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**SPOŁECZNE ŚWIATY  
ELITY ADMINISTRACYJNEJ PAŃSTWA**

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# THE SOCIAL WORLDS OF THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIVE ELITE

## Summary

Mutual relations between the ruling elites of the state have a significant impact on the state's functioning and the efficiency of governance. According to the institutional assumption of elite theory, the elites are formed by those who occupy top positions; in this case in the structures of state government and administration. Therefore, mutual relations between top politicians and state officials in ministries and government agencies are of special importance.

On the one hand, politicians and civil servants have close functional relations. On the other hand, they naturally strive for separation, autonomy and even compete for dominance in decision-making processes. In their activity, they use different resources and legitimacy grounds – for politicians these are electoral mandates and the contents of their party's political programmes; for officials these are professional knowledge and 'expertise'. Striving together to achieve common goals, subordinated to the shared conception of the common good, representatives of the distinguished elites are somehow guided by different rationalities, whereas their relationships are full of misunderstandings and tensions.

Government elites have rarely been the subject of social and political research in Poland, as these environments are fairly hermetic and hardly accessible to external observers. This applies to the elite world of both politics and administration. Moreover,

researchers have frequently focused on the political conditions for the operation of the political elites, or the legal and procedural determinants of the civil service. Rarely have they observed mutual interactions and tensions between these groups. At the same time, researchers have shown that the political transformation has reinforced the unequal positions of these groups, as a result of which politicians are more privileged, whereas state governance is more politicized and less professional. Therefore, it seems natural to ask how members of the administrative elite react to this situation, and how they seek to maintain or strengthen their weakened position in the system. This book tries to answer these questions. It is based on the results of empirical research carried out in 2013 and financed by a National Science Centre grant. It involved a qualitative stage, which included interviews with the directors of ministerial departments, and the study of decision-making cases.

The starting point for this analysis is the assumption that modern states are increasingly complex and accompanied by administrative pluralism. Here administrative pluralism is recognized as a system of many organizations, group actors, rules, values, goals and knowledge, guided by its own dynamics and being capable of self-regulation. Administrative decisions are treated as resulting from a series of multilateral negotiations and tenders adapted to changing circumstances and environments of action. It has been assumed that these dynamics and self-regulation of the state 'administrative system' are based on specific social and cultural mechanisms. The authors look for their traces, as they largely determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative elite of the state.

This book consists of two parts. Part 1 contains the analysis of the systems of meanings and identities shared by members of the administrative elite. These factors largely affect their reasoning and define action strategies accompanying the process of solving social problems in the course of governance. Patterns of thinking, definitions and the structuring of reality are formed in the processes of organizational socialization that take place within the state administration. They grow from the experience gained in the course of fulfilling management roles in various places within the system and are streamlined in the dimension of individual

lives and agreed with other members of the elite. This sphere of shared meanings contains important stabilizers of decision-making processes and potential for the elite's interactions. On the other hand, where meanings and interpretations are different, there is a risk of confusion, conflict and fierce competition. The authors of this book focus on this awareness-related and cultural material for interactions and relationships that connects elite civil servants with each other and with their political superiors in the government, parliamentarians and party leaders.

Chapter 1 of Part 1 of this book examines the ways of thinking exhibited by heads of ministerial departments, as well as the typical structuring of external organizational – administrative and political – environments and social context related to the functional dimension of official tasks. This chapter demonstrates how far these structures differ from each other, reflecting the difference of 'ecological niches', allowing adaptation to their requirements and building relationships with their partners.

Chapter 2 of Part 1 of this book is devoted to internal ministerial circles and the socialization processes that affected those who occupied managerial positions during the study in 2013. Reference systems are not only formal organizational structures and responsibilities, but also informal worlds of particular professional groups (government officials) and the represented functional category (coalition partners). The emerging collective structures and scripts of effective measures build heterogeneous ways of filling the administrative role and different motivations.

Chapter 3 of Part 1 of this book deals with identity and identification established in the environment of the state administrative elite, and ways of defining the administrative role – in regard to the mission, functions and tasks to be fulfilled in the state. It shows ways of thinking in terms of 'we' and 'I' and gaps between these identifications. Their similarities and differences reflect the richness of the social world of the administrative elite and explain a large part of the behaviours associated with the exercise of the sovereign role in the country in cooperation with politicians.

These three areas of meanings – external, internal and professional environments – make it possible to reread and understand the world of legislative measures taken by the elite and take a look at this basic

form of legislative activity. It is in these activities that the acquired systems of meanings and scripts become an important guide of conduct and are themselves verified, fixed and changed. These issues are discussed in Part 2 of this book. It presents the results of the analysis of three decision-making cases. Each of the decisions was made in accordance with uniform regulations and formal procedures and yet was different from each other. This was affected by many factors, including different locations of the political centre, which initiated and supported the proceedings and activated a network of relations in connection with the nature of the problem being solved. Another such factor was the nature of strategies and negotiations of the parties involved, which were guided by different interpretations of the situation.

Chapter 1 of Part 2 shows the course of work on the revision of the pension law from 2012, as well as its active actors and the networks of relations they launched in the course of this work. Chapter 2 focuses on the relations that accompanied changes in the law on deregulation of professions from 2013. Chapter 3 presents decision-making processes associated with changes in the law on parental leave from 2013. This section ends with conclusions drawn based on the role as characterized by the surveyed directors of departments. They perceived this role through the prism of their practical knowledge and personal experience, built in the context of their earlier decision-making activities.

The whole richness and heterogeneity of the social worlds of the administrative elite presented in this book explains the fundamental difficulty of governance, understood as the coordination of actions taken by many relatively autonomous and culturally different actors. At the same time, it indicates that culture is still a little exploited reservoir of resources, which can foster better communication and cooperation between all participants in state governance processes.