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THE TENURE OF THE LOCAL EXECUTIVE TENURES ON THE EXAMPLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN THE ŁÓDŹ VOIVODESHIP

Abstract. The article concerns issues related to the tenure of the executive body in Polish local government units. The paper aims to make a spatial analysis of the phenomenon of multicadency of mayors in Łódź voivodeship. The study was carried out in two dimensions: spatial (rural municipalities in Łódź voivodeship) and temporal (local government elections in 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018). The analysis based on data from the State Election Commission revealed that re-election is a frequent phenomenon in the rural municipalities of Łódź voivodeship. It is probably because local authorities respond to the needs and expectations of voters. This strengthens their positive feelings, increases satisfaction and leads to the formation of positive motives for participation in local government elections and election decisions (identified with the re-election of the municipal executive).

Keywords: local elections, term of office, executive body

KADENCYJNOŚĆ WŁADZY WYKONAWCZEJ NA PRZYKŁADZIE WYBORÓW SAMORZĄDOWYCH W WOJEWÓDZTWIE ŁÓDZKIM

Abstrakt. Artykuł dotyczy zagadnień związanych z kadencyjnością organu wykonawczego w polskich jednostkach samorządu terytorialnego. Celem artykułu jest dokonanie przestrzennej analizy zjawiska wielokadencyjności wójtów województwa łódzkiego. Badanie przeprowadzono w dwóch wymiarach: przestrzennym (gminy wiejskie województwa łódzkiego) i czasowym (wybory samorządowe w latach 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014 i 2018). Analiza dokonana w oparciu o dane z Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej ujawniła, że ponowny wybór to częste zjawisko w gminach wiejskich. Wynika on prawdopodobnie z tego, iż władze lokalne odpowiadają na potrzeby i oczekiwania wyborców. Wzmacnia to ich pozytywne odczucia, zwiększa zadowolenie i prowadzi do kształtowania pozytywnych motywów udziału w wyborach samorządowych oraz decyzji wyborczych (utożsamianych z reelekcją organu wykonawczego gminy).

Słowa kluczowe: wybory samorządowe, kadencyjność, organ wykonawczy

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1. Introduction

Civil society allows for many value systems based on strong ties and numerous structures involving the activity of the inhabitants, where participation is voluntary. An essential feature of the above mentioned is respect for democratically established legal principles (Halamska 2001). In the pluralistic society model, the role of territory as the basis of social bonding and the principle of organisation of social life is strongly emphasised. One of the essential institutions of the civil social order is the local government (Starosta 1995). Local government here is elected through processes of competition among themselves (local elections), which is one of the manifestations of a democratic state and one of the most important mechanisms for the functioning of the political system. It is a tool to represent social preferences in an aggregated result, allowing for the election of a representative for a specific position (Markowski 2015). Local government are, among others, a method used to select from among candidates the persons to hold the position of a mayor (mayor of the city, president of the city) (Wojtasik 2013). In Poland, the election of this executive body in municipalities against the background of all general elections is a complicated and elaborate procedure.¹

An essential element of the electoral system is the term of office, understood as the number of terms allowed for one person. Since the changes to the local government system in 2018, the term of office of a mayor (mayor of the city, president of the city) lasts five years (2018–2023). However, this extension of the term of office from four to five years has been accompanied by a reduction in the number of possible terms of office. People elected in the 2018 elections can serve a maximum of two terms (2018–2023, 2023–2028) (Sikora 2020). The introduction of this limitation has significantly changed the existing “rules of the game” in the Polish local government.

Furthermore, it should be taken into account that two different types of actors are involved in the political recruitment process: the elected and the electors (“selectors” and “selectees”) (Wasilewski 1990). When choosing a candidate, voters take a prior interest in which people they want to sit in the office and make decisions that relate to their daily lives. As a result, elections enable the electorate to influence the composition of representative bodies, and the outcome of the vote indicates the level of satisfaction the electorate has with the person running (often once again) for office. It is also an appreciation of the merits and past benefits of good governance and administration of local affairs, which voters recognise and reward through re-election (Detka 2011). To the greatest extent, electoral success is influenced by people already in power. This situation tends to provide an advantage due to direct

¹ This is due, among other things, to the fact that the largest number of local authorities are elected on a single day (in 2018, 2 477 of a mayor (mayor of the city, president of the city) were elected out of 6 958 candidates).

prior municipal governance. An incumbent mayor running for re-election makes it easier for voters to make a choice, in which case, among other things, the decision on whom to vote for is made more quickly and, simultaneously, less interest in the election (Bartnicki 2019).

According to P. Starosta, within the framework of a local community and a pluralistic order, the voter “takes action based on his or her discernment and calculation and acts prompted by an interest in the affairs of his or her area or community. (...) The goal of an individual’s action is oriented towards the good of the local system. It stems from an individual conviction, belief or internal stimulation supported most often by specific knowledge” (Starosta 1995: 200). Due to the strong position of a mayor as the executive body in Polish municipalities, local government elections usually take the form of direct and personalised competition. Elections of local government bodies are accompanied by particular emotions, mainly due to the importance of a single citizen’s vote, which may determine the winner. Consequently, there is an intense struggle on the part of the local authority for each voter, which is usually linked to the desire for re-election. By voting for a given candidate, residents indicate that they trust them, entrusting them with this function through their vote (Chrobak, Niezgoda 2006).

The article aims to make a spatial analysis of the phenomenon of the multicadence of mayors in the Łódź voivodeship. At a simple glance, the introduction of legal regulations is straightforward and transparent. However, the lack of verification and identification of re-election of executive bodies,² as well as the scarce literature on the subject,³ creates a risk of building a local government system by sudden explosive electoral “rules of the game”. The article is divided into three sections. The first section of the text presents the issue of tenure in theoretical terms and previous research. The following section discusses research methods and source materials and defines the research area. The next part of the paper presents the results of local government elections and their variation between 2002 and 2018. The article concludes with conclusions and recommendations.

² It is worth mentioning that state institutions, including, among other things, the Central Statistical Office or the State Election Commission do not have such statistics. This is most likely because in 1990–1998 the mayor (respectively the others) was elected by the municipal council. The State Election Commission only has information from municipal council elections. Only after the introduction of direct elections for the function above in 2002 did the State Election Commission start collecting information on the results of local government elections for individual territorial units.

³ Recently, an analysis of the phenomenon of executive re-election (often in the largest cities in Poland) has been undertaken in the Polish literature, e.g. Gałuszka (2016), Grabowski (2016), Drzonek (2013).

2. Tenure in theoretical terms and research to date

In 2002, a significant change took place in Polish local government law (Act 2002), transforming the hitherto collegial executive body (the board presided over by the mayor, mayor of the city, and president of the city) into a monocratic body directly elected by the local community (Budzisz 2016). The key objective of this change was to stabilise power in the municipality by strengthening the position of the executive in the decision-making and controlling body (Kowalik 2015). As written: “This is not about cosmetic changes, but a radical reform of the local government system. The actual authority of the municipality ceases to be a representative body, and this is when an individual replaces the council and f with a social mandate – the mayor, mayor of the city, president of the city. The mayor is in charge of governing, and the council is in charge of the parade” (Grabniak 1997: 6).

Before the 2018 amendment, local government elections had been held in Poland at regular four-year intervals since 1990, and there were no additional restrictions on the number of terms in office. After the expiry of one term, the executive could seek re-election as long as he or she was interested in standing for election and as long as he or she had voter approval if there were no circumstances excluding his or her right to stand for election. However, 2018 saw another significant change to the local government system, restricting the same person from holding the mayor’s office for several consecutive terms (Act 2018). This change aimed to create the legal possibility of replacing one mayor with another – not only in the event of death or a natural circumstance forcing the removal of a mandate but also by setting a limit on the exercise of power in advance.

Regularly recurring municipal elections allow for a cyclical exchange of political elites, as they ensure the election of a representative body for a certain period only, at the end of which the candidates are re-elected. The content of the principle of tenure consists of two essential elements, the first of which concerns the institutional sphere, the establishment of an upper time horizon for the mayor’s tenure. Therefore, the period of office must be known before the start of the term of office so that the executive is aware of the term of office it is dealing with. The second aspect of the tenure principle is related to the personal dimension of the term of office of the directly elected local authority. From this perspective, the term of office creates a certain minimum of guarantee value, as the fixed term of office protects the permanence of the functioning of the executive body. However, this does not mean absolute immutability of power during the term of office, as the law must regulate situations in which the continuation of power by the incumbent mayor (mayor of the city, president of the city) is undesirable or impossible (Łukowiak 2020).

In the literature, opinions on changing the regulations related to the tenure of the executive in municipalities are divided. The discussion of the proponents of both views – for and against limiting the number of terms of office of the mayor – abounds with serious and convincing arguments from both sides. Table 1

summarises the most common arguments against limiting the number of terms of office and the arguments that favour limiting term limits.

Table 1. The main arguments of opponents and supporters of term limits

Arguments against limiting the number of terms of office	Arguments in favour of limiting the number of terms of office
1	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring the stability of the composition of the body over more than two terms ensures continuity in the operation of local government • The local community has the opportunity to vote for a candidate who has proved himself or herself in the position held so far • removing the possibility of further “cooperation” with a multicadence mayor is the effect of limiting self-government by depriving the local community of the right to decide its affairs • allowing the mayor to hold office for an unlimited number of terms is a sign of respect for freedom and democracy • limiting the number of terms of office of an elected body entails high costs, including the introduction of new people to the bodies who need time to familiarise themselves with the function to be performed • undesirable risks (e.g. pathological and corrupt phenomena) in municipalities can be generated by far more severe factors than a limited number of terms of office (e.g. inefficient administrative apparatus, overregulated legal system) • the problem of an incompetent mayor can be solved by other institutions (inspection and investigation bodies and procedures, possibility to choose another candidate during the elections or to dismiss him/her by referendum) • long-standing support from the local community enables the mayor to be more proactive in planning a long-term action plan, setting goals and directions for the development of the municipality • the restriction on the number of terms of office constitutes a restriction on the right to stand for election 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing citizen participation in the process of electing, operating and controlling activities in the municipality • a multicadence mayor has an advantage over new potential candidates in all kinds of areas of the municipality’s functioning, including long-standing social networks and relations – there is the effect of voting by neighbours and friends, the so-called official caste around the mayor, which in practice blocks access to power for those outside the informal interest group • preventing the concentration of power in the hands of one person over a long period • unlimited multicandidate leads to the strengthening of manifestations of “negative democracy”, which creates conditions for the desire to hold recall referendums but also for the exchange of power, which is only possible if a stronger candidate than the incumbent emerges • ensuring systematic generational renewal, as the group of people who built this self-government and created its institutions is gradually ageing and does not allow the younger generation to come to power • unrestricted multicandidate leads to an increase in self-confidence and consequently leads to the phenomenon of power erosion – a decrease in the rationality of managerial decisions, as well as a reduction of the will to implement them • limiting the number of terms of office is not a problem in planning their future working life, as some mayors resign from office, doing so consciously, believing that their predispositions predispose them to political office at higher levels of government

Table 1 (cont.)

1	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the desire to be elected during municipal elections is a significant sacrifice on the part of the candidates for the office of mayor (as opposed to the election of councillors), as they have to be professionally involved in the management of the municipality for the duration of their term of office • the frequent re-election of existing municipal leaders is the result of decisions made by the local community themselves, as people are more likely to vote when they see reasons for their own (electoral) intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • term limits increase competitiveness in the political arena, ensuring that election promises are kept, whereas, in the case of multicadence mayors, this often leads to severe municipal debt • the two-term limit will ensure variability in local politics and affect the effectiveness of the mayor's work

Source: own elaboration based on, among others: Składowski (2019), Skotnicki (2018), Sitek (2016), Kowalik (2016), Bujny and Ziemiński (2015), Kowalik (2015), Żurek (2012).

On the assumption that at the heart of the mayor's multicandidacy⁴ (mayors of the city, presidents of the city) is the satisfaction of voters resulting from fulfilling their expectations, it should be borne in mind that these expectations vary from one local government unit to another. After all, each municipality is a complex system, with complicated relations between many individual and collective actors guided by rational information processing during local government elections. An executive body oriented towards maintaining the continuity of its authority faces the challenge of accurately identifying and understanding the needs of the municipality's residents, i.e. matching the style of governance in the municipality to the residents' expectations (Nijander-Dudzińska 2016). Conversely, voters are assured of a free decision between candidates vying for their votes, resulting in possible re-election. Governors can reduce the risk of losing power by limiting the degree to which they compete to influence the shape of citizens' decisions. This is due to actions carried out by candidates who "dilute" the electoral message to increase the likelihood of victory. In this case, voters' decisions are based on perceptions and beliefs rather than rational analysis (Wojtasik 2016). Local elections, including voting, are thus treated as a means to achieve the voter's goals, and the desire to accomplish these goals mobilises the voter to participate in elections. In the case of candidates, it is to be assumed that they are only motivated by the pursuit of power and then by maintaining and exercising power or taking responsibility for it. When vying for the undecided votes in an election campaign, they often change their programmes to make them more effective and closer to the citizens to win additional votes or even eliminate their opponents. The issue becomes whether

⁴ The term "multi-term mayor" is used interchangeably with a term known from the literature as "perpetual mayor" – that is a person who has been elected in direct local elections at least three times in a row (i.e. double re-election).

voters can count on reliable information from the candidates, treating such news as an instrument to economise on political decision-making (Ward 2006). In the case of voters, we can speak of the existence of at least three groups, one of which is the faithful electorate of the current mayor of the municipality, the second is the opponents and voters of the counter-candidates, and the third is the voters who are undecided about whom they will vote for, discouraged, not interested in elections or politics at all, and those who declare that they will not participate in the elections. It is worth pointing out that the latter group usually constitutes the majority of those eligible to vote, so the current municipal executive must send completely different but targeted messages to this group to secure re-election. Through such microtargeting, a multicadence mayor can influence the election results, as his loyal electorate may be convinced that he has no one to lose the election to. Voters will not feel the need to participate out of sheer laziness, which may result in the absence of these voters at the ballot box, ensuring the success of the counter-candidates (Stępowski 2018).

In 2002, there was a move away from the election of the executive body of the local government in its basic organisational units by the municipal/city council. The principle of direct election of the above body by the voters was introduced. While in the elections of 1990, 1994 and 1998, it was the councillors who decided on the structure of the local government executive, since 1990 (thus already eight times), there could be an alternation in the position of a mayor by one person, as the 2002 legislation ensured the re-election of the previous mayor. The maximum number of terms of office of a local government body depends on the time censorship is adopted. The process for the election of mayors in rural municipalities, especially aspects of social behaviour, including electoral decisions, often results in the re-election of incumbent mayors. The new election rules affect democracy locally. Thus, the phenomenon of multicadence among mayors in the years under study provides a complete illustration. Until the 2006 elections, there could be only one term (2002–2006), until 2010 two terms (2002–2006, 2006–2010), until 2014 three terms (2002–2006, 2006–2010, 2010–2014), until 2018 four terms (2002–2006, 2006–2010, 2010–2014, 2014–2018), and until 2023 five terms (the last term extended by one year).

3. Research methods and data sources

The study was conducted in two dimensions: spatial, i.e. data for municipalities as basic units of local government, and temporal, taking into account local government elections in 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018. The spatial scope was limited to those territorial units in which the position of the executive body is critical, i.e. rural municipalities. The area of the study was limited to Łódź voivodeship, which was dictated by the regionally specific large number of candidates for mayor

registered in this voivodeship (465 persons) in the year adopted as the starting point for the study (2002) and a significant decrease in this number over the 16 years to 322 persons.⁵ In addition, the municipalities of this voivodeship are among the top three voivodeships (after Mazowieckie and Lubelskie voivodeships) where the number of registered candidates for mayor exceeds 300. The voter turnout in local elections in 2002, 2006 and 2010 was lower in Łódź voivodeship than at the national level. In contrast, it changed in 2014 and 2018. In the 2014 elections, the Łódź voivodeship ranked 6th in voter turnout compared to other voivodeships, and in 2018, it ranked 2nd, with a result of 57.02% in the first round and 49.31% in the second round.⁶ The voter turnout was higher only in the Mazowieckie voivodeship (60.93%). It can be presumed that the election of local government representatives has a significant and direct impact on the lives of voters, which results in a willingness to nominate candidates for the position of mayor. Moreover, it can be inferred that in the voivodeships mentioned above (including Łódź voivodeship), citizens' awareness of their actual impact on shaping local politics is relatively greater.

Table 2. Local voter turnout in the years 2002–2018 in Łódzkie voivodeship

Specification	Election result 2002		Election result 2006		Election result 2010		Election result 2014		Election result 2018	
	I round	II round	I round	II round	I round	II round	I round	II round	I round	II round
Łódź voivodeship	41.76%	32.84%	45.69%	35.46%	46.53%	30.46%	48.10%	43.02%	57.02%	49.31%

Source: own compilation based on data from the State Election Commission, <https://www.pkw.gov.pl> (accessed: 2.02.2023).

The time covered 2002–2018 and was based on analysing the results of those elections in which the mandate of power comes directly from the local community. The study was based on local government election results made available by the State Election Commission (PKW). On their basis, a database containing information on 665 personal victories in 133 territorial units in Łódzkie voivodeship was compiled. The final result of the work was the presentation of multicadence mayors currently

⁵ In 2018, a total of 322 candidates ran for the office of mayor in the rural municipalities of the Łódź voivodeship, of which 106 candidates were elected in the first round of elections (an average of 2.4 candidates for the position of the executive body in the municipality). In 19 municipalities, only one candidate came forward (8 more municipalities than in 2002). In the eighth term of municipal government (2018–2023), there were fewer changes to the mayor's office than four years earlier – there were 37 changes instead of 43.

⁶ This was one of the highest results recorded since the introduction of direct election of the municipal executive (i.e. since 2002). A general improvement in voter turnout can be seen between 2002 and 2018. The last municipal elections, in particular, were exceptional in this respect. Nationally and in almost all voivodeships, the voter turnout exceeded 50.00% (this did not happen only in the Opolskie voivodeship).

managing the municipality. For the work, their tenure is counted from the last surveyed elections, 2018 to 2002.

The results obtained were presented in the form of tables and also using cartograms. This method ensured that a large amount of information was conveyed to avoid illegibility (Dębowska, Korycka-Skorupa 2010). The use of geographic information system (GIS) data and QGIS software ensured that the spatial distribution of the described phenomenon was presented along with the spatial relationships between individual objects (Zych 2014).

4. Results of the analyses

From 2002–2018, the distribution and diversity of mayoral re-elections in rural municipalities in Łódź voivodship was relatively stable. During the period under study, one could not perceive a trend towards increasing divergence in the municipalities mentioned above. The analysis of the winners elected in the executive elections between 2002 and 2018 presents a picture whose main feature is a more significant number of continuations than changes. In most municipalities, the mayor’s election already occurred in the first round of elections. In 2006 and 2010, municipalities where the incumbent mayor was re-elected accounted for 71% of all the territorial units analysed. In 2014, the percentage was 68%; in 2018, the same person became mayor in 72% of the localities surveyed.

Table 3. Changes in local government elections to the executive body between 2002 and 2018 in rural municipalities in Łódź voivodship

Specification	Election result 2002		Election result 2006		Election result 2010		Election result 2014		Election result 2018	
Rural municipalities in Łódź voivodship	number of candidates		number of candidates		number of candidates		number of candidates		number of candidates	
	2461		2415		2406		2374		2340	
	% of elected mayors in:		% of elected mayors in:		% of elected mayors in:		% of elected mayors in:		% of elected mayors in:	
	I round	II round	I round	II round	I round	II round	I round	II round	I round	II round
	62	38	72	28	76	24	76	24	80	20
% dominance of incumbents		% dominance of incumbents		% dominance of incumbents		% dominance of incumbents		% dominance of incumbents		
x		71		71		68		72		

Source: own compilation based on data from the State Election Commission, <https://www.pkw.gov.pl> (accessed: 2.02.2023).

A review of the data below shows that local politics in the rural municipalities of Łódź voivodeship is characterised by multicadency (Figure 1).

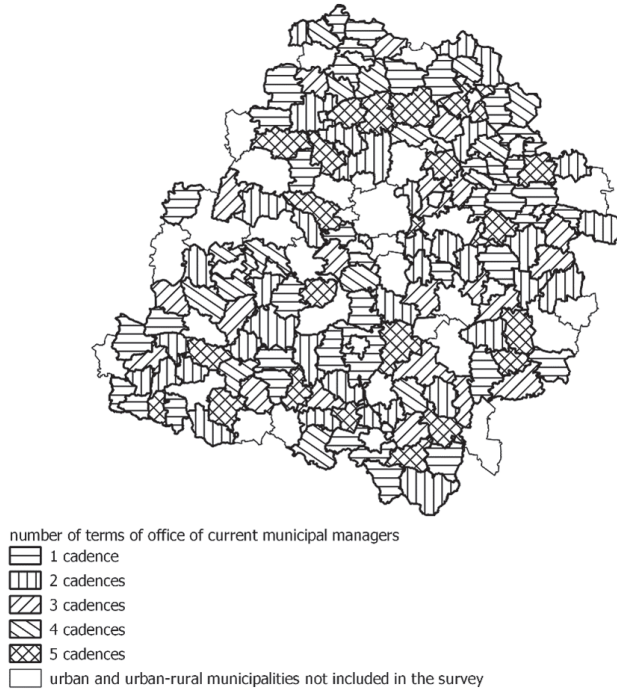


Figure 1. Number of terms of office of current municipal managers

Source: own compilation based on data from the State Election Commission, <https://www.pkw.gov.pl> (accessed: 2.02.2023).

Of the 133 municipalities with rural status at the last local elections, as many as 59 are managed by multicadence mayors.⁷ In 23 cases, the same person won the next five elections. It should be noted, however, that some mayors have been in office for longer, that is, before 2002, when direct elections to the post did not exist. In contrast, 15 mayors have been in office for four terms (from 2006 to 2023), while another 21 have been in office for three terms (2010–2023). The 2018 local government elections did not fundamentally change the staff pool of Łódź mayors but strengthened their (already strong) position.

⁷ Out of 59 multicadence mayors in 2018, there was a monopoly in the electoral market in 14 cases. Among the multicandidate mayors, re-election in non-primary elections was always a formality. In a further 32 cases, there was trace competition in the local electoral ‘markets’ – the number of candidates in the elections was only one more than the number of seats that could be won. A multicadence mayor was successful in the remaining municipalities, defeating three or four of the counter candidate.

Table 4. Percentage of mayors by number of terms of continuous office between 2002 and 2018

Specification	1 cadence	2 cadences	3 cadences	4 cadences	5 cadences	Total
until the 2006 elections	29% n = 39	71% n = 94	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	100% n = 133
until the 2010 elections	29% n = 39	25% n = 33	46% n = 61	not applicable	not applicable	100% n = 133
until the 2014 elections	32% n = 43	24% n = 32	17% n = 22	27% n = 36	not applicable	100% n = 133
until the 2018 elections	28% n = 37	28% n = 37	16% n = 21	11% n = 15	17% n = 23	100% n = 133

Source: own compilation based on data from the State Election Commission, <https://www.pkw.gov.pl> (accessed: 2.02.2023).

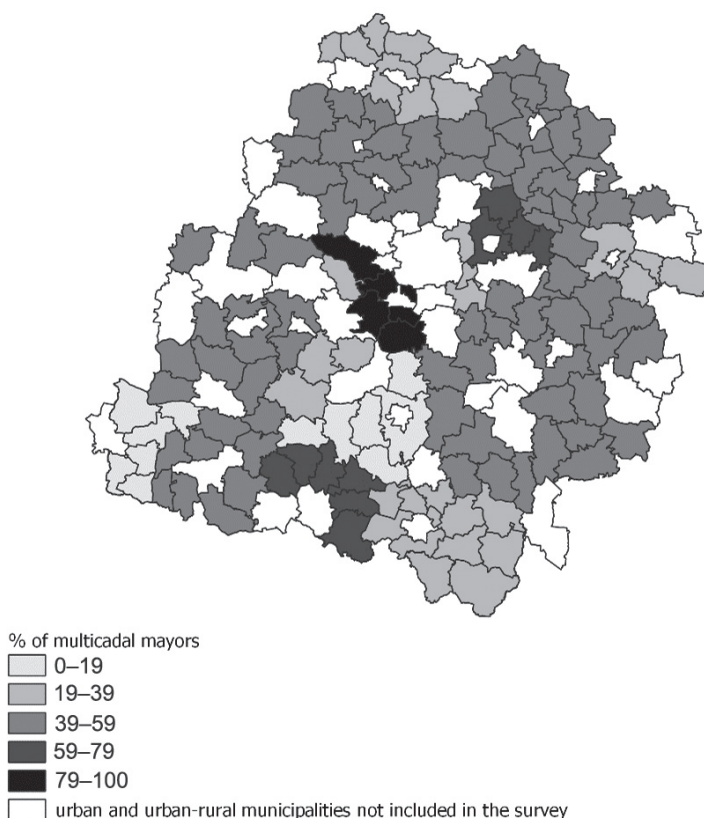


Figure 2. Percentage of multicadral mayors

Source: own compilation based on data from the State Election Commission, <https://www.pkw.gov.pl> (accessed: 2.02.2023).

The following table shows how the ratio of multicadence mayors (from 2002 to 2018 backwards) to all mayors from a given district is in the individual rural municipalities of the Łódź voivodeship.⁸ The average ratio is 45%. The lowest result (below 20%) was recorded in the districts of Wieruszów (17%) and Bełchatów (0%). The highest percentage (above 60%) of multicadence mayors concerning all mayors from a given district occurred in the following districts: Pajęczański (67%), Brzeziński (75%) and Pabianicki (80%). This shows that despite the universality of the phenomenon of multicadency in the entire voivodeship, there are visible local correlations between the place of election and the holding of the office of “perpetual mayor”.

5. Summary

The article’s focal point was the issues related to the term of office and the arguments of opponents and supporters of term limits. Some understand the considerable stability of local government as a factor favouring institutional efficiency and professionalism in governance; others, it is sometimes presented as a threat to local democracy. Over time, the long tenure of one person in a central position in local government can take on the characteristics of oligarchic power. Many short- and long-term consequences of this phenomenon are pointed out, the most important of which is a gradual narrowing of the group of people with influence over decisions, a decrease in the effectiveness of power control mechanisms or susceptibility to power erosion phenomena – a decrease in the rationality of managerial decisions, as well as the ability to hierarchise and delegate tasks within the authority. Over the years, there may also be a threat of routine in municipal management, in which there is a lack of openness and readiness for continuous change and improvement on the part of the authority (Krukowska 2018).

Analysis of voter turnout data in Łódź voivodeship provides some interesting conclusions. Firstly, one of the highest results recorded since the introduction of direct election of the executive body was recorded in the last local elections. Secondly, political activity (voter turnout) is related to the size of the municipality. Higher voter turnout (above 70%) is much more common in smaller municipalities (less than 6,000 inhabitants). This is assumed to imply a greater interest on the part of voters in the authorities’ activities, which, in the case of a high voter turnout, indicates a high degree of legitimacy of the authorities (Piwowarski 2017). Therefore, it is recommended that measures be taken to raise the awareness of residents in the study area about political activity and undertake educational activities about the fact

⁸ As an example, Pabianice district includes five rural municipalities, and as many as 4 of them (Lutomiersk, Dłutów, Dobroń, Ksawerów) are municipalities in which the phenomenon of multicadency occurs among local government representatives. Thus, the percentage of multicadence mayors in relation to all the mayors in the district is 80%.

that every single vote thrown into the ballot box is essential for democratic codecision. Consideration should be given to the broader involvement of residents in municipal affairs in larger territorial units, where the costs of obtaining information about candidates for executive office are higher. This is because there are more frequent personal meetings with residents in a smaller municipality, and the candidate is more likely to win.

The number of rural municipalities in a given county does not influence the number of re-elections. Therefore, measures should be taken to raise awareness and knowledge of politics and governance mechanisms among the local community of Łódź voivodeship. It would be advisable to conduct a broad information policy to increase the local community's interest in what concerns them by living in the territory of a particular municipality. The decision on who to elect as mayor should, therefore, be taken based on an in-depth analysis supported by knowledge of local politics and the scope of competencies of the various local government bodies rather than based on, for example, image issues. However, it needs to be remembered that being in power for several terms of office does not always ensure victory in the first round of voting. In addition, the number of counter-candidates may influence the election results, as each successive counter-candidate reduces, in a way, the support among the remaining candidates. Such a tendency can be observed, e.g. in 2018, where changes of executive power are often due to a higher number of counter-candidates, and it was only possible to win in the second round of elections (for example, municipalities Łanięta, Pabianice, Radomsko).

Among multicadence mayors, the number of counter-candidates in local elections is low, which may indicate their relatively strong position compared to the others. Among the arguments that favour limiting the number of terms of office, there are voices in favour of limiting the "no-reflection" vote, as the numerous connections and colligations ensure the advantage of the multicadence mayors over other candidates. It is worth emphasising that the way to have increasingly powerful yet politically aware mayors lies not in formally limiting the possibility of re-candidacy but instead in caring for civic education, resulting in stronger competition on local political stages and more effective mechanisms of social control of power (Swianiewicz, Krukowska 2018). Nonetheless, changes in persons performing the roles of mayors in rural municipalities in Łódzkie voivodeship are rare and amount to approximately 30%. It seems reasonable to assume that voting for the mayor in power or their counter-candidate is not only a result of perceptions (less often knowledge) of their successes (e.g. in the implementation of investments, especially in infrastructure), their programmes, party affiliation but also a consequence of contemporary political conservatism (which is understood as attachment and aversion to change) among voters. The perception of voters will tend to be oriented towards those seeking re-election, and the municipality's population moderates the strength of this fixation in municipal executive elections (Bartnicki 2017). Therefore, developing and implementing educational activities that reduce the knowledge deficit about the processes taking place on the local

political scene (especially in the context of term limits and the consequences of unreflective behaviour – often unconsidered electoral decisions) becomes essential.

It is also only possible to mention specific weaknesses in the analysis, which may have affected the results. Firstly, it is impossible to assess whether the number of rotations in the posts of mayors is good or bad. Each case is different, and a separate analysis of such cases needs to be made to get a complete picture of the phenomenon of multi-tenure in the local political system. This issue is still worth studying, especially in rural areas in Poland, which is still waiting for a clear answer confirmed by empirical research. Thus, interpreting the obtained results could be much more in-depth and reliable if additional research was conducted. Due to the limited framework of the study, it concerned only the Łódź voivodeship. Studies of this kind may serve as a starting point for similar analyses conducted for all the voivodeships in 2002–2018. Other cognitively valuable directions for further analyses may include opinion polls conducted among the local community, which would provide knowledge on the motives for participating in local government elections and election decisions. It seems reasonable to carry out surveys among the executive of the selected municipalities – in terms of the length of time in office, additionally showing their involvement in the municipality's development. This would make it possible to find out their perspective and enrich the general knowledge in limiting local authorities' term of office. It is worth noting that obtaining and organising such data is labour-intensive, but the results would be purposeful and valuable (e.g. they could ensure the popularisation of local government election results). Thus, carrying out such an analysis will ensure the creation of an overall picture of the re-election of mayors in direct elections and will also allow us to move away from purely speculative snapshots. Therefore, the research is planned to continue using advanced methods and techniques. I hope the research will be a valuable source of information for local authorities responsible for the development and success of individual territorial units and their residents.

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