Local Democracy and Instruments of its Functionality in Local Self-government in Lithuania: Case Study of Alytus and Sirvintos Municipalities.

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Abstract

Developments in the modern world are posing a great number of fundamental challenges to the democratic thought. The coalescence of the market and democracy on a national state level has stirred up tensions with regard to modern democracy concepts and models. The impact that globalisation will have on further democratic development leaves a number of open questions. Some argue that the solution lies in further democratic globalisation, while others are inclined towards options of national state democracy consolidation. This is especially important to Lithuania, a country that successfully freed itself from the oppression of the Soviet empire two decades ago and is now engaged in voluntarily integration into Western Europe.

The article points out that finding ways to strengthen public involvement in democratic processes on a local self-government level is one of the key issues to be solved in the controversial process of the democratic development. Compared to the active role that the citizens of Lithuania adopted in the first post-independence years by participating in the public life (referendums, meetings, signature collection campaigns, participation in central and local government elections, etc.), the tendencies observed in the recent years are quite different. Activity levels are decreasing across all the possible forms of civic participation, and, as civic participation in one of the main manifestations of democracy, i.e. elections, weakens, the government legitimisation and the democracy and civil sentiment of the society itself are at stake. It is therefore important to discuss how the employment of other forms of civic participation at local self-government institutions could and must offset the state's democratic deficit. The data of research on local democracy conducted in Lithuania analysed in the article in order to define local democracy instruments reveal some of the tendencies of the local democracy that can be discerned at Lithuanian municipalities.

Keywords: democracy, local democracy, instruments of local democracy, municipality

Introduction

Democracy is one of the fundamental concepts with its millennium-long history of theory and application. Looking back on the vision and implementation of democracy in the ancient times, the changes that took place as years went by are evident – democracy has transformed, served the purpose in some cases but failed in other. Human beings, with their thoughts, feelings and actions creating or destroying

democracy, have always played the main role in these processes. In the light of all the apologetics and criticism one might ask what else is there to talk about. To quote Zygmunt Bauman, "we are writing on the subject because we are not afraid to be tied down, to commit, to get attached". These are the key components in the values of life, and in the author's opinion, discussion of value aspects in today's Lithuania, is vital. The **problem** lies in the perception of democracy. Perception will improve only if we see democracy functioning in a specific field of public life and activity, in this case – at municipalities. The **goal** of the article is to evaluate how certain instruments are functioning at Lithuanian municipalities, based on the latest tendencies in democratic manifestations. Local democracy instruments at Lithuanian municipalities constitute the **object**, while **methods** are based on the analysis of scientific resources and an empirical-expert research, case study and survey of secondary sources. The **article** is of special **interest** to scientists as it presents the opportunity to question the insights, and to practitioners, first and foremost municipality politicians, administration staff and active citizens, who will be able to develop local democracy in a more systematic way due to the theoretical insights and empirical research data provided.

The theoretical part of the article is exclusively based on the insights of Western European scientist C. Crouch[1]. Crouch[2] enters in to polemics with such gurus of the democracy problems as R. Dal, R. Putnam, G.A. Almond, P. Schmitter et al. In the analysis of an extremely important aspect of democracy – press and its freedom we invoked A. Mickūnas (2007)[3]and S. Spurga (2012)[4].

All the more so because the latter scientist refers to and disputes with such democracy subject *gurus* as Dal, R., Putnam, R., Almond, G.A., Schmitter, P., etc. The reasons behind choosing the book by Crouch are two-fold. First of all, in the introductory chapter of the Russian edition of his book *Post-Democracy*, published in 2010, the author asks former totalitarian countries the principle question: could a state make the transition to the post-democratic status without passing the democratic phase? This question is important to the Lithuanian society and especially to its political elite, which often irresponsibly refers to the processes taking place in the country as being identical to those occurring in the old democracies. However, it might be an appealing but otherwise unsupported intention to be in the "club of the best"? The second reason that determined the choice of this author was that his dedication to the subject of civil society and democracy manifests both in his theoretical insights and personal experience; as the author himself admits: "my wife has been a top-ranking official in the education system in one of the counties and I have personally witnessed the pressure that the central government exerted on her and her colleagues across the country, demanding that part of the education system functions be passed on to private businesses, which would essentially change the concept of the general education system" (2010, p.13). Authors of the article also had an immediate opportunity to observe how rapidly and easily people give up on more democratic behaviour norms as conditions change (e.g. change of leaders) or the large number of people speaking about democracy but so few of them actually trying to understand its essence and even fewer attempting to act democratically. As mentioned before, analysis of the issue requires absolute resolution to be tied down, to commit, and to get attached, which is an underlying perception not only to the authors of the article but also to all the citizens who are not indifferent to the implementation of the idea of democracy. Analysis of democratic processes involves not only the application of scientifically-defined formal methods of research but also our individual methods, i.e. personal perception and relating to the real processes that drive or weaken democracy, the processes taking place in our close environment. To make sure this corresponds to

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[1] Sociologists, professor at the University of York (Great Britain), whose widely-known book *Post-Democracy* (2004) analyses systemic crisis of democracy.

[3] Philosopher, professor at the University of Ohajo (USA) – most famous Lithuanian emigration scientist, analyzes of democratic processes in democratic and *post-democratic* countries.
[4]Doctor of Social Sciences at the University of Mykolas Romeris (Lithuania) political reviewer and writer.

the formalities required for the method, a goal must be raised, evaluated, analysed, described or discussed. According to Crouch, democracy flourishes when ordinary people are granted the possibility to actively participate in discussions, seeking organisational autonomy by forming agenda of the public life. The engagement of such possibilities is vital. Of course, it cannot be expected that the most active involvement in the abovementioned processes would be observed among the majority of people since it is the ideal model, however, just like any other unattainable goal, it serves as a useful benchmark for determining how close our behaviour is to the ideal (2010, p. 17–18).

As has already been mentioned talking on democracy Crouch[5] claims media playing an outstanding role. He indicated two issues of concern about media, i.e. lack of increase of political competence and lack of forms of information transfer. In terms of increase of people's political competence instead of conducting political discussions that increase competence of citizens, press, radio and television turns more and more commercial, i.e. even political news are to be transmitted in a quick and attractive manner. In this way people fed by scandals and sensations increasingly fail to understand happenings in politics and state governance. Mickūnas[6] reiterates by saying that in political societies media is not free to print or display anything merely because it has to report on important events as uninformed citizens are hardly aware of public affairs and can hardly formulate rational decisions. Ownership of media resting upon a small group of stakeholders is a second issue of concern, (Mickūnas[7] claims that the greatest part of media is managed by powerful companies, therefore alternative media that should be given an equal voice to present different views is of great importance) as even development of novel technologies did not increase forms of information transfer. Spurga [8] raises the third issue of concern – importance of media freedom in general, and proves it by media freedom indices measured by Freedom House. Thus, three important conditions for the development of democracy in association with media are raise by the said authors and   addressed at the national and international levels, while for us addressing this problem it is relevant how media help to raise people's political competence at the local level, how different forms of media are used and how free it is at different locations. We will try answer these questions analysing completed empiric research.

The concept of democracy and local democracy.

Investigating the subject of democracy, the researcher, and not necessarily a scientist as mentioned above, should start with the establishment of definitions. Scientists single out two directions in the definition of concepts of democracy, namely the procedural democracy theory and the rich democracy theory. The procedural democracy theory underlines the decision-making process based on the participation of all citizens, political equality, majority government, and government's response. In other words, the four pillars of procedural democracy are as follows: universal participation, political equality, majority principle, and government's response to public (social) opinion. The real procedural democracy is marked by strict adherence to the first three principles and flexible perspective on the implementation of the fourth principle. It is the prerequisite of this principle that when drafting and adopting decisions the government was aware of and acted in line with the expectations of the public majority. However, the government is reluctant to implement the responsiveness principle, generally trying to demagogically understate or distort its significance, for instance, by asking rhetorically what should be done about the rights of those citizens not falling under the majority category, or rightly claiming that public opinion is often unclear and controversial. For this reason the government tends to stress its political will. This defies the idea that in one way or

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[5] Ibid, p. 70

[6] Mickūnas A. Demokratija šiandien. Vilnius:Versus Aureus, 2007, psl. 79.

[7] Ibid p.80

[8] Spurga S. Demokratija ir pilietinė visuomenė nacionalinėse valstybėse ir Europos sąjungoje. Vilnius: Mykolo Romerio universitetas, 2012.

another, government institutions' behaviour, underpinned by the media, shapes the public opinion and manipulates it. According to Crouch, this is also the case in post-democracy since "despite the process of elections, the pre-election debates are merely a staged play controlled by rival professional teams that employ persuasion techniques to discuss a limited number of questions selected by the teams themselves. A host of people plays a passive, silent, or even apathetic role by responding only to the signals sent" (2010, p. 19). When speaking about the constantly arising question of whether people are ready to participate in political discussions at all, Crouch notes that people need to be trained and that currently the media plays a major role in this process, however, the training by the media resembles weak schooling providing students only superficial knowledge. Thus, the press does not train politically-educated citizens, does not try to raise interest in politics, therefore people understand that they are not knowledgeable in politics and the media-selected information that reaches them – political scandals, sensations – only brings more confusion (2010, p. 68).

Recently, democratic countries have increasingly tried engaging NGOs and other civil organisations in the process of adopting decisions in lawmaking, thus trying to bolster their activity and share political responsibility. The goal is to make use of democratic-legal procedures and turn NGO representatives into a non-governmental economic-social council advising the country's parliament on the adoption of legal acts. What about Lithuania? According to Smalskis[9], distinctive Lithuanian history processes were a basis for an ambiguous perception of the definition of civil organisation (local community). When interpreted in the Western sense, the definition refers to free owners (citizens) rallying into various social groups (communities) to help each other and contribute to developing the relationship between citizens and public government in order to make the participation in government-formulated and adopted decision-making process easier. On the other hand, the definition of a community may be perceived from the Eastern perspective. A community (Rus. *община*) means people, commonly peasant people performing fieldwork together (collectively), herding the animals on the land given by the landlord or granted by the courtesy of the state. They are not free citizens but rather they depend on the favour of the landlord or the state. When comparing the civil government tradition, urban development characteristics of the development of Western civil and democratic government, and the first steps of Lithuanian civil participation, many questions surface. The main question is whether there are social conditions for the democratic civil participation to flourish in Lithuania? Urban culture has not formed in our country, and it is namely the urban tradition that provides the soil for civil participation and civil democratic life to grow (2011, p. 79).

As mentioned before, universal participation is vital to procedural democracy. Its manifestation is most possible and visible in local government. It makes community members engaged in self-regulation and the government is based on the use of democracy instruments. One of such instruments is the election of *representatives* to the government and implementation of decisions adopted by them. This is one of the formal forms of local government, i.e. local municipality with a functioning local democracy, which goes beyond the election of government.

In Western democratic countries, the participation of citizens in local democratic processes is made possible through systematic studies that reveal certain trends. One of such markers is the identification of society's civil power. In Lithuania, such studies were first performed in 2007. According to the civil society institute *Civitas*[10] (4), the society's civil power is the citizens' ability to act together for the sake of common benefit. Civil power manifests itself not only when people rally to protect the state from external enemies or the threat of authoritarianism, but also when residents of a multi-apartment building gather to clean up the

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[9] Doctor of social sciences, head of the Public Administration Department at Politics and Management Faculty of Mykolas Romeris University.
[10] Civitas is an independent civil organisation in Lithuania that debates issues dealing with civil society and democracy formation.

courtyard, clean the lake in the neighbourhood or take care of lonely seniors of the town. Civil power may be also represented by collective demands for the government and activity inside the community. The definition, therefore, includes the ability to impact political government and control it as well as the ability to independently solve common political, economic, and local problems without governmental interference. Research data show that Lithuanian residents would be mostly motivated to act on problems concerning local life that have direct impact on them or people in their close environment.

However, the number of population arranging solution of local problem or being involved in it is increasing very little, or actually only fluctuates (see Table No 1), as in 2007 only 27% of those participating in survey would have arranged the solving of a local problem and 47% would have agreed to join the process, while 23% would have arranged and 48% would have agreed to join the process of solving the problem in 2012.

Table 1
Local problem solving process

Year (Results presented in percent)..	Would arrange solving local problem solving process	Would join the problem solving process
2007	27	47
2008	27	48
2009	29	47
2010	19	55
2012	23	48

Analysis of the forms of activity in 2009 showed greater engagement in environment cleaning campaigns and, especially, participation in local community activity (see Table No. 1).

Table 2
Lithuanian civil activity forms and statistics

Form of activity (Results presented in percent)..	**2007 m.**	**2008 m.**	**2009 m.**	**2010 m.**	**2012 m.**
Participation in environment cleaning campaign	31	29	46	50	54
Money, donating to charity, other support to persons or social organisations	45	50	45	56	48
Participation in local community activity	17	18	33	34	37
Making contact with state regulatory institutions (police, tax inspectorate, child rights ombudsman, etc.) to report an instance of law violation	11	16	10	12	17
Participation in activities of public organizations, movements	9	8	10	11	12
PS. Less than 10% of residents are engaged in other civil activities. Results presented in percent.					

As far as local problems or local initiatives are concerned, they are closely interrelated with sociality and the prerequisite for its existence is a functional local community which forms the foundation of the civil society and is the condition for the motivation to implement the principle of democracy. Discussing the democratic ideal, Crouch claims that "the longing for a democracy where a number of different groups and organisations of ordinary people tried participating in drafting a political programme that would provide answers to questions important to them amid influential groups dominating non-democratic societies in which political systems were not yet knowledgeable in manipulating their demands. Popular movements and parties could be led by people whose personal leadership style was far from the democratic ideal but they were actively pressed by mass-movements in which ordinary people were engaged. <...> It was not long before the elite learned to govern and manipulate, and people got disappointed, tired, or engaged in their personal life <…>, also corruption rooted in, showing that democracy is ill and that the political class has become cynical, immoral, and detached from people" (2010, p.22–25). Are the provided descriptions not reminiscent of the longing for democracy that was in Lithuania and that materialised in certain forms two decades ago? Are we currently not in the situation where the elite knows how to manipulate us and we are tired, therefore the Lithuanian society is ill with corruption? Crouch responds that today American citizens are less dependent on the state because they can rely on their own resources more (this is what Americans learned by working hard for the sake of local democracy – S.N.) as compared to people in the early twentieth century, and they must be better prepared to seek their goals based on free economy, thus they are less concerned about political issues (2010, p.35). Do Lithuanian citizens believe they have earned to have some rest during the past two decades? The opinion of journalist Tomas Viluckas, more or less reflects the problem of democracy in modern-day Lithuania. According to him, "our political elite unanimously agree that citizens must be precluded as much as possible from decision-making processes. Politicians take the citizens' opinion into account only during elections consciously ignoring the fact that elections are only one of several forms in which democracy manifests itself and that it is represented by other, no less significant, elements. In addition, Article 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania stipulates that the "most significant issues concerning the life of the State and the Nation shall be decided by referendum", however, the provision is not being implemented[11]. If politicians trusted the citizens, they would not seek truth on state matters in the constitutional court club (in Lithuania, politicians tend to file appeals with the courts extremely often S.N.) but rather ask citizens' opinion through referendums and plebiscites" (2012, p. 8). Scientist Vytautas Šlapkauskas confirms this by stating that "one of the most challenging issues in the development of the democratic Lithuania is its indolent self-development as a Western civil society. We must admit that the adoption of the Western civil society characteristics in Lithuania is rather cumbersome. This can be definitely attributed to Lithuanian elite groups being merged with the government, the promotion of political, business, and media elite groups' selfish interests, and legal nihilism. Analysis of the state of Lithuanian civil society's functions and development reveals that less than 20% of Lithuanian society members are socially active and engaged in the activity of non-governmental organisations. The ability of a civil society for self-organisation is underdeveloped and has little impact on the increase of citizens' employment" (2011, p.68–69).

Regardless of such historic and modern conditions that befall Lithuania, for the sake of the country's democracy we must look for opportunities and ways to bring change. For this purpose we have carried out a research at Lithuanian municipalities and will be analysing its results in greater detail in the next section.

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[11] From 1991, Lithuania held 10 referendums in which citizens approved of proposed provisions 4 times. Initiative groups made 15 unsuccessful attempts to collect the 300 000 signatures required by the Constitution. The amount of signatures is extremely difficult to collect in a 3 million population.

Local democracy trends across Lithuanian municipalities.

Democracy is a process and in order to determine the way this process is being implemented, it must be constantly observed. The research *Vietos Demokratija 2009* was aimed to observe and record how residents across Lithuanian municipalities (politicians, administrative staff, and active citizens) record, see, and estimate the democratic processes taking place at the municipality in question.

The specific feature of the research lies in the following:

1. It is the only research of such scale to be performed at Lithuanian municipalities.
2. Methodology is based on the methods applied in *Vietos Demokratija 2003* (Local Democracy 2003) research, developed in co-operation with Finnish scientists. According to them, such methods are applied in the analysis of local democracy in Finland.
3. The research is longitudinal as other studies were conducted in 2003 and in 2005.
4. The research is performed in co-operation with the scientists of two Lithuanian universities, namely the Kaunas University of Technology and Mykolas Romeris University.

The research was comprised of questionnaires intended for experts and was conducted in all of the Lithuanian municipalities (60). Experts were selected as follows: 4–5 politicians (preferably including the mayor or the vice-mayor and the remaining respondents randomly selected by the researcher from different political groups); 5–7 municipality administration staff members (preferably including the head or one deputy head of administration and the remaining respondents randomly selected by the researcher from different departments); 7–9 NGO, Community Centres' leaders, elders (if any) whose organisations are in different locations of the municipality (e.g., in different wards, if it is a city, in different locations, if it is a region: city centre, towns, villages. In the case of NGO, they must be from different organisations).

In 2012 case study method was used at municipality of Širvintos region[12] in the central part of Lithuania not far from Vilnius, having 17 thousand inhabitants, and in 2013 the same method was used at municipality of Alytus region[13] located in South of Lithuania not far from the regional centre – Alytus having 27 thousand inhabitants.

The research was aimed at finding out expert opinion on the following issues.

1. Does the municipality support initiatives of civil community development (see Table No.3)? Results show the level and forms of support as well as the number of municipalities in which they are observed and how evident they are to experts across three groups.

Table 3. Forms of municipality support for civil initiatives

	Instance of support	Politicians	Administrative staff	Active citizens
a)	Provide financial support	31	23	20
b)	Organise training on bolstering civil activity	22	16	11
c)	Offer premises in municipality's building free of charge / or for a symbolic fee	32	29	23

[12] Kavaliauskaitė J. 2012. Demokratija ir vietos savivalda: Širvintų savivaldybės atvejis. Magistro darbas. Vilnius: Mykolo Romerio universitetas.

[13] Višelga.Š. 2013. Šiuolaikinė pilietinė visuomenė ir vietos demokratijos instrumentai: Alytaus rajono savivaldybės atvejis. Bakalauro darbas. Vilnius: Mykolo Romerio universitetas.

d)	Offer premises equipped with necessary equipment	26	21	13
e)	Support initiatives with verbal incentive / awards	33	27	24

2. Another issue raised was related to **the way the municipality promoted citizens' active participation in local social life**. In politicians' opinion the council performs very well only in three (3) municipalities; politicians of only one (1) municipality consider administration to work very well; and politicians of four (4) municipalities believe community councils work very well. In the opinion of administrative staff, councils encourage civil participation very well in one (1) municipality, while administrations themselves perform well in only two (2) municipalities. Community council activity was very positively evaluated only by administrative staff of one (1) municipality. Active citizens estimate that only one (1) municipal administration promotes civil participation very well.

3. While analysing politicians' general perception of citizens' / residents' knowledge of **decisions adopted in the municipality,** most positive opinions were expressed in ten (10) municipalities, while **citizens' direct participation** is best evaluated by politicians of two (2) municipalities. Answers from administrative staff suggest that activity of seven (7) municipalities is considered flawless. It must be noted that administrative staff of only one (1) municipality believe **citizens' direct participation** at their municipality is good or very good. Active citizens think that residents in four (4) municipalities are well acquainted with decisions adopted at municipalities, and citizens' direct participation in the local public life is evaluated as highest by active citizens in one (1) municipality.

4. In order to attain certain results, a management process entails knowledge of a specific strategy. Therefore, when analysing municipal development we have looked into the **steps that are considered important and very important to municipal development** (replies merged) by the experts (see Table No. 4).

Table 4. **Most important steps in the development of local self-governance**

		Politicians	Administrative staff	Active citizens
	Steps in the development of self-governance	**Priority level / number of municipalities considering it important and very important**	**Priority level / number of municipalities considering it important and very important**	**Priority level / number of municipalities considering it important and very important**
a)	Strategy / rules on promoting citizens' participation in local democracy	4/14 municipalities	7/8 municipalities	5/10 municipalities
b)	Strategy / rules on providing info to residents	3/18 municipalities	4/19 municipalities	4/12 municipalities
c)	Responsible administration staff members assigned to promote citizens' participation	4/14 municipalities	6/10 municipalities	6/9 municipalities
d)	Council members receive training on citizens' participation	7/4 municipalities	9/4 municipalities	8/1 municipalities
e)	Systematic (at least semi-annual) meetings with society	2/28 municipalities	3/21 municipalities	3/18 municipalities
f)	Constant media briefing on	1/33 municipalities	1/32 municipalities	1/28 municipalities

	local developments			
g)	Improvement of internet services at municipalities	1/33 municipalities	2/31 municipalities	2/23 municipalities
i)	Consumer representatives appointed to municipality service provision company management	5/10 municipalities	10/2 municipalities	7/8 municipalities
h)	Citizens explained alternatives to services provided	4/14 municipalities	5/13 municipalities	7/8 municipalities
k)	Political debates on expanding possibilities for passive resident groups' direct participation	6/8 municipalities	8/5 municipalities	8/1 municipalities

Of indicated 10 steps two steps related to a factor important to democracy, free press, should be distinguish. Here we talk about strategy or rules of information supply to the public set by municipalities and the fact that information about local events related to local government has to be constantly provided to media. Politicians, administration and active citizens consider information supply to media the main priority (see 1 in Table No 4), while presence of strategy and rules of information supply politicians consider to be priority 3 whereas administration and active citizens – priority 4 (see Table No 4). The above confirms the importance of this factor in the process of case studies of the Širvintos and Alytus regional municipalities.

Analysing the Širvintos region case, developing the strategy and rules of the information supply to inhabitants was found to be "important". 38% of respondents-active citizens agree with that and consider it to be "very important", 12% of respondents-active citizens and 28% of administrative staff think it is "important". The rest 38% of active citizens, 14% of administrative staff and 50% of politicians consider that to be "useful". (see Fig.1).
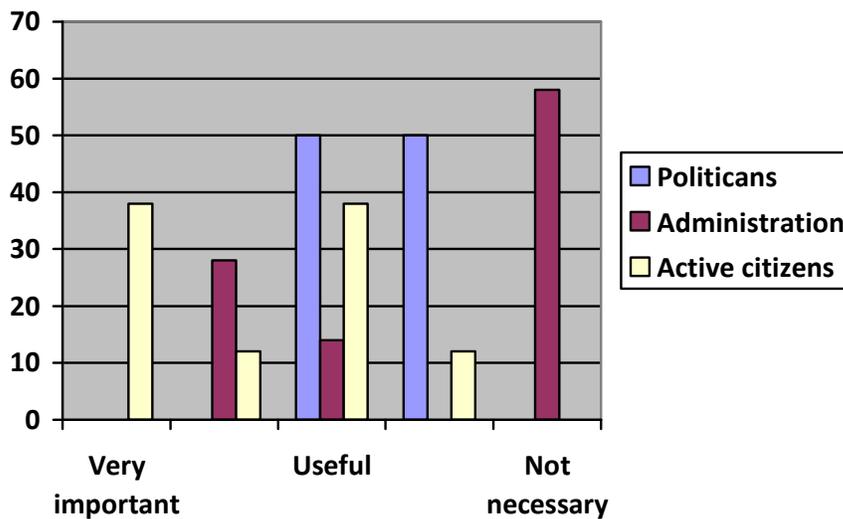

Fig.1. Assessment of strategy of information supply to citizens.

Summarizing it becomes clear, that the situation resembles the one with the strategy/rules of inhabitants participation motivation, the greatest part of administrative staff consider the strategy of information supply to citizens not to be mandatory, the opinion of active citizens is split to "very important" and "useful" while politicians think it to be "useful" and "probably useful" respectfully. Judging from the whole it could be stated that the great majority of respondents find this strategy useful.

The study also aimed to find out the assessment of information supply to media about local events. 37% of all respondents found it "very important" and "useful", 21% found it "important" and 5% - "probably important" Analysis of the Alytus region case revealed that the strategy or rules how to supply information to citizens do not exist, and all, politicians, administrative staff and active citizens find that it is necessary to provide systematic information on events in the municipality. Comparing the case studies with the investigations at the level of the republic no statistical or qualitative differences were found which shows that similar tendencies prevail during investigations at municipalities of similar type. Unfortunately, in reality other cases also exist. As mentioned earlier in analysis of works by theoreticians, the way media improves the political competence at local level, usage of different forms and the level of freedom of local media is important. Investigations show[14] that 90% of meetings of municipal councils of Lithuania are transmitted by internet. All municipalities with no exceptions prepare reports on Council meetings, analysed issues and resolutions and decisions taken. However as much as 50% of municipalities report that they have had or are having certain problems or conflict situations with local media. Almost one-third of municipalities that participated in the survey have one or the other rules of information supply to media but they might not always be in compliance with the legal acts. On their basis not easier but on the contrary more difficult conditions are set for journalists to get and transmit information; or municipality undertakes to publish a newspaper financed from budgetary means by itself, though it is against the law. This is already associated with freedom of media and this actually shows a relatively low level of local democracy.

5. When asked **who should regulate the rights and duties that define local community's internal life,** majority of politicians and active citizens made reference to the local self-government legislation and a decision by the collegial institution of the local community, while administrative staff members are convinced such regulation should be a decision made exclusively by the collegial institution of the local community.

6. When asked to indicate **major factors that influence local communities' development,** the absolute majority across all local self-government expert groups named the following factors of influence: the importance of leaders who attract interested groups of people; government institutions that allow local communities to act; government institutions that promote local communities to act; local traditions; people's internal motivation to handle issues in their own area of residence; the scale of social-economic problems, the possibility to get financial fund assistance; the possibility to get financial support from local government.

7. As for **more passive groups in self-government**, all the expert groups provided unequivocal replies, i.e. they refuted the assumption that women are more passive. Experts unanimously agree that teenagers, children, welfare recipient individuals, and rural area residents are more passive. However, experts discard the opinion that all people are passive.

Conclusions:

1. In Lithuania, which liberated itself from totalitarianism only two decades ago, political elite tends to identify itself with democratic processes taking place in the old democracy countries, thus, instead of an instrumental approach involving discussion of key actions aimed at promoting democracy, only talk

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[14] Lietuvos savivaldybių asociasija. 2014 Lietuvos savivaldybių asociacijos ir Žurnalistų sąjungos atstovų susitikimas. Prieiga per internetą: http://www.lsa.lt.

(declaration) of democracy prevails. Therefore, the gap between democracy perception among ordinary residents and political elite is widening.

2. The research showed that a large part of Lithuanian local self-government leaders are reluctant to verify the functionality of democracy instruments.

3. Responses by the participants in the research *Vietos Demokratija 2009* reveal that the respondents were not inclined to idealise local democracy processes taking place at their local self-government institutions. The fact that opinions of three expert groups differ on almost all the key issues of how local democracy functions in local self-government proves the lack of systematic effort in the development of local democracy instruments at local self-government institutions.

4. Case studies showed that usage of local democracy instruments by municipalities is a complicated process; often different views of expert groups on raised issues indicate the lack of systematic cooperation between employees of municipalities and citizens in development of local democracy instruments, when citizens are involved in management of local self-governance, in decision-making process and thus developing and strengthening civic duties. Such citizens ensure further development of democracy and stability of state.

5. Practical examples show that implementation of local democracy is a complicated process very often broken by rules established by local politicians even is such sphere as freedom of media.

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