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**MACHYNIAK JÁN:
„IMPLEMENTATION OF SELF-GOVERNMENT AT THE LE-
VEL OF MUNICIPALITY, CITY AND REGION“ WITH THE
SUBTITLE „SLOVAKIA 1990 -2020“**

This scientific monograph was published within the project of the Cultural and Educational Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Slovak Republic KEGA under the number 001UCM-4/2019: Dynamics of Public Administration Transformations in the Slovak Republic. The author presents the topic of the local governance authorities in the chronological development from 1990 till 2020.

Territorial self-government undoubtedly represents an important part of the political system of a democratic state governed by the rule of law. As one of the key subsystems of public administration, it contributes significantly to the quality of life of citizens. Therefore, it can rightly be stated that self-government (in its various forms) is one of the pillars of the democratic order of society. As it concerns a relatively large number of local communities, we must consider its political, economic and social dimensions. For this reason, this scientific monograph is an attempt to contribute to the professional debate at a time when democracy and democratic values lack intensifying as a result of political, economic and social development over time. The author claims that the main interest is to provide the relevant information to the general public, but also, if possible, to create a comprehensive picture of the problems of territorial self-government from the point of view of its significant problem areas.

The monograph consists of almost 130 pages. In addition to the introduction and conclusion, the text of the monograph is divided into three chapters. The first chapter presents the valueable space in which the democratic activities of self-government take place. The author focuses his attention on the definition of democracy as the basic, we may say the universal value of Western civilization. The author tries to implement this

theoretical principle into the self-governing space of the local community of both modern and democratic state.

The second chapter is devoted to the legal definition of the position and competencies that the entities of territorial self-government are handed in order to perform the original entrusted tasks. In this context, the author analyzes the differences, but also possible relations, between individual actors of local and regional self-government. He tries to identify the main problem areas that deserve a professional discussion of alternative solutions. Several of these problems have been caused by inefficient performance of self-governing tasks and, as the author admits, wide range of discussions were held among the professional public for several years.

The third chapter of the monograph leaves the theoretical background of the theme and reflects the practical experience of the activities of self-government in Slovak national conditions. This part of the text is divided into three main sections which – due to their content – create the space for a critical analysis of the functioning of territorial self-government in the conditions of the Slovak Republic.

The last subchapter 3.3 presents the historical chronological insight and it opens the discussion about the future heading of the local self-governance authorities and their structural organization. The author sets a presumption that might go beyond the boundaries of his work, but its relevance can be verified only in praxis: "Historically, the amount of self-governing regions seems to be non-relevant variable for the effective functioning of regional self-government. The relevant indicator of the effectiveness in regional management should be the (dis)-ability of the local authorities to handle the given competencies – and, of course, the correlation to the financial resources spent on their implementation regarding the performance of regional policies." The author also opens the question of political culture and public voting preferences. The low turnout in the elections of self-governing regions seems to be another topic worth discussion. Obviously, not only in the theoretical level. As presented in the text, the primary reason for this situation is the fact that

the regional self-government lacks a civic dimension in the conditions of the Slovak Republic.

Finally, looking at the issue of local and regional self-government in the context of their political dimensions, the author comes to the conclusion that each level has a wide range of public-political problems. In the case of municipalities in the Slovak Republic, it is not only the size and the number of local governments that seems to be a partial problem issue, but also the financial provision of the performance of both their original and transferred competencies. It is even possible to identify cases where municipalities lack personnel in addition to material resources. The institute of direct democracy at the local level can also be viewed critically, as a substantial part of the referendums held so far at this level have had obvious political character (they concerned the dismissal of the main representative of the municipality). Due to the fact that there are no official statistics, there is a relative number, which gives us not comprehensive, but nevertheless valuable information about the current state.

The level of regional self-government seems similar, of course considering its own specifics. On the sidelines, it can be mentioned that so far no referendum has taken place at the level of self-governing regions (it would most likely end in failure). However, a significant problem of regional self-government in the conditions of the Slovak Republic is the fact that citizens and inhabitants of these self-governing units are not able to fully reflect their existence. The reasons can be sought precisely in a purposeful political decision in the selection of a suitable model for the organization of regional self-government. But due to the historical experience, the reason might be also found in the insufficient public interest in the public administration at both levels of self-government.

Finally, it must be reminded that the exercise of self-governing tasks is limited by the fragmentation of municipal settlement structure, abuse of direct democracy institutes for political competition, lack of interest about public affairs among inhabitants, partial public unawareness of the key roles of territorial self-governments in development and improvement of the living conditions in local communities, as well as the reluctance of

key public policy actors to reconsider their past and present political attitudes towards territorial self-government.