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ACTIVITIES VIII

Regional policy actors/entities

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recently, we talked about regionalism and regionalisation. We therefore already know what regions, regionalism, regionalisation and regional policy are. We have also learned some of the ins and outs of public governance. Today, we will look at who shapes regional policy and then, in the context of regional policy, turn to the fundamental problems and their solutions.

In the literature it is assumed that social organisations, private companies, associations, interest groups and their representations participate in co-management. Thus, these are public actors, social actors and those representing the economic sector. In particular, the concept of multi-level governance [**Wiktorska-Święcka, Klimowicz, Michalewska-Pawlak 2017, pp. 17 and 24**], previously mentioned, is not without significance in regional development management.

Each of the actors mentioned has a role here. Let us start with social organisations.

An overview of the views expressed in the doctrine on the subject of social organisations is quoted by D. Fleszer. It follows from this section that social organisations: **1)** are non-state organizations with participation based on the principle of voluntariness and characterized by the permanence of distinction, **2)** cause changes in people by involving them in caring for the common good, **3)** refer to a specific group of people or ideas affecting human life, **4)** go beyond individual interest in their activities, **5)** serve to activate and involve people who want to devote their time to public affairs, **6)** in exercising their freedom of association, seek to achieve jointly complex goals that identify specific social needs, thus expressing determination to meet the public interest.

In Polish literature, social organisations are divided into two groups. The first group includes social organisations that develop the interests of a narrow group of subjects and whose activities do not coincide with the realisation of state goals and tasks. The activities of social organisations included in this group are indifferent from the point of view of state authorities as long as they do not pose a threat to them. In the case of the second group, it is exactly the opposite. Their activities coincide with the realisation of the goals and tasks of the state, and the state authorities are interested in contributing to their development and supporting their activities, while at the same time commissioning tasks from the scope of public administration. So we will be talking here about social organisations that are primarily established for the implementation of the set social goals, but which are also commissioned with administration functions. Thus they combine features of a non-state organisation, but which at the same time may have a state significance, with functions resulting from tasks delegated to them from the

scope of public administration by a legal act of a statutory rank. At the same time, it should be remembered that the tasks delegated to them within the scope of public administration are carried out in legal forms of activity of the relevant public administration. Moreover, it is worth noting that social organisations are often perceived on the ground of sociology of public life as civic non-governmental organisations [Fleszer 2018, p. 48 - 49].

Therefore, social organisations include such entities as, inter alia, the Centre for Social Integration, social integration clubs, cooperatives, social insurance companies, associations conducting economic activity, and some foundations. It should also be remembered that the functioning of civil society institutions, including social organisations, is also connected with the existence of various interest groups [Blicharz 2009, p. 107 and 109 - 110].

L. Zacharko, in the subject of vocational and social rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, includes, after the legislator, also associations, unions, chambers and organisations of entrepreneurs of national character as social organisations [Zacharko 2009, p. 518].

Let us now turn to the issue of interest groups. This concept in science can be defined as follows: "a circle of individuals aiming to gain influence on decision-making centres in the course of their specific conduct, which will be manifested by obtaining an appropriate decision or regulation representing this interest" (a narrower understanding), or "as any organised group of people, supporting some interest perceived as their own, and, in addition, not putting forward any other aspirations, in particular the aspiration to rule the state (a broader understanding)". [Makowski 2014, no. 6, p. 12].

Indirect reference should be made in this connection to the concept of association. Leaving aside the legal aspects, we can say that the essence of an association is a structure based on voluntary membership, created in order to pursue jointly agreed objectives, which are then achieved by selected means. Its members should also adopt a certain way of making decisions which are considered common, while at the same time conforming to certain, at least minimum, democratic standards. While there does not have to be full equality of all members, it is unacceptable for there to be no influence of any kind on the part of any of them [Black, Nalezinski 2002, pp. 599 et seq.; cited after Fleszer 2018, pp. 32 - 33].

Analysing the discussion so far, one may come to the conclusion that social organisations, associations and interest groups will in many situations include similar categories of entities. Of course, it should not be assumed a priori that their potential catalogue will always be identical. At this point I will want to draw attention in particular to professional association and trade association.

We will start with trade association. It has the character of non-territorial, compulsory public-law unions, which appear as economic associations. It comprises chambers of agriculture, chambers of crafts, chambers of industry and commerce as well as others. These are usually of a regional nature. However, they only comprise certain groups of entrepreneurs who are united by economic interests. Thanks to the delegation, these associations perform tasks of public administration, whereas otherwise these tasks would have to be performed by government administration bodies with the help of a clerical apparatus. In practice, however, it is often the trade association that performs these public tasks better and more efficiently, thanks,

among other things, to the replacement of the bureaucratic clerical factor by a civic factor, which consists of more competent entrepreneurs organised in chambers of commerce.

This is, of course, a model approach from the perspective of the construction of self-government as such. In practice, there are at least three models on the basis of which trade association has been organised in Europe. The problem is important in that in some cases we can actually talk about self-government, while in others it is "self-government in name". The French model is typically public law. In the case of the Anglo-Saxon model, we can talk more about voluntary, private-law associations [Wykrętowicz 2008, p. 34 - 35].

In Poland, the majority of economic self-governments are unfortunately similar to the Anglo-Saxon model, which in practice significantly reduces their representativeness. This is partly due to the reluctance of entrepreneurs themselves, who are afraid of additional fees in the form of contributions and the politicisation of the authorities of such a self-government. However, changes in this respect have been postulated for a long time [Horubski, Gola 2009, p. 285]. In fact, the only exception are the chambers of agriculture, which meet the conditions for recognition as a public law corporation [Wykrętowicz 2008, p. 84].

In the case of professional association comprising professions of public trust, the basic link between members is the profession they practice. Their tasks include: representing the interests of certain professions vis-à-vis the state authorities; supervision over the proper practice of a profession and keeping a register of persons with the right to practice in a given profession; shaping the rules and ensuring ethics in the practice of a profession; organizing and conducting disciplinary proceedings; professional development and determination of training programmes in a given profession and conducting educational activities [Kmieciak 2010, p. 24 and 27].

The professional association also has administrative authority in the performance of public administration tasks. It has the right to enforce certain actions which guarantee the quality of services rendered and provide a guarantee of securing the interests of the state. Such solutions do not, in fact, threaten its independence, but it is also impossible to allow too far-reaching supervision to lead to a hierarchical subordination of professional corporations to the state administration, which, as R. Kmieciak writes, would be tantamount to their liquidation [Kmieciak 2018, p. 244]. They are also compulsory unions established by law, not voluntary ones as, for example, in most examples of trade association in Poland [Fundowicz 2005, p. 175].

Finally, it is worth paying attention to private companies. Writing in the context of enterprises, M. Typa points out that they influence the economic space in the local dimension by developing local factors of production. Economic ties between enterprises, in turn, cause the spread of growth in the regional dimension [Typa 2016, no. 30 (1), p. 73].

In the case of social organisations, it is their role in building civil society that contributes to influencing regional policy. Their activities covering various areas of citizens' needs have an impact not only locally but also regionally. The scope of these activities includes, among others, the areas of sport, tourism, recreation, hobbies, education, upbringing, culture and art, health

care, social services and social assistance, as well as the one mentioned so to speak - local development [Dąbrowska 2019, no. 29, p. 98].

Let us then move on to interest groups. R. Wiszniowski, quoting J. Greenwood, indicates that we can distinguish three categories of such groups. The first, based on the subject criterion, is groups of employees and employers; in the second case, based on the object criterion, we have groups of a production or service nature. The third, based on the territorial criterion, distinguishes groups of regional, national and supranational range [Wiszniowski 2003, p. 127].

If we look at these three cases alone, we can see that there are quite a few actors involved in shaping regional policy whose activities we are not always aware of. The different categories, as noted earlier, even overlap.

Naturally, self-governments also deserve a small comment. Therefore, referring to trade association, it is necessary to emphasise its role, for example, in the scope of building, together with local government units, a development strategy; promotional activity to attract external capital; co-organisation of special areas of economic development; co-organisation of infrastructural undertakings; creation of economic undertakings of key importance for local development; creation of high technology undertakings; co-organisation of business support institutions; creation of local and regional capital markets; co-operation with specialised economic chambers in the scope of specific undertakings [Najniwier 1995, no. 7-8, pp. 80]. Similar tasks, although more oriented towards professionalism and ethics in the exercise of professions of public trust, could be set before professional associations, the majority of whose structures in Poland have two levels, of which the first level is typically regional.

The role of local self-government seems obvious. Nevertheless, it has also been indirectly discussed in the context of trade association.

In the context of creating and implementing regional policies, it is therefore easy to see now not only the importance of participatory governance but also of multi-level governance. Today, public administration structures without the civic factor would certainly not be able to cope with such dynamic development as we are experiencing in European democracies. This is because they are whole networks of various actors with sometimes different interests, whose activities can nevertheless be coordinated by the public administration in such a way as not only to support the development of civil society, but also to contribute to the well-being of all of us who live in the various regions. By the same token, however, we also recognise that public administration still has a significant place and role in continental Europe, even though, with increasing globalisation, its functions are changing, some are being diminished and others have to be learned from scratch as something new. It is therefore not unreasonable to refer to administration as a learning organisation; not to mention the validity of the concept of the learning region [Chrisidu-Budnik 2005, p. 485].

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