

Civic Participation as a Development Principle of Civil Society in Azerbaijan

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Introduction

Civic participation is the most important principle of civil society and it considers inclusion or involvement of governable ones to administration, their influence on decision-making, monitoring its fulfillment and self-government within the framework of local community.

Civil society

This is a set of non-governmental private associations of citizens pursuing individual and group interests [1].

As we know, formation of civil society is one of the important directions in construction of real democratic government. The idea of civic participation («citizen participation», «civic participation») is one of the foundational, key in the modern conception of democracy. We can say that voluntarily civic participation is a quintessence of democracy.

Idea of civic participation suggests including or involvement of controlled in the management of public affairs, also as much as possible, by governmental affairs.

Essentially we are talking about decentralization and distribution of political administration. Civic participation is desirable and necessary element in the development of local communities and societies.

In general, civil society – these are relations of different informal and formal organizations of citizens. In Azerbaijan civil society started its formation slowly. But often particularly active citizens ignore the essence of informal societies, making accent on formal associations.

Process of democratization becomes successful and riches stability only in the case if there is provided active and concerned citizen participation in social-economic and political transformations, in the process of administration and decision making, their involvement to public and political life of society.

This should be certainly occur in practically public behaviour in the form of direct and indirect participation of citizens in public life and administration of government, decision making socially significant cases in one or another form. Aside with this, the citizens should learn overcome social apathy and nihilism so widespread in recent period in most of states in former Soviet Union, also in Azerbaijan [2].

It is important to note that the concept of “Public participation” is quite rare observed in modern political science literature, but more often referred to another close concept – “civic participation” [3].

According to the opinion of specialists, civic participation is considered one of the principles of civil society built at the beginning of constitutional democracy. Conception of “civic participation” is intended to include or involvement “administered” in the process of management in the discussion and processing socio-economic, political, cultural programs and projects, effect on admission of

decisions and control on their execution, self-administration to “grass-roots” local level. We are dealing with a real opportunity of citizens publicly express their opinion, consolidated with like-minded people to exchange views, for promotion of their views, for organized effect on authorities, extension its candidature on selections.

In this way it can be assumed that under the civic participation refers to the least “grass-roots” politicized forms of political participation not only residents, but only citizens of countries, i.e., the proportion of the population with activist political culture or culture of participation [4].

Principles of civic participation means

- At first the interests of all groups and sectors of society should be represented in political process and should be considered in decision-making;

- Secondly it should be ensured that direct involvement of citizens in discussion and processing of socio-economic, political, cultural programs and projects, also effect on decision making and control for their execution about self-administration in local level.

It is quite natural that idea of civic participation conceived as a kind of redistribution of political government in Azerbaijan, may be often found in this or another form of resistance by government structures. This resistance contributes to the fact that the citizens and their associations are not capable of existing civic participation, they expect “Top” pointer. This is especially clearly manifested in the Muslim world, also in Azerbaijan [5]. Often these expectations of «Top» pointers prefer transfer of activity from civil and public sphere in the sphere of personal contacts with government officials, strengthening of elements “Shadow (unofficial) policy”.

In post-totalitarian societies this problem are compounded existing stereotypes and prejudices in accordance with, any public activity can be perceived as an expression of any conformism and careerism, or permissiveness and abuse of their rights and responsibilities, “Too much freedom”[6].

One of the important forms of civic participation is for example different civic initiations by which can be compensated lack of effectiveness of the system of representations in the provision of realization of general interests, equality of citizens and their access to

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the affect to public-political processes. Especially civic participation is important in solution of local problems related to, for example, education, health, ecology, level of employment to the revision of which government officials and politicians often fit without detailed information and without feeling the problem of the "inside". The experience of democracy shows that greater opportunities to influence decision-making has such types as civic participation as activity in local level (in the Board of Trustees of educational institutions, ecological committee), letter and requests their deputies, routine and as a right unobtrusive work on lobbying in the legislative bodies [7].

In total under public participation it is understood participation of non-governmental organizations (NGO) and individual citizens in the discussion and decision-making by governmental authorities in most of cases in local level, also control for their implementation [8].

Apart from this, to the category of public participation it can be attributed to the involvement of citizens in the activity of public organizations and associations in the frame of which it is possible to solve the problems of many people, and without the participation of weak structures.

Thus, the public participation differs from the civic participation by absence among its forms of electoral activity, evasion of activity of political parties and movements, also from the forms of protest participation.

According to the opinion of several specialists such form of civic participation as vote in elections is one of the least efficient. If in the consideration of the phenomenon of political participation of voting is commonly regarded as central, main method, then in usage of term "civic participation" the voting is considered one of the least effective forms of participation [3].

Significantly more effective may be the participation in election campaigns. Thus, massive actions in selection period may attract attention of mass media and have some impact on decisions of political leaders. But after completion of such actions the mechanism of control for the process of formation of decisions and their implementation often does not work. That is why the experience of democracy shows that with much more capabilities such types of civic participation possess as activity in local level [9].

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Apart from this to the category of public participation it can be attributed to the involvement of citizens in the activity of public organizations and associations in the frame of which is possible to solve the problems of many people, and without the participation of weak structures.

Thus from the civic participation the public participation differs by absence among its forms of electoral activity, evasion of activity of political parties and movements, also from the forms of protest participation. The citizens who are not involved to NGO, as indicated by their activity in Azerbaijan, mostly ignore various forms of public participation but at the same time the NGOs often indifferent to the fact that to involve its decision as named "little" problems [10].

Monitoring the results of sociological polls held in Azerbaijan for recent years shows that the existence and multi-variance of civil awareness and participation. In particular, the results of sociological

researches held in Azerbaijan by political scientist D. Muslim-zade for recent years, shows that modern massive consciousness of population of countries includes in itself wide spectra of different, sometimes diametrically opposed thoughts and discussions about roles and essence of democratic values in the life of Azerbaijan society. It represents in itself rather complex symbiosis of totalitarian and democratic methods of thinking. It can be combined fancifully incompatible elements - strict adherence to moral norms and at the same time nihilistic attitudes to the laws and disregard for elementary rights of behavior in different social situations.

In current time the process of civic participation in Azerbaijan can be appreciated as intermediate between level of record of thoughts and level of consultation as well as the opportunity exists formally on record of thoughts of citizens in the processing of programs, improvement of work of governmental administration and etc. But when it comes to practice, not everywhere and not always the process of informing is fully implemented, also the mechanism of record of thoughts practically doesn't work.

Above mentioned items certifies that different forms of self-administration and unions of the citizens of Azerbaijan should participate in decision making related to the development of the local community and social services. For this cause it is necessary to create and process the mechanisms of civic participation in local level, securing the appropriate procedures, organization of constructive dialogue among representatives of government and non-governmental organizations. Aside with this, the authorities of government bodies obtaining the support from local communities, they will be capable more effective and operatively react on different needs and demands of the population.

Decisive role in the self-organization and development of civic community, on the level of decision of local problems belongs to the local social groups involving citizens in the process issuing the opportunities to participate in public life, forming the tradition of self-administration.

It should be noted that local self-administration in its development based on the system forms and methods of civic participation in institutes of civil communities, but latest in term on local self-administration as more effective institution of realization of interests and needs of civil community. But it should be noted that, today the effective system of local self-administration in Azerbaijan is not established yet, this makes difficult the development of democracy, formation of civil community and decision of social problems of population [5].

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