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Non-political Factors of Multi-term Incumbency in the Governance Process of Staying in Power in Poland. Selected Cases of Mayors

Abstract: Acquiring and retaining of power is one of the main research areas in political science. Multi-term has been the subject of numerous analyses in the field of political science. The authors of this article have chosen to explore this area interdisciplinarily – in socio-economic terms. The aim of this article is to explore the potential links between multi-term incumbency and selected non-political factors that may be important in the process of managing mayors' Staying in power. The main research question corresponds closely to the aim of the article, and the specific research questions are: are there relationships between mayoral multi-term incumbency and factors such as own income, investment expenditure and unemployment? Furthermore, in the process of managing staying in power, do governors use tools related to the so-called "political business cycle"? In this study, the comparative method and elements of the quantitative method – to analyse structure and dynamics – were applied; a comparison of the selected factors was made in 13 selected medium-sized cities in Poland, where the mayor has been in power continuously since at least 2002. The analyses carried out show that the cities' own income co-varies with multi-term incumbency in the surveyed units, while investment expenditure and unemployment levels are unrelated to the mayors' staying in power. In addition, the authorities were unlikely to use tools linked to the political business cycle.

Key words: multi-term incumbency, mayor; process management, power, non-political factors

Introduction and literature review

In democratic societies, elections are a necessary condition for the formation of political representation. The process of electing representatives to govern involves voting (Heywood, 2006, p. 284). Gaining and staying in power appears to be one of the main objectives among political actors. The cyclical nature of the elections means that a maximum duration is set for the mandate given by the citizens to govern. In other words, the term of office determines the date of the next election, as well as determining the shape of the so-called electoral calendar (Wojtasik, 2012, p. 27).

The issue of multi-term incumbency has been the subject of numerous studies and research papers. Analyses have addressed, among other things, the partisanship of local political scenes with a multi-administrator (Flis, 2011, pp. 139–159; Gendźwiłł, Żółtak, 2014, pp. 1122–1145; Gendźwiłł, Żółtak, 2020, pp. 40–66). In addition, subsequent researchers have addressed the issue of the re-election of candidates with regard to city mayors in particular, as well as their political affiliations (Drzonek, 2013; Gendźwiłł,

2012, pp. 501–518; Gendźwiłł, 2010, pp. 99–119). The research also points out that a lack of party affiliation can be conducive in the process of successfully seeking to maintain power (Drzonek, 2019, pp. 13–137).

Researchers have analysed the issue of the position of multi-administrators in the context of the so-called incumbent effect (Bartnicki, 2017, pp. 55–68). Other researchers looked at incumbent advantage and the resulting electoral manipulation in various dimensions (Turska-Kawa, Wojtasik, 2020, pp. 647–674). Attempts have been made to explain the “re-election phenomenon” in medium-sized cities in the context of clientelism theory (Rutkowski, 2008, 48–69; Gadowska, 2002).

An elaborate qualitative study related to specific cases of multi-term mayors was carried out. The result of this research in recent years has been the creation of a series titled “Wieczni prezydenci...” – studies on the mayors of: Gdansk, Gdynia, Świnoujście, Rzeszów (Drzonek, 2019, 2022, 2023).

Analyses have been made of the effectiveness of strategies in gaining and then staying in power by city mayors (Drzonek, 2013, pp. 145–160).

The political factors co-occurring with the uninterrupted mayoralty have received much analysis and remain intrinsically linked to the strong position of the candidate and then incumbent. Research from this perspective is prevalent among academic papers on multi-term incumbency.

In examining the ways in which a given urban centre is governed and maintains power, it seems expedient to seek (in addition to political science references) other conditions: economic, social, historical. Indeed, selected factors in this area may co-occur with multi-term. The city’s elected representatives can guide investment policy and introduce various types of support instruments for business and entrepreneurship. The implications of such activity will include the size of the city’s own income and the scale of investment expenditure. Therefore, confirmation of the successful management of staying in power by the head of the local executive will not only be factors related to the explicitly political category, but also to the economic and social category (Bartnicki, 2018, pp. 61–74).

There have been articles in the literature that have attempted to identify the various factors that co-occur with multi-term incumbency (Bartnicki, 2014, pp. 6–23). Other authors have analysed the potential determinants of re-election in contexts related to, among other things: the sociology of politics, the economic situation of the individual, the political business cycle and the use of EU funds (Grabowski, 2016, pp. 98–114). Studies have presented – as one way of electoral struggle – the creative construction of the entity budget using the political business cycle at the municipal level (Veiga, 2007, pp. 45–64). There are well-known analyses with reference to mayors and city mayors, in which different types of correlations have been sought, such as: term of office duration vs. per capita income level in the municipality (Bartnicki, 2015, pp. 58–75). Additionally, it is worth noting that, with regard to the effective functioning of cities, researchers have attempted to search for potential relationships between social factors (e.g. trust, satisfaction with local government activities) and the size of the unit (Swianiewicz, 2010, pp. 5–16). The advantages and disadvantages of the size of local units in terms of the efficiency of managing such units were also described (Swianiewicz, Herbst, 2002; Swianiewicz, 1995, pp. 23–35).

The value and topicality of the issue is further highlighted by the changes concerning the limitation of the number of terms of office for mayors. Supporters of the introduced

restriction point, among other things, to an aspect of the functioning of the body: the city council's control over the mayor's action often remains illusory (Hausner, 2013, p. 9). Opponents, on the other hand, cite the referendum as a potential means of dismissing a negatively assessed mayor. The experience of European countries shows that referendums fulfil their role and can support the development of civil society (Musiał-Karg, 2008, p. 7). On the other hand, after the limitation of the number of terms of office introduced in 2018, further studies were produced on, *inter alia*, the consequences of the adopted bicameralism (Springer, Jarosz, 2022, pp. 161–172), as well as analyses of opinions on this issue among parliamentary politicians (Drzonek, 2022, pp. 9–32) and among the electorates of groupings and committees in elections to provincial assemblies (Szczepański, 2021, pp. 171–185).

Research methodology

An assumption was made that re-election and the resulting multi-term incumbency mayoralty in the selected cities may co-occur with factors of a political nature as well as factors not directly related to politics – hereafter referred to as non-political factors. It is the second group of factors that will be the focus of the article's authors.

The aim of this article is to explore the potential links between multi-term and selected non-political factors that may be important in the process of managing mayors' Staying in power. The authors of the article posed the main research question: do non-political factors co-evolve with the multi-term incumbency of mayors of selected medium-sized cities in Poland? Analyses about non-political factors of multi-term incumbency will be conducted on the basis of the following specific research questions:

1. Are the low levels of unemployment and the above-average share of own revenue and investment expenditure in city budgets linked to selected cases of multi-term incumbency mayors?
2. In the process of managing staying in power, do the mayors of selected medium-sized cities apply the so-called political business cycle, *i.e.* increasing the share of capital expenditure in the city in the two years before local elections?

The authors identified the main, leading research hypothesis: it is likely that non-political factors co-occur with mayoral multi-term incumbency in the surveyed medium-sized cities in Poland. The verification of the main hypothesis will be developed through specific hypotheses:

1. Arguably, in the case of low levels of unemployment, in the city, together with significant levels of own revenue and investment expenditure in city budgets are linked to selected cases of multi-term mayors.
2. In the process of managing staying in power, do the mayors of selected medium-sized cities apply the so-called political business cycle, *i.e.* increasing the share of capital expenditure in the city in the two years before local elections?

An examination of the non-political factors associated with mayoral multi-term in medium-sized cities in Poland between 2002 and 2014 will be carried out using a comparative method. In addition, tools from quantitative methods will be used as an auxiliary method. This will enable some similarities to be detected between the factors selected

and the multi-term studied, while also identifying the structure and dynamics of changes in the factors over the period studied.

In analyses of the political position of mayors, indicators such as the percentage of votes obtained in the first round of elections, the index of the intensification of electoral competition, the number of city council seats won by people from the mayor's grouping are used (Drzonek, 2015, pp. 91–107). This type of analysis adds to the knowledge of the political determinants of mayoral multi-term and has been the subject of many studies. The effective holding of the office of city mayor can also be analysed as a process of managing the maintenance of power. The authors decided to analyse precisely this approach. Non-political factors that may be relevant to this type of process have been identified. It was proposed to examine multi-term in a socio-economic context in selected medium-sized cities. The following volumes and indicators were selected for analysis:

- own revenue – own revenue ratio (ORR) [%]: the share of own revenue in relation to total revenue in the city's budget in a given financial year;
- investment expenditure – investment expenditure ratio (IER) [%]: the share of investment expenditure in relation to total expenditure in the city budget in a given financial year;
- unemployment – unemployment rate (UR) [%]: the number of people unemployed in a given calendar year in relation to the total population of the city.

For the purposes of the article, the definition of *multi-term incumbency* has been adopted as holding the office of mayor by the same person and in the same city continuously since 2002. Thus, it will be those persons who were the winners in the direct elections for mayor in 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014.

Cities in the medium-sized category in terms of population were selected for the study; they are assumed to be those with a population between 20,000 and 100,000 (Szymańska, 2007, p. 12). Due to the specific nature of the survey conducted, some narrowing down was done (20–30,000 inhabitants) and 13 units were identified whose mayors met the criterion of multi-term. Table 1 presents the cities selected for analysis.

Table 1

Medium-sized cities selected for the study, including multi-term mayors

No.	City	Voivodeship	Mayor
1.	Aleksandrów Łódzki	łódzkie	Jacek Lipiński
2.	Biłgoraj	lubelskie	Janusz Roslan
3.	Józefów	mazowieckie	Stanisław Kruszewski
4.	Kluczbork	opolskie	Jarostaw Kielar
5.	Mragowo	warmińsko-mazurskie	Otolia Siemieniec
6.	Nowa Ruda	dolnośląskie	Tomasz Kiliński
7.	Płońsk	mazowieckie	Andrzej Pietrasik
8.	Środa Wielkopolska	wielkopolskie	Wojciech Ziętkowski
9.	Świebodzin	lubuskie	Dariusz Bekisz
10.	Świecie	kujawsko-pomorskie	Tadeusz Pogoda
11.	Września	wielkopolskie	Tomasz Kałużny
12.	Wyszaków	mazowieckie	Grzegorz Nowosielski
13.	Zambrów	podlaskie	Kazimierz Dąbrowski

Source: Own work on the basis of the Main Statistical Office (GUS) data and PKW.

The time frame of the analyses is 2002–2014 and resonates with the proposed definition of *multi-term incumbency*. The designation of such a period was justified as follows: in 2002, the first direct elections of mayors took place under the then newly adopted law (Ustawa..., 2002). This reform was in line with the trends of organisational change at the local government level observed in other Central and Eastern European countries (Swianiewicz, Klimska, 2003, p. 21). In contrast, 2014 was the last election of mayors before the law introducing a term limit for them was passed four years later (Ustawa..., 2018). Hence, the period from the 2002 mayor elections to the 2014 elections seems reasonable in terms of the comparability of results and the socio-economic conditions of the period. On the other hand, a possible area for analysis in subsequent scientific studies could be the comparison of the aggregated results of the 2002–2014 period with the results after 2018 in the context of detecting possible changes, trends related to the introduced limitation on the number of terms of office.

Own income, investment expenditure and urban unemployment

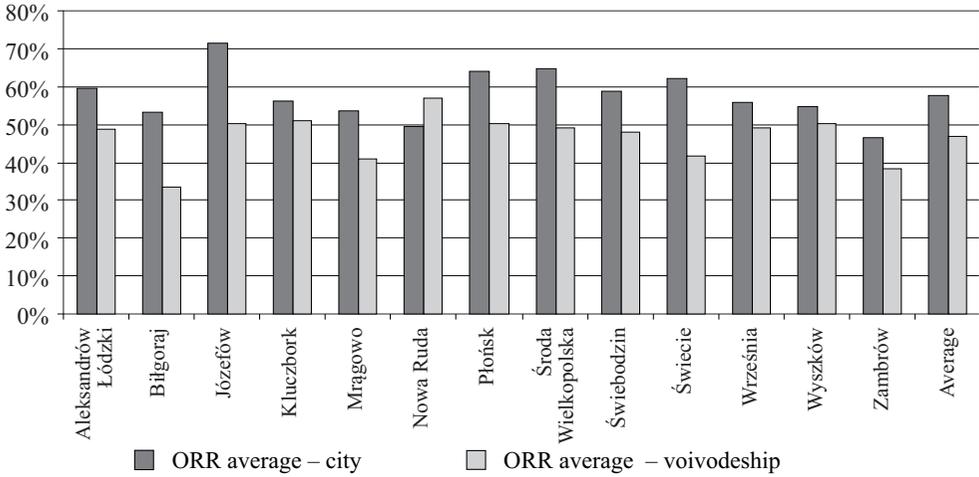
In basic terms, the revenues of a given city in basic terms are divided into: own revenue, subsidies and grants (Ustawa..., 2003). An entity's own income is a representative figure showing the degree of development and the peculiar independence of the city in the context of its management by the mayor. This is because the ratio of own revenue to the city's total revenue indicates (directly or indirectly) what proportion of the total revenue is generated by residents and business units operating in the city. Therefore, the high values demonstrate, among other things, the extent to which the mayor is able to support the development and build independence of the city, which is thus not dependent on funds from the "outside". Alternatively, own revenues also allow for greater use of investment funds from external sources as a so-called "own contribution". In addition, the entity's own income is an element that supports a sense of local identity and economic patriotism, as it is generated by the people and businesses operating in the city together with the relevant management actions of the mayor.

Figure 1 summarises the averaged ratio of values of the selected cities from 2002 to 2014 compared to the corresponding values at the provincial level, which serve as a benchmark.

On average, own revenue indicator in cities took on a value of 57.75 per cent during the period under review, and 46.83 per cent in the provinces – so it was almost 10 percentage points lower. In most cases (12 out of 13 cities), the indicator reached higher average values; only in Nowa Ruda the own revenue indicator was lower by 7.42 p.p., than in Lower Silesia. An analysis of the development of the average values of the indicator in the cities under study indicates the existence of above-average own revenue indicators.

The budget revenue raised can be used by the city for various categories of expenditure. Important in the context of the research conducted is the basic division of expenditure into: current consumption and investment. The investment expenditure to total city expenditure ratio indicates the tendency to forego current consumption for future investment. High values are indicative of a forward-looking approach to city management, which implies an appropriate approach to the management process of the mayor's

Figure 1. Averaged own revenue indicator – city vs. voivodeship

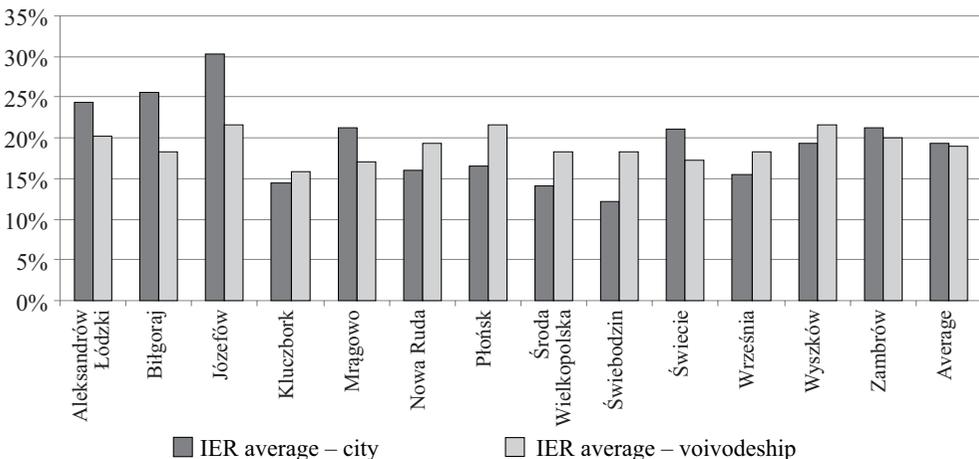


Source: Own work on the basis of the Main Statistical Office (GUS) data.

staying in power. This is because, in the future, investment can result in the creation of new jobs (or the maintenance of existing ones) and the multiplication of technical and social infrastructure. This results in improved living conditions for residents. In turn, allocating an insufficient amount of budget funds to investment expenditure may lead to the decapitalisation of the city’s own assets, limiting the possibility of generating income in future periods; the consequence of this may be a lowering of the risk of not gaining sufficient public support in the next local elections.

Figure 2 shows the averaged values of the analysed cities from 2002 to 2014 compared to the corresponding regional values of investment expenditure to total city expenditure.

Figure 2. Averaged investment expenditure to total city expenditure – city vs. voivodeship



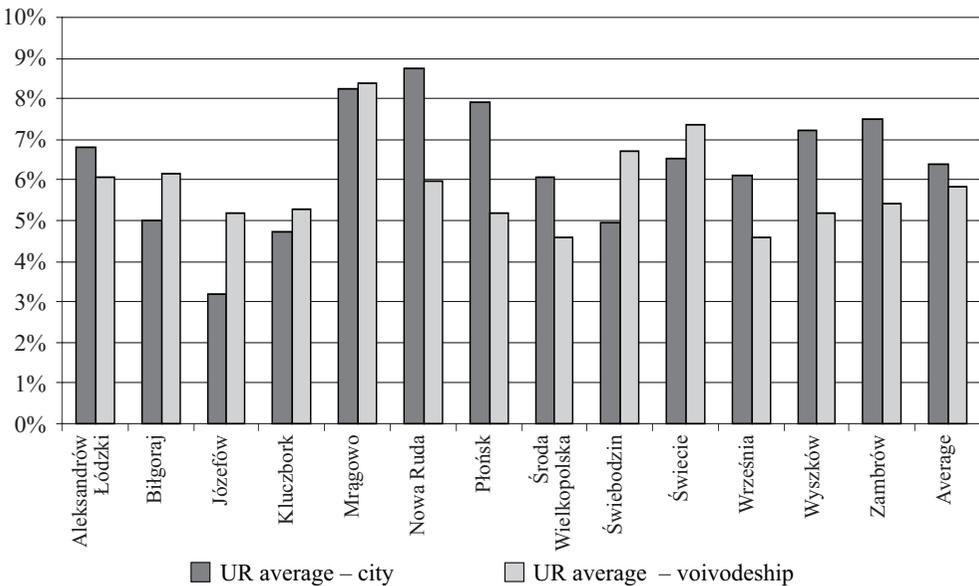
Source: Own work on the basis of the Main Statistical Office (GUS) data.

The average level of investment expenditure to total city expenditure in the cities was 19.39%. The corresponding average value at voivodeship level for reached a similar value (19.06%). However, the average values of the indicator for investment expenditure in the individual urban centres compared to the respective provinces in the table are characterised by diversity. In some of the urban centres (Aleksandrów Łódzki, Biłgoraj, Józefów, Mragowo, Świecie, Zambrów) the difference was positive (in favour of the city); in other units the values were negative. The largest positive difference was recorded in Józefów (8.65 percentage points) and the largest negative difference was in Świebodzin (-5.98 percentage points). Averaged values from 2002 to 2014 in individual cities therefore show no definite trends – they were not above average compared to values in the relevant provinces.

In some simplistic terms, society in the labour market can be conventionally divided into: employed, unemployed and those outside the labour register. The unemployed are colloquially considered to be people of working age who can and want to work, are actively looking for a job, but for various reasons cannot find a job; formally, such people must be registered as unemployed at a labour office (Próchnicki, 2007, p. 315). Unemployment, therefore, is the inability of people of working age, willing and able to work, actively seeking work (to find it). In the article, in the strict sense, an unemployed person is defined according to the provisions of the relevant Act (Ustawa, 2004).

Figure 3 shows the averaged values unemployment rate in selected medium-sized cities – 2002–2014.

Figure 3. Averaged unemployment rate – city vs. voivodeship



Source: Own work on the basis of the Main Statistical Office (GUS) data.

By analysing the data in figure 3, it can be seen that the summed, averaged unemployment rate (6.38%) in all the cities surveyed was greater than the corresponding un-

employment rate at the voivodeship level (5.85%). The volumes of the unemployment rate developed more favourably in the six cities than at the level of the corresponding voivodeships. The leader in the comparison of the unemployment rate differences between the city and the voivodeship was Józefów (−2.01 p.p.). In addition, five more urban centres (Świebodzin, Biłgoraj, Świecie, Kluczbork, Mragowo) showed a difference in favour of the city. In the remaining units, the average unemployment rate was higher than that of the corresponding voivodeship: the difference ranged from 0.76 percentage points to 2.8 percentage points. Therefore – as with the investment expenditure to total city expenditure values – no decisive above-average low values of the unemployment rate were found.

On the “political business cycle” at the micro level

The political business cycle refers to the interdependence between the dynamics of an individual’s economic policy and the cycle of the electoral system (Przesławska, 2006, pp. 35–48; Pacześ, 2010, pp. 71–97; Grzelak, May, 2008, pp. 35–46). In general, the phenomenon is considered on a macro scale – at the level of the central government of the state. There have also been analyses of the incidence of the political business cycle at the local level (Olejnik, 2019, pp. 187–199). For the purposes of the article, the authors have just adapted this concept to the microscale – to the city level.

One piece of evidence of the political business cycle reflected in the entity’s budget could be the increase in the capital expenditure the year before and in the year of the local elections, and thus the noticeable increase in the investment expenditure to total city expenditure before the elections. This will examine the dynamics of investment expenditure to total city expenditure in the years respectively: 2006–2005 and 2005–2004; and in such an order before each subsequent election: 2010–2009 and 2009–2008; 2014–2013 and 2013–2012. Therefore, positive differentials will imply increases in the level of investment, which may confirm the presence of a political business cycle. Table 2 summarises the differences described; differences with positive values are highlighted in grey; units with the largest differences are highlighted in bold.

Table 2

The political business cycle in cities

<i>Political business cycle</i>	Difference					
	2005–2004	2006–2005	2009–2008	2010–2009	2013–2012	2014–2013
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Aleksandrów Łódzki	12.93%	4.72%	−5.17%	−2.22%	4.33%	10.90%
Biłgoraj	11.80%	4.73%	11.15%	−14.07%	3.16%	−0.04%
Józefów	26.84%	−10.87%	−15.40%	2.35%	−24.06%	−7.50%
Kluczbork	2.43%	11.24%	0.35%	−1.07%	−8.33%	4.76%
Mragowo	9.79%	−14.29%	−0.54%	0.26%	−19.26%	−7.68%
Nowa Ruda	0.43%	9.84%	−9.63%	9.84%	−1.36%	10.60%
Płońsk	18.10%	−7.53%	3.67%	12.14%	3.39%	7.46%
Środa Wielkopolska	5.02%	10.10%	−2.05%	7.36%	−4.58%	−2.99%
Świebodzin	−3.23%	11.10%	−5.87%	9.11%	3.07%	3.33%

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Świecie		3.43%	13.02%	-1.25%	12.46%	-5.76%	19.32%
Września		1.20%	9.16%	-6.23%	-2.33%	-4.02%	4.15%
Wyszaków		0.61%	1.52%	10.46%	-5.83%	2.43%	-1.87%
Zambrów		5.05%	-7.82%	2.15%	-10.51%	0.36%	-3.48%

Source: Own work on the basis of the Main Statistical Office (GUS) data.

According to the criteria described, a political cycle was only observed in Płońsk: the percentage of the investment expenditure was increased two years before each of the local government elections studied (with the exception of 2006 to 2005).

In the years prior to the 2006 elections, a trend towards increased investment expenditure in relation to total city expenditure can be seen. In terms of 2005 to 2004, only Świebodzin did not experience an increase (-3.23 p.p.). In the election year (2006 versus 2005), investment expenditure to total city expenditure values decreased in four urban centres: in Józefów, Mrągowo (-14.28), Józefów (-10.87), Płońsk (-7.82) and Zambrów (-7.53).

Such a definite trend, as before the 2006 elections, no longer appeared in adequate periods in subsequent years before the elections. The reflections carried out indicate that city mayors were unlikely to use the tools associated with the political business cycle in the management process of staying in power.

Conclusions

The basis of the article was a search for an answer to the question of potential links between mayoral multi-term incumbency and non-political factors. Among the non-political factors selected were such figures as own income, investment expenditure and unemployment. The research was based on a sample of selected medium-sized cities with mayors who have been successful in successive elections – holding power continuously since at least 2002. The main research hypothesis was partially confirmed – as not all of the selected factors co-occurred with multi-term incumbency, as evidenced by the analyses carried out and the answers obtained to the specific research questions.

An analysis of the Own revenue indicator of selected medium-sized cities in the period 2002–2014 confirmed the existence of a relationship between the size of own revenue and the multi-term incumbency of mayors: in 12 (out of 13) urban centres, the ORR remained on average higher than the corresponding provincial averages. In contrast, the investment expenditure to the total city expenditure values in the city-voivodeship comparison did not show such a decisive trend, and varied. The averaged unemployment rate of the surveyed cities provided evidence towards a rather lack of correlation between unemployment and mayors' continuous multi-term incumbency. Indeed, there was no definite trend in this respect: only in half of the cases did the cities score more favourably than the corresponding voivodeships. In addition, the averaged unemployment rate for all cities was at a higher level than the corresponding provincial average. The research hypothesis no. 1 was confirmed in the section on own income, and falsified in relation to investment expenditure and unemployment.

The authors of the article questioned whether a victory in the mayoral election is was linked to increasing the city's capital expenditure in the two years before the munic-

ipal elections. Research hypothesis 2 was falsified on the basis of an analysis of the dynamics of the share of investment expenditure in total city expenditure two years before the mayoral election. Thus, the use of the so-called political business cycle in the process of managing the mayors' staying in power in the city was not found.

The search for the factors and even the determinants of multi-term incumbency is undoubtedly an interdisciplinary task, especially for factors of a non-political nature. The authors are aware of the complexity of the issue and that it can be affected by many processes. The issue may be an interesting area of research in the future, taking into account proposals for other factors, broader analyses, other periods, as well as in the context of the introduced limitation on the number of terms of office.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization (Konceptualizacja): Bartosz Mazurkiewicz, Hubert Pachciarek

Data curation (Zestawienie danych): Bartosz Mazurkiewicz, Hubert Pachciarek

Formal analysis (Analiza formalna): Bartosz Mazurkiewicz, Hubert Pachciarek

Writing – original draft (Piśmiennictwo – oryginalny projekt): Bartosz Mazurkiewicz, Hubert Pachciarek

Writing – review & editing (Piśmiennictwo – sprawdzenie i edytowanie): Bartosz Mazurkiewicz, Hubert Pachciarek

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Pozapolityczne czynniki wielokadencyjności w procesie zarządzania utrzymaniem władzy w Polsce. Wybrane przypadki burmistrzów

Streszczenie

Zdobycie i utrzymanie władzy stanowi jeden z głównych obszarów badawczych w naukach o polityce. Wielokadencyjność była przedmiotem licznych analiz w zakresie politologicznym. Autorzy artykułu postanowili eksplorować ten obszar interdyscyplinarnie – w ujęciu społeczno-gospodarczym. Celem artykułu jest zbadanie potencjalnych powiązań między wielokadencyjnością a wytypowanymi czynnikami pozapolitycznymi, które mogą mieć znaczenie w procesie zarządzania utrzymaniem władzy przez burmistrzów. Główne pytanie badawcze ściśle koresponduje z celem artykułu, a pytania badawcze szczegółowe są następujące: czy istnieją związki między wielokadencyjnością burmistrzów a czynnikami takimi jak: dochody własne, wydatki inwestycyjne oraz bezrobocie? Ponadto, czy w procesie zarządzania utrzymaniem władzy wóldarze stosują narzędzia związane z tzw. „politycznym cyklem koniunkturalnym”? W pracy zastosowano metodę komparatystyczną oraz elementy metody ilościowej – do analizy struktury i dynamiki; dokonano porównania wytypowanych czynników w 13 wybranych miastach średniej wielkości w Polsce, w których burmistrz sprawuje władzę nieprzerwanie od co najmniej 2002 roku. Przeprowadzone analizy dowodzą, że dochody własne miast współwystępują z wielokadencyjnością w badanych jednostkach, a wydatki inwestycyjne oraz poziom bezrobocia nie mają związku z utrzymaniem władzy przez burmistrzów. Ponadto wóldarze raczej nie korzystali z narzędzi związanych z politycznym cyklem koniunkturalnym.

Słowa kluczowe: wielokadencyjność, burmistrz, zarządzanie procesem, władza, czynniki pozapolityczne