The Various Worlds of Local, Social Citizenship. On Diverse Social Policies in the Communes of Poland

The article presents the concept of the local dimension of social citizenship, understood as the vesting of general rights and obligations delimited through the sphere of local social policies and their operation.

The first section of the article is an endeavour to carry out a theoretical reconstruction of the local dimension of social citizenship. In the second part, the results of the author’s empirical research, conducted on a sample of two hundred and thirty-four Polish communes, is presented. The level and nature of the social citizenship is determined, inter alia, by means of the commune authorities’ expenditure on particular measures within their own commune. The completed study reveals that a generous local social citizenship signs up to a generally beneficial “local developmental complex”, the “citizen village” and “wealthy towns” and, in this sense, reflects a certain aspect of a wider social inequality in the Polish space. At the same time, in contrast to care-oriented activities, the level of the residents’ general access to universalist activities diversifies the urban and rural communes and is powerfully correlated with their socio-economic and financial condition. This indicates that the differentiating role of social citizenship in Poland depends not only upon the fact that the residents of various communes are entitled to various ‘packages’ of local authority activities, but also that, in some of them, particularly the wealthiest, social citizenship is potentially more egalitarian by nature.