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## SELECTED CONCEPTS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY

*B. Petrecka*

*State Higher School of Technology and Economics in Jaroslaw*

*Institute of International Relations*

*Department of Administration*

*ORCID 0000-000200671-7446*

*beata.petrecka@pwste.edu.pl*

The paper deals with the issues related to the theoretical concepts of local authority and the ways of their emergence. Local authority is a political institution that has the ability to influence the creation of rules applicable in a given limited by territory community. The paper attempts to systematize the concept of local authority and to present its essence. For this purpose, a comparative method was applied. Full understanding of the mechanisms of separating local authority in society will allow the identification of people who have a real impact on the lives of citizens.

*Key words:* local authority, elite, governance.

Local authority is a political institution that has the ability to influence the creation of rules applicable in a given, limited by territory community [1]. Global research on local government has been dominated for decades by two competing approaches: elitism and pluralism. The elitist approach was best represented by Floyd Hunter, who in 1953 published a study of Atlanta entitled "Community Power Structure". The second pluralistic approach was most fully presented by Robert Dahl, who polemicized with F. Hunter by publishing in 1961 the book "Who governs". In his research, he asked himself a number of questions. Who are the people who rule the city? How do they gain power and how do they use it? What is their relationship with the rest of society? He applied the reputation method as the starting point for his research. It consists in the fact that the research begins with a list of 20 people (e.g. received from a journalist who knows the city) containing the names of people exerting the greatest influence on local decisions. These 20 people are then interviewed, showing them the list, asking if they agree with its composition and who, if any, should be added. Then it is checked who was mentioned most often in this kind of voting. At a later stage of the study Hunter also analyzed decision-making processes. As a result of his research, he came to the conclusion that the decision-making process is dominated by businessmen who subordinate politicians. As a result, the city is ruled by a small elite. It turned out that all the "leaders" are high-ranking directors of the largest enterprises. Importantly, their role in the political process was not particularly visible. None of them was involved in politics in the literal sense (they did not sit on the council, they did not work in

the administration). According to Hunter political institutions play an essential role in the implementation of policy, but policymaking often takes place outside city hall. Representative democracy is a smoke screen for dominant economic interests [2, 3].

Hunter's opponent, R. Dahl, talks about the need for multivariate analysis in social analyses. Social status can have various sources, e.g. wealth or an origin. According to Dahl, political power depends on various types of resources such as votes, money, legitimacy, access to the media, or access to politicians. Not only the current political power is important, but also the resources that can (potentially) be used to achieve political goals. In his work, Dahl allows the possibility that the possession of resources is not synonymous with their use (e.g. due to the lack of interest in the city's politics). At this point some questions arise: How are the most important decisions made? What people have the greatest influence on decisions? What is the importance of the most widespread political resource - the right to vote? Is the power structure permanent, or is it subject to change?

Dahl studied decision-making in detail in three areas: city planning, education and political appointment decisions. He concluded that political weight was not distributed evenly in all areas. One can play an important role in urban planning without having any influence on education policy decisions. According to Dahl, except for the mayor and a few key municipal officials, the lists of important people in different areas of municipal policy do not overlap. Moreover, the resources possessed by individuals are not enough to influence the political process. Therefore, coalitions must be formed to pool the resources of cooperating participants in the political game. Therefore, Dahl's explanation of urban politics is pluralistic: there are many different groups that exert influence on decision-making. Relatively few actors have great and direct influence, but most citizens have limited and indirect influence on the decisions made. This is important since politicians (councilors) have the actual or implied preferences of voters in mind at all times and take them into account, when making decisions [2].

Both researchers mentioned above found many imitators. According to, among others, P. Swianiewicz and J. Wasilewski [4], many studies have been carried out worldwide, using both the first and the second method. Some attempts have also been made to reconcile the two approaches to local government research. Such a summary of the two positions and proposals for reconciling competitors and research directions was addressed, among others, by Nichols Clark in the paper entitled "*Power and Community Structure: Who Governs, When and Where?*" and Robert J. Waste in "*Community Power. Directions for Future Research*".

The essence of Clark's idea was to use an identical method based on a survey with questions relating to both concepts in a study of multiple cities and then compare the results obtained. Through his method he concluded that individual cities differed greatly in their policy styles and decision-making methods. He also

introduced the concept of deconcentration of power in a city. He used a very simple measure: in an open-ended question, he asked respondents to list the five most important groups in financial decisions and the five most important ones in local politics in general. He then checked how many groups were actually listed in the responses to this question. Respondents in some cities were only able to list one or two important groups, which Clark saw as evidence of a strong concentration of power [2].

The concept of the city as a "growth machine" was formulated by Harvey L. Molotch in the late 1960s. One of the first publications where the author presented the assumptions of his concept is "The City as a Growth Machine" where real estate development investment activity the machine that drives urban development. According to this concept, local actors form a so-called pro-development coalition to expand the city. The primary actors in the coalition are politicians, the local media and leaders of independent public or quasi-public institutions such as the city's water and sewage company and transportation companies. On the other hand, secondary actors are entrepreneurs who devote their time, energy and financial resources to local development and, in running their businesses, maintain frequent contacts with municipal authorities. These include, in particular, landowners, investors who invest capital in financial institutions, as well as centers of learning and culture such as universities, museums, theaters and, last but not least, trade unions. The agreement between "capital and authority" is supposed to create conditions conducive to attracting investment, developing real estate trade, expanding the network of trade, services and infrastructure, and thus the economic benefits derived from the place (i.e. profit for developers and increased income for city budgets), i.e. set the growth machine in motion[5].

The theory of urban regimes is of great importance in contemporary research on the mechanisms of local politics. Its main creator is considered to be Clarence Stone, whose most important work concerns the policy pursued by the authorities of Atlanta entitled "Regime Politics. Governing Atlanta 1946-1988". When analyzing Stone's theory, P. Swianiewicz notices its connection with development challenges that impose the need for cooperation between the public and private sectors. The local government increasingly has to work with others and achieve its goals through other organizations. In the UK, the concept of "enabling government" has emerged in this context, which seeks to create the conditions for others to act instead of directly performing individual tasks and services. The theory of urban regimes helps to understand the issue of power in such an environment. Different groups join forces to achieve common goals. Proponents of regime theory argue that business is dominant in urban politics and believe in the autonomous importance of the political process. According to this theory, not only the objective conditions in which the political process takes place are important, but also the ability to translate them into effective politics. The source of failures in the development policy of cities are both structural conditions and the lack of an intelligent policy. The concept of complexity is the central point of the regime theory. Institutions and individual actors are entangled in extremely complex networks of interaction. Finding

individual actors are entangled in extremely complex networks of interaction. Finding simple causal relationships is almost impossible, so local politics is full of surprises. Stone, argues that "in a sense, the world is chaotic, most of the processes taking place without a clear connection to the activities of the leadership group"[6].

The most important role of local government in this theory is the mobilization and coordination of resources. It happens that the city authorities impose their will and force actions, but this aspect is only a small part of political life. The essence of policy is to formulate priorities, and the main challenge is to ensure the cooperation of various actors that will lead to the implementation of these goals. The combined forces of the private and public sectors create "regimes" that enable joint action. According to Stone, the regime is an informal but stable group with access to resources (including the resources of institutional power). This access enables it to have a lasting influence on governance decisions. There is no formal hierarchy within the regime, there is no single line of action and control, but it is not an open group either. Rather, its network nature and cooperation between participants are emphasized [6]. Stone, convinced of the importance of strategic coalitions for local government, proposed four key elements of the model of local governance: 1. Program dedicated to specific problems; 2. A governing coalition established to implement the program, bringing together both representatives of the local government and people not related to the municipal authorities; 3. Appropriate resources to implement the program adopted by the members of the ruling coalition (including material, knowledge and skills, informal contacts); 4. A plan of cooperation in the coalition where its members will define their role [4].

The literature on the subject raises the problem of the possibility of transferring American concepts to Polish soil. Of course, there are supporters and opponents of such transfer. In many cases, it seems that Western theories were successfully used to analyze the Polish local community, e.g. J. Wiatr, in «*Local Politics in Poland*», B. Jałowiecki in "*Spoleczne wytwory przestrzeni*" («*Social Products of Space*»), or recently I. Sagan in "*Miasto. Scena konfliktów i współpracy. Rozwój miast w świetle koncepcji reżimu miejskiego*" ("*The City. The Scene of Conflicts and cooperation. The development of cities in the light of the concept of the urban regime*").

In Polish literature, many researchers have attempted to conceptualize local authority in an elitist and pluralistic dimension. One should mention Z. Bauman, who in his work entitled "*Struktura władzy lokalnej. Koncepcja badań*" ("*The structure of local authority. The concept of research*") (1962) created the scope of the concept of the power elite and claimed that it was "the possibility of making decisions regulating the satisfaction of the communal living and cultural needs of the inhabitants of a given local community, as well as the possibility of arbitration in cases of conflicts of interest arising in the sphere of meeting these needs" [7]. According to Bauman, the basic core of the power elite are people recruited from the formal structures of local authorities. Separating the local power elite is possible using the positional procedure which

takes into account, first of all, positions in institutions of power, and then positions in institutions acting to meet the communal needs of residents [8].

W. Narojek, in *"System władzy w mieście"* (*"The system of authority in the city"*) (1967), distinguished the local system of power by describing organizations operating in the city, authorized to make decisions that are binding on individuals and groups within reach their actions. He identifies the local elite by characterizing its interpersonal connections and internal conflicts, as well as supra-local relations. It also presents, to a limited extent, social relations between representatives of local authorities and residents.

Another researcher of local government issues, J. J. Wiatr, who e.g. organized and conducted an international comparative study on local government, in his works entitled *"Władza lokalna u progu kryzysu"* (*"Local authority on the verge of crisis"*) (1983) and *"Władza lokalna w warunkach demokracji"* (*"Local authority under conditions of democracy"*) (1998) focuses primarily on the characteristics of people in power and compares Polish leaders with leaders from other countries.

J. Bartkowski in the work *"Lokalne elity władzy w Polsce w latach 1966 – 1995"* (*"Local power elites in Poland in the years 1966 – 1995"*) (1996), presents changes in the socio-demographic composition of local elites in Poland. He deals with the issues of rotation of local elites and the role of parties in local politics. He also devotes much space to public opinion and its views on elitism.

Z. Draj and J. Indraszkiewicz in the monograph *"Regionalna elita władzy w Polsce"* (*"Regional power elite in Poland"*) (1994), reconstruct the portrait of the regional elite and its position in the social structure. In their research interests, they devote a lot of space to the views of the elite on morality, economy and politics.

In the collective work entitled *"Elity w procesie transformacji społeczno – gospodarczej i politycznej Polski"* (*"Elites in the process of socio-economic transformation of political Poland"*) (1995), edited by J. Sztumski, one can meet with the issue of factors determining the popularity of local elites and the analysis of the results of empirical research devoted to the opinion of residents on the activities of local authorities during the transformation period.

M. Halamska in the work *"Reprodukcja czy wymiana? Przekształcenia lokalnych elit politycznych w Polsce w latach 1990 – 1998"* (*"Reproduction or exchange? Transformations of local political elites in Poland in the years 1990 – 1998"*) (2001), focuses on the presentation of local political dynamics, dealing in particular with the issue of citizens' participation in parliamentary, presidential and local elections. She reconstructs the process of selecting political elites and attempts to create a portrait of local leaders.

Wasilewski, following P. John, introduces to the Polish ground one of the dominant approaches in the world literature, based on the distinction between the concepts of *government* and *governance*. *Government* refers to formal procedures and hierarchically located institutions of power at various levels. The decisions they make, the way governments are carried out and other practical aspects of governance are

influenced not only by the internal, formal-institutional set-up of the political world, but also by the social environment, including socio-political movements, dominant values, social structure, as well as the economic environment with its organization of interests and ownership structure. There has "always been a two-way relationship between the world of *governance* and its environment: mutual influences have been frequent and significant" [4].

Wasilewski further explains that "the novelty associated with *governance* is the inclusion of this environment in the world of exercising of power. This is no longer the environment, i.e. something external, it is an internal component of the ruling system, e.g. of the local public administration. *Governance* includes not only the system of state institutions (e.g. a county or a commune self-government structure) but also non-state structures (e.g. non-governmental organizations) and informal structures, including *ad hoc* structures (e.g. citizens organized around a certain issue), interest groups and influential individuals. *Governance* is an open and variable network of relations, of which only one component is the government, understood as the traditional system of power institutions. The other components of *governance* change depending on the situation but are always present. (...) In this way, various social circles are involved in the process of working out and making decisions, and thus this process gains broader social legitimacy. (...) Public authority understood as *governance* strives to involve the widest possible circles in decision-making, because in this way its decisions will be more accurate and public funds will be used better. Thus, it increases her chances of re-election. This is a classic added-sum situation where all players win" [4].

As Wasilewski continues, it is still too early in Polish conditions to make *governance* the main research paradigm because expanding the circle of active participants in power processes by organizations, social groups or people formally not belonging to this circle is perceived negatively by society. It is rather treated as a potential manifestation of privacy, nepotism, corruption, "cronyism" or "partisanship" [4]. Over time, when Polish society shows greater involvement in social and political matters, gets used to active participation and participation in decision-making, such research will become possible.

M. Halamska and J. Wasilewski pose the question to what extent certain findings of the theory of elites can be transferred from the macro level to the local level. M. Halamska reflects on the possibility of applying the general theorems of the theory to local phenomena, as well as the possibility of making comparisons between the regularities occurring among the elites at the national and local level. She notes that the macro and micro elites are interested in different issues. One of the basic difficulties in making generalizations and transferring findings from one level of analysis to another is the problem of the scope of autonomy of local elites, i.e. determining to what extent the actions of the lower-level elites are sovereign, and to what extent they are subject to influence, influence, pressures of higher levels [9]. Before the systemic changes, concerns about the transfer of arrangements from one level to another, in the case of local political elites, were quite justified and were expressed in the works of J.

Wasilewski: "the macro approach (...) tries to show the concepts of power in the hands of the national elite (...), the local approach (...) tries to show in specific cases how potential power (controlling the basic means of power) is realized in actions, paths of influence, conflict resolution. Between these approaches there is an area of <<no man's land>> since there is no methodological mechanism for transferring findings from one level to another" [10]. Nowadays, rather local political elites enjoy considerable sovereignty and such attempts are being made to transfer them. J. Wasilewski in 2006 writes that contemporary political elites are broadly defined as people occupying leading positions in organizations and therefore exerting a permanent and significant influence on the content of political decisions [4]. As he writes further, what kind of organizations are involved depends on the given society and the level of analysis, whether it is the central, regional or local level, and it should be understood here not only as strictly political organisations, but all organizations that play an important role (e.g. religious, economic, trade union, ethnic), regardless of whether they participate in the exercise of power or remain in opposition [4]. Thus, it can be understood that it is justified to analyze the local elite using models for national elites. Elite theories focus on national (central) political elites. Nevertheless, all theoretical proposals emphasize the importance of subelites (the concept of subelites in the literature is used interchangeably for such terms as "elite recruitment layer", "local elite", "regional elites", "intermediary elites"), i.e. those occupying the middle levels of power and influence structures. This is related to another important aspect of elite theory, which is the relationship between elites and the masses. There is a belief that intermediary institutions between the national (central) elite and the masses are indispensable for a functioning democracy. Mid-level elites occupy high positions in these institutions and, because of this, have a special role to play, being a key link between the national elite and the masses.

## **ВИБРАНІ КОНЦЕПЦІЇ МІСЦЕВОЇ ВЛАДИ**

*B. Petrecka*

*State Higher School of Technology and Economics in Jaroslaw*

*Institute of International Relations*

*Department of Administration*

*ORCID 0000-000200671-7446*

*beata.petrecka@pwste.edu.pl*

У статті розглядаються питання, пов'язані з теоретичними концепціями місцевої влади. Місцева влада – це політичний інститут, який має можливість впливати на створення правил, що застосовуються в певній обмеженій території громаді. У статті зроблено спробу систематизувати поняття «місцева влада». Для цього було застосовано порівняльний метод. Повне розуміння механізмів відокремлення місцевої влади в суспільстві дозволить виявити людей, які мають реальний вплив на життя громадян. Обґрунтовано висновок про те, що усі теоретичні пропозиції підкреслюють важливість субеліт (поняття субеліти використовується як синоніми для таких термінів, як «місцева еліта», «регіональна еліта», «проміжна еліта»), тобто тих, хто займає середні рівні влади та структури впливу.

*Ключові слова:* місцева влада, еліта, врядування.

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