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INTRODUCTION

Besides democratization, publicity and pluralism perhaps the most frequently repeated key term in connection with the reform of the system of Hungarian political institutions is autonomy of the self-governing type. While declaring the ideal of self-government we often fail to clarify it conceptually, which would require bringing it into harmony with the principles of our state theory and constitution in a narrow sense, not to speak of the enormous lack of information concerning the local social and political conditions of self-governing. Besides clarifying some conceptual criteria in this paper I am trying to reveal the actual conditions of the democratization and decentralisation of local administration as explored in my fact-finding investigations. I think it is a basic question whether the settlements and local communities have at their disposal the degree of autonomy necessary for coming closer to the administrative system of the self-governing type. The question is raised whether under the present conditions a settlement is able to interface with its political-administrative environment, to remain intact while preserving itself; whether the relationship of the local level is conceivable on the basis of consensus. It is impossible to answer these questions by merely analysing the system of councils. A realistic picture of the situation can be outlined only through the consideration of all the components of the local power relations.

THE PHASES OF REGIONAL POLICY, THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION

After the Liberation the role of the former local governments was gradually pushed into the background, the First Council Act already based regional administration on the principle of democratic centralism.

The Council Act created a strict hierarchy between the government, the councils and the individual council levels in the form of so-called twofold subordination, which implied the co-existence of horizontal and vertical dependencies.

Besides centralized management, twofold subordination and the survival of deconcentrated organs the further restricting of the local autonomy was ensured by the strongly centralized division of functions. In the final account, however, it was an administrative structure which suited the socio- and economico-political objectives and the regional development conceptions of the period. Forced industrialization, the over-ambitious objectives of regional development (the formation of

new towns, the resolution of the employment troubles of the countryside, the supply of all the villages with radio, telephone and electricity etc.) which were formulated in the first five-year plan accordingly required a political-administrative mechanism operating as a monolithic unit and ensuring extremely rigorous implementation. In the Second Council Act of 1954 the weight of the representative bodies was increased and the subordination of the executive committees to the top organs of special management (to the ministries) was abolished. The idea of self-government was still stigmatized as a bourgeois phenomenon and in spite of the organizational separation of representation and administration the centralized control over management became, in fact, more direct.

During the consolidation following the incidents of 1956 the disproportionateness of the regional division of labour, particularly in the wake of the acceleration of the restructuring of agriculture, came to light more sharply directing the attention to the regional issues.

In parallel to the economico-political strengthening of the regional aspects the role of the councils was gradually widened in the field of influencing the spatial economic processes and in the resolution of the tasks connected with state administration in general. The mid-sixties can be characterized by the restructuring of council management and the transformation of its role in the development of regions and settlements. The consolidation of the political power, the regional restructuring of the population and the socialization of agriculture made it possible and also necessary to accelerate the integration processes of council organization, which, on the one hand, meant mainly the division of the local councils into districts, on the other hand, powerful urbanization. The elimination of the representation of the communities, then the division of the institutional and social spheres into districts, however, cut off the way to the political, institutional assertion of interests for the local communities.

In 1986 in addition to the significance of its economic contents the economic reform also gave a decisive push to the decentralization of state life making the strengthening of the system of councils and the unambiguous assignment of the tasks and powers inevitable.

The introduction of indirect management methods, the change in the character and role of planning, the problems emerging within the system of councils all motivated the extension of council autonomy and the shift of the main points of efforts in the division of labour between the council levels.

The main directions of regional development policy were also identified. The basic socio-political objective was the regional equalization of the living conditions, a possible way of which was the formation of the adequate regional employment proportions, the other alternative being the regional levelling of the infrastructural supply of the population, principally in relation to the

settlements belonging under the same category. The implementation of the objectives of the regional development policy was subsidized from separate financial funds as early as 1970.

The 1971 governmental resolution on regional development policy and the conception of the development of the national network of settlements in combination with the Third Council Act were the pillars that determined the economic and administrative management framework of regional policy and resulted in a turning-point in both contents and organizational forms.

The twofold purpose of regional policy is, on the one hand, the efficient utilization of the resources of the economy and the individual regions, the modernization and rationalization of the network of settlements and, on the other hand, the mitigation of the diversity in the material and cultural standards of the populations of the individual regions by simultaneously levelling regional employment, productivity and settlement supply levels.

The hierarchical system of the centres, however, adumbrated the town-centred allocation of the settlement development funds. Obviously the socially unjust consequences of settlement development with its strongly polarized allocation mechanism could be anticipated, moreover they were intentional. About 2000 small settlements classified under the "other settlements" category, were practically excluded from the development.

Perhaps the most important amendment to the Third Council Act having come into effect in 1971 was the radically new definition of the state organizational character of the councils according to which the councils are representative self-governing and state administrative organs. From the side of organization the increased degree of autonomy, the extension of authority were served by the abolition of the sub- and super-ordination of the council bodies to one another maintaining the twofold subordination of the executive committee at the same time. The basic powers of central administration were assigned to the Council of Ministers. According to the Act the basic economic tasks of the councils became the development of regions and settlements, the organization of meeting the needs of the population. To enable the councils to accomplish these tasks the principle of the autonomous management of their financial means was declared. In contrast with the former regulation the tasks of the individual council levels were designated in a differentiated way where the state character of the county councils and the self-governing character of the local councils became prominent.

In the early eighties the correcting and reforming efforts of the regional and settlement development policy and those of the administrative policy coincided again. The debate unfolding in the Hungarian special literature was focused upon the review and modernization of OTK (development conception of the national network of settlements) and the preparation of the sixth

five-year plan, while the science of management and the slowly strengthening political science were revived in the hope of reforming the regional system of administration.

Under the pressure of the demographic indices, the proportions of the shares in the development funds and the tensions connected with the supply of small villages OTK was modified as early as 1980. With the abolition of the category of "other settlements" indirect pressure could be exercised in the interest of the formation of a more proportionate and socially more equitable distribution structure.

The national proportion of the means expended on the development of infrastructure, the situation of living standards policy became the subject of heated debates. It was the first time that the development of settlements was set in a perspective where besides the rational technocratic considerations the issues of social welfare and democracy were powerfully contoured as well. The role of the council sphere in the development of settlements, the structure of the resources of the councils' financial means were closely related to these issues.

The prevailing basic document of the state on the development of settlements broke with the former way of developing the system of centres according to a rigid hierarchy. In the intensive and regionally proportionate development of the economy it aimed at giving rise to an increased reliance on the local endowments, paying particular attention to and promising central support for narrowing the economic gap between the backward zones and the average regions, for developing the zones with specific features (small villages, border regions, agglomerational zones etc.). From the socio-political aspect perhaps the most important target is that urbanization, modern living conditions should embrace an ever wider range of settlements.

Following the reform of the system of councils having taken effect in 1984 the system of urban environs became general. A framework was created for the administration and the system of relations of the settlements which serves the implementation of the long-term objectives of the two-level regional administration. The reform is an unambiguous response to some of the earlier contradictions but certain dilemmas have not lost their topicality up to now.

Taking account of the present proportions of the local and county administrative units the reform strengthened the county in its functions and perspectives, thus at the state level a negative response was given to the so-called "county debate" re-emerging in the early eighties once again. It remained an open question how the style of county administration and administrative practice would be modified parallel to emphasizing the self-governing character of the local councils. Should the state or "official" character of the county be further strengthened tightening the link with the governmental sphere to "counterbalance" this? Or consistently following the process of decentralization will that certain "county interest" appear in the relationships with the government

and the other counties? The picture of the future provided by the launched reform process is uncertain in this respect too.

The changes introduced in the management of the councils can be regarded as consistent with the shift of conception and the modifications having taken place in the development policy and administrative policy. The greater proportion of the locally formed financial means, the normative allocation of the redistributive resources, the driving back of the allocating function of the counties and the somewhat greater flexibility of the management regulations, the loosening of the relationships with the central budget, the possibility of entrepreneurship and the establishment of a more direct relationship with the population resources are all promising safeguards of the realization of council self-government. Nevertheless with regard to the structure and attitude of management these modifications are rather corrections than reform measures. There are also possibilities inherent in regulation with the help of which the distribution proportions, the dependencies in management may be restored. Obviously the further deterioration of the load-bearing capacity of the economy will not promote the increase of the economic autonomy of the councils.

Now let us survey what kind of relationship is suggested between the policies of regional development and administration by the conclusions drawn from a historical retrospection.

The conception of the development of regions and settlements can be deductively concluded from the needs of the national economy, while that of the regional administration from the centrally designated state tasks, and the need to match the two always remains secondary. Recalling *O. Bihari's*¹ thoughts and arguments besides the "element of power" the role of "consensus" is still missing or is weak in the regional policy. The contents and system of instruments of regional policy must principally feed on the regional interests and these interests are to be linked to the governmental decisions by means of consensus, otherwise real harmony is never to be achieved.

Up to this point I have discussed the relationship of the regional policy and the management system as an issue of economicalness, rationalization or, if you like, efficiency and I also touched upon its social aspect. In the 70s but mainly in the 80s the attention was directed towards the regional issues on another plane too which could be called on the whole the manifestation of ambitions to achieve a more explicit democracy than formerly. By now it has become irrefutably clear that the dividing lines between the tasks undertaken by the state - society - individual are not rigid or eternal. Between the state - society and the individual political relationships of a new kind are required by the new-type division of labour creating new proportions. It is not accidental that

¹ BIHARI, O. 1980.

the shift in the proportions of the bearing of burdens is strongly revealed in the development of settlements. This phenomenon may be called relying upon the local features and resources or a more equitable general and proportionate sharing of taxation, nevertheless the main thing is that the state withdraws itself from the development of the population infrastructure. The changes in the division of labour and in attitudes ensued without adequately adjusting either the structure or the principles or the operating methods of our state-political system of administration to the changed situation.

The positive call for democratization definitely appears at the local-regional level of administration, too. For the self-governing type functioning of this level, however, it is indispensable for us to know how the local-regional socio-political medium reacts to decentralization and democratization. For the elaboration of the mechanisms that serve the assertion of the local interests the theoretical foundations are missing as well as empirical experience. In the following chapters of my paper I am trying to make up for the serious lack of information by setting forth empirical evidence of the institutional functioning of the local communities and settlements.

CONCEPTUAL CRITERIA OF THE ASSERTION OF LOCAL INTERESTS

With the gradual transformation of the grandiose scale of the system of objectives and instruments of administration and politics causing upheaval in the macrostructure of the society and economy into influencing the system of relations with the group interests, the socio-economic sub-systems and even the individual, the availability of human-centred information about the communities has gained special importance and has become indispensable by nowadays.

From among the numerous scientifically elaborated consequences of urbanization we know relatively little on what conditions are created by the disappearance of the closed world of communities, the regional and functional separation of the different communities for the local communities. "Do they exist at all?" one may ask.

In my opinion local communities are the communities of people organized on the basis of territory and neighbourhood which in addition to their social determination are mainly adjusted to the geographical and ecological conditions, their further conceptual criterion being that they have the opportunity of separate political participation and assertion of interests, the direct basis of which is ensured by the uniformity of the demands and expectations from the domicile.

If we take account of the radical change having taken place in the regional structure of the Hungarian society keeping in mind the drastic organizational integration processes that affected the small settlements in particular and we add to this the strongly centralized peculiarities of administration ensuring political participation for the most part only formally, it becomes obvious that the local communities lack these criteria nowadays.

In the history of self-government it represented autonomy against the state only from time to time and it was formulated mainly rather as an issue of the division of labour or later on as the socialization of the tasks of the state. Whatever independence the local self-governments may have, however, it does not exclude the supervisory right of the state. Most western bourgeois constitutions contain safeguards not only in respect of the autonomy of the local governments but also in that of the maintenance of the unity of the state. Yet the clarification of the sterile legal concepts of autonomy and self-government has become a problem of minor importance by now. According to *H. Zielinsky*² the increased socio-political claims laid on the local communities and settlements require the creation of a complex representative system of interests at the level of the settlements. The convergence of the individual local sub-systems established at the local level has taken place, says Zielinsky, without the formation of new rules to play by in this new system of co-existence co-operation. And these new rules of the game are only partially normative issues.

The idea of self-government as the principle of constructing the state from below towards the top was a realistic alternative facing the socialist countries. The reasons inducing the majority of the socialist countries to take over the model of the Soviet Constitution of 1936 were not related to matters of structure or principle but were rather of practical, topical and political nature.

It needs no particular explanation that in the period of the renewal of the idea of self-government special attention has been paid to the Yugoslavian model. This is the only administrative system among the socialist countries where the federative concept of self-government is consistently realized up to the level of central administration.

In the development of the local-regional administrative mechanism of Hungary - as already mentioned in the latter chapter - the Third Council Act, which declared the self-governing character of the councils for the first time, is to be regarded as a milestone.

After 1971 in spite of the "limited" interpretation of self-government exaggerated and unrealistic expectations were formulated in relation to the councils. Although an increasing number of the formerly centrally handled tasks was transferred to the competence of the councils, the gap between the actual freedom of movement of the councils and the demands on them was widening

² ZIELINSKY, H. 1982.

more and more. The discrepancy between the de jure and de facto status harmed the prestige of the councils and started a process of internal "disruption": on the one hand, the relegation of the councils to the background as compared to the executive organs and on the other hand, the powerful separation of the formal and informal decision-making spheres.

The dissatisfaction connected with the functioning of the local councils was coupled with the effort aiming at the decentralization and democratization of the entire system of state and political administration. In the reform of the system of administration the call for accomplishing the self-governing character (promised a long time ago) was inevitably manifested not only in the local-regional administration but also in the institutionalization of the other socio-economic interest groups.

In fact what do the concepts of self-government and the promised reform actually imply?

1. Reorganization of the division of labour, consistent decentralization which does not retreat time over and again with the necessary economic guarantees?
2. The decision-making system of the local councils on a wider and more direct democratic basis?
3. The first cautious step taken in the direction of a "federative" state structure?
4. An element of the possible solution of a more pluralized system of political institutions?
5. Or simply a "puffer zone"³ in the political seek-and-hide which is taking place under the circumstances of the decreasing load-bearing willingness of the state and the increasing demands of society?

The basis of this query is the fact that the fundamentals of political science and political institutions have not changed in the least during the past forty years. The place, role, guiding method, internal structure of the party have remained unchanged, the stages of evolution in state administration have been more of corrections than reforms. On the other hand, it became apparent that without the modification of the basic structure and institutional system and re-interpretation of the relations of distribution and ownership in particular, the mere declaration of self-government and the formal democratization of the administrative-political relations of functioning and procedure provide only symptomatic treatment.

The most important task is to narrow down the scope of democratic centralism and adopt it mainly in the area of executive administration. The point in question is to decide whether we can create the possibility of co-operation on the basis of consensus in the relationships of the central state level and the party guidance with each other on the one hand and with their lower

³ OFFE, C. 1973.

organizational units on the other hand, whether the elements of partnership can appear besides the power elements.

In the state organization character of the system of councils the self-governing element should be given prominence in relation to the scope of authority as well as organization and the vertical administrative methods should be adjusted to these modifications. The actually established main points of effort of the internal organizations of the councils do not promote the functioning of the self-governing type. The still prevailing Third Council Act has not solved the dilemma either, according to *F. Erdei* "...the same elected organ - the executive committee of the council - simultaneously carries out self-governing and acts as the executive organ of the central government."⁴ It would be worthwhile to consider the possibility of forming a representative structure which is richer in organizational relation. A possibility should be considered where the locally emerging interest groups can get "pluralized" institutionalization and the reconciliation of the interests of the units which are relatively independent with regard to organization takes place at the local level.

In the functioning of the council sphere greater freedom of motion should be ensured against the vertical administration and also greater dependence on the local community.

Because of the personal subordination of the council officials to the laws of labour the "identification" of the local leaders with the local society is ambivalent.

With regard to the economic safeguards of the autonomy of the councils and local policy it is not the independence of management in the absolute sense that should be aimed at but rather the effort to make redistribution perform as many functions and tie up only as many resources as is indispensable for meeting the proprietary and economic management functions of the socialist state and serve as instruments in equalizing the efforts of the regions. The narrowing down of redistribution is not so much a question of political resolution as a function of the internal endowments of the economy. Nevertheless, it is a fact that sometimes redistribution is merely a convenient instrument for centralism to cut up and make indirect the relations formed in production and consumption between the individual, the group and the goods. The redistributive organization closely correlated with power is wedged in.

Besides the fact and extent of deprivals - in view of the present subject matter - the structure of the use of the deprived goods and the decision-making mechanism of distribution are relevant too. In the distributive mechanism practically there are no local, even county (regional) levels either, since the local and county councils dispose of revenues, the existence, use and volume of

⁴ ERDEI, F. 1970. p. 29.

which (or all these in combination) are rendered possible only by central provisions of law. Thus in the distributive relations the local-regional councils are not in an ordering but in an executive position have been institutionalized as ordinary users, consumers. The management of the local-regional council organs always takes place (within the framework of the allocated resources) centrally in a direct or indirect way by means of ad hoc or targetor lump-related normative decisions.

In the final account the practice of redistribution in Hungary (with its proportions and methods) is a serious obstacle to the formation of local governments because it creates dependence putting the central distributing apparatuses at the centre of the power movements.

In my opinion the question raised by *I. Szelényi*⁵ has not been given a scientific answer up to now. The question is the following: how can the conflict of the industrial and communal investments be eliminated, how can the efficiency of communal development be ensured, what are the safeguards of the rational management of the national wealth and of the dynamism of communal development? Of course, the answer cannot be given within the framework of regional management, it depends, as has already been mentioned, on the function of redistribution within the economy. In any case the council-local self-government is also one of the "victims" of the economic management attitude in which the distribution of incomes operates instead of the market and not as its complementary whether from the side of economicalness or policy.

Administration is not the only channel of the decisions affecting the local communities but they have a separate political identity which the decision-making mechanism of the state and the socio-political institutions reckon with. The council mechanism is inadequate to its medium in relation to both regions and the socio-economic determination of interests. Regional inconsistency has been brought about by the extremes of the integration process and also by the fact that the regional structure of public administration - for reasons easily accounted for - is unable to follow and actually reflect the "amorphous" social and economic formations coming into being on the basis of territorial vicinity.

We should not have an aversion to the possibility that certain interests, certain activities could be organized independently of state administration and expediency supervision. From the standpoint of étatism it is difficult to accept the non-state organs as partners too. On the other hand, such a change would have a beneficial influence on the state sphere too since in the course of the partner-like and non-vertical (non-paternalistic) co-operation with the other organizational-political sphere the adopted practice of contact and working methods would inevitably change too.

⁵ SZELÉNYI, I. 1973.

From the point of view of the functioning of the system of councils efforts should be made to benefit from the privilege of organizational complexity, that is from the fact that it consists of units of diverse character with different functions, to use it for establishing more flexible relationships with the local society and the system of political and economic institutions. For this purpose the greater operativity and freedom of mobility of the representative bodies, committees and officials of the councils should be created.

Among the political conditions of self-governing we should mention the elimination of the political retardation of the local communities in the last place only for a reason of formality. According to *N. W. Polsby*⁶ political apathy is more or less a normal condition in the case of a well-functioning modern democracy. The middle classes can be activated only when they see that their vital interests are in danger. When it comes to that, legal safeguards are required to ensure the possibilities of action according to the domicile. The question still remains: if the majority of the local societies, communities have vital interests in improving the circumstances of the domicile, in fighting for more favourable positions and proportions then what accounts for their political indifference? At present the social legitimacy of the political and state representative systems of institutions is not adequate at the local level and, in a contradictory way, passing downwards the hierarchical levels of the certain types of political-power organizations less and less attention is paid to them by those affected. It seems proper to say that with the decrease in the scope of activity and autonomy of a political-state organizational unit the contact with the direct environment is proportionately being lost, which inevitably results in the antidemocratism of the decisions made within the narrow scope of motion. This is a vicious circle. The local level of political publicity should not be thought of as a monolithic unit, from which the conclusion can be drawn again that its representative-institutional system should be also formed with the consideration of several factors. The political meaning of self-government includes that the local community - practically becoming independent of its socially determined internal articulation - should be able to represent the domicile-related interests in a uniform (impersonal) way outwards. What depends on the democratism of the internal power relations is "only" the way in which consensus is reached with regard to the contents of the external representation of interests and the nature of the relationship between the group interests appearing among the domicile-related so-called "common" interests and the internal articulation of interests.

⁶ POLSBY, N. W. 1963.

Thus we can say that the political acceptance of self-government does not automatically give way to democratic local power relations, its lack, however, thwarts the creation of democratic local political publicity.

THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE PRESENT LOCAL POWER-POLITICAL RELATIONS IN THE PERIOD OF THE REFORM OF SELF-GOVERNING ON THE BASIS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH IN COMMUNITIES

Until the early 1980s there were few investigations in Hungary analysing the entirety of the administrative-coordinative organizational and informal relationships of the settlements. At best the attention was turned towards the functioning of some organizational types but the settlement as a whole either from the sociological point of view of the potential communities or from the administrative-organizational aspect of management have remained a neglected, adversely treated field of research.

The evidence of the small number of the examinations of complex character, however, suggested that the analysis of these problems was certainly justifiable. The systems of the organizational, personal, formal and informal relations show such a muddled picture that they are, as it were, "black boxes" for the regional and national decision-making.

The main objectives of the research project launched by me in 1982 focus just on this very question - whether local level of administration is able to actually represent and govern the settlement, local society within the system of the relationships having been established with the central (regional) power. Until we get to know precisely the channels, instruments and impact of this "external" influence, it is impossible to interpret the points of juncture and the power relations which came into being in the local decision-making mechanism. At the same time I also wanted to find out what internal formal and informal structure was at the disposal of the organizational complex of the settlements forming the local administrative level, where the structural points of gravity and the actual decision-makers could be found, or how the settlement as an organizational entity behaved towards its governing organizational environment.

I carried out empirical research in three settlements: in Pécsvárad (1982-83), Jakabszállás (1985) and Kiskunmajsa (1986). My experience makes it possible to make comparisons and to arrive at some relative generalizations. At the same time these generalizations serve as working hypotheses, which still will have to be proved or corrected on a wider empirical base in the future.

The three settlements of - basically sooner - agrarian character (with a population of 4500 - 2600 - 11,000 respectively) showed different aspects in relation to social stratification, infrastructural development, economic attraction, organizational structuring, dynamism of development and administrative status. Nevertheless the official state-political structure bears similar features in each of them.

It is a general characteristic that the council body can be regarded as the "summit organ" of the communal policy merely in its formalities. The legitimacy of functioning is ensured by the ceremonial authority of the council body. Neither the lower council units, nor the non-council organs and institutions, nor the members of the council expect the council body to undertake a programme-determining, actual governing role. The subordinated executive committee is characterized by great operativity as compared to the functioning of the council body. With its activity preparing the decisions of the council-meeting, with exercising its own and relegated powers the point of gravity of the power within the council was shifted to the executive committee. This seemingly internal organizational shift is a very important indicator of the position of the local council within the settlement and as opposed to vertical administration. As a result of the double subordination of the executive committee the influence of the county practically ripples over to the activities of the council bodies owing to the fact that the governing role of the council body is not asserted towards the executive committee, just on the contrary.

On the basis of the detailed analysis of several years of the administrative activity of the special agencies it was possible to make conclusions with regard to the components, the gravity points and character of council activity. It became clear that the local council is mainly prepared to respond rather than initiate and organize i.e. it has not a "motoric" function. It was also revealed that in the activities of the local councils there is an unhealthy hypertrophy of the work connected with the organization of development and supply, while the function of managing and organizing the local community is performed substantially imperfectly. It is part of the same story that between the actual decision-making authority of the councils and the claims laid on them by the state (top level) and the population (low level) the gap becomes apparent which involves the local politics in a crisis of legitimacy. The positions of the local councils are, therefore, rather weak even in the areas where they exercise normatively fixed coordinative-supplying functions. At the same time if they happen to slip through from the sphere of state competence to the communal, self-governing plane, this mainly political activity already has not any legal bases to rely on. If the social prestige that could replace it - as will be repeatedly pointed out - is missing then it is mere illusion to regard the councils as the top of the local power.

The internal power relations of the council mechanism are characterized by the strong intertwinement of the different organizational units and eventually they support the virulence of the activity of the administrative-executive type. From among the triple state organizational character (self-government, popular representation and state administration) the council is able to fulfil only the latter function.

Switching over to the other components of the local political mechanism from the situation of party guidance the following conclusion could be drawn: the party organizations of the small settlements are not in the position which could be expected on the basis of the macromodel of the political system. It is an established fact that particularly in the functioning of the party organization a wider scope of motion was observable in the case of the leading officials than in that of the public bodies. The powers and decision-making possibilities necessary for influencing are powerfully becoming independent of the functioning of public bodies. The activity of the party secretary, for example, does not require the authorization of the public body as a rule. The mandate given by the party body is undistinctive and the activity of the leaders is not controlled by the public bodies. With regard to the local-settlement regularities of the place and operating methods of the party guidance I took care not to make generalizations. It can be accounted for by the fact that the regulation of the instruments, methods, limits and structure of party guidance is missing even in respect of the constitutional relation to the state. To all probability this is why the role of the party organizations is strongly differentiated, contingency may have a greater role according to the personal and local peculiarities. (The Patriotic People's Front in Hungary - the widest social mass movement with its alignment, character, methods of functioning and independent organizational impact can be regarded as an informational channel, an accelerator for the decisions of communal policy which is the medium and participant of the political processes without an actual deciding role.)

The importance of the other social organs and organizations from the point of view of communal policies could hardly be registered during the investigations. In spite of the fact that the representative organs are not able to reflect the local articulation of interests, there is no real possibility for the organization of the interests of groups with peculiar political contents. The process taking place in Hungary in our days, the mushrooming of societies, unions representing interests and social organizations holds out promises of the pluralization of the local political relations as well. What is still characteristic today - due to the central character of the reform - is that the national agencies and organizations take the initiative and make decisions about foundation; the differentiation and restructuring of the formerly politically uniform and poor mechanism is shaped from the higher quarters downwards.

In contrast with the half-hearted political role of the social-political organizations the predominance of the political weight of the economic units became evident during my investigations. Paradoxically, our state-political administrative system practically does not take account of the peculiar interests of the economic organizations, their representation is relegated to the informal sphere.

In the three above mentioned settlements the relationships between the system of political and economic institutions were formed according to three types.

In Pécsvárad in accordance with the sporadic and ineffective economic structure the representation of the economic organizations is formally solved by means of the public activities and board memberships of the leaders, at the same time the role of the economic sphere is not emphatic with regard to the political decisions.

In Kiskunmajsa in spite of the fragmented economic structure there is a dominant production branch and a dominant economic unit which does not endeavour to integrate its role in the settlement policies with the official structures. The interrelationship of the political and economic spheres is unbalanced and loaded with conflicts, at the same time the benefits of the economic prosperity can be pointed out in the settlement. Speaking figuratively, there are two functioning power centres in the settlement each demarcating its sphere of influence in different circles and at different levels.

With regard to the relation between these two organizational spheres the political structure of Jakabszállás is homogeneous perfectly integrated formally as well as informally and - in contrast with Kiskunmajsa - the dominance of the economic interests is asserted without conflicts.

Thus the economic sphere is a prominent element of the power processes of the communities and its influence gets through just owing to the lack of institutionalization on a regulated basis. Thinking about the representative forms of the economic interests we must not forget that the sphere of interests in question is one which shows a differentiated picture in conditions, behaviour and influence, and this fact makes it impossible to offer a uniform model for all the settlements. From the point of view of self-government, however, there is no doubt that the lack of the conditions of the relationships of the transactive type deprives settlement autonomy of its base.

It is another matter that the reciprocity of relationships, partnership is conceivable between the local state-political administration and the economy only if they dispose of similar competences and means in the development of the settlements. The present desperate budgetary constraints imposed on the councils, the lack of the material and ownership conditions of entrepreneurship are rather unpromising with regard to the harmonical settling of the relationship.

The consideration of the population as a political factor and a general public in the investigation warned against the groundlessness of self-government from the point of view of sociology and social psychology. In lack of the institutions of local publicity the population relies on a very low and fluctuating informational basis not only with regard to its value judgements but it also has poor factual knowledge about the local events and personalities.

The information obtained about the public behaviour of the population shows that for the time being the connections of the local political leaders do not mean solid support for the democratic exercising of the increased local autonomy. The dominant political attitude is indifferent, even hostile from time to time. In spite of the undoubted role of political culture or its lack the reason for this is mainly the lack of institutions of direct democracy and the local informational system. It is no use keeping silent about the fact that the majority of people are well aware of the fact that the future of their domiciles is not decided locally.

After analysing the functioning of the different organizational spheres and the unorganized society it was eventually easy to determine the circle of the local élite. In the course of the analysis I adopted the mature western methods (decision-making, positional and regulation techniques etc.) of communal research. At the same time it has to be taken into account that the models elaborated in the western bourgeois political science cannot be adopted mainly on account of the fact that they are the result of a real power formula where the local community, the settlement has relative autonomy against the extra-settlement levels of power and where the individual organizational and personal participants of the power can also function in the possession of relative autonomy. That is the national and local levels of administration are closely interrelated with respect to the extent of centralization. In Hungary the majority of the organs functioning in the settlements do not have such a degree of organizational autonomy and do not dispose of rights and means in the possession of which they could make autonomous decisions in an intact way or could be participants of the local common decisions. Eventually "politicizing" in the three settlements does not represent local power, it is rather a matter of "jockeying for position" and adaption where the horizontal relations of the local organs to each other is of secondary importance in many respects.

In the decision left within the range of local competence or rather in the choice of the strategies of adjustment the individual organizational types can assert their interest in proportion to the extent of autonomy granted by the top elements of their own vertical chains. Thus it becomes understandable why the power weight of the economic organizations can be asserted and why the council cannot govern the local decision-making processes. The relationship of the different organizations can be characterized by permanent and generalizable peculiarities with difficulties. In the structure of the official administration of settlements only a narrow band is functioning. This

narrow band of actual influence does not include either all the elements of the official political structures or the entirety of the organizational types. It was mainly the leaders or the more active core of the public bodies that determined the functioning of the organizations. Another important characteristic is that the élite participating in the local political processes comes from the objectively (positional) technocratic professional stratum with a greater possibility to intervene in the decision-making processes due to the fact that the management, executive elements of the local political-administrative system are virulent. The actual power and par excellence state-political structures do not coincide. The most significant shift is represented, on the one hand, by the political predominance of the economic organizations and the relative weakness of the council sphere, on the other hand, its third characteristic feature is the élitist character, the lack of social publicity. The power structure which is mostly integrated around one or maybe two poles is outlined at best on the basis of its relation to the other local organs. The organ or person that can get an advantage over the others is the one which has the greatest chance to obtain and maintain the support of the superior level of administration. There are, however, hardly any relations and decisions for the establishment and regulation of which the local information, the local decision-making competence and the local system of guarantees of execution would be sufficient.

The conglomerate of the local organizational, political and social systems of relationships is not able to cooperate for a long time. The lack of cohesion can be accounted for just by the stronger assertion of the diverse but basically close vertical sectorial management of the individual spheres as opposed to the regional-local influence.

The local power system divided by the dependency in administration seems to be objectively unable to hold together. The locality - following the inevitable disintegration already referred to - was replaced by a territorially cut up, sporadic, over-administered but at the same time incoherent structure. The multi-directional commitments of the inhabitants, the alienation of the administrative centres, the impersonalization of the decisions, the centralization of the distributive relation became a major obstacle to the formation of a unifying local power. At the same time these very phenomena with their consequences show the need for the re-establishment of localities. In a curious way the role of localities comes into the lime-light more and more frequently both from the aspect of economic efficiency and socio-political renewal, democratization or from the point of view of the evolution of the individual. In the relation with the constructed and natural environments and the small communities considerable troubles may be caused by the wrong undervaluation of the role of the domicile. I do not state that the centralization of the political-administrative relations has an exclusive role in the disintegration of localities, since it could at best support and accelerate the economic and social concentration processes.

The external downwards determination of the local system of relationships is much stronger than the level which could be justified by the central social and economico-political objectives. The dependency of the local organs to such a degree, in particular that of the local council and party organs hinders the marked representation and assertion of interests at the level of the settlements and the transformation of the settlements into communities. It does not mean to say that local decisions are not made or the local organs do not influence the local living conditions at all, that there are not decision-making centres having some power over the local society. This power, however, is merely executive power and in my investigations I could not find traces of power of self-governing character. The primary scientific task, therefore, is to elaborate the criteria of the local-settlements autonomy in relation to central management.

In this respect the elucidation of the constitutional, organizational, normative, economic and sociological conditions is necessary.

The local decision-making mechanisms are not still open and democratic. In my opinion the main reason for this is that the specific interests of the settlements and local societies that are emphatically linked to the locality do not get a primary form of assertion in the management-political system. Their occasional appearance in some places is due to the latent functions or the malfunctioning of the organizations.

CONCLUSIONS

The creation of the economic, social and political-institutional conditions of the local-settlement autonomy is an underutilized resource which is of decisive importance from the point of view of the democratization of the administration of society as well as from that of economic efficiency and the rationalization of administration and management. The self-governing-type functioning of the settlements is limited by structural factors. There is no doubt that the consequence of urbanization is mainly the disintegration of the closed forms of locality. At the same time the administrative relations of centralizing character, the redistributive allocation system eliminate the commitments which might connect the society, economy and institutions of the domicile by conforming to the environmental, sociological and ethnic etc. peculiarities of the "place".

At the moment the different sub-systems of the settlement are functioning so to say independently of each other. The different spheres of activity (administration, production, supply)

are operated by their own - extra-settlement - vertical organizational chains. On the basis of my empirical research the intra-settlement relations are characterized by the following.

1. The officials in charge of settlement policy, the local council and party organs do not dispose of sufficient autonomy either in governing the intra-settlement interest relations or in particular in the external representation of the settlements. The possibility of the influence of the councils is limited by the excessive central influence on the local living conditions, the lack of the material background of the competences ensured in the organization of supply, the management of institutions and developments and by the county administration directly influencing the exercising of their own competences. In the conflicts with the governing county council and its organs the local council does not dispose of the means of asserting the interests which can function in a formal and efficient way. In the "ideology" of our administration system local interests are inferior as a matter of course. The role of the party organ at the local (settlement) level depends on the level of organizational development and on the scope of the ensured political authority of the local leaders. Their influence is, however, far below the extent possessed by the top management levels of the party.

2. The organizational range affecting the decisions of settlement policy is usually wider than that of the *s u i g e n e r i s* political-state governing organs. The role of the economic organizations is over-emphasized in settlement policy, although it is differentiated according to the production structure of the given settlement and the economic potentials of the individual production organs.

3. The local power decisions are made in the circle of a narrow élite. The possibility of this is due to the strong formality of the functioning of the local representative and corporate organizational units. The composition of the public bodies is not able to reflect the local structures of interests, it is more the delegation practice of the local organs than the representation of the interests of the local society that can be accomplished by it. The discussed items on the agenda, the decisions made show that only the formal legitimacy required for the functioning of the officials and the executive organizational units is ensured.

The loss of importance of representation is promoted by the peculiarities of council administration strengthening the role of the executive organs formally as well.

The activity of the party officials is only slightly controlled by the members and the public bodies.

For the decisions of the élite representing chiefly organizational interests the forums of formal and informal bargaining ensure ground. In the organizationally less articulated smaller

settlements the everyday personal relations play a greater role and accordingly the role of the council and party executive committees is even less here.

4. The public behaviour of the local society is characterized by political indifferentism. There are no forums for local publicity, the greatest part of local society has neither urge nor political culture nor local information necessary for influencing the local political processes. The activity of the population in development - in villages - is mostly based on necessity. The autonomous community movements headed by the local intellectuals are based on special interests other than those of the local politics. The social organs can mobilize as a rule only a small part of the local society from time to time.

The local society or settlement with diverted interests and practically autocratic governing will be able to function as self-government only by means of radical changes concerning attitude and structure. The primary condition is the predominance of the method of consensus as against the method of power, the system of hierarchical dependencies have to be replaced and complemented by horizontal partnership. In the re-regulation of the administrative relations the political identity of the entirety of settlements has to be ensured, the institutional central and county representation of the local interests has to be established.

In the distribution relations the level of settlement management should be treated separately where the harmonization of the interests of the production, infrastructure and the population could be accomplished. The autonomy of settlement management should be limited by the central distribution only in certain groups of settlements or in the interest of certain development objectives from time to time.

I think we should not be afraid of political particularism or economic-financial autonomy of the local interest endangering the assertion of regional, sectorial or even national economic interests. In the relationship of the local and national (regional) interests the permanent ousting of the local interest can result only in illusory harmony and this is what really endangers the assertion of the national interest.

The issue of self-government may not be narrowed down to the reform of the system of councils or simply to the formation of a new-type division of labour between levels of state administration or to creating balance of centralization and decentralization. This group of problems requires a new approach in the system of the relations of the state and society. The relegation of the étatic administrative methods to the background, the extension of the social institutions of direct citizen participation, the formation of the regulations of cooperation between these two spheres make it possible to realize the democratic functioning of self-governments.

Although I am entitled to make up only a raw model of relative applicability on the basis of my research experience, nevertheless I would like to outline the future organizational model of the assertion of local interests below:

- The vertical linkage should be mainly determined first of all by a clear - from time to time determined again - objective of division of labour and not by the subordination relations dictated by self-interests of centralization. Consistent decentralization means that the freedom of motion of all locally functioning organizations is similarly increased. That is to say without the decentralization of the party or the institutional sphere the widening council autonomy or the upswing of societies cannot find local partners and the locality cannot evolve again into an integral or organic whole.

- A more articulated, less standardized regional management structure is necessary the elements of which are able to get into contact with each other flexibly in the horizontal respect and to raise the missing resources by means of business ventures and functional associations.

- The internal structure should consist of several relatively autonomous units giving a chance of the appearance of all interest dimensions and harmonizing them according to the power relations. In this structure the étatic elements should not predominate.

- The power functioning of each organization takes place under social control.

In conclusion I can think of local administration of the self-governing type as a complex political and only secondly state organizational mechanism which is divided according to local specialities and where autonomy is ensured by the unambiguous division of labour between the centre and the local level, equal chances are provided for the assertion of the heterogeneous local interests and it functions within democratic forms of procedure. *L. H. Nix*⁷ formulated all this as follows, "An adaptable village is not the one where perfect harmony and concord prevail but the one where the different groups reconcile their mutual dependency in an organized way, in a system compromising and eliminating conflicts."

⁷ NIX, L. H. 1974. p. 326.

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