

Summary

The political and non-political factors related to the multi-term incumbency of mayors in medium-sized cities in Poland

The aim of the dissertation is to examine the correlations between the multi-term incumbency of mayors and political as well as non-political factors that may be concurrent with elections of mayors in medium-sized cities in Poland.

The first part of the dissertation focuses on presentation of indicators connected with mayoral election results, i.e. the political factors. These include factors such as: support obtained in the first round of any given election, typology of election actors, intensification of electoral competition, number of seats (i.e. how many supporters of the mayor have won a seat in the city council). The above mentioned factors have been found representative to enable calculation of indicators that determine the mayor's political position in the examined cities. The part of the dissertation that addresses the non-political aspects presents the factors that are representative in the context of analysing the correlations with multi-term incumbency of mayors. They pertain to dimensions and phenomena such as: the city's income level, investment expenditure, unemployment rate and poverty.

In relation to multi-term incumbency of mayors, the author points out to the unresolved research problem (there is no unambiguous legitimising theory, and no agreement between researchers) regarding the correlation between the period of time of being in power and the achieved level of social and economic development; there are ongoing discussions on whether or not the correlations are of a positive or negative nature. Moreover, the issues connected with multi-term incumbency in relation to local authorities are topical, particularly in the context of the adopted new regulations regarding limitation of the number of terms that may be served – since 2018, mayors of cities, towns and rural municipalities may only serve two terms. At the same time, the term length was extended to five years. According to the author, there is a small number of academic studies that address both political and non-political factors that may be concurrent with re-election of mayors. Besides, medium-sized cities (in terms of the population size) may constitute an interesting research area, as it is analysed to a smaller extent compared to small and big cities.

The doctoral dissertation specifies the main hypothesis, according to which there are two groups of factors: political and non-political, which are concurrent with multi-term incumbency of mayors in the examined medium-sized cities in Poland.

This study applies the research methods that are typically applied in political science and interdisciplinary studies: the comparative method (being the main method), and the auxiliary methods such as the institutional and legal method, the quantitative method, content analysis, and the qualitative method. The analysis of multi-term incumbency was enhanced by using some elements of the pragmatism theory, the rational choice theory and the social constructivism.

The research study was carried out on the basis of the elections to the local self-governing bodies in the years 2002-2014, published by the National Electoral Commission. This resulted in obtaining representative political indicators regarding the political position of multi-term mayors and their campaign committees. The information needed for determining the non-political factors that may be concurrent with re-election of mayors was obtained from the documents of the selected medium-sized cities, i.e. budget implementation reports, city development strategies, reports on welfare centres operations. Moreover, the indispensable data were obtained from the materials published by the Central Statistical Office of Poland in the Local Data Bank. The characteristics of the individual cities were developed on the basis of the data found in the Public Information Bulletin and on the official websites of the selected cities.

The doctoral dissertation consists of six chapters. The first chapter is an introduction containing disambiguation of terms and classification of assumed political factors (*inter alia*, the percentage of votes received in the 1st round of the election, the intensity level of electoral competition among the candidates for mayors, the typology of electoral actors, the number of seats in the city council won by the mayor supporters) and non-political factors (the percentage of the city's income and investment expenditure in the budgets of the examined cities, the unemployment and poverty rate). The author reviews and presents the current status of the research studies on multi-term incumbency on the central and local level. Additionally, the author presents the approaches to the issue in question, which so far have been adopted in academic papers, as well as the factors that in the opinion of the researchers may be concurrent with multi-term incumbency. Moreover, the author specifies and legitimises the adopted research tools: the theoretical and methodological assumptions as well as the method of selecting the cities to be included in the study.

The second chapter describes multi-term incumbency in the local dimension: the regulatory framework of self-governments, the specific nature of local elections in Poland, as well as the specific features of mayoral elections.

The third chapter contains a description of cities selected for the purposes of the study. The individual cities are characterised particularly in terms of any differences resulting from the social, economic and spatial conditions. Here the author also presents and discusses the results of the mayoral and city council elections in the years 2002-2014.

The fourth and fifth chapters analyse the selected political and non-political factors that may be concurrent with the recurring re-elections of mayors. The author attempts at determining the general level of the social and economic development of the studied cities – to this end, “The Territorial Community Development Indicator” was calculated.

The sixth chapter summarises and compares the a/m factors, and attempts at determining certain potential regularities between the selected elements. This involved the use of statistical tools, such as Pearson correlation coefficient.

In the conclusion to the doctoral dissertation, the adopted research hypotheses are verified, and the posed research question is finally answered.

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