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TECHNOLOGY OF POLITICAL CROWDSOURCING: WORLD EXPERIENCE AND STEPS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION IN UKRAINE

Technologies of political crowdsourcing are analysed as modern approaches to make political dialogue and provide transparency of authorities. Justification for their use in socio-political sphere is argued. Reasons that actualize the use of crowdsourcing in policy as well as global and Ukrainian experience of their application are studied. The paper identifies the factors that affect the success of crowdsourcing projects in policy.

Difficulties in implementing of such proven with international practice experience is complicated in Ukrainian environment by the fact that crowdsourcing philosophy is based on mutual responsibility, social participation and a solid belief that everyone can change something in this world, and joint efforts approximate the goal achieving. Real practice of political crowdsourcing directly correlated, in our opinion, with indicators of social funds – both individual and collective. Ukrainian social capital itself stays on difficult and not quickly accumulating way.

Key words: socio-political (political) crowdsourcing, political investing, public, information and communicative technologies.

Within the recent years, search for new effective technologies of public interaction at all levels from global to local one takes place in political science. “From the model of *co-operation* we turn to the model of *co-creation*. Exchange of ideas and views to achieve the best results comes in the foreground”¹. The leading trend is intensification of political discourse through its virtualization and the use of new information and communication technologies.

The term “political (socio-political) crowdsourcing” is new concept of political science. Their development has just begun. Difficulty in understanding of their essence lies in: 1) lack of research unity in interpretation of basic concepts – crowdsourcing; 2) conceptual phenomena novelty of socio-political crowdsourcing; 3) still negligible empirical base to explore practice of crowdsourcing mechanisms use, especially in Ukrainian policy.

At the same time, current political process is open to new technological mechanisms – organizational and financial one. The political practice of the recent years shows the commitment to the crowdsourcing mechanisms, which, having started as a business mechanism, broadened the scope into the socio-political sphere. The importance of study the possibility to use crowdsourcing in policy is caused by continual growth of the role of public participation in policy, and, consequently, need to clarify the modern mechanisms of organization and activation of community in its involvement into the political processes. Study of possibilities of crowdsourcing application in policy is actualized to clarify new approaches, which help to solve the problem of lack of human and financial resources for the implementation of socially important projects.

Crowdsourcing today is increasingly used as a new method of public involvement into the political process. It is one of mutual interpersonal formats. Crowdsourcing is attracting of human capacity to joint decision of the certain issues or projects implementation. Thanks to the crowdsourcing, specific work is implemented with joint efforts; planned idea is embodied by ordinary people – volunteers and caring one.

Crowdsourcing means: 1) «use of collective intelligence and work of volunteers for a variety of useful purposes, including commercial one»²; 2) «problems transfer to significant, often anonymous, amount of individuals – human crowd» (the Internet community) and involving of their assets, resources,

¹ Левина, Е.А. (2012). Применение технологий краудсорсинга в социально-политическом диалоге. *Проблемный анализ и государственно-управленческое проектирование*, 5 (25), 36.

² Долгин, А. (2010). *Манифест новой экономики. Вторая невидимая рука рынка*. Москва, 39.

knowledge or experience”¹. So, crowdsourcing is a common intellectual work of a large number of people unfamiliar to each other on a common task in the network environment. This is a new method of obtaining needed services, ideas or information by reference to the large number of different groups, often through the Internet.

Crowdsourcing can be considered as a new format of the socio-political dialogue. Its key features are: 1) lack of payment (occasionally – minimal compensation) for the executable function; 2) a significant number of volunteer performers in the project; 3) use of virtual networks that enable optimization of expenses for information search, collecting and processing, and allow to divide work on a number of components that unite a whole, resembling mosaic. Certainly, crowdsourcing would not be possible without the Internet – just through a network, people can coordinate their actions, discuss ways to solve problems and join into communities on a voluntary basis. Internet is used by users to create instruments that can adjust government policy. For example, «Arab Spring» motivated many activists and ordinary Internet users to primarily use of Twitter and Facebook to schedule the protest acts and spread of revolutionary appeals against establishment of Egypt, Yemen and Libya.

Crowdsourcing in Ukraine just begins to root, having started with social projects like public acts of cleaning the city. Less is Ukrainian practice makes political displays of crowdsourcing, but this experience is rapidly acquired. For example: 1) ElectUA – project of monitoring violations during the parliamentary elections of 2012 as apolitical initiative to draw public attention to the transparency of voting. The project was aimed to attract volunteers on fixation violations during the parliamentary elections and visualization of the data on the virtual map; 2) «Chancellery hundred» as a volunteer project that arose during the events on the Maidan in winter 2014 and restored documents, which the deposed regime tried to destroy; then documents of runaway oligarchs were started to be recovered and published.

The reasons, because of which crowdsourcing is appropriate to be applied in policy, are the following:

- 1) generation of a large number of new ideas (crowdsourcing provides much more insight, derived from ordinary Internet users. Getting new ideas allows hoping for better proposals);
- 2) selected ideas will be more closely related to the community of followers (personal ideas will be useful to the target audience, because it offers generated data);
- 3) open methodology creates transparent and democratic system (users can see where are certain ideas come from, that will help to increase their involvement and makes an additional support of policy that is carried out).

Political crowdsourcing is useful and technologically justified in many socio-political dimensions – from designing the state constitution to implementation of local projects. This provides still small, but slowly accumulating by international practice experience of use such a practice of open cooperation.

We select several successful crowdsourcing campaigns in policy.

1. Iceland, 2012. This is an interesting country to study experience of crowdsourcing in political practice for at least two reasons: 1) it is the only state in which crowdsourcing technology has already been successfully applied to the development of the constitution; 2) crowdsourcing has become one of the ways out from the political crisis that was the result of the hottest economic downturn of the country in 2008².

2. Finland, 2012. Launched crowdsourcing platform Open Ministry was designed to create new bills by the public. If the bill, proposed by a citizen, gathers more than 50 thousand signatures, it is put to parliamentary vote.

3. The USA. Citizens do not publish their own bills, but they can communicate with the politicians using resource PopVox, where the bills, proposed in Congress, are placed on separate pages, giving voters the opportunity to leave their comments. This resource helps to establish communication between politicians and voters.

Modern politicians are trying to find new ways of interacting with potential voters and the public in general. The main areas, in which the use of crowdsourcing is justified to attract attention and promote political campaigns, are the following:

1. *Creation of political profile*. Examples: 1) the President of the USA Barack Obama cooperated

¹ Hemer, J. (2011). A snapshot on crowdfunding. *The Open Access Publication Server of the ZBW*. Karlsruhe, 8.

² Курочкин, А.В. (2013). Краудсорсинг как новый метод политического управления в условиях сетевого общества. *Исторические, философские, политические и юридические науки, культурология и искусствоведение. Вопросы теории и практики*, 9-1 (35), 80.

with Artworks by creation crowdsourcing posters dedicated to increase working places; posters of three finalists were signed by the head of the state, designed for sale to raise funds for the further advancement of the project; 2) a candidate to become a deputy of the Australian Parliament in 2013 K. Rudd worked with crowdsourcing platform DesignCrowd to create design of a pre-election slogan and a T-shirt. He selected the winner from more than four hundred drafts and really used the chosen idea for his campaign.

2. *Providing power to people.* Examples: 1) even in «pre-crowdsourcing era» the first Australian prime-minister E. Barton in 1901 initiated an international competition to create a sketch of the Australian national flag; competition received more than 30 thousand proposals; 2) In 2010, the Government of India created design of the new Indian rupee using crowdsourcing. There were suggested more than 8 thousand drafts from participants from all over the country; the project has attracted global attention and rupee became a recognizable symbol in the world.

3. *Aid to people in the crisis regions.* Examples: 1) In South African Republic there was operating an crowdsourcing site Agang South Africa to help to rebuild a country that gained independence in 1994; the aim was to increase public influence on the election results; 2) a number of projects today (such as projects of the organization Italian coalition for civil rights and freedoms (Cild) and Chicas Ponderosas), that are aimed at finding ways to help those 19 million people that in 2014 became refugees because of wars or persecutions) and the number of which increased sharply in 2015 (Syrians, Iraqis and Eritrean etc.).

4. *Bills development.* The examples are the already mentioned experience of Finland and Ireland. Iceland has become a political example of crowdsourcing in development of constitution draft. Its implementation passed through a number of steps: 1) Constitutional Committee of Iceland provide the public with an extensive report (700 pages) about the state of constitutional law in the country and prospects for its improvement; 2) at general elections there were elected 25 members of the Constitutional Assembly (non-party representatives from different regions of Iceland) – a special authority set up to design and improve the draft of the new constitution of the country¹; 3) every week members of Constitutional Assembly placed on a special Internet portal new legislative proposals, which have come from citizens using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. All Assembly meeting were also broadcast on the Internet and were open for online citizen participation².

Structures of the different levels, from global to local, come with crowdsourcing projects. Thus, the UN in 2015 implemented the project «Beyond 2015» – a global initiative that aims to attract young people to solve social problems and inform the world political leaders of what should be their priorities. Crowdsourcing model allowed young people from more than 80 countries to share ideas, discuss vital issues and their possible solutions. For three months period crowdsourcing project has collected over a thousand unique ideas and received more than 27 thousand responses and comments; Internet community, which was embraced with this project, makes more than 16 million people from around the world.

With crowdsourcing in many cities around the world there are implemented projects codenamed «smart city» (eng. *Smart City*). Today we are talking not just about expanding the range of electronic services but about merging them into a system of «smart city», which organizes management thanks to initiatives of the public, generated ideas, namely social and political crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing allows actively promoting policy of open municipal government, through various portals, on which public proposals are accumulated. In the «smart city» every interested resident is not only a consumer of services but also the member of the decision-making to improve life quality. The only availability of modern electronic services does not ensure public involvement in solving problems; instead the focused crowdsourcing practices are aimed on generating collective idea.

Successful implementation of crowdsourcing projects in policy depends on several factors, including:

– *how clearly the ultimate goal and planned incremental movement to it are defined.* Crowdsourcing project should clearly declare its goal, the way to achieve it and the role of project participants. Clear focus on the citizens as the main participants is required. At the beginning of the project implementation it is important to understand what the result will be: ideas, knowledge or experience;

– *communication quality after project launch.* Crowdsourcing does not happen automatically once put into Network, but information about the political project is necessary to be spread with all possible

¹ Gylfason, T. (2012). Constitutions: Financial Crisis Can Lead to Change. *Challenge*, 55 (5), 106-122.

² Курочкин, А. (2013). Краудсорсинг как новый метод политического управления в условиях сетевого общества. *Исторические, философские, политические и юридические науки, культурология и искусствоведение. Вопросы теории и практики*, 9-1 (35), 80.

ways. Political crowdsourcing does not always attract attention; patience and perseverance in making interest and involvement of participants are required;

- *simple technological solution* of crowdsourcing project, making it accessible to ordinary users (simple user interface);

- *further permanent project management*: moderating of debates, questions responses etc. And, in addition, specific additional tasks, such as: delete of abusive comments, «reflection» of trolling attacks; all this are integral characteristics of Internet conversations on political subjects;

- *right determination of the project duration*, as crowdsourcing is not a permanent project on promotion of the certain political objectives. If there is known that one can join the project within the outlined time (e.g. several weeks), it encourages people to get involved. However, there exist long-term projects – such as several months signatures collect for a petition. If the project is a long-term one, periodic publication of interim results of the project is necessary;

- regular *offline activities carrying* for the project support. This format of communication that helps to spread information about the project is an opportunity for participants to meet with the organizers;

- constant *analysis and monitoring of the project* during its implementation, and analysis of results after completion. The analysis results, which testify the effectiveness of crowdsourcing campaigns, are certainly necessary to be published online for review by all interested participants and the public.

Of course, there are a number of obstacles on the way to sustainability practices of political crowdsourcing:

- *digital isolation* of rather significant number of adults as political actors. Although the number of people integrated in the Network is growing, to organization of crowdsourcing projects there is advisable to add such opportunities to participate in the project that do not require the mandatory use of the Internet, namely, the offline events;

- *crowdsourcing is not the equivalent of democracy*, opinion of the participant of any political crowd-project is not, as a rule, the majority opinion. But crowdsourcing can be seen as part of democracy, for example, using the method of survey. The importance of crowdsourcing for citizens is that it becomes a new tool for socio-political activity and lobbying of socio-political interest of society;

- *crowdsourcing does not change the opinion of experts*. However, depending on the topic, public opinion can be equated to an expert opinion, though it can be minor;

- *political crowdsourcing requires technical and human resources*. However, not all crowdsourcing projects always require presence of new technical solutions, as there are a lot of software and free tools like Twitter or Facebook;

- *the problem of attracting participants*. Usually citizens learn about crowdsourcing and get involved to it not unexpectedly. As political crowdsourcing is new and unfamiliar process for most of them, it is necessary to pay special attention to work with the community and promotion of crowdsourcing opportunities;

- socio-political crowdsourcing is facing a difficult challenge: how to integrate the views of people into the final decision – whether the proposal of the bill, or the strategy of the country (region, city). There is a danger that crowdsourcing will only become a policy tool to attract attention. That is, crowdsourcing may stop responding its meaning and motivation of people to get involved in such projects in the future will decrease.

Particular importance of crowdsourcing technology makes for forming active political community and ensuring the transparency of political decision-making. Crowdsourcing allows not only achieving a high degree of public participation in the development of certain projects, but also creating a sense of national unity. Free participation of citizens in the development and policy making allows avoiding pressure of the interest groups that usually have privileged position in the legislative process.

At the time, technology of socio-political crowdsourcing in Ukrainian format is quite unusual and unresolved with regulatory instruments, but considering positive global practice, they have the potential to become the norm of political ideas elaboration at all levels. Citizens want to influence policy and much of them are ready to use digital tools for this. Technologies of political crowdsourcing create new opportunities for civic activity. This is a truly revolutionary approach to achieve the goal – to build a community in which everyone can be heard.

Application of these technologies in the political sphere is a global technological trend by which transparency of state bodies, public involvement in the process of political communication and work on socially significant tasks, which really can improve the quality of life of the citizens, is increased. New

technologies can enable truly democratic policy implementation at all levels.

Difficulties in implementing of such proven with international practice experience in Ukrainian environment is complicated by the fact that crowdsourcing philosophy is based on mutual responsibility, social participation and a solid belief that everyone can change something in this world, and joint efforts approximate the goal achieving. Real practice of political crowdsourcing directly correlated, in our opinion, with indicators of social funds – both individual and collective. Ukrainian social capital itself stays on difficult and not quickly accumulating way.

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