control of the executive (3.24), and to decisions on financial strategy (3.22). More-

over, local representatives differ in attitude towards representation of certain groups of inhabitants. The Polish councilors consider this task as slightly more important than their Finnish counterparts (Finland = 2.86; Poland = 3.02). A clear distinction between both countries is also visible in relation to local conflicts. While according to the Poles, the municipal council may play an important role in mediating local disagreements (Poland = 2.99), from the Finnish perspective it is one of the council's minor tasks (Finland = 1.89). On the one hand, it may be interpreted as an outcome of the different governing model; yet, on the other hand, it may boil down to the fact that Finnish local politics is based on consensus and agreement, while the Polish local government is quite often an arena of rivalry and conflict. Interestingly, those differences do not translate into councilors' attitude towards facilitating citizens' participation. The Finnish and Polish councilors attach the same moderate importance to this particular task (Finland, Poland = 2.83). This indicates that although councilors from both states perceive the importance of the council's tasks differently, they have similar views on the council's role in enhancing civic participation.



Note: Mean value 0-4 where 0 means 'not important at all', 1 'of little importance', 2 'of moderate importance', 3 'of great importance', and 4 'of utmost importance'.

Figure 4: Importance of different tasks as perceived by Finnish and Polish councilors

Source: Own preparation

Analysis of interviews from both countries indicates that councilors notice that the new tools encourage the engagement of those already involved. In this context, the biggest concern for the Finnish representatives constitutes the fact that the participative framework appeals mainly to old residents and those with background in

NGOs, while a certain group of inhabitants – youngsters, families with children – are not present. In consequence, new instruments deliver mixed up and not balanced information, which causes municipal councils to make decisions based on the opinions of the minority, rather than the majority of residents (FI/T/15). Similarly, one of the councilors from Poland notices that ‘participative budgeting does not contribute to the sustainable development of the municipality, as it favors numerous, better organized groups’ (PL/L/22). Additionally, local representatives from both states, mainly backbench (Finland) and opposition (Poland) councilors, notice that the new participative framework is used for political reasons. In the case of Finland, mainly executive politicians are primarily involved in the operation of the new tools (FI/T/8; FI/T/14), whereas in the Polish municipalities the new participative framework seems to strengthen the role of the mayor and his party group (PL/L/22).

The analysis of the interviews indicates also that, in the opinion of the councilors from Finland and Poland, each local government has its own difficulties in the efficient ‘management’ of the participative framework. In the case of Finland, one of the repetitive issues is insufficient linkage between the new engagement mechanisms and the operation of the council. In this context, non-executive councilors indicate they do not have sufficient knowledge about participative tools and the way they function, as well as that new instruments are not well enough integrated with the council operation. One councilor addresses this issue in the following way:

‘(...) in my work, I do not see how this tool works. There should be a way to connect new instruments with the city council work more (...) there is lack of information somewhere; we do not hear of these instruments that much (...)’ (FI/T/14).

In turn, the Polish councilors complain about residents’ idleness, and see it as the major hindrance for participative mechanisms. Using the example of participative budgeting, one representative comments on it in the following way:

‘The mechanisms in our city are adequate, we should not go any further and stick strictly to the framework we have. The framework was created not only by administrative officials and councilors; there were meetings with district inhabitants as well’ (PL/L/19).

The above opinion, unwilling to broaden the participation framework is shared by Finnish councilors, however they are motivated by different reasons. In the case of Finland, they indicate that citizens themselves have a sense that an elected representative should first and foremost decide about local matters. In this context, describing the operation of citizens gatherings in city districts⁸, one councilor indicates that:

‘(...) it is very useful to hear what the life in the area is, what the problems there are, but I would not give them [city districts – KRM, AH, AP] more power (...)’

⁸ In some of examined Finish municipalities elected politicians and administrators organize citizens’ gatherings to discuss with local inhabitants planned policies and actions.

ple would not be happy if only some people decided how to use their tax money if they were not elected' (FI/T/17).

Polish councilors are moreover afraid that a participatory framework may constitute a mayoral weapon against her/his political opponents. In this context, the councilors underline that the mayor plays a role of main architect and manager of the participative framework; s/he decides about operation and development of particular instruments (PL/L/8; PL/L/19; PL/L/22). One of the opposition councilors, using the PB example, comments on this in the following way:

'Participatory actions strengthen the mayoral power and deprive the council of competence over a part of the city budget (...) looking critically we (...) give the executive body money for individual use' (PL/L/22).

6. Conclusions

The main goal of our research has been to investigate the attitudes of the Finnish and Polish municipal representatives towards citizens' participation, including the extended participative framework. In line with the findings of other studies on local representative democracy (Egner, Sweeting and Klok, 2013), the results of our research indicate that the co-existence of representation and participation is not an easy process. Based on our data, we claim that the explanation is not councilors' fear of losing their power, but uncertainty about their role.

Despite different traditions of local democracy and institutions of local governing, the Finnish and Polish representatives share a similar, positive attitude towards citizens' engagement. The Finns and Poles consider elections the most important form of engagement and perceive other tools rather as a supplement to this main form. The councilors in both countries are strongly attached to the principles of representative democracy (elections as a decisive factor in local politics; and making decisions in the name of the majority of the residents), although they do not reject the voice of the people expressed during the decision-making process. In consequence our first hypothesis (**H1**) has not been entirely confirmed, as – irrespectively of the adopted model – councilors value similarly the citizens' overall participation in the local decision-making. The more positive attitude of the Polish councilors towards direct participation of citizens in decision-making somewhat corroborates hypotheses H1a and H1b. We believe, on the one hand, it may be the outcome of a more technocratic and output-oriented model of governing in Finland, and of a higher level of trust in the Finnish society that gives councilors a stronger mandate, on the other hand. The history of the democratic rule on the local level provides the Finnish councilors with the liberty not to be obliged to prove themselves as representatives of the people and those who are the agents of the principal, i.e. citizens. Therefore, the input side of local governance seems not to be vital.

In contrast to Poland, where the tradition of the split between the ruling and the ruled is still inherent, where social and political trust is low, municipal councilors

need to prove themselves as representatives of the people, as officeholders acting for the people. This is, we believe, the clue of the more input-oriented (participative) model of local government in Poland. Therefore, in line with Heinelt's findings (2013), our data indicate that governing models influence councilors' perception of citizens' participation. Importantly, that perception influences their attitude towards legitimacy. While the Finns consider new forms of citizens' involvement mainly as an additional source of information that may give rise to the better operation of local authorities (*output legitimacy*), for Poles they rather constitute yet another step in building the open civil society (*input legitimacy*). Although we did not hypothesize on relations between civic engagement and the level of social and political trust, low values of the latter for Poland might induce councilors to support enhanced civic participation as a way to rise those values.

On the grounds of interviews, we cannot explicitly confirm or falsify the hypothesis **H2**. We can do it on the basis of institutions' 'behavior', which are apparently insensitive to enhanced participation. But careful analysis of interviews indicates that the extended participative framework brings some informal challenges. Finnish respondents are concerned about insufficient information on innovative instruments of civic participation, and their relation to councilors' and council's activities. In Poland, councilors and residents seem to understand their contribution to the decision-making differently. Finally, what links the councilors from both countries, is their concern about having 'unbalanced participation' since the new participative framework seems to further strengthen only specific, already active groups, and to weaken the passive majority (Baud and Nainan, 2008, pp. 483-499). This is an additional argument for maintaining representative democracy in a relatively unchanged form.

To sum up, we can reason that both the Finnish and Polish local councilors are characterized by a 'pro-civic' attitude, however, they still perceive representative democracy as a cornerstone of the local decision-making. Valuing participative tools, they still treat them as a supplement to the 'standard account' of representation. Moreover, the Finns and Poles do not seem to give strong support for further development of participative instruments. In both countries, unease about sufficient authorization, accountability, and responsiveness of residents in the governing process constitute a major hindrance to further development and are of concern to councilors (see Hendriks, 2009, pp. 689-715).

Additionally, our research provides also interesting insight into citizens' involvement and related problems. Firstly, it shows the difficulties of creating adequate links between representative and participative agendas. Both frameworks still in many cases can be treated as two, separate worlds, however, in the opinion of our respondents, not in opposition to one another. Our findings support the views of other scholars, namely, that the value of representation is not undermined but supplemented by participation (Florida, 2013). A significant consent with regard to the elections being the decisive factor in local governance, and agreement between Finnish and Polish councilors in this respect have also been noted; an even greater acceptance for the

council expressing majority views in both countries confirms the steadfast position of the council and councilors as representatives of the local community. The direct participation of the citizens in decision-making or at least their right to be heard before a decision is made is vastly accepted as well.

Secondly, the research indicates that extended participation mechanisms are relevant to the councilors, while simultaneously their role as community's representatives is not impaired. The same refers to the status of the whole council – representing the majority of residents, not only those active and participating. The issue of participation, however, divides the councilors slightly. But the division line is clear – more positive and involved in participatory mechanisms are executive and ruling-coalition representatives, whereas non-executive and opposition councilors reveal in many occasions skepticism, recognizing increased participation as an instrument of upgrading the executive (mayor, board) position over that of the legislative (council) body. Especially in the case of the Polish local government, the latter may engender threat and tension on the part of the representation. While the Finnish local executive is embedded in the council, the Polish mayor, due to her/his popular election and complete executive power, has supremacy – albeit not formal, but political – over the council. S/he and her/his officials are not only architects of participative frameworks but also its main beneficiaries. They can easily use participative tools to mobilize particular groups of residents or to impart certain messages (see Pinson, 2010, pp. 335-342). Therefore, if the status of the council is endangered at all, it is not due to the increased participation of residents or its particular forms, but due to further empowerment of the local executive (Pawłowska and Radzik-Maruszak, 2016, pp. 19-38).

References:

1. Alonso, S., Keane J. and Merkel, W. (eds.), *The Future of Representative Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
2. Andeweg, R.B., 'Beyond Representativeness? Trends in Political Representation', 2003, *European Review*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 147-161.
3. Arnstein, S.R., 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation', 1969, *Journal of the American Planners*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 216-224.
4. Baba, C., Cherecheș, R., Mora, C. and Țiclău, T., 'Public Participation in Public Policy Process – Case Study in Seven Counties from North-Western Region of Romania', 2009, *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol. 26E, pp. 5-13.
5. Barber, B., *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
6. Baud, I.S.A. and Nainan, N. "Negotiated Spaces" for Representation in Mumbai: Ward Committees, Advanced Locality Management and the Politics of Middle-class Activism', 2008, *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 483-499.
7. Bober, J. et al., *Narastające dysfunkcje, zasadnicze dylematy, konieczne działania. Raport o stanie samorządności terytorialnej w Polsce* (Growing Dysfunctions, Major Dilemmas, Necessary Actions. Report on the State of Territorial Self-government in Poland), Kraków: MSAP, 2013.

8. Dalton, R., *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
9. Dalton, R.J., Scarrow, S.E. and Cain, B.E. 'Advanced Democracies and the New Politics', 2004, *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 124-138.
10. Dente, B. and Kjellberg, F. (eds.), *The Dynamic of Institutional Change: Local Government Reorganization in Western Democracies*, London: SAGE, 1988.
11. Dobson, A., 'Representative Democracy and the Environment', in Lafferty, W.L. and Meadowcroft, J., (eds.), *Democracy and the Environment: Problems and Prospects*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996, pp. 134-165.
12. Egner, B., Sweeting, D. and Klok P.J. (eds.), *Local Councillors in Europe*, Springer Fachmedien: Wiesbaden, 2003.
13. European Social Survey (ESS), 2016, [Online] available at <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>, accessed on July 11, 2019.
14. Florida, A., 'Participatory Democracy versus Deliberative Democracy: Elements for a Possible Theoretical Genealogy. Two Histories, Some Intersections', 7th ECPR General Conference, Sciences Po, Bordeaux, 4-7 September 2013, [Online] available at <https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/71d7f83c-3fe4-4b11-82a2-c151cd3769f4.pdf>, accessed on February 19, 2017.
15. Geurtz, C. and Van de Wijdeven, T., 'Making Citizen Participation Work: The Challenging Search for New Forms of Local Democracy in the Netherlands', 2010, *Local Government Studies*, vol. 36, no. 4, pp. 531-549.
16. Hall, P., Kettunen P., Löfgren, K. and Ringholm T., 'Is There a Nordic Approach to Questions of Democracy in Studies of Network Governance?', 2009, *Local Government Studies*, vol. 35, no. 5, pp. 515-538.
17. Haveri, A., 'Nordic Local Government: A Success Story, but Will It Last?', 2015, *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 136-149.
18. Haveri, A., Airaksinen, J. and Paananen, H., 'Transformation of Local Leadership-Narratives on Changed Interaction', 2015, *Open Journal of Leadership*, vol. 4, pp. 117-128.
19. Heinelt, H., 'Councillors' Notions of Democracy, and Their Role Perception and Behaviour in the Changing Context of Local Democracy', 2013, *Local Government Studies*, vol. 39, no. 5, pp. 640-660.
20. Heinelt, H., *Governing Modern Societies: Towards Participatory Governance*, London: Routledge, 2010.
21. Hendriks, C.M., 'The Democratic Soup: Mixed Meaning of Political Representation in Governance Networks', 2009, *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 689-715.
22. Hibbing, J.R. and Theiss-Morse, E., *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs About How Government Should Work*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
23. John, P., *Local Governance in Western Europe*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001.
24. Kubka, A., *Modele demokracji w Skandynawii (Models of Democracy in Scandinavia)*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo LIBRON – Filip Lohner, 2016.
25. Loughlin, J., Hendriks, F. and Lindström, A. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Local and Regional Democracy in Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
26. Lowndes, V. and Wilson D., 'Social Capital and Local Governance: Exploring the Institutional Design Variable', 2001, *Political Studies*, vol. 49, pp. 629-647.

27. Michels, A. and De Graaf, L., 'Examining Citizen Participation: Local Participatory Policy Making and Democracy', 2010, *Local Government Studies*, vol. 36, no. 4, pp. 477-491.
28. Michels, A., 'Innovations in Democratic Governance: How Does Citizen Participation Contribute to a Better Democracy?', 2011, *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol. 77, no. 2, pp. 275-293.
29. Papadopoulos, Y. and Warin, P., 'Are Innovative, Participatory and Deliberative Procedures in Policy Making Democratic and Effective?', 2007, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 445-472.
30. Pateman, C., *Participation and Democratic Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
31. Pawłowska, A. and Radzik-Maruszak, K., 'Instytucjonalno-prawne warunki partycypacji i dialogu obywatelskiego na poziomie lokalnym (na przykładzie wybranych miast)' (Institutional and Legal Conditions of Participation and Civil Dialogue at the Local Level, on the Example of Selected Cities), 2016, *Acta Politica Polonica*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 19-38.
32. Pinson, G., 'The Governance of French Towns. From the Centre-Periphery Scheme to Urban Regimes', 2010, *Análise Social*, vol. 45, no. 197, pp. 717-737.
33. Pitkin, H.F., 'Representation and Democracy: Uneasy Alliance', 2004, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 335-342.
34. PKW, 'Wybory samorządowe 2018' (Local elections 2018), [Online] available at <https://wybory2018.pkw.gov.pl/pl/frekwencja/0411#f1000001>, accessed on July 15, 2019.
35. Plotke, D., 'Representation Is Democracy', 1997, *Constellations. International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 19-34.
36. Quick, K.S. and Bryson, J.M., 'Public Participation', in Ansell, C. and Torfing, J. (eds.), *Handbook on Theories of Governance*, London: Edward Elgar, 2016, pp. 158-169.
37. Radzik-Maruszak, K. and Mieczkowska-Czerniak, K., 'From Indifference to Protest: Citizen Activity at the Local Level in Poland', 2013, *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, Sectio K-Politologia*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 151-169.
38. Rehfeld, A., *The Concept of Constituency. Political Representation, Democratic Legitimacy and Institutional Design*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
39. Røiseland, A. and Vabo, S.I., 'Interactive – or Counteractive – Governance. Critical Reflections on Interactive Governance', in Edelenbos, J. and van Meerkerk, I. (eds.), *Critical Reflections on Interactive Governance: Self-organization and Participation in Public Governance*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016, pp. 120-145.
40. Schmitter, P. and Trechsel, A., 'The Future of Democracy in Europe: Trends, Analyses and Reforms. A Green Paper for the Council of Europe', Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2004.
41. Schumpeter, J., *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London: Routledge, 2003.
42. Smith, G., *Democratic Innovations: Designing Institutions for Citizen Participation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
43. Sørensen, E. and Torfing, J. 'Towards Robust Hybrid Democracy in Scandinavian Municipalities?', 2019, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 25-49.
44. Stănuș, C., 'Political Representation and Governance: The Case of Second-Tier Councilors in Romania', 2016, *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol. 48E, pp. 124-144.
45. Statistics Finland, 'Municipal Elections', [Online] available at http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/kvaa/index_en.html, accessed on July 15, 2019.

46. Swianiewicz, P. 'Modele samorządu terytorialnego w krajach Europy Zachodniej oraz Środkowowschodniej – próba generalizacji' (Local Government Models in the Countries of Western and Central and Eastern Europe – An Attempt at Generalization), 2002, *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne*, vol. 4, no. 10, pp. 49-67.
47. Swianiewicz, P., 'An Empirical Typology of Local Government Systems in Eastern Europe', 2014, *Local Government Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 292-311.
48. The World Bank, 'Governance and the Law', World Development Report, 2017, [Online] available at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2017>, accessed on June 17, 2017.
49. Torfing, J., Peters, B.G., Pierre, J. and Sørensen, E., *Interactive Governance: Advancing the Paradigm*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
50. Tuurnas, S., *The Professional Side of Co-Production*, Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2016.
51. Urbinati, N. and Warren, M.E., 'The Concept of Representation in Contemporary Theory', 2008, *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 11, pp. 387-412.