

## Book review

Aleksandra Zubrzycka-Czarnecka, *Participation of social actors. in planning the housing policy in Warsaw in the years 2000–2016*. Warszawa 2022: Dom Wydawniczy ELIPSA; ISBN: 978-83-8017-449-8

The methodology, open to theory and tested in practice, places the reviewed book among the most promising policy studies. Analyzes and conclusions combine scientific and practical values. At the same time, the specialization of research does not overwhelm the 'uninitiated' ones – the author does not lose contact with the generals of democratic policies shared by various specialists. The assumptions of the D-Housing model proposed by the author proved successful in the analysis of the research material, interviews and formal documentation. The 190-page study consisted of: a brief introduction, seven carefully organized, a summary and four annexes.

Chapter one has been dedicated to the theoretical framework and research methodology, with the key concepts and factors of the research – with the leading one: democratisation of the decision-making process in housing policy. The study has been anchored in constructivist epistemology – *in the 'weak', critical version of constructivism, and in interpretive policy research*. The key part of the chapter one is the description of the research scheme *D-housing*. The scheme seems to be promising attempt to operationalize those conceptual threads associated with deliberative democracy, which, while basic, often elude operationalization in research and practice. Thus the D-Housing is a research tool enable to analysis of a the arenas/spheres of interactions involving numerous (more or less) active actors, it could be used also as an evaluative tool. Constructing it, the author refers to the latest theoretical discussions, tests them, weaves references to them into the structure of D-Housing and does it without losing deliberative generals, but skillfully specifying detailed research operations. The proposed solutions are innovative, a.o. those related to the polit linguistic approach on discourse analysis.

The second chapter introduces the formal context and classifies the data. In line with the adopted methodology, the author identified three aspects (procedural, organizational, socio-political) of the participation of social actors in the re-privatization process in Warsaw against the background of legal conditions. Each of the aspects was presented taking into account the evolution of the processes involved and their impact on the real scope of participation. The adopted analytical formula was used in all empirical chapters (from the second to the seventh). This solution allowed for capturing the state of advancement of the analyzed processes in individual governance bands of the Warsaw housing policy. The case study of re-privatization in Warsaw conducted in the second chapter leads to the conclusion that it is a sphere with a low level of participation of social actors in the decision-making process.

The third chapter indicates the resources, structures, access rules, and the scale of needs related to municipal housing, and using the adopted methodology, the three aspects were analyzed – with regard to the participation of social actors in decision-making processes related to social housing. In the case study, the capital city's social construction was diagnosed as a sphere with a low level of participation of social actors in the decision-making process.

Chapter four is dedicated to homelessness. It contains a realistic diagnosis of public problems related to it and looks for opportunities and examples of slowly developing good practices. The analysis shows the scale of difficulties in breaking non-participatory patterns of action in the area of homelessness problems, which is accompanied by understandable withdrawal of the homeless themselves and the related challenges faced by authorities, social organizations or (sub) local neighborhoods.

Content of the fifth chapter is focused on the issue of activating the neighborhoods as part of the housing policy in Warsaw. The diversity of social actors operating in this arena is noteworthy. This sphere is analyzed using the conceptualization of the concept of neighborhood, which the author provided in full in Annex 4 to the book. The case study of Warsaw's neighborhoods shows that it is a sphere with a high level of participation of social actors in the local decision-making process.

The sixth chapter is devoted to another sphere with a high level of participation of social actors in the decision-making process, which turned out to be the revitalization of the capital city of Warsaw. It is an arena with significant dynamics, where participation is alive and the stakes are high (e.g. in the form of building conditions). Therefore, the actions known from more competitive models of pre-decision fields reconciliation are more clearly visible, which may be related to, inter alia, with

(informal) lobbying. On this occasion, they can reveal themselves more clearly and clash with each other socially shaped ways of understanding the framework of participation.

The case study of housing innovation contained in chapter seven argues that this is another sphere with a high level of participation of social actors in urban decision-making processes. The author introduces the concept of housing innovations and gives examples of them in the Warsaw housing policy. It highlights the opportunities in the form of relations with social actors established and developed by city authorities, but also perceives barriers, e.g. in the form of resistance from officials, interest groups or distrust of councilors.

The content of all the empirical chapters shows a general conclusion that the scope of participation of social actors in the housing policy of the capital is low (re-privatization, municipal housing) or possibly medium (homelessness) – in those areas where stakeholders are often passive. Their participation is hindered or prevented by the conditions that make up the asymmetry of their social position and (micro) systemic position in the political sense. On the other hand, the policy of activating neighborhoods, city revitalization and housing innovation was much more dynamic and complex.

The extensive, 20-page ending presents the conclusions of the conducted own research, relating them to the previous results of the housing research. The author presented diagnostic conclusions. She indicated, *inter alia*, the differences in the methods of establishing the principles of cooperation and its organization in the analyzed spheres of relations, which in practice determines the scope of democratic management of housing policy in its individual threads. The results are subject to critical discussion in relation to related publications, the content of which is the author's contribution to constructivist research on the democratization of housing policy. Among the conclusions, there are many general and specific recommendations and postulates aimed at both the present and the near and distant future.

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