

PATTERNS OF RECRUITMENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE¹

Roxana Marin

PostDoctoral fellow, West University of Timișoara, project ATRiUM POCU/380/6/13/123343

Abstract: *The present paper constitutes an attempt at critically and comparatively examining the patterns of recruitment operating at the local level in three countries of East-Central Europe, i.e. Romania, the Czech Republic, and Poland. Resulting in the production of different types of local elites, the means and modes of recruitment at the local level bear a quite engaging diversity, starting from the classical dichotomy between “intramural” vs. “extramural” selection, to the differentiation among the three layers of selection: (a) self-selection, (b) recruitment by party selectorates, and (c) selection by the electorate (election) (Norris 1996). This study touches upon a series of aspects of the recruitment and selection processes, including: the formal and informal, general and specific criteria of eligibility of potential candidates for joining the local elite; the impact of reelection and the effect of incumbency; the importance of “political proximity”, along with other types of proximities, etc. Finally, in order to assess the significance of different recruitment procedures, a socio-demographical and quality-based profile is constructed on the bases of the empirical observations drawn from the administration of largely quantitative methods on three case-studies, i.e. the members of three Local/ Municipal Councils in three small-to-medium-sized towns (approximately 35,000 inhabitants), with similar developmental strategies (i.e. food industry, supplemented by commercial activities and constant contacts with the surrounding countryside). From the results on recruitment of local political elites in the three cases, three types of selection procedures are distinguished: (1) political recruitment of “predominantly elitistic” local elites, (2) political recruitment of “democratic elitist” local elites, and (3) political recruitment of “predominantly democratic” local elites.*

Points for practitioners: *This paper provides illustrative examples of the manner in which political recruitment generates certain types of political elites at the local level, in six communities of six East-Central European countries. It explores the marked importance of different types of “proximities” (political, family, professional/ occupational etc.) in the process of recruitment locally. It also ventures to link a specific portrait of the local/ municipal councilor to a specific form of recruitment (intramural v. extramural selection), to further associate it to the level of decentralization characterizing a territorial-administrative setting. The presence or the absence of the party in the recruitment process at the local level marks the socio-demographical and value outlook of the future local political elite. Additionally, a higher level of decentralization tends to favor extramural elite selection in ECE.*

Keywords: *local leadership, political recruitment, intramural v. extramural procedures, three-leveled selection, East-Central Europe, eligibility criteria.*

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1. Introduction: Theoretical considerations on political recruitment²

The process of political recruitment is defined generically as “a process by which individuals are inducted into active political role”³. Prewitt discusses “recruitment” (often interchangeable with “selection”) in similar terms: “We have saved the term ‘recruitment’, in particular, to describe the processes grooming an even smaller group within the active stratum of public office.”⁴ Harasymiw pushes forth the importance of elite recruitment, by defining it in terms of the “critical links between society and polity”: “Recruitment is the important link between social structure and political elite role, and between changes in the two”⁵, since “the study of [the elite] recruitment contributes to one facet of the understanding of politics and political change.”⁶ Dwaine Marvick postulates that “[t]he study of political recruitment is in an important sense equivalent to the study of political performance – or governance – itself.”⁷ William Zartman even argues that Pareto’s and Mosca’s “elite circulation” refers specifically to political political recruitment⁸. Moreover, the significance of the patterns of recruitment designed and employed by the “selectors” is enormous: the patterns of elite recruitment can “influence the kind of policies that will be enacted, accelerate or retard changes, effect the distribution of status and prestige, and influence the stability of the system.”⁹ While it is difficult to demonstrate the fashion in which the “selectors” conducting the recruitment, being socialized in a certain “system”, accustomed with particular mores of selection, can effectively influence, through their actions, the “stability of the system”, the manner in which elite recruitment is undertaken virtually shapes the political elite. According to Peppa Norris, there are three main levels of political recruitment: the self-selection (i.e. the interest and the disposition, the inclination to enter into politics), the selection as candidate by a party and the selection by the electorate (i.e. the election as public official)¹⁰.

2. Methodological considerations

This paper employs, as a methodological approach, the case-study, isolating the local political elite in three small-to-medium-sized towns of 30,000 – 35,000 inhabitants, similar both in terms of demographics and of developmental strategies (i.e. an economy based on food industry and on commercial activities, maintaining comprehensive contacts with the surrounding villages): Tecuci (Galați county, Romania), Česká Lípa (Liberec region, the Czech Republic), and Oleśnica (Lower Silesia voivodeship, Poland). The data was collected in the period 2011-2015. Bearing a rather descriptive, exploratory scope, the study isolates the local political elites from a positional perspective, hence

² See, for one of the most comprehensive analysis of patterns of recruitment and candidate selection, Reuven Y. HAZAN and Gideon RAHAT, *Democracy within Parties. Candidate Selection Methods and Their Political Consequences*, Oxford University Press (“*Comparative Politics*” Series), Oxford & New York, 2010, especially pp. 19-89: the two Israeli scholars discuss recruitment on four dimensions: (a) “candidacy” (i.e. criteria of eligibility), (b) “the selectorate”, (c) the degree of party “centralization/ decentralization”, and (d) “the appointment/ voting method”. Equally instrumental in the analysis of recruitment is Michael GALLAGHER and Michael MARSH (eds.), *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*, Sage Publishers, London, 1988.

³ Ira William ZARTMAN, “The Study of Elite Circulation. Who’s on First and What’s He Doing There?”, in *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (April 1974), pp. 465-488.

⁴ Dwaine MARVICK, “Continuities in Recruitment Theory and Research: Towards a New Model”, in Heinz EULAU and Moshe M. CZUDNOWSKI (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 29-44 (p. 29).

⁵ Kenneth PREWITT, *The Recruitment of Political Leaders: A Study of Citizen-Politicians*, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis (Indiana) & New York, 1970, p. 107.

⁶ Bohdan HARASYMIW, *Political Elite Recruitment in the Soviet Union*, St. Martin Press, New York, 1984, pp. xv and 2.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁸ Dwaine MARVICK, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁹ Ira William ZARTMAN, “The Study of Elite Circulation...”, pp. 465-488.

¹⁰ Lester G. SELIGMAN, “Elite Recruitment and Political Development”, in *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (August 1964), pp. 612-626 (pp. 612-613).

¹¹ Peppa NORRIS, “Legislative Recruitment”, in Lawrence LeDUC, Richard G. NIEMI and Pippa NORRIS (eds.), *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective*, Sage, London, 1996, p. 196.

operationalizing the phrase “local political elites” through the following definition: The local political elite is that group comprising those individuals in legislative and executive positions within the local leading, decision-making structure. Hence, it isolates positionally the members of the Local/ Municipal Councils of the three towns as the main representatives of the local political elite. By using a case-study approach, complemented by a positional approach, no hazardous generalizations will be made on the entire local political elite of a specific country or on that of East-Central Europe. Based on the method employed and on the chosen populations, the main questions of this research will tackle the following:

- (1) How is each of the three stages of political recruitment developing for the three selected cases?
- (2) What are the main formal criteria of eligibility, provided for in the statutes of the parties represented in the three Municipal Councils?
- (3) Conversely, what are the main informal criteria of eligibility, developed through the specific personal interactions and degree of reputation and prestige a member of the local elite may present?
- (4) What are the principal selectorates for the local elites on each tier of administration (local, regional, central/national), and what is the impact of each tier selectorate in the actual recruitment process?
- (5) What types of “proximities” are at work in the recruitment at the local level?
- (6) What is the level of incumbency in each of the three communities and how does it correlate with the desire to run again of the incumbents?

Surely, the enumeration below is not exhaustive, a series of secondary questions are added during the research process, whose tentative, partial answers will be attempted in the sections below. The study employs, as the main research methods, the administration of a standard written questionnaire (including sixteen closed- and open-ended questions), document analysis on the statutes of the parties represented in each of the Municipal Councils under scrutiny, and participatory observation during the sessions of the Councils and the workings of the specialized Committees.

3. The first phase: the self-selection

The first step in the recruitment process is the self-selection, the decision of a person to enter into politics, the “initial recruitment”¹¹. The motivation for getting involved into politics is different from each case of local councilor to another. One of the most comprehensive matrix of motivations in self-selection process is constructed by James Payne and Olivier Woshinsky, who discriminate among six basic “emotional needs” which determines ordinary people to enter politics; in their model, various motivations generate different behaviors only joining the rank-and-file of politics and afterwards¹². Concretely, (1) the need for “adulation” seeks for “personal pride” in politics and describes a gregarian behavior, with the emphasis put on electoral campaigns, during which the personal reputation of the candidate is fully displayed. (2) The “status” model considers that “success” is the emotional need to be satisfied in politics, whereas the subsequent behavior of the candidate is that of a person constantly preoccupied with his political career, generally cynical in what regards the others’ motivations and politics in general. (3) The “programme” model accounts for the need of the candidate to solve the political problems; as a consequence, his behavior is one interested in the substance of both the public policies and the political process, being more preoccupied of stability, good governance, and favorable to compromise and negotiation. (4) The motivation in the fourth case is “the mission”, the need to

¹¹ Herbert JACOB, “Initial recruitment of elected officials in the United States – A model”, in *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (November 1962), pp. 703-716.

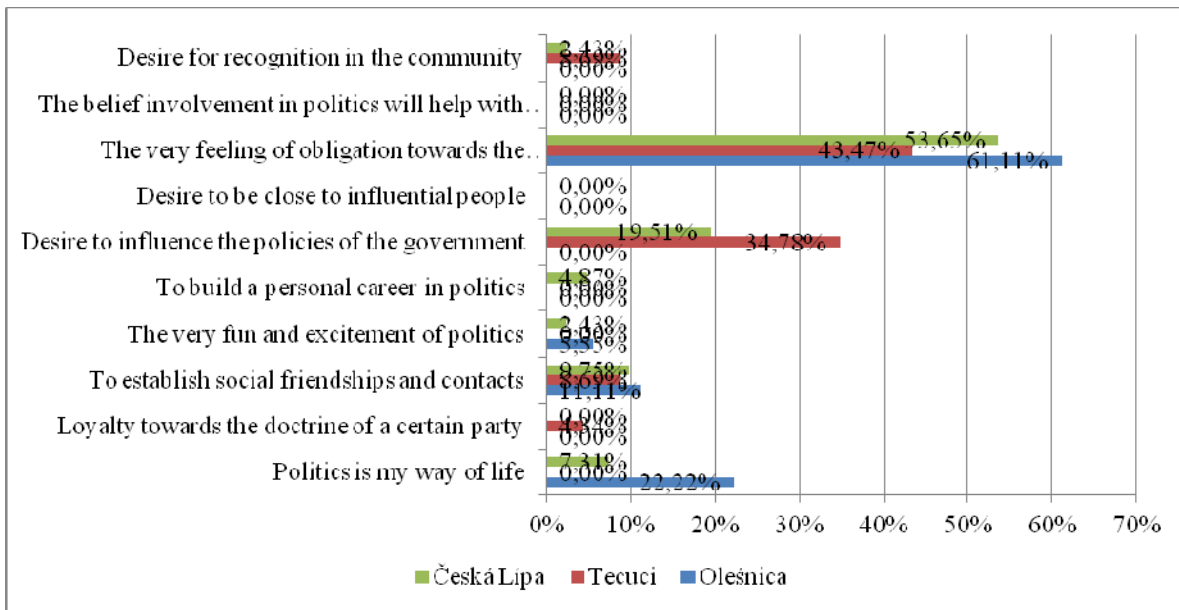
¹² James L. PAYNE and Olivier H. WOSHINSKY, “Incentives for Political Participation”, in *World Politics*, Vol. 24, No. 4, (July 1972), pp. 518-546 [adds mine].

“identify with a certain cause”, in which case the successful candidate is concentrated on ideology, deploying a rather missionary zeal and fully dedicated to social transformation, in a somehow revolutionary endeavor. (5) The “obligation” model distinguishes a candidate that seeks the “sense of civic duty”: it is the traditional, though rather idealistic, pathway an ordinary citizen, preoccupied by his community needs and grievances decides to enter politics to solve the problems of the community, but, due to the fact that she was moralistically driven into politics, he will be more inclined towards normative principles – sometimes, in the detriment of actual, concrete results; he exposes an aversion towards politics and towards negotiations and compromises, being dedicated to some ethical stances that would otherwise forbid compromise. Finally, (6) the “game” model discusses the exercise of attributions in the political competence as a “satisfied need”, generating a behavior that is “preoccupied with strategies and tactics; he [the successful candidate] enjoys the political maneuvers and manipulation; he has a detached vision upon the political ‘game’, although he supports its general rules.”¹³ In *Political Elites in Modern Societies*, S. Eldersveld uses, for his study of political activists in Detroit, a matrix of motivation self-selection in politics that includes eleven motives for getting involved in politics¹⁴; the present research uses ten of them. According to the responses provided through the questionnaire, for Tecuci, the large majority of the local councilors, 42.85%, the main motivation for being part of the political spectrum is the sentiment of obligation towards the community. Other motivational aspects for politics pointed out by the members of the Local Council are: the desire to influence the governmental policies (28.57%), the desire to establish friendships and social contacts (19.04%) and the desire to be prestigious, acknowledged as influential within the community (4.76%). For Česká Lípa, the motivations to get involved into politics seem similar to those of the local political elite of Tecuci: the very sentiment of obligation to the municipality occupied a prime place (53.65% of responses, even greater than in the Romanian case), and is followed by: the desire to influence the policies of the government (only 19.51%), even the desire to establish social friendships and contacts (9.75%), politics as a way of life (7.31%) and, sincerely enough, the possibility of building a personal career in politics (4.87%) (three of the motivational resorts that would not be sincerely spelled out by the political elite in Tecuci). For the municipal councilors of Oleśnica, the motivational drive to enter politics is somewhat different: 22.22% of the respondents perceive politics as a way of life, while another 11.11% enter politics for establishing social friendships and contacts; the feeling of obligation towards the community meets the highest pick in the Polish case: 61.11%, pointing towards a very community-oriented local elite. It seems obvious that the responses gathered through the questionnaire do not express the true, complete and complex motivational mechanisms behind the decision of the present members of the Local Council to become involved in politics, but it offers “a perspective at least on the image these people would like to have in the eyes of the citizens”¹⁵.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

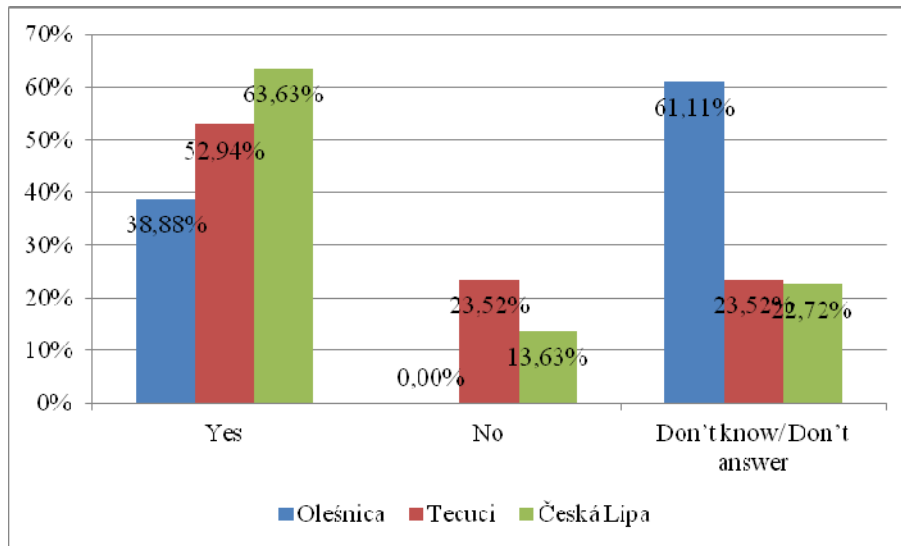
¹⁴ Samuel ELDERSVELD, *Political Elites in Modern Societies Empirical Research and Democratic Theory*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor (Michigan), 1989, p. 33.

¹⁵ Virgil STOICA, *Cine conduce Iasiul ?*, Fundația Axis Publishing House, Iași, 2003, p. 129.



Graph 1. The personal motivation of the municipal councilors to enter politics (Source: the administered questionnaire)

The issue of the desire to be reelected is inherent when discussing aspects of self-selection. Actually, the political system seeks a certain degree of stability and professionalization of political elite, while, at the same time, encouraging the change of elites and the change of perspectives. Generally, the political system aimed at the equilibrium between oligarchic, atomized structures and discontinuous and anarchical structures. According to the responses in the questionnaire, the large majority of the local councilors in Tecuci (52.94%) and Česká Lípa (63.63%) expressed their desire to run for another mandate and to get reelected; the same score is significantly lower for Olešnica (38.88%), whereas uncertainty regarding the future reelection dominates (61.11% of the responses). On the other hand, 23.52% (in Tecuci) and 13.63% (Česká Lípa) of the local councilors would not run for another seat in the Local Council; this category includes mostly the women in the present Local Councils, the youngest and the eldest members of the two forums.



Graph 2. *The desire for reelection of the members of the three Local/ Municipal Councils (Source: the administered questionnaire)*

As many of the local councilors occupy, at the same time, leading positions in organizational structure of the local branch of the parties – Presidents, Vice-presidents, members of the Permanent/ Political Bureau –, being the ones to form and to purpose the lists of candidates for the Local Council, it is expected that their very desire to run again for a position of local councilor to be the single criterion in having their names at the top of such lists. Actually, since 8 local councilors (*i.e.* 42.1%) in Tecuci, 12 municipal councilors (*i.e.* 48%) in Česká Lípa, and 14 municipal councilors (63.63%) were reelected, the self-selection seems a successful recipe for all three cases, with a rate of replacement of only 57.9%, 52%, and 36.36% respectively, in the Local Councils, that would suggest the beginning of stability and professionalization on the deliberative branch of the local administration.

4. The second phase: the selection by the party

The discussion about the role of the selection by the party in the Polish case of the town of Oleśnica is futile, for the large majority of the municipal councilors are selected extramurally (*i.e.* from outside the party), running in the local elections as independents, non-affiliated, without the backing of a political party. Conversely, all the members of the Local Council in Tecuci and of the Municipal Council in Česká Lípa were recruited as candidates in an intramural manner, *i.e.* from within the party. This can be translated by the fact that the support and selection by a political party of a candidate are *sine qua non* conditions for getting elected in a public position. Generally, each of the four parties represented in the Local Council of Tecuci and the eight parties represented in the Municipal Council of Česká Lípa imposes, according to their statutes, the same requirements for a future candidate to a seat in the two Municipal Councils. Therefore, for being nominated as candidate, a member (1) should have paid his/ her levy on a monthly basis; (2) should be a militant (*i.e.* a member of the party that is actively involved in the life of its organizations, in its activities and functioning), evaluated according to his/ her efficiency in political activity and his/ her competence¹⁶, before being selected by the party; (3) should enjoy the support of all members of the Local Branch of the party; (4) should have his/ her candidature approved by the Local Branch of the party, which is nevertheless obliged to advance a list of candidates for a public position. In the case of Liberal-Democratic Party (Romania), for instance, the list of candidates for mayor and local councilors is proposed by the Local Permanent Bureau and is approved by the Local Coordination Council. The party militant aspiring to a local elective position is analyzed according to its “file”, containing his/ her activity within the party and the personal competence, as registered by the Secretariat for human resources, militants and the management of career (SRUMGC) of PD-L. In the case of the National Liberal Party (Romania) and the TOP 09 Party (the Czech Republic), an initial proposition of candidates is made by the district organizations and by the organizations at the level of polling stations. The lists of candidates are gathered by the Local Political Bureau; the final list is proposed by the Local Political Bureau/ Local Committee, is approved by the Local General Assembly, which submits it, for finalization and validation, to the County Political Bureau/ County Committee and to the Territorial Permanent Delegation¹⁷; therefore, the candidates of PNL (Romania) and TOP 09 (the Czech Republic) must enjoy a broader support, including that at the county level. Moreover, the Local Political Bureau/ Local

¹⁶ The Statute of the Liberal-Democrat Party, Title V. “*The Carrier in PDL: The Management of Carrier and Candidature in PDL*”, p. 28, and the Statute of the TOP 09, Sections 5, “*Members’ Obligations*” and 7. “*Organizational Structure of the Party*”, <http://en.top09.cz/documents/top-09-statutes/>, last accessed: 02.03.2012.

¹⁷ The Statute of the National Liberal Party, Chapter V. “*The organizational structure at local, communal, town and municipality levels*”, art. 38, p. 10.

Committee is the one to prepare the selection of candidates for local elections and to organize the electoral campaigns. The Permanent Delegation of PNL and the Executive Committee of TOP 09, respectively, are the organisms that validate the lists of criteria for the selection of candidates, even at the local level; the application of this list is compulsory for the local organizations of the party. In the case of the Social Democratic Party (Romania), a member of the party aspiring for a seat in the Local Council should have at least one year of membership¹⁸ – proving, therefore, a minimum level of party loyalty –, he/she should prove political experience, professionalism, “prestige and moral authority within both the party and the society”. The Bureau and the Council of the Local Organization of the party propose, among the party members, the candidates for local elected positions. The list of candidates is finalized by the Executive Committee of the Council of the County Organization. The electoral campaign of the candidates is organized and coordinated by the Executive Committee of the Municipal Branch.

E.E. Schattschneider radically concludes that: “[H]e who can make the nominations is the owner of the party.”¹⁹ In general terms, this owner can be “party organizations, the personal *cliques*, the groups of dignitaries [...] involved in the selection of candidates and in their presentation to constituencies.”²⁰ Analyzing the manner in which the recruitment of the candidates of the Local (Municipal) Council is done, it was observed that three types of party selectorates²¹ operate in this process:

- the national selectorates: the Permanent Delegation (in Romania) and the Executive Committee (in the Czech Republic) of the party which establish the general criteria in the selection of candidates;
- the county/ regional selectorates: County Political Bureau and the Territorial Permanent Delegation (in Romania) and Regional Committee and the County Committee (in the Czech Republic) which validate the list of candidates for local public offices;
- the local (municipal) selectorates: probably the most important in this process are the deliberative (Local Coordination Council, Local General Assembly, Council of the Local Organization, in Romania; Local Assembly, in the Czech Republic) and the executive (Local Permanent Bureau, Local Political Bureau, Bureau of the Local Organization, in Romania; Local Committee, in the Czech Republic) organisms within the Local Branch of the party. The Local Bureaus have the responsibility of proposing names of candidates. The composition of such bureaus is particularly significant, for their members are those who actually generate a certain type of local political elite.

Especially at the local level, the role of the selectorates for the candidates’ future nomination and career can be assessed by one additional indicator: the degree of “political proximity” the candidate enjoys in respect to his/ her selector. Other types of proximities to a prominent political figure at the local (or, usefully enough, at the country/ regional/ district) level are “professional” and “family” proximity. The case of “family proximity” is not illustrative to the local elites in either of the three cases, since the members of the three Municipal Councils have no relatives engaged in politics. On the other hand, the case of “professional proximity” works quite interestingly particularly in reference to the local elite

¹⁸ The Statute of the Social-Democratic Party, Chapter III. “*Organizational Structure and the Leading Bodies of PSD. The Electoral Procedure and the Competences*”, Article 18, paragraph 10).

¹⁹ Elmer Eric SCHATTSCHEIDER, *Party Government: American Government in Action*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1942, p. 100.

²⁰ Heinrich BEST and Maurizio COTTA (eds.), *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe, 1848-2000. Legislative Recruitment and Careers in Eleven European Countries*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, p. 7.

²¹ See, for the pioneering usage of the term “selectorate” in reference to the elitist studies, Peter PATERSON, *The Selectorate: The Case for Primary Elections in Britain*, Macgibbon and Kee, London, 1967.

in Tecuci, since it does not refer to the professional status of the members of the Local Council, but rather to their “occupational status”: in their everyday activities, especially in their business relations, the members interacted with the political leaders of the town, who were, in their turn, local businessmen. Thanks to a rather special form of “professional proximity” – to be coined as “occupational proximity” –, the would-be local councilors have become part of the political elite.

Of course, the widest, most basic *criteria* of eligibility – rather than basis for candidate selection – are the ones inscribed in the Constitution of the Czech Republic and in the Act No. 152/ 1994 on the Elections to the Municipal Council and Local Referendums: every citizen of the Czech Republic with permanent residence in the municipality, 18 years of age on the last day of elections, may stand in elections to the Municipal Council²². During an initial phase, components of eligibility²³ in the candidates’ recruitment and party nomination processes, for the specific cases of the Local Council of Tecuci and the Municipal Council of Česká Lípa, were the following:

- educational level and occupational status: In the process of recruitment of local political elites, the high educational level of the would-be candidates is extremely important, even for the selection at local level. Hence, the general perception of the selectorates is that “the expertise and the wisdom would lead to the ‘best’ [*i.e.* the correct] political decisions.”²⁴ Moreover, the group of intellectuals is a minority group within the social hierarchy of the town, which would inherently qualify those who graduated university studies as an elite. The overrepresentation of a certain occupation – that of engineer – in the Local Councils would indicate a preference of the local selectorates for candidates with technical and technological training and expertise. The presence of teachers among the local councilors can be associated with the importance the selectorates assign to education. In addition, both engineers and teachers enjoy a traditional prestige within the community. For the case of Česká Lípa, the most striking element is the remarkably high educational capital of the Municipal Council (graduates of Master and PhD programmes), which would evidently imply that the level of education of the candidates was of paramount importance for the selectorates.

- high level of financial independence: 73.68% of the local councilors in Tecuci are involved in the business area. They are either administrators or directors of their own firms or they work as consultants, jurists or engineers in the firms of their close relatives (wives, sons or daughters). The majority of these firms are highly profitable businesses in Tecuci (chains of restaurants or pharmacies, notary public bureaus, furniture firm, small commercial firms such as food stores and department stores, etc.), making their owners and administrators very powerful and influential individuals. Due to their reputation, to their capacity in gathering supporters and voters and to their ability in self-funding the electoral campaign, such persons are prone to be nominated for a seat in the Local Council. In this sense, probably the most notable case is the one of Costică Florea of PD-L, with virtually no record of party activity and no significant experience in public institutions; even so, what is clearly striking to this particular member of the Local Council is his

²² unless there is an electoral obstacle, *e.g.* citizens deprived of their capacity to act in legal matters, citizens serving a prison sentence, etc. An English translation of the Act No. 152/1994 is to be found in *Structure and Operation of Local and Regional Democracy: Czech Republic* (2nd ed.), a publication of the Council of Europe and the Steering Committee on Local and Regional Authorities, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg (France), 1998, pp. 13-14. The office of municipal councilor is incompatible with other function in the local *apparatus*: employee of the municipal office, member of the state administration authority with competencies over the local government area (financial offices, commissioned municipal offices), etc. Nevertheless, a local councilor can hold, at the same time, other elective offices (MP, senator, member of District Assembly, etc.).

²³ Those *criteria* of eligibility contained in electoral laws – such as Romanian citizenship, the age over 18 years old, with a permanent residence in Romania – were presumed as inherent from the beginning. Even through necessary, they are by no means sufficient in the candidates’ recruitment process.

²⁴ Virgil STOICA, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

annual income, about two times the income of the next richest local councilor and more than 32 times the revenue of the poorest one. Nevertheless, as already pointed out, the situation is commonplace for Tecuci, since the local branches of the main parties, largely sustained from partisans' and sympathizers' donations, are incapable to financially support the campaigns of would-be councilors and thusly require from the candidates the payment of their own campaign and greetingly welcome businessmen who wish a political position within the community. The situation is largely different in Česká Lípa, where, even though a certain degree of financial independence is rather intrinsically required (no unemployed will ever accede to a seat in the Municipal Council), the parties are more supportive to their candidates during campaigning for Municipal Council, while candidates themselves acquire financial autonomy and self-sustenance thanks largely to their professional status, not as businessmen (though exceptions are to be encountered as well).

- incumbency: 42.1% of the present members of the Local Council in Tecuci and 48% of the municipal councilors in Česká Lípa are at their second, third or fourth mandate as local councilors. This situation guarantees to this proportion a high degree of experience for this public position, a certain easiness in dealing with the responsibilities associated with the position. At large, there is a general trend towards a "closing of the elites" after twenty-three years since the communist breakdown, a trend that is present for the two selected cases as well: as the high rates of incumbency show, the willingness of the selectorates in supporting new figures proves to be rather contingent, hence announcing "the closing of the elites" and, with it, the beginning of the "professionalization of politics" at the local level.

- age: While not an eligibility criterion of primary importance, age was significant in the selection of candidates, as certain age categories – mainly 40 to 50 and 50 to 60 – are dominant among the members of the Councils in Česká Lípa and Tecuci, respectively. Generally, maturity is associated with a stable family and socio-economical situation, with a certain level of prestige and reputation in the community. People in their 50s and 60s had the time to prove something to the community, to provide for their community. This is the reason why the selectorates prefer – even unconsciously – a particular age category. For Česká Lípa, the youngsters tend to penetrate more and more the political mindset of the selectorates and to advance as capable candidates.

- an "orthodox" lifestyle, high degree of morality (this is especially true for Tecuci): Under this phrase, features like an universally accepted marital status and religion or a clean criminal record are included. Being married and being part of a united family and acknowledging the Christian-Orthodox religious conviction are two of the characteristics that are, traditionally, positively perceived both by the electorate and by the selectorates, particularly in the case of elected officials in relatively small communities. Moreover, 73.33% of the members of the Local Council of Tecuci mention honesty among the first five most important qualities a local councilor should possess; honesty is, again, associated with an "orthodox" conduit of living. Others named similar features: modesty (13.33%) or altruism (13.33%). It seems that such moral characteristics would qualify a party militant to be selected for candidacy. Despite the fact that, religiously, the Municipal Council of Česká Lípa is deprived of definitive affiliations, the Czech selectorates favor in their candidate selection the same "orthodox" lifestyle of the candidates: the large majority of the municipal councilors are married, displaying happy families, and are inclined towards an ideal image of the municipal councilors that bears predominantly ethical features: honesty (12.03% of the responses), modesty (1.85%), high moral stance (10.18%), courage and bravery (3.7%).

- party loyalty and party discipline: The parties require, according to their statutes, a minimum time span of membership. Moreover, there is no case, among the members of the two Local Councils analyzed, of extra-mural selection (*i.e.* recruitment of candidates from outside the party): all the local councilors were recruited on the list of candidates from within the party. Nevertheless, this is relatively important for the selection of candidates particularly for the Local Council in Tecuci, as there are several situations in which on the list proposed by the Local Bureaus names of party switchers were to be found. In the Municipal Council of Česká Lípa, the members themselves tend to value party loyalty (1.85% of the responses, similar to the percentage in the case of Tecuci). By contrast, the perceived importance of party loyalty for the members of the Municipal Council in Olešnica – the large majority of them selected in an extramural fashion – registered the lowest values (1.38% of the answers, respectively).

Prestige and reputation are equally important in the patterns of recruitment and party nomination process at the local level, especially in the context of a small town, more often than not preserving patrimonial and surveillance-like societal features. Reputation may be given by the matrimonial status – proved by the large proportion of married individuals among the local councilors, 84.21% for Tecuci, 68% for Česká Lípa, 66.66% for Olešnica –, by the embraced religion – 100% of the members of the Local Council in Tecuci – and by the degree of financial independence. Local notoriety is, in the case of Tecuci, the resultant of non-political activities, namely business activities: at the local level, the citizens consider that business notoriety of the majority of the local councilors is linked primarily to the fact that these economic and political notabilities are first and foremost job-providers for the community, hence their notoriety increases accordingly, exponentially. Therefore, many of the local councilors in Tecuci – in Česká Lípa and Olešnica, as well, but due largely to reasons related to their professional status and to their prominent party activity and party seniority – exert an additional high-profile social role, usually roles prone to increased prestige and local visibility. Either job-providers and some sort of local *mecena* (for Tecuci), cultural prominent figures (for Olešnica), or professional notabilities and political “experts” (for Česká Lípa), the local political elite in the two cases enjoy a significant level of notoriety working as part of the candidate’s credential, as booster for nomination assets. Equally significant in the realm of prestige and reputation at the local level are the so-called “apprenticeship positions”, *i.e.* those institutional or non-institutional positions, partisan or non-partisan *loci* a candidate or an elected official holds that are politically relevant for occupying or maintaining in the targeted office an individual capable of exercising a series of adequate social-economic traits. These apprenticeship positions refer generally to such offices as director of local educational establishments, private administrators or managers of publicly owned spots, members of the leadership of local (branches of) political parties (*e.g.* Vasile Diaconu, Petr Skokan, etc.) and former public officials at the national, regional or local levels (*e.g.* Jiří Kočandrlé).

5. The third phase: the elections. How should a candidate look like?

In the *spectrum* of political recruitment, the Polish case of the Municipal Council in Olešnica is an obvious outlier: the extramural procedure of selecting elites makes the candidates to pass only through two phases, practically skipping the trials of the parties and their multi-leveled selectorates. The profile of most of the standing municipal councilors in Olešnica reveals the fact that they are former civil society activists or teachers, previously active in social matters, particularly mother’ and child’s rights, educational rights, social benefits etc.; they are well-positioned, quite popular within the community and acknowledged for their role in pushing forward projects for the improvement of the town.

Their *status* within the community and their reputation determine the high percentage of reelection and incumbency. Inversely, the stakes of the political game make no sense to their way of conceiving local leadership.

Finally, for identifying the qualities that ideally a local councilor should possess, qualities that could constitute eligibility criteria for both the parties and the electorate, the questionnaire included an open question addressing the issue. After comprehensively scrutinizing the ones in power, the recent scholarly generally agreed on five models²⁵ that might account for specific “qualities” in defining and identifying elites. The assemblage of these models pledges to the fact that a normative-descriptive reconciliation was intended, although in an overwhelmingly descriptive fashion²⁶. The “ethical model” of political elite refers to such qualities as: correctness, honesty, fairness, altruism, modesty, high moral standards, verticality and seriousness, courage and bravery, punctuality. The “technocratic model” of political elite takes into consideration such attributes as: political experience, political will, expertise and training, intelligence, patience/ rapid reaction, enthusiasm and imagination. The “pragmatic model” of political elite is respective to such features as: dedication to the constituency’s (state’s) improvement plans, devotion and respect for the community/ country, desire to change, the capacity to identify development opportunities for the community/ country, vision, perspective, initiative, persuasion skills, capacity to compromise and negotiate, dialog-oriented, intuition, social sensitivity, care for the citizen, economic independence, leadership skills. The “political model” subscribes to the following qualities: oratorical skills, rhetoric, political loyalty, incorruptibility, interest detachment (objectivity), collegiality and team spirit. The “gender model” refers to the gender quality. The results largely coincided to an “ethical model”, with features such as honesty (justness, correctness, fairness, truthfulness) (14.66% of the answers for Tecuci, 12.03% of the answers for Česká Lípa, 15.27% of the answers for Olešnica), moral verticality, seriousness, personal discipline, sobriety (5.33% for Tecuci, an impressive and telling 10.18% for Česká Lípa, 2.77% for Olešnica), altruism and selflessness (1.33% of the answers for Tecuci, 5.55% for Olešnica) and modesty (1.33% of the responses for Tecuci, 1.85% of the responses for Česká Lípa), courage and bravery (3.7% for Česká Lípa), punctuality (Česká Lípa, 0.92%) among the most important qualities a local councilor should have. The technocratic model was equally valued by the local councilors: a significant number pointed out such characteristics as training and expertise (4% of the answers for Tecuci, 4.62% for Česká Lípa, 1.38% for Olešnica), and political experience and political will (5.33% for Tecuci, 6.48% for Česká Lípa, 1.38% for Olešnica), reliability and solidity (5.55% for Olešnica), effectiveness and competence (2.77% of the answers for Olešnica), intelligence and wisdom (6.48% of the answers for Česká Lípa, 4.16% of the answers for Olešnica), patience or rapid reaction (1.85% for Česká Lípa), and enthusiasm, imagination, creativity, and innovation (1.85% of the answers for Česká Lípa, 5.55% of the answers for Olešnica) as the hallmark of the technocratic model. Those local councilors mentioning the dedication to the town’s improvement plans, devotion, desire to change, and respect for the community (12% for Tecuci, a falling 8.33% for Česká Lípa), involvement, diligence, commitment, assertiveness, industry (6.94% of the answers for Olešnica), determination, consistency, consequence (2.77% for Olešnica), thoroughness (1.38% for Olešnica), the capacity to identify development opportunities for the town, vision, perspective (6.66% for Tecuci, 10.18% for Česká Lípa, 1.38% for Olešnica), the initiative and enactment (1.33% for Tecuci, a similar 1.85% for Česká Lípa, 1.38% for Olešnica), the persuasion skills, the capacity to compromise, cooperate, and negotiate, dialogue-orientation, non-conflictual stance (1.33% for Tecuci, a

²⁵ The fivefold model of values of the political elite was firstly used by Prewitt 1970, but it has been employed ever since (and subsequently modified and altered) in numerous empirical studies of the 70s-90s.

²⁶ This is particularly the reason why this paper coins the recent (*i.e.* post-Wright-Mills) empirical drive in studying and defining political elites as “neo-descriptive”, since it admits the necessity of introducing the “ethical model”, in spite of the fact that the inquiries are in themselves largely descriptive, exploratory.

more significant 7.4% for Česká Lípa, 8.33% for Olešnica), intuition (0.92% for Česká Lípa), openness to others, tolerance, broadmindedness (particularly, in the case of Olešnica – 9.71% of the answers), social sensitivity, social activity, care for the citizen, the spirit of social justice, and social-problem awareness (3.7% for Česká Lípa, the highest – 11.11% – for Olešnica), economic independence (1.85% for Česká Lípa), leadership skills (2.77% for Česká Lípa), accountability, responsibility, responsiveness (5.55% of the answers for Olešnica), etc. favored the pragmatic model. Finally, the political model was constructed through the following qualities: party loyalty (2.66% of the answers for Tecuci, 1.85% of the answers for Česká Lípa, 1.38% of the answers for Olešnica), oratorical skills (1.33% for Tecuci, 0.92% for Česká Lípa), incorruptibility (5.33% of the answers for Tecuci, 4.62% of the answers for Česká Lípa), interest detachment and objectivity (2.66% for Tecuci, a similar 2.77% for both Česká Lípa and Olešnica), political independence (relevant only for Olešnica – 1.38% of the answers), but, most important, team spirit and collegiality (12% of the responses in the case of Tecuci, as opposed to 2.77% of the responses in the case of Česká Lípa, 1.38% of the responses in the case of Olešnica). The gender model was not used by the present study, as no local councilor perceived the gender differences as being important in sketching the ideal profile of a member of the Local Council. Generally, for the Local Council of Tecuci, the dominant models were the political (24% of the answers), and the ethical ones (22.65% of the answers). For the Municipal Council of Česká Lípa, the prevalent models were the ethical (28.68% of the answers) and the pragmatic ones (27.77% of the answers). For the Municipal Council of Olešnica, the model of paramount importance in the councilors' ranking was the pragmatic one (48.56% of the answers), followed by the ethical one (23.59% of the answers); the political model ranked the lowest among all the six Local Councils (6.91% of the answers).

6. Some tentative conclusions

As a matter of fact, the mechanisms of political recruitment locally for each of the three communities discussed here are significant, not only for the formation and the resulting profile of the local leadership, but also for the prioritization strategy, for the drafting and the implementation of the agenda setting, and, generally, for the fashion in which the town develops. Conversely, the present paper favors two explanatory trajectories accounting for the striking differences between the three cases in matters of political recruitment: (a) the degree of decentralization, and (b) the “legacy of the former regime”²⁷. Based on the employ of the two independent variables, the paper distinguishes among three types of local political elites: (1) “predominantly elitistic” (*e.g.* the case of Tecuci; *i.e.* significant gap between the elite and the community, intramural selection, with a high impact of the national selectorates), (2) “democratic elitist” (*e.g.* the case of Česká Lípa; *i.e.* moderate degree of “elite distinctiveness”, an intramural selection, but pondered by the important role of local selectorates; a model conducive to splinters, mergers, localized parties), and (3) “predominantly democratic” (*e.g.* the case of Olešnica; *i.e.* low level of “elite distinctiveness”, coupled with extramural selection). The validity of the typology is presently under scrutiny and seeks generalization.

7. Bibliographical references

²⁷ For the employ of the two independent variables for the same cases, see “Democratic Elitism at the Local Level and Local Governance in East-Central Europe. A Comparative Assessment on the Elites of Tecuci (Romania), Česká Lípa (the Czech Republic) and Olešnica (Poland)”, in Stelian Scăunaș, Vasile Tabără and Eugen Străuțiu (eds.), *Political Science, International Relations and Security Studies. International Conference Proceedings, the VIIth Edition, Sibiu, 24-26 May 2013*, Department of International Relations, Political Science and Security Studies (Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu), Sibiu, 2013, pp. 29-56.

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