E‑DEMOCRACY OR E‑DOMINATION?
CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS OF ONE E‑DEMOCRACY TOOL IN A LOCAL GOVERNANCE INSTITUTION IN LITHUANIA

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Drawing on critical considerations of the so called "electronic democracy", the paper empirically explores to what extent the internet tools provided by the local governance institutions in the course of electronic democracy are enabling the expression of the "voices of citizens" as well as participation in decision making. Content analysis of questions and answers stemming from the official webpage of one Lithuanian municipality has been conducted; altogether, the sample entails 310 questions or suggestions of citizens and answers from the municipality. The results show that participation of citizens via internet-based voice opportunities represents a trivialization of participation issues by mainly constructing the citizens as complain-holders about everyday issues. Participation by influencing political decisions could not be obtained.

Introduction

Participation of citizens in the local government institutions has long been constituent of the political agendas as well as an intensively researched topic. Especially in the East European countries where the totalitarian regime in the past constructed citizens as passive, silent and obedient, citizens' participation bear highly normative connotations, such as fastened democracy processes (Petrova 2011). Political desires have been complemented by new technological developments, with electronic democracy and electronic governance being assumed to enable citizens to participate in political decisions to a higher extent than ever possible in the past. Even if the euphoric messages regarding the digital democracy have been curtailed by critical observations (see Hindman 2008), electronic governance and electronic democracy enjoy great popularity among political actors as well as scholars.

With the present study I will further critically analyze the structures of the so called electronic democracy. In concrete terms, I focus on the local governance institutions in

Lithuania and investigate more deeply one of the tools of the e-democracy, the question-and-answer device on the webpage of local governance institutions in Lithuania. The aim of the study is to assess to hat extend to internet-based toll of questions and answers represent participative procedure, enabling citizens of municipalities not only to express their voice but also to take part in political decision making. To this aim, I qualitatively analyze the content of the questions and answers obtained from the webpage of one municipality in Lithuania. The questions guided the analysis of the qualitative data, are threefold: first, what is the structure of interaction in the question-answer mode; second, which topics and issues and in what kind are voiced by citizens via this internet tool and third, what kind of reactions from municipality can be obtained to the questions asked.

Citizens' participation in local government

In political sciences, participation has mostly been considered as a possibility of citizens to influence decisions of governments. The most visible form of participation in democratic regimes is voting and elections, this kind of participation has been considered by authors as a constituting feature of democratic societies (e.g. Diamond 2008). Other forms of civil participation gained considerable attention as well, for example participation in political parties, associations or communities – they have considered as constituents of the so called "civil society", the second key element of democracy (e.g. Beetham 1996). To sum it up, participation of citizens has been seen as a desirable aim of democratic societies and has been argued to help building local democracy (e.g. Cuthill 2003).

Callanan (2005) distinguishes three main approaches regarding the citizens' participation in policy-making: 1) liberal, which considers citizens as consumers and focuses mainly on providing information to citizens, 2) managerial,

also considering citizens as customers, with the difference that here participation consists of satisfaction surveys and complains systems, and 3) communitarian approach pointing to the user democracy and highlighting the importance of public will (Callanan 2005: 912).

Concrete instruments of participation are highly heterogeneous, but they reflect main approaches mentioned. Leach and Wingfield (1999) identify in their study three types of public participation used by local authorities: 1) traditional, such as public meetings, question and answer sessions, 2) customer oriented, such as complaints procedures or satisfaction surveys, and 3) innovative devices, such as interactive websites, focus groups or citizens' juries.

Scholars of organizational behavior researching on the topic of participation, however, in organizational contexts, point to the fact that participation is a complex phenomenon which can occur to a different extent. Black and Gregersen (1997) describe in their model six degrees of participatory involvement of employees:

– No advance information is given to the employees,
– Information given in advance to employees,
– Employees are allowed to voice their opinion,
– Employees' opinions are taken into consideration,
– Employees are allowed to veto a decision,
– Employees decide entirely alone.

Here, the first degree represents no participation whereas the last two degrees refer to true participation in the sense of influencing decision making. Although Black and Gregersen (1997) are focusing on employees, similar degrees of participation can be expected in the case of municipality and citizens. As the empirical study of this paper focuses on the extent of participation, the classification of Black and Gregersen will be useful in order to interpret empirical findings.

In the course of the new-public management ideology which highlights client-oriented

conception of citizens the managerial approach to citizens' participation become particularly popular. One example for this approach is the study of Petukiene and Damkuviene (2012). The authors consider here citizens' participation mainly as opportunities for them to influence public services provided. The aim of this kind of participation in local administration is solely a managerial one, i.e. "to develop effective services to meet client needs, and is recognized as a key driver of continuous service improvement" (Petukiene, Damkuviene 2012: 45). Similarly, Petrova (2011) argues in her study that increasing involvement of citizens (in her case non-governmental organizations) in the policy-making process increases municipal efficacy. In contrast to dominating managerial approach, the communitarian approach which stresses that participation of citizens in local government strengthens democracy and fosters public will seems to gain little attention, if any, from the scholars as well as from the political actors.

The question is now what kind of approaches to citizens' participation do new internet technologies as well as highly popular concepts of electronic governance (e-governance) and electronic democracy (e-democracy) foster. At the same time we can ask what kind of participation (or voices of citizens) are suppressed thereby. Thus, the question of power relations and domination structures between citizens and institutions of local government should be asked, however, from the perspective of internet-based technologies. Before considering the issues of e-governance, we turn to one classic work expressing considerable skepticism regarding principal democracy in organizations.

The "iron law of oligarchy"

The so called "iron law of oligarchy" has been developed by Robert Michels, a German-French-Italian social scientist. In his classic work "Political parties. A sociological study of the oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy" Michels (1962) dealt with the Social Democratic Party of Germany in the early twentieth century, where he was a member. Special focus of Michels laid on the question if truly democratic organizations are possible. With his famous statement "Who says organization, says tendency to oligarchy" Michels (1962: 25) expressed his opinion that truly democratic organizations are impossible.

As a main cause he acknowledges an inevitable division inside of each organization, even the most expressly democratic one, into two parts: small elite ("oligarchs") on the one side and the other members on the other. According to Michels, a range of processes lead to such a division. The success and the growth of organizations set in motion the forces towards oligarchy. In growing organizations participation of all members in decision-making becomes more constrained, since there is a fundamentally problematic to find enough times and place for all members to discuss relevant issues (e.g. Tolbert, Hiatt 2009). Accordingly, organizational growth requires delegating responsibility to a small group of members, who over the years become increasingly empowered to set agendas and to make decisions with little input from members. Additionally, in order to carry out delegated functions, specialized, in-depth knowledge is required. Together with the specialized knowledge, the delegates (elite) of the organizations gain additional power as well as an increased freedom to manage the organization. As a result, members cannot easily question decisions made by the elite any more. Accordingly, leaders "emancipate themselves from the mass and become independent of its control" (Michels 1962: 70). Since this knowledge accumulates with tenure, the longer the tenure of the leaders is, the more costly and difficult it becomes to replace them.

Even though the iron law of oligarchy by Michels very skeptical about democracy of organizations, he point out that, among many, creating better mechanisms for input of all members can weaken oligarchic tendencies

and strengthen democratic attempts in organizations.

Troubles with digital democracy

Internet made great hopes for more democratic participation and transparency in organizations in general and in local governance institutions in particular. At the same time, however, it has been observed that internet creates new forms of exclusion and selection or reproduces the old form of domination, known from the "real" world.

Internet-based participation opportunities and digital democracy have gained a lot of attention in the current research (e.g. Chadwick, May 2003). New concepts have been introduced and became popular, such as "digital citizenship" or "electronic democracy" (e-democracy) which refer to participatory opportunities enabled by the new-technology, such as internet, twitter or blogging. However, the opinions regarding the effects of digital democracy are highly contradictory. On the one hand new technologies have been celebrated as "empowering machines", enabling citizens with more and intense voice (see van Dijk 2010). Political actors pronounced the "renewal" of democracy via internet and other communication technologies (Chadwick, May 2003: 271). On the other hand critical observers show that digital participation is highly selective, as it is mainly used by highly educated good earners (e.g. Hindman 2008). Accordingly, internet-based voice opportunities can reproduce the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion well known from the real world.

Chadwick and May (2003) differentiate in their study three models of interaction between the state and its citizens via internet: managerial, consultative and participatory model. Authors equate a *managerial model* with a primarily concern about the efficiency of information delivery to the citizen-user-client in contrast to the bureaucracy-oriented inefficiency and

non-transparency (Chadwick, May 2003: 277). A *consultative model* focuses on the communication of citizens' opinion to government. Instead of efficiency, "better" policy and administration and strengthened democracy are the main concerns of the e-governance from standpoint of consultative model (Chadwick, May 2003: 278). A *participatory model* proceeds with the ideas of consultative model by adding to the state-citizen communication complex and multidirectional interactions between all participants (Chadwick, May 2003: 280). In an ideal case, all citizens take part in decision making, all relevant information is available to the public, all benefices and sacrifices are equally distributed among participating citizens. From point of view of participatory model, "access to the information" is not enough; permanently interactions and exchange of information in order to influence political decisions are constituent to the participation. After considering the models of e-governance in the USA, Britain and European Union, the authors conclude in their study "that the democratic potential of the Internet has been marginalized as a result of the ways in which government use such technology" (Chadwick, May 2003: 272). There still exist considerable power asymmetries and managerial model of interaction seems to dominate over the consultative and participatory. The tools of e-government mainly enhance the citizens' access to the information, but the possibilities of influencing policy-making are at bare minimum (Chadwick, May 2003: 293).

Method of the study

In order to explore the practices and structures citizens' participation the so called "electronic democracy" (further "e-democracy") in local government, I undertook an explorative qualitative empirical study. From the previous study (Rybnikova 2012) it has been known that the Lithuanian local governance institutions used on their official websites at least

three participatory devices, "participatory" in the sense that those devices enable citizens to ask their questions, make suggestions and complains or tell feedback to local government institutions. The three devices observed in the most of the websites were: 1) email via contact address given, 2) online surveys of users with pre-structured answers regarding local issues or an interactive tool enabling citizens to register problems in the city or municipality, 3) the section "questions and answers" which gives an opportunity to citizens to ask their questions and to show their voice online.

In the present study, I focused on the last device, the section "questions and answers". As there are 60 municipalities in Lithuania and 47 from them used the section "questions and answers" on their webpages, I decided to analyze this section more profoundly in the case of one municipality, that of Zarasai district (lit.: Zarasų rajono savivaldybė). The decision is based on several grounds. First, some technical facts must have been taken into account. Not on all official websites the questions of citizens and answers of the municipality are public visible; some of them were limited to the registered users only (registration required to be declared in the municipality given). Furthermore, not all webpages entailed questions and answers which are older than one year. As the official webpage of the Zarasai district enables both, to see the content of the section "questions and answers" publicly and from the four last years, this webpage has been selected for the study.

Zarasai district is located in a pictorial region in the north-eastern side of Lithuania, about 150 km from Vilnius. With its 1339 km² Zarasai district is a border area, in the north side having border with the Latvian Republic and in the east with the Republic of Belarus. The secondly ground to select this district for the analysis was the fact that the section "questions and answers" on its webpage turned out to be one of the intensively used by the citizens. Since 2009 there are 43 pages of questions and answers shown, with about 12 answered questions per page.

Having in mind that there are about 20,000 citizens in Zarasai district, it seems considerable high if we compare it for example with Alytus district which counts about 31,000 people and 48 questions asked via webpage of municipality (Rybnikova 2012: 49).

Instead of analyzing all obtained questions and answers (about 500 in sum), I limited my analysis to the last three and a half years, i.e. December 2009 and May 2013. In sum, there were 310 questions and answers to be analyzed. Choosing the time frame between the end of 2009 and 2013, I aimed to observe if there are some differences in the digital interactions between citizens and municipality in the course of these three years, as 2011 elections for local governance took place with potential effects on them. Beside this, I assumed that the remaining questions and answers wouldn't add some relevant findings, as inductive saturation of data could be assumed.

I treated the questions and answers from the webpage of municipality as written document and used the method of qualitatively content analysis. Qualitative content analysis as a method of analysis enables more detailed content investigation of relevant text excerpts (Krippendorff 2004). Since the questions and answers represent digital interaction between asking citizens and answering municipality, the content analysis of the document given can uncover topics addressed and well as structures of interaction and of power. I focused the method of content analysis especially on these three questions:

– What is the structure of interaction in the question-answer mode? Who and how provides this structure? How personal or anonymous are the participants?
– What kind of topics and issues citizens bring in here?
– What kind of answers from the side of municipality can be obtained?
– To what extent participation of citizens in decision making of local government can be obtained here?

Results of the analysis: what do voices of citizens express and how are they heard by local government?

Structure of digital interactions

Everyone who is going on to send his or her question to the municipality via the webpage section "questions and answers" will be confronted with a form which has to be filled in order to ask a question. The introductory information as well as the form itself shows that the digital interaction is highly structured – by the municipality – and is mainly serving the interest of municipality.

The form which must be used to ask questions is introduced by some notices, one of them pointing out that all fields have to be filled completely in order to be considered. All questions will be forwarded to the responsible staff member who will consider the issue and get the answer. At the same time citizens are informed that complains and applications requiring judicial explorations or official answer from municipality, can be giving only in written form. Therefore, this introduction suggests that legal status of digital questions and answers is precarious since they are only secondary and in a serious case not relevant at all.

The form given to be filled out entails three aspects: name of person asking, email address and question text (publicly visible are only names, questions, answers of municipality and data of answering). It becomes obviously that this kind of structure serves rather the interests of the municipality, not those of citizens and reproduces the usual power structures. First, whereas persons asking questions have to indicate their names, the representatives of municipality delivering the answer may remain anonymous, since the form does not require this. Indication of answering institution is voluntarily. In some cases (4 from 310) texts entails concrete information regarding the answering person or at least department, such as educational section,

in the most cases this information is missing. Thus, in the most cases neither the asker nor other readers know who deals with their issues and with whom concretely they interact; the counterpart of their questions is then the abstract and anonymous "municipality".

In contrast to this, persons having questions are forced to leave their anonymity and to suggest their "names". Moreover, the names should be real as the delegates of municipality are free to ignore the questions it they are anonymous. That means that in the case of false names or pseudonyms of askers the municipality can select the questions to be considered. However, this information wasn't given at the introductory notices and can only be read in the history of questions and answers as citizens several times complained about missing answers on the side of municipality. Therefore, citizens are forced to give up their anonymity. And they are dealing with this forced situation very differently. None of the 310 askers observed use their fully name and survey; rather they are trying to avoid this force situation by suggesting only their first names: "Vida", "Mindaugas", "Petras". The second strategy of avoidance was to indicate the residency, such as "zarasietis" (resident of Zarasai city), "Zarasų raj. gyventoja" (resident of the district Zarasai) or "užsienietis" (a foreigner). Some of the citizens ignored this force by indicating "that is of no importance". Thus, citizens also used several strategies to avoid the forced identification and to retain their anonymity. Even then, the internet form used shows clear asymmetry of primarily requirements regarding asking citizens and answering municipality.

Second observation refers to the data specified after the answers from municipality. As public visible are only data of the answers, it remains open how long citizens wait for an answer to their question. According to the information given by the municipality in some of the answers, 20 working days is the maximum for giving an answer. How often the answers fall below this dead line, remains open. This small detail indicates once more the asymmetry

between the askers and answer-givers on the webpage of the municipality and the power structures of the so called e-democracy which highly remain the "usual", real power structures between the local governance and citizens.

Issues of citizens and kind of their presentation

The issues addressed in 310 questions have been content analyzed and classified into ten topics. The topics and well as their frequency can be seen in the next table. It has to be pointed out that the categories shown in Table 1 as well as those discussed later are not mutually exclusive; the same questions and the same answer can include several of the categories.

It is no surprise that the most of the issues addressed in the questions stem from the everyday life and everyday troubles of citizens, where citizens hope some help or assistance from the municipality, may it be that they assume municipality holds responsibility for these issues, may it be they consider municipality as holder of relevant information.

Most frequent topic which was addressed in the questions of citizens stems from the housing and accommodation. Especially the questions regarding the prices of heating and electricity

were addressed to the municipality. The heating price is one of the sensitive topics in Lithuania in general, since residents are paying for heating only in winter months and the complete price often appears extremely high in comparison to the other months. Additionally, there is barely competition market regarding heating services as there is in the most cases only one firm, in a region, more or less depending from municipality, delivering this service and appointing the prices. Similarly, as firms delivering electricity and water are in the most cases owned by municipality or at least assigned be it, citizens are turning to the municipality as controlling instance in case of bad service, like bad smelling or brown looking water or missing information regarding new electricity prices.

The issues of social benefits, transport questions and educational fields are genuine topics of municipality as it is responsible for them. Dominating here are notes about precarious situation of the streets in the city, such as holes in the street, several months lasting lakes on the streets or lighting which is turned off until 10 pm.

Also frequent are "other issues", mainly encompassing juridical questions, such as the rights of citizens when dog owners do not behave according their obligations or questions regarding requiring documents for children in case of border crossing.

Table 1. Main topics of the "questions and answers" section

Issues considered	Frequency in %
Issues of housing and accommodation (electricity, heating, water)	24
Other issues (statistics, dogs in the city, crossing borders)	15
Social benefits (questions of admission, forms of benefits)	14
Transport issues (road works, street lighting)	14
Municipality (answering questions of citizens, information about local governance delegates)	10
Educational issues (schools, kindergartens, their equipment)	8
Leisure (parks, festivals)	7
Pollution (polluting companies)	6
Health care issues (hospitals, ambulance, work of doctors)	4
Labour law (employee rights in case of bankruptcy; unemployment benefit)	3

The activity of municipality is rather seldom an issue (10 per cent of the questions analyzed). Here, citizens are asking about the functioning of the section "questions and answers" and why they do not get quick answers, or they are expressing their desire to get more information about delegates and employees of the municipality or about some concrete decisions. In my view, this topic especially stands for the participation of citizens in political decision-making, may it be in form of requiring for additional information or making suggestions regarding increasing transparency of municipal activity. Before considering how municipality deals with this kind of questions and suggestions, I shortly discuss in what kind citizens are asking their questions, as the intention of question can directly shape reactions to them.

In sum, three main kinds of questions can be obtained. First, questions seeking for information, second, suggestions as well as requests addressed to the municipality and third, complaints. One may assume that the webpage section "questions and answer" especially attracts complains. The content analysis of the questions challenges this assumption, since 94 per cent of all messages were questions and information seeking. Despite of this, about 18 per cent of the questions can be identified as complains, mainly encompassing direct or indirect criticism, expressed sometimes also by several exclamation or interrogation marks. The last frequent category was suggestions and request from citizens (6 per cent). However, we have to bear in mind that those publicly visible questions and answers are the result of selections made by municipality. Even though or just because of this, this result shows that in the fewest cases the interaction between citizens and municipality has been socially constructed (by both partners) as a discussion between equal partners participating in each other decisions. Instead of this, the opinion dominates that municipality is a service (information) deliverer to citizens, which deserves complaints, criticisms or even affront in case of bad services.

Reactions of municipality

Having discussed contents of the questions asked by citizens, I now turn to the answers given by municipality. Content analysis of all answers yielded five categories of how municipality delegates deal with questions from citizens. The following Table 2 summarizes the categories of the reactions as well as their frequency in 310 cases.

The dominating reaction (84 per cent) is delivering of information. In the most cases it is extensive referencing to the legal laws or decisions of local municipality regarding the issues addressed, with a more or less reference to the concrete case. In many cases the askers get also link to the further information as well as contact person directly responsible for the issue. This kind of reaction often corresponds with the promise to deal with the issue in the near future (13 per cent), may it be to repair the damaged street or to start the project of reparation as soon as founding will be guaranteed. One interesting example regards a suggestion of citizen to make the curriculum vitas of

Table 2. Kind of reactions from the municipality

Kind of reaction from the municipality	Frequency in %
Giving information, link to further information or contact person	84
Marginalizing the question, moralizing and instructing	16
Promising to deal with the issue	13
Acknowledgement	3
Excuse, empathy	1

municipality delegates and employees publicly visible in order to inform the citizens of districts about who are ruling them. This suggestion has been declined with reference to the private rights of the persons concerned as well as the indication that there is no law requiring for this; according to the low, only the curriculum vitae of mayor has to be published. Accordingly, the answer suggests that the desires of citizens are not to be taken into account as long as there is not law requiring for this.

In 16 per cent of cases a defensive reaction could observed: denial of the relevance, moralizing or instructing of citizens. For example, one question regarding employment situation was answered by saying that the description given misses relevant details and is abstract, thus, no concrete judgment can be made; citizen have to deliver further information and documents. Or one question regarding extremely differences in heating different house with the same prices was answered in a pedagogical manner by explaining that the internal temperature of the apartments can be different depending on the situation of the building (renovated or not), newness of the windows, number of the heater or just weather. An interesting addition gave municipality in the case in one similar question: residents of the buildings which were renovated on their own costs have to pay considerable lower prices than residents in buildings which were not renovated. Accordingly, citizens have to stop to complain and to start to behave as entrepreneurs of their own lives, i.e. to mobilize their neighbors in order to renovate the whole building.

Whereas information giving as a reaction draws on the "managerial model" of participation according to Chadwick an May (2003), as it constructs municipality solely as service delivering institution, the moralizing and instructing of citizens is rather an indication of domination over citizens which are implicitly considered as pupils to be learned "new", i.e. entrepreneurial and personal responsible behaviors by municipality.

The third and the rarest mode or reactions from municipality are acknowledgments of the issues given by citizens (3 per cent) or excuses for being late with the answer or for do not having considered the issue earlier (1 per cent). Drawing on Chadwick and May (2003) these reactions can be seen as indications of consultative or participatory model, since they suggest more or lesser equal partnership aiming not so much at better management of municipality, but better wellbeing of all residents of the district.

Of interest is also the frequency of the answers given by the municipality in the time observed frame from December 2009 up to May 2013. As Figure 1 shows, the activity of
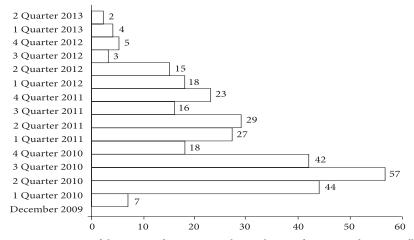

Fig. 1. Frequency of the answers from municipality in the time from December 2009 till May 2013

municipality in reacting to the digital questions gradually decreases. The peak of the answers was obtained in the second quarter in 2010 with 57 answers, since third quarter of 2012 there are only between five and three answers in three months being published via webpage. Even though the reasons for this could be very different and complex, beginning with fewer questions from citizens ending with fewer resources to deal with these questions at the municipality, this can be in fact an indication for decreasing importance of questions and answers via webpage in terms of information toll as well as participatory device.

Digital participation of citizens in political decision making? Conclusions and discussions

Despite several limitations of the present study, such as the focus on the webpage section "questions and answers" only and a limited consideration of the institutional context of the section, the results gained suggests that the skepticism regarding digital democracy via internet is more than justified, especially in the case of the local governance institutions. After analyzing the contents of "questions and answers" from the webpage of one Lithuanian district many issues become evident.

First, the structure of the digital tool "questions and answers" reproduces power structures between the municipality and its citizens as they are known in the "real" world, with citizens required to identify themselves, not so municipality delegates answering the questions or with municipality delegates being able not to react to the question if the person remains anonymous. Thus, in the digital sphere the political business "as usual" continues without many possibilities for citizens to challenge the rules of interaction.

Second, topics brought in by citizens via questions stems from everyday troubles and reflect trivial issues; only in seldom cases citizens refer to political issues, such as transparency of municipality personnel or decisions made. Even then delegates of municipality are able to "get rid" of the suggestions made by the reference to the law or local rules. The managerial model according to Chadwick and May (2003) dominates here with the main focus laying on the information seeking and information giving as the interaction mode between citizens and municipality. This interaction mode represents and reproduces the economically narrowed conception of citizens as clients and municipality of service delivering institution. Instead of a multi-vocal voice of citizens we hear rather yelping of helpless persons reduced to the few options between satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

The "questions and answers" on the webpages of municipalities can barely be considered as participatory tools or devices of e-democracy, as long as they reproduce main power asymmetries between citizens and municipality. Thus, they cannot fulfill promises made on e-democracy advocates. Instead of individual oriented questions and answers, collective-oriented participation options should be also taken into account, may it be digital or real. Petrova (2011) mentions in her study many collective-oriented participation devices, such as public forums or discussions, advisory council meetings, consultations with stakeholder focus groups or polls. If and when these tools are truly participatory and enables expression of citizens' voice instead of its domination through familiar power mechanisms, remains to be evaluated in a concrete institutional context.

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ELEKTRONINIS VALDYMAS AR ELEKTRONINIS DOMINAVIMAS? KRITIŠKA ELEKTRONINIO VALDYMO PRIEMONĖS VIENOJE LIETUVOS SAVIVALDYBĖJE ANALIZĖ

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Remiantis kritine prieiga prie vadinamojo elektroninio valdymo, empiriškai analizuojama, kiek savivaldybėse įdiegtos internetinio dalyvavimo priemonės padeda piliečiams reikšti savo nuomonę ir dalyvauti priimant politinius sprendimus. Analizei buvo pasirinkta „klausiate – atsakome" rubrika vienos Lietuvos savivaldybės internetiniame puslapyje. Atlikta piliečių klausimų ir savivaldybės atstovų atsakymų analizė, empiriniai duomenys apėmė iš viso 310 interakcijų (klausimo ir atsakymo porų). Analizės rezultatai rodo, kad piliečių dalyvavimas elektroninio valdymo procese labai susijęs su dalyvavimo trivializavimu, nes piliečiai čia redukuojami į skundų dėl kasdieninių reikalų teikėjus. Piliečių dalyvavimo priimant politinius sprendimus analizuota elektroninė priemonė neįgalina.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: elektroninė demokratija, piliečių dalyvavimas, galios struktūros elektroninėje sferoje, turinio analizė.