

Lucyna Rajca

The Jan Kochanowski University
in Kielce

SEARCHING FOR LOCAL MODEL OF ELECTORAL SYSTEM¹

Introductory remarks

In response to the crisis of representative democracy, instruments are introduced in many European countries to dismiss political parties away in order to establish more direct ties between citizens and public authorities. Institutional changes are described as a departure from party democracy to civil democracy. According to Angelika Vetter, the concept of local civil democracy refers to a system characterized by weak institutional position of political parties in the representative system and entails a number of institutional features: directly elected mayors, binding referendums, an electoral system which weakens the position of parties, e.g. first past the post (FPTP), mechanisms enhancing the influence of citizens on decisions. In such a system, a political party may cease to be the single most important point of reference for the councillors, and indirect links between the representatives and the voters (through the party) are supplemented or even replaced by more direct contacts with the residents.²

One of institutional ways to change the relationship between politicians and citizens is the electoral system. Politicians are looking for opportunities to change these relationships, and because it is easier to alter local electoral systems,³ these changes most often occur at the local level.⁴ One of a variety of electoral systems is implemented depending on what effect is sought. In recent years, in parliamentary elections the most popular in the world are the proportional system with open lists and the majority system of single-member constituencies.⁵ The most popular local electoral system in Western Europe is the “open” system of party lists.⁶ Noticeable in the world is a shift

¹ The article is a translation of its Polish version contributed for publication in the jubilee book to honour the 60th anniversary of dr hab. Wojciech Saletra, Professor at Jan Kochanowski University, Dean of Faculty of Management and Administration.

² A. Vetter, *Citizens versus Parties: Explaining Institutional Change in German Local Government, 1989-2008*, “Local Government Studies”, vol. 35(1), 2009, pp. 125-142.

³ E.g. Constitution of the Republic of Poland on the question of elections to constituting bodies of local government refers to an ordinary act (art. 169).

⁴ H. van der Kolk, *Local Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, “Local Government Studies”, vol. 33, no. 2, 2007, p. 159.

⁵ W. Sokół, *Główne tendencje w polityce reform wyborczych w wyborach parlamentarnych*, “Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska”, vol. 20, no. 2, 2013, p. 115.

⁶ D. Wilson and C. Game, *Local Government in the United Kingdom*, Basingstoke 2006, p. 230.

from majority formulas towards proportional or mixed ones. In majority systems, evolution can be seen from multi-member to single-member constituencies.⁷ Interest in mixed systems, offering a promise of connection and implementation of the best features of both models, rose at the beginning of the 21st century.⁸ In line with modern trends in the UK and other English-speaking countries, there is a tendency to change from the majority system towards the proportional one. On the other hand, in Poland the opposite direction of change can be seen. The aim of this paper is to give an account of changes taking place in recent years and of the search for new solutions in electoral systems, mainly in Poland and the UK, as well as to present some reflections related to the subject matter.

Changing the electoral system in Polish municipalities

In Poland, it is quite a common belief that the adoption of the proportional system, especially for determining the outcome of elections to county councils and provincial councils (5% threshold and the method of translation of electoral votes into seats by d'Hondt) has shifted local elections towards party politics and weakened the civil factor.⁹ Analyses indicate that the political parties represented in the Parliament of Poland are trying to appropriate local government in the name of political struggle being carried out.¹⁰

The Election Code has introduced fundamental changes to the elections to municipal councils. It eliminated the previous division into municipalities up to 20,000 inhabitants, where councillors were elected in majority elections in one- to five-winner constituencies, and municipalities over 20,000 inhabitants, in which the proportional system was in force. Under the new arrangements, in all municipalities except for urban counties elections are held in single-member constituencies (Polish JOW) on the relative majority basis.¹¹ However, a radical change occurred only in the 327 municipalities where proportional elections were replaced by majority elections in JOW. The other 2152 municipalities have under 20,000 inhabitants, and therefore majority elections in single – or multi-member constituencies had been held there even before.

It could be argued that the establishment of single-member electoral districts in the elections to municipal councils is not the right solution because: it eliminates groups

⁷ W. Sokół, *Główne*, p. 129.

⁸ B. Michalak, *Mieszane systemy wyborcze na przykładzie Włoch i Rosji. Ordynacja doskonała czy niespełnione nadzieje?*, "Studia Bas", no. 3(27), 2011, p. 52.

⁹ Report from the conference *Dwudziestolecie demokratycznych wyborów w Polsce* and from celebration of the World Elections Day, Toruń, February 2-3, 2011, "Przegląd Sejmowy", no. 4(105), 2011, p. 219.

¹⁰ Fundacja Rozwoju Demokracji Lokalnej. Małopolski Instytut Samorządu Terytorialnego i Administracji, *Co nam powiedziały wybory samorządowe w 2010 roku, w 20 lat od wprowadzenia reformy samorządowej? Sukces? Porażka? Normalność?*, Raport z badań, Cracow 2011, p. 156.

¹¹ Art. 418, par. 1 *Ustawy z dnia 5 stycznia 2011 r. Kodeks wyborczy*, "Dz. U.", 2011, no. 21, pos. 112.

enjoying small and medium public support; leads to over-representation of the election winner; can create local councils without considerable opposition and with a tendency to polarize rather than unify local communities; because the rural mayor, town mayor or president of the city are directly elected and keep most of the power in their municipalities, while the councillors are marginalized, it is important that the council were representative, or elected by proportional elections. Towns with similar population will use different electoral systems, e.g. Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski now has single-member districts, while in Łomża and Ostrołęka (towns constituting urban counties) councillors are elected in the proportional system. In small communities single-member constituencies are likely to work, because the inhabitants know the candidates and they can designate the one who will represent them well and act in their interest. In larger municipalities the candidates are less well-known, voters will be guided by their party affiliation, and therefore JOW's do not obviously favour the election of independent candidates (and shift from the party-biased policies of local government). In the UK, where the system first-past-the-post is in operation, about 90% of councillors are associated with political parties and the vast majority of councils (almost 70 per cent of the total number) are dominated by either the Conservatives or the Labour.¹² Parties (their leaders) decide who and in which district is to stand for the council. The British example shows that the conviction frequently expressed in Poland about independence of candidates running in single-member constituencies is but a myth.

Unfavourable for the majority system are studies that show that in the countries where it is applied election turnout is significantly lower than where the proportional system is in force.¹³ However, it seems that the impact of the electoral system on the turnout cannot be determined unambiguously because in different countries there are many specific circumstances, both changeable and unique, such as the levels of legal culture and political consciousness, economic crises and current social problems.¹⁴

In Poland supporters of single-member constituencies prevail. In a survey conducted by OBOP in 2008, 64% of the respondents were in favour of the introduction of single-member constituencies, 13% were against, and 23% expressed indifference or lack of opinion.¹⁵ Proponents of single-member districts consider them an important constitutional experiment which will improve the quality of Polish democracy. Independent candidates are expected to appear in politics thanks to their competence and not to obedience to party leaders.¹⁶ The bonds between the councillors

¹² D. Wilson and C. Game, *Local Government in the United Kingdom*, Basingstoke 2011, p. 311.

¹³ A. Ladner and H. Milner, *Do Voters Turn Out More under Proportional than Majoritarian Systems? The Evidence from Swiss Communal Elections*, "Electoral Studies", no. 18, 1999, pp. 235-250; S. Bowler, D. Brockington and T. Donovan, *Election Systems and Voter Turnout: Experiments in the United States*, "Journal of Politics", vol. 63, no. 3, 2001, pp. 902-915.

¹⁴ Cf.: A. Jackiewicz, *Wybory do Parlamentu Europejskiego jako wybory drugiej kategorii (Second-Order-Elections). Uwagi na temat przyczyn, konsekwencji oraz prób przeciwdziałania niskiej frekwencji wyborczej*, "Przegląd Sejmowy", no. 2(121), 2014, p. 19.

¹⁵ *Polacy o proponowanych zmianach w systemie politycznym*, OBOP, April, 2008.

¹⁶ *Posłowie tworzą prawo na wyrost*, rozmowa Michała Cyrankiewicza z Jerzym Regulskim, "Rzeczpospolita", November 14, 2014, p. A11.

and their voters will be stronger, and the former will be easier to be held accountable for their promises. In the electoral systems which entail voting on the candidates more emphasis is put on grassroots connections, while the systems based on party lists tend to have stronger party control, and the fulfilling of the councillor's mandate is more related to the party than to personal relationships with the voters. The literature indicates that in the civil democracy the citizens are more likely to vote for a person rather than a party, and the elected representatives will be more sensitive to the needs and opinions of the citizens than in party systems of democracy.¹⁷ A trend is also expected towards personalization of local policies and changes in the nature of political representation.¹⁸

Trends in electoral reforms in the United Kingdom

The majority electoral system is commonly applied in English-speaking countries. The states following the Westminster model predominantly use the system FPTP (first past the post) – a relative majority in single-member constituencies. However, the ambassadors of Westminster democracies: the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand have attempted to shift from this system.¹⁹ The collapse of the effectiveness of the formula FPTP coincided with the increasing popularity of third parties and decreasing percentage of voters for the two major parties. In the UK, support for the proportional system (PR) has been increasing since the 1970s. The electoral manifesto of the British Labour Party in 1997 contained a commitment to hold a referendum on changing the electoral system. However, after their success in 1997 election, the Labour abandoned their intention of revising the electoral scheme. The reason was internal divisions within the party arising out of fear that the new system would be detrimental to the party that won the elections held under the current formula. In 2010, no party received a majority of seats, and that is why the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats formed a coalition government, which solution has little popularity in the British political tradition. The Liberal Democrats strongly opted for changing the electoral system as it was very unfavourable for them. In the elections in 2010 the party, enjoying a 23% public support, won only 8.8% of the seats, which clearly indicates a deformation characteristic of the FPTP system. In a referendum in 2011, the majority of Britons (68%) voted against the proposed system of “alternative vote”.²⁰ The first past the post system is therefore still used in the elections to the House of Commons

¹⁷ D. M. Farrell, *Electoral Systems. A Comparative Introduction*, Houndmills 2001, pp. 170-171.

¹⁸ B. Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, Cambridge 1997.

¹⁹ M. Więckowska, *Problematyka zmiany systemu wyborczego w demokracjach westminsterskich: Nowej Zelandii, Kanadzie i Wielkiej Brytanii. Perspektywa porównawcza*, “Przegląd Prawa Konstytucyjnego”, no. 3, 2011, p. 162.

²⁰ Alternative voting belongs to preferential systems usually used in single-member constituencies. The main objective is not proportionality but exclusion of the chance of being elected by a minority of votes, as it happened in the case of 2/3 of MPs elected in national elections in the UK in 2005. D. Wilson and C. Game, *Local Government in the United Kingdom*, Basingstoke 2006, p. 232.

and in local elections in England. After-referendum comments explained that the proposal to change the electoral system was rejected due to the Britons' aversion to coalitions being a symbol of suspect deals and broken promises.²¹

The British electoral system employed in local elections was considered the cause of the weakness of local democracy because of its injustice and numerous drawbacks that other systems do not have. Some British researchers called for radical reform towards the introduction of a more proportional system.²² Talking about the change of the electoral scheme in English local elections, they took into consideration the single transferable vote system (STV) and a version of the Additional Member System (AMS) – voters have two votes: one for the candidate in the district, and a vote determining the proportional result.²³ Both STV and AMS would increase chance of election of independent candidates and members of smaller parties, and both systems would probably significantly increase the already existing large share of so-called “balanced” councils (in terms of arithmetic).²⁴ This would imply the building of formal and informal local coalitions. British literature perceives the positive aspects of balanced councils, because they can “develop more open and democratic forms of local government than those usually controlled by majority authorities”.²⁵

The use of the first-past-the-post system in local elections in England (and Wales) means that the composition of a council does not reflect the preferences of voters. In some English districts of local government, local authorities are constantly dominated by one party, and some temporarily do not have any opposition. In England and Wales, more than 20 million people live in the districts of local government where more than 75% of the seats are in the hands of one party. The Conservatives, who in the northern part of England have weaker public support, are very poorly represented in local councils. For example, in 2010 in Sheffield Tories did not have a single seat in the council. If PR electoral law were in force, they would have had 12 out of 84. In 2012 in Tameside, the Conservatives won 25% of votes, which translated into seats gave them only 5 (8.8%) out of a total of 57. Under proportional representation they would have won 14 seats.²⁶ Conservative voters are underrepresented in major cities, while the Labour voters in rural areas. In 2011, the Labour Party did not even have their representatives (councillors) in as many as 69 English districts and unitary units.

²¹ T. Clark, *10 Reasons Why AV Referendum Was Lost*, “The Guardian”, May 6, 2011.

²² J. Stewart, *Modernising British Local Government. An Assessment of Labour's Reform Programme*, Basingstoke 2003, p. 17; D. Wilson and C. Game, *Local Government in the United Kingdom*, Basingstoke 2006, p. 238.

²³ H. van der Kolk, *Local Electoral Systems*, p. 172.

²⁴ As shown by the experience of Scottish councils after the change of the electoral system in 2007.

²⁵ S. Leach and C. Game, *Local Government: The Decline of the One-Party State*, [in:] *Refreshing the Parts: Electoral Reform and British Politics*, ed. G. Smyth, London 1992, p. 152; L. Rajca, *Reformy samorządu terytorialnego w Anglii w latach 1997-2010*, Toruń 2012, pp. 220-221.

²⁶ N. Tyrone and C. Terry, *Northern Blues. The Conservative Case for Local Electoral Reform*, The Electoral Reform Society, *Foreword*, <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/downloadfile.php?PublicationFile=374> [November 15, 2014].

Many votes are wasted. In England and Wales, more than half of the votes are put to candidates who do not win seats. Sometimes voters choose to vote tactically, resigning from supporting their most preferred candidate.²⁷ The relative majority necessary to ensure the victory drops with increasing number of candidates in the district; as a result, candidates are elected by minority votes and have weak legitimacy. There is also the problem of lack of interest among the residents in fulfilling functions in local representative bodies. In Wales in 2012, 96 seats (approx. 8% of the total) were uncontested. The assignment of a seat in the absence of an opponent (opponents) means that voters did not have a choice and the person holding the seat does not have proper legitimacy to do this. The problem is noticeable in England as well.²⁸ The shortcomings of the relative majority system in single-member constituencies undoubtedly have an impact on Britons' political apathy and consequently the low turnout at elections.

British Liberal Democrats have another chance to change the electoral system. At the end of 2014, both major parties enjoyed public support at a similar level (according to a survey by Populus, 33% of respondents would have voted for the Conservatives, while 35% for the Labour²⁹). In the face of expected difficulties in obtaining a majority in Parliament in 2015, a hung parliament is probable. Both the Conservatives and Labour are open to reform the electoral system.³⁰ The social changes that have been taking place for several decades resulted in the population of the UK not being divided along social class lines any more. The society has become more fluid and complex. The old identities binding people with political parties have weakened, while identities associated with ethnic groups, gender, age or level of education have grown in importance. For this reason, British politics is becoming increasingly multi-biased. Social changes affect the polarization of the British political scene, which raises the likelihood of coalition rule and change in the electoral system, also at the local level in England and Wales.

STV/preferential voting

One of the instruments establishing more direct links between citizens and public authorities is to make the electoral system more personal by giving more weight to preferential ballot.³¹ Preferential voting allows voters to articulate their political

²⁷ On tactical voting in the UK see.: J. Salamon, *Współczynnik SF jako miara głosowania taktycznego w wyborach do brytyjskiej Izby Gmin z 6 maja 2010 roku*, [in:] *Wybory 2010. Polska i świat*, eds. M. Jeziński, W. Peszyński, A. Seklecka, Toruń 2011, pp. 236-252.

²⁸ L. Baston and W. Brett, *Towards One Nations. The Labour Case for Local Electoral Reform*, Electoral Reform Society, pp. 4, 13, 31, <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/downloadfile.php?PublicationFile=382> [November 15, 2014].

²⁹ *Latest Populus and You Gov Poll*, October 17, 2014, <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/> [October 10, 2014].

³⁰ Electoral Reform Society, *Electoral Reform at the Local level. A Red Line Issue in 2015*, London, <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/downloadfile.php?PublicationFile=394> [November 2, 2014].

³¹ Depending on technical solutions, preferential voting can take the shape of: ranking; accumulation; changing or establishing the order on the list; juxtaposing candidates from different

preferences more precisely and fully.³² The Single Transferable Vote system (STV) seems to be worth considering a solution in local elections. In this system, used for example in Ireland and Northern Ireland, voters vote for several candidates, arranging them in the order of their preferences. Voters decide how many candidates they rank. If a voter believes that only one candidate is suitable, they can cast a vote for that candidate without indicating other preferences. If the preferred candidate classified as No 1 does not have a chance of getting a seat or already has enough votes to obtain it, the vote goes to the second preferred candidate. The process of determining the result of the ballot continues until all seats are assigned. A voter has an influence on the composition of the local council even if their most preferred candidate does not win a seat as their preferences are taken into account in the allocation of seats. This motivates voters to analyze the persons and their programmes rather than just vote for the preferred party. In this system, there are very few “wasted votes”. STV is assessed as the most faithfully translating a diversity of the voters’ political opinions into the composition of the elected body. Since 1973 it has been used in Northern Ireland, and since 2007 in Scottish local elections. In Scotland it eliminated in most councils the previous “one-party monopoly”, or councils of “one-party domination”.³³ It also abolished the “plague” of so-called uncontested seats (with only one candidate to apply for) and gave Scottish voters fairer representation. In the last local government election held under FPTP system (2003), there were 61 seats won without competition because of the lack of contestants, while since 2007 (the introduction of STV) candidates for councillors have fought for every seat. Voter turnout remained stable despite the allegedly more complicated STV system.

A research into the decisions taken by Belgian voters in regional elections indicates a variety of motivations in preferential voting and three aspects thereof. Firstly, the preferential voting turns out to be a sophisticated electoral behaviour more accessible to active voters who are interested in politics. Less politically active voters often confine themselves to voting for candidates in the top positions of the list, without distinguishing their support among the candidates. Secondly, preferential voting is very symptomatic of closeness between the candidate and the voter. Thirdly, the voters’ disposition towards preferential voting grows together with the growth of its influence on the process of allocation of seats.³⁴ Other studies conducted in municipalities in Flanders show that a voter’s readiness to distribute preferential votes depends on favourable factors: socio-demographic, political, geographical of social capital and form

lists (*panachage*). A. Sokala, B. Michalak, P. Uziębło, *Leksykon prawa wyborczego i referendum oraz systemów wyborczych*, Warsaw 2013, p. 69.

³² However, this entails a more complicated process of establishing the results of elections.

³³ H. Bochel and D. Denver, *Minor Parties and Independents in Times of Change: Scottish Local Elections 1974 to 2007*, “Local Government Studies”, vol. 34, no. 5, 2008, pp. 577-593. See.: L. Rajca, *Systemy wyborcze do organów stanowiących samorządu lokalnego w Europie Zachodniej*, “Athenaeum”, no. 3, 2011, p. 58.

³⁴ A. André, B. Wauters, J.-B. Pilet, *It’s Not Only About Lists: Explaining Preference Voting in Belgium*, “Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties”, vol. 22, iss. 3, 2012, pp. 293-313.

of voting (e-voting). The research showed as well that electoral reforms giving voters more opportunities to make choices provide perceivable effects only in urban municipalities, since in rural communities local politics had already been largely personalized and electoral reform was therefore unnecessary.³⁵

Concluding Remarks

Scholars argue that electoral systems affect many aspects of the decision-making process, including at local government level. Unfortunately, there are not many studies of local electoral systems and their consequences in Western Europe.³⁶ The multitude of factors that affect the functioning of local democracy (local government) makes it very difficult to distinguish the specific effect of electoral procedures even if the optimum model thereof could be identified.³⁷ Examination of the actual effects of institutional reforms is therefore not easy and requires a long-term empirical studies both before the reforms and after them. Bas Denters and Pieter Jan Klok concluded that an alternative form of such research may be investigation into the impact of diversified institutional structures on local democracy in a number (16) of European countries. On the basis of the analyses carried out they found that it is doubtful that democratic institutions with enhanced civil aspect could lead to improvement in relations between the representatives and the represented, and to increased democratic sensitivity of the representatives.³⁸ The last civil democratic reforms will not lead to transformation of local systems of political representation, as they have little impact on the attitudes and behaviour of councillors.³⁹ They also found that “the stronger the civil institutions of the local government, the fewer councillors maintain contacts with citizens and local groups”.⁴⁰ They also suggested that the relatively lower frequency of these contacts in systems of local civil democracy may be due to the wider availability of alternative and perhaps more effective means of expressing citizens’ opinions and needs in such systems. Further empirical studies verifying the above statements would be desirable. As regards the expected advantages of single-member constituencies which are supposed to manifest themselves in more frequent and closer contacts of the voters with their representatives, an analysis of data from a few dozen democracies leads to the conclusion that there is no statistically significant difference in respect

³⁵ B. Wauters, D. Verlet and J. Ackaert, *Giving More Weight to Preferential Votes: Welcome or Superfluous Reform? The Case of the Local Elections in Flanders (Belgium)*, “Local Government Studies”, vol. 38, iss. 1, 2012, pp. 91-111.

³⁶ H. Van Der Kolk, *Local Electoral Systems*, p. 160.

³⁷ D. Packel, *Electoral Institutions and Local Government Accountability: A Literature Review*, “Local Governance & Accountability Series”, no. 111, July, 2008, p. 14.

³⁸ B. Denters and P.-J. Klok, *Citizen Democracy and the Responsiveness of Councillors. The Effects of Democratic Institutionalisation on the Role Orientations and Role Behaviour of Councillors*, “Local Government Studies”, vol. 39, no. 5, 2013, p. 675.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 661-680.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 662, 676.

of the closeness of these relationships between the proportional system and single-member constituencies.⁴¹

Introduction of changes to the electoral system does not always produce the expected results. In Italy, for example, the reform of 1993 transforming the electoral system from a purely proportional to the mixed-member majoritarian, with a preponderance of the relative majority system in single-member constituencies, was aimed at obtaining a more transparent and stable rule, elimination of “rotten” alliances, limitation of corruption, reduction of the number of political parties in order to replace the “polarized party pluralism with its moderate, preferably bipolar version”⁴² and the establishment of conditions for policy of interests rather than policy of influence. Against all expectations, Italian politics on the local, provincial and regional levels revealed an explosion of number of parties – majority elections in JOW did not reduce their number, as would result from Duverger’s law. An emphasis on forming coalitions has increased, including a lot of strange ones because composed on the basis of local and ideologically opposite pre-election alliances, which have become a new obligatory format of political competition.⁴³ Contrary to expectations, this produced conditions more favourable for politicians of influence than for politicians of interest. The electoral reform, designed to generate a bipolar system, remarkably changed the action of local governments, but had no effect on the polarization itself.⁴⁴ The Italian example shows that the conditions (political context) of introduction of an electoral system are of great importance for its later effects.⁴⁵

The choice between the proportional, the majority and mixed systems depends on the value system of those making the choice. If, for example, emphasis is put on preserving the personal character of a choice, but at the same time it is essential to ensure proportional representation of different groups of voters, then STV can be a good method, because it best combines proportional and personal nature of elections. The ability to adjust the electoral system to a specific context is particularly important. International comparative studies on local electoral systems, however important, will be of limited value for politicians, as other countries do not have exactly the same social and political conditions (including the model of political system, historical traditions,

⁴¹ *The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*, ed. H.-D. Klingemann, Oxford 2009, R. Markowski, *System wyborczy – system partyjny – jakość demokracji. O jednomandatowych okręgach wyborczych*, Warsaw 2010, p. 11.

⁴² B. Michalak, *Mieszane systemy wyborcze*, p. 57.

⁴³ According to some researchers modern democracies based on the principle of representation give results which are mostly developed during negotiations between the leaders of political groups and to a lesser degree in the course of processes requiring general attention. A. Przeworski, *Demokracja i rynek*, [in:] *Władza i społeczeństwo* 2, ed. J. Szczupaczyński, Warsaw 1998, pp. 119, 122.

⁴⁴ P. Parigi, P. S. Bearman, *Spaghetti Politics: Local Electoral Systems and Alliance Structure in Italy, 1984-2001*, “Social Forces”, vol. 87, no. 2, 2008, pp. 623-649.

⁴⁵ In 2005 Italy resigned from the mixed electoral system and returned to an earlier proportional system, however, largely modified. B. Michalak, *Mieszane systemy wyborcze*, s. 62.

socio-political divisions, political culture, civil society). Probably the only way to verify the potential effects of local electoral systems on the functioning of local democracy is by experimenting – for at least a couple of election cycles. Reforms of electoral system will continue to be a subject of consideration, because the objectives of electoral systems, procedures and public expectations about the quality of political representatives change ceaselessly. Representative democracy is still the core of local democracy, in spite of all its shortcomings and in spite of all the experiments with alternative models.

Summary

SEARCHING FOR LOCAL MODEL OF ELECTORAL SYSTEM

In response to the crisis of representative democracy, instruments are introduced in many European countries to dismiss political parties away in order to establish more direct ties between citizens and public authorities. One of the institutional ways to change the relationship between politicians and citizens is the electoral system. In Poland it is quite a common belief that the adoption of the proportional system has shifted local elections towards party politics and weakened the civil factor. The recently introduced change to the electoral system in Polish municipalities is not sure to bring the desired results. Scholars (Bas Denters and Pieter Jan Klok) claim, on the basis of the research they have carried out, that the recent civil democratic reforms will not lead to the transformation of local systems of political representation, as they have little impact on the attitudes and behaviour of councillors. There is also no statistically significant difference with respect to the closeness of voter-representative relations between the proportional systems and single-member constituencies. The conviction that commonly appears in Poland about independence of candidates running in single-member constituencies may be but a myth. The circumstances (the political context) of introduction of an electoral system are of great importance for its later effects. The multitude of factors that affect the functioning of local democracy (local government) makes it very difficult to single out a specific effect of electoral procedures. Therefore, the examination of the actual effects of institutional reforms is not easy and requires long-term empirical studies. Reforms of electoral systems will still be taken into consideration, because their goals and procedures as well as public expectations concerning the quality of political representatives are constantly changing.

Keywords: local government, electoral system

Zusammenfassung

SUCHE NACH EINEM KOMUNALWAHLSYSTEM

Einer der institutionellen Wege die Beziehung zwischen Politikern und Bürgern zu ändern ist das Wahlsystem. In Polen ist es ein weitverbreiteter Glaube, dass die Ein-

führung des proportionalen Systems lokale Wahlen gegen Parteipolitik verschoben und den Bürgerfaktor geschwächt hat. Der kürzlich eingeführte Wechsel zum Wahlsystem in polnischen Gemeinden stellt die erwarteten Ziele nicht sicher. Es ist allgemeine Überzeugung in Polen, dass unabhängige Kandidaten welche in Wahlkreisen antreten möglich, aber ein Mythos sind. Die Umstände (der politische Kontext) der Einführung eines Wahlsystems sind von großer Bedeutung für die späteren Effekte. Die Vielzahl von Faktoren welche die Funktion einer lokalen Demokratie (lokalen Regierung) beeinflusst macht es sehr schwierig einen einzelnen Effekt der Wahlprozeduren herauszugreifen.

Schlüsselwörter: die kommunale Selbstverwaltung, das Wahlsystem

Streszczenie

POSZUKIWANIA MODELU SAMORZĄDOWEGO PRAWA WYBORCZEGO

W odpowiedzi na kryzys demokracji przedstawicielskiej w wielu państwach europejskich wprowadzane są instrumenty odsunięcia partii politycznych w celu ustanowienia bardziej bezpośrednich związków między obywatelami a władzą publiczną. Jednym z instytucjonalnych sposobów zmiany relacji między politykami a obywatelami jest system wyborczy. W Polsce dość powszechne jest przekonanie, że przyjęcie systemu proporcjonalnego doprowadziło do upartyjnienia wyborów samorządowych i osłabienia czynnika obywatelskiego. Wprowadzona niedawno zmiana do systemu wyborczego w polskich gminach nie koniecznie przyniesie oczekiwane rezultaty. Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań uczeni twierdzą (Bas Denters i Pieter Jan Klok), że ostatnie obywatelskie reformy demokratyczne nie doprowadzą do transformacji lokalnych systemów politycznej reprezentacji, gdyż mają one słaby wpływ na postawę i zachowania radnych. Nie ma też statystycznie istotnej różnicy w zakresie bliskości relacji wyborców z reprezentantami w systemach proporcjonalnych i jednomandatowych okręgach wyborczych. Mitem może być często pojawiające się w Polsce przekonanie o niezależności kandydatów startujących w jednomandatowych okręgach wyborczych. Warunki (kontekst polityczny), w jakich wprowadzany jest system wyborczy mają ogromne znaczenie dla jego późniejszych efektów. Wielość czynników, które mają wpływ na funkcjonowanie demokracji lokalnej (samorządu terytorialnego) powoduje, że bardzo trudno jest wyodrębnić specyficzny efekt procedur wyborczych. Zbadanie faktycznych efektów reform instytucjonalnych nie jest zatem proste i wymaga długotrwałych studiów empirycznych. Reformy systemów wyborczych nadal będą rozważane, zmieniają się bowiem nieustannie cele systemów wyborczych, procedury i społeczne oczekiwania co do jakości reprezentantów politycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: samorząd terytorialny, prawo wyborcze

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