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PLATFORMIZATION OF POLITICS IN NON-DEMOCRACIES: SPACES OF PARTICIPATORY EXPERIMENTS IN BELARUS IN 2020s

This paper's focus is on the innovations in the urban public political agenda that are due to the interplay between participatory digital platforms, the socio-economic paths of specific urban environments, and long-term policy orientations on the national and urban levels. The context of the 2020 presidential elections in Belarus and the resulting boom of participation in the local and national political agendas is taken here as a particular configuration of the mentioned interplay and its outcomes. The first part of the paper focuses on the role of digital platforms in the studied boom of participation in 2020, the second documents the urban policy developments in Belarus during the period of 2015–2020, and the third reflects on the compatibility of the Belarusian case with wider discussions on the political impact that the spread of digital platforms has on urbanism. It is argued that the repressive state, the gradual marketization of urban development and the accompanying strengthening of urban dwellers' economic autonomy, and the proliferation of commercial digital platforms and civic tech are the factors that have defined the studied politicization and the boom of participation in Belarus. The examined case shows the contours of emerging politics in non-democracies under conditions of ubiquitous digitalization and the pressure on the state's redistributive capacities.

Keywords: platformization of politics, digital platforms, urban politics, participation, housing, experiments, non-democracies

INTRODUCTION

The miraculous massive politicization of Belarusian society in the summer and autumn of 2020 generated a variety of perspectives to consider regarding this change, including nation building, the erosion of the foundations of authoritarianism, gender roles in public politics, protest as creativity, grassroots activism, and mushrooming local communities. In this process, one could observe a significant expansion of the repertoire of participatory practices in political agendas on different levels – from a neighborhood one to the national one. This article emphasizes the critical entanglement of this politicization with two long-term tendencies.

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The first tendency is the expansion of the digital platforms' ecosystem, which has enhanced the society's collective potential to make claims and made it easier to articulate discontent collectively (Krastev, 2014). The second tendency is the partial gradual marketization of urban policies in Belarus and the accompanying growth of citizens' economic self-reliance vis-à-vis the state. Thus, this article aims to examine the profound destabilization of power relationships in Belarus in 2020–2021 as a result of the interplay among digital technologies, market-driven urbanization, and bottom-up participatory politics.

The power of the rapidly emerging new modes of collective action in Belarus in 2020 lay in its location off the grid in relation to the long-established inertial material statehood that was consolidated by Alexander Lukashenko from the 1990s and equally in relation to the long-established oppositional structures and practices. On the one hand, new types of community organizers were organically nurtured in a new job market (the IT and private sectors in general were significant drivers), and they entered the political realm in 2020 to replace the knowledge and communication controllers among the ideologues and welfare-sector workers. On the other hand, Lukashenko's key challengers designed their strategies to be deliberately viral. They revealed almost nothing about themselves in terms of habitual conventions of the political process (their programs, ideologies, structures, already-existing agreements, and networks with other political players). The new tools of empowerment were essentially memetic – relying on visualization and replication rather than on deliberation and representation. At a later stage, the information about state violence triggering the protests was delivered without any montage or mediation by text: the most motivating and touching moments of the protests were captured on streamed videos.

Two major arenas of innovations in the political process in terms of citizen participation were the communities of neighbors (organized within Telegram chats) as well as the platforms that duplicated the functions of the state's Central Election Committee and other state functions that were related to the election process. The result was a breakdown and reconfiguration of the "epistemic infrastructure" of Belarusian politics (Boyer, 2018). The 'infrastructural lens' on this specific political change provides not only notions to dismantle various apparatuses of political power. But it also provides analytical instruments to identify the drivers of political change itself. Infrastructures are political in terms of the resources, alliances, flows, modes of behavior, interactions, claims, representations, and artifacts that they enable. This article exploits the opposition between the logics of infrastructures and those of digital platforms (Plantin et al., 2018) and the ways that this opposition has developed and stood out in Belarus as a case of post-Soviet authoritarianism. It argues that, on a more abstract level, the period of presidential elections in Belarus in the spring, summer, and autumn of 2020 was the moment of destruction of the mode of the infrastructural gridding that Lukashenko's regime had been developing over decades. Already, the inability of the state to properly address the threats of COVID-19 in spring 2020 led to a massive mistrust in its welfare system and in the government in general. This mistrust has created a legitimate niche for critical political stances in society. Some have promoted a lens on it as "a 'permissive condition' for critical juncture," leading to "new expressive forms of […] non-violent 'ludic' resistance" (Kananovich, 2022, pp. 259–260). In the long-term perspective, this disruption threatened not only the dictator

or inefficient bureaucrats but also the prevalent top-down infrastructural gridding in Belarus. There are influential interpretations of the decisive role of energopolitics and its redistributive potential in the consolidation of Lukashenko's regime (Balmaceda, 2014). The massive politicization in 2020 was, in such a perspective, the moment of the disruption of the infrastructure of post-Soviet carbon modernity as the underlying enabler of Lukashenko's system.

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The history of protests in independent Belarus before 2020 can be split into several distinct phases. The first phase in the early 1990s was the continuation of the national response to Perestroika that was triggered by the revelation of late 1930s Soviet mass killings in the Kurapaty outskirts of Minsk as well as by the Chernobyl catastrophe. The Belarusian Popular Front was the main organizer of the activities that made this phase. The second phase started in 1995 and was marked by the consolidation of authoritarianism under Alexander Lukashenko and the beginning of Belarus's widely contested integration with Russian Federation. The protests of this period were directed against undemocratic changes in the constitution in 1996 and against the agreement on the so-called Belarus and Russia Union State in 1999. The third phase was constituted by two failed attempts of Belarusian 'Maidan' against presidential election official results in 2006 and 2010. The fourth phase had two peaks that had a socio-economic background and were not directly connected to the electoral processes. The earlier peak was the so-called 'silent' protests against the state's inability to cope with the economic crisis in 2011. These protests are often referred to as 'revolution through social networks' due to the massive use of the VK social network by the organizers. The later peak was about the so-called social protests against the 'Decree on Parasites' (the decree that introduced the tax on the state of being unemployed). It is possible to recognize the tendency that the numbers of protesters were declining during this course – from circa 200,000 people on the streets in 1991 to 190,000 in 1996, around 90,000 in each 1999 and 2006, around 35,000 in 2010, around 20,000 in highly decentralized protests in 2011, and around 5000 people in different places across the country in 2017. In this regard, more than 800,000 people protesting across the whole country against the falsifications of the election results in 2020 was a big surprise and the breaking point in the existing tendency.

At the same time, the singled-out phases have a dimension of changing means to communicate political claim-making. With the decline of participation in street politics that was mainly controlled by the mainstream institutionalized oppositional political parties and organizations, there was a simultaneous steady growth of internet users in Belarus. There were 16% of the population who were internet users in Belarus in 2006 (at that moment, LiveJournal diaries and reflections by protesters were new features in political campaigns); in 2010, 32% were internet users (Facebook was the main interactive medium of the campaign, with politicians as active users; and then in 2011, VK was the main medium of de-centralized protests against the economic crisis); in 2017, 74% were internet users (this was the first case of video streams during the protests); and finally, 85% were internet users in 2020 (massive video streams were leading to the user-generated growth of political agenda, with Telegram and YouTube as

the main politicized shareable media).[1] Video streams as a communication technology were central in both the 2020 revolution and the currently ongoing counter-revolution in Belarus. In today's law-enforcement practice, streams are qualified as the organization of mass protests, not as coverage of mass protests. This means that user-generated content that covers activities that are related to political claim-making is not distinguished from organizing or promoting political claim-making. As an example, journalists who stream protests are brought to court as co-organizers of the protests. This is a suddenly revealed fragility that stems from the combination of shareable media and a repressive regime.

Since the independence of Belarus, it is possible to recognize a combination of the declining intensiveness of street politics and the growing number of internet users over time. The questions are as follows: what are the political impacts of this combination? Is it possible to talk about the gradual emergence of platform politics during the analyzed period? The definition of a digital platform that is adhered to here is a "programmable architecture designed to organize interactions between users" (van Dijck et al., 2018). From this perspective, we can talk about Belarus in the 2020s as one of the articulations of platform politics with its specific political path of civic participation and civic innovations on both the local and national levels. This platform politics was shaped by the use of commercial shareable media and the creation of civic tech products with the purpose of undergirding and steering political change in the country. As for the commercial shareable media, one could recognize the equal popularity of YouTube, Facebook, and VKontakte in the election periods of July and August 2020. According to StatCounter, these three platforms attracted 14.84 to 17.2% of all of the online traffic among social media uses in Belarus (excluding Telegram).[2] At the same time, the most popular platform in Belarus during this period was Pinterest (41.6% and 38.13% in July and August 2020, respectively). Both the leadership of Pinterest and the equal popularity of YouTube, Facebook, and Vkontakte is making social media consumption in Belarusian society significantly different from the neighboring countries. It is equally different from the tendencies in Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia (where Facebook is a distinct leader), and it is different from Russia (where Pinterest is not the most popular among the shareable media).

In addition to the massive use of commercial shareable media that has enabled the large-scale participation in politics, one could document the rise of civic tech, which was created specifically for the context of the 2020 presidential elections. These newly created digital platforms were massively instrumentalized to target state institutions as constraints for the democratic political process. The targeting mainly implied the digital duplication of existing state functions by their platform twins. "Golos,"[3] one of the most recognizable and discussed platforms, was designed and used as the citizens' driven digital twin of the state Central Election Committee. This has made it possible to organize an alternative bottom-up process

[1] According to the World Bank, internet users are the individuals who have used the Internet (from any location) during the last three months, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=BY [2.05.2022].

[2] Social Media Stats Belarus (January–December 2020) at StatCounter, https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/belarus/2020 [2.05.2022].

[3] Eng. "voice," https://belarus2020.org/home [2.05.2022].

to count votes. "Golos" instructed users to register their phone numbers on the platform and then report their ballots (preferably with a confirmation photo). As a result, 1,049,344 unique votes (around 15% of all voters) were registered on the platform on the day of the elections (August 9, 2020). This platform innovation worked as a reconfiguration of the relationships between anonymous voting and a representative democracy. As "Golos" connected the ballot to an individual phone number (in contrast to the prevalent practice and conventions), it cultivated the relationship between de-anonymization and a representative democracy.

Two similar examples are the "Honest People"[4] and "Zubr"[5] platforms, which were designed and used to organize alternative election observations, document violations, and deanonymize; by means of this, the members of the territorial election committees were made to feel accountable. After the elections, "Honest People" launched a massive campaign (with around 50,000 citizens participating) in order to put pressure on and force those parliament members that failed to represent the overwhelming popular discontent with the election results to resign. A fourth example of undergirding political process by a digital platform's tools is the "Skhod"[6] project. It was launched after the elections and the massive state violence to shut down the protest. This platform's purpose was to use the momentum of the popular discontent with authoritarian politics and organize the upcoming local elections in the format of open online dialogue among voters, candidates, and the state. However, these local elections were postponed by the Central Elections Committee as a result and have not taken place as of yet. All of the four introduced platforms were recognized as "extremist" by the state; thus, their managers and volunteers have been massively persecuted by state security services. After the criminalization of these platforms, they went dormant; i.e., have at least temporarily lost their initially intended functions.

All of these platforms are characterized by a cross-platform ecosystem that functions as a mash-up of various already-existing commercial platform services.[7] The major features of all of these digital platform innovations were the enhancement of transparency through de-anonymization (both of individual bureaucrats and of votes) as well as a duplication of state functions. Both features implied the greater agency of citizens vis-à-vis the repressive and opaque state. At the same time, the strategies behind these features are not specific only to the authoritarian context of Belarus but characterize the platformization tendency at large. As an example, it is possible to observe the current trend of creating digital twins for infrastructures and institutions with the purpose of increasing their predictive capacities and efficiency. Such twins of infrastructures and institutions provoke new practices and new notions of spatiality. These are the relationships between the originals and the copies, where the copies are usually a means to better control the originals. Today, this practice is mainly inherent in such sectors as energy engineering, production and infrastructure maintenance, and the management

[4] https://honest-people.by/en [2.05.2022].

[5] Eng. "bison", https://zubr.in/ [2.05.2022].

[6] Eng. "gathering", https://www.shodbelarus.org/ [2.05.2022].

[7] VK, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Odnoklassniki, Telegram, and Viber in the case of "Golos"; Facebook, VK, Odnoklassniki, YouTube, Telegram, Viber, and TikTok in the case of "Honest People"; YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Odnoklassniki, Telegram, and VK in the case of "Zubr"; and Viber, Telegram, and YouTube in the case of "Skhod."

of business processes. However, one could expect the application of this practice in public administration and civil society matters (Eom, 2022). In this vein, the Belarus case shows that digital twinning is potentially a plane for developing procedures and tools to enhance citizens' control in the course of progressing digitalization.

Furthermore, the digital platforms acted as enablers of new political careers beyond the routine of mainstream institutionalized politics. Digital profiles made it possible for the 2020 presidential election campaign's major challengers to scale-up their immediate experiences to the arena of national politics. The user-generated growth of a political agenda instead of deliberation and representation was the novelty that was introduced by the so called 'new opposition' to dictator Alexander Lukashenko. This novelty was about a focus on personal experience or a certain embedded lifestyle instead of a focus on the presentation and discussion of procedures and future policies that was typical of Belarus political opposition campaigns before 2020. In the winter of 2020 (seven months before the elections), leaders of oppositional parties organized 'primary elections' (taking an analogy from the US politics) as the procedure to decide who will be the jointly negotiated candidate for the presidency on behalf of the democratic opposition. The idea was that such a [mainstream electoral] transparent procedure would make it possible to attract supporters, gain added legitimacy, and subsequently challenge the dictator. However, the actual role in the elections of the politicians and parties that took part in such a 'primary' turned out to be very modest. The main challengers to the dictator were people without any prior political careers. Instead of relying on mainstream political institutions and procedures such as parties or primary elections, they focused on creating new spaces for political claims.[8]

The strategies of two such presidential candidates who efficiently used the new spaces and tools to challenge the dictator required special attention. In the 2020 campaign, Sergei Tikhanovsky played the role of an experience blogger in Belarusian politics. He started as a storyteller on YouTube, addressing the theme of difficulties of being an entrepreneur in Belarus. He bought a manor in rural Belarus and wanted to create a hospitality business; during this process, however, he was distressed by the state bureaucracy's requirements to the building's renovation. He subsequently managed to create a political agenda out of these very local site-specific constraints that he had faced. From here, he started his career criticizing the state's approach to business and entrepreneurship and by making other small entrepreneurs (mainly from small peripheral towns) and their challenges visible. In addition to this, he was organizing video streams with other political bloggers and oppositional politicians. As a result, he became successful in a new genre of political claim-making in Belarus – a video stream from a site where the protagonist would talk to an interlocutor and would have a critical conversation about the state's corruption, over-bureaucratization, incompetence, arbitrary uses of power, etc. Such a format of streaming from a site (usually an

[8] To check the list of current (May 2022) political prisoners (more than 1200) who were the most harshly punished (from 13 to 22 years in prison), there was only 1 person with a prior political career in the top 14 (Mikola Statkevich). At the same time, there were 6 bloggers of different kinds among these 14. Besides, 5 out of the 14 were convicted of terrorist attacks. In addition, there were one military member who leaked a secret document and one top manager who decided to run for president.

open square or the surroundings of a market place) turned out to have big virality potential in May 2020, when the possibility of collecting signatures for the candidates for presidency was opened. Sergei Tikhanovsky himself was arrested during one of these streams when collecting signatures for the candidacy of his wife (Sviatlana Tikhanovskaya) in Hrodna on May 29, 2020. His career could be regarded in the context of existing research on YouTube political style (Finlayson, 2022).

Another major challenger of dictator Lukashenko in the 2020 presidential election campaign was Viktar Babaryka – Director of Belarus Gazprom Bank and a patron of arts, theatre, and crowdfunding. His presidential campaign relied on the ecosystem that was created by Belgazprombank's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project called "OK16," a creative cluster in the building of the former Minsk Factory of Machine Building.[9] This CSR project included an exhibition space, theatre stage, crowdfunding platforms "Bee Hive" and "MolaMola," and fintech start-ups. It accentuated a certain lifestyle that was related to a certain way of doing business. A few years before the elections (after the launch of this CSR project), there was a cliché about the space as 'the most European site/street in Minsk' in terms of cultural consumption and the approaches to entrepreneurialism. In the spring of 2020, this ecosystem turned out to be a virality base of Viktar Babaryka – the key people of "OK16" became the key people in his presidential campaign from day one. It turned out to be the fastest-growing citizen initiative group in the history of presidential elections in independent Belarus. Similar to Tsikhanouski's campaign, one could recognize the strategy of scaling-up daily routines to the level of national political claims here. The CSR background and the creative cluster function opens the question of to what extent this was political or post-political mobilization (Swyngedouw, 2007).

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The described digital platform innovations in the political process were embedded into the larger context of new structural challenges to the infrastructural gridding in Belarus. The first challenge was the result of growing tensions in Belarus's economic and political relationships with Russia during the course of reviewing the principles of integration between the two states; the second challenge was the result of the global crisis of economic production and social re-production that were related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These two challenges threatened centralized 'state vertical'[10] as the power scaffolding for the socio-spatial development of Belarus and the centralized resource re-distribution as the 'state vertical's' main instrument for development. As a result, the period before the 2020 presidential elections witnessed the

[9] Being a Belgazprombank Corporate Social Responsibility project, "OK16" and Viktar Babaryka's presidential campaign turned out to be a contentious issue due to their direct relationship to Gazprom in Russia. During the period of 2018–2020, there was an open disagreement concerning the terms and conditions of the economic integration between Russia and Belarus where the topic of gas prices was one of the key ones. In this context (on the level of identity politics), this period was marked by the emphasis in official state rhetoric that Belarus was sovereign vis-à-vis Russia. Even after the jail sentence to the former Belgazprombank director and the candidate for presidency (Viktar Babaryka), this continued to be a contentious issue.

[10] Regional and sectoral bureaucracy, appointed and controlled directly by the President.

massive discontent of the Belarus population with the local and national political and socio-economic course. This discontent was targeted at the long-lasting state's inability to increase the quantity and quality of workplaces in the state sector. This was amplified by the closed borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which hindered work migration to neighboring countries as a strategy of survival and dealing with the discontent individually. Thus, this revealed the limit of the 'state vertical' to efficiently proletarianize and pacify the population. This was especially vivid in small and medium-sized towns, which were not politicized for decades before the 2020 presidential elections. Another significant element of this discontent was the growing momentum of the green agenda, with the protests against the project of the "Accumulator Plant LLC IPower" in Brest as the iconic case. This accumulator plant was expected to be highly polluting by environmental experts; therefore, its construction attracted a lot of attention from civil society and the independent media in the entire country.

Both the massive contestation of the 'state's vertical' socio-economic model and its local outcomes and the popularization of the localized green agenda showed that, just before the 2020 elections, citizens were increasingly keen to negotiate the rights and obligations of individuals, state bodies, and businesses in the urban development and planning context. This context was gradually turning into less of an arena for undisputed technocratic decisions and more of an arena of discussion and advocacy. The societal request of the de-technocratization of local politics as well as the gradual introduction of participatory consumer-oriented practices to the sphere of urban governance and planning were gaining momentum after the economic crisis and the GDP's fall of 2015–2016. Viktar Babaryka's previously mentioned "OK16" CSR project was launched in 2017 and was one of the flagship experimental urban-development projects in the whole country. Although this was very unusual in terms of institutional organization and the urban function for the Belarusian context, it was very much a part of the bigger tendency in the urban policy in Belarus. This tendency was about the controlled partial marketization of urban development as a response to the economic crisis; it combined the increase of the state's reliance on financial sources that were external to the state budget, the growing expectations of individual consumers, and the attempt of the state to retain full control over the process of the planning, construction, and provision of urban services (even under these crisis conditions).

A similar case to "OK16" within the outlined tendency was the range of the housing projects that were fully realized on a commercial basis. Such housing projects addressed the expanding milieu of the economically self-reliant consumers that were nurtured in the private sector. During the period of the 2020 presidential elections and their aftermath, such housing projects made a similar impact as that which the digital platforms made. They created a foundation for the new degree of intensiveness of the participation of its dwellers in local and national politics and, thus, a foundation for challenging the prevalent mode of the top-down gridding constitutive for the political regime in Belarus. The biggest and most recognizable private developer that worked for this new type of consumers was "A-100 DEVELOPMENT." In 2020, most of the media's attention was directed toward the protests and the spectacular community's self-organization in this developer's "New Borovaya" housing estate project (just beyond the border of Minsk). This is one of the most vivid cases of enclosed housing estates for the group of the new young middle class – typically related to the IT sector in Belarus,

which has enjoyed significant tax benefits since 2018. As a rule, this new type of home owner consisted of young families with good jobs who, therefore, expected an international standard of middle-class urban living. Under these circumstances, "A-100 DEVELOPMENT" was not only a construction business that was responding to the requests of this consumer group – it also took responsibility to actively facilitate such a participatory neighborly way of living. The company's community managers continued to work with the "New Borovaya" housing estate community after it was already built – organizing the neighbors' festivals and other events.

Such an intended and unintended creation of strong ties in the new commercial housing estates (distanced from the state in socio-economic terms) also had political consequences. These types of communities, which were rather homogeneous is terms of age, socio-economic status, and cultural preferences, has turned out to also be homogeneous in terms of political values. During the period of 2020–2021, "New Borovaya" (like other new commercial housing estates) was one of the most intensively protesting neighborhoods in Minsk. And, it was actively promoted in the news during the 2020 post-election political mobilization as one of the most intensive protest enclaves. In November 2020, the whole estate was cut off from its water supply and heating for several days. This incident was publicly interpreted as the Minsk City Executive Committee's leverage to force local residents to remove protest symbols from the neighborhood's public spaces and stop gathering in the yards. Telegram chats, YouTube channels, and campaigning in the yards were undergirding this and many other local communities in Belarus; thus, it would be justified to regard this type of community as an entanglement between an enclave of marketized urban policy and digital platforms' sociality in repressive political context. The other cases of new housing projects as the centers of political discontent and resistance that were widely covered in the media were the enclosed "Minipolis Kaskad" and the so-called "Square of Changes" (consisting of separate unenclosed buildings). In such new housing projects, communities of neighbors had the experience of negotiations and joint activities (as a rule with the active use of chats) already before the elections.

The rise of the commercial housing estates coincided with the decline of the state's redistributive capacities in the housing sector and with the slowdown of housing construction in general. This tended to make housing increasingly an arena of pro-active economic behavior of citizens/consumers and, simultaneously, an arena of challenging the state's image as a welfare provider. The election period was the final stage of the "Construction of Housing for 2016–2020" program. In contrast to the previous programs for housing construction, almost three quarters of the funding was driven from extra-budgetary sources in the 2016–2020 case. In 2019, 52% of the program's financing was taken from the population, while 17.3% came from external loans, 12.9% – local budgets, 9.6% – organizational budgets, and 8.2% – the national state budget.[11] The growing re-orientation to private sector sources (instead of the state's budgetary sources) starting from 2016 had two backgrounds. This was a response to the 2015–2016 economic crisis (and the respective fall in the GDP). As a result, the rate of housing construction in square meters had been declining since 2014. In 2019, the population declined in every region of Belarus with two exceptions – the Minsk region, and the city of Minsk.

[11] Report by the Ministry of Architecture and Construction – http://mas.gov.by/ru/koncec_zhilischn_politiki/ [2.05.2022].

In addition, the re-orientation to private sector sources in urban development was the result of an attempt to follow expert recommendations on behalf of international organizations. During this period, the state was intensifying its relations with the West after partial political liberalization and the release of political prisoners in 2015. It is relevant that most of the EU-funded projects in Belarus were directly related to urban or rural infrastructures or to the social services of cities and towns.[12] As an example, the European Investment Bank provided a 90 million euros loan to Belarus at the end of 2019 to perform thermal renovations of multi-apartment housing together with modernizing the district heating system (500,000 square meters of housing) as well as implementing biomass-based heat generators. This was especially relevant in light of the dependence of Belarus on Russian energy sources and the low energy efficiency of the Belarusian housing stock (especially those circa 60% of residential buildings that were constructed before 1993). Thermal modernization was not included in the residential buildings' capital renovation projects and had to be supported from external sources. Strategically, this was also connected to the gradual reorientation of electricity to be used for heating, hot water, cooking, and mobility since the launch of the Astravets Nuclear Power Plant. Such investment projects were canceled after the state repression in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential elections.

Although one can recognize the rise of fully commercial urban projects before the 2020 presidential elections in Belarus (with "A-100 DEVELOPMENT" and "OK16" as the most recognizable flagship cases), the construction market was at the same time still clearly dominated by state companies over private companies. The housing tended to be built primarily with prefabricated large-panel houses. The management of multi-apartment buildings (including capital renovation) was equally dominated by state-owned companies and was funded from local budgets. The state remained a monopoly in the context of urban services provision despite the economic crisis. Although the share of the state budgetary sources in housing construction was declining, the policies reproduced a largely egalitarian urban environment. As a result, the urban environment was not much differentiated due to the economic opportunities of different income groups; this makes Belarus rather different among its neighboring countries. This combination created a potential for conflict. On the one hand, marketization tended to prioritize citizens as economic participants of urban development, but on the other hand, their possibilities to have a say in urban development and planning as consumers and citizens remained narrow. This resulting conflict was most vivid precisely in the context of the new housing estates in Minsk, which were planned and built with only minimal state involvement. This was the case of the previously mentioned "New Borovaya," "Minipolis Kaskad," or the widely-covered-in-the-international-media "The Square of Changes" courtyard.

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The tendencies in Belarus that are documented above suggest that political participation, digital platforms, and urban environments are not autonomous from each other but are entangled. In other words, they generate a new reality that is undergirded by both digital

[12] https://euprojects.by/ [2.05.2022].

platforms and the new digitally enabled practices of belonging to a wider community (of neighbors in a smaller locality or a whole country's citizenry). This new reality poses new dilemmas and challenges for political representation, common public good creation, and statehood at large. These new practices of belonging are characterized by highly personalized and performative participation. Sarah Barnes talks about the current socio-technological conditions in terms of momentum in the relationships between corporeality, code, and commerce (2020). As a non-democratic context, Belarus is distinct due to the lack of a state agenda to politically institutionalize the boom of digitally enabled participation in local and national politics. Bottom-up projects that are aimed at such institutionalization (like the mentioned "Skhod") have been criminalized by the state. During the conditions of the severe crisis of political representation, however, such projects have shown the potential for innovative formats to organize the political process from the neighborhood to national levels. Despite the fact that the case that is examined in this article belongs to a non-democratic context, it is not disconnected from the worldwide tendency of the reconfiguration of the relationships among states, societies, and spaces due to digitalization. This reconfiguration entails new forms of practicing urban and national citizenship.

There are experimental Belarusian digital platforms that are devoted to urban politics that continue to operate despite the massive state repression on local activists and the closure of the majority of the neighbors' Telegram chats in the country. This niche is now mainly being cultivated by the "Robim Good"[13] platform; it specializes in consulting citizens regarding procedural and technical possibilities for realizing urban projects as well as managing actual realizations of urban projects. In practice, these projects are about the design of public spaces in most cases. The "Robim Good" platform's team is thoroughly anonymized – some of its members that organize the consultation process and the management itself might not know each other. Although security-related risks make this platform rather special in an international context, it is part of the wider tendency of platformizing urban planning with the goal to intensify participation.

Online participation tools such as Nextdoor or MindMixer serve as instruments of stabilization via the wider transparency and societal control of public issues (Afzalan and Muller, 2018). On one hand, they promote a culture of deliberation among communities; on the other hand, they make planners' access to local knowledge possible and, thus, amplify sensitivity to local problems. Furthermore, a combination of synchronized and desynchronized communication allows for more-diverse formats to which community members can contribute. In this context, it is noted that, in the course of digitalization, urban planning is increasingly becoming about the co-creation and self-organization of citizens that used to be considered 'silent' beforehand (Boland et al., 2021). This makes a new degree of awareness possible and opens access to those modes of knowledge that were not normally accessible to planners or politicians (Norkunaite and Kunkel, 2019). It thus harvests the gains of participatory action research whose feature is to "disrupt expert (power) hierarchies in the production and circulation of knowledge" (Susskind et al., 2018, p. 130) and, thus, contribute to creating closer ties among research, knowledge, and democracy.

[13] "Robim Good", https://robimgood.org/ [2.05.2022].

In this regard, it is crucial that digital platforms are essentially participatory ecosystems (as noticed by Sarah Barns in 2019). They are participatory both from the perspective of users who are supposed to constantly generate content and be hyperresponsive to the innovations and tech entrepreneurs who are to develop their own products so that they fit the already-existing platform ecosystem with its technical, legal, and business principles. Barns suggests that digital platforms and the resulting 'platform business models,' 'platform economy,' and 'platform urbanism' raise a set of complex questions concerning 'platform governance' (2020). As platforms create an ecosystem in an engineering perspective, the questions are which political implications do this ecosystem generate, and which measures are needed to ensure public awareness of the platform ecosystem's political consequences? In public discourse, it is often emphasized that city-as-a-platform rests on the requirement of the availability of open data, open governance, services, etc. (Repette, 2021, p. 9). From such perspective, it is justified to expect that the pro-democratic platformization of politics agenda should include a strategy of municipalizing data. In light of these questions, the participatory nature of digital platforms is also reconfiguring citizen-sovereignty relationships. This provokes a range of critical perspectives for examining this shift.

The most direct critical perspective on power here is the knowledge asymmetry between the digital platforms' owners and users. This asymmetry provokes the use of the 'black box' metaphor (Fields, 2019; Fields et al., 2020; Pasquale, 2015). As a platform economy entails turning digital urban data into a commodity, the question about distributing accumulated data beyond the 'black box' is acute. Barns interprets the smartphone as an "extractive agent of data-harvesting" (2019, p. 8). On a higher abstract level of political analysis, Pasquale talks about the tension between territorial sovereignty and functional sovereignty that results from the ubiquitous spread of digital platforms and their economic logic (2018). In Pasquale, companies like Amazon (by means of outsourcing, accumulating data, and becoming arbitration authorities) in effect strengthen their functional sovereignty and, thus, challenge the territorial sovereignty of modern statehood. These conditions require new narrative strategies on behalf of critical researchers. Some show how ethnographic writing makes it possible to reveal and discuss the relational power of urban platforms such as Uber beyond only the digital realm (Pollio, 2020). Such writing de-hermitizes the 'black box' of 'platform urbanism.' The very phenomenon of a flexibilized and informalized urban service becomes the major source of data-creation, agglomeration, and valuation. In this respect, the smartphone is also the basis of a user's spatial experience of functional sovereignty relationships. A tragic and bitter ironic illustration of the tension between territorial and functional sovereignty in Belarus is the fact that the most common way for security services to gain access to the data from dissidents' mobile phones (participations in chats, contacts, subscriptions, and photos from protests) is through physical torture. Belarus security services are indeed largely deprived of leverage in relation to the functional sovereignty of commercial digital products. At the same time, the fact that a Telegram profile is connected to a specific mobile phone number entails a range of risks for dissidents that use Telegram in Belarus.[14]

[14] In Belarus, one needs to register one's passport data in order to buy a sim card. This creates the grounds for the de-anonymization of Telegram users.

The factors of the repressive state in Belarus, of the gradual and enclave-like marketization of urban policy and the concomitant strengthening of urban dwellers' economic autonomy, and of the participatory attitude that is driven by digital platforms lead to the country-specific configuration of both urban and national politics. The severe crisis of political representation in 2020 has shown that this configuration is highly conflictual. It has also shown that there is a significant potential of experimentation in terms of political claim-making and organizing the political process in the niche that is created by the three factors that are mentioned. Under these circumstances, experiments could be defined in a variety of ways – from a narrow understanding as a research method to a broad understanding of a means of governance (Huitema et al., 2018). McDermott discusses the use of experiments in political science and shows that, thematically, it is most often focused on issues of voting and elections, committee and jury decision-making, and issues of coordination and cooperation (2002). The context of specifically urban policy with participation principles that are not fixed and are highly dependent on a distinct spatial context (and the paths of politicization that it provokes) often inevitably requires experimental measures. This is especially relevant as the complexity of the spatial justice that is at stake is increasing. Usually, experimentation in urbanism is regarded today in the view of city labs tackling the complexities of urban issues (Scholl and de Kraker, 2021). Scholl and Kemp interpret city labs as the "management of boundaries" or a "boundary work," "mediating organizations between urban-development projects and the policy system" (2016, p. 94). These experiments could aim to create a new "material product" and a new social practice (Scholl and Kemp, 2016, p. 93). The main questions regarding the relationships between digitalization and democratization (relevant in both the democratic and non-democratic contexts) are who drives and facilitates such experimental collaborative efforts and who sets the criteria for deliberated decisions? Such an angle on the 'planning-technology nexus' especially concerns the use of algorithms in urban planning in a democratic context (Boland, 2021, p. 10) and a combination of the use of algorithms and the use of arbitrary power in a non-democratic context.

CONCLUSION

In the studies of the massive political mobilization in Belarus in the course of the 2020 presidential elections and their aftermath, the factor of a 'platform society,' 'platform urbanism,' and a 'platform economy' is not narrativized as of yet. As a rule, the meaning of digital platforms in the political process is reduced to mere tools. This article has suggested an explanation of the profound destabilization of the power relations in Belarus during the period of 2020–2021 as an entanglement of the spread of digital platforms, the gradual marketization of urban development, and the boom of bottom-up participatory politics. This entanglement evolved in the context of the long-lasting top-down infrastructural gridding as the foundation of the non-democratic political regime in Belarus. The result was large-scale societal conflict and a severe crisis of the state's legitimacy. Two major niches of innovations in the political process in terms of citizen participation were communities of neighbors (organized within Telegram chats) and the platforms that twinned the state's functions connected to the

process of elections (mainly, the functions of the Central Election Committee). Both niches significantly enhanced citizens' (hybrid online-offline) participation in both the local and national political processes. These innovations coincided with the tendency of the gradual marketization of urban policy and the decrease of the state's redistributive capacities (especially in the construction of housing) due to the economic crisis of 2015–2016. Despite the decreases of state budgets in housing construction, the state remained an urban-development, planning, and design monopoly. The growth of economically self-reliant citizens/consumers led to a conflict with such a top-down monopoly state. The most organized, active, and long-lasting protests took place in the new fully commercial housing estates where communities of neighbors already experienced joint activities and negotiations (enabled by digitalization and shared socio-economic experiences and statuses). The documented tendencies suggest that the Belarusian case of experimental platformized politics has gained a new dimension when discussed in light of the world-wide political effects of ubiquitous platform eco-systems.

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ROLE OF DIGITAL TOOLS IN COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT AND URBAN PARTICIPATION (EVIDENCE OF BELARUS)

This article is devoted to an analysis of the "hybrid neighborhood" phenomenon. Traditionally, a Soviet residential yard is presented in urban studies as the sphere of a neighbor's active participation. The post-Soviet changes have significantly weakened the activities of neighbor communities; however, the spread of digital communication tools (social networks and messengers) has led to an increase in civic engagement in cities (new forms of neighboring communities are created, traditions of spending time together with neighbors revived, and individuals are actively involving in the struggle for their "place in the city"). The empirical materials that are analyzed reveal the features of neighbors interacting demonstrate the differences between "neighbor" and "civil" communication modes, define the role of online communities in local self-government, and practically implement the "right to the city."

Keywords: online communication, local community, local self-government, neighborhood, "The Right to the City," urban participation

INTRODUCTION

The trends of attracting local populations to actively participate in improving and developing urban areas in recent years can be traced not only in Western cities and towns but also in post-socialist ones. The accumulated research and practical experience shows that the development and strengthening of urban communities not only contributes to improving the quality of the urban environment with less time and lower resource costs but also becomes a good alternative to the overgrowth of the municipal bureaucratic apparatus and makes it possible to exercise the rights of citizens to local self-government (Amster, 2004; Hartman and Robinson, 2003; Mitchell, 2003; Rosol, 2010; Weinstein and Ren, 2009). Conversely, if

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urban communities are not active in exercising their rights to quality urban environments, this leads to a distortion of the principles and goals of the long-term development of entire cities or towns (Dellenbaugh, 2015). Citizens in such a situation often become a buffer between the interests of the state and business without having sufficient power to influence either the former or the latter.

In this regard, the key research question of the article concerns *the particular mechanisms that contribute to community management and the role of digital tools in this process.* I will argue that *a community's activity* (on the example of courtyard improvement) is *in large part determined by the nature of neighbors' relationships (especially their chatting in social media)*. Then, the research focus will shift to 'local chats' themselves as the bases for urban participation. In a search for an answer to the key research question, I will undertake a qualitative analysis of neighborhood chat content. This analysis will reveal *the main communication patterns that are formed in the process of communication* and the effects of these patterns on the further development of full-fledged local self-government institutions in Belarusian cities (via the example of Minsk).

A rather contradictory situation as for the activity of urban communities has developed in modern Belarus. On the one hand, there are rather low levels of both urban residents' trust in each other in general and civic involvement in particular (as is the case in many post-socialist cities and towns). Among the reasons for this, researchers name the following: the specifics of architectural development, which contribute to the atomization of residents and prevent the appearance of urban communities and the care of citizens about those spaces and objects that are outside their private apartments (Cheshkova, 2000); the paternalism that had formed over a long period of life in Soviet society (i.e., the habit of relying on the state for everything as an entity), which is powerful but at the same time distant from society (Engel, 2007); and the communication barriers between society, business, and the state that were formed during the difficult transition period (Lebedeva, 2020).

On the other hand, the large-scale political crisis of 2020 in Belarus launched the processes of consolidating civil society that have never been seen before. From an urbanistic perspective, this meant the formation and strengthening of neighborhood communities, which began to quite actively claim their rights to manage their cities and towns. The grassroots decentralized nature of this Belarusian activism in 2020 has become its characteristic feature – along with demonstrations in central streets, urban residents began to actively gather in their own yards and organize holidays and joint tea parties. Moreover, one could observe an interesting transformation of local activity – starting with various kinds of art interventions (installing flags, making graffiti, etc.); this quickly acquired the classic features of good neighborliness, including yard holidays, independently organized sports tournaments, volunteer landscaping, etc.

The key mechanism for activating local communities that establish their boundaries not only online but also offline is the participation of citizens in various practices to improve their yards. Joint urban-improvement activities have allowed citizens to realize their common goals and objectives and formulate mutually beneficial solutions while also reducing the likelihood of conflicts and disagreements.

Another important factor in the rise of civic activity was the so-called 'communication revolution' (the so-called Telegram revolution), which peaked in the autumn of 2020. Local network platforms ('neighborly chats') helped neighbors get to know each other, coordinate their actions, and made it possible to not only share 'local knowledge' with each other but also bring information about local problems to a wider audience – namely, municipal authorities. In general, the degree of citizen involvement in technical decision-making also depends on the structural features of a particular participatory mechanism. Nowadays, citizens have access to a wide range of electronic participation tools (electronic voting systems, group-decision support systems, discussion forums, etc.). However, e-government institutions (including in the urban management sphere) are still in their infancy in Belarus; the only well-known one is 115.bel (the portal that is aimed at solving housing and communal problems) – its services were used by 35.7% of Minskers in 2021. Perhaps the explosive growth for neighborhood chats was partially driven by attempts to fill the e-government vacuums that existed. In this case, social networks acted as a focal point – from spaces of connection and socialization came major infrastructures upon which much of modern life depends (Barns, 2019).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

The analysis of the activities of neighboring communities was predominantly carried out in the neo-Marxist critical theory frame (Attoh, 2011; Hardt and Negri, 2011; Harvey, 2003; 2011; Lefebvre et al., 2010; Purcell, 2001). The key idea for the survey's design and construction was *the concept of "the Right to the City."* From a neo-Marxism point of view, the urban environment is a theatre of the struggles and conflicts – a field of social contradictions sharpening. Another key category of the analysis was the "*local community*", which is considered in the ecological tradition as a kind of collective subject that has a relatively high degree of social unity and the particular habitat. In this sense, a community is "a group of households located in the same place and linked to each other by a functional interdependence that is closer than similar interdependences with other groups of people within the social field to which the community belongs" (Elias, 1974, p. ix). The key features of such communities are the *locality* (belonging to a certain territory) and *social density* (the intensity of relationships within a community is higher than between individual members of the community and the external environment). A close definition of local community is the "neighborhood" (the phenomenon close in meaning to local community is neighborhood) – a community that arises in the process of the natural division of the city into segments (living yards) (Chernysheva, 2020). One more research concept is the term "hybrid neighborness" – a digital-human network that functions 24/7, unites thousands of local residents, keeps the history of all previous interactions, responds immediately, and can be easily appealed to in an incredible variety of situations (from seeking moral support to helping with the practicalities of life) (Gromasheva, 2021). Attention to neighborhood online communications made it possible to "rethink not only the organization of neighborhood communities but also the structure of collective political action" (Chernysheva, 2022, p. 45). This is fairly popular

research approach to conceptualize urban management "as a technology governance arena" (Lunevich, 2019, p. 80). From this perspective, urban participation mainly turns into citizen engagement in technical decision-making.

The empirical basis of the study was the results of computer-aided telephone interviews (CATI) – a total of 415 Minsk residents aged 15 years and older were interviewed (during the period of September–October 2021). The phone numbers for the calls were selected from a general database of mobile numbers in Minsk by the random number method. The sample was controlled by sex, age, and level of education. The estimated value of the sampling error did not exceed 4.8%. Information was obtained during the interviews about the peculiarities of the participation of citizens in the improvement of urban areas as well as their views that concerned the possibilities of local self-government. The second stage was an expert survey that involved five experts (specialists in the fields of architecture and urban planning with work experience in Minsk). The expert interviews were focused on a deeper understanding of such matters as the possible difficulties that are associated with the improvement of yard areas (the main trends in this field) as well as the balance of the efforts of the state, business, and the public in solving the emerging problems of urban improvement. As a supplement, we used the method of a qualitative analysis of the content of neighborly chats in Minsk during the period of August 15 through September 30, 2020. In total, six chats were selected in accordance with the specified criteria and located in various districts of Minsk; of these, two were located in areas with new apartment buildings, and four were located in areas of mixed buildings (mainly built in the 1970s–2000s).

LOCAL COMMUNITIES AS SUBJECTS OF ACTIVITY

As a rule, urban improvement is thought of as the creation of the most favorable living environment with the provision of comfortable conditions for residents. The improvement of residential yards is, in fact, one of the most urgent problems of modern urban planning. A person's home cannot be considered to be fully comfortable if the environment is not well-maintained. There is a relationship between spending on urban improvement and the level of social stability – reductions of such spending have an extremely negative impact on the social well-being of citizens, their assessment of their own prosperity, and the overall assessment of the policy that is being pursued by the state.

According to the results of the telephone survey, Minsk residents considered the most pressing problem of urban improvement to be those difficulties that are associated with parking private cars in yards; namely, *the lack of parking spaces, difficulties driving through residential yards, and potential dangers that arise due to this* – 70.5% of the respondents mentioned this. Second place was occupied by *bad playgrounds* (monotonous and outdated playground equipment, their shortage, and the poor location of playgrounds) – 39.2%. The last of the three urgent urban improvement problems was *the lack of places for walking dogs* (and, as a result, violations of the rules for walking dogs by the residents) – 23.5%. Another 15–17% of the citizens complained about *the lack of bike lanes and bike parking lots, the lack of benches and recreation areas in the yards*, and *the poor condition of the green spaces*.

The experts identified a number of reasons for the current problems with the improvement of standard yards:

1. The low interest of stakeholders in high-quality public spaces (especially on the periphery – in the so-called 'dormitory areas' with low housing costs).
2. The motivation of developers to maximize their profits ("*to provide just a minimum set of amenities*"[1]).
3. The lack of interest among district administrations in considering the requests of citizens ("*There is no feedback and there is no mechanism to obtain it*").
4. Difficulties with consolidating neighborhood communities – the rigid boundaries of their activities, and the inability to do something even at the level of one's own yard. According to one of the experts, this was due to the fact that "*not so many urban residents care about the urban improvement around them – they would rather put up with what they have and be happy if nothing gets worse*." In such a situation, the improvement of yards is secondary – *working with neighborhood communities should come first*.

Indeed, the telephone survey showed that the participation of Minsk residents in urban improvement cannot be called a popular practice – only 11.3% of urban residents regularly participate in it. Another 35.8% do it rarely – once or twice a year. About a quarter of Minsk residents (28.4%) is potentially interested in taking care of the urban environment. Approximately the same number (28.1%), however, do not plan to spend time and effort on improving their own yards (see Fig. 1). It can be assumed that, in the absence of any external efforts in this field, a little less than a third of Minsk residents will remain outside the zone of activity, virtually excluding themselves from the number of actors that are involved in creating the urban environment.

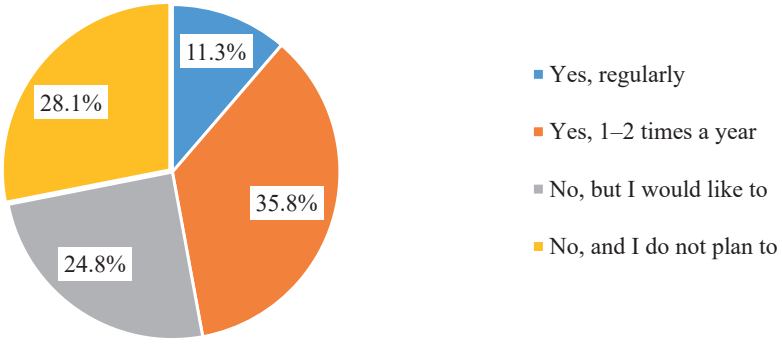

Figure 1. Participation of citizens in the improvements of their yards

[1] Hereinafter, texts in italics indicate quotations from expert interviews.

The danger of such a situation lies –n the fact that, if the balance of activity in the triad of '*State – Business – Local Communities*' is disturbed, the cities begins to transform under the influence of the strongest actors (most often, the state and business); meanwhile, urban residents will be unable to protect their own interests and will be pushed aside to peripheral areas (their apartments, summer houses, etc.).

The positive moment is that, out of the 28.1% of urban residents who do not intend to participate in urban improvement in the near future, only 12.0% have completely ruled out such a possibility (they will not participate under any circumstances). Therefore, this situation may change. The residents of new houses (built after 2010) where condominiums[2] have been formed demonstrated the maximum willingness for self-government; 48.2% of them are willing to participate in improving their yard areas through various local self-government institutions. In addition, the residents of new districts are less willing to finance the improvement of yard areas through taxes and utility bills; more often than others, they would like to use the services of private service companies (which indirectly confirms their readiness for local self-government).

The experts named certain *factors that influence the activities of citizens*:

1. *Clear boundaries of yard areas* – when yards are closed and houses are combined into quarters, there is a feeling of the boundaries of "one's own" territory, etc. All of this can significantly increase the level of responsibility of urban residents and, therefore, their motivation to participate in urban improvement.
2. *The presence of stable neighborhood communities* – in such situations, interest in improving yards as well as control over their conditions is formed and maintained without any external influences.
3. *The practice of spending time together with neighbors* – the tradition of yard holidays and neighborly tea parties that draw the attention of urban residents to their yard areas as potential places for spending free time (extensions of their apartments).
4. *Simple and understandable mechanisms for independent transformation of yard areas* – the absence of overwhelming bureaucratic barriers to local activity where urban residents know how and what they can officially do in their yards.

The answers of Minsk residents that were received during the telephone interviews suggest that the possible prospects for local self-government lie precisely in the self-organization of grassroots structures that are formed on the bases of neighborhood communities (*so-called* '*grassroots activism*').

This conclusion correlates with *the most convenient form of financing the improvements of yard areas (in the opinion of Minsk residents)*. Less than half of the respondents (47.0%) are willing to pay utility bills to the state to maintain improvements of their yards, while the

[2] A legal entity that is founded by the owners of residential premises that are located in one multi-apartment residential buildings within one adjoining territory or in several single-apartment houses and/or townhouses that are located on adjacent land plots in order to preserve and maintain their common property of joint household ownership, possession, and use of it as well as for other purposes that are provided for by this code and the condominium charter (the association of owners).

remaining 53% would like to be able to independently manage the finances that are intended for urban improvement (without the direct participation of the state). This means the appearance of so-called 'urban commons'; i.e., situations where urban residents seek to take the management of nearby areas under their actual control – to independently clean yard areas, landscape them, jointly install new equipment in playgrounds, restore recreation areas, etc. It is noteworthy that more than a quarter of Minsk residents (27.2%) expressed their willingness to direct their own financial resources to organize district and yard holidays; this indicates a growing demand for interaction with neighbors and the formation of an internal need to create local communities and actively participate in their lives.

Only 8.7% of the respondents would completely refuse to independently finance the improvements of their yard areas. It can be assumed that, in the current situation, only a small part of urban residents consciously refuse an active role in developing the urban environment, while the majority are willing to act as active subjects of transformation (under certain conditions).

COMMUNICATION WITH NEIGHBORS AS FACTOR IN ACTIVITY OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

It was noted earlier that one of the reasons to reject participating in urban improvement is the lack of acquaintances with neighbors, the low intensity of the contact with them, and the lack of a collective initiative. In this regard, the peculiarities of relations with neighbors can constitute one of the most powerful factors that influence the activities of local communities. This was confirmed by the results of the telephone survey – about a quarter of the respondents in Minsk (25.9%) do not participate in the improvement of their own yard because they do not know their neighbors and do not know where to start and who to contact. Therefore, *overcoming communication barriers between neighbors and improving their interactions can increase the levels of activity of urban residents*.

According to the survey, 71.2% of urban residents described the relations with their neighbors as good (with 14.2% of the respondents noting that the relations with their neighbors had improved over the past year). By contrast, only 29.6% of the respondents described their relations with the representatives of housing and utility services or condominiums as good. Only 15.4% considered their relations with the district administration to be good. The positive dynamics in the relations of urban residents with formal structures was minimal as well – only 6.7% of urban residents believe that their relations with the representatives of utility services had improved over the past year, and 2.4% had improved their relations with the district administration.

A general analysis of the interaction of Minsk residents with their neighbors, representatives of utility services, and district administration suggests that horizontal ties (with neighbors) are currently much stronger (and continue to strengthen) than vertical ties (with utilities and district administration). About one-quarter of the respondents (28.6%) are members of 'neighborly chats' (which is one of the signs of a formed stable neighborhood community). Urban residents who are members of a condominium interact much more often with their neighbors in neighborly chats (60.7%).

The survey data revealed a direct relationship between the state of neighborhood communication and the willingness of urban residents to participate in urban improvement; the better relations are between neighbors, the more often they communicate with each other (including over the Internet) and the more actively are urban residents to be involved in various practices to improve the urban environment. By contrast, no one devoted time to urban development on a regular basis among those respondents who described their relations with their neighbors as bad. Indeed, almost half of the urban residents (45.5%) who have not established neighborly communications do not plan to participate in urban improvement in the near future at all (for a comparison, this proportion is much lower among urban residents who have good relations with their neighbors – about 26%). Among those who do not chat with their neighbors, every third citizen does not plan to participate in the improvement, while this number is only every fifth among those who do communicate (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Relations with neighbors and participation in improvement correlation [%]

Participation in improvement	Relations with neighbors			
	good	rather good	rather bad	bad
Yes, regularly	14.9	3.3	0	0
Yes, 1–2 times a year	36.8	34.1	40.0	31.8
No, but I would like to	21.3	36.3	40.0	22.7
No, and I do not plan to	27.0	26.4	20.0	45.5

Table 2. Chatting on social media with neighbors and participation in improvement [%]

Participation in improvement	Chatting	No chatting
Yes, regularly	17.6	8.8
Yes, 1–2 times a year	39.5	34.3
No, but I would like to	23.5	25.3
No, and I do not plan to	19.3	31.6

Thus, 'neighborly chats' are an effective tool for forming local self-government institutions. They could potentially make a shift in the focus away from "sharing economy" toward the participatory ecosystem including the collection and extraction of urban data with implications for the regulatory influence of city governments (Barns, 2019).

'LOCAL CHATS' AS BASIS FOR URBAN PARTICIPATION

A qualitative analysis of the content of neighborly chats made it possible to divide them into two groups – '*For everyone*,' and '*For locals*.' This division is based on the hypothesis

that "the communication of local network communities in social media does not just take place in the form of 'public network conversations' but balances between two modes, which can be conveniently called '*neighborly mode*' and '*civic mode*'; these correspond to different types of network publics" (Pavlov, 2016, p. 48).

Yard chats '*For everyone*' are as open as possible – anyone can join in (one does not have to confirm their belonging to the 'yard' community), although the 'backbone' of the participation is usually made up of actual neighbors. Interaction is concentrated around both local problems (improvements of yards, organizations of holidays, etc.) and general political and social issues (there are no clear boundaries between these two areas). However, the spatial factor (directly adjacent territory) is of a secondary importance. The key criterion for presence in this type of chat is not the actual neighborhood but the similarities of the views and values – *that is, only those who share the value-based worldview of each other remain among the permanent participants*, while the 'dissenting' ones are removed from the chat by the administrator quickly enough. Such chats are, first of all, turning into political issues; internal discussions and contradictions are less likely to occur in them, participants as a rule openly demonstrate their political views (there may be calls for participation in actions, offers to sign petitions, etc.), and reposts of news from other chats (also predominantly political ones) can appear. Considering these circumstances, the majority of the participants in '*For everyone*' chats resort to the tactics of maximum anonymity (they use fictitious names, hide personal phone numbers, etc.); this causes certain difficulties in identifying 'locals' (neighbors) and 'strangers' (all of the others).

Yard chats '*For locals*' have a fundamental difference – joining them is possible only after confirming one's place of residence (the administrator performs the control function). The range of identification mechanisms in this case is quite wide – from a request to tell the chat administrator one's address to the request to show a photo of a passport registration page, share one's geolocation, or show the view from one's window. The strictness of the control practices that are used depends on how carefully the yard community guards its borders from 'strangers.' The predominant topics of the messages in the chats '*For locals*' are concentrated around local issues, although essential events that are taking place in the country may be discussed as well (such as elections, the recent constitutional reform, sanctions, etc.). An important feature of the chats '*For locals*' is that *the key criterion for being present in the chat is the actual neighborhood* – participants may not share each other's political views but can be in the same chat and interact exclusively on local issues ('*outside politics*'). In this regard, such a chat has a more debatable nature – conflicts may arise in it due to the different political views, which as a rule end by switching over to the domain of everyday issues (which is confirmed by quotations from chats: "*This chat is about the house, not about politics or the expressions of opinions. Some are against, some are for*"; "*It's a fact that people of different views live in our house*").

Despite the fact that the communication in both cases is tied to a certain urban space (residential yard), *the types of relationships that are formed in* '*For everyone*' *and* '*For locals*' *chats are different*. Communication in the chats of the first type ('*For everyone*') is based on the principle of an '***online community***,' while in the chats 'For locals,' we are now dealing with '***network societies***' (using the terminology of Dutch new-media theorist

Jan van Dijk (van Dijk, 2006). 'Network societies' that are formed on the basis of 'For local neighbors' chats do not solely depend on the local network platform that is used – they can combine various means of online and offline communications (including giving preferences to the latter – for example, participating in yard holidays). In other words, 'network societies' were not solely created thanks to Telegram channels; this means that they can maintain their existence without them (provided that the connecting element is preserved – namely, the neighbors' interest in each other and their yard). In the case of an 'online community,' their existence depends directly on the well-being of the digital platform that it is based upon (after such chats are blocked, the established communities as a rule turn out to be unviable in an offline environment).

'Network societies' are 'communities of practice' that are based on something *common*, not communication; i.e., they are based on common interests that are concentrated in a certain territory that is perceived by all members of the community as "their own." They allow urban residents to see alternative points of view, clearly show the diversity of existing views, develop tolerance and form the ability to find common ground, reach compromises, and develop generally accepted rules of communication – first as 'chat rules' ("*Please, do not descend to insults – we will all continue to live in the same house*"[3]), and subsequently as universal rules of communication ("*Let us hold events that will unite people and not divide us further*"). Due to the fairly strict moderation, the spontaneous communication that occurs in 'network societies' ('networked public talks' (Walker, 2011)) **has a chance to develop into a special form of political culture**. The boundaries of one's 'right to the city' are not always correctly defined by neighbors; this often leads to local conflicts (especially in the context of a socio-political split). In everyday online communication, private interests (for example, the desire to live in a well-maintained yard) are articulated by many users (parameters and criteria for improving the yard that are acceptable to all are developed) and gradually move into the plane of 'generally significant topics' (the desire to have access to the decision-making that concerns the improvement of one's yard); after this, they become the basis for the formation of new values (civil rights and freedoms, participation, responsibility, etc.) – "acting as highly participatory ecosystems for value-sharing means" (Barns, 2019).

In these processes, digital platforms go beyond an instrumental role and become active participants in urban transformations. By facilitating more efficient value-sharing between platform participants, platform ecosystems have been described as "sharing economies" (Barns, 2019). Platforms continually reinforce the intentional interdependencies between the personal and the algorithmic, restructure the nature of interpersonal interaction just as significantly as they restructure coordinates and corral the distribution of information. The results of the survey showed the relationship between getting to know one's neighbors and participating in collective practices – the more actively urban residents communicate with their neighbors (including outside 'neighborly chats'), the more likely they are to participate in improving adjacent areas, yard holidays, joint tea parties, etc. Such hybrids of physical and digital, material and social *are quite often mobilized within the framework of everyday self-government and actually become a "school for democracy."*

[3] Hereinafter, texts in italics indicate quotations from chats.

Unfortunately, the heyday of local neighborhoods chats in Belarus was rather short – in less than a year, many local Telegram chats (including the interactive map of neighborly chats – dze.chat) were recognized as extremist groups by the authorities. The practice of holding the participants of local neighborhood chats administratively liable has endured in Belarus recently. All of this has happened against the background of the serious administrative pressures on civil society (self-organized non-government local festivals are now prohibited, urbanistic NGOs were closed down by court order in 2021, etc.) which displaces the grass-root activism by the top-down administrative decision-making position. For the time being, it is difficult to judge how the new bans have affected the activities of neighborhood communities due to the lack of sufficient empirical data in this area. One can only assume that, when the existing neighborhood chats become more private and secured, the participation of the citizens in them turns out to be more cautious and the grassroots activism involves communication with the city administration to a lesser extent.

The relevance of the study is that it indicates the fundamentally important role of digital communication tools in community management and urban participation. There are no possibilities for urban participation without horizontal interaction, self-government, and local leadership. The weakening of horizontal interaction (by the local chat limitation) and its displacement by an administrative vertical will definitely lead to communication gaps between society and the state. On the contrary, strong neighborhood solidarity could influence the sense of citizens' responsibility and willingness to act together in pursuing common goals – that is to say, it contributes to the participation turn in urban development. For local authorities, urban participations could be a chance for economic relief and the stabilization of a representative democracy system (Dellenbaugh, 2015).

By participating in accessible ways in the transformation of the urban environment, urban residents feel their own importance and involvement in urban life and form a responsible attitude toward the city/town (they learn not to wait for the initiative 'from above' but to act 'here and now'). With this approach, public places 'grow out' of the already existing habitable space without destroying it but, on the contrary, focusing on the needs of the people that live in the neighborhood and turning into a tool for forming a strong local community. In the course of the joint solutions of emerging problems of urban improvement, the structuring of neighborhood communities occurs, the search for resources and supporters is carried out, and local leaders are identified. The resulting group structures and relationships are often quite stable and persist after completing collective improvement activities, making it possible to maintain the high quality of the urban environment. It is 'neighborly chats' that provide urban residents with the opportunity to 'become visible' and draw the attention of city/town managers to the opinion of the 'ordinary person.' It is worth noting that, in the interpretation of David Harvey (Harvey, 2011), 'the right to the city' means (among other things) the right to 'stay' in the city; i.e., the ability to resist the mechanisms and processes (economic, political, and cultural) that seem to 'force' urban residents outside the city limits (for example, forcing them to leave in the event of a significant rise in housing prices or making it impossible to exist in public spaces by introducing bans on gatherings and mass events).

Belarus faced serious domestic and external challenges during the period of 2020–2021. Civil freedom – the most important intangible asset – is the key factor for countering them.

According to the experts of the Fraser Institute[4], the main recommendations for countries whose governments want to create institutions for rapid, long-term, and inclusive economic growth are the following: operational legal and administrative institutions for the protection of private property, the elimination of conflicts of interest in public administration agencies, free trade as a mandatory element of competition, and a *solidary society – as a full-fledged partner in an open dialogue with business and government*. Implementing these simple tips turns a rigid bureaucratized economy into a truly entrepreneurial and popular one. Thus, rehabilitating the digital tools of local self-government (in particular, 'neighborly chats') can be one of the most effective steps for the nearest development.

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CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AS PLATFORM FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF MINSK URBAN SPACE

Creative industries do not make revolutions in city planning but transform the ways of thinking about and practicing urban space development. In the context of Minsk, Belarus, creative industries are a part of the contemporary urban infrastructure transformation that is reestablishing the former Soviet urban space. The aim of this article is to document and analyze the ways that creative industries turn the urban spaces of Minsk into participatory platforms for cultural transformations. The development of these creative industries in Belarus has played a crucial role in transforming urban spaces into new inclusive cities. The distinctive feature of Belarusian creative industries is their embeddedness in the spaces of Soviet cities. Empirically, this text is based on the findings of a qualitative empirical study in the framework of grounded theory. The research seeks to understand the self-narrative and self-identification of the new creative class in Minsk (spring and summer 2018). The respondents were people who are involved in the process of developing creative industries in Belarus.

Keywords: cultural identity, creative industries, participation, Belarus, urban culture, platform

The aim of this article is to document and analyze the ways that creative industries turn the urban spaces of Minsk, Belarus, into participatory platforms for cultural transformations. The article is based on an analysis of 30 semi-structured interviews that were conducted in spring and summer 2018 with various experts from companies within the Belarusian creative industry sector. The interview results were analyzed in the perspective of the grounded theory research method. These interviews were part of a research project on the cultural identity that is promoted by creative industries in Belarus. The key category for this research project is cultural identity, with subcategories of practice, time, and space. This article focuses on the sub-subcategory of [urban] space. Creative industries are a phenomenon of contemporary urban culture; by default, this phenomenon belongs to urban spaces and is actively involved in their rethinking. How do we describe the space within which the interaction takes place and

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the current Belarusian urban culture that is being created? To what extent is this connected to the revitalization of Soviet urban spaces? One of the themes of the interviews were the new places for creative industries in Minsk. The informants most often referred to Kastrychnitskaya and Zybitskaya Streets, the former production facilities of the "Horizont" plant, and others. Many interviews were conducted in these locations. The article traces the effects of the reuse of these specific locations in the city; it shows that a reinterpretation of physical space can be part of the construction of a new self-narrative and, thus, of the construction of a new identity. The challenge is that contemporary Belarusian cities are, by and large, Soviet cities. The Soviet past has a lot of faces and dimensions; it is about toponymy (the names of streets and places) that make it still Soviet. It can be seen in the transformation of private and public spaces and the creation of "third places" (Oldenburg, 1989) as something in between home and work. It is also about a newly emerging mode of power distribution in urban spaces (video surveillance, neighborhood watches, etc.). Creative industries have the potential to transform a Soviet urban space into a new inclusive city. They do not make a revolution in city planning but transform the way of thinking about and practicing urban space development.

IDENTITY-BASED CONSUMPTION: FROM CULTURAL TO CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Having abandoned the search for a single totalizing identity, we continue to search for ourselves in many small differences from others while enjoying common views and values with representatives of the group of which we are a part. Even the most mobile creative class, the representatives of which think of themselves as kinds of nomads and cosmopolitans of the 21st century, is not free from the socio-cultural constraints that are present in society. Personification, individualization, customization – these are many names for one phenomenon of searching for one's own identity. It seems promising to deal with the performative nature of cultural identity given that there is more than one ideal object to which we aspire. Creative industries enable city dwellers to look differently at themselves and their surrounding socially determined space. They influence the transformation of post-Soviet urban spaces, shaping new cultural practices and participating in the creation of new aesthetics in everyday life.

The critique of the mid-twentieth-century cultural industry theory on behalf of twenty-first-century scholars is describing the transition from a cultural industry to creative industries. Here, the reference to the classical text "Dialectic of Enlightenment" by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno is obvious (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972). The situation at the beginning of the 21st century differs from the conditions and the state of society that was analyzed by representatives of the Frankfurt School. The cultural industry in the original sense of the Frankfurt School was focused on the broad masses of people who were deprived of access to advanced levels of education. Creative industries focus on a different social configuration today. Here, not only property but also lifestyle are factors for social stratification. Thus, the transition from cultural to creative industries is not just a return to a long-proposed term. Let

us try to trace how this transformation has become possible and how it has affected media consumption. Cultural capital is the notion at the forefront of explaining the fragmentary nature of the consumption of online information where audiences are forced to navigate among the many news providers that are available online and make certain choices:

> The digital news landscape is increasingly choice-oriented. Choices in the market of cultural goods are never sociologically neutral, however, but rather a way for individuals to produce and reproduce their positions and status. Given its concentration among class factions that are rich in cultural capital, the consumption of 'quality' online news media may, thus, be seen as an act of cultural distinction (Ohlsson et al., 2017, p. 13).

Today, we can observe diagnoses of the crisis of public broadcasting when citizens abandon the consumption of traditional broadcast media in favor of much more individualized, interactive, networked, and personalized media. As a result of this convergence, the devices for media consumption have changed radically, becoming a variety of network devices as terminals for remote operation. Nicholas Garnham's key point about this transformation is that a society's information policy should be regarded as being a part of the creative industry process. "The choice of the term 'creative' rather than 'cultural' is a shorthand reference to the information society and that set of economic analyses and policy arguments to which that term now refers" (Garnham, 2005, p. 20). This may explain the popularity of creative industries in the creative environment of the lobbyists of cultural change. Another explanation of the transition from cultural to creative industries that is necessary to highlight is Stuart Cunningham's take on the examples of Australia and North America. "The concept of creative industries is trying to chart an historical shift from subsidized 'public arts' and broadcast-era media toward new and broader applications of creativity" (Cunningham, 2002, pp. 58–59). These observations allow us to see the political-economic trace in understanding the differences between cultural and creative industries. In creative industries, Andy Pratt sees a "political construct" and notes that "when the creative industries are articulated with the broader cultural field, the dualisms of economic/private of the non-economic/public arts are re-established" (Pratt, 2005, p. 6). This brings us to the definition of creative industries as copyright industries where the first priority is not the opportunity for creativity but the opportunity for copyrighting and the subsequent restrictions of use.

In his introductory chapter of "Creative Industries," John Hartley noted that "The drift from public culture to private life has been accompanied by a vigorous and extended struggle about identity" (Hartley, 2005, p. 17). This can be explained by a human's desire for freedom and comfort but not absolute freedom. Above all, this is the freedom to choose and have a comfortable existence in terms of consumption – not least, the comfort of media consumption. The individualization of the media has led to the fact that people have isolated themselves from others by means of personalized media consumption. This process goes hand in hand with the privatization of public spaces. As a result, the privatization of public life is connected to the blurring of boundaries between a citizen and a consumer. "It is in this dynamic context that the notion of creative identities needs to be seen and where it begins to connect with the creative industries" (Hartley, 2005, p. 108). Virtual space can be the same new public space

where users can create themselves. While "the creative industries are enterprises that monetize (creative) ideas in a consumer economy […], they exploit the commercialization of identity and citizenship" (Hartley, 2005, p. 114). The construction of identity is only possible in the process of conspicuous consumption. In this context, social networks are the same virtual space where we create ourselves.

There is range of critical arguments by urban scholars regarding the instrumentalization of creative industries in urban development. Constructing special creative neighborhoods in city spaces was to become a part of cultural policy – and the vision of meaning of their existence went far beyond economic feasibility. In such a policy, a local place was recognized as a cultural product. This culture-led place was to extract and produce not geographically-based senses but also socio-cultural meanings and values.

> Place-based cultural identity aiding in development is the way in which place reputation can act as an attractor of even more of the same inputs that initially established its cultural identity and competitive advantage in the first place: firms, capital, and skilled labor (Currid, 2009, p. 375).

In his article "Culture that works? Creative industries development in a working-class city," M. Jayne tried to analyze an attempted to revive the small industrial city of Stoke-on-Trent, which degraded after deindustrialization. For a 15-year period, attempts have been made to revitalize the city by creating favorable conditions for the development of creative industries; in reality, however, these creative industries had a minimal impact on rebuilding the city. Jayne explains this as

> the result of both a flawed creative industry strategy and the associated failings of the city to overcome its spatial and economic structural conditions so as to compete in an urban hierarchy dominated by post-industrial and middle-class consumption cultures (Jayne, 2004, p. 208).

In the article "Cultural Quarters as Mechanisms for Urban Regeneration," J. Montgomery considered using the opportunities of cultural industries to revitalize degraded cities. Cultural neighborhoods should not turn into ghettos or any enclosed spaces. In his opinion, "this means that cultural quarters, and indeed the wider notion of city creative economies, cannot be considered in isolation from the geography and characteristics of urban places. Places matter" (Montgomery, 2003, p. 302).

Neighborhoods for creative industries are not just physical locations of offices. "Arts clusters may seek out the broader attributes of certain types of cities but locally require different attributes in their production processes and 'work life,' so to speak" (Grodach et al., 2014, p. 2838). Clusters combine physical locations and conceptual unity for creative industries. Bas van Heur proposed the critical revision of a city space as a place for creative industries and the knowledge-based economy by studying the relationships among accumulation, regulation, and networks of creative industries in an urban context. This made it possible for him to develop a research approach "that takes seriously the cultural turn in social analysis while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of capital accumulation and state regulation" (van Heur, 2010, p. 191). Thus, the development of such clusters is even substantiated in political-economic discourse, as one of the consequences of stimulating the development of

creative industries may be changes in the social (one might say "class") compositions of the inhabitants of these renovated neighborhoods. Such a change in the social composition of a population is an integral part of the gentrification process; this phenomenon has long been included in the agenda of urban studies.

In this case, we can additionally talk about the consequences of the development of creative industries as the emergence of a new class or a new social group – the precariat. Guy Standing, the author of a book on the topic, devotes an entire section to describe those who may be transformed into the new class (Standing, 2011). The representatives of creative industries are at risk with their free schedules, temporary contracts, and part-time employment (and they are simultaneously politically active). Possible comparisons of the precariat in the 21st century with the proletariat in the 20th century highlight the socially vulnerable position of the representatives of creative industries and, as a consequence, a possible interest in changing the social order. The transformation of a society is often simulated in the process of constructing one's own identity. Why change the system if there is a belief in the possibility of changing one's place in it? Once faith disappears, however, transformation will become inevitable.

At the same time, the instrumentalization of cultural industries in urban development creates indirect, often unintended outcomes. Cultural industries can be seen as a constant generator of possible minor differences and variabilities in the forms of certain practices and objects; the consumption of this, in turn, allows us to expand the boundaries for possible identifications with the social environment. The process of constructing a cultural identity is indirect when many secondary and implicit factors affect it:

> Identity is a context-dependent action. Its real content is not consistent within different social settings. The individual will adjust which communicative actions are used according to the setting requirements (Gomez-Estern et al., 2010, p. 244).

This opens the possibility of regarding an urban space as a platform. The City-as-a-Platform concept is deeply connected with the idea that any kind of digital technology supports efforts to establish collaboration instead of competition.

> Platformization – platform urbanism in general, and City-as-a-Platform in particular – is conceptualized as a model of sociotechnical governance supported by digital architecture technologies with open and modular standards that provide the connection between government and society for the co-creation of services and policies of high public value (Repette et al., 2021, p. 2).

The digitization of cultural and social lives transforms imagination and cultural practices about the social dimension of a space. "As digital platforms are woven into urban life, produce urban space, and participate in urban governance, it is vital to interrogate the politics of these socio-technical systems" (Fields et al., 2020, p. 465).

In the book "Instagram and the modern image," Lev Manovich considered the possibility of using Instagram to construct cultural identity. According to him, identity is built with the help of Instagram today; i.e., not only directly on Instagram but also far beyond this social network. In this respect, one can talk about the intersection of creative industries and cultural

identity. From the point of view of Manovich, today's cultural identity is determined by many variations and small differences as well as by the hybridization of already occupied positions. Everything in one's surroundings can be used to make sense of one's own uniqueness, otherness, and difference from others.

> 'Subcultures,' food preferences, and fashion styles give people basic tools to establish and perform their cultural identities. However, digital cameras and editing and publishing tools as exemplified by Instagram provide the crucial mechanism to further refine and 'individualize' these basic identities (Manovich, 2016, p. 20).

Previously, lifestyle choices were important steps toward building one's own identity; however, this is not enough nowadays. Even basic forms of the identity need further customization and personification. As Manovich aptly noted, "lifestyle is not about always doing things. […] To use the term from narratology, lifestyle is often more about »description« than »narration«" (Manovich, 2016, p. 24), because it is also how and what not to do, what not to have. A simple example with one's own selfie against the background of someone else's car does not indicate the ownership of the car but fits perfectly into a certain lifestyle (just like the fact of taking a selfie, by the way).

> And this is why, today, Instagrammism is the style of global design class. […] It is also defined by its visual voice – which is about subtle differences, the power of empty space, visual intelligence, and visual pleasure (Manovich, 2016, p. 25).

The global design class that was mentioned by Manovich can be attributed to creative industries, as this class will not be able to exist outside of them. As a global narrative of creative self-description, Instagrammisms are not only actively used by professionals but also by young aspiring photographers, designers, and other future creatives. For them, the use of Instagram is an obvious mechanism for building their own portfolios and being included in their professions. In this case, Instagram is not so much a mirror as a selfie for the creative class. The metaphor of a mirror refers to reflection and representation, and selfies – to the active development of the space around oneself and the mobile privatization of objects that fall into the frame. Chaotic photo sets, which are aggregated by tags and form unexpected selections, can be metaphorically compared to yeast (which, being in a favorable nutrient medium, starts to grow exponentially). In this case, yeast can be seen as a metaphor for the activities of creative industries today. In contrast to the idea of stationary yeast, it is not only alive but also mobile; i.e., it does not exist simply for the transmission of information or the coexistence on a plane (surface), but it can become the "engine" for the beginning of movement in society under certain conditions. In order to start the fermentation, a nutrient medium is required; the process itself is accompanied by the release of energy. This chemical-biological explanation of this process can be a metaphorical illustration of how creative industries and the cultural identity of its representatives can be linked among each other and linked to the process of urban space re-establishment.

The conducted interviews suggest that, in Minsk, Belarus, we can find a lot of evidence that creative industries act not merely like businesses but also work on the creation of a cultural

infrastructure or an independent cultural nutrient medium. When occupied and transformed by creative industries, places establish new rules for participation. This is especially active participation when "citizens as platform users are not simply passive consumers of data; their sites of complex entanglements are not simply reduced to data points in an abstracted system view of acity" (Barns, 2020, pp. 6–7). This is the case when everyday urban culture transforms citizens' behavior and their ways of thinking.

> As global platforms have evolved from spaces of connection and socialization to become major infrastructures upon which much of modern life depends, their dominance has provoked myriad calls to "think infrastructurally" about how platform intermediation actually works (Barns, 2019, p. 2).

The development of creative industries in Belarus has played a crucial role in the transformations of urban space. The first of these places were recognized as "ghettos" for members of the creative class, but this new way of life soon became more popular and ventured to start a new urban sociality.

EMPIRICAL DATA DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHOD

This text is based on the findings of a qualitative empirical study; the research sought to understand the self-narrative and self-identification of the new creative class in Minsk. In the spring and summer of 2018, I performed a large empirical survey in Belarus and conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 experts in different types of companies in the Belarusian creative industries sector. I adhered to the grounded theory methodology. There was a broad spectrum of problems discussed; one was about the potential of creative industries for contemporary cities in Belarus. I used a "snowball sampling" method to collect interlocutors for interviews. Theoretical sampling was used instead of probability sampling. Upon completion of the interviewing, the respondents were asked to name people with whom they thought it would make sense to talk. If a person was named two times or more, he/she was asked to participate in an interview. The most famous person in this area was named eight times. My respondents were persons who were involved in the process of developing creative industries in Belarus; they were from the advertising sector, creative spaces, galleries, media, cafes, festivals, etc. All of them were owners of businesses in the sphere of creative industries, or they occupied top position in their companies.

The interviews were conducted in the Belarusian and Russian languages. The transcripts of the interviews were processed in the analytical program (MaxQDA, 2018) with a three-step coding process (open, selective, and axial). Analytical procedures that were methodologically based on selective and axial coding were already carried out – taking the results of open coding into account. The open coding was applied to the transcribed texts; this made it possible to break down the monolithic statements of the experts into meaningful units. Then, I proceeded to two other coding practices: axial, and selective. These are two multi-directional strategies that allowed me to get a multidimensional result of the whole work. Key category and subcategories were also formulated during the coding process. Under theoretical saturation,

it was necessary to understand the absence of fundamentally new information and a significant number of repetitions of what was articulated during the previous interviews. The result of the study made it possible to create a framework for substantiating the proposed theory of the mode that creative industries influence the construction of cultural identity. The text provides excerpts from the interviews; references to them are as follows: "*Words of the expert*" <152.19.46: 20>. In quotation marks was a fragment of an expert's speech, and the numbers in […] were coded (the duration, the language and date of the interview, and the paragraph number in the transcribed text of the conversation). The direct speech of the respondents is provided to guarantee the anthropological authenticity and presentation of the narrative of the self-description by people who were involved in creative industries in Belarus.

LOGIC OF PLATFORMIZATION IN CULTURE-LED URBAN DEVELOPMENT

This article emphasizes the cultural dimension of creative industries, not an economic one. As a global phenomenon with local outputs, creative industries are related to urban culture by default in this view and can be recognized as a platform for citizen cooperation and identity formation. In the political-economic approach, thinking about creative industries is very much related to the functioning of various kinds of economic institutions (van Heur, 2010); we can assume that this is the reason that they work. Creative projects that have emerged in Belarus in recent decades could remain purely creative endeavors, but some of them have been transformed into businesses. And "*it is a completely normal proper sustainable ecosystem that feeds itself. It is just borrowing the right literate business practices. We will still say that this is a business,* […] *even implementing non-profit projects, we work one way or another according to the rules of business. No one excludes the rent and taxes that we pay on an equal footing with any of our other business colleagues, regardless of whether we present a cultural project (almost free of charge) or sell sausages*" <192.58.58: 18>. Despite the fact that some people in creative industries do not see themselves as part of the sector but simply as part of a business, creative industries can have second function: "*entertainment or service (and you can be a creator and develop in what unites around this place of people) creates communication platforms and begins to influence the city through the fact that the creative core is emerging*" <290.19.97: 46>. The commercial component of creative industries is successfully fitting into an urban space and the new forms of cultural consumption that are described above. It does not have to happen on a gigantic scale. "*In order to have a culture of consumption, you need shopping malls. If you go to some not very large Belarusian city where these malls were built, then there are people hanging out. But it is not urban culture. Urban culture, in my opinion, is the streets of the city center where you can just walk without consuming and feel very, very comfortable. Social space, continuity of the environment, active interaction of people*" <162.58.62: 8>. The respondents mentioned various city festivals as new forms of social interaction. Such festivals have become very popular and demanded among city dwellers: "*Festivals are just a direct hit for the Belarusian*

consumer. The Belarusian consumer is a cultural consumer; he or she first of all wants to get something in return […] *The Belarusian consumer, literally and figuratively, has not yet eaten this urban culture.* […] *The city just becomes more owned by the people who live here, they just become the crossroads between work and home, from parents to friends.* […] *It is clear that all of these initiatives are of a commercial nature*" <185.58.78: 20>.

At the same time, the respondents were attracted not by the commercial nature but by the possibility of inclusion and involvement: "*There are several stages of interest in consumption* […]. *If you decide to buy coffee and it is important for you to be involved in the process, then the service is important*" <192.58.54: 74>. For other respondents, the possibility of the new consumer practices that become possible in specific spaces is crucial. This fits into Michel Foucault's concept of "heterotopia" (Foucault, 1986), as it is normative behavior in heterotopic spaces that may explain the appeal of the new practices that are offered by creative industries: "*They cultivate new practices as we come into these spaces, as we create them, as we interact with others*" <162.58.61: 3>. The frivolous character of the consumer's attitude toward culture does not deny the seriousness of the creative industries' impact; sometimes playing around and just imagining possible options for the future can make them real. This is like trying to formulate the same attractive project of the future when, in addition to abstract fantasies, implementation attempts are needed to find out its viability. Through the creation of diverse communities that are formally distant from social-political life, creative industries contribute to the creation of new actors with their aims. These actors can be called public activists, concerned citizens, and creative entrepreneurs. When "*no one wanted to be a leader in some areas and issues to fight for something*" <185.58.58: 62>, creative entrepreneurs understand that they will not be able to become the "government" and radically change the field of activity. This is because, unlike others, their activities are localized in the city space. The active use of digital technologies as intermediaries for the transformation of urban space creates a "new digital version of a theatrocratic society […] with the possibility to imitate professional or quasi-professional statuses" (Liubimau, 2014).

Among the respondents of the interviews, the activities of creative industries as platforms for civic participation and the opportunities that they offer are sometimes perceived as practices that create 'cultural ghettos.' These are the places of otherness that can be attractive. In such places, formally forbidden activities are possible; in this sense, it repeats the mechanism of cultural hegemony. Despite the potentially mass nature of their products' consumption, Minsk creative industries are creating a distinctive audience that strives for hegemony in imposing taste and style as well as in shaping consumption practices. The changes thus occurring in the creative industries' locations in Minsk are inevitably noticeable to everyone who can observe these spaces. On the one hand, it is possible to talk about the intangible nature of the results of the activities of creative industries, and on the other hand, the results of their activities affect the daily practices of people who can be completely unrelated to this sphere; then, we could recognize the tendency of the expansion of 'cultural ghettos.' If our space is tied to a certain mode of communication and is expanded as much as possible throughout Belarus, then the whole of Belarus becomes such a 'cultural ghetto.' Then, it is not a ghetto anymore but a new condition of culture and society.

IMPACTS OF URBAN CULTURE-LED DEVELOPMENT IN FORMER SOVIET CITY

One of the tasks for creative industries in Belarus is to create an attractive project for the future through consumption (in opposition to the Soviet past). According to the respondents, it is not a triumphant march of the Enlightenment project, as everything rests on rather blurred ideals and axiological guidelines: "*There is a huge number of people who have some values, simple enough – the value of a comfortable and relatively free life. There is no task to create, to change the world – it is not their value. There is a value of a nice and good contemporary life*" <192.58.78: 22>. Reflections on contemporary Belarusian cities are impossible in isolation from the pasts of these cities. The well-known Khrushchev's panels that are typical of the past create the illusory unity and uniformity of former Soviet cities when "*the only thing that unites – is Soviet buildings*" <179.19.35: 20>. At the same time, it is not a new research problem. Almost a hundred years ago (1924), Vladimir Picheta wrote the following when studying the state of the Belarusian urban culture of the early twentieth century:

> Belarusian cities have lost their Belarusian character. The cities had a large Polish, Jewish, and Russian population. The urban intelligentsia was either Polish or Russian. Educated in traditions far from Belarusian culture, the urban intelligentsia not only did not want to accept this desire for national and cultural revival but treated it with the usual disrespect, looking at this movement as something artificial, unnecessary in modern culture (Picheta, 1924, p. 19).

A century later, these remarks are still relevant. Belarusian uniqueness outside the cities is clear and meaningful: "*Belarusian landscapes can calm people, and this national Zen is really present: in nature, architecture, art, people*" <060.58.44: 48>. However it is more complicated with urban spaces. "*It's like machines brought some new ones to an enterprise and they bury them because they do not know what to do with them and work on*" <179.19.35: 20>. At the same time, "*creative industries originally is an urban phenomenon, it is about the city*" <192.58.78: 62>. Yet, what is a contemporary Belarusian city? According to which vision of the world is this particular urban space formed?

With nearly a thousand years of history, today's Minsk exists in a space that was created as a model example of the Soviet understanding of social space: "*Minsk is a Soviet city, and even what is happening now with the restoration of the city center – it is all a Stalinist prism. It is the thinking we were taught in the 30s and 50s of the 20th century* […] *We don't have village houses, we have a Soviet city, with a Soviet rethinking at the moment, and we just need to understand what we are doing wrong now*" <162.58.62: 30>. Nowadays, this context of the Soviet city is confronted with a post-industrial understanding of the city. To understand today's context, it is necessary to look at the way the city has changed and developed. "*For a long time, Minsk lagged behind other Soviet cities in the number of public functions. Then, of course, it caught up.* […] *And the water-green diameter – this project failed because we simply do not have enough people to actively use this public space; i.e., it is possible to design 80 cinemas, but if there are only 2, the remaining 78 will not be able to exist*" <162.58.62: 4>. According to one of the respondents, this specific development of Minsk was perfectly described by German researcher Thomas Bohn in the book "Minsk

Phenomenon" (Bohn, 2013). "*Minsk was one of the fastest growing cities in the world.* […] *And the Minsk phenomenon is not so much in the speed of city growth as in the process of the assimilation of rural residents by the city. There was what he called 'the proclamation of the city.' Minsk has been under pressure from rural culture for a very long time, especially since the mid-1960s and 1970s.* […] *And this continued until the 80s, when Malinovka was inhabited after the Chernobyl disaster.* […] *The movement of the rural culture into the city is well described at the level of academic research*" <162.58.62: 14>. The transition of the village to the city is culturally described and conceptualized by Mikhas' Stral'tsows "hay on asphalt" metaphor (Stral'tsow, 2015, p. 147).

Today, consumption practices are gradually affecting the value mechanisms in the field of Minsk urban culture. The activities of creative industries are focused on the city and its inhabitants. In this respect, it is not the buildings but the social and cultural dimension in the urban spaces that require research attention. How and with whom will communication take place in urban spaces? In this regard, one should look at the city as a space where individuals act as agents of social transformation. My interview partners are aware of the international context: "*Bilbao phenomenon – a famous Spanish city in crisis, businesses did not work. How to live on? Are we closing the factories, moving to other cities? And here, the representatives of the future creative industry came and realized that it was possible to work with abandoned factories*" <151.58.82: 13>. In the interviews, Minsk is repeatedly compared with the other Belarusian cities from a regional context. "*Minsk has not started to develop as a multinational city, like Moscow, gathering visiting migrant workers, it is not a rich city, it is a city with more features of a province, more a provincial town than a capital*" <184.58.80: 12>. Here, one can recognize the difference between the provincialism of the Soviet era and the provincialism in the European context (the European cultural space of creative industries). The evidence of this entry can be an assessment of the quality of the cultural events that are taking place in Belarus. An example of this is as follows: "*People say that Minsk has become more interesting than Vilnius – this is also such an important indicator*" <162.58.62: 2>.

The interview partners also pointed to local features: "*Many people noticed that, when the event ended, it was almost perfectly clean*" <089.19.55: 6>. To avoid the restrictions of the Soviet urban space, "*one should not directly apply to any folk houses there. If they write books about Belarusian housing, they run into this contradiction again: urban culture versus rural culture, Belarusian culture or non-Belarusian, and this must also be overcome*" <162.58.62: 28>. One of the possible options for overcoming this division can be found in the unique urban culture. "*These are urban values, this is communication in public space, this is the ability to spend money in public spaces for one's own pleasure. Virtually all people of my parents' generation do not understand how you can go to town and spend ten times more money for a cup of coffee than it actually costs. Among young people, however, there are many more people who think differently, and people are gradually mastering this urban culture – the city is growing. It is very good.* […] *It requires money and culture*" <162.58.62: 6>. The mechanism of enjoying conspicuous consumption can be seen as an opportunity to build one's own identity and distinctiveness as compared to others. This can be interpreted as the process when Soviet monotonous urban space is diversified by the practice of conspicuous

consumption: "*The effect of a big city, many social classes, and these classes compete with each other for some of their features, some signs of fashion, there is already a movement toward symbolic capital*" <184.58.80: 10>.

Sometimes, there is misunderstanding about those consumption practices that are supposed to be imitated and adapted to Belarusian conditions: "*in a European city, this is considered normal, and it is cool to live in the center of an oasis, surrounded by people.*" <162.58.62: 42>. Perhaps it is also explained by the fact that "*we think about the interior and very often do not think about the rights, about the city, about the public spaces they should be. It should be interactive for communication, etc. The creative industries, without even thinking about it, are already changing this space. By holding a festival where people of different ages, different statuses, and different cultures gather, they create conditions, a platform for interaction, mutual understanding, multiculturalism, and something else that will not exist under normal conditions*" <151.58.82: 15>. Creative value can be developed only where representatives of different social groups meet. "*If I used to be interested in preserving my identity, made me strong so I didn't change. Everyone longed for strength and tried to remain themselves. But it is self-deception and deception on the part of the seller.* […] *Now, we openly say we are selling change, you will not remain yourself, you will acquire a new identity or complete it in some way. I believe that I am free to build my own identity*" <192.58.78: 66>. The constant activity of creative industries against the background of the Soviet urban space actually leads to the fact that "*we are re-creating the urban Belarusian culture*" <290.19.97: 78>. However, this is not created in a vacuum but in the "interiors" of former Soviet urban spaces, which are not always conducive to experimentation: "*for the creative industries have a very high need for investment to be done; but at the same time, the investment potential is very small*" <192.58.78: 72>.

CONCLUSION

Creative industries can be understood as representing a platform for cooperation. In the Minsk context, they are a part of the contemporary urban infrastructure that re-establishes the former Soviet urban space. This article presents an analysis of the role of creative industries in the process of transforming Minsk's urban space. Starting as an attempt to rethink Soviet heritage, this leads to the creation of "new third places" that not only fulfill their utilitarian functions but also act as heterotopias for new cultural practices. Then, they are transformed into 'cultural ghettos' that are not stigmatized; according to the logic of cultural hegemony, they instead offer new options for civic participation. This study can be viewed in a historical perspective as an example of the potential of creative industries in the transformation of the process of social becoming. This empirical study (which was conducted in 2018) offers a key to find the roots of massive civic activization that took place in Belarus in 2020. This is not a prediction of the future, but it allows for talking about creative industries as yeast for the "fermentation" of cultural identity. Initially, creative industries in Belarus existed on the margin. In fact, overcoming the situation of a ghetto and the transition to the mainstream

in the late 2010s can be considered to be their greatest achievement. When the opportunity arises, the representatives of online communities go offline and continue their own activities far beyond the Internet.

The global project of creative industries necessarily has local boundaries. It is the search for that unique and inimitable combination of the global and the local that offers its own vision of globalization to the world. An indirect result of reflecting on the global project may be a rethinking of the phenomenon of borders: cultural, ethnic, and social. Invisible social boundaries can both divide urban space and create opportunities for the shared use of urban infrastructure and for a better understanding and implementation of 'the right to the city' concept. Creative industries directly belong to urban culture. The distinctive feature of Belarusian creative industries is the space of a Soviet city. Here, one can recognize a symbiosis of the capitalist logic of the development of creative industries and of physical and symbolic space of the former Soviet city.

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HOW TO DEVELOP CONNECTIVE DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR URBAN ACTIVISM IN UNFREE COUNTRY: CASE OF "ROBIM GOOD" PROJECT

This article aims to analyze the "Robim Good" project – a digital platform for sharing urban knowledge and info about upcoming local campaigns. A vacuum among urban initiatives was established in Belarus because of the repressive policy of the authoritarian regime. As a result, around 965 non-profit organizations have been shut down. Nonetheless, there was a demand from activists to create a safe managerial organization that focused on urbanism. The "Robim Good" project became a solution. The research question is as follows: what is the value orientation of the analyzed digital platform that attracts new participants? The paper applies the value-based approach in NGO engagement. The analysis shows that one of the main promoted values and key characteristics of the digital ecosystem is security, which is directed at overcoming the dangers of the unpredictable regime. Subsequently, "Robim Good" has been able to engage volunteers and survive after a year of activity.

Keywords: digital transformation, platform, digital ecosystem, online participation, authoritarianism

The digital transformation of non-profit organizations has been accelerated since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world. The digitalization of non-governmental organizations in Belarus has been intensified due to state repression that has targeted civil society since the protests in 2020. Primarily, online participatory tools offer opportunities to people who may not be able to attend offline meetings because of safety reasons, distance, or physical constraints (Afzalan and Muller, 2018, p. 162). Regarding Belarusian NGOs, employees relocate abroad to avoid any risk that is specifically associated with the repressive policy. Despite such circumstances as prominent distances among the staff and volunteers, some organizations continue to operate by taking advantage of the benefit of technology. For instance, Belarusian ecological NGO "Ecohome" was eliminated by the authorities after a notice from the Ministry of Justice. Its managers (some of whom were detained or interrogated in 2020) decided to relocate the office from Minsk to Vilnius, consequently digitalizing its activities. This fact allowed them to continue monitoring air-quality and radiation levels

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with the help of a volunteer network – communication within which happened in Telegram chats. Besides transferring special equipment for measurements by mail, "Ecohome" consults civilians on their ecological rights, organizing free eco-consultation service "Green Phone" on Telegram, Viber, Instagram, Odnoklassniki, VK, Facebook, via email, and in a Telegram chatbot. Without a doubt, the main reasons for the relocation and subsequent digitalization were to escape persecution and facilitate engagement across geographies and citizens.

Why are Belarusian NGOs in danger? The thing is, the authoritarian regime stigmatizes and recognizes independent formations as drivers for electoral revolution. "These vile 1500 non-profit organizations [...] it's clear what they have been doing. They were financed from outside […]," declared Belarusian dictator A. Lukašenka (DW, 2021). With this, he has signaled to the apparatus to start the so-called *verification* of NGOs. The same signal that was disseminated on TV and the Internet came from a close circle around the politician; for example, from the ex-Foreign Minister U. Makiej: "Any further tightening of sanctions will lead to the fact that civil society will cease to exist. And it will be, I think, absolutely justified in this situation […]" (Belsat, 2021). Thus, the 'institutional uncertainty' of authoritarianism forces the apparatus to keep horizontal threats at bay and to continue its systematic repression against civil society since the protests after the fraudulent presidential election of 2020 (Schedler, 2013, p. 47). As a consequence, more than 40,000 people have passed through the detention system, 11,000 criminal cases have been opened, 3120 people are in prison due to the protests, 10 or so people were killed because of their political views, and around 965 non-profit organizations have been closed or are still in the process of elimination (Lawtrend, 2022).

On the one hand, some of the eliminated NGOs were replaced by pro-authoritarian simulacra whose role is to structure a 'disciplinary society.' For example, human-rights group "Center Systematic Human Rights" mostly criticizes the policy of EU states instead of focusing on the situation in Belarus. On the other hand, NGOs that are specialized in urbanism (such as Miensk Urban Platform or the "Take Care" project) stopped activity and were not replaced at the time, creating a vacuum among urban initiatives. Nonetheless, there was a demand from activists who were located in Belarus and forced to move online to launch a managerial and consulting organization. The "Robim Good" urban project was initiated due to this fact.

This article poses the research question as follows: what is the value orientation of the analyzed digital platform that attracts new participants?

Content analysis and a short online survey were applied. The former covered social media posts; for instance, 18 promotional Instagram posts were selected and uploaded to QDA Miner software. Words that were associated with safety like "security," "anonymous," "verification," and "Telegram chatbot" (a chat platform that provides anonymity) were counted and coded. The latter consisted of a short online survey on the perception of urban volunteer opportunities in Belarus and was conducted on the "Robim Good" channels (Telegram and Instagram). This contained the following question: "Are you ready to engage in volunteer campaigns?" The options to answer were as follows: "I'm ready," "Yes, but it depends on what kind of campaign," "No, I don't have time," or "No, I'm worried about my safety." In all, 137 people took part in the short survey, which was 6% of the total audience.

The paper applies the value-based approach in the NGOs' engagement to the analysis of the volunteers' participation in urban campaigns. The acceptance of a technological platform

basically relies on the fact that "NGO volunteers are more interested in the values of the organization itself and the social causes that it defends, rather than on the visual image or the brand name" (Saura et al., 2020). The iconographic design, the identity of the web pages, and the visual content played minor roles. Usually, the visual identity of a platform merely contributes to the online reputation of NGOs that can positively affect organizational promotion. Volunteers perceive the utility of a digital platform because of the content and words that form the messages that they share: "These messages can influence users in different ways about their intention of use and behavior when they interact with the content on digital ecosystems" (Saura et al., 2020). From this point of view, the values of a digital platform become a crucial component in attracting volunteers and promoting urban campaigns.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital participation and platform studies are well-developed topics. Prominent contributors exist, such as scientists J. van Dijk and A. van Deursen. According to them, the motives for spending time on the Internet are more related to shopping and career rather than social interaction. Besides, the motive for connecting with virtual groups is indicated as one of the lowest motivations (van Dijk and Deursen, 2014, p. 517). Another issue is the low effectiveness of online conversations and debates:

> Frequently, the debate was dominated by a few people. Finally, there was not much pressure to come to a conclusion, let alone reach consensus in electronic debates as compared to face-to-face discussions. There were only weak attempts to resolve a collectively perceived problem (van Dijk, 2013, p. 7).

The argumentation definitely needs to be examined by the "Robim Good" case. Nevertheless, certain researchers evaluate digital participation as producing social effects after all:

> The literature currently suggests that, in many cases, online and offline activism correlate, either because people's online and offline behaviors are intertwined or because one person's online activism can mobilize others for offline protest (Greijdanus et al., 2020).

It is believed that online activism can facilitate offline actions through advertising and management. For example, some of the non-profit organizations in Spain recruit volunteers with the help of digital tools, thereby promoting offline projects and achieving organizational goals. The recruiting process is successful if some favorable conditions are met: NGOs place importance on the values of an organization and are not centered on the graphical nor design elements (Saura et al., 2020). Researcher D. Mercea revealed the significant contribution of online communication to the mobilization of the unaffiliated in Romania and the UK. The scientist concluded:

> At the high-risk event, the unaffiliated seemed to have a sense that using the Internet to prepare for their participation had influenced their decision to attend. At a low-risk protest, the unaffiliates relied exclusively on the Internet to glean information about the event and interact with the organizers (Mercea, 2012).

Meanwhile, platform studies highlight how platforms' affordances simultaneously allow and constrain expression as well as how technical, social, and economic concerns determine platforms' structures, functions, and use (Plantin, 2018, p. 298). At the same time, platform studies show how platforms recalibrate how citizens are used to know, interact, document, and traverse (Barns, 2019, p. 10). They are simply represented as a mode of digital socio-spatiality. For example, the platform model of Uber acts as a standard for future transport services. Airbnb releases "latent space" within existing buildings and allows tourists to be able to "live like a local" (Barns, 2019, p. 5).

Thus, the "Robim Good" case lies at the intersection of different optics, such as digital participation and platform studies. However, there is a gap in the literature that is dedicated to the comprehensive research of digital platforms in unfree countries (Greijdanus et al., 2020). This is why the current research contributes to the topics of digital participation, platform studies, and comparative authoritarianism.

DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM OF "ROBIM GOOD" BETS ON SECURITY

A digital platform is a centrally controlled and designed system that constitutes a model for innovative products (Plantin et al., 2018, p. 299). Some of the basic characteristics of a platform are as follows: "many-to-many" form of content-sharing between producers and consumers, facilitation and maximization of interaction, co-creation, and participation (Barns, 2018, p. 4). "Robim Good" is a platform on the robimgood.org website that was launched on September 21, 2021, for exchanging urban experiences and information about upcoming local campaigns among citizens, local activists, and experts. The reason for the launch was described in an interview by the manager of the project (his/her name and surname are not mentioned for security reasons):

> In general, there was a request from activists since they had been saying that there was no safe platform that would collect initiatives (so that you know what kind of initiatives you can join). Moreover, we wanted to help them with our expertise to implement their projects, since most often it's difficult to understand where to start, where to go, and to whom to write appeals, how to challenge municipal decisions and monitor their adoption.

As seen, one of the purposes of the project is to help citizens by providing expertise on improving living conditions in their yards, streets, districts, villages, towns, or cities. Not only does the website function, but the whole digital ecosystem does. In short, the digital ecosystem consists of interconnected sets of services through which users fulfill various cross-sectoral needs in one integrated experience (Chung et al., 2020). Thus, the urban project is represented by different channels with different purposes that are combined under urban topics (Tab. 1).

First, the platform provides step-by-step consultations and legal and documentary support for users who make requests on a Telegram chatbot or directly through a moderator on Telegram (the link is provided on the website). According to the manager, the top two requests for consultations were as follows: "How to improve my yard" and "How to make a mural in my neighborhood." Experts package textual support with information that concerns legal

grounds, responsible institutions, and opportunities to improve a space. At the same time, they draft an appeal that could be sent online to these institutions, asking officials to improve a common space by using local budgets.

Table 1. Digital ecosystem of "Robim Good"

Channels	Links	Tasks
Website	robimgood.org	publishing of initiatives, documents, and experiences on "Map," link to chatbot
Telegram	t.me/robimgood_bot t.me/robim_good_chat t.me/robim_good t.me/Robimgoodmoderator	step-by-step consultations, discussions, volunteer network, verification, posting
Instagram	instagram.com/robim.good	posts on urban topics, video reviews, advertisement, communication
Facebook	facebook.com/robimgoodpage	posting
Zoom	team sends link by email after registration and verification	#urbantalks, online meetings, discussions

"Robim Good" is similar to Public Service 115.бел to a certain extent, whose function is to collect requests from citizens about infrastructural problems in cities and react to them. However, there are at least three issues with the service: it does not always respond, it belongs to the repressive state, and it does not promote initiatives.

Second, one of the aims of "Robim Good" is to facilitate the interaction and participation of users by motivating them to share and publish their initiatives and experiences in campaigning on the interactive "map" (robimgood.org/#map). According to the robimgood.org website, 32 active initiatives are currently on the interactive map. All of these initiatives passed through the procedures of verification and consultation. There are already completed projects: for instance, the improvement of the forest park in Navapolack, the organization of an animal shelter in Barysaŭ, the renovation of a dog-walking area in Navapolack, and the yard updating in Vierchniadzvinsk. Most of these began online and were accompanied by local volunteer support. Posted on the "map," social networks, and Telegram, the initiatives are usually promoted by "Robim Good" if the applicants do not mind. This means that the team looks for volunteers, media coverage, and financing. With this, applicants can also easily post their successfully completed campaigns, attach accompanying legal documentation for solutions to problems, and join initiatives as volunteers by making requests through a chatbot or moderator.

Third, "Robim Good" has its own initiated campaigns; for example, the campaign against destroying a Soviet mosaic in Minsk, participation in a design-concept competition in Viciebsk, online lectures, and offline volunteering actions for improving the local infrastructures of Belarusian cities. Local authorities were ordered to paint over a Soviet mosaic in Minsk; because of this, the team organized a campaign to protect a mosaic. The appeal to the municipality was prepared together with the online community and signed online by about 300 citizens.

A competition that was dedicated to reorganizing public spaces in Viciebsk was announced by the local municipality in 2022. The campaign united the team of "Robim Good", volunteers, and locals in elaborating a design concept for Victory Square. Corresponding to the manager, the campaign achieved results from online discussions via Zoom, and a design concept was already completed. The educational component is represented by public lectures called #urbantalks, whose roles are connecting Belarusian urbanists and activists. There are lectures and seminars on urban development in Belarus that are promoted by targeting on Instagram. The topics that were discussed on Zoom were dedicated to comfortable cities, citizen participation in Belarus, cycling in the EU and Belarus, and public debate as a mechanism of influence.

How exactly does the "Robim Good" team convince its users of the safety of this platform? The answer is this: by promoting security, which is practically achieved by value orientation, verifications of actors, and Telegram-based usage. According to the content analysis, "Robim Good" promotes the value of safety. A software QDA Miner showed that there are 13 mentions of "security" (8 times) and other words that are associated with safety, such as "anonymous" (twice), "verification" (once), and "Telegram chatbot" (twice) within 18 promotional Instagram posts (8 posts also mentioned the value of security). There are mentions on the website as well. "All 'Robim Good' initiatives run exclusively within the law system of the Republic of Belarus. A chatbot does not ask to necessarily leave your data," claims the website.

Key characteristics also mean that a request in a chatbot can be made anonymously, and consultations are completely free. All requests (and volunteers who are willing to join campaigns) are verified by a moderator through interviews, and double checked. It is worth saying that Telegram is considered to be a secure means of communication and the second-most-popular messenger in Belarus (Auseyushkin, 2021). It provides a confident privacy policy: all of the stored data is heavily encrypted so that even local Telegram engineers cannot gain access. Furthermore, the "Robim Good" project keeps its agenda outside political topics to avoid the unwanted attention of the authorities. This is controlled by a moderator and a copywriter. "For security reasons, do not repost from channels recognized as «extremist»", t.me/robim_good_chat says.

To sum up, the urban digital platform is primarily about interactions among citizens, activists, and experts to facilitate engagement and urban knowledge. Resulting from digital participation, the platform develops the self-organization of communities and achieves certain goals by using a secure digital ecosystem.

CREDIBILITY

It is worth mentioning that the level of the participation of Belarusians in NGO activities is low. As reported by the Center for East European and International Studies (ZOiS), "only about 4% of respondents had worked for a non-governmental organization or a political party" (ZOiS Report 3, 2021, p. 12). According to ZOiS, Belarusian society is characterized by low social trust (ZOiS Report 3, 2021, p. 13). In such a context that is conditioned by state repression against civil society, an NGO operates.

A low level of social trust is affected by the authoritarian regime that keeps citizens at bay and prevents initiatives and community-building. This is why a digital platform should

focus on security issues, verifications, and trusted channels to convince users of the greater advantages of participation rather than non-participation. How are messages effectively sent to users and volunteers to convey credibility? "Robim Good" relies on a value-based approach, providing a secure digital ecosystem and predictable organizational behavior. The project promotes itself mostly by targeted ads on Instagram, by collaboration with secure accounts, and media that is "permitted" by the authorities (such as CityDog.io and Realt.by).

Based on the results of an online survey entitled "Are you ready to engage in volunteer campaigns?" on Instagram (2140 followers) and Telegram (145 followers) in August 2022, the majority of the respondents were ready to become volunteers (59 and 84%, respectively). The answers were represented as follows: "I'm ready" (both 33%), "Yes, but it depends on what kind of campaign" (26% and 51%, respectively), "No, I don't have a time" (19% and 8%, respectively), and "No, I'm worrying about my security" (22% and 8%, respectively). In all, 137 people took part in the short survey (which was 6% of the total audience).

Even though the audiences were mostly from Minsk and between 25 and 34 years old, the results showed differences between social networks and messengers: Telegram has more confident users who feel safe.

DISCUSSION

The management of "Robim Good" is based on a flexible team that is not necessarily linked to a specific geographical point. Distancing themselves from the physical place of their offline activities and the peculiarity of a digital ecosystem protects them from an unpredictable repressive regime.

The same can be said for volunteer networks that are verified by moderators and formed for specific campaigns and then break apart. However, it cannot be said with certainty that this is related to "unhidden" activists who communicate directly with state institutions to resolve any emerging needs. For this reason, the platform behaves as an initiative that is not politically oriented to somehow guarantee safety. The content analysis showed that the central message that accompanies the promotional texts of "Robim Good" is security. Foremost, security relates to protection from acts of violence (Martin, 1999). The dynamics of local support by providing anonymity and verification, coordination by flexibility, and local 'bridge-building' with "permitted" organizations certainly contribute to the protection but, unfortunately, do not provide an absolute guarantee for "unhidden" volunteers due to the unpredictable regime.

Also, the specifics of the platform are that most online activities are on Telegram, which Belarusians perceive as a relatively safe platform. It is the second-most-popular messenger in Belarus with the so-called 'digital underground state' (Avseyushkin, 2021).

At the same time, the digital platform showed the usefulness of online participatory tools. According to the manager, discussions on Telegram and Zoom came to conclusions and achieved practical results (petition, design-concept) that refuted skeptical views regarding online participation. One more observation of the manager is that volunteers use the urban knowledge that the platform provides in such online conversations, showing mutual influence.

Thus, the case of "Robim Good" likely reveals some explicit aspects of the livability of an NGO under an authoritarian regime: a digital platform, and clear and predictable value-based organizational behavior.

Considering that the ZOiS survey that was dedicated to social trust in Belarus was conducted in December 2020 (before the sharp increase in the digitalization of NGOs), there is a need for broader evidence of credibility in digital platforms and online participation in Belarus to examine their viability.

CONCLUSION

In short, Belarusian Telegram users can receive step-by-step instructions on resolving urban issues and promote their initiatives on the interactive "map," social networks, and messenger. To consult with the team of urban experts from "Robim Good," they leave a request through a chatbot or text a moderator directly. In addition, the robimgood.org platform aims to exchange urban knowledge and info about upcoming local campaigns among citizens, activists, and experts. The project also elaborates its own online and offline initiatives using Facebook, Zoom, Telegram, Instagram, and its website.

Why are people not afraid to leave their digital footprints here? Because "Robim Good" promotes the value of security, verifies actors, and uses Telegram-based communication. All initiatives and volunteers who are willing to join urban campaigns are carefully verified by a moderator, while Telegram provides a confident privacy policy: all data is stored encrypted. As a result, "Robim Good" was able to survive after a year of activity, promoting around 32 different campaigns up until now. An online survey showed that users of "Robim Good" are ready to be volunteers despite the fact that repression is going on in Belarus. Probably, the project has created a trustworthy platform – an example that can be followed by other NGOs that work under the pressure of authoritarianism.

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SHIFT IN BALANCE: UK PERSPECTIVE ON DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT ADDRESSED BY PARTICIPATORY TURN AND GAMIFICATION

This paper provides a conceptual theoretical review of participatory turn and gamification from a United Kingdom (UK) perspective. Democratic deficit is a perennial problem in urban-planning systems due to the number of causal factors. Participatory practices and gamification are two instruments that can be used to help alleviate low democratic responsiveness. The paper articulates how there are different ways of knowing and assessing community priorities and values – people need increased consciousness and self-confidence to participate. The UK case studies that are discussed have made a significant contribution by providing useful insights regarding the benefits and limitations of participatory practices and gamification. For example, 'Participology' and 'Geogopoly' have clear participatory gamification benefits even though they are unable to include decision-maker accountability or recreate real-life power relationships. This paper posits that the use of participatory practices and/or gamification as policy levers (specifically in UK urban-planning processes) will herald a shift in the balance of power.

Keywords: participatory turn, gamification, participatory research, democratic deficit, participatory practices

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a review of the extant literature that has analyzed studies of participatory practices and gamification tendencies that have been predominantly published in the 2020s and devoted to cities that are coping with COVID-19. An analysis of the public's relationship with participatory turn and gamification has provided answers to some critical questions along the way. The paper indicates that people's senses of belonging increased with their senses of the community ownership of their locale. The paper identifies some of the causal factors that

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can influence those urban-design features that local communities value the most (Cavada, 2022, p. 9; Fox et al., 2022, p. 2; Lawson et al., 2022, p. 32; Palese, 2022, p. 74), those urban development policies that local people indicate that have had the greatest impact on their lives (Cavada, 2022, p. 9; Fox et al., 2022, 7; Lawson et al., 2022, p. 20; Muehlhaus et al., 2022, p. 5; Palese, 2022, p. 51; Tewdwr-Jones and Wilson, 2022, p. 234), and those changes that are needed in urban-planning policy to redistribute knowledge and democratization in communities (Fox et al., 2022, pp. 8–9; Lawson et al., 2022, p. 19; Muehlhaus et al., 2022, p. 2; Palese, 2022, p. 6; Tewdwr-Jones and Wilson, 2022, p. 229).

This paper consists of three sections. The first section discusses the role of the participatory turn and gamification in democratizing urban-planning processes. The reader is alerted to how a democratic deficit in local decision-making can be avoided by making civic participation more user-friendly. The second section discusses how participatory research can inform citizens of power relationships in their local communities. There is also discussion on how the participatory turn and gamification can re-awaken and empower local communities to benefit from civic engagement. The third section discusses various UK participatory and gamification practices alongside global case studies with a UK context. The COVID-19 global pandemic has affected urban-planning processes and increased the use of online participation and gamification. The paper concludes with a critical overview that reflects on various aspects of the participatory turn and gamification to summarize and recap key points.

DEMOCRATIZATION, PARTICIPATORY TURN, AND GAMIFICATION

In the UK, democratic deficit occurs in many forms (Cavada, 2022, p. 10; Fox et al., 2022, p. 2; Lawson et al., 2022, p. 26; Muehlhaus et al., 2022, p. 5; Palese, 2022, p. 53; Tewdwr-Jones and Wilson, 2022, p. 229). Compared to other European countries, England has very large local authority areas and few local representatives per area (Palese, 2022). There is an absence of community control, identity, locale, and people's ownership of their living space and their place. Palese (2022) notified us of multiple critiques of local English politics in a number of areas. The English population is broadly supportive of their local authorities as potential change agents at the local level. English people are discontented that this potential does not materialize in reality. There are too few opportunities for local people to be able to engage with local decision-makers in order to have a say in what happens in their local community. What was attempted to be forced onto local communities during the height of the COVID-19 crisis in England is an apt case in point. Local mayors had some devolved powers, but the main crucial policy-forming agency still remained centralized in Westminster Whitehall. On more and more issues, participatory practices and gamification can help give local communities more agency in England and other areas where a democratic deficit resides in any of its forms.

Local government restructuring in the UK has been more about hidden centralism and cost effectiveness, not about giving communities local control. For example, a local government is only allowed to keep 50% of the business rate taxes that it collects; the remaining 50% must be sent to the central government (Palese, 2022, p. 48; Sandford, 2022, p. 19). The UK

government divides the country into large regional areas but has little idea of the needs of the small rural areas and parishes that make up the regional areas. England has nine 'combined authorities' or 'metro mayors' who cover large regions of the country – often taking in between two and ten cities along with several towns and villages (Institute for Government [IfG], May 6, 2022). Metro mayors are essentially regional mayors who came into being as part of the 2014 Devolution agenda in England. Combined local authority metro mayors are meant to have pivotal roles in enabling local democracy. In the UK, this intention has only been partially met; metro mayors have been installed, but they are essentially tokenistic figureheads whom central government can blame for local policy failures. "In negotiations with local leaders, the UK government made the introduction of metro mayors a prerequisite before any substantial allocation of powers or additional budgets. This was intended to provide a single point of accountability for decision making and for negotiation with central government" (IfG, 2022, p. 1).

The governance of smaller towns and villages that are not covered by a metro mayor remains the same. Such English units must rely on minimalist and tokenistic consultation processes that can be centrally overruled by Westminster Whitehall. Combined local authority metro mayors have not been introduced in the other three constituents of the UK that enjoy devolved governments: Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. In the UK, there are few signs of deliberative participatory forms of local democracy (for example, citizen assemblies or local referendums). Democratic deficits due to unaccountable regeneration institutions has become an existential threat in the UK – especially if the systems that are in place and designed to enable civic participation act to prevent challenges of any urban planning processes that people feel are fundamentally flawed. UK ward council areas are simply too large for elected local councilors to be effective in representing their constituents. Large proportions of UK people feel disenchanted – disempowered by a local democracy system that they cannot access that does not work for them. This is why systemic democratic deficits in local communities represent an argumentation.

> Compared to other European countries, England has significantly larger local authorities and a much higher ratio of population per elected councilor […]. On average, a councilor in England represents around 3300 people, compared to countries with a similar population size such as Italy and France where one councilor represents every 600 and 130, respectively. In terms of local authority size, the average population per council in England is almost 100 times larger than in France (Palese, 2022, p. 58).

Low democratic responsiveness is systemic. If regionalization is adopted wholesale, it will replicate the current democratic deficit that pervades the local authority system in England in the 2020s. The OECD (2020a) informed us that there are four broad types of regionalization, the common denominator among each being the implementation of some form of a transfer of powers from the central government to the regions. A democratic deficit will have taken place if migration levels were to have increased at rates that were not agreed upon by the local people, for example. Regionalization is not homogenous – some people could support or oppose the fluid nature of regionalization. The UK has three different kinds of regionalization in its largest country England (OECD, 2020a). Palese (2022, p. 25) provided the following

description: "There are three forms of sub-national government in England: local authorities, combined authorities, and the Greater London Authority." It is anticipated that regionalization will increase traffic flows from small towns at a greater level than the current rates in the UK. This could lead to intermunicipal rivalry, as regional areas that were not previously connected would now compete for the same development funding alongside agile, flexible workers. Some form of regionalization 'safeguarding' regulatory body would need to be created; this agency would have a set of locally agreed upon regionalization 'criteria' that would have to be implemented in order to protect smaller regional areas from being deprived or blighted (Regan et al., 2021, p. 41).

Participatory practices and digital gamification can be introduced by posting a local authority online forum dashboard. People would be free to interact with the online dashboard in the comfort of their homes, thus increasing civic participation; such a gamified participation could be used to decide the subject of an annual local referendum for an area. Constituents would indicate their support of, for example, an environmental traffic-calming scheme or agree to accept or choose to challenge an asylum-seeker resettlement proposal or re-open a footpath by awarding tokens to the various sponsors of each suggested local referendum subject. Each initiative's scores would be constantly available on the public online forum dashboard, which would also act as an online blackboard where people can publicly express their views. This form of participatory practice and gamification would help increase civic engagement and democratic participation (Romano et al., 2022). A local authority's partnership board with local residents and non-state stakeholders would increase low democratic responsiveness by making local politics more relevant to people's everyday lives – more engaging, more interactive, more fun, and more user-friendly. In China's mode of a participatory turn, citizens can post their views on an electronic bulletin board regarding proposed urban regeneration schemes, along with suggesting alternatives (Chen W. et al., 2022). There are numerous e-participation tools in democracies and non-democracies that have a mix of benefits and a basket of problematic challenges.

Aichholzer and Rose (2020) found that deliberative digital tools have made little impact on decision-making. From a participatory turn and gamification perspective, e-participation can include e-information, e-deliberation, e-campaigning, e-consultation, e-petitions, e-participatory budgeting, and e-voting (Aichholzer and Rose, 2020). Trust has been found to be a factor that influences the effectiveness of e-participation in democracies (Aichholzer and Rose, 2020). When consultation regards services that a community wants, public trust increases.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH REAWAKENING OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

There are different ways of knowing which need to be considered when studying cases of the gamification of urban policy (Krath et al., 2021). Krath et al.'s 'Research on Gamification' study (2021) informed us about the cognitive aspects of gamification in enabling people to participate in problem-solving. With this gamification utility, improved learning, and mental agility, people are now able to understand that different members of society have

differing needs and values. People in local communities may view the cultural, economic, political, and social aspects of their community with significant local attachment. People might view pavement cafes and small public spaces to watch dance and perform music as important parts of their community (Zan, 2021). This community attachment applies; even though they themselves do not directly participate, they recognize the social benefits that exist for the people who do. Participatory research (PR) can identify the social aspects of urban design, policy, and planning projects that may not be apparent when using normative assessment criteria (Zan, 2021).

An urban planning democratic deficit can be avoided by ensuring that the local population has a 'consciousness' of the numerous issues that surround consultation, democracy, and knowledge-transfer (Constantinescu et al., 2020). Consciousness is based on the premise that the way knowledge is produced changes the awareness and perspective of those people who are involved in participatory urban-planning projects. One effect of the Constantinescu et al. (2020) interpretation of consciousness is that people become aware of the power relationships that surround them. The relationships among knowledge, action, and consciousness are quite complex and clearly have a role in critical resource allocation. A key power relationship in the gamification of participation is when the dominant ideology sets the agenda as to what should be considered to be valid knowledge, what is relevant, what the community priorities are, and what people's values should be.

Hassan and Hamari's 'Gameful civic engagement' study (2020) harmonizes with Constantinescu et al. (2020) by also discussing consciousness. The discourse is from a self-consciousness perspective that can inhibit people from challenging power relationships. For gamification and participatory practices to work well in urban planning, people must be enabled, self-aware, and conscious of other people's views in the community. People with a consciousness that is developed through participation are able to be critical about state-sourced information and obtain non-government knowledge instead. State-sponsored information could be bound up with colonialism or entangled by blinded, preordained, paradigmatic, and hegemonic dogma that only recognizes a limited source of knowledge (Hovde et al., 2021). There needs to be a shift in the balance of power: co-production from different ways of knowing should be proactively sought after, taken seriously, and responded to by government officials. There is a sense of self-realization and enlightenment; people are now enabled to influence the psychological, psychosocial, and conceptual boundaries to re-imagine what is possible (Constantinescu et al., 2020). Accompanying this self-realization is a self-determination where people with a consciousness develop a sense of agency that provides them with the 'motivation' for civic education and engagement (Nadi-Ravandi and Batooli, 2022; Sailer et al., 2017). Thus, people are able to produce knowledge that communicates their priorities, thus developing a different way of assessing community identities and values. In this sense, Constantinescu et al. (2020) introduced the concept of democratization by the stakeholder development of co-produced knowledge; this is an outcome of participatory practices.

PR focuses on the co-production of knowledge through partnerships between urban regeneration stakeholders and residents with trans-local knowledge and expertise (Vaughn and Jacquez, 2020). PR emphasizes democratization by direct engagement to deliver a local people's perspective. PR is especially useful in urban design (Lawson et al., 2022, p. 19)

where stakeholders are involved in the research process. Normally, research processes treat local stakeholders as arm's-length participants whom they then subject to various quantitative, qualitative, analytical, and methodological tests (Vaughn and Jacquez, 2020). In PR, people are much more equal (Anderson et al., 2021). PR analyzes the shared lived experiences of different groups of people who are all equal with differing views of community values. It "emphasizes participation in processes *with* others rather than research for researcher's sake conducted *on* people/communities" (Vaughn and Jacquez, 2020).

Gamification can be defined as the use of any analog (usually digital audio and a video game) that is used by people to engage in a non-game social activity (Tseng, 2022). There is rule-based gamification where the rules of the game are set at the start. Then, there is reward-based gamification where players are given some form of token or badge for performing additional tasks. Krath et al. (2021) articulated how social gamification can enable social comparisons and "nudge users towards guided paths" of relevance to their community (Krath et al., 2021, p. 1). Auf et al. (2021) informed us that "another commonly used technique for influencing user behavior is the use of nudge theory or behavioral economics to create indirect reinforcement" (p. 1648). Mamede et al.[1] (2021) harmonized with Krath et al. (2021) regarding the fact that gamification is a "promising persuasive strategy" for effecting behavioral change. Krath et al. (2021) and Mamede et al. (2021) also chimed in by focusing on the social comparison and social support aspects of gamification. I argue that the analyses of Krath et al. (2021), Mamede et al. (2021), and Auf et al. (2021) suggest that gamification can be regarded as a form of a behavioral nudge process. In such processes, rewards are used for encouraging societally beneficial behavior and decisions. In such a context, "gamification and digital engagement practices are widely used in spatial planning and urban design for various reasons" (Mosquera and Pagano, 2021). Digital handset games encourage democratization, require decision-making, and encourage cooperation and compromise. Little specific knowledge is required, which enables wider participation by people who normally choose to stay home. A clear benefit of gamification is its cost effectiveness; it is significantly cheaper to deliver urban design consultation exercises online with people who participate from their own homes (Muehlhaus et al., 2022). Gamification enables the adaptation of experimental projects that can be adjusted to accurately reflect the local conditions that are unique to a particular area (Galeote et al., 2021).[2]

UNITED KINGDOM PARTICIPATORY GAMIFICATION CASE STUDIES

The COVID-19 global pandemic has brought the importance of participatory practices and gamification to the fore: enforced COVID-19 mitigation practices have informed us that urban-planning consultation must include a sufficient variety of consultation mechanisms. This is to ensure that most people are able to interact with consultation mechanisms to be able to

[1] Mamede et al.'s study (2021) discusses the use of physical nudges alongside a web-based gamification app to promote changes in health behavior. This study can be used in urban-planning community consultation.

[2] Galeote et al.'s 'Gamification for climate change engagement' study (2021) discusses how 'increased situation awareness only leads to action if certain conditions exist.' This is a form of a unique local condition that is present in a particular area (p. 19).

give their informed consent to any suggested urban developments. COVID-19 has identified that being aware and conscious of different stakeholder's priorities and self-consciousness are crucial in implementing effective local consultation (Constantinescu et al., 2020; Hassan and Hamari, 2020). Lekić Glavan et al.'s 'COVID-19 and City Space: Impact and Perspectives' study (2022) discussed the profound affect that COVID-19 has had on urbanism. It has not been possible to get uniform data on the effect of COVID-19 on urban development; this is because COVID-19 measures have not been applied in the same way in different countries, thus limiting the information. "In the following months and years, it will be difficult to assess various changes to develop urban planning and design in the post-COVID-19 world" (Afrin et al., 2021, p. 1).

The differences in COVID-19 responses have been non-uniform, both internationally between countries and on an intranational basis within a single country. The effect of these differences has resulted in a paucity of country-specific urban-design studies from European countries (including the UK). "Therefore, for a comprehensive study of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on urban space, it is necessary to conduct a broad review as is performed in this study" (Lekić Glavan et al., 2022, p. 2). In their 'Cities Policies Responses' study (2020b), the OECD collated policy activity and causal factors that have influenced urban-design decision-making. The OECD discussed how Bristol, UK, developed a 'One City Approach' – a strategic partnership to deliver its COVID-19 program. The 'One City Approach' involved multiple stakeholders applying participatory practices for consultation and discussion. Interactive workshops were used to inform the decision-making process (OECD 2020b).

Davidova et al.'s 'Co-De | GT: The Gamification and Tokenisation of More-Than-Human Qualities and Values' study (2022) discussed an urban mobile software application. Co-De | GT was used for community engagement and consultation participatory turn purposes in Grangetown, Cardiff, in Wales, UK. Grangetown is a very poor area of the UK whose population faces education, health, and poverty challenges. Grangetown is located in an important biodiversity corridor that is threatened by growing urbanization, from connecting areas that are also near Cardiff. Grangetown needs some form of mechanism that can accurately heed human and non-human stakeholders (Davidova et al., 2022). The use of Co-De | GT-linked gamification with a tokenization scheme helps contextualize climate change and other aspects of protecting Grangetown's biodiversity. A common theme of role play where stakeholders don the clothing of different stakeholders to their own personas delivers an element of verstehen[3] to the participatory turn. For example, people get the opportunity to see how institutional failures to work in partnerships can put various parts of Grangetown's biodiversity at risk. There are clear societal benefits, as non-human stakeholders are more readily understood, increasing the climate change impetus (or cultural imperative) to sustain the environment (see also Velenturf and Purnell, 2021).[4] Co-De | GT introduced tokenization when it was implemented in Georgetown in the form of some bitcoin cryptocurrency as community participation progressed (Davidova et al., 2022). Like most digital games, Co-De | GT

[3] 'Verstehen' is the research method of asking various research participants and/or stakeholders during consultation exercises to put themselves in the other person's shoes.

[4] Velenturf and Purnell's 'Principles for a sustainable economy' study (2021) resonates here on a number of non-human fronts to include cultural and environmental necessities.

can be adapted so that the tokenization is reward-based gamification with a societal benefit. Community engagement with the app should not result in any form of financial gain for an individual participant. Co-De | GT can be designed so that suggestions that support non-human stakeholders (for example, soil erosion or wildfire prevention) receive the most tokens. Gamification and tokenization can help introduce the public to key concepts; for example, agenda setting, bureaucratic gatekeeping, lack of accountability, local ownership, and transparency (Pavlopoulou, 2021). Tokenization can help participants develop their own personas and pursue a particular community issue that is of interest to them. Co-De | GT is a medium for participatory practices, as a community can demonstrate what its priorities are in its level of engagement with the app. Participants' choices of tokenization reflect what they value most, and gamification reveals a community's desires, wants, and needs (Robinson-Yu, 2021).

Cavada's 'Evaluate Space after COVID-19: Smart Cities Strategies for Gamification' study (2022) discussed the impact of COVID-19 on the urban environment. Cavada's study focused on three case study areas: retail, roads, and parks. There is a discussion of gamification practices in urban space, using examples of locating spaces to practice social distancing or healthy exercise outdoors (see also Lu and Ho, 2020, p. 5).[5] The findings are collated on a computer app that can be downloaded and accessed on a digital device (typically one's mobile phone). Effectively gamification has delivered a smart city strategy that enables people to find green open spaces within walking distances of where they live. Cavada (2022) chimed in with both Afrin et al. (2021) and Lekić Glavan et al. (2022) in observing limitations in the literature. For example, there has been an inadequate recording of rates of homelessness in some urban areas before 2019. Similarly, transient migration rates were also not recorded frequently enough up until the end of 2019. Societally, we are not in the position to do a longitudinal study of the effect of COVID-19 on the health of the local population or on urban planning systems: "we do not have years of study and limited time-based data. We will now explore the current literature on the broader implications of COVID-19" (Cavada, 2022, pp. 1–2). When conducting an evaluation of the impacts that COVID-19 has had on the urban environment, Cavada suggested using a combination of four critical lenses to conduct smart research. These four lenses were economy, environment, governance, and society. The impact of COVID-19 needs to be considered from the angle of its implications for the urban environment, health, and the way people live their lives (Cavada, 2022). A game can be designed to consider urban-design and -planning governance alongside an unrelated but societally important feature (Gomes et al., 2022). Gamification has enabled people to use retail areas and parks in different ways, thus developing their social skills. A gamification app can also act as a location finder: it is able to advise participants of the safest route (roads) to navigate from their current locations to safe spaces for social distancing (parks) (Chen D. et al., 2022). In keeping with Davidova et al. (2022), Cavada's (2022) smart city strategy can be adapted

[5] Lu and Ho's 'Exploring the Impact of Gamification on Users' Engagement for Sustainable Development' study (2020) discussed the Nike Run Club (NRC) mobile app. Gamification and urban health are manifest, as the NRC app 'allows users to personally monitor and record their workouts and socially share and compare accomplishments' (Lu and Ho, 2020, p. 1). Gamification has motivated users to use the NRC app, resulting in improved urban health and social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

to find specific kinds of biodiversity. The mobile app can act as a digital community audit, enabling people to find the shortest routes to their nearest libraries or post offices.

Typically manifest in board games, analog gamification is as valuable as digital games. Robinson et al.'s 'Using games in geographical and planning-related teaching' study (2021) discussed two board games that are used in the UK's planning process. These analog games equip students to address real-world problems in a different way to how a digital game would transfer urban-design knowledge. 'Participology' is a participatory learning game that was devised by Birmingham City University and was based on a fictitious United Kingdom (UK) rural-urban fringe area (Robinson et al., 2021). Players roll a die or dice that determines a particular urban-design scenario, which can change depending on what the die or dice display. Players who can be student urban planners answer questions that address issues that are raised by the die or dice-decided scenarios. The given answers enable urban renewal students to explain their visions for the rural-urban fringe area if their planning proposals are accepted (Tzortzi et al., 2022). Hybrid versions of 'Participology' have been used in urban-design and planning consultations with the public in the UK. Members of the UK public have been able to consider the bases, contexts, and impacts of the planning proposals. Once consulted, the participatory turn reveals different ways of knowing and discussing alternative set of values and priorities that have not previously been considered by urban designers (Hidalgo et al., 2021; Puttkamer, 2020). This is public input, different perspectives, and priorities that the planners can negotiate with the residents in the rural-urban fringe area.

Urban-design practitioners, planning students, and the public all benefit from 'Participology' by being able to individually reflect on the multi-positions that often exist in participatory urban-design consultation with multiple stakeholders (Tewdwr-Jones and Wilson, 2022, p. 236). 'Geogopoly' is an upscaled version of 'Participology' that was created by the University of Salford. One of the aims of 'Geogopoly' was to develop urban-design students so they can understand how the UK planning system works. Students were able to see the negative sides of various state and non-state urban-design activity such as guerrilla gardening or compulsory purchase orders. Such enlightenment came from interacting with 'Geogopoly,' which helped students acquire critical-thinking and decision-making skills (Robinson et al., 2021, p. 7). 'Participology' and 'Geogopoly' are quite flexible in the subjects that they can analyze. These games can be adapted to devise social-distancing solutions in temporary homeless shelter provisions in response to future pandemics (Drill et al., 2022; Rodriguez, 2022). 'Participology' and 'Geogopoly' have clear participatory gamification benefits even though they are unable to include decision-maker accountability or recreate real-life power relationships (Robinson et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

The UK is beset with democratic deficit problems that affect how urban-planning processes work. Palese (2022) articulated the UK's perennial problem of embedded democratic deficits in its local community decision-making processes. People want to engage in

community issues in their local areas but often find the experience disempowering and off-putting (see Anderson and Raine, 2020).[6] What local people need are user-friendly modes of participation that are simple to use and transparent. This paper has demonstrated how the participatory turn and gamification are underutilized in urban-planning processes globally (especially in the UK). Regarding UK local governments, restructuring has not really helped – the same old rules regarding the destiny of the local taxation still apply (50% of the revenue that is raised from local business taxes must be sent to the central government) (Palese, 2022). As a part of regionalization, combined local authorities or metro mayors have increased democratization at the local level and decreased the influence of the UK's central government in Whitehall. Although this is a step in the right direction, locally elected metro mayors are still under the control of the central government (who can veto their decisions). The paper has also explained how regionalization can result in cities or large towns competing with each other for the same resources. Increased use of participatory consultation and/or various forms of gamification are required to engender democratization. The emergence of e-participation in the 21st century makes the underutilization of participatory exercises inexplicable in the UK. The absence of gamification is even worse, as many modes of gaming require a hand-held digital device (typically a person's mobile phone). One of the main advantages of gamification is that it makes community engagement and democratic participation easily accessible. This must advance democratization; the various forms of e-participation and gamification have this utility (the ability to quickly and cheaply increase community awareness).

Participatory research (PR) can help communities realize that they have knowledge, consciousness and agency, independent freedom of thought, and the ability to act (Constantinescu et al., 2020). By engaging in PR (for example, in a participatory budget exercise), the paper discussed the possibility of local people becoming self-aware, self-conscious, and enlightened. This sense of agency of independent thought gives people the necessary self-confidence and personal capacity to discuss urban-planning proposals for their areas. When people consider a budget that involves the addressing of community priorities, they became aware of different ways of knowing. PR enables people to realize that different members of the same community have differing lived experiences and values. These differences could affect how people assess and finance community priorities by way of a participatory budget. If communities engage in PR, there could be a shift in the balance as to who decides what should be considered to be knowledge. Some participants will become conscious to the extent that they can appropriately challenge the perceived assumptions that they feel are being made by urban planners. In this sense, gamification has resulted in co-produced knowledge and the subsequent community buy-in of urban-planning development proposals.

COVID-19 has identified that being aware and conscious of different stakeholder's priorities and self-consciousness are crucial in implementing effective local consultations (Constantinescu et al., 2020; Hassan and Hamari, 2020). The OECD's stakeholder approach to analyzing urban development (2020b) harmonizes with Constantinescu et al. (2020) and Hassan and Hamari (2020). The OECD (2020b) discussed how Bristol, UK, developed a 'One

[6] Anderson and Rainie's Pew Research Center report (2020, p. 49) features analyses from tech experts that are concerned that 'wealthy interest groups' control the societal recognition of knowledge. Well-resourced groups can drown out average citizens, 'as only the loudest or more extreme voices get repeated' (p. 49). This is a causal factor that can result in a local democratic deficit and spatial injustice.

City Approach' – a strategic partnership that was meant to deliver its COVID-19 program. The 'One City Approach' involved multiple stakeholders applying participatory practices for consultation and discussion. Interactive workshops were used to inform decision-making (OECD, 2020b). Gamification was found to be an ideal policy response during the COVID-19 crisis, as this mode of participation enabled collaborative work while engaging in social distancing. Pockets of participatory practices that were manifested as online civic engagement that used gamification or non-gamified online forums has gained more traction during the COVID-19 pandemic (Gastil and Broghammer, 2021). Gamification and tokenization can help introduce the public to key concepts; for example, agenda-setting, bureaucratic gatekeeping, lack of accountability, local ownership, and transparency (Pavlopoulou, 2021). Gamification is ideal for community communication, consultation, groupwork and problem-solving, and local people's priorities can be identified. Any social issue can be turned into a game; for example, food bank provision or homelessness. Gamification's role in the participatory turn is to provide a medium that engenders people's participation in policy discussions in which they would not normally engage (Fox et al., 2022; Lawson et al., 2022). Games can be designed to award extra points or rewards for certain criteria; for example, feasibility, innovation, or value for money. Studies suggest that reward-based games are more closely aligned to the problem-based learning and co-produced knowledge aspects of PR and the participatory turn (Mazarakis and Bräuer, 2023).[7] Gamification is a medium for participatory practices, as communities can demonstrate what their priorities are in their levels of engagement with the app. Participants' choices of tokenization reflect what they value most, and gamification reveals a community's desires, wants, and needs (Robinson-Yu, 2021).

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[7] Mazarakis and Bräuer (2023) 'Gamification is Working, but Which One Exactly?' study, found that progress bar, badges and feedback (all types of reward), motivated people to work harder. When this finding is transferred to urban planning, there is an increase likelihood of collaborative co-production.

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ETYCZNE UZASADNIENIE ZARZĄDZANIA DANYMI MEDYCZNYMI W PERSPEKTYWIE DZIAŁAŃ ROZWOJOWYCH UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ

Nieustannie rozwijające się społeczeństwo europejskie aktywnie mierzy się z problemami etycznymi, dotykającymi każdej części życia. Tekst ma na celu zaprezentowanie problematyki zarządzania danymi medycznymi oraz zaproponowanie uzasadnienia dla tego obszaru działalności badawczo-rozwojowej z perspektywy Unii Europejskiej przy uwzględnieniu istniejących już wartości oraz podejścia filozoficznego. Na podstawie wybranych koncepcji prezentujących różne dziedziny filozofii oraz bioetyki artykuł prezentuje holistyczne i nowoczesne podejście do zagadnienia etyki w zarządzania danymi. Punktem wyjścia dla tego typu rozważań stała się teoria umowy społecznej T. Hobbesa, która omawia powinności człowieka wobec społeczeństwa oraz wolności przysługujących człowiekowi. Dyskurs analityczny został wsparty koncepcjami filozoficznymi L. Floridiego oraz A. Dawsona. Te dwa poradygmaty pomagają zakreślić nowoczesne problemy i terminologie, które starają się uchwycić zmieniające się aspekty technologiczne dzisiejszego świata.

Słowa kluczowe: etyka w zarządzaniu danymi, RODO, dane medyczne, biobanki, Horizon Europe, European Health Data Space, EHDS, bezpieczeństwo danych

WSTĘP

Społeczeństwo ery technologicznej codziennie przetwarza ogromne ilości danych (w roku 2022 będzie to 44 zettabajtów) – to informacje dotyczące cen produktów, czasu przejazdu

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środków transportu publicznego, danych medycznych itp. Niektóre z nich, szczególnie powiązane bezpośrednio z człowiekiem, uznajemy za warte ochrony. Pozostałe stanowią formę nadwyżki behawioralnej jako produktów ubocznych interakcji społecznej w postaci informacji i zbiorów danych (Zuboff, 2020, s. 101).

W artykule zostaną przedstawione etyczne aspekty rezygnacji z wyłączności danych osobowych. Bazując na koncepcjach filozoficznych, pojawiających się kolejno w myśli Thomasa Hobbesa, Luciano Floridiego i Angusa Dawsona, można zrozumieć i opisać podejście pozwalające na gromadzenie oraz użytkowanie danych medycznych np. przez biobanki czy działania rozwojowe Unii Europejskiej. Problemem badawczym pozostaje skonstruowanie takiego podejścia, które utrzymując wartości i wolności obywatela, jest w stanie zapewnić jak najlepsze warunki rozwojowe dla działań Unii Europejskiej. Artykuł zawiera wybraną linię argumentacyjną dającą podstawy takich rozwiązań.

PROBLEM DANYCH W FILOZOFII

Filozof Thomas Hobbes postrzegał ludzi jako grupę podobnych do siebie istot, które w stanie naturalnym działają pod wpływem negatywnych skłonności. Wynikają one z nadziei człowieka względem swoich możliwości rozwoju. Chęć osiągnięcia lub posiadania większej ilości dóbr prowadzi do problemów między ludźmi. Gdy dwie osoby pożądają tego samego, następuje nieuchronny konflikt. Hobbes identyfikuje trzy zasadnicze przywary człowieka: rywalizacja, nieufność oraz żądza sławy. Prowadzą one do *stanu wojny każdego z każdym*, gdzie ludzie dążą do podporządkowania sobie innych przemocą lub podstępem. Człowiek jest w stanie przezwyciężyć tę tendencję przez utworzenie wspólnoty z innymi (Hobbes, 2009, s. 204–206).

W wizji Hobbesa, aby osiągnąć dobrobyt i zachować życie, ludzkość ogranicza swoją wolność. Rezygnując z absolutnej wolności działań, człowiek kosztem obowiązków wobec innych zyskuje bezpieczeństwo. Brak zagrożeń zewnętrznych pozwala skupić się na rozwoju. Złamanie tego podejścia określane jest jako niesprawiedliwość i bezprawie. Człowiek, występując przeciw tym ustaleniom, stara się zawłaszczyć to, co należy do innych; niezależnie od tego, czy chodzi o dobra fizyczne (ziemia, jedzenie, kosztowności), czy metafizyczne (wolność) (Hobbes, 2009, s. 213). Istotą tej koncepcji jednak nie jest tylko zachowanie życia oraz zapewnienie podstawowych potrzeb. Autor argumentuje również za zabezpieczeniem środków i ustaleń w celu „zachowania życia, tak by nie stało się ono uciążliwe" (Hobbes, 2009, s. 215).

Myśl Hobbesa stała się niezwykle istotna dla europejskiego rozwoju filozoficznego i prawnego, będąc jedną z najdonioślejszych koncepcji umowy społecznej jako podstawy funkcjonowania społeczeństwa. Dostarcza ontologicznego fundamentu podstawom relacji społecznych i jest wykorzystywana również w dzisiejszych czasach. Jednym z przykładów mogłoby być podejście większości krajów członkowskich Unii Europejskiej. Obywatel jest postrzegany jako osoba mająca własne wartości oraz wolności, pozwalające jej na działania według nich. Dotyczy to również osądów etycznych (EUR-LEX, 2010, C 83). Kwestie te nie odnoszą się jednak wyłącznie do jednostek. Interpretacje wartościujące poruszają wszystkie

aspekty wspólnoty, jaką jest społeczeństwo. Unia Europejska łączy dwadzieścia siedem państw. Oczywiste jest, że istnieją różnice kulturowe (lub prawne) dotyczące akceptacji czy nieakceptacji pewnych praktyk społecznych. W ramach współpracy między sobą państwa te są jednak w stanie porzucić część swoich potencjalnych możliwości i wartościowań na rzecz dobrobytu. Analogia do koncepcji umowy społecznej Hobbesa wydaje się w tym przypadku adekwatna. Ceną partycypacji we wspólnocie jest zrzeczenie się części potencjalnych możliwości dostępnych w stanie naturalnym.

ZAŁOŻENIA ETYCZNE UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ

Wspólne działania na rzecz rozwoju technologicznego i społecznego przybierają różny charakter. Łączą one starania wielu nacji europejskich, które używają swojego kapitału rozwojowego w celu określenia oraz rozwiązania najważniejszych problemów Unii Europejskiej. Jednym z przykładów może być seria programów rozwojowych Horyzont Europa. Budżet programów w latach 2021–2027 wyniósł 95,5 miliarda euro (European Commission, 2020). Oprócz ram finansowych UE zapewnia także ramy prawne i etyczne, których przestrzeganie jest podstawą otrzymania finansowania. Proponowane przez sektor badawczo-rozwojowy (B+R) lub badań naukowych i innowacji rozwiązania oraz firmy biorące udział w konkursach muszą wypełnić deklaracje dotyczące etyki działań projektu oraz stanu firmy. Komponenty wniosków powinny zawierać także element „miękki", wskazując na ich oddziaływanie społeczne. Przykładem tak szeroko planowanego ustawodawstwa jest np. podejście UE do programu *European Health Data Space*. Ma on na celu stworzenie przestrzeni magazynowania, wymiany i przetwarzania danych medycznych, badawczych oraz niezbędnych do świadczenia pomocy dotyczącej zdrowia.

Oprócz stworzenia zaplecza technologicznego Komisja oczekuje także przedstawienia (i wdrożenia) propozycji rozwiązań pewnych aspektów społecznych czy etycznych. Działania te mają charakter kierunkujący dla rozwoju europejskiej nauki – wyznaczają np. metazałożenia projektów. Jako jedne z nich może zostać wymienione propagowanie podejścia otwartej nauki (*open science*). Ma ono na celu zapewnienie jak największego przepływu informacji dotyczących badań oraz ich wyników. Każdy krok procesu badawczego powinien być dostępny dla zainteresowanych obserwatorów, automatycznie pozwalając na wzajemną recenzję. Dodatkowo w założeniu podejście to upraszcza dalszy rozwój naukowy (European Commission, 2019).

Podstaw przejrzystości działania można upatrywać w Ogólnym rozporządzeniu o ochronie danych (RODO). Określa ono ramy postępowania w przypadkach zarządzania i wymiany danych identyfikowanych jako dane osobowe (*personal informations*). W sposób aksjomatyczny prawodawcy unijni uznali prywatność jako nieuchronnie powiązaną z godnością i wolnością (GDPR-Text.com, 2018, art. 88). Warunkuje to konieczność uzasadnienia takiej interpretacji, najlepiej we wszechstronny sposób. Powracając do interpretacji umowy społecznej Hobbesa, można zauważyć, że za zrezygnowaniem ze swoich wolności powinna stać pewna motywacja. Jeżeli więc prywatność jest częścią wolności, to oddanie uprawnień do zarządzania danymi powinno zostać uzasadnione.

Rozporządzenie zawiera szereg założeń filozoficznych oraz społecznych. Jednym z najważniejszych jest uznanie dychotomii jednostki i społeczeństwa. Działania prawne Unii wydają się dążyć do zachowania praw pierwszego z wymienionych. Priorytetyzują one obywatela i jego wolności ponad np. możliwe zyski ze sprzedaży jego danych. Standardy UE dotyczące wymiany, użytkowania, gromadzenia i sprzedaży informacji na temat podmiotu są jednymi z najściślejszych i najbardziej rygorystycznych na świecie. Dyskwalifikują one na ten moment firmy amerykańskie, gdyż obszar Stanów Zjednoczonych w swoich ustawach HIPAA przewiduje znacznie niższy standard bezpieczeństwa informacji o użytkowniku (Osobowe Dane Zdrowotne – *Personal Health Informations*) może zostać udzielone innemu usługodawcy bez zgody pacjenta, podczas gdy w RODO każda interakcja danych pacjenta musi zostać zatwierdzona (HHS.gov, 2013). Dodatkowe wyroki sądów europejskich w sprawie np. przetwarzania informacji poza granicami UE (sprawa Schrems I & Schrems II) (GDPR Summary, 2020) na ten moment dążą do dalszego ograniczenia potencjalnie niepożądanych działań przeciwko interesom obywateli. Sprawa Maximilliana Schremsa, który pozwał Facebook Ireland Ltd o, jego zdaniem, nieuzasadniony transfer danych dotyczących jego konta do USA, zakończyła się unieważnieniem *Privacy Shield*. Ten traktat pozwalał na regulowaną wymianę danych pomiędzy USA a EU.

KONCEPCJE ROZWOJU W SPOŁECZEŃSTWIE TECHNOLOGICZNYM

W dzisiejszych czasach rozwój technologiczny jest ściśle związany z komputerami i dostępem do internetu. To automatycznie zwiększa istotność oraz ilość przetwarzanych informacji podzielonych na pakiety danych. Optymalizacja wymiany informacji i selekcji danych spośród natłoku dostępnych źródeł stanowi bardzo ważny krok dla rozwoju. W polu opieki medycznej jest to szczególnie istotne, jeśli wziąć pod uwagę ścisły związek informacji, np. o stanie zdrowia, przeszłych zabiegach itp. oraz jakości usług. W związku z tym można zauważyć, że problem stanowią granice między wolnością jednostki (prywatność danych) a interesem społeczeństwa (optymalizacja służby zdrowia). Dotyczy to oczywiście Unii Europejskiej.

Odmiennym przykładem może być wizja opieki zdrowotnej USA. Jest ona skrajnie indywidualistyczna, niemalże niezważająca na ogólny stan zdrowia społeczeństwa. Mieszkańcy muszą samodzielnie zadbać o dostęp do programów ubezpieczeniowych czy medycznych. Brak opłacenia usługodawcy może skutkować wykluczeniem z podstawowych praktyk czy też wyjątkowo drogimi rachunkami powiązanymi z leczeniem. Argumentacja wychodząca z perspektywy „ochrony personalnej wolności" widzi tę sytuację jako pozytyw. Przez realizowanie swojego obywatelskiego prawa o samostanowieniu jednostka może zdecydować o niepłaceniu za prywatne usługi. To jednak powoduje ograniczenie do jedynie najbardziej podstawowego poziomu opieki (Sainato, 2020).

Podejście „europejskie" cechuje się jednak zupełnie innym nastawieniem. Podmiot ma niezbywalne prawa, w tym do opieki zdrowotnej. Publiczna opieka zdrowotna może zostać scharakteryzowana jako ogólnie pojęta realizacja interesów społeczeństwa. Stąd założenie, że badania naukowe w polu medycyny przynoszą jej zyski, np. oferując nowe metody terapii

lub skuteczniejsze leki. Ze względu na wspomnianą różnicę interesów między jednostką a ogółem społeczeństwa konieczne jest podejście utrzymujące balans.Za argument na rzecz uchylenia prywatności można uznać polepszenie dobrobytu ogółu społeczeństwa. Jeśli posłużyć się aparatem pojęciowym Hobbesa, byłoby uzasadnione odstąpienie od swojej wolności na gruncie „zachowania życia, aby nie było uciążliwe". Rozwój medycyny może skutecznie pomóc w uniknięciu „uciążliwości" (Hobbes, 2009, s. 215).

Niemniej niesłychanie ciężko byłoby utrzymać balans między dobrem społeczeństwa a interesami jednostki. Nawet postulowana przez niektórych technokratów wizja stworzenia sztucznej inteligencji (*artificial intelligence*, AI) mającej udzielać odpowiedzi działałaby w wymiarze etycznym. Wartościowanie „najlepszych" decyzji zakłada automatycznie istnienie pewnej interpretacji. Pojęcie optymalizacji w tej kwestii jest niejasne oraz nie pozwala na skuteczne rozwiązanie tego problemu. Każdy problem etyczny jest zakorzeniony w społeczeństwie, które aktywnie się zmienia. Opcja „automatyzacji" tych decyzji wydaje się niesatysfakcjonująca. Postępujący w ramach programu unijnego rozwój EHDS (mający do roku 2025 zakończyć budowę krajowych węzłów wymiany danych medycznych) dodatkowo podkreśla wagę tematu. Wizja jednej przestrzeni przechowywania i udzielania informacji medycznych pacjenta w celu ulepszenia jego doświadczenia w związku ze służbą zdrowia niesie oczywiście znaczący koszt odsłonięcia prywatności jednostki (European Commission, 2020).

W tym miejscu zasadnym jest powrócić do wspomnianych wcześniej wartości i założeń unijnych struktur. Jednym z metazałożeń, które można zaobserwować w regulacjach oraz całości działań, jest wyjątkowy status człowieka. Jest on jednostką, której przysługuje prawo do prywatności, nieodłącznie związane z wolnością i godnością. Wartościowanie przyjęte w ramach tego podejścia jest uzasadnione, gdyż nie można chronić rzeczy bez wartości (ich utrata nie jest w żaden sposób odczuwalna). Prywatność staje się czymś ekskluzywnie należącym do człowieka. To pociąga za sobą szereg założeń ontologicznych na temat istoty ludzkości i problemów potencjalnie go dotykających. Przytoczony uprzednio podpunkt drugi aktu 88 RODO wydaje się potwierdzać tę interpretację: „zapewniające osobie, której dane dotyczą, poszanowanie jej godności, prawnie uzasadnionych interesów i praw podstawowych, w szczególności pod względem przejrzystości przetwarzania, przekazywania danych osobowych" (GDPR-Text.com 2018, art. 88).

CZŁOWIEK JAKO BYT INFORMACYJNY

Godność ludzka staje się wartością nierozerwalnie sprzężoną z samym istotą człowieczeństwa w społeczeństwie zachodnim. Takiej samej myśli jest Luciano Floridi, filozof oraz etyk, ściśle związany z Uniwersytetem Oxfordzkim. Zajmuje się on między innymi etyką komputerową, filozofią informacji i filozofią technologii. Dodatkowo jego opinie zostały uwzględnione przez Komisję Europejską, Niemiecką Radę Etyki czy międzynarodowe korporacje, takie jak Google czy IBM (Floridi, 2020). Według Floridiego godność ludzka powinna być nieodzownie powiązana z prywatnością. Ta z kolei jest tym, co wyznacza tożsamość osobową podmiotu. Jego założeniem jest, że dane, które produkujemy, stają się konstytuantą nas jako jednostki w przestrzeni świata.

W ramach tego założenia dane medyczne jednostki zyskują dodatkowo na znaczeniu, gdyż są zbiorem najwrażliwszych i najbardziej personalnych danych. Zgodnie z podejściem Floridiego informacje określają nas jako ludzi, a informacje medyczne stają się w takim wypadku pewnego rodzaju metainformacjami. Umożliwiają one jeszcze dokładniejsze poznanie graniczące z naruszeniem wartości jednostki (intymności, godności). Takie podejście pozwala na sprecyzowanie wolności człowieka i jej granicy. Dzięki zrozumieniu wartości stojących za naszymi motywacjami możemy precyzyjniej uzasadnić nasze działania (Floridi, 2016).

Floridi w przytoczonym tekście dokonuje przeglądu rozmaitych podejść do konceptu prywatności oraz godności, poszukując właściwego rozwiązania dla człowieka XXI wieku. Takie działanie wydaje się niezbędne dla dalszego rozwoju kwestii praw obywatelskich jednostki wewnątrz Unii. Należy w takim wypadku określić zasady, wartości i szereg innych koniecznych kroków pozwalających nam zrozumieć, dlaczego możemy przyjąć założenie, że prawo do prywatności jest „wolnością".

Człowiek jako pewnego rodzaju narracja jest tworzony przez to, co inni są w stanie o nim powiedzieć. W tym rozumieniu jest on bytem informacyjnym, składającym się głównie z wiązek danych, co czyni ochronę prywatności jednym z najważniejszych powinności społeczeństwa. Doskonale wpasowuje się to w wymagania ery technologicznej. Dotychczas istniejące teorie, zdaniem Floridiego, nie mogą stanowić podstawy działań na rzecz ochrony naszej prywatności (w tym przypadku rozumianej jako synonim wolności). W swoich założeniach zawierają albo luki, albo pasywność w podejściu do między innymi ingerencji w prywatność. Obrazuje to przykład teorii antycznych i oświeceniowych. Autor argumentuje, że koncepcja chrześcijańska Świętego Augustyna również nie może być podstawą nadrzędnego nakazu ochrony prywatności. Pełna prywatność nie istnieje, gdyż Bóg jest wszechwiedzący, automatycznie negując możliwość „ukrycia" czegokolwiek. Koncepcja postmodernistyczna zakłada, że wartość człowieka powstaje właśnie w wyniku obcowania z innymi. Według autora sprawia to, że łamanie naszej prywatności nie jest problemem. To, co nie jest postrzegane i nie podlega prawu wymiany, nie posiada wartości. Sprawia to, że prywatność nie jest istotna jako aspekt utrudniający interakcje międzyludzkie. Proponowana przez Floridiego koncepcja „ekscentryczna" nie poddaje się tym problemom. Zapewnia ona jednostkowy i unikalny status człowieka jako bytu informacyjnego. Ten rodzaj interpretacji wydaje się korespondować z intencjami zawartymi w RODO oraz prawodawstwie unijnym. Stawia ona jednostkę jako źródło każdych działań i wartości spajających Unię Europejską. Określenie statusu zarówno podmiotu, jak i informacji w ramach jego interakcji ze światem zewnętrznym jest niezbędne, aby uzasadnić dalsze działania w zakresie wykorzystania danych (Floridi, 2016).

Dokonując analizy powyższego podejścia nieuchronnie wiążącego prywatność jednostki z jej wolnością, możemy skuteczniej argumentować za częściowym odstąpieniem od jednej i drugiej wartości. Podejście Floridiego nie jest jedynym traktującym w wyjątkowy sposób udziału jednostki w wymianie informacji o sobie w zamian za inne dobra. W dziedzinie opieki zdrowotnej doszło do odejścia od dotychczas dominującej koncepcji paternalistycznej. Plasowała ona lekarza jako doświadczonego i odpowiedzialnego za samodzielne podejmowanie kluczowych decyzji. Zastępuje ją podejście pacjentocentryczne. Ma ono na celu zwiększenie udziału chorego w procesie leczenia oraz dbania o jego zdrowie. Pozwala ono na

informowanie pacjenta o jego stanie zdrowia i uzyskiwaniu od niego informacji na zasadzie transakcji, w której to pacjent decyduje, jakie (jakiego rodzaju i ile) informacje udostępnia. To podejście z jednej strony pozwala na wzbudzenie poczucia większej wolności u pacjenta, z drugiej zaś odnosi się do jego świadomego samostanowienia. Decyzyjność jako forma realizacji woli i wolności pozostaje w gestii pacjenta. Działania podejmowane przez lekarza są wynikiem woli pacjenta.

Rozwiązanie zakładające partycypację pacjenta w procesie leczenia wymaga jednak odpowiedniego stopnia edukacji na temat zdrowia i praktyk lekarskich. Problematyka kompetencji zdrowotnych (*health literacy*) (WHO, 1998) jest z tych powodów nieodłączna w realizacji koncepcji partycypacyjnej. Człowiek wymaga zdobycia umiejętności pozyskiwania informacji o sobie i swoim stanie zdrowia i doświadczenia w praktycznym zastosowaniu tej wiedzy. Zdrowie jako dobrostan wymaga relacyjności między pacjentem i lekarzem. Wyłaniający się między nimi dialog uzupełniony o informacje pochodzące od pacjenta i od lekarza pozwala na wypracowanie systemu, w którym decyzyjność będzie opierać się na zasadzie świadomej zgody.

DOBRO PUBLICZNE A WOLNOŚĆ OSOBISTA NIEPOINFORMOWANYCH

W kontekście RODO świadoma zgoda pacjenta lub uczestnika badań pozwala na przykład na magazynowanie i użytkowanie jego danych (próbek, informacji itp.) przez biobanki. W świetle dotychczas nakreślonych podejść oraz problemów warunkuje to konieczność uzasadnienia gromadzenia danych i informacji o pacjencie za jego zgodą. Wytwarzane przez społeczeństwo dane w toku interakcji ze służbą zdrowia pozwalają udoskonalać narzędzia poznawcze i jednocześnie „uczyć" lekarzy nowych metod leczenia. Te założenia, wynikające z działania grupy (jej interakcji ze służbą zdrowia), przekładają się na korzyść jednostki. Człowiek zyskuje na terapii wypracowanej na interakcjach społecznych. Jest to skuteczny kontrargument przeciw indywidualizmowi, gdyż jednostka partycypująca w społeczeństwie nie zyskiwałaby na tej relacji.

Zobrazowaniem tej sytuacji mógłby być przykład, gdzie dane przechowywane przez pewien biobank dotyczyłyby rzadkiej i wstydliwej choroby. Pacjent oczywiście mógłby chcieć, aby te dane zostały nieodwracalnie usunięte – to jednak skutecznie zatrzymałoby badania nad lekami.

Gdyby niczym w hobbsowskiej koncepcji stanu naturalnego ludzie zawsze wybierali swój bezpośredni interes, bardzo szybko skończylibyśmy w stanie „wojny wszystkich ze wszystkimi" (Hobbes, 2009, s. 211). Pomimo to człowiek jest stworzeniem społecznym, przez co pewne poświęcenia jednostki na rzecz ogółu uznajemy za uzasadnione (np. rozwój medycyny, jakości usług medycznych). RODO próbuje rozwiązać ten problem przez pojęcie uzasadnionego interesu. W ramach niego zgoda jednostki nie jest potrzebna w sytuacji warunkującej takie podejście lub dobro ogółu społeczeństwa. Dzięki temu w przypadku sytuacji kryzysowej lub przełomowej dla rozwoju medycyny społeczeństwo jest w stanie uchylić

wynikające z prawa do prywatności wolności. Wprowadzone pojęcie wartości „interesu publicznego" skutecznie pozwala na obronę uchylenia wolności jednostki dla dobra ogółu (GDPR-Text.com 2021, art. 6).

ROZWÓJ TERMINOLOGII KOMPETENCJI ZDROWOTNYCH

Rozwój terminologii *kompetencji zdrowotnych* oraz opieki medycznej zbudowanej dookoła modelu partycypacyjnego przyczynił się do podkreślenia idei zdrowia prywatnego jako części zdrowia publicznego. Dzięki całościowemu podejściu, biorącemu pod uwagę na przykład jednostkowe uwarunkowania genetyczne, możemy zadbać o zdrowie całego społeczeństwa na szerszą skalę. Przykładem takiego podejścia są szczepienia. Pojawia się tutaj ponownie wątek dychotomii wolności personalnej i dobra ogółu. Angus Dawson, profesor Uniwersytetu w Sydney, zajmuje się tematyką etyki zdrowia publicznego. Kieruje on dodatkowo multidyscyplinarnym zespołem badawczym Sydney Health Ethics (SHE). W swoim tekście *Vaccinations ethics* (Dawson, 2011, s. 143) na przykładzie szczepień rozważa kwestie zgody, informacji i przymusowej partycypacji. Podczas gdy praca Dawsona oraz przykłady w niej zawarte nie odnoszą się bezpośrednio do tematyki danych medycznych, analogie między kwestią wolności osobistej wobec szczepienia a prywatności i jej ochrony pozwalają na głębszą argumentację. Szczególnie użyteczny będzie aparat pojęciowy wprowadzony w tym artykule, który skutecznie można wykorzystać w kwestii prywatności jednostki.

Angus Dawson zauważa, że z perspektywy liberalnej (a tak można scharakteryzować podejście Unii Europejskiej) paternalizm jest nieuzasadniony, gdyż odbiera jednostce możliwość samodecydowania. Jednak dopuszczamy pewnego rodzaju „słaby (miękki) paternalizm" wobec tych, którzy nie mogą decydować za siebie (dzieci, osoby nieprzytomne, ludzie chorzy lub niezdolni psychicznie do podjęcia decyzji). W ich przypadku nawet liberalne podejście akceptuje pominięcie ich samostanowienia.

W myśl koncepcji Johna Stuarta Milla można wykazać, że szczepionki powinny być obowiązkowe, jako że pomijanie ich jest „szkodliwe dla innych". To łamie zasadę dopuszczalnych działań „szkodliwych dla siebie". Według Dawsona ta argumentacja sama w sobie nie jest paternalistyczna, gdyż ograniczenie swobody innego człowieka następuje, aby ochronić resztę społeczeństwa (Dawson, 2011, s. 144).

Kolejnym argumentem, prezentowanym przez przedstawicieli tzw. liberalnego podejścia, jest „najlepszy interes" pacjenta. To podejście jest dużo obszerniejsze, gdyż bierze pod uwagę kontekst rodzinny, społeczny i kulturowy. Pozwala to na przykład na zaszczepienie dziecka ze względu na jego „najlepszy interes" z pominięciem decyzji opiekuna. Dawson skutecznie rozprawia się z argumentacją przeciwko szczepieniom, zauważając, że opiekun dziecka może być w błędzie. Dodatkowo podaje on przykład hipokryzji, gdzie do braku szczepień nawołują najczęściej ludzie już zaszczepieni, więc lepiej chronieni przed chorobami (Dawson, 2011, s. 144).

Prezentowane przez Dawsona podejścia do poszukiwań uzasadnienia dla powszechnych szczepień są pomocne w znalezieniu użytecznej terminologii. Pojęcie „słabego paternalizmu" jest wystarczająco elastycznym terminem, aby mogło zostać użyte do utworzenia złotego

środka między jednym i drugim. Dodatkowo pozwala też uzasadnić działania „przeciw" wolności jednostki, utrzymując Hobbesowskie rozumienie tej koncepcji.

Niniejszy tekst zakłada, że partycypacja pacjenta w leczeniu jest istotna i powinna być rozszerzana oraz ulepszana w celu osiągnięcia jak najlepszych wyników. Brak ogólnej wiedzy zdrowotnej może w negatywny sposób wpłynąć na perspektywę zdrowia publicznego. Niskie zrozumienie tematyki prowadzi do działań, które jedynie pozornie wypełniają zasadę „zachowania życia tak, aby nie stało się uciążliwym". Jednym z przykładów takich zachowań mogłoby być postępowanie Polaków podczas pandemii COVID-19. Nawet część zaszczepionych obywateli nie miała dostatecznej wiedzy na temat szczepionek i ich sposobu działania. Wobec tego potrzebny byłby system operujący założeniem „słabego paternalizmu", przynajmniej dopóki edukacja zdrowotna w społeczeństwie nie osiągnie zadowalającego poziomu. Niektóre decyzje w sprawie zdrowia powinny zostać skierowane na ten czas tylko do ekspertów, których celem byłoby zadbanie o dobrobyt „swoich podopiecznych". Oczywiście wiązałoby się to z koniecznością uznania zasady minimalnej ingerencji i zaawansowanych działań informacyjnych. Utrzymując wewnętrzne zasady działania Unii Europejskiej oraz mając na celu własny dobrobyt, powinniśmy dbać o demokratyczne i przejrzyste działanie tych procesów.

Według programu rozwoju EHDS oddanie części swojej prywatności byłoby w najlepszym interesie jednostki. Magazynowanie dużej ilości danych medycznych dotyczących konkretnego obywatela pomoże nie tylko jemu, ale także jego społeczności. Dzięki zbiorowi danych, np. rodzinno-genetycznych (co podkreśla wagę tworzenia biobanków), można zawczasu wyszukiwać i przeciwdziałać rozwojowi chorób genetycznych. Przekroje danych mogą pomagać całej lokalnej społeczności. Na przykład gdyby dane pacjentów z objawami określonej choroby zostały zebrane w jednym zbiorze, szybciej można by zidentyfikować jej przyczynę np. w warunkach środowiskowych. W ten sposób byłoby zupełnie uzasadnione oddanie części naszej wolności w celu zadbania nie tylko o nasz dobrobyt, ale też najbliższych. Podczas gdy możemy cenić sobie naszą samowiedzę, czasami brakuje nam głębszego wglądu w otoczenie lub samych siebie (np. w zakresie wiedzy o nowotworach, zaburzeniach psychicznych). Wydaje się to dodatkową argumentacją na rzecz partycypowania w inicjatywach takich jak EHDS. Przez oddanie części naszej prywatności moglibyśmy zadbać o polepszenie warunków zdrowotnych innych ludzi. W takim świetle „słaby paternalizm" pod postacią zbierania danych o stanie pacjenta i magazynowania ich jest zupełnie uzasadniony. Oczywiście koniecznym krokiem jest zbudowanie systemów bezpieczeństwa, które zapobiegłyby utracie tak cennych danych oraz ich potencjalnemu szkodliwemu wykorzystaniu. Takie działania byłyby według podstaw teorii Hobbesa połączonych z przemyśleniami Floridiego atakiem na nas samych. Niemniej jest to dyskurs czysto techniczny, w którym eksperci proponują swoje rozwiązania.

PRZYSZŁOŚĆ ETYKI DANYCH

Problem ujawnia konieczność zbudowania podejścia zawierającego metody przewidywania społeczno-etycznego w kwestiach medycznych. Nieustannie zmieniające się społeczeństwo potrzebuje nie tylko najwyższej jakości rozwiązań technologicznych. Nasze praktyki

etyczne powinny być tym, co wyznacza kierunek rozwoju technologicznego i społecznego, a tym samym i wartości przemawiających za nauką jako źródłem postępu. Podejścia takie, jak na przykład *open science* czy przejrzystość dokonań naukowych, są efektem oraz jednym z głównych wyznaczników wartości etycznych przyświecających działaniom badawczo-rozwojowym. Niemniej nieuchronny postęp technologiczno-społeczny przyniesie konieczność tworzenia nowych wartości lub dopasowywania ich do zmieniającego się społeczeństwa. W takim przypadku, aby uniknąć konieczności wyszukiwania doraźnych rozwiązań, należy zadbać o jeszcze szerszą współpracę nauk społecznych z naukami ścisłymi (European Commission, 2019).

Ma to też odwzorowanie w kwestiach medycyny. Sfera socjologii i etyki pozwala poznawać postawy społeczeństwa, o którego zdrowie chcemy dbać. Wartości w dużej mierze wyznaczają świat człowieka. Każdy rodzaj myśli na temat społeczeństwa można sprowadzić do pewnego rodzaju systemu wartości, uzasadniając wybrane podejście. Celem naszych działań powinno być stworzenie systemu analizy kwestii społecznych i etycznych w medycynie na tyle elastycznej, aby pogodzić interes użyteczności uzyskiwanych danych z interesem zdrowotnym pacjenta. System poznawczy powinien działać z odpowiednim uargumentowaniem etycznym. Tylko wówczas będzie w stanie uzasadniać dalsze modyfikacje (ingerencje w prywatność). Funkcjonujące rozwiązania, takie jak RODO, EHDS lub biobanki, są dobrym przykładem tak zaawansowanych przemian systemowych. W okresie mniejszym niż siedemdziesiąt lat ludzkość przeszła przez kilka przemian systemów magazynowania danych, informacji koniecznych do zapewnienia adekwatnej pomocy oraz nawet podejścia do pacjenta. Ciężko wyobrażać sobie, aby nasze dzisiejsze sposoby działania kształtowane przez szybko zmieniający się świat technologii stanowiły stałe rozwiązanie. Odpowiednie podejście metodyczne oparte na prognozowaniu przemian społecznych może okazać się rozwiązaniem, które z jednej strony będzie wymagało stałej aktualizacji, a z drugiej będzie przynosić najbardziej optymalne rozwiązania do analizy relacji etycznych w obszarze przetwarzania danych.

WNIOSKI

Analizując problematykę wartości etycznych dotyczących społeczeństwa informacyjnego, można zauważyć wiele potencjalnych punktów spornych. Niniejszy tekst proponuje podejście proaktywne do tematu przetwarzania danych w postaci adaptatywnego uzasadnienia. Ma ono na celu utrzymanie wartości i wolności obywatela przy zapewnieniu jak najlepszych warunków rozwojowych dla działań Unii Europejskiej. Przez skonstruowanie linii argumentacyjnej, uwzględniającej zarówno kluczowe w dobie społeczeństwa cyfrowego wartości osobiste, jak i potrzeby zmieniającego się społeczeństwa, otrzymujemy uzasadnienie pozwalające utrzymać równowagę obu tych aspektów. Wymienione przykłady oraz ich podbudowa teoretyczna, w opinii autora, mogą stać się wystarczającym argumentem za świadomą rezygnacją z części wolności osobistej na rzecz poprawy ogólnego dobrobytu społeczeństwa.

Państwa Unii Europejskiej uznają istnienie praw obywatelskich wynikających z pewnych wartości. Stąd też konieczne jest uzasadnienie ewentualnej utraty prywatności w celu rozwoju np. biobanków lub innych usług medycznych. Przez wyszczególnienie dotychczasowych

zapisów o ochronie prywatności oraz jej statusie w społeczeństwie europejskim można zobaczyć jej ekskluzywny status. W wyniku analizy stosującej bioetyczny aparat pojęciowy i klasyczną koncepcję teorii społecznej Hobbesa można znaleźć uzasadnienie dla dalszych działań. Zważywszy ograniczone możliwości poznawcze jednostki i potencjalne zyski społeczeństwa jako całości, kosztem stosunkowo niewielkiej utraty wolności, argumenty zdają się przemawiać za dalszym rozwijaniem projektów typu EHDS. Niemal pewne jest, że w przyszłości wytworzą się kolejne potencjalne problemy natury etyczno-rozwojowej, wobec których działania zapobiegawcze i ich przewidywanie pozwolą na trafniejsze i szybsze rozwiązania.

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KUBA PIOTR RUCIŃSKI, PIOTR LEWANDOWSKI

ETHICAL JUSTIFICATION OF MANAGING HEALTH DATA WITHIN DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIONS OF EUROPEAN UNION

Endlessly changing European society actively faces ethical problems that transpire through every part of life. This article aims to present the problem of managing and utilizing medical data and proposes a concept for justifying these types of research and developmental activities from the perspective of the European Union. By selecting appropriate texts from different areas within philosophy and bioethics, the author aims to show a cohesive and innovative approach. He utilizes the concept of a social contract from the works of T. Hobbes in order to highlight the duties of humans toward their society and the liberties that are available to them. Moreover, the philosophical concepts of L. Floridi and A. Dawson help capture the modern problems and terminologies that try to explain the everchanging technological aspects of modern society.

Keywords: European Union, biobanks, medical data, Horizon Europe, European Health Data Space, EHDS, GPDR

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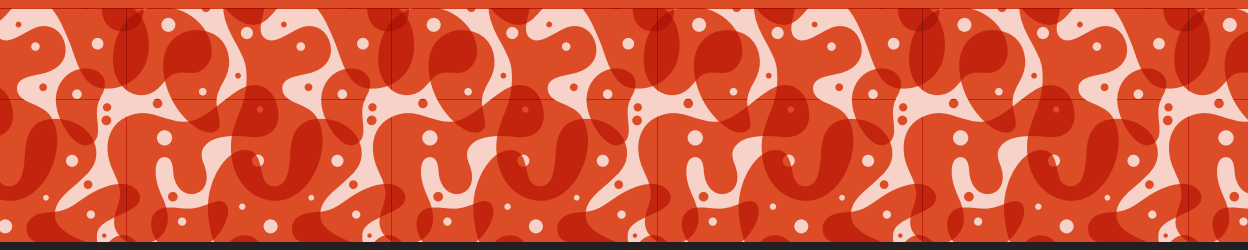

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