Channels of recruitment to the big city political elite

The growing significance of large cities as economic and cultural centres means that a set of questions pertaining to the elites governing them takes on a particular topicality. This article contains a typological analysis of that elite group’s recruitment channels. Data collected by the authors during fieldwork conducted in twelve Polish cities were utilized in the study. Three types of resource accumulated prior to entering the elite were taken into consideration: party, local government-administrative and socio-demographic. Five channels were isolated using the k-means clustering analysis method: via neighbours, the party, early-start channel, the bureaucratic, later-start channel, rapid promotion to the council and the municipal-party channel. The analysis leads to the conclusion that the existence of connections between particular parties and specific channels cannot be ascertained, while party resources, although important, do not determine recruitment and, in some cases, are superseded by other of resources. Albeit to no great extent, the big-city elite is open to those who occupy lowly positions in the social hierarchy.