

## **Exclusion of “citizens knowledge” (savoir citoyen) in times of modernisation of public services?**

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We would like to discuss a special form of privatization of local public services and their influence on modernisation and the mobilisation of „savoir citoyen“. In the actual debate „privatization“ is often understood as service delivery by private actors meanwhile another form of privatisation has been neglected. As privatisation can also be considered the creation of „municipal enterprises“, which means that service delivery passed from direct local administration to an external enterprise which is owned (100%) by the municipality. In Germany this transformation, that we call organisational privatisation, is a general tendency: In the last ten years services on public transport, energy, sewage... are delivered in more than 80 % by such municipal enterprises. Due to this fact, we would like to discuss the following hypothesis and questions.

We would like to show that the extensive creation of municipal enterprises effected local democracy in a very deep way: Access to information is any more guaranteed for all councillors or citizens. Only the elected members of the supervisory board are (potentially) able to control the enterprise. The meetings of the board **have to be held** by lay under the exclusion of public. These obligations has several consequences.

- First, the enterprise is transformed in a black box for politicians and citizens which are not represented in the supervisory board. We are considering this as countertendency in respect to the opening of public administration by participation and transparency in 1990's.
- Second, the reduced group of insiders which has access to the supervisory board contributes to an oligarchisation on local democracy. Only a small group of councillors take decisions on prices and can control the management of the enterprise.
- Third, we would like to discuss the impact of this development on modernisation of local administration. Normally the creation of municipal enterprises is considered as a modernisation process. In our argumentation we would like to raise the question if this kind of management is still efficient, because it seems that the obligation to secrecy of private law means the exclusion of citizens knowledge. Can public enterprises and participatory modernisation in the be considered as a contradiction? Are there ways to overcome this problem? What could be the advantages for public enterprises to integrate citizens knowledge?

The data of this research is collected by field study in Potsdam (Germany). We evaluated the actual literature on this topic and we mainly did some participative observations in supervisory boards of municipal enterprises in which researchers normally have no access. Our group is composed by researchers and practisers of local democracy. Our work can be interpreted as some way of “research action”, but until the actual step our focus was not implementation of new practices. We tried to participate in political processes in order to have access to information and to understand the dynamic in the black box of municipal enterprises.

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