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Political elites in local politics

Abstract:

The notion of political elites is often related to the national level in politics since it suggests a high position in the political power structure and thus a high position in the territorial setting as well. While elites are indeed national level players – MPs, government members, high-ranking party officials – they are often embedded in local politics as well. In Hungary where the political power, especially decision-making is centralized, high politics is believed to dominate over local interests (Böhm, 2006). Still, local level seems to attract much political attention: MPs are eager to hold local positions which enforces the phenomenon of holding multiple mandates and local issues are present in the political discourse.

The paper aims at exploring the role of local level politics in the career of political elites and the connection of local and national level politics in their activities. The first part of the paper analysis the local background of politicians: their past and present positions in local politics and the function of the available local networks. The second part of the paper focuses on the content side of the problem: it examines whether the locally embedded politicians represent the local interests, whether they reflect on local issues and if they do how they connect their local and national roles in their political activities. The analysis will concentrate on members of the Hungarian Parliament: on the career patterns emerging among parliamentarians and on the issues presented to the plenary by MPs with local background.

References:

Böhm Antal (eds) (2006): *Helyi hatalom és önkormányzati választások Magyarországon* [Local power and local elections in Hungary]. Budapest: MTA Politikai Tudományok Intézete