

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Vadzim Smok

REGIONAL POLITICAL ELITE OF BELARUS AND POLAND: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HRODNA REGION AND PODLASKIE VOIVODESHIP

I. INTRODUCTION

THE SUBJECT OF REGIONAL ELITE IN BELARUS has not yet received sufficient attention of political scientists. The earliest work on regional elite of then Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic appeared in the United States, written by Michael Urban (1989).¹ Current studies in this field are scarce: the article by Andrej Kazakevič (2007), two articles by Piotra Natčyk from the volume “Local Elections in the Contemporary Political History of Belarus” (Natčyk, 2003a; 2003b), as well as her article “Belarusian Nomenklatura and Cleavages within It” (2001), which partly covers the issue.

Michael Urban studies personnel system of the BSSR as a system of power relations and attempts to reveal the rules of its arrangement. He suggests central control, regional influences and patronage relations as structural factors, and studies their role in personnel system by analysing chains of vacancies. For details of the methodology see Urban, 2010: 19-25.

In the volume on local elections, Natčyk studies the development of local government system and its relations with the centre during the 1990s. The author mentions a number of factors that determined weakness of regional elite in Belarus: economy structure, the persistence of Soviet institutions and Soviet elite, centralisation policy implemented by Aliaksandr Lukašenka since 1994, lack of citizen engagement in politics. Natčyk shows how change of legislation on local government, electoral legislation and personnel policy contributed to centralisation of power and full submission of local political and economic elite to the central government (Natčyk, 2003b: 20-54).

In her study of 1995 and 1999 elections, Natčyk analyses the spectre of candidates to the regional Councils as well as composition of Councils after elections. She singles out a number of groups: managers with status, industrial managers, agricultural workers, intellectuals and businessmen. Natčyk shows that in the process of regime consolidation and centralisation of power, the role of political parties, intellectuals and businessmen in local government decreased. Meanwhile, local managers of state institutions and industry, which became dependent on the central executive, asserted their domination (Natčyk, 2003a: 55-79).

¹ The research was conducted in the 1980s, and its results were published before the USSR collapse.

Andrej Kazakievič studies biographies of deputies of regional Councils, elected in 1999, 2003 and 2007. He analyses several parameters, including electoral discipline, representation of political parties, age, gender, territory of origin, and identifies some trends in the structure of regional elite. The study shows that Councils are ageing, and the balance exists between the dominant age groups of 40-50 and 50-60. These are 40-60 years old men, who occupy leading positions in the public sector of economy. Besides, he indicates spacial differences in formation of Councils, attempts to administer the composition of Councils from the centre, decrease of party representation and growth of representation of regional centres and other big cities (Kazakievič, 2007: 54-55).

The lack of attention to regional elite in Belarus in terms of problem setting and methodology creates a promising area for research. As the students of Belarusian elite note, the methodology of elite research is yet to be elaborated: *"Up to now, a reliable criteria of study of Belarusian political elite as a group have not been found. In other words, it is difficult to trace the centers of power beyond formal state institutions. [...] In our opinion, to commence a research in this area, one should focus on formal structures"* (Belarusian Elite..., 2010).

In the above mentioned research, the authors focus on the analysis of formal institutions of state power. In our view, this approach indeed seems most fruitful for the study of Belarusian elite, but the study of formal institutions can be continued by elaboration of methodology. One of the directions of its elaboration is clearly the introduction of comparative analysis, which is presented in our study.

Earlier students of regional elite mention the factors which shape the pattern of elite formation. We consider institutional legacy, political regime and structure of economy to be the most significant among them.

Institutional legacy helps to understand the background that led to the present model of elite formation, defined by political regime and economic structure. Political regime sets the rules of elite recruitment, which suppose a wider spectrum of political groups in a democratic regime and a homogenous group in authoritarian regime. Equally, the political regime defines whether relations among elites at various levels of government should be centralised or decentralised.

Economic structure of the country also impacts the elite formation in a significant manner, as it predetermines their economic interests and the degree of affiliation with either state or private sector. We suppose that differences in these factors in various cases must have various outcomes regarding the pattern of elite formation. We suggest this thesis as a hypothesis of our study. To test it, we will conduct a comparative analysis of two cases in order to trace the dependence of composition of regional elite on the suggested factors. We take one region of Belarus, Hrodna Region, and one region of Poland, Podlaskie Voivodeship, as the cases for comparison. These are two neighbouring regions, which have a long common history and similar culture, population and structure of urban and rural settlements. However, in the second half of the 20th century the regions became parts of two different states, which determined their further existence and divergence in the factors, which we define as independent variables. These factors will be compared in the first chapter of

the text. It covers the key elements of political, social and economic development of Belarus and Poland from the end of World War II to the fall of communist regimes in the two countries. Next, we will compare seven elements of political regime in the countries according to Freedom House methodology, and finally, we will compare the economic structure of the countries.

Chapter two will focus on the composition of regional representative bodies of the three terms in office – the Hrodna Regional Council (2003–2007, 2007–2010, 2010–2014) and the Sejmik of Podlaskie Voivodeship (2002–2006, 2006²–2010, 2010–2014). Here, we understand composition as the arrangement of deputies according to a number of parameters: sector of employment, level of position, field of employment, place of residence, age, gender. The choice of these criteria was the result of their accessibility and existence of prior studies that employ some of these criteria. Personal data of the Sejmik deputies is available in the online Bulletin of Public Information of the Marszałek Office (Wealth Declarations for Year 2004..., Wealth Declarations for Year 2006..., Wealth Declarations of Sejmik...). The data on the 2010 Hrodna Regional Council is available on the webpage of the Hrodna Regional Executive Committee, on the 2003 and 2007 Councils – in the *Hrodzienskaja Praŭda* newspaper (2003, 2007).

We will try to interpret the results of this comparison with regard to three factors discussed in the first chapter. By doing this, we will both test the hypothesis and try to find and describe the pattern of formation of regional representative bodies in the two regions. During this analysis we will consider some ideas from the already mentioned studies as well as some other works of Belarusian and Polish authors.

II. FACTORS OF FORMATION OF REGIONAL ELITE

1. *Historical Legacy*

The profound divergence of paths of the two regions started in 1944, when the Podlaskie Voivodeship was annexed to Poland, and Hrodna Region remained in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. Despite the dependence on the USSR, Poland was a sovereign state with a long tradition of statehood and strong national identity. After Stalin's death Poland gained more autonomy from the USSR and started to build its own model of socialism. Communist party remained the only political player, but economy preserved some elements of market, private production and trade in both industry and agriculture. The Roman Catholic Church remained a powerful actor in life of the society despite the attempts of communists to reduce its influence. Comparing to the USSR republics, Polish society was more open and integrated in the European processes. In intellectual circles, the discussions on the ways of development of Poland occurred publicly. Polish economy gradually integrated in the European economy through the in-

² In the original text (Smok, 2011) we considered 2002, 2006 and 2007 elections. The 2006 Sejmik was dissolved because it did not manage to elect the executive body of regional self-government (Zarząd Województwa), and new elections were held in 2010. We decided to remove the 2007 elections from our analysis and replace them with 2010 elections to make the elements of comparison more relevant.

vestments and creation of enterprises with Western capital. During the second half of the 20th century, population of Poland continuously showed its ability to organise themselves and defend their interests through mass strikes, which often resulted in human casualties. Trade unions played key role in those events, and they received support from other groups that opposed the communist regime. Eventually, the pressure on communist leadership resulted in the transfer of power to opposition and deep transformation of political and economic system of Poland (Prażmowska, 2010: 158-260).

After Hrodna Region joined the BSSR in 1939, communists began to implement the policies that took place in the rest of the republic in the interwar period. Soviet administration worked in the environment of totalitarian communist regime. Complete collectivisation of agriculture was implemented, and private production and trade were banned. A large number of population were repressed and exiled into the remote parts of the USSR. The death of Stalin did not bring significant change, except for the end of mass repressions. A certain decentralisation within the USSR and its republics occurred, yet communist party retained control of all spheres of life. In such conditions the emergence of oppositional groups was simply impossible. Dissident groups were scarce and clandestine, so they could not influence the society, while religious institutions remained under full control of the state and their operation was highly restricted.

During the second half of the 20th century a large industrial sector was built in the BSSR as an element of the general USSR production system. These brought a certain level of welfare, unseen by previous generations of Belarusian population that mainly lived in villages. In the 1980s, Belarus appeared impenetrable for Perestroika ideas and lacked forces which could advocate reforms. Reformist ideas mainly existed among intellectuals and remained largely ignored by labour masses. The indifference of labour also resulted in the absence of strong independent trade unions. However, ineffective socialist economy and centralised government led to the collapse of the USSR. Belarus gained independence, but Sovietised political and economic elite did not attempt to reform the government and economy. Opposition remained weak and was unable to seize power to implement such reforms (Mironowicz, 2003: 81-167).

2. Political Regime

To compare political regimes in the two countries, we decided to employ the methodology of Freedom House, which is based on the assessment of seven categories and general rating of democracy. The assessment is conducted annually on the basis of reports made by an expert from a given country with the assistance of a group of Freedom House experts. The categories cover the most important elements of political regime and consist of a number of questions, which set the logic of the country report.

The assessment uses a seven-point scale, where higher point means worse situation in the particular sphere and vice versa (Freedom House, 2011c). Table 1 presents data from 2011 reports (Freedom House, 2011a; 2011b).

TABLE 1
Democracy ratings of Belarus and Poland

<i>Country</i>	<i>EP</i> ³	<i>CS</i>	<i>IM</i>	<i>NDG</i>	<i>LDG</i>	<i>IJ</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>DR</i>
Belarus	7.00	6.00	6.75	6.75	6.75	6.75	6.00	6.57
Poland	1.50	1.50	2.25	2.75	1.75	2.50	3.25	2.21

Source: Freedom House, 2011a; Freedom House, 2011b.

According to Freedom House regime classification the two countries belong to opposite groups. Poland is a consolidated democracy and Belarus is a consolidated authoritarian regime. It is worth to mention that for Belarus these indicators remained at the same level during the last decade, while for Poland they aggravated by one point on average. This, however, cannot question the profound difference of political regimes.

Now we will consider some indicators most important for our study on the basis of 2011 country reports. At the same time, we will try to understand the role of these indicators in the process of formation and operation of regional elite.

Electoral Process

Electoral mechanism is the core of relations between citizens and ruling elite. In democratic societies this mechanism forms the institutions of government through free competitive elections. Democratic elections facilitate the competition of political groups and their accountability, and allow citizens to elect and change political leadership. Thus, any representative of a community can be granted powers to elaborate and implement policies, or other functions which institutions of government have according to country's legislation. Free elections usually lead to emergence of variety of political groups which compete for power. When democratic elections are absent, electoral mechanism loses its sense as one political group secures political power for an undefined period. In such situation elections fulfil some other functions which do not stem from society needs and usually serve the interest of ruling elite. Perhaps the most important of functions of sham elections is preservation of status-quo in power and securing the absence of political rivals in governmental institutions. Other important function is maintaining the legitimacy of authority in the eyes of citizens and abroad.

In Belarus, authorities have full control over electoral process and media, which leaves alternative candidates no chance for victory. High electoral discipline and decay of political parties in regional representative bodies present a good example of the nature of elections in Belarus (Kazakievič, 2007: 42-46). This process together with significant restriction of freedom of expression, association and meeting resulted in the decline of party politics and political opposition in general in 2000s.

³ EP – electoral process, CS – civil society, IM – independence of media, NDG – national democratic government, LDG – local democratic government, IJ – independence of judiciary, C – corruption, DR – democracy rating.

In Poland, political process is based on free competition of political parties. Parties serve as the main source of elite recruitment in the representative bodies. During the three terms in power, Podlaskie Sejmik consisted of 4-5 main political parties of Poland and only a couple of deputies were not affiliated with any political party.

National Democratic Government

This indicator covers a wide range of issues of constitutional system and national government. It includes separation of powers, participation of citizens in decision-making and government, legitimacy and stability of government, effectiveness and independence of legislative and executive powers as well as security services. In terms of elite this means the system of relations of elite groups among themselves and the citizens. Democratic system should provide balance of power, mutual control of various political groups and ability of citizens to influence political processes.

In personalist authoritarian regime of Belarus all branches of power and state institutions are directly or indirectly subordinate to the President, who has immense powers in their formation and key informal influence on all political issues. Representative body, which formally serves as a legislature, has little impact on legislative process, which actually occurs in the executive bodies, who are the main developers and administrators of public policy. Participation of citizens in decision-making has been minimised, as such mechanisms either do not exist or do not work. And so do mechanisms of public control of government.

Political system of Poland has a functioning separation of powers, with a dual executive power of President and Prime-minister, where President has less power, and legislative power operating through bicameral Parliament. Pluralist political system and its actors – political parties, media and NGOs, facilitate an opportunity for citizens to participate in politics and control the ruling groups.

Local Democratic Government

This indicator is especially important for our study, as it defines the status and powers of regional elite in the political system. Local democratic government implies autonomy from central government in the running of local affairs, participation of local community in this process, and formation of local government bodies in a democratic way.

The preamble and the first chapter of the Constitution of Poland provide the principles of subsidiarity, decentralisation and autonomy of self-government, which today exists at three levels (Constitution of the Republic of Poland..., 1997: 16,17). The regional, or voivodeship level emerged here as a result of administrative reform of 1999. The reform created self-government at the level of voivodeships and powiats, and separated self-government from the state administration (Imiołczyk and Reguński, 2007). Sejmik of Voivodeship became the elective representative body of regional self-government. It forms the executive body of self-government – Zarząd, headed by Marszałek. Sejmik represents the voters of voivodeship and runs regional affairs. The interests of national government at voivodeship level are represented by the Committee of Voivodeship headed by

Voivode. The voivodeship self-government can not interfere in the affairs of lower levels of powiat and gmina, while the state administration can not interfere in the self-government competences. The responsibility of voivodeship level includes economic development, infrastructure, science and education, environment, public security and some other spheres (Law of 5 June 1998..., 11,14).

According to the Belarusian law, local self-government in Belarus is a part of state administration and works for governmental interests and interests of the population, which lives on a given territory. Here, the subsidiarity principle does not exist and lower levels of self-government are subordinate to higher ones. The system of local self-government consists of Councils and Executive Committees. The Councils serve as representative bodies and are elected at general elections. Article 121 of the Constitution of Belarus grants the Councils four exclusive competences: approval of programmes of social and economic development, local budgets and reports on their execution; setting local taxes and charges; setting the regulations for municipal property; appointing local referenda. Executive Committees are controlled by the President directly and subordinate to national government. In fact, they develop and implement the bulk of local policies in close cooperation with national government. According to the Council's competences, it has a status of institution which approves the projects of local policies. It means that Council deputies also participate in politics through the work of permanent commissions, discussions during the sessions, introduction of amendments. Yet the political autonomy of the Council can not transcend the border of national politics and the programmes approved by the central government (Constitution of the Republic of Belarus..., 1994: 117, 119, 120, 121; On Local Government..., 2010: 1.1, 1.3, 38.3, 41).

Thus, regional representative bodies of Belarus and Poland have important differences with regard to the status and powers in national and local political system. Sejmik serves as a political center of voivodeship within the granted competences, while the Council is only an element of the system of government at the regional level inferior to the Executive Committee, which subordinates to the central government.

Civil Society

By civil society we mean the voluntary collective action of citizens in the public sphere, which is autonomous from the state and based on common interests and normative consensus (Čarnoŭ, 2009). This is a crucial institution of representation and implementation of interests, which also serves as a source of recruitment of leaders and holds the government accountable. Therefore the environment of creation and operation of NGOs as well as their general number present important factors of elite formation.

Non-governmental sector in Poland and in East-Central Europe in general remains relatively weak if compared to Western Europe, yet it grew much stronger than in Belarus in recent decades. The number of NGOs in Podlaskie Voivodeship makes around 3600 (Database...), while in whole Belarus there were only 2359 registered NGOs as for 1 July 2011 (Political Parties...). The conditions of registration and operation of NGOs in Belarus is extremely difficult, because authorities regard them as part of political opposition, and not as

partners in resolution of public problems. Many NGOs exist without registration, which increases the probability of their persecution. Meanwhile, Polish NGOs enjoy the support of the state, which created favourable institutional environment for their development. Moreover, they receive considerable financial support from the EU funds for their activities.

Independent Media

Media are another effective instrument of elite control and serve as a means of communication between elite and the society. In modern era of mass communication media become critically important. The possibility to control the agenda and public opinion is a major source of political power. Therefore freedom and pluralism of press should be guaranteed to facilitate the representation of various political groups.

Belarusian authorities control all electronic (TV and radio) and majority of printed media, and occasionally attempt to censure the Internet. Communication occurs only in the top-down fashion and independent media have no access to state affairs to make them public. At local level, independent media usually do not exist at all except for the Internet projects. Polish media, as virtually all media in the world can hardly be called independent, but their diversity by form of property and political sympathies secures a pluralist interpretation of political reality.

Independent Judiciary

Independent judiciary plays a key role in control of compliance of elite games to the law and defence of rights and freedoms of citizens. It prevents the elite from spreading its power beyond the borders set by the law and acting against the public interest.

In Belarus, judiciary is controlled by the executive power. President appoints judges and has competences that transcend the powers of the executive, for example he can relieve the citizens of criminal liability. No higher official can be taken to court without President's permission, while the unlawful prosecution of opposition became a common case.

Poland also has problems regarding politicisation of judiciary, but they are incomparable to Belarusian situation. Polish judiciary has a vast autonomy from political leadership, which has no power over judiciary similar to Belarusian case.

Corruption

The level of corruption shows the ability of politicians and bureaucrats to conform with legally established rules and avoid power abuse for private interest. Although anti-corruption services are present in Belarus, they cannot work against the President and his entourage, and the President has an informal right for final decision on each high-level corruption case.

Meanwhile, Polish system of government does not allow any particular political group to avoid anti-corruption supervision. The cases of corruption are of course there, but they only present separate attempts of power abuse and do not

stem from deficiency of political regime. To support Freedom House estimates regarding corruption, we provide the data from Transparency International, the international NGO which studies corruption worldwide. The annual corruption perception index produced by the organization ranks Poland 38 and Belarus 123 out of 176 considered countries (Transparency International, 2013).

3. Structure of Economy

Economic structure of the state definitely impacts the formation of elite. In our analysis structure of property (state or private) and field of occupation are among the parameters of analysis. Market economy and domination of private property create elite which has direct or indirect relations with business. Administrative economy and state property create elite which is connected to the interests of state bodies which regulate the economy and state enterprises as its productive units.

Likewise, the importance of a given branch of industry determines the power of its owners and managers in the structure of elite.

During independence period Belarus has implemented limited structural reforms, and after taking office in 1994 A. Lukashenka started to build a so called socially oriented economy. This model suggests domination of the state in economy and a high degree of redistribution of income. Public sector remains large in Belarus compared to the other countries of the region. Although the share of population employed in private sector already exceeds that of the public sector according to official statistics,⁴ the share of small and medium business in GDP remains low – around 20% (The Share...). In recent years, Belarus made some advances in Doing Business rating and ranked 63 in 2013, while Poland ranked 45 (Ease of Doing...). Despite this modest success, the foreign direct investments in Belarus remain low due to remaining serious problems in economic policy coming from state domination. Belarus remains weakly integrated in international economic organisations and at regional level cooperates mostly with Russia and CIS countries.

Poland took a different path of economic development. It implemented radical reforms of socialist economy through deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation and became a leader of reforms among transition economies. Poland joined WTO and OECD and became a member of the European Union, which shows high degree of integration of Poland in global economy.

Here we give the numbers of employment in the two regions in order to understand the differences between them more precisely (Table 2).

As the table shows, the regions clearly differ according to both criteria. The number of employment in private sector in Podlaskie Voivodeship is 20% higher than in Hrodna Region. We should also bear in mind that official statistics can define public enterprises with small private share as private, although they remain state-governed.

As for branches of economy, the share of employment in agriculture in Podlaskie Voivodeship is two times higher. Meanwhile, in Hrodna Region indus-

⁴ National statistics should be treated carefully, because its methodology could include private sector enterprises with some private ownership, but in fact governed by the state.

try and construction employment is 13% bigger, and healthcare and education 4% bigger than in the neighbouring Polish region.

TABLE 2

Structure of employment in Podlaskie Voivodeship and Hrodna Region, %

Region	Form of property		Branch of economy			
	State	Private	Industry and construction	Agriculture	Healthcare and education	Services, trade and other
Hrodna	45,4	54,6	33,6	15,1	17,3	34
Podlaskie	22	78	20,2	32,6	13,1	34,1

Source: Statistical Office..., 2010.

The results of the comparison of institutional legacy, political regime and structure of economy show that Belarus and Poland significantly differ in each of them. The countries had different historical paths in the second half of the 20th century, which led to establishment of different political regimes and economic models. Poland is a democracy with market economy and decentralised system of government, while Belarus is a centralised authoritarian regime with state regulation of economy. These differences, according to our hypothesis, should produce different structure of elite at regional level. To test this, we turn to the analysis of the composition of local representative bodies in the two regions.

III. COMPARING THE COMPOSITION OF REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

In this section we compare the composition of the Council of Deputies of Hrodna Region (further referred to as the Council) and the Sejmik of Podlaskie Voivodeship (further referred to as the Sejmik). The data is taken from the three last convocations of the Council (2003–2007, 2007–2010 and 2010–2014) and the Sejmik (2002–2006, 2006–2010 and 2010–2014). The 2003 Council was incomplete and consisted of 55 deputies, but the two subsequent Councils included all 60 deputies. The Sejmik consisted of 30 members in each of the considered convocations.

The comparison involves six parameters: place of residence, sector of employment, level of position, field of employment, age, gender. Each parameter consists of a number of categories according to which the deputies are classified.

1. Place of Residence

We created three categories for the analysis of territory representation: regional centre (which both serves as administrative centre of the region and is the largest city of the region), other towns (centres of lower administrative units) and rural area. Similar categories were used by A. Kazakievič (2007) in his study of regional government. Such division represents the structure of settlements in the regions, which can be further analysed in terms of representation in the regional government. This analysis will show whether territory representation in

regional government is fair and which territory level dominates in regional politics. Table 3 gives the proportions of population that lives in the three types of settlements (National Statistical Committee, 2010: 18, 24; Statistical Office, 2011: 21-22). It should be noted that Hrodna Region has a bigger share of population in the regional centre and smaller share in rural areas than Podlaskie region.

TABLE 3
Percentage of population by area of residence

	<i>Hrodna</i>	<i>Podlaskie</i>
Centre	30,5%	24,8%
Other towns	38,5%	35,6%
Rural area	31%	39,6%

Source: Statistical Office..., 2011; National Statistical Committee..., 2010.

FIGURE 1
Territory representation in Hrodna Council, %

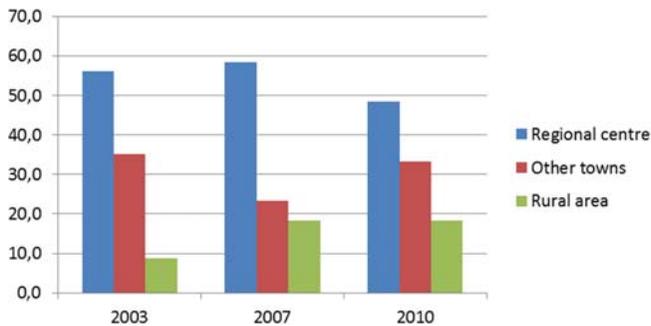
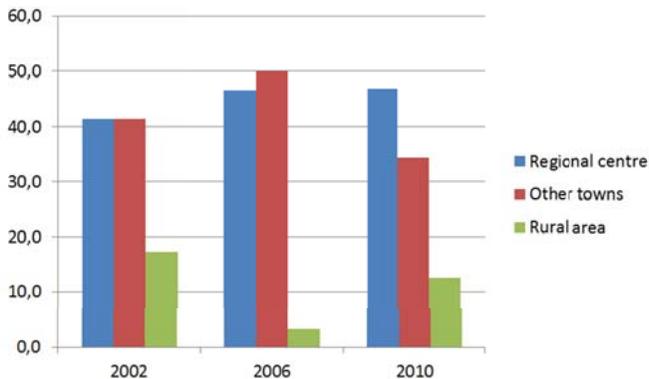


FIGURE 2
Territory representation in Podlaskie Sejmik, %



The Figures 1 and 2 show that in both bodies the representation of territory levels is unfair. Representatives of regional centres make half of the deputies in all three Councils, while Hrodna city population accounts for less than a third of the whole population. Imbalance of representation remains stable during the whole period. Sejmik shows a similar situation, with the imbalance varying from 17 to 22%.

Other towns of Hrodna Region have almost 40% of its population, but in the Council they receive only a third of seats, with a disproportion varying from 3% to 15%. Here, the Sejmik has a clear difference from the Council. Representatives of other towns have 35-50% of seats in the Sejmik with a 35% share of population in them.

Rural areas in Hrodna Region show an imbalance similar to that of other towns – 8-16% less than the share of rural population. In Podlaskie Voivodeship, where the rural population dominates (40% of the whole population), Sejmik members from rural areas have only 3-17% of seats.

The diagrams show that the two regions demonstrate both similarities and differences in territorial representation. In the Council people from the regional centre oust their fellows from other towns and villages, while in the Sejmik members from the centre and smaller towns occupied majority of seats despite the fact that rural population dominates in Podlaskie Voivodeship. And unlike the Council, in the Sejmik people from the other towns sometimes have more weight than representatives of the centre.

To our mind, domination of people from the center in the Council can be explained by the system of government in Belarus as well as electoral process. The government system of Belarus is centralised, and the three levels of local government are hierarchically subordinate to the national government. This system grants regional government more powers than the two lower levels, and the main administrative structures, which make and implement regional policy, are concentrated in the regional centre. Consequently, heads of these structures become the most likely candidates for the regional Council and use nondemocratic electoral mechanism to occupy it.

When analysing territorial representation in Sejmik, we should bear in mind two factors: decentralised government and the involvement of business in politics (see the section on sector of employment). A good deal of Sejmik members are representatives of governmental bodies, which are located in the towns other than regional centre. Polish system of government grants every level of government autonomy from the higher level, which reduces the role of regional centre. Economic activity usually concentrates in the cities, hence the businessmen also tend to concentrate there, and in the Sejmik they make a majority, as we will see later.

The village naturally has a different structure of population by education, age and employment, which results in less political activity. Despite this fact, the imbalance of rural representation in Podlaskie Voivodeship does not look truly democratic and proves the existence of "city oligarchy" there.

2. Sector of Employment

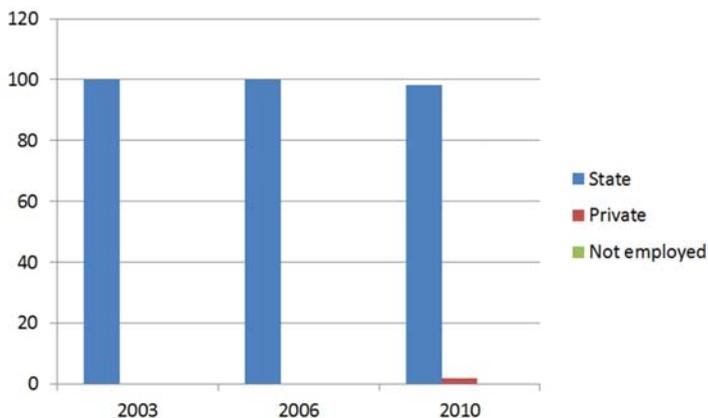
Sector of employment is a parameter which shows the representation and political weight of the public (or state as more appropriate term for Belarus),

private and NGO sectors in regional self-government. However, we did not create a separate category for non-governmental organisations here, as their role in both representative bodies appeared to be insignificant. In the Council, no genuine NGO can be found during the whole period. In the 2003 Council, there were two state-controlled trade union functionaries and one representative of the Belarusian Republican Youth Association (BRSM), the organisation which is organised and financed by the government. In the 2007 Council only one BRSM functionary can be found. Here, perhaps the only representative of NGO sector was the Red Cross worker, but in Belarus this organisation also closely cooperates with the state. In 2010, not even pro-governmental NGO representatives appeared in the Council.

Interestingly, in Podlaskie NGO representatives also do not appear in the Sejmik. The only institutions that got some representation in 2010 Sejmik are religious organisations. Two people here represented Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the main churches of the region. We did not include them in the calculations, while in Belarusian case pro-governmental NGOs were considered as state sector. Instead of NGOs, we added to the analysis the category of the non-employed, which includes pensioners, unemployed people and students. This category will be quite significant for the study.

FIGURE 3

Sector of employment in Hrodna Council, %

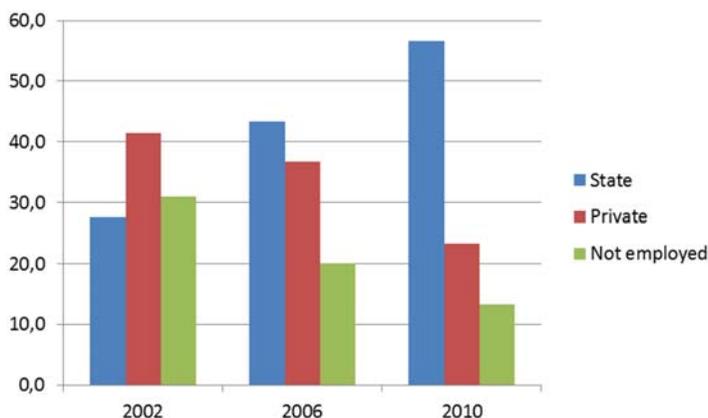


As Figure 3 shows, Council deputies are almost 100% state employed. In the three convocations only one representative of private sector can be found – a farmer in the 2010 Council. Meanwhile, the majority of the region's population are employed in private sector (National..., 2012: 123). So why is already solid private sector absent in the Council? P. Natčyk in her analysis of local elections of 1995 and 1999 notes low activity of businessmen in elections. The number of candidates from business then totalled 2-6% of all candidates (Natčyk, 2003a: 63-64, 74-75). It means that absence of businessmen in the Council cannot be explained exclusively by administrative pressure and fraud during elections.

On the one hand, business may be reluctant to participate in local representative bodies because it does not consider them powerful enough to influence local politics. On the other hand and most probably, businessmen are simply afraid to get involved in politics and lose their assets or even be imprisoned, since state bureaucracy has powerful leverage on business in Belarus and property guarantees remain weak.

FIGURE 4

Sector of employment in Podlaskie Sejmik, %



Very significant is the complete absence of non-employed category in the Council, while in the Sejmik they have 13 to 31% of seats and form a stable group. This contrast shows that one cannot become a Council deputy unless one occupies a position in state bureaucracy. This mandatory status gives us a clue to understanding the Council's role in political system: it is not a body of territory representation, but rather an aid institution for state administration at local level.

In Podlaskie Sejmik, the ratio of state and business representatives appears much more balanced and matches the structure of employment in the region, especially before 2010. But here we see a gradual decrease of private and non-employed categories along with the rise of state presence. The Sejmik is apparently moving towards a body of professional bureaucrats, but it will hardly ever reach the structure which the Hrodna Council shows.

3. Level of Position

Figures 5 and 6 show the structure of representatives with regard to the level of their positions. This parameter indicates whether the regional government is accessible for "non-elite" citizens, who do not occupy high positions in society. We created three categories for this purpose. The first is made of heads of organisations, including people who run their own business. The second consists of managers, people who occupy positions inferior to the heads but who

also have leading roles in organisations and direct the work of other people. Finally, there are workers who are the lowest level in organisations.

FIGURE 5

Level of position in Hrodna Council, %

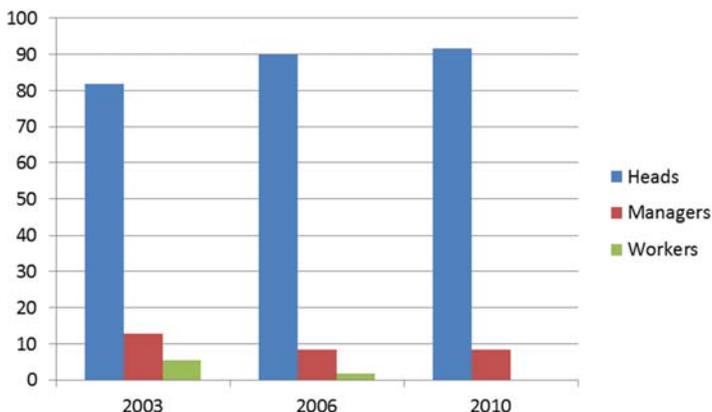
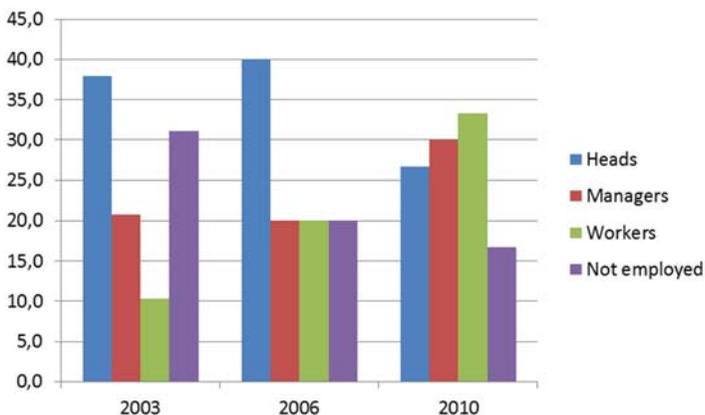


FIGURE 6

Level of position in Podlaskie Sejmik, %



The Council and the Sejmik demonstrate quite opposite trends with regard to this parameter. Heads of organisations dominate in both governmental bodies, but while in the Council they make 90% of deputies, in the Sejmik their share is 40% at best, and in 2010 they appeared a minority and yielded to both managers and workers.

In the Council, "elitisation" proceeds through the whole period. Managers and workers play insignificant role there, and it decreases with the time. In

2010 workers disappear completely. Such structure and trend, in our view, prove that the logic of Council formation is to help the state executive to manage regional affairs.

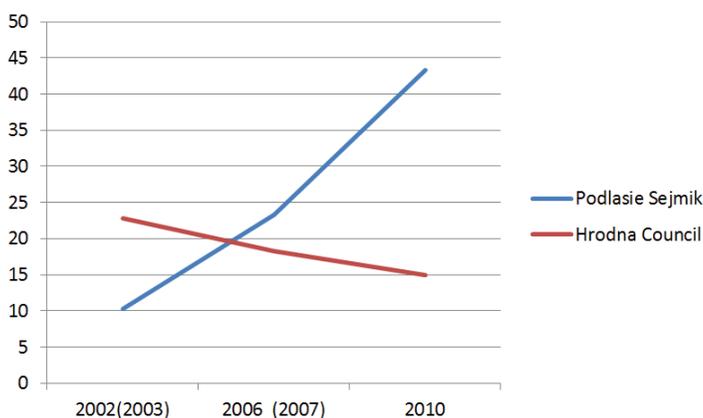
In the Sejmik, the trend is opposite – managers and workers steadily grow while heads slightly increase in 2006 and then fall in 2010. Most striking in the Sejmik is the growth and domination of workers. It looks like Sejmik becomes more non-elite, and if we look at the trend of field and sector of employment, in recent years it tends to concentrate middle-level professionals in public administration. Thus, the Sejmik becomes more an instrument of generation of public policies than the arena of political struggle.

4. Field of employment

Section four presents the structure of the regional representatives by field of employment of their members. Such analysis may show the role of certain branches of economy, public services or administration in local politics. During the analysis we suggested nine fields to structure the local representative, but not all of them eventually were significant and worth discussing. Out of them, we chose five to present here: governmental bodies, education, health-care, industry and services, agriculture. For the sake of convenience, we combine 2002, 2006 terms of the Sejmik and 2003, 2007 terms of the Council in the diagrams.

FIGURE 7

Representation of governmental bodies, %



By governmental bodies we mean the state administrations as well as representative bodies of various tiers. The Sejmik and the Council show the opposite trends as to representation of governmental workers. In the Council, they occupied 23% in 2003 yet the percentage gradually fell to 15% in 2010. Meanwhile, Sejmik shows a striking rise of them over the period: from 10% in

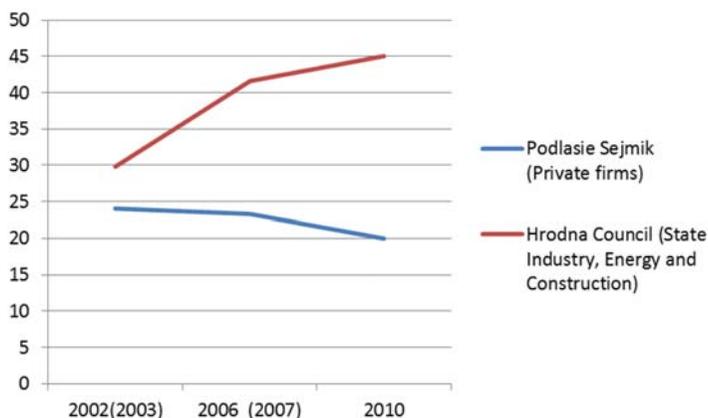
2002 to 43% in 2010. As for the Council, the dynamics of representation of governmental bodies should be analysed together with the dynamics of industry and services representation.

Industry and services rise with the decline of governmental workers, indicating a growing role of regional economic elite in the Council. Also, this trend proves our assumption on the evolution of function of regional representative in Belarus. The parameters of age, level of position, sector of employment and field of employment indicate that the Council is formed as the ground for gathering of professionals in public sector, who have influence in their area of work and who interact with the regional state executive during the implementation of regional policies. Therefore, such professionals look more useful for consulting and resolving specific problems than workers of the Executive Committees and Councils of lower tiers, who may not possess such expertise.

The Sejmik demonstrates an opposite trend, when the state workers grow twofold every term, while the industry sector (and all other fields except for education) declines. Assuming the democratic electoral process in Poland, the question remains why governmental workers oust the workers of other fields within the given period. The businessmen could ignore the Sejmik because it lost its significance as a channel of promotion of business interests, and due to decrease of corruption and professionalisation of public administration as a result of government reforms, better training and Europeanisation of government. Meanwhile, the professionals in public administration began occupying the regional Sejmik and thus implement their direct duties and professional skills. On the other hand, the voters could simply vote in favor of civil servants who are supposed to advocate public interest and reject businessmen, who are inclined to promote their business interests. But these peculiarities of electoral behavior are impossible to test in this study.

FIGURE 8

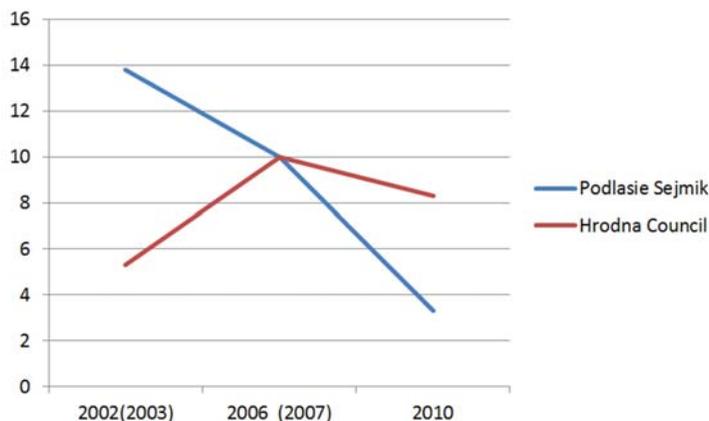
Representation of industry and services, %



The field of industry and services was the most difficult to analyse. First, the sources on Polish members of the regional representative do not provide information on the type of activity a certain business carries out, and therefore it is impossible to define them as service or industry. Information was available only on some of them, with trade and services dominating, while in Belarus it is industry, energy and construction sectors that absolutely dominate in the field. Second, as it was mentioned in the section that studies the structure of bodies by state/business sector, in Belarus all Council members represent state sector, while in Poland private sector dominated in 2002, balanced with state sector in 2006 and only in 2010 gave way to the public sector. These circumstances should be taken into account during the analysis of the field.

So, the industry and service sector grows in the Council and decreases in the Sejmik, and while in the Sejmik private services and trade dominate, in the Council it is state industry, energy and construction.

FIGURE 9
Representation of agriculture, %



As for agriculture, the Council and the Sejmik also show opposite trends. While the Sejmik, having a significant 14% share of agricultural workers in 2002, dropped to 3% in 2010, the Council balances at 5-10% rate without a visible trend. Again, it should be noted that agriculture in Poland means private farms of various size, while in Belarus they are Soviet-type collective farms with their directors being state bureaucrats. Therefore, the reason for decrease of agriculture sector in Poland may be similar to that of industry and trade, as businessmen see no personal benefit in the Sejmik work, or voters simply do not trust businessmen.

In the Hrodna Council, the role of agricultural elite is not stable. It is perhaps worth mentioning that in other regional Councils of Belarus the role of agricultural elite clearly decreases, especially if we compare the present situation with the 1999 convocation, when collective farms were vastly represented. Collective farms' directors lost their positions in Belarusian bureaucratic elite, as the development of economy brought new branches forward.

FIGURE 10
Representation of education, %

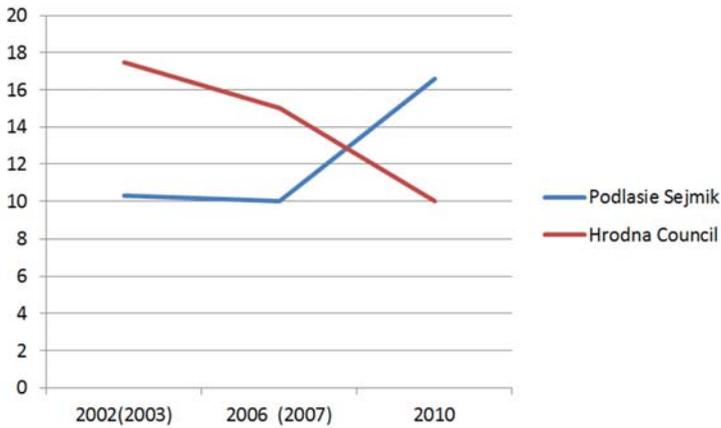
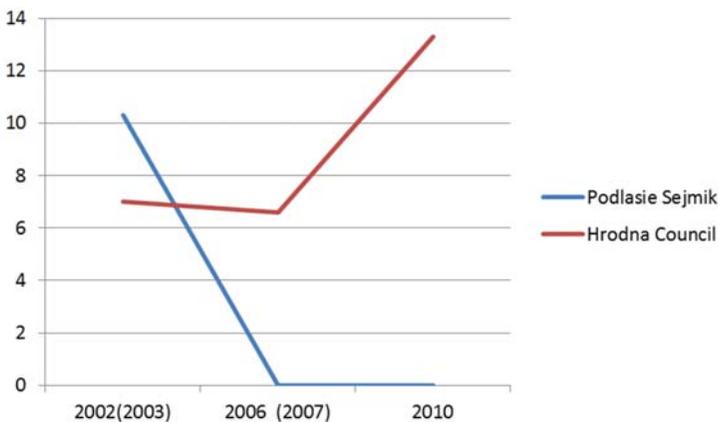


FIGURE 11
Representation of healthcare, %



Education and healthcare are the spheres of special social importance in modern societies and it seems natural that these spheres are present in local representative bodies. They make the third largest group after governmental workers, and industry and service groups. These two spheres show different trajectories. Education group was initially bigger in the Council, but in 2010 it fell, while in the Sejmik it grew. In healthcare, the Sejmik had a bigger representation in 2002, but the next two terms not a single worker of this sphere appeared there, while in the Council healthcare group grew twofold in 2010. In Belarus, healthcare is almost totally public, and the heads of hospitals administer healthcare issues on regional level as state bureaucrats. In Poland, where private healthcare is

widespread, the doctors might be less engaged in public administration duties. In education though, the Poles are quite politically active. Education workers in the 2010 Sejmik are mostly public secondary schools' employees, and this fact supports the trend of growth of governmental workers in the Sejmik.

5. Age

To analyse the age structure of regional Councils, we employ the scale suggested by A. Kazakievič (2007): under 31, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70. Additionally, we calculate the average age of members for all terms in office.

FIGURE 12

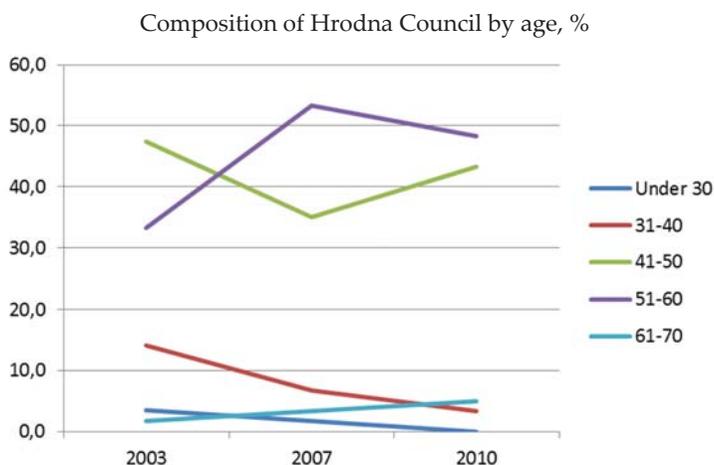


FIGURE 13

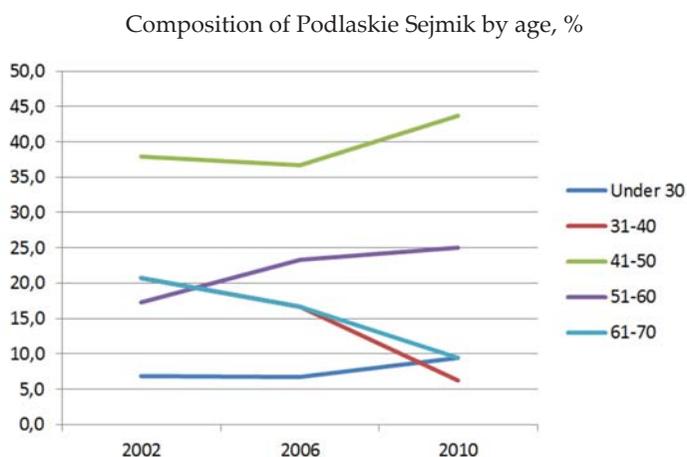
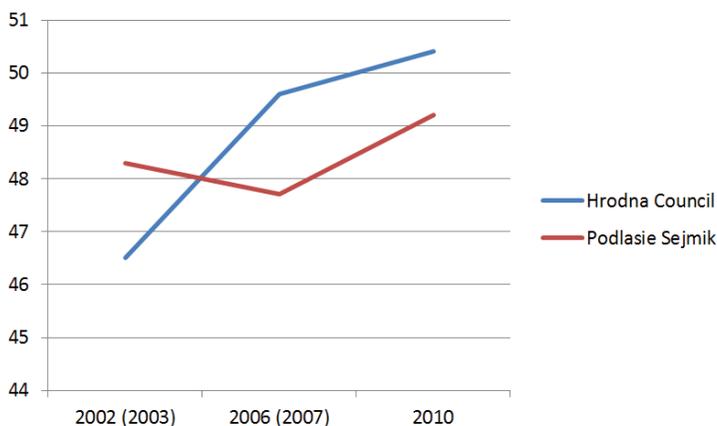


FIGURE 14

Average age of the regional representative members by term,⁵ years

The categories of 41-50 and 51-60 dominate in both bodies. Political domination of people of this age is less defined by political regime and this may be true for most modern societies. As the average age of members shows, there is only a slight one-year difference at present. Considering the dynamics, the ageing of members of both bodies is observed, but the balance of 41-50 and 51-60 categories varies. While in the Council they make 80-90% of deputies, in the Sejmik – only 55-69%. The dominant category of the Council is 51-60, while in the Sejmik the 41-50 category is the absolute leader.

Other three categories both in the Council and Sejmik receive few places and tend to decrease, but again, the difference persists. In the 2010 Council the three outsider groups received 8% of seats, while in the Sejmik they had 25%. According to J. Wasilewski (2006: 41), powiat, voivodeship and Sejm (parliament) elections tend to exclude young people under 40, and they occupy only 12,7% of seats in Voivodeship Sejmiks over Poland. Nevertheless, the Sejmik demonstrates a clearly wider representation of age groups. Both the Council and the Sejmik are ageing, but the Council does it much faster and reflects the age of state bureaucracy which forms it. It completely excludes young people, who haven't reached high positions in state sector, and this trend fits the parameters of level of position and sector of employment, explaining the pattern of Council formation.

6. Gender Structure

As Figures 15 and 16 show, males absolutely dominate in both bodies over the period. At present, females occupy around 10% in the Council and Sejmik. The previous dynamics, however, varies. In 2003, females received a third of seats

⁵ 2002 and 2006 are Sejmik's terms, 2003 and 2007 are Council's.

in Hrodna Council, which is quite unusual considering the later dynamics. As A. Kazakievič (2007: 55) suggests, the dynamics of gender structure of regional Councils may indicate the administrative modelling of representation, which involved a system of quotas for females and peaked in 2003. However, this system weakened afterwards, as the political centre possibly offered more autonomy to regional elite in defining the composition of Councils.

FIGURE 15

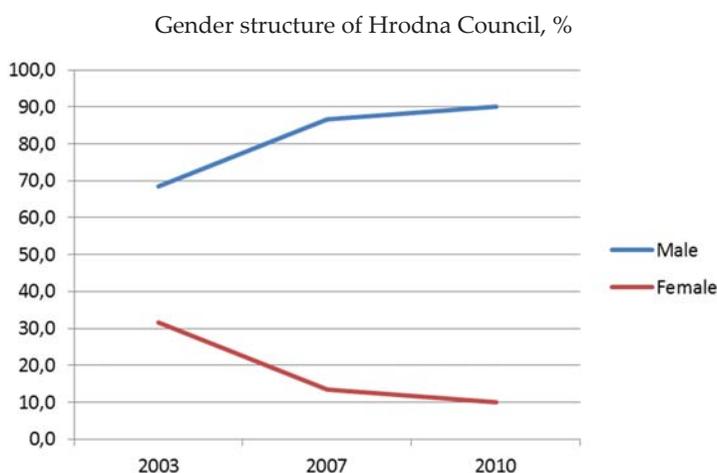
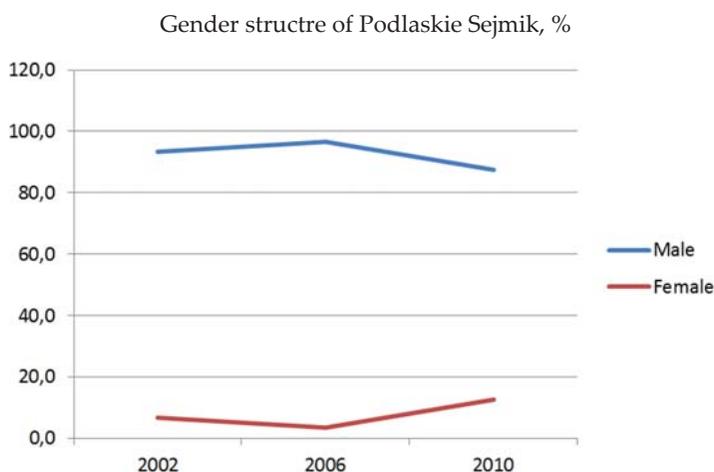


FIGURE 16



In the Sejmik, female representation did not exceed 6% in 2002 and 3% in 2006, but saw a positive dynamics in 2010, reaching 12,5%. As J. Wasilewski (2006: 41). observes, low representation of females in the self-government is a

typical situation throughout Poland and stems from the culture and traditions of Polish society. However, the rise of female representation in 2010 may indicate a transformation of traditional gender roles in contemporary Polish society, when women engage in politics more actively. It is worth mentioning that representation of females in democratically elected Belarusian parliament of 1990s showed the same numbers as in 2002 and 2006 Sejmiks – 3,6-5% (Belarusian Elite..., 2010). Therefore, this percentage probably shows the real political engagement of females in the region of Eastern Europe provided that the elections are fair. However, the result of 2010 elections in Podlaskie Voivodeship demonstrates that for Poland this pattern may change as the society develops. For Belarus, it remains unclear because of undemocratic elections.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the Council and Sejmik composition shows that the chosen factors indeed influence the formation of elite in the regional representative bodies. In Belarus, the absence of political competition, centralised authoritarian government and weakness of non-state actors, including private sector, make state bureaucracy the primary actor of politics. Occupation of a leading position in state sector became the main criterion for accessing the Council. This fact directly impacts the structure of governmental bodies, resulting in the narrowing of the channel of recruitment and “bureaucratisation” of the Council. Created as an instrument of democratic representation of regions, with the establishment of authoritarian regime it turned into an institution of representation of regional state bureaucracy. The concentration of state sector chiefs with a large share of regional centre representatives stems from the centralised system of government in Belarus, where the regional tier controls lower tiers of local government. The case of Sejmik shows that a decentralised system of government does not require a high concentration of this group. Therefore, the Council corresponds to its constitutional status, which defines it not as a body of democratic self-government, but as a part of a system of state bodies. Such form of cooperation of regional executive and heads of regional state organisations helps to implement local administration more effectively. Hence, the composition of the Council affects the structure of interests and development of local policies. It seems obvious that the heads of state organisations and enterprises would lobby their interests, while other social groups do not have such opportunity. Moreover, they are unable to do this through other non-state actors – civil associations and political parties. Of course, this fact has a negative impact on the development of local community, and on the development of the whole Belarusian society.

Also, the composition of the Council demonstrates that it has significant political power, contrary to the widespread opinion that in Belarus Councils are only formal institutions, which serve as a facade of democracy in authoritarian regime.

In Poland, due to the pluralist political system and strong private sector party-affiliated politicians and businessmen appear important political players. As a result, the Sejmik demonstrates a wider representation of various

social groups, especially regarding the parameters of economic activity (sector of employment, field of employment, level of position) and place of residence. The analysis of dynamics of sector and field of employment shows that state sector also grows continually in the Sejmik. Here, however, the state sector is represented by the workers of self-government of various tiers. But unlike in the Council, they do not come from the leading positions and serve mostly as the street-level administrators. This process in the Sejmik also differs from the Council "bureaucratisation", because its members work in really functioning self-government, which means they are not put on their position by the national executive authority. This trend in the Sejmik may be the result of evolution of Polish politics, and development and Europeanisation of political and economic institutions. Regional representative body becomes the place where businessmen, who potentially can pursue their private interests, give way to professionals of public administration. However, it remains unclear which factors influence this process most: development of public institutions, which makes the participation in regional self-government economically unreasonable for business, more active involvement of local self-government workers in political struggle, or the shift of political culture and preferences of voters, who started to trust the self-government institutions.

Despite the obvious difference of regional representative institutions in Belarus and Poland, our analysis shows some common features they possess. Gender and age remain the parameters where Sejmik demonstrates a high imbalance of representation. In both Sejmik and Council 40-60 years old males dominate. Basically, these parameters do not depend on the political and economic factors which we tested in this study, and probably they are typical at least for this region of Europe. But to study them, we should employ more fundamental cultural and anthropological factors of formation of ruling elite. Economic and political factors shape it into a more diverse structure in the case of democracy and into a more narrow and closed one in the case of authoritarianism.

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