

# **Citizen participation in public administration: the case of Croatian local government\***

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## 1. Introduction

The question of citizen participation has become quite popular within the public administration research and practice. In the last three decades it preoccupates the attention of public administration theorists as well as practitioners, for which several reasons can be found (point 3.). In general, it is considered as properly and desirable, being an issue of democratization in public administration (see Bragué and Gallego, 2003). The normative underpinnings of the citizen participation in administration are thus clear; citizens who are affected by certain decisions normatively have the right to participate in its formation (Robbins et al, 2008: 564). In addition, as argued by Wang and Wan Wart (2007), the general argument in favour of citizen participation is that well informed citizens can actively and constructively contribute to decision making on policy issues, regulatory requirements, and service provision, in all except the most technical issues, which fosters better results and leads to higher level of public trust (Wang and Wan Wart, 2007: 265). These arguments point at two main dimensions of citizen participation issue: process dimension (participation as procedural right, with possible functions regardless of outcomes) and outcome dimension (participation as a means to certain goals, functions related to the outcomes of the process). However, from the present relevant literature, clear and unambiguous conclusions on the real effects of public participation in practice cannot be drawn yet. Therefore, further theoretical elaboration and empirical research of the concept seems to be necessary. This paper represents very preliminary draft of the concept of citizen participation in public administration, the review of the existing literature on citizen participation and few points of authors' research interest within the theme.

## 2. Citizen participation – concept and definition

Public participation is a complex concept, with its scope and definition open to debate (Rowe and Frewer, 2004). In the literature a wide range of definitions can be found.<sup>1</sup> However, the

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\* Draft paper prepared for the PhD Workshop, IPSA Conference *Decentralization Policies: Reshuffling the Scene*, 7-10 May 2015, Dubrovnik, Croatia.

definition of citizen participation should depend on the 'arena' in which it takes place. In that sense, crucial seems to be the distinction between political and administrative participation, which is not always employed in the literature on public participation. As explained by Wang and Wan Wart (2007), political participation means 'public involvement in expressing preferences for a broad spectrum of important national, regional, or local policies, mainly during the process of selecting political representatives, campaigning, and voting'. On the other hand, participation in administration refers to 'public involvement in administrative process and administrative decision making'. One difference between two forms is that participation in administration occurs on a continual basis, while political participation occurs during election cycles. Further, administrative participation takes place at the executive level and political participation occurs mainly at the legislative level (Wang and Wan Wart, 2007: 267-268). Similarly, Yang and Pandey (2011) address citizen participation as citizen involvement in administrative decision making and management processes, in difference to political participation or individual volunteerism in civic affairs. Distinction between governmental/administrative, electoral, and civil society participation is also employed by Cooper, Bryer and Meek (2006). In exploring governments' citizen involvement efforts in administrative processes (in difference to political involvement), Yang (2005) makes further distinction between 'less political, more technical, procedural, diffused, and symbolic' efforts (for example, public hearings and citizen surveys) and 'efforts that are more political, strategic, selective, and substantial, such as determining policy alternatives and program goals' (Yang, 2005: 8). Wang (2001) emphasizes two aspects of participation: participation in various public service functions and management functions, and participation in decision making, e.g. citizen participating in goal setting and formulating strategies (Wang, 2001: 323).

Further, the public can be involved at different levels of government (national, local), in a number of different ways (different mechanisms or techniques, e.g. public hearings, public consultations, discussions, surveys, focus groups, forums, etc.), and at different level of citizen engagement according to their possibility to influence the outcome of the process (e.g. Arnsteins' (1969) ladder of participation ranging from manipulation to citizen control; Moynihan (2003) differentiates between pseudo, partial and full participation; see also Robbins et al, 2005 and Thomas, 1993).

In this paper, citizen participation in public administration is understood as citizens' direct involvement in administrative processes, that is, in its functions. According to different administrative functions, citizens can be involved in issuing regulation, providing public services, performing oversight and in management functions (budgeting, supervisory and management boards). Meanwhile, the levels of citizen participation vary. On the first level citizens can participate by being recipients of information (active or passive) from

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<sup>1</sup> According to Smith (1983), public participation refers to a group of procedures designed to consult, involve, and inform the public to allow those affected by a decision to have an input into that decision. Cooper (2005: 534), for example, defines public participation as 'people participating together for deliberation and collective action within an array of interests, institutions and networks, developing civic identity, and involving people in governance processes.' According to Roberts (2008), citizen participation can be defined as 'the process by which members of a society (those not holding office or administrative positions in government) share power with public officials in making substantive decisions related to the community.'

administrative organizations. In fact, this level of participation is precondition to other comprising citizen consultation and active participation (engagement) processes. As elsewhere in the literature, terms participation and involvement are here referring to the same phenomenon. Citizen engagement, however, comprises forms of citizen participation that implicate more active mode of citizen participation and greater citizens' influence on the process outcomes. The concept of engagement implies two-way interaction between citizens and public administration, and feasible opportunity for citizens to influence outcomes of process they are involved in. As noted by Svava and Denhardt (2010), citizen participation is often used for gaining information, assistance and support from citizens, but does not necessarily stress citizen engagement. 'Citizen engagement focuses on revitalizing democracy, building citizenship and reinforcing a sense of community, and it cannot be equated with one-way exchanges between government and citizens' (Svava and Denhardt, 2010: 5). From a citizens' standpoint, a consequence of participation is that citizens are being empowered in relation to administration. In Fung's words (2003), public participation empowers citizens if the results of the participatory process directly affect public action (Fung, 2003, in: Koch, 2013: 2). That is, public participation will lead to citizen empowerment if citizens' views and preferences are incorporated in the outcomes of the process. From a public administration standpoint, the consequence is responsiveness to citizens' needs and demands.<sup>2</sup> With regard to the terms citizen participation/public participation, they are considered synonyms, as the term citizen in this context includes not only citizens as individuals but also organized interests, that is, interest groups and private sector actors.

Table 1. Typology of citizen participation

Criteria	Type of participation	Authors
Arena (legislative/executive)	Political/administrative participation Political/administrative participation/individual volunteerism in civic affairs Governmental (administrative)/electoral/civil society participation	Wang and Wan Wart (2007)  Yang and Pandey (2011)  Cooper, Bryer and Meek (2006)
Involvement mode (mainly during election cycles/continual)	Participation in the process of selecting political representatives, campaigning, and voting (elections, referenda) / participation in administrative procedures and administrative decision making	Wang and Wan Wart (2007)

<sup>2</sup> Vigoda (2002), for example, argues that responsiveness should nowadays be replaced with the concept collaboration which embraces 'a more active, bidirectional act of participation and unification of forces between two (or more) parties.' In this paper the term responsiveness is used to refer to public administrations' reaction to citizens' views and preferences, regardless of the citizens' participation mode.

Public administration function	Participation in decision-making/service provision and management Participation in decision-making and problem-solving/participation in service delivery and addressing community needs	Wang (2001) Svara and Denhardt (2010)
Phase	Participation in formulation/implementation	Moynihan (2003) de Graaf (2007)
Level of citizen involvement	Public communication/consultation/participation Informing/consulting/participating Informing (providing) / consulting/coproducing/collaborating/empowering Manipulation/therapy/informing/consultation/placation/partnership/delegated power/citizen control Pseudo/partial/full participation Autonomous managerial decision/ modified autonomous managerial decision /segmented public consultation/ unitary public consultation/ public decision	Rowe and Frewer (2005) OECD (2001) Svara and Denhardt (2010) Arnstein (1969) Moynihan (2003) Thomas (1993)

### 3. Incentives for citizen participation

As noted by several scholars, citizen' trust in government (as well as other institutions in democracies such as political parties) has decreased in the last decades of the 20th century (Box, 1996; Putnam, 1995; Thomas, 1993). Higher levels of discouragement and apathy derived from citizens' perception that 'participation through normal institutional channels has little impact on the substance of government politics' (Crosby, Kelly, and Schaefer, 1986, in: King, Feltey, and Susel, 1998: 317). Resulting in declining legitimation of government institutions, establishing the direct links between citizens and government has been seen as a remedy. In Rowe and Frewer' words, 'a nonconsulted public is often an angry one and involving the public may be one step toward mollifying it' (Rowe and Frewer, 2004: 514).

Another reason can be found in increased complexity of modern societies. Governments today act in rapidly changing environment and face growing number of complex, 'wicked' issues. Public management of complex economic, financial, social and environmental issues require

new ideas, views and perspectives and wider range of solutions which can be provided by public (Cuthill and Fien, 2005: 64). As nonprofessionals, they can contribute to the development of innovative approaches and strategies because they are free from the 'obsolete wisdom of professionals and the techniques that are embedded in their organizations and procedures' (Fung, 2006: 73). In the provision of public services involvement of citizens as clients in coproduction can improve the quality of services. Citizen participation is thus especially important on the local level, as citizens may have special local knowledge about the problems within the certain context. In addition, citizens today possess the information and knowledge to participate more actively in administrative decisions that affect their lives. In sum, citizens possess distinctive capabilities that may improve public action (Fung, 2006: 73). This ability has grown into a right to be involved in those decision-making processes (Roberts, 2004).

Moynihan (2003) stresses three theoretical arguments that support the question of growing public participation. First, the postmodern discourse theory, emphasizes the role of 'postmodern values' that include a distrust to formal institutions such as government and political parties and a desire for more participatory democracies, as argued by Inglehart (1980, 1997). The second argument concerns the disillusionment with bureaucracy, as one of the characteristics of traditional Weberian hierarchical bureaucratic model was reliance on expertise and qualifications of bureaucrats, lacking responsiveness in relation to citizens. Finally, argument for searching the democratic ideal is rooted within the classic normative theory, emphasizing the importance of participation in preventing public alienation from government and maintaining the stability of the political system. Participation also has benefits for citizens by enabling them to fulfill the 'democratic wish' and exert real influence in the governing process (Moynihan, 2003: 166).

Citizen participation in administrative processes is a challenging concept because it questions traditional (Weberian) model of administration which does not support active forms of citizen involvement and does not seek input from citizens (except from chosen experts). Namely, traditional bureaucracy rests on expertise, regularity and routinization, efficiency, and self-maintenance as basic principles (Kweit and Kweit, 1980). The accountability in relation to citizens is maintained through mechanisms of representative democracy. Direct links with citizens and additional input from citizens are not seen as necessary, as only professional administrators possess the adequate knowledge and expertise to implement policies and issue regulation. Thus, a certain tension exists between the public's right to greater involvement and the prerogative of public officials to act as administrative decision makers (King, Feltey, Susel, 1998). The 'unsupporting nature' of bureaucracy-participation relation has been recognized by a number of public administration scholars (see Kathi & Cooper, 2005; Cooper & Bryer, 2007; Wang and Bryer, 2012; Kweit and Kweit, 1980). The local level of government, however, is to much lesser extent characterised by bureaucratic nature, as the main purpose of local self-government is in meeting common needs and interests of local community, and resolving everyday problems and issues of local citizens. Citizen participation on the local level is therefore more salient and easier to perform.

Today, however, a balance between the principles of efficiency and expertise on the one hand, and democratic principles of openness and participation in public administration on the other, can be noticed, both within public administration theory work and practice. From the 2000s administrative doctrine of *neoweberian state* has become prominent within theoretical discussions. It conciliates the principles of traditional (Weberian) bureaucracy such as expertise, legality and efficiency, with contemporary challenges of public administration functioning, principally with respect to greater responsiveness to citizens and citizen participation in public administration. The doctrine of *good governance* on the other hand, argues for even greater citizen role in political and administrative processes. Citizens are seen as partners of government, with equal abilities to influence decisions and set the agenda. The theoretical and doctrinal concepts advocate the inclusive, participatory and collaborative mechanisms in order to overcome the traditional concept of bureaucracy characterized by low responsiveness to citizens. With decreasing citizens' trust in government, attenuating the traditional Weberian administration, strengthening citizens' awareness and level of education, stronger impetus for government transparency and informing the public, with overall tendency towards democratization, as well as decentralization processes actuated by the new public management, these ideas have been advocated by administrative doctrines from the mid-1990s onwards.

In theoretical discussions, from the 1980s the concept of government has widely been replaced with the broader concept of governance which, besides the state actors, includes wider range of non-state, social (market and non-market) actors in decision-making processes. While the concept of government implies strong and predominant role of the state actors in decision-making processes that mostly excludes other social actors (one-dimensional relation between those who govern and those who are governed, i.e. subjects of government), the concept of governance presumes interactive relation between different public, private and civil sector actors and, consequently, more complex decision-making processes relying on collaboration and interdependence (see Rhodes, 1996; Levi-Faur, 2012). The government model, which was predominant in western democracies for most part of the 20th century, implies that public administration relies on professionals, hierarchy and clear lines of responsibility in implementing policies and providing public services, with citizens staying largely outside these processes. As Bingham, Nabatchi, and O'Leary (2005: 547) explain, 'government occurs when those with legally and formally derived authority and policing power execute and implement activities; governance refers to the creation, execution, and implementation of activities backed by the shared goals of citizens and organizations, who may or may not have formal authority and policing power.' Citizen participation in administrative processes therefore represents devolution of power from those who have power to those who have not and has democratic potential (see Cuthill and Fien, 2005).

#### 4. Benefits of citizen participation

A long list of citizen participation potential benefits has been identified in the literature. Citizen participation can have educative and integrative function for citizens (e.g. Glass, 1979;

Roberts, 2004, King, Feltey and Susel, 1998) as well as for administrators (King, Feltey and Susel, 1998), and contribute to the strengthening of social capital. Increasing citizens' trust in public administration, building support and improving legitimation of public decisions and government organizations in general are among the most commonly noted benefits (e.g. Glass, 1979; Creighton, 1981; McNair et al, 1983; Edelenbos, 2000; Wang, 2001; Roberts, 2004; Innes and Booher, 2004). Better quality of decisions and decisions incorporating citizens' needs and preferences is a benefit emphasized by Moynihan (2003), Beierle and Cayford (2002), Edelenbos (2000). In discussing effectiveness of citizen participation, Irvin and Stansbury (2004) identify two tiers of benefits: process oriented (referring to increased public knowledge and greater cooperation) and outcome oriented (better policy and implementation decisions).

Citizens can improve outcomes of administrative decision making by providing public managers with context-specific information that might not otherwise be available, as administrators make decisions on the basis of their narrow specialized knowledge (Neshkova and Guo, 2011: 272). Moreover, as noted by Sirianni (2009), 'only holistic-problem-solving strategies tailored to specific context can be effective with systems defined by complex interactions among innumerable natural and social dynamics (Sirianni, 2009, in: Neshkova, Guo, 2011: 272). In contrast to traditional modes of decision making, citizens can provide innovative solutions to public problems, which means that participation is associated with knowledge sharing (Neshkova and Guo, 2011: 273). Advocates of citizen participation stress both normative, e.g. advancing fairness and justice (Innes and Booher, 2004) and instrumental benefits of participation, e.g. providing information that helps managers improve public efficiency (Moynihan, 2003: 174).

Some authors argue that different participatory mechanisms are associated with specific objectives (Glass, 1979; Moynihan et al, 2012; Robbins et al, 2005). Public hearings are, for example, associated with the main goal of meeting legal mandates and implementing present programs, while citizen surveys are related to informing administrators about citizens' support or opposition to certain issues (Robbins et al, 2005: 369).

## 5. Challenges of citizen participation

Besides broadly documented benefits of citizen participation, there are also some important administrative costs and possible difficulties that need to be taken into account. First, with regard to citizens, possible problems include cynicism, distrustfulness and disinterest for administrative processes (Berner et al, 2011: 135). Further, citizens often lack time and other resources to participate. There is also a danger of predomination of certain interests, that is, the problem of representativeness (Roberts, 2004: 326). From the public administration point of view, participation is time consuming and can significantly slow administrative decision making processes as well as reduce the ability to reach consensus and decision closure (Neshkova, Guo, 2011: 271; Moynihan, 2003: 173). It is also more expensive than the decision making done by a single administrator (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004: 58). Involving

citizens necessary complicates the administrative processes and requires additional coordination efforts. There are concerns of administrators for losing control over the process. As noted earlier, involvement of citizens in administrative processes can conflict with a specialized, routine-oriented and hierarchical bureaucracy (Callahan, 2004; Kweit and Kweit 1981). Moreover, as argued by Moynihan (2003), administrators may believe that participation damages the quality of the decision outcome and that as a result of citizens' lack of knowledge and expertise poor decisions could emerge (Moynihan, 2003: 174). There is also a cost with respect to additional education and training for administrators to be able effectively survey and involve citizens, collect data and interpret findings (Berner et al, 2011: 135-136).

Table 2. Benefits and challenges of citizen participation – summary

Benefits	Challenges
Legitimacy of public decisions Better quality of regulations Innovative solutions to public problems Increasing trust in government Strengthening social capital Citizen education and integration Administrators' education Advancing social fairness and justice	Citizens' disinterest and lack of time Problem of representativeness Slower and more complex administrative procedures, greater coordination efforts, extra costs - lower efficiency Poor quality of decisions and regulations

6. Functions and effects of citizen participation

As already mentioned, the current literature does not provide unambiguous answer on real effects of citizen participation. The main problem is that research efforts offer mixed evidence and mostly analyze individual case studies and often rely on single-factor analyses (Neshkova and Guo, 2011: 270; Wang and Wan Wart, 2007: 265). It is not clear whether the incorporation of citizens' say in administrative decision making will lead to a more efficient and effective provision of public services (Neshkova and Guo, 2011: 270). There is also no definite conclusion about other potential benefits of citizen participation, such as increased trust and legitimation. However, the existing literature provides some significant theoretical and empirical insights.

Rosener (1978) proposes participation evaluation matrix relying on two dimensions: 1) knowledge of a cause/effect relationship between a participation program or activity and the achievement of specified goals and objectives, and 2) agreement on program goals and objectives, whose goals and objectives they are, and the criteria by which success or failure will be measured. By combining them, she comes to four 'quadrants' i.e. possible situations, of which only in one can assessments of the effectiveness of the participation be complete -

when participation objectives are clear to all and when there is a complete knowledge on how to achieve these objectives.

Glass (1979) identifies five general objectives of citizen participation: information exchange, education, support building, decision-making supplement and representational input. He argues that all mentioned objectives cannot be accomplished by single technique, that is, there is no participatory technique that would be the best in all situations. The best technique will depend on the context, i.e. concrete situation and the objectives.

Thomas (1993) developed theoretical *effective decision model*, according to which effective participation depends on the concrete participation mechanisms employed in the specific context. In accordance with the model, more public involvement will be needed for issues that require greater public legitimacy, while for decisions requiring managerial efficiency and technical competence, lower level of citizen involvement should be applied. In order to determine what are the needs of concrete decision, Thomas proposes list of seven questions a manager should answer, after which he can choose among five decision making approaches varying in the scope of citizen involvement and their potential influence. Five possible model are autonomous managerial decision, modified autonomous managerial decision, segmented public consultation, unitary public consultation and public decision.

Rowe and Frewer (2000) develop a framework for evaluating public participation effectiveness consisting of two types of criteria. Acceptance criteria include: criterion of *representativeness* of participants, *independence* - participation process conducted in an independent unbiased way, *early involvement* of the public, *influence* - the output of the procedure should have a genuine impact on policy, *transparency* of the process. Process criteria encompass criterion of *resource accessibility* - participants having an access to the appropriate resources to enable them to successfully fulfill their brief, the *nature and scope of the participation task* should be clearly defined, criterion of *structured decision making* - appropriate mechanisms for structuring and displaying the decision-making process, and the criterion of *cost-effectiveness*. Authors then assess some of the public participation techniques (referenda, public hearings, citizen juries, consensus conferences, etc.) according to set of determined criteria. In their another work on participation evaluation (2004), Rowe and Frewer are preoccupied with defining the term effectiveness (success) of participation process. As universal definition seems unlikely, they provide an extensive review of definitions of effectiveness employed by different scholars in the context of public participation

In their article, Yang and Pandey (2011) develop and test a model for exploring the conditions under which citizen involvement can improve administrative decision making. They use four types of variables to explain involvement outcomes (involvement mechanisms, characteristics of participants, characteristics of target organizations, and environment). In empirical part of research, they test hypotheses by investigating city managers' perceptions of participation process outcomes in the following functional areas: parks/recreation, planning, and community development; finance/budgeting and public works; and personnel/human resource and economic development. Their findings implicate that in explaining participation outcomes,

participant characteristics and forms of government are not significant. As most important appeared public management variables (elected official support, red tape, hierarchical authority, and transformational leadership).

Based on interviews with subject matter experts and citizens, King, Feltey and Susel (1998) derive a conclusion that in order to be improved, citizen participation needs to be authentic. By authentic citizen participation mean 'deep and continuous involvement in administrative processes with the potential for all involved to have an effect on the situation.' Citizens need to have an immediate and equal opportunity to influence the processes and outcomes (King, Feltey and Susel, 1998: 320).

Wang's (2001) survey was focused on three dimensions of public participation: the use of participation mechanisms, citizen involvement in service or management functions, and citizen involvement in administrative decision making. Conducted on a sample of chief administrative officers in US cities, survey showed that although cities use variety of participation mechanisms, citizens are rarely involved in central management functions such as budgeting and procurement, as well as in decision making. Author also find that public participation is correlated with meeting public needs, building consensus and improving public trust.

Edelenbos and Klijn (2005) analyze public participation in the case of planning and zoning decisions in six local units in the Netherlands. First they focus the outcomes of the process by analyzing actor satisfaction and enrichment with new ideas (variety and influence of ideas), then they look at the process design and management by examining the degree of formalization of the process and the manner in which process manager lead the participation process (rigid/flexible, more or less actively), and finally they explore the width and depth of the participation process (degree to which each member of a community is offered the chance to participate and the degree to which citizens have the opportunity to determine the final outcome of the process).

Differentiating political participation from governments' citizen involvement efforts (GCI), Yang (2005) tests a proposed model which explains GCI with socio-economic variables, institutional arrangements, and managerial attitudes and actions, variables that are used in the literature on the political participation. His research showed that all three variables are important for explaining GCI, but the relationships between these variables and GCI is more complicated than in the political participation case.

Wang and Wan Wart (2007) analyze whether public participation in administrative functions affects public trust in administration, and through which intermediating variables. The results of their research conducted on chief administrative officers in US cities shows that participation has effects on trust through two factors of administrative behavior: administrative ethical behaviors and service competence.

Michels and De Graaf (2010) explore whether participation leads to a new division of roles between citizens and officials as one of the effects of citizen participation. Empirical research was conducted in cases of two cities in Netherlands, however, neither confirmed initial proposition. Authors conclude that the role of individual citizens is mainly to provide information and ideas and vital role is played by civil servants and professional organizations. However, they find that citizen participation has positive effects on citizens' sense of responsibility for public matters, promotion of mutual understanding, and greater legitimacy of decisions. They also point at possible disappointment and withdrawal of participants, as a result of their non realized (high) expectations.

In answering what constitutes effective participation, Berner, Amos and Morse (2011) explore the views of directly involved actors in the process: elected officials, local government staff, and citizens. They find out that perception among three different groups vary - elected officials see effective participation widely in terms of traditional representational government, being passive and channeled through elected officials, staff believes that for effective participation well educated citizen are needed, while citizens associate effective participation with interactiveness and direct democracy.

Neshkova and Guo (2011) examine to what extent public managers utilize citizen input when setting the budget priorities of their agencies, and whether public participation affects organizational performance, that is, the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery. They conducted empirical research of US state Department of Transportation across the country, concluding that public agencies can become more efficient and effective by using input from the public (Neshkova and Guo, 2011: 269).

Yang and Oh (2013) raise 'the million dollar question of instrumental benefits' whether citizen participation leads to greater efficiency, effectiveness and equity. Their preliminary conclusions drawn from empirical study of local governments indicate that participation does not lower efficiency, and may increase the effectiveness and equity.

As mentioned in the introduction, two main dimensions of citizen participation can be identified – process and outcome. These two dimensions need to be taken into account when considering functions of the participation. In addition, a wide range of possible benefits listed by a number of scholars (point 4) can be divided into those more practical, tangible benefits, and those with more intrinsic, normative value.

Table 3. Functions of citizen participation in public administration

Benefits / Dimensions	Practical	Intrinsic/normative
Process	Meeting legal requirements Citizen education Administrator education	Citizen integration, social capital Consensus-orientation Legitimacy of decisions

Outcome	Better regulation and quality of services Decisions reflecting citizen preferences	Citizen trust in administration
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7. Constructing the methodological framework for exploring citizens participation in Croatian public administration

In Croatian public administration literature, issue of citizen participation is still understudied. Citizen participation as a part of a concept of public administration transparency and openness has been explored by Musa and colleagues (2011, 2014) and Vidačak and Škrabalo (2014). Modes of citizen participation in local governance have been explored by Koprić and Manojlović (2013) and Koprić and Klarić (2015). As findings related to the effects of citizen participation in public administration have derived from research mostly conducted in USA, UK and Scandinavian countries, the question is whether there is significant difference with respect to participation functions in new democracies, characterized by different institutions and politico-administrative culture. Therefore, the proposed research question concerns 1) exploring, describing and classifying mechanisms (instruments) of citizens participation, 2) the identification of variables that intermediate different effects of participation, and 3) exploring the effects of citizen participation and identifying differences between national/local level of government and between local self-government units.

In order to address these questions, for the first part of the research, following methodological framework is developed:

Type of PA organisation	Input (expert/interest)	Type of participants (difuse/target)	Instruments (public consultations, public discussions,hearings, surveys, expert analysis)	Regulation (strategies, laws, bylaws, general acts)
Ministries (20)				
Agencies (20)				
Local self-government units (20)				

Research method will include content analysis of organizations' websites and sending a preliminary questionnaire. In the second phase, a more qualitative methods of research could be conducted (questionnaire and case studies based on semi-structured interviews), with emphasize on the functions/effects of participation. It could be expected that different types of organizations (especially those on the national level in difference to local level organizations) will rely to greater extent on particular mechanisms (for example, public discussions on the local level, expert analysis in the case of agencies), and accordingly, on different types of participants and input (expert or general public). Consequently, different benefits could prevail on different levels of government.

The main aim of this research is to develop and elaborate the concept of citizen participation in public administration in general, and applying it on the Croatian case, where the topic has not yet been widely studied. The expected benefits of the research include greater understanding of the citizen participation (especially the administrative type), identification of local level specificities and providing some evidence on the issue from postsocialist countries perspective.

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