

The Influence of the Position of Political Parties in the District Council on the Election of the Staroste. Evidences from Poland

Kamil Glinka, Michał Klonowski,
Maciej Onasz¹

Abstract

Despite the growing number of studies devoted to the intricacies of the functioning of local government units in Poland (communes, districts and provinces), it is difficult to point to a scientific study that focuses on districts and the influence of the position of political parties operating at the level of legislature on the election of the staroste as the chairman of the executive. The paper is intended to fill this urgent research gap. The conducted research based on the use of methods and techniques – mainly comparative analysis and statistical analysis – as well as the nationwide data leads to the conclusion that the position of the staroste party (in the district) is weaker than the position of the president party (in the commune) and the marshal party (in the province). In other words, the leading parties operating in districts have the weakest position among the leading parties in all types of local government units included in the study.

Keywords: staroste; district; local politics; political parties; coalitions; Poland

DOI: 10.5817/PC2025-1-4

CC BY 4.0 (<https://www.creativecommons.cz/licence-cc/>)

¹ Dr. hab., prof. Kamil Glinka, UWr, University of Wrocław, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4983-9697>, E-mail: kamil.glinka2@uwr.edu.pl; Dr. Michał Klonowski, University of Łódź, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0226-6593>, E-mail: miguel.klonowski@gmail.com; Dr. Maciej Onasz, University of Łódź, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4062-1253>, E-mail: maciej.onasz@gmail.com.

1. Introduction

It is difficult to disagree with the statement that the system of relations between actors operating at the local government level - namely the actors serving as, on the one hand, an legislative authority, and on the other, an executive authority - takes various forms, regardless of what local/regional regime reflects the socio-political reality (cf. Elkin, 1987; Stone, 1989; Stoker, 1991; Stoker & Mossberger, 1994; Glinka, 2020a). A review of the extremely extensive literature on the subject, as well as local government practice, proves that the possible variants of mutual positioning are reflected in a continuum between a full support (and the consent as to the directions of the action of the executive) and its complete lack (understood as obstruction of the executive's actions).

It is impossible not to notice that the issue of the relationship between the legislature and the executive at the local government level is a subject of many studies. An attempt not only to illustrate, but also to 'intend' these relationships is a characteristic of numerous publications - and in this case not only comprehensive analyses, but also papers and partial chapters. It is worth pointing out in this context the works that aim to provide a theoretical (conceptual) understanding of these bilateral relations (see Boynton & Wright, 1971; Svara, 1987, 1990, 1999, 2003; Heyes & Chang, 1990; Morgan & Watson, 1992; Mouritzen & Svara, 2002; Pelissero, 2003; Schragger, 2006). However, it should be noted that the dominant analyzes focus on large and medium-sized cities and their mayors. Therefore it is worth pointing out studies exploring the phenomenon of mayoral leadership embedded not only in the context of the relationship between the executive and the legislature (see Sweeting, 2002; Haus & Sweeting, 2006; Alba & Navarro, 2006; Denters, 2006; Gresley & Stoker, 2008, 2009; Teles, 2014; Sancino & Castellani, 2016; Hlepas, Chantzaras, & Getimis, 2018; Navarro, Karlsson, Magre, & Reinholde, 2018; Egeberg & Trondall 2009), but also within the concept of governance defined through the prism of network relations of public, private and social actors (see Verheul & Schaap, 2010; Cepiku & Mastrodascio, 2011; Haus & Erling Klausen, 2011; Orr & Bennett, 2017; Sweeting, 2017; Denters, Steyvers, Klok, & Cermak, 2018; Kinder, Stenvall, Six, & Memon, 2021; Sancino, Carli, & Giacomini, 2023; cf. Ospina, 2017; Bryson, Sancino, Benington, & Sørensen, 2017; Craps et al., 2019; Cristofoli, Trivellato, Sancino, Maccio' & Markovic, 2021).

The situation in which the mode of selecting an executive authority is indirect, rather than direct, seems to be particularly interesting. In other words, this is a situation in which the executive authority is not elected by citizens, but is a subject of arrangements made at the level of the legislative authority, between political parties. The activities of the staroste [Pol. *starosta*] in Poland, who being the chairman of the district board [Pol. *zarząd powiatu*], is elected by the members of the district council [Pol. *rada powiatu*] belonging to particular political

parties, is an example of such an interesting, however rarely examined, situation. Therefore it is difficult to point to a scientific study that focuses on districts [Pol. *powiat*] and the influence of the position of political parties operating at the level of legislature on the election of the staroste as the chairman of the executive. In this sense, the paper is intended to fill this urgent research gap and, consequently, provide an answer to the question about the relationship between the balance of power in the legislature (the district council and the position of political parties operating in it) and the choice of the executive (namely the staroste whose choice is dependent on the support of these parties). The main goal of the paper is hence to illustrate the influence of the position of political parties represented in the district council on the choice of the staroste.

As the results of the research on other local government units in Poland - namely the commune [Pol. *gmina*] and the province [Pol. *województwo*] - prove the question about the relationship between the legislature (and the political parties represented in it) and the executive is current and fully justified. It turns out, as Maciej Drzonek (2013) and Kamil Glinka (2020b) write about the executive in communes (city presidents), or Robert Alberski (2010, 2024) and Tatiana Majcherkiewicz (2021) write about the executive in provinces (province marshals), that the position of the parties operating in the legislature, respectively, the so-called presidential parties in the commune council and the so-called marshal parties in the province assembly, plays a fundamental role. In this sense, the paper is the first comprehensive attempt to illustrate the influence of political parties represented in the district council (so-called staroste's parties) on the election of the staroste, precisely in relation to the aforementioned communes (and the position of the presidential parties) and provinces (and the position of the marshal's parties). It is assumed that the data used (namely the data from around 2,800 local government units in Poland) and the applied methodological approach (quantitative analysis) will allow for a reliable, in-depth analysis of this influence.

The structure of the paper was subordinated to the implementation of the research goal. First, a theoretical conceptualization based on a review of the literature on the subject and the main directions of research on the relations between the legislature and the executive in Poland were discussed. The hypothesis and research questions were presented. The research methodology and the data used were presented in the following part. The next part of the part is analytical in nature. It focuses on illustrating the influence of the position of political parties represented in the council on the choice of the staroste. In accordance with the adopted assumption, the considerations presented in this part are related to communes and provinces and the position of political parties that operate at the level of legislatures in these two types of local governments units. Key conclusions and potential directions for conducting research in the future are presented in the summary.

2. Theoretical conceptualization

As already indicated in the introduction, the relations between the legislature and the executive are the subject of many analyses by researchers of local self-government. However, there is a lack of research – and it is worth emphasizing this once again – devoted to these relations at the district level in Poland. The special, because extremely rarely analyzed case of the district makes it justified to compare the district with other local government units where the functioning of political parties, also in the context of the relations between the legislature and the executive, is the subject of an incomparably greater number of scientific studies.

Firstly, we are talking about the commune and the relations between the council (as legislative) and the political parties operating at their level and the commune head/mayor/president of the city (as executive) (see Swianiewicz, Klimska, & Mielczarek, 2004; Swianiewicz, 2007; Antoszewski, 2012; Drzonek, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2019a, 2019b, 2022, 2023; Sidor, Kuć-Czajkowska, & Wasil, 2017; Glinka, 2020b; Tomczak, 2020). This is clearly the dominant perspective. Regardless of the case analyzed, the authors investigate the conditions, mechanisms and results of support (or lack thereof) of political parties operating at the council level for the commune head/mayor/city president who is elected in direct elections. They examine the conditions and reasons under which coalitions are formed. Among many analyses, it is worth mentioning those whose authors consider the impact of changes in electoral law on the position of parties represented in the commune legislative (see Sidor, Kuć-Czajkowska & Wasil, 2015; Gendźwił & Żótkak, 2016, 2020; Flis & Stolnicki, 2017; Onasz & Klonowski, 2018; Michalak, 2018a, 2018b; Rakowska-Trela, 2018a, 2018b; Czapiewski & Miszczuk, 2019; Glinka, 2021; Klonowski & Onasz, 2021; Onasz, 2022; Glinka, Klonowski, Niemczyk & Onasz, 2023). Also, in research on the functioning of communes, it is worth noting the approach related to the study of leadership, mostly mayoral one (Michałowski, 2008; Pawłowska, 2008; Sidor, Kuć-Czajkowska & Wasil, 2020; Wasil, 2023) and governance concept, mostly urban governance (Swianiewicz & Klimska, 2003; Glinka 2023).

Secondly, we are talking about the province and the relations between the province assembly, in which political parties operate, and the province marshal elected in indirect elections. The number of studies on this subject is not as large as in the case of communes, although still greater than in the case of districts. Reading of the works by Robert Alberski (2010, 2024), Bałomiej Kulas and Jan A. Wendt (2017) or Tatiana Majcherkiewicz (2021) leads to the conclusion that it is difficult to point to one that provides the most comprehensive answer to the question about the influence of political parties represented at the legislative level on election of the executive in the mode of indirectly. What is important and noticeable, however, is that this influence is noticeable, especially since provincial legislatures are an area of increased activity of nationwide political parties that

want to control regional policies. The creation of coalitions is subordinated to the achievement of this goal.

The dominance of communes and provinces in research on the system of relations between the legislature and the executive, which requires emphasis, draws from the key position of these local government units in the local government system in Poland. The differentiation of the local government structure into three basic levels is reflected not only in a fundamentally different catalog of public tasks that they must perform, but also, and perhaps above all, in a different mode of their selection (see Kulesza, 2008; Regulski & Kulesza, 2009).

As shown by the analysis of the data presented in Table 1, the basic dividing lines between the commune, district and province can be analyzed in two contexts.

The first, completely basic, comes down to the election of members of the decision-making bodies. It turns out that in the case of commune councils, two types of electoral regulations apply: majority (when it comes to the communes with up to 20,000 inhabitants) and proportional (when it comes to the communes with more than 20,000 inhabitants, including cities with district rights). *In contrario* to communes, in the case of districts and provinces, elections of legislative bodies are based on the provisions of the proportional electoral system.

The method of selecting executive authorities is the second, but equally important, context in which the differences between local government units should be analyzed. It should be emphasized that only in one case – namely communes – the commune head, mayor or city president is elected in direct elections. As argued by Andrzej Antoszewski (2012) this mode of election measurably strengthens his/her legitimacy to exercise power and determines a relatively strong position in the local political arena. In the case of a district and a province – namely the staroste who is the chairman of the district board and the marshal who manages the work of the province board – the indirect mode of election needs to be emphasized.

Table 1:
Bodies of local government units in Poland and the method of their selection according to types and subtypes

Type of local government unit	Legislative body according to local government unit subtype	Executive body
Commune	Commune council (city council) - general elections:	Commune head/mayor/president - direct election by citizens in general elections
	Communes with up to 20.000 inhabitants - majority elections	
	Communes with over 20.000 inhabitants, including cities with district rights - proportional elections	
District	Districts council - proportional elections.	County board, including the staroste (chairman of the board) - indirect election, made by the district council
Province	Province assembly - proportional elections.	Province board, including the marshal (chairman of the board) - indirect election, made by the province assembly

Source: The author.

The lack of scientific studies devoted to the relations between the legislature and the executive in the district is not the main reason why the authors of this paper analyze the influence of the position of political parties in the district council on the election of the staroste, placing them in the context of the relations between the legislature and the executive in the commune and the province. For the purposes of this paper, it is assumed that there are certain clear, although as yet unexplored analogies between, on the one hand, the district and, on the other, the commune and the province, which concern the functioning of political parties and their relations with, on the one hand, the staroste and, on the other, the commune head/ mayor/city president and the province marshal.

It is hard to disagree that the position of the presidential party which nominates a candidate for the commune head/mayor/president of the city and then, after winning the elections, supports his/her activities during the term of office is the key element determining the relationship between the legislature and the executive in communes (see Gendźwił 2020). It is therefore possible to say that the strong position of the presidential party is a *sine qua non* condition for stable support provided to the commune head/mayor/president of the city. Thus, as Drzonek (2013, 2014, 2016) and Glinka (2020b) prove, the stronger the presidential party (measured by the number of seats won), the greater the probability of

effective governance by the president. Although the optimal situation is one in which the presidential party has a majority in the council and is the dominant party, it should also be remembered that it is not always possible to achieve it. Situations in which the presidential party forms coalitions with other parties represented in the council prevail. These are the so-called presidential coalitions. The formation of the coalition is burdened with many risks, starting from the need to agree on common goals and directions of city policies, and ending with satisfying the particular interests of individual parties related to the filling of positions (not only in the council, but also in the municipal office headed by the president).

Similar conclusions are drawn from the analysis of research results relating to provinces. Alberski claims that not only the election of the marshal (and this is a situation analogous to the situation in districts) is a derivative of the position of the marshal's party in the province assembly. The author argues that this position plays a fundamental role in the effectiveness of governance understood as the performance of public tasks by the marshal who heads the province board (see Alberski, 2008). Just as in the case of a commune, the most common situation is one in which party coalitions are created in order to create a majority supporting the marshal (see Majcherkiewicz, 2018). However, this does not mean that the position of the marshal's party loses its importance. On the contrary, it is the 'size' (counted as the number of seats) in the entire coalition that is a key determinant of the election of the marshal, and then support for the activities he/she implements (cf. Kulas & Wendt, 2017).

Taking the above into account, it is assumed that the election of the staroste (as well as the commune head/mayor/city president and the province marshal) depends on the position of the staroste's party in the legislature. It is assumed that a stronger position of the staroste's party (following the results of studies relating to the position of the presidential party and the marshal's party) facilitates his/her election. For the sake of the paper, it is adopted that the staroste's party is defined as the political grouping from which the staroste comes (the one which put forward his/her candidacy in the elections) and which is represented on the district council supporting the activities he/she implements. Once again, presidential parties and marshal parties refer to such groups represented in the commune council or province assembly, which put forward candidates for, respectively, a commune head, a mayor or a president (in the case of a commune) and a marshal (in the case of a province). All three types of parties - the staroste's party, the presidential party and the marshal party - can be collectively called leading parties.

The aim of the paper is, therefore, to illustrate the influence of the position of the parties represented in the district's decision-making body (district council) on the election of the chairman of the district's executive body (staroste). It should be emphasized that this analysis is set in the context of a comparison

of these relationships with other local government units in Poland, i.e. the commune and the province.

For the purposes of the paper, a hypothesis is formulated according to which the position of the staroste's party is weaker than the position of the presidential party and the marshal party. The way the hypothesis is formulated is by no means accidental. It is assumed that a significantly higher level of party fragmentation at the level of district councils (compared to commune councils and province assemblies) translates into an objectively weaker position of the staroste's party. In other words, the weaker position of the staroste's party means that it is more difficult for a staroste to have a stable base in the district council, than is the case with a commune head, a mayor or a president (in the case of a commune) and a marshal (in the case of a province).

The hypothesis is accompanied by the two research questions:

Question no. 1 (Q1): What is the political position of the staroste's party in district councils?

Question no. 2 (Q2): How does the position of the staroste's party (district) differ from that of the presidential party (commune) and the marshal party (province)?

The way of formulating research questions is based on the analysis of the results of the previous research on communes and provinces. As indicated, there are certain analogies between districts and communes and provinces in relation to the position of the leading parties and the choice of the executive. The aim is to examine to what extent the position of the staroste party is different from the position of the presidential and marshal parties. The position of these parties is generally stronger and results from the less complicated process of formulating coalitions at the legislative level in communes and provinces based on the less fragmented party scene.

When comparing the influence of the position of political parties in the district council on the election of the staroste with similar relationships in the commune and the province, one should remember about the objective differences indicated above, which are primarily a result of the executive election procedure (cf. Table 1). Importantly, the direct election procedure in the commune is the factor that builds the advantage of the commune head/mayor/president over political parties in the council, including the presidential party, as demonstrated in their works by Monika Sidor, Katarzyna Kuć-Czajkowska and Justyna Wasil (2020, 2017, 2015).

The previously mentioned issue of forming a coalition at the level of the commune council and the province assembly, although important and worth noting, is not the dominant thread of the authors' considerations focused on coalitions in the district council. This issue, due to the complex and multi-threaded nature of the functioning of political arenas in communes and provinces, requires a completely separate study.

3. Methodology

It should be emphasized that the authors of this paper are interested in the functioning of around 2,800 local government units in Poland. Therefore, all types of local government units were subjected to the study: districts, as well as communes and provinces. Within the communes, three subtypes were distinguished:

1. communes with up to 20,000 inhabitants,
2. communes with over 20,000 inhabitants,
3. cities with the status of a city with district rights.¹

The study excluded the communes in which no executive body was elected as a result of general elections and those in which no voting took place in the elections of the decision-making body (i.e. where all seats were distributed without voting²).

Two main data sets were used for the study. With regard to the election results of the decision-making bodies of communes, districts and provinces and the executive bodies of communes, these were the data from the National Electoral Commission [Pol. *Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza*] and the National Electoral Office [Pol. *Krajowe Biuro Wyborcze*]. However, taking into account the elections of the chairmen of executive bodies in districts and provinces (districts' *staroste* and provinces' *marshal*, respectively), it is worth emphasizing the analysis of resolutions of district councils and province assemblies.

Importantly, the political affiliation of the chairmen of executive authorities in districts (*staroste*) and provinces (*marshal*) was determined, first of all, taking into account which electoral committees they represented in the elections to the district's council or the province assembly, respectively. In those cases in which the elected chairman of the executive body (*staroste*, *marshal*) did not run for election to the decision-making body³, one took into account his/ her political activity (in particular public functions performed at the time of election), the political group putting forward his/ her candidacy for the 'race' for the executive function, and where necessary – reports from local media.

The most important research methods and techniques used for the purposes of the paper include the comparative method allowing for capturing key similarities and differences between the studied cases (Della Porta, 2008) and statistical analysis (Marchant-Shapiro, 2014). The captured results were illustrated in the form of tables, figures and box figures which, in the opinion of the authors of the paper, allows drawing attention to the most important trends and, consequently, promotes the clarity of the argument. However, the key role should be assigned to the use of two parameters. This concerns, firstly, the percentage of seats obtained by the leading group in the legislative authority (the commune/citycouncil, the district council and the province assembly), and secondly, the Shapley-Shubik power index (cf. Nwokora & Pelizzo, 2018; Jarmara, 2024).

The Shapley-Shubik power index has already been used in research by political scientists, including the previous text of one of the co-authors of this paper, which was devoted to the impact of changes in the electoral system on the political position of presidential parties in communes in Poland (Onasz, 2022)⁴ The usefulness, and therefore the explanatory potential, of the Shapley-Shubik power index emphasized in the previous text results from the fact that it allows for capturing the political position of those political parties that have been defined as leading, and in the analyzed case they are: staroste's parties (district), presidential parties (commune) and marshal parties (province). The index therefore makes it possible to illustrate the position they have within, respectively – the district council, the commune/city council, the province assembly (Onasz, 2022, p. 85).

According to Mikołaj Jasiński the power indexes, and therefore the Shapley-Shubik power index, can be treated as *'functions that determine the position of individual participants in collective body'* (2010, p. 50). Importantly, they are analyzed in the context of formulating possible coalitions (Jasiński, 2010, p. 50). For the purposes of the paper, it is assumed that the game in the district council, the commune/city council or the province assembly, depending on whether we are talking about a district, commune or province, can be written as: $\{q; s_i; s_j; s_k\}$, where:

- (1) s_i refers to the weight of a particular player i (namely the number of representatives of a political party in the district council, the commune/city council or the province assembly, depending on the subject of the study),
- (2) q denotes the weight required for the winning coalition (i.e. one that has a majority that determines the stability and therefore required ability to govern a district, commune or province, depending on the subject of the study) (Onasz, 2022, p. 86).

Moreover, it is assumed that a coalition can be defined as a winning coalition only if the sum of the weights of the taken into the account players, and in the analyzed case – political parties, is higher or equal to q (Jasiński, 2010, p. 52, via: Onasz 2022, p. 86). Additionally, it is also worth to mention that if, as a result of player i (a political party, which may be a staroste's party, presidential party or marshal party) joining a losing coalition (namely the coalition with a weight lower than q operating at the district, commune or province level), this particular coalition becomes a winning coalition capable to govern effectively the particular local government unit, the already mentioned player i should be defined as a decisive player. According to the adopted assumption, the Shapley-Shubik power index for player i (ϕ_i) should be treated as equal to the percentage of the total number of coalitions in which the already mentioned player i acts as the decisive player, depending on whether we are talking about the district, commune or province level (Kliber, 2015, p. 180–181; via: Onasz, 2022, p. 86; cf. Maschler, Solan, & Zamir 2020).

The index can be characterized in a following way: (1) the sum of the ϕ values for all the players (political parties operating at the district, commune or

province level) is equal to 1; (2) if $\varphi_i=1$, then player (political party) i is a dictator player in the district council, the commune/city council or the province assembly; (3) if $\varphi_i=0$, then player (political party operating at district, commune or province level) i is a player who is not taken into account and therefore can be defined as an irrelevant one; (4) the value of φ_i is in the range from 0 to 1 (Kliber, 2015, p. 181, via: Onasz, 2022, p. 86).

It is worth to mention adopted designations as: φ_{PW} for the Shapley-Shubik power index for the leading party (staroste's party, presidential party or marshal party, depending on whether we are talking about a district, commune or province) and φ_i for the Shapley-Shubik power index of any other party operating at the district, commune or province level, also for one that is not crucial from the point of view of the ability to create coalitions (Onasz, 2022, p. 87). Importantly, s is the percentage of seats, s_{PW} is the percentage of the seats of the leading party, namely staroste's party, presidential party or marshal party and s_i is the percentage of the seats of each other party.

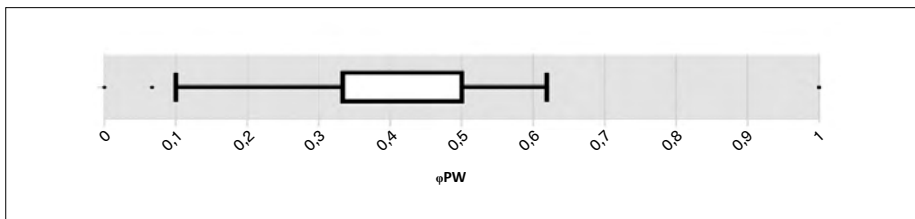
The essence of the conducted analysis is reflected in the following sequence of activities (Onasz, 2022, p. 87):

- The values of φ_{PW} in districts in 2018 were taken into the consideration.
- The frequency of obtaining the highest φ value and the highest s value by the leading party in districts was examined – in both cases in the variants allowing and excluding draws ($\varphi_{PW} \geq \varphi_i$, $\varphi_{PW} > \varphi_i$ oraz $s_{PW} \geq s_i$ oraz $s_{PW} > s_i$, respectively).
- The average value of φ_{PW} was compared in the types (namely districts, communes and provinces) and subtypes of local government units (cf. Table 1).
- The frequency of the leading party, namely staroste's party, presidential party or marshal party obtaining the position of dictator player ($\varphi_{PW} = 1$) was compared in the types (namely districts, communes and provinces) and subtypes of local government units.
- The frequency of the leading party, namely staroste's party, presidential party or marshal party achieving the position of an insignificant player ($\varphi_{PW} = 0$) was compared in the types (namely districts, communes and provinces) and subtypes of local government units.
- The frequency of obtaining the highest the Shapley-Shubik power index value by the leading party, namely staroste's party, presidential party or marshal party in the types of local government units (namely districts, communes and provinces) was compared in the variants allowing and excluding draws ($\varphi_{PW} \geq \varphi_i$, $\varphi_{PW} > \varphi_i$, respectively).
- The frequency of obtaining the highest number of seats by the leading party, namely staroste's party, presidential party or marshal party in the types of local government units (namely districts, communes and provinces) was compared in the variants allowing and excluding draws ($s_{PW} \geq s_i$, $s_{PW} > s_i$, respectively).

4. Analysis. In search of the position of the staroste' parties against the background of the presidential and marshal parties

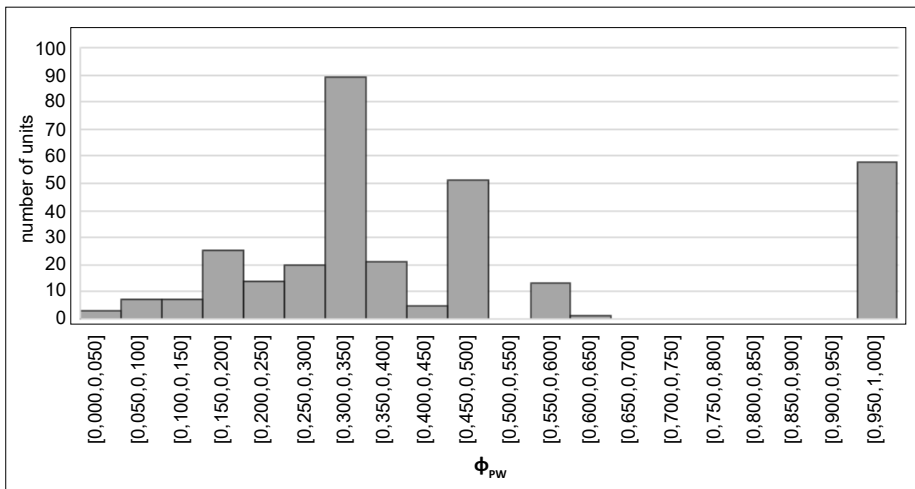
As mentioned, the verification of the hypothesis as well as answering the research questions will be illustrated in the form of table, figures and box figures⁵. In an attempt to answer the first and, what seems to be, fundamental research question (Q1), the value of the index of party power of starostes in districts was examined. The results of the analysis are presented in Figure 1a and Figure 1b. Statistically significant values are presented in Table 2.

Figure 1a:
 Φ_{PW} values in districts in 2018



Source: The author.

Figure 1b:
 Φ_{PW} values in districts in 2018



Source: The author.

Table 2:
Statistically significant values

Minimum value	1st quartile	Median	3rd quartile	Maximum value	Mean	Dominant
0,000	0,333	0,333	0,500	1,000	0,468	0,333

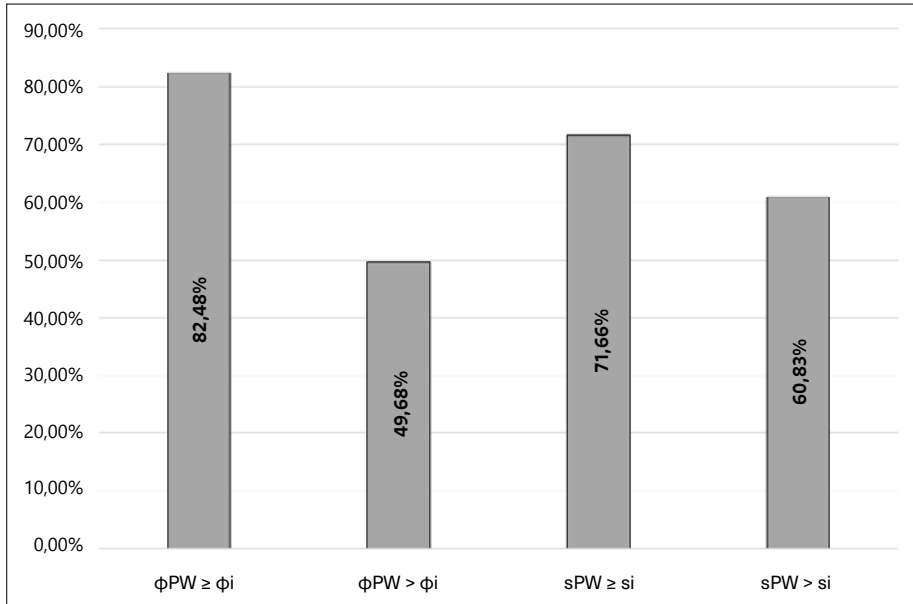
Source: The author.

As Figure 1a shows, the middle half of the scores range from 0,333 to 0,500. This is even more important if we take into account the median value equal to the value of the first quartile (0,333). This is due to the clear overrepresentation of the situations in which only three important parties – players are represented in the district council, none of which obtained the position of dictator.⁶ In such a situation, an agreement between any two of them creates a winning coalition. This situation occurred in 88 out of 314 (28,03%) district councils.⁷ The value of the first quartile and the median are equal to the value of the dominant, which confirms that in a significant part of district councils there is a balance of power between (important) players. In $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cases, the value of the strength index did not exceed 0,500. Among the outliers, special attention should be paid to the staroste's party gaining the position of a dictator player ($\varphi = 1$), which occurred in 58 cases (18,47%), and the position of an unimportant player – in 3 cases (0,96%). It may be puzzling to elect a staroste representing a party with the position of an insignificant player, but in these cases (the Mogilno and Radziejów districts in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Province and the Bochnia district in the Lesser Poland Province) it resulted from the divisions within individual groupings between the elections of the decision-making body and the election of staroste.

A deeper analysis of the observed values is possible using a histogram (Figure 1b). The values in the range (0,300, 0,350] dominate, which confirms the previous observations. Confirmation is also provided by a significant share of values contained in the ranges (0,450, 0,500] and (0,950, 1,000]. It should be noted that all values contained in the latter range were in practice 1 (the staroste's party obtained the strongest possible position, i.e. the position of dictator).⁸

To deepen the answer to the first research question, the authors analyzed, firstly, the frequency of obtaining the highest power index value by the staroste's party, and secondly, the highest number of seats (in the variants allowing and rejecting ties) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2:
Frequency of obtaining the highest ϕ value and the highest percentage of seats in the district by the staroste's party, including and excluding draws
 ($\phi_{PW} \geq \phi_i$; $\phi_{PW} > \phi_i$; $s_{PW} \geq s_i$; $s_{PW} > s_i$)



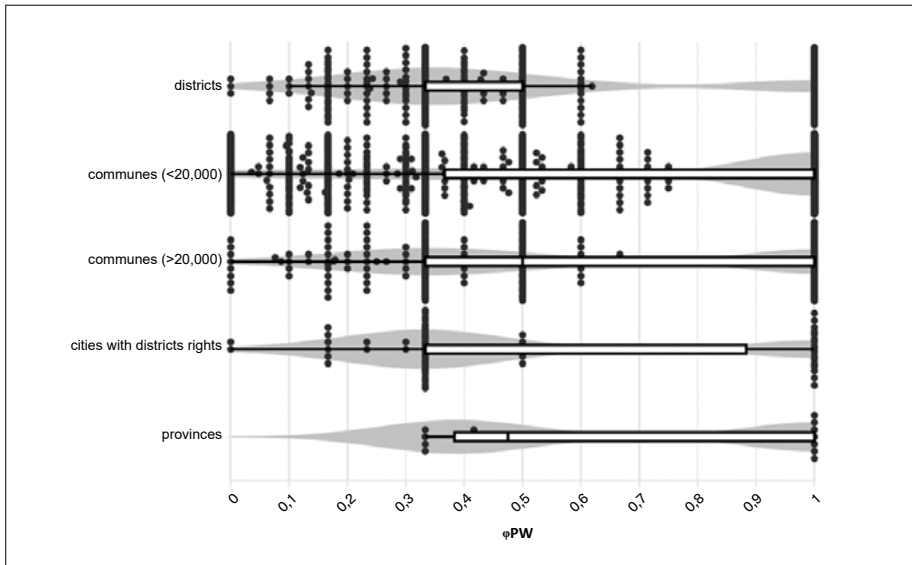
Source: The author.

Even a cursory analysis of the data presented in the figure allows one to assume that the most frequently elected staroste came from the party that obtained the highest power index value (regardless of any draws). A clear difference should be noted between the frequency of obtaining the highest power index value and the highest number of seats by the staroste's party. While the staroste came from a party with a lower power index than the highest value in 17,52% of cases (55 cases), in as many as 28,34% (89 cases) he/she came from a party that did not obtain the highest mandate result. The importance of the coalition potential is also confirmed by comparing the mentioned values with variants that reject situations in which draws occurred. While in the case of the number of seats the difference is 10,83 percentage points, in the case of the power index value it is as much as 32,80 percentage points. As a consequence, in 39,17% of cases (123 out of 314) the elected staroste did not come from a party that could be clearly considered victorious in the elections in terms of the number of seats (obtaining the highest mandate result on its own), and in terms of the value of the power index it had this place in slightly more than half (50,32%) of cases (158 out of 314).

In search of an answer to the second research question (Q2), it was decided to compare the position of the staroste's party with the position of other leading parties – presidential parties (commune) and marshal parties (province).

First, the significant statistical values of the strength index was examined in relation to individual leading parties (see Figure 3 and Table 3).

Figure 3:
Significant statistical values of ϕ_{PW} in types and subtypes of local government units



Source: The author.

Table 3:
Significant statistical values of ϕ_{PW} in types and subtypes of local government units

	districts	communes (<20,000)	communes (>20,000)	cities with districts rights	provinces
1st quartile	0,333	0,367	0,333	0,333	0,383
Median	0,333	1,000	0,500	0,333	0,475
3rd quartile	0,500	1,000	1,000	0,883	1,000
Mean	0,468	0,743	0,578	0,494	0,657
Dominant	0,333	1,000	1,000	0,333	1,000

Source: The author.

The values observed for districts significantly differ from those observed for other types of local government units (excluding cities with district rights). It should be emphasized that in relation to communes (both subtypes) and in relation to provinces, significantly lower values were observed for both the median, the 3rd quartile, the mean and the dominant.⁹

Compared to other types of communes (both communes with up to 20,000 inhabitants, in which the decision-making bodies come from majority elections, and communes with over 20,000 inhabitants, in which the decision-making bodies

come, as in the case of cities with district rights, from proportional elections), the differences are very clear. Such large differences cannot be explained only by a completely different method of electing staroste (by the decision-making body) and commune leaders (commune heads/mayors/city presidents elected in direct elections), because in the case of leading parties in provinces, the average value of the power index is clearly closer to the values observed for communes than for districts. The biggest differences were observed in comparison to small communes, where the leading party's position is objectively the strongest. At the same time, however, it is worth noting the clear differences in comparison to larger communes (excluding cities with district rights) and provinces. These differences can be explained in several ways.

Firstly, in relation to communes, it should be emphasized that the leading parties in communes are 'based' on the person of the mayor/city president, his/her achievements and proposals formulated during the election campaign (cf. Skrzypiński, 2012). Elected in direct elections, he/she gathers local political elites around him/her and, as a consequence, as Paweł Swianiewicz and Jolanta Krukowska (2018) point out, he/she gains a strong position. This is manifested in a relatively strong position in relation to political parties representing the commune council. This position is incomparably stronger than that of starostes, who are to a greater extent dependent on the current balance of power in the district council. This strong position of commune heads/mayors/city presidents is particularly visible in communes where they hold office for several terms (in some cases even continuously for over 20 years), as indicated by Maciej Drzonek's research (2019a, 2022, 2023). In this sense, there are situations in which a strong commune head/mayor/city president does not have to make the effort to form a coalition, because his/her party has an independent majority in the council.

Secondly, in relation to provinces, it should be emphasized that although the method of electing the staroste and the marshal is similar (indirect election mode), the staroste's position is much weaker (cf. Buczkowski, 2021). This difference can be explained by the penetration of provinces' legislatures by nationwide political parties (cf. Alberski, 2010; Tomczak, 2019; Glinka, 2024, p. 23-24) which strive to gain a dominant position in the province assembly, resulting in full control over the election of the marshal. In other words, unlike district councils, where local election committees dominate, in the case of provinces, one can observe a significant influence of nationwide political parties on the formation of coalitions in province assemblies, and these parties try to implement coalition patterns from the central level to the province level (cf. Majcherkiewicz, 2011).

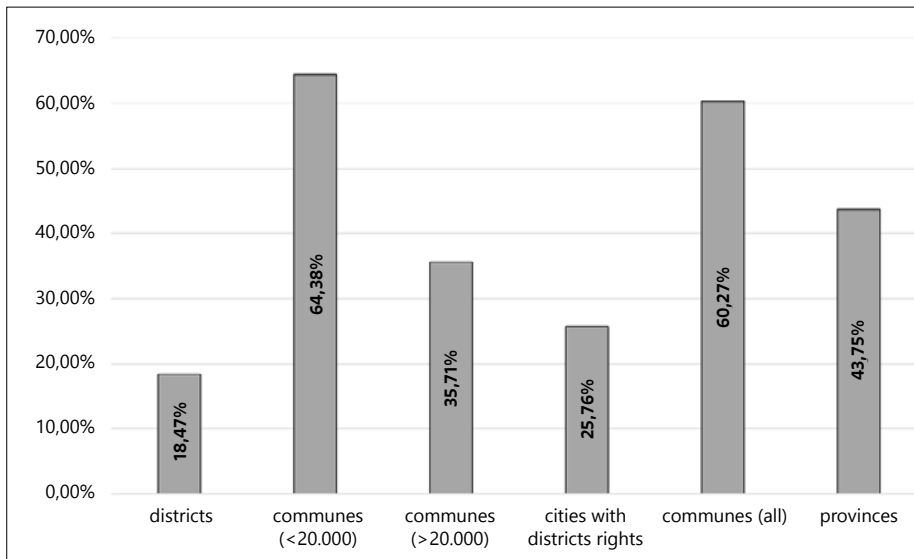
Summing up, this may be due to the weakness of both local government bodies at the district level, as well as the districts as a point of reference in identity terms. The concentration of identity at the commune level makes it difficult to build strong district-wide organizations. Moreover, it may lead to the situation

in which the election results at the district level reflect to a greater extent political preferences at the level of individual communes. In the case of provinces, we are dealing with the different process – elections to province assemblies to the greatest extent reflect the political preferences of voters at the national level.

In order to provide a full answer to the second research question, the authors conducted the analysis of the frequency of obtaining the position of dictator by leading parties in local government units in 2018 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4:

Frequency of obtaining the position of dictator by the leading party ($\phi_{PW}=1$) in types and subtypes of local government units in 2018



Source: The author.

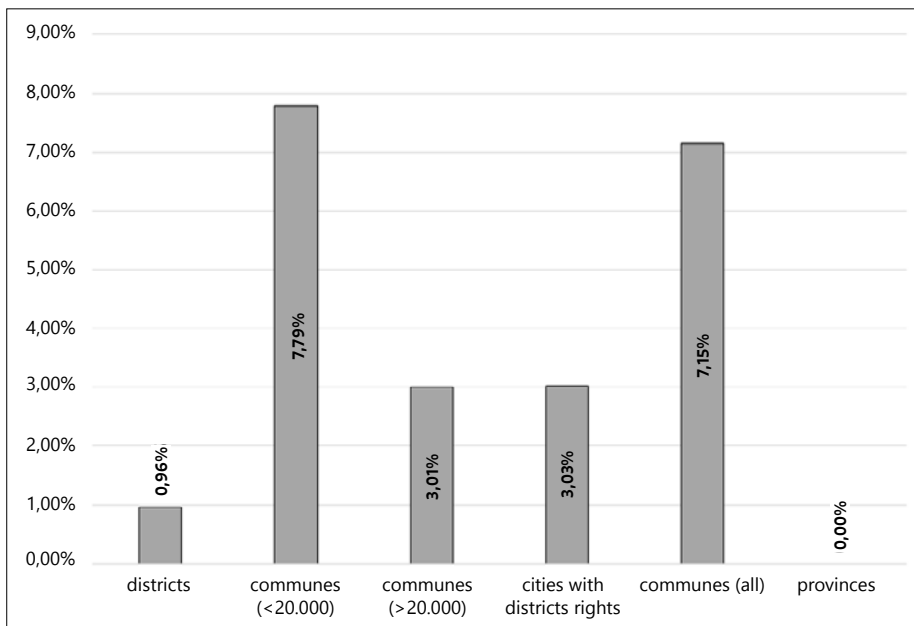
It should be emphasized that the obtained results are consistent with previous observations. The frequency of obtaining the position of dictator by the leading party ($\phi_{PW}=1$) at the district level is clearly lower than in other types (including subtypes) of local government units. Only in the case of cities with district rights can we talk about values that are at least slightly similar. The differences between districts and the smallest communes and provinces are particularly clear. At this point it is worth pointing out the factors that influence such a clear differentiation in the frequency of obtaining the position of dictator. At this point it is worth pointing out the factors that influence such a clear differentiation in the frequency of obtaining the position of dictator.

Particularly at the commune level, this should be associated with the very strong position of the one-person executive body (cf. Drzonek, 2013; 2019a, 2022, 2023; Swianiewicz & Krukowska, 2018; Glinka, 2020b). It is often so strong that the commune head/mayor/city president is actually able to permanently

dominate the local political scene and hold his/her position for several consecutive terms.¹⁰ The difference between districts and larger communes and cities with district rights is smaller, although still noticeable, which confirms earlier conclusions by one of co-authors of this paper (Onasz, 2022) about the unequivocal positive correlation between the use of the majority electoral system based on single-member constituencies and the frequency of obtaining the position of dictator by the leading party, as opposed to the proportional electoral system, which limits such a probability. The reasons for this state of affairs can be also found in the previously mentioned multi-faceted weaknesses of districts and their institutions.

The study also examined the frequency of the leading party obtaining the position of an insignificant player ($\phi_{PW}=0$) in local government units in 2018 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5:
Frequency of the leading party achieving the position of an insignificant player ($\phi_{PW}=0$) in the types and subtypes of local government units



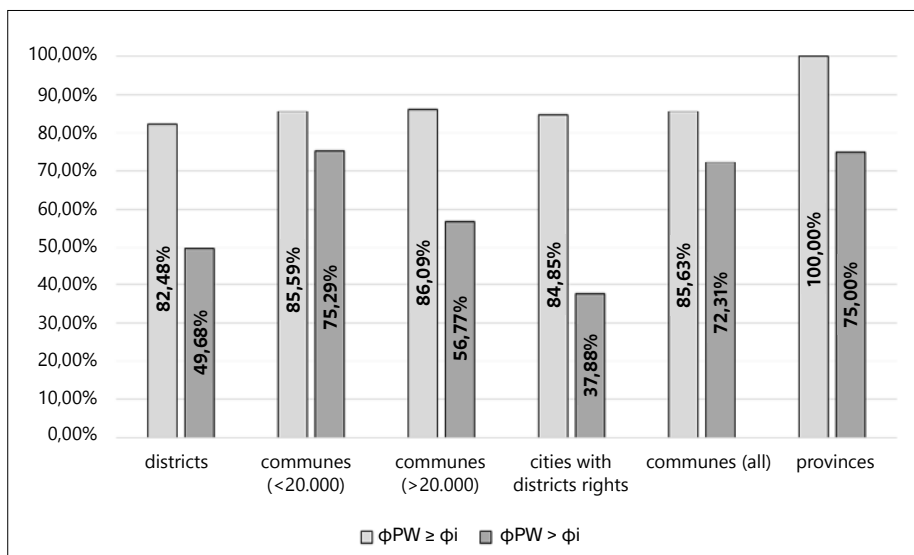
Source: The author.

The analysis of the content presented in Figure 5 allows one to state that the phenomenon of the leading party gaining the position of an insignificant player occurs in districts with very little frequency. The cases that took place in 2018 resulted from the decomposition of individual groups represented in the composition of the district council before the election of the staroste. In this respect, the position of the leading party in districts and provinces is very similar (no such case was observed in the latter, however, a small number of provinces should be

taken into account – 16 compared to 314 districts). The situation is completely different in communes, where approximately every fifteenth commune head or mayor/president does not have significant support in the decision-making body.¹¹ The difference in this area results from a different way of creating the executive body in communes than in districts and provinces. As it has already been indicated, in the case of communes, the executive body is elected in general elections, while in other types of local government units, the executive body is elected by the decision-making body. The findings relating to districts and the position of the staroste's party are consistent here with the results of research on coalition formation in communes (cf. Drzonek, 2013, 2014, Swianiewicz, Klimska & Mielczarek, 2004; Swianiewicz & Krukowska, 2018; Glinka 2020b) and provinces (cf. Alberski, 2010; Tomczak, 2019; Majcherkiewicz, 2011; 2018).

Importantly, the authors of this paper are also interested in the frequency of obtaining the highest value of the power index by the leading party in local government units. The obtained results are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6:
Frequency of obtaining the highest ϕ value by the leading party in types and subtypes of local government units in 2018, taking into account and excluding ties ($\phi_{PW} \geq \phi_i$; $\phi_{PW} > \phi_i$)



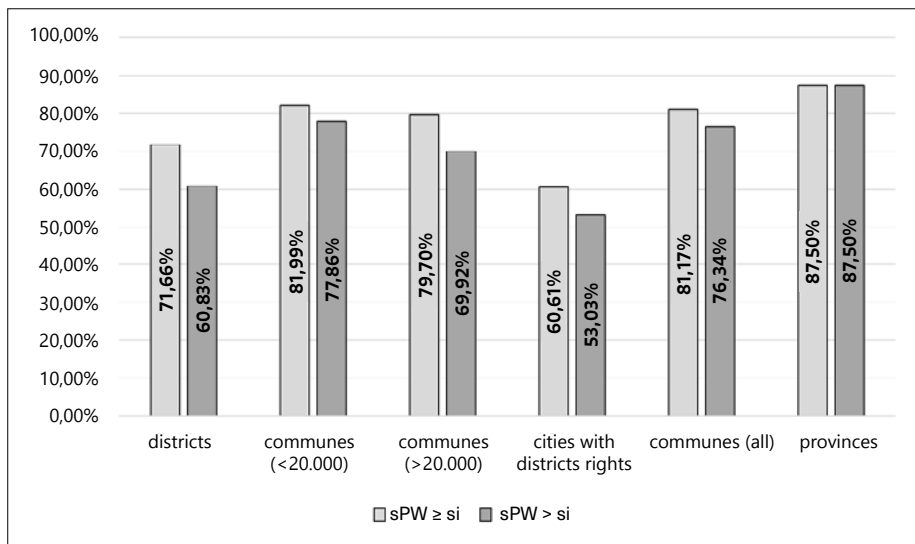
Source: The author.

With regard to obtaining the highest value of the power index by the leading party in districts, no clear differences were observed compared to communes. In the case of provinces, the frequency of obtaining the highest value of the strength index is clearly higher (applies to 100% of provinces), but it should be remembered that the number of provinces is small (16). In the variant excluding draws, more visible differences were observed. Only in the case of cities with district rights is the frequency of obtaining the highest value of the power index

by the leading party lower than in the case of districts. Especially in the case of the smallest communes (up to 20,000 inhabitants) and provinces, the difference is very clear. This proves more equal political competition in decision-making bodies in districts.¹² This is obviously related to the objectively higher level of party fragmentation in districts (on the subject of district see more: Jarosz & Springer, 2017, 2018; Sienkiewicz, 2011).

The last stage of the study was to analyze the frequency of obtaining the highest mandate result by the leading party (in variants allowing and excluding draws) in local government units. As the analysis of Figure 7 shows, in all types and subtypes of local government units (excluding cities with district rights), the frequency of the leading party obtaining the highest number of seats is higher than in the case of districts. In relation to all communes, the difference is 9,51 percentage points and in relation to provinces - 15,84 percentage points. An even greater difference concerns the variant excluding draws (15,51 percentage points and as much as 26,67 percentage points, respectively).

Figure 7:
Frequency of obtaining the highest percentage of seats by the leading party in types and subtypes of local government units in 2018, taking into account and excluding draw ($s_{PW} \geq s_i$; $s_{PW} > s_i$)



Source: The author.

Again, this proves more equal political competition in the bodies constituting this type of local government units. It should be emphasized that in approximately 2/5 of the district councils there is a competitive grouping with the leading party with no lower (and in the case of 28,34% of the districts - higher) potential for creating winning coalitions. The situation is a result of the specific nature of party

rivalry in districts. The party scene in districts is much more fragmented than in the case of communes and provinces. These are results that clearly correspond with the findings of other studies on territorial self-government in Poland and proves that the functioning of the district council has its specificity due to the applicable solutions related to the election of the staroste (cf. Sienkiewicz, 2011; Lewandowski & Wituska, 2012).

5. Conclusions

As shown, the staroste's parties are, next to the presidential and marshal parties, important players that demonstrate the ability to create coalitions and, therefore, to constitute the political base of starostes. However, what is worth noting is the fact that they have less power than the parties supporting commune heads/mayors/city presidents and province marshals. It is worth to mention that the influence of the starosts' parties on the election of starosts should be stressed, although it is smaller than in the case of the presidential and marshals' parties. In this sense, the conducted research procedure allows not only to answer the research questions but also leads to the conclusion that the hypothesis can be verified in a positive way. In other words, the position of the staroste's party seems to be weaker than the position of the presidential party (in communes) and the marshal party (in provinces). As it results from the analysis based on the comparison of statistical data, the leading parties in districts have the weakest position among the leading parties in all types of local government units included in the study. This is an observation that fills the gap in studies focused, as has already been indicated, on communes and provinces in Poland.

Moreover, the use of data from nearly 2,800 communes, districts and provinces in Poland proves that obtaining the highest strength by the party represented in the district council (the staroste's party) is still an important determinant of gaining influence on the choice of the staroste as a result of the ability of the coalition's creation. However, what is worth noting is that one cannot look for some kind of automatism in this, especially in comparison with the provinces. This results to a large extent from the frequent obtaining of equal (and the highest in a given district council) strength by more than one grouping, as a result of which in more than half of the studied cases – and we are talking about districts – the staroste does not come from a grouping with independent (and therefore excluding ties) strength. Taking into account the findings so far, one may be tempted to say that the process of forming a coalition in the district council, treated as a condition for providing support to the staroste, is a space for the influence of many political actors (not only the staroste's party) and, therefore, for the clash of various, often different interests of other parties.

In summary, certain analogies between, on the one hand, districts and, on the other, communes and provinces do exist and are noticeable. However, placing

the influence of the position of parties represented in the district council on the election of the staroste in the context of communes and provinces proves that this election has its own specificity, which is determined by the system of relations between the legislature and the executive. This specificity is determined not only by the number of political parties (there are clearly more of them than in the case of communes and provinces), but also by the nature of political parties (these are to a large extent local committees, not nationwide parties, which strongly penetrate commune's legislatures, especially in large cities, and even more strongly provincial legislatures).

While searching for the directions for further research on the influence of the position of the staroste's party on the choice of the staroste as the chairman of the district executive one should take into account other, in a sense unmeasurable factors that determine this position. In this case, the point is to expand the research instruments to include the achievements of sociology and political psychology, as well as to take into account a broader time perspective allowing for analyzes to be conducted in a longitudinal perspective, which is also a potential direction for further research. In this case, it is means research that takes into account a larger number of local government elections and, therefore, allows for in-depth comparative analysis of the examined cases.

References:

- Alba, C. R., & Navarro, C. (2006). Mayors and Local Administrators: A Puzzling Relationship. In H. Bäck, H. Heinelt, A. Magnier (Eds.), *The European Mayor: Political Leaders in the Changing Context of Local Democracy* (pp. 287–309). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Alberski, R. (2008). Struktura rywalizacji wyborczej. In R. Alberski (Eds.), *Wybory samorządowe na Dolnym Śląsku w 2006 roku. Wzorce rywalizacji w lokalnych systemach politycznych* (pp. 65–83), Wrocław: Wydawnictwo „Profil”.
- Alberski, R. (2010). System wyborczy do sejmików województw w Polsce. Gra o zmiennych regułach. In R. Alberski, M. Cichosz, Ł. Tomczak (Eds.), *Wybory do sejmików województw w 2006 roku* (pp. 11–18). Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Marina.
- Alberski, R. (2017). Niekompetentny wyborca? Głosy nieważne w wyborach do sejmików województw, In R. Alberski, M. Cichosz (Eds.), *Gra o regiony 2014. Wybory do sejmików województw* (pp. 333–354). Wrocław: Instytut Politologii Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Alberski, R. (2024). Lepsze wrogiem dobrego? Ewolucja systemu wyborczego do sejmików województw w latach 1998–2002. In R. Alberski, M. Cichosz, Ł. Tomczak (Eds.), *Gra o regiony 1998 i 2002. Wybory do sejmików województw w Polsce* (pp. 27–40). Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Antoszewski, A. (2012). Rywalizacja o władzę w miastach Dolnego Śląska. Uwagi wprowadzające. In D. Skrzypiński (Eds.), *Rywalizacja o prezydenturę w miastach Dolnego Śląska* (pp. 11–27). Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Marina.
- Boynton, R. P., & Wright, D. S. (1971). Mayor-Manager Relationships in Large Council-Manager Cities: A Reinterpretation. *Public Administration Review*, 31(1), 28–36.
- Bryson, J., Sancino, A., Benington, J., & Sørensen, E. (2017). Towards A Multi-Actor Theory of Public Value Co-Creation. *Public Management Review*, 19(5), 640–654.
- Buczkowski, K. (2021). Parlamentarne propozycje wprowadzenia bezpośrednich wyborów starostów i marszałków województw. *Przegląd Prawa Konstytucyjnego*, 4(26), 259–272.

- Cepiku, D., & Mastrodascio, M. (2021). Leadership Behaviours in Local Government Networks: An Empirical Replication Study. *Public Management Review*, 23(3), 354–375.
- Craps, M., Vermeesch, I., Dewulf, A., Sips, K., Termeer, K., & Bouwen, R. (2019). A Relational Approach to Leadership for Multi-Actor Governance. *Administrative Sciences*, 9(1), 1–12.
- Cristofoli, D., Trivellato, B., Sancino, A., Maccio', L., & Markovic, J. (2021). Public Network Leadership and the Ties that Lead. *Journal of Management and Governance*, 25(1), 251–274.
- Czapiewski, T., & Miszczuk, R. (2019). Wpływ zmian polskiego prawa wyborczego w 2018 roku na proces przygotowania i przeprowadzenia wyborów. *Acta Iuris Stetinensis*, 3, 53–80.
- Della Porta, D. (2008). Comparative analysis: case-oriented versus variable-oriented research. In D. Della Porta, M. Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences* (pp. 198–222). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Denters, B. (2006). Duo or Duel? the Relations between Mayors and Councils in Democratic Local Government. In H. Bäck, H. Heinelt, A. Magnier (Eds.), *The European Mayor: Political Leaders in the Changing Context of Local Democracy* (pp. 271–285). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Denters, S., Steyvers, K., Klok, P. J., Cermak, D. (2018). Political Leadership In Issue Networks: How Mayors Rule Their World? In H. Heinelt, A. Magnier, M. Cabria, H. Reinaert (Eds.), *Political Leaders and Changing Local Democracy. The European Mayor* (pp. 273–296). Cham: Springer.
- Drzonek, M. (2013). *Reelekcje prezydentów w wyborach bezpośrednich w Polsce*. Kraków: Dante.
- Drzonek, M. (2014). *Partyjnie czy bezpartyjnie? Szkice o zdobywaniu władzy lokalnej*. Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego.
- Drzonek, M. (2016). Wielokadencyjność bez afiliacji partyjnej? Spostrzeżenia po reelekcjach „wiecznych prezydentów” w 2014 r. *Przegląd Politologiczny*, 1, 81–89.
- Drzonek, M. (2019a). *Wieczni prezydenci. Dwa przypadki trójmiejskie*. Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej.
- Drzonek, M. (2019b). Im dłużej tym „bezpartyjnie”? Włodarze dużych miast w wyborach 2002–2018. *Przegląd Politologiczny*, 2, 123–140.
- Drzonek, M. (2022). *Wieczni prezydenci. Przypadek Świnoujścia*. Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego.
- Drzonek, M. (2023). *Wieczni prezydenci. Przypadek Rzeszowa*. Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego.
- Egeberg, M., Trondall, J. (2009). Political leadership and bureaucratic autonomy: Effects of agencification. *Governance*, 22(4), 673–688.
- Elkin, S. (1987). *City and Regime in the American Republic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Flis, J., Stolnicki, D. (2017). JOW-y w gminach: lokalne partie władzy a nowe reguły rywalizacji. *Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny*, 3, 253–366.
- Genđźwiłł, A. (2020). *Wybory lokalne w Polsce. Uczestnictwo, konkurencja i reprezentacja polityczna w demokracjach mniejszej skali*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Genđźwiłł, A., Żółtak, T. (2016). Skutki wprowadzenia okręgów jednomandatowych w wyborach lokalnych. *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne*, 3, 94–116.
- Genđźwiłł, A., Żółtak, T. (2020). Ile partii w samorządzie? Partie sejmowe i listy lokalne w wyborach władz gmin w latach 2002–2018. *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne*, 2, 40–66.
- Glinka, K. (2020a). The Urban Regime Theory in Political Science Research - The Possibilities and Limitations of Implementation. *Polish Political Science Review*, 8(2), 1–21.
- Glinka, K. (2020b). *Polityka miejska w marketingu prezydentów największych miast Dolnego Śląska*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.
- Glinka, K. (2021). Polityczne konsekwencje zmiany formuły wyborczej i wprowadzenia ograniczeń w kandydowaniu - przypadek wyborów do rad dużych i średnich miast województwa dolnośląskiego z lat 2014 i 2018. *Przegląd Prawa Konstytucyjnego*, 2(6), 155–172.
- Glinka, K. (2023). *Przeskalowanie urban governance. Doświadczenia miast wojewódzkich w Polsce*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Glinka, K. (2024). W „oparach” drugiego etapu reformy samorządowej. Dwa wymiary aktywności samorządu województwa. In R. Alberski, M. Cichosz, Ł. Tomczak (Eds.), *Gra o regiony 1998 i 2002 Wybory do sejmików województw w Polsce* (pp. 13–25). Wrocław: Instytut Politologii Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.

- Glinka, K., Klonowski, M., Niemczyk, K., & Onasz, M. (2023). Impact of the Election Formula Change on the Structure of Competition in Local Legislatures: Lessons from Poland. *Czech Journal of Political Science*, 1, 25–42.
- Gresley, S., & Stoker, G. (2008). Mayors and urban governance: Developing a facilitative leadership style. *Public Administration Review*, 64(8), 722–230.
- Gresley, S., & Stoker, G. (2009). Urban political leadership. In J. S. Davies, D. L. Imbroscio (Eds.), *Theories of Urban Politics* (pp. 125–136). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Haus, M., Erling Klausen, J. (2011). Urban Leadership and Community Involvement: Ingredients for Good Governance? *Urban Affairs Review*, 47(2), 256–279.
- Haus, M., Sweeting, D. (2006). Local Democracy and Political Leadership: Drawing A Map. *Political Studies*, 54(2), 267–288.
- Heyes, K., & Chang, S. (1990). The Relative Efficiency of City Manager and Mayor-Council Forms of Government. *Southern Economic Journal*, 57(1), 167–177.
- Hlepas, N., Chantzaras, T., Getimis, P. (2018). Effective Mayoral Leadership in Council-Manager Cities: Reassessing the Facilitative Model. In H. Heinelt, A. Magnier, M. Cabria, H. Reynaert (Eds.), *Political Leaders and Changing Local Democracy: The European Mayor* (pp. 209–241). Cham: Springer.
- Jarmara, T. (2024). Distribution of Seats in the New 2021 Czech Government Coalition in Terms of Coalition Theories and Power Indices of Political Parties. *Czech Journal of Political Science*, 1, 4–27.
- Jarosz, A., & Springer, B. (2017). *Powiat w Polsce. Problemy i wyzwania szczebla ponadgminnego*. Zielona Góra: Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego.
- Jarosz, A., & Springer, B. (2018). *Samorząd miasta na prawach powiatu. Struktury, aktorzy, działanie*. Zielona Góra: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego.
- Jasiński, M. (2010). Czy zawsze większy jest silniejszy, czyli jak zmierzyć siłę uczestników zgromadzeń decyzyjnych. *Studia Socjologiczne*, 1–2, 49–77.
- Kinder, T., Stenvall, J. Six, F., & Memon, A. (2021). Relational Leadership in Collaborative Governance Ecosystems. *Public Management Review*, 23(11), 1612–1639.
- Kliber, P. (2015). *Wprowadzenie do teorii gier*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Poznaniu.
- Klonowski, M., Onasz, M. (2018). Wybrane zmiany w systemie wyborczym organów jednostek samorządu terytorialnego wynikające z ustawy o zmianie niektórych ustaw w celu zwiększenia udziału obywateli w procesie wybierania, funkcjonowania i kontrolowania niektórych organów publicznych wstępna ocena, *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne*, 2(72), 99–117.
- Klonowski, M., & Onasz, M. (2021). Skutki zmian w systemie wyborczym organów jednostek samorządu terytorialnego wynikających z ustawy z 11 stycznia 2018 r. *Athenaeum*, 69, 147–170.
- Krajowe Biuro Wyborcze (n.d.). Krajowe Biuro Wyborcze. <https://pkw.gov.pl/kbw/zespolny-kbw>
- Krukowska, J. (2018) Staż burmistrza na stanowisku a jego poglądy na zarządzanie gminą. *Samorząd Terytorialny*, 7–8, 24–38.
- Kulas, B., & Wendt, J. A. (2017). *Wybory samorządowe do sejmików wojewódzkich w Polsce. Analiza wyników i preferencje elektoratu, regiony stabilne i labilne w latach 2002–2014*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Bernardinum.
- Kulesza, M. (2008). *Budowanie samorządu. Wybór tekstów ze „Wspólnoty” 1990–2007*. Warszawa: Muncipium.
- Lewandowski, K., Wituska, E. (2012). Dychotomia aktywności starosty powiatowego w strukturze terenowej administracji publicznej. *Studia z zakresu prawa, administracji i zarządzania UKW*, 2, 23–44.
- Majcherkiewicz, T. (2011). Wybory samorządowe, partie parlamentarne a wzory tworzenia koalicji w samorządach wojewódzkich. *Studia Politologiczne*, 20, 111–138.
- Majcherkiewicz, T. (2018). Tworzenie koalicji regionalnych a ewolucja systemu wielopoziomowego w opinii marszałków województw od I do V kadencji. *Athenaeum*, 57, 54–77.
- Majcherkiewicz, T. (2021). *Politycy i polityka regionalna w systemie wielopoziomowym. Koalicje regionalne - dobór regionalnych elit samorządowych - modele polityki regionalnej - role aktorów i wzory karier*, Kraków: Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny w Krakowie.
- Marchant-Shapiro, T. (2014). *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers*. Sage.
- Maschler, M., Solan, E., & Zamir, S. (2020). *Game Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Michalak, B. (2018a). Ocena funkcjonalności zmian wprowadzonych do Kodeksu wyborczego w 2018 roku w świetle doświadczeń wyborów samorządowych. *Studia Wyborcze*, 28, 55–73.

- Michalak, B. (2018b). Zmiana przepisów Kodeksu wyborczego przed wyborami samorządowymi. *Athenaeum*, 58, 75–99.
- Michałowski, S. (2008). Uwarunkowania pełnienia ról przywódczych w samorządzie terytorialnym. In S. Michałowski, K. Kuć-Czajkowska (Eds.), *Przywódtwo lokalne a kształtowanie demokracji partycypacyjnej* (pp. 27–44). Lublin: Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.
- Morgan, D. R., & Watson, S. S. (1992). Policy Leadership in Council-Manager Cities: Comparing Mayor and Manager. *Public Administration Review*, 52(5), 438.
- Mouritzen, P. E., & Svava, J. H. (2002). *Leadership at the Apex: Politicians and Administrators in Western Local Governments*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press.
- Navarro, C., Karlsson, D., Magre, J., Reinholde, I. (2018). Mayors in the Town Hall: Patterns of Relations and Conflict among Municipal Actors. In H. Heinelt, A. Magnier, M. Cabria, H. Reynaert (Eds.), *Political Leaders and Changing Local Democracy: The European Mayor* (pp. 359–385). Cham: Springer.
- Nwokora, Z., & Pelizzo, R. (2018). Measuring Party Systems Change: A Political Perspective. *Political Studies*, 66(1), 100–118.
- Onasz, M. (2022). Wpływ zmian w systemie wyborczym w 2018 r. na pozycję polityczną partii prezydenckich w gminach powyżej 20.000 mieszkańców. *Przegląd Prawa Konstytucyjnego*, 1(65), 81–95.
- Orr, K., & Bennett, M. (2017). Relational Leadership, Storytelling, and Narratives: Practices of Local Government Chief Executives. *Public Administration Review*, 77(4), 515–527.
- Ospina, S. M. (2017). Collective Leadership and Context in Public Administration: Bridging Public Leadership Research and Leadership Studies. *Public Administration Review*, 77(2), 275–287.
- Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza (n.d.). Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza, <https://pkw.gov.pl/>.
- Pawłowska, A. (2008). Prawno-instytucjonalny wymiar przywództwa lokalnego (na przykładzie wybranych państw). In A. K. Piasecki (Eds.), *Model przywództwa* (pp. 442–465), Kraków: Wydawnictwo Profesja.
- Pelissero, J. P. (2003). The Political Environment of Cities in the Twenty-first Century. In J. P. Pelissero (Eds.), *Cities, Politics, and Policy. A Comparative Analysis* (pp. 1–34). Washington: CQ Press.
- Rakowska-Trela, A. (2018a). Nowelizacja samorządowego prawa wyborczego z 2018 r. *Przegląd Prawa Konstytucyjnego*, 4(44), 19–35.
- Rakowska-Trela, A. (2018b). Zasada demokratycznego państwa prawnego a zmiany w prawie wyborczym. *Studia Wyborcze*, 25, 17–30.
- Regulski J., Kulesza M. (2009). *Droga do samorządu*. Warszawa: Wolters Kluwer.
- Sancino, A., Carli, G., & Giacomini, D. (2023). Relational leadership in local governance: the engagement of mayors with citizens, public managers and politicians. *Public Management Review*, 25(9), 1730–1754.
- Sancino, A., Castellani, L. (2016). New Development: Directly Elected Mayors In Italy – Creating A Strong Leader Doesn't Always Mean Creating Strong Leadership. *Public Money & Management*, 36(2), 153–156.
- Schrager, R. C. (2006). Can strong mayors empower weak cities? On the power of local executives in a federal system. *The Yale Law Journal*, 115(9), 2542–2578.
- Sidor, M., Kuć-Czajkowska, K., & Wasil, J. (2015). Wpływ rozwiązań przyjętych w Kodeksie wyborczym na zjawisko koabitacji w gminach. *Polityka i Społeczeństwo*, 3(13), 151–164.
- Sidor, M., Kuć-Czajkowska, K., & Wasil, J. (2017). *Koabitacja na poziomie gminnym w Polsce*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Sidor, M., Kuć-Czajkowska, K., & Wasil, J. (2020). Przywództwo na poziomie lokalnym w Polsce w warunkach koabitacji - oczekiwania versus rzeczywistość, *Athenaeum*, 66(2), 20–34.
- Sienkiewicz, M. K. (2011). *Samorząd powiatowy w Polsce. Zamierzenia i realizacja*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.
- Siwaniewicz, P., Krukowska, J. (2018). Czy polski burmistrz jest (zbyt) silny? Pozycja burmistrza w poziomych relacjach władzy – perspektywa europejska. *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne*, 4(74), 26–47.
- Skrzypiński, D. (2012). *Rywalizacja o prezydenturę w miastach Dolnego Śląska*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Marina.
- Stoker, G. (1991). *The Politics of Local Government*. London: MacMillan.
- Stoker, G., Mossberger, M. (1994). Urban Regime Theory in Comparative Perspective. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 12(2), 195–212.

- Stone, C. (1989). *Regime Politics. Governing Atlanta 1946–1988*. Kansas: Kansas University Press.
- Svara, J. H. (1987). Mayoral Leadership in Council-Manager Cities: Preconditions versus Preconceptions. *The Journal of Politics*, 49(1), 207–227.
- Svara, J. H. (1990). *Official Leadership in the City. Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Svara, J. H. (1999). The Shifting Boundary between Elected Officials and City Managers in Large Council-Manager Cities. *Public Administration Review*, 59(1), 44.
- Svara, J. H. (2003). Effective Mayoral Leadership in Council-Manager Cities: Reassessing the Facilitative Model. *National Civic Review*, 92(2), 157–172.
- Sweeting, D. (2002). Leadership in urban governance. The mayor of London. *Local Government Studies*, 28(1), 3–20.
- Sweeting, D. (2017). *Directly Elected Mayors in Urban Governance. Impact and Practice*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Swianiewicz, P. (2007). Changing forms of urban government in Central and Eastern Europe. In R. Hambleton, J. S. Gross. (Eds.), *Governing Cities in a Global Era. Urban Innovation, Competition and Democratic Reform* (pp. 93–112). Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave.
- Swianiewicz, P., Klimska, U. (2003). Kto rządzi gminą? Lokalni liderzy polityczni w teorii i praktyce samorządu terytorialnego w Polsce. *Samorząd Terytorialny*, 4, 15–40.
- Swianiewicz, P., Klimska, U., & Mielczarek, A. (2004). *Nierówne koalicje. Liderzy miejsc w poszukiwaniu nowego modelu zarządzania rozwojem*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Swianiewicz, P., Krukowska, J. (2018). Czy polski burmistrz jest (zbyt) silny? Pozycja burmistrza w poziomych relacjach władzy w perspektywie europejskiej, *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne*, 4, 26–47.
- Teles, F. (2014). Facilitative Mayors in Complex Environments: why political will matters. *Local Government Studies*, 40(5), 809–829.
- Tomczak, Ł. (2019). Wybory do sejmiku województwa zachodniopomorskiego. *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych*, 1, 79–92.
- Tomczak, Ł. (2020). Formowanie większości w radzie miasta Szczecina w warunkach bezpośredniego wyboru prezydenta. In M. Kamola-Cieślak, Ł. Tomczak (Eds.), *Gospodarka i polityka w czasach przemian. Economy and politics in times of change, księga jubileuszowa dedykowana profesorowi Benonowi* (pp. 356–376). Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.
- Verheul, W. J., & Schaap, L. (2010). Strong Leaders? The Challenges and Pitfalls in Mayoral Leadership. *Public Administration*, 88(2), 439–454.
- Wasil, J. (2023). *Przywództwo lokalne kobiet w Polsce. Studium gmin wiejskich*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.

Endnotes:

- 1 The criterion for distinguishing subtypes (communes) is to organize the elections based on a different type of electoral law. It is worth adding that a city with district rights is not a district, but only performs the tasks assigned to it. For this reason, cities with this status are not classified as districts.
- 2 In a situation where the number of candidates nominated in a constituency in the elections of the local government body is equal to the number of seats to be allocated in that constituency, no voting is held and the mandate is automatically awarded to the only candidate. In practice, this only applies to communes with up to 20,000 inhabitants. In the 2018 elections, this affected 3,062 seats. Moreover, in the case of 11 commune councils, this situation occurred in all constituencies, as a result of which no vote was held in the entire commune and mandates were awarded without voting.
- 3 This type of situation concerned as many as 29 districts (Łaski, Aleksandrowski, Rypiński, Jaworski, Legnica, Janowski, Krasnostawski, Łęczyński, Łukowski, Opole, Gorzów, Międzyrzeczki, Żagań, Zielona Góra, Gorlicki, Siedlce, Sokołów, Wołomin, Krapkowicki, Brzozowski, Lubaczów, Sanok, Grajewski, Tczew, Nidzicki, Konin, Leszczyński, Słupca, Turek) and 3 provinces (Lublin, Łódź, Świętokrzyskie).

- 4 Theoretical findings regarding the Shapley-Shubik power index were the subject of considerations presented in one of the earlier texts devoted to the impact of changes in the electoral system on the political position of presidential parties in communes in Poland by the co-author of this paper (Onasz, 2022, pp. 85–87). For this reason, the findings presented here, due to their fundamental nature and basic assumptions that are difficult to change, are based directly on this earlier text, in some parts literally.
- 5 It should be emphasized that in certain fragments of part four of this paper (Analysis), the presented findings also refer to earlier text devoted to the impact of changes in the electoral system on the political position of presidential parties in communes in Poland by one of the paper co-authors. The reference consists mainly in the presentation of the findings in the form of tables, figures and box-figures (Onasz, 2022, pp. 87–92).
- 6 This may mean obtaining representation only by 3 parties, but also by a larger number of them, provided that only 3 of them obtain a position other than an unimportant player. The division of seats: {13: 7, 7, 7, 2, 2} for which $\varphi = \{0,333; 0,333; 0,333; 0; 0\}$ is an example.
- 7 Of these, in 31 cases in the council 3 parties were represented, in 37 cases 4 parties, in 14 cases 5 parties and in 6 cases 6 parties.
- 8 The distribution of results is not consistent with the normal distribution, what is more - some of the ranges remain empty: (0,500, 0,550], (0,650, 0,950] (which in practice is equivalent to the range (0,650, 0,999]). The lack of indications for the second range in particular should not be surprising, considering the specificity of the coefficient used. The possible values of φ depend on the number of players and the distribution of shares between them. In practice, in the 2018 district council elections, the number of groups that obtained seats in a given district council (i.e. the number of players) ranged from 2 to 8, with councils with 4 to 6 players dominating (over 75%). The number of players mechanically limits the maximum possible player power, excluding the dictator position. The odd number of seats in each council (no ties) is another limiting factor. The highest possible power index value lower than 1 in a 4-player game with an odd number of shares and a simple majority requirement is 0.500. For the remaining numbers of players, respectively: 2: 0,000; 3: 0,333; 5: 0,600; 6: 0,667; 7: 0,715; 8: 0,750. Taking this into account, obtaining a power index value in the range (0,75; 1) under the conditions of these elections was not at all possible. Of course, the empty range is wider: (0,650;1), but obtaining a value from this range requires the participation of at least 6 players, and there were only 54 such situations in these elections (17,20%), with games with 6 players dominating in this group. 7 or 8 groups appeared in only 12 cases (3,82%). It should be remembered that obtaining the highest possible value of power, excluding the dictator position, requires a special balance of power in the council.
- 9 Only the value of the 1st quartile is similar in all types and subtypes of units. The differences between districts and other types of units are most clearly visualized by the range of 50% of the middle observations (the space between the 1st and 3rd quartiles) - despite similar values of the 1st quartile, only in the case of districts the value of the 3rd quartile is only 0,500, while in the remaining groups it reaches a value close to the maximum (MNPP) or the maximum (other subtypes of communes and provinces). For none of the other types and subtypes of local government units did any of the statistically significant values take a value lower than for districts. This indicates a significantly lower position of the staroste's party compared to the leading parties in the remaining units, in particular compared to the smallest communes where the position of the presidential party is the strongest.
- 10 The limitation of the number of terms of office of commune heads/mayors/city presidents to two is a separate issue. The change was introduced by the legislator in 2018. Due to the fact that the limitation will come into force in 2029, it does not affect the situation in local arenas analyzed by the authors.
- 11 This should be treated as a limitation of this phenomenon in time. It is worth mentioning that in 2014 this phenomenon affected every tenth commune.
- 12 Not without significance here is the frequency of obtaining an independent majority (dictator's position) by leading parties in small communes and provinces, which was analyzed in one of the previous points.