

V. Qualitative analysis. Case studies of selected communes

In accordance with the adopted method of nested analysis, the statistical analysis was a stage that was to be first of all a source of knowledge about which units should be chosen for an in-depth qualitative analysis. From the quantitative analysis, we already know that there is no positive correlation between ethnic diversity and governance quality, with the exception of a clear connection between ethnic diversity and the participation dimension of good governance. However, we would like to examine more thoroughly the meaning of multiculturalism in the context of governance quality because the quantitative analysis showed that the multi-ethnic communities were characterized by greater diversity in this respect, which still entitles us to ask about the role of multiculturalism. We can assume that there are multicultural communes where this factor has some, positive or negative, influence on the quality of governance, and simultaneously there are communes where it is not of much importance. Therefore, the question whether in a particular communal context, ethnic diversity plays any role from the perspective of governance quality (not only in the participation dimension) remains topical. However, an answer to this question will not suffice to formulate generalizations about relations between our variables because it will be valid for concrete cases only. But it will make it possible to show a more multi-dimensional picture of relations in which multiculturalism and governance quality may enter in various local contexts. It may even result in debunking numerous generalizations concerning the impact of “Silesianness/Germanness” on the quality of governance. Additionally, we would like to find out which factors may be responsible for a high or low place on our good governance scale in both multicultural and culturally homogeneous communes.

As it has already been noted in Chapter 1, we decided to apply the method of extreme cases (cf. Seawright and Gerring 2008). Therefore, for the further analysis, we selected four communes holding extreme positions with respect to governance quality. We chose two communes which are characterized by a high degree of ethnic diversity and simultaneously hold respectively the lowest and the highest positions on the governance quality scale and two such ethnically homogeneous communes:

- a) Kolonowskie – an ethnically diversified commune holding the highest position on the scale of governance quality;

Tab. 15: Selected information on the communes selected for the qualitative analysis

	high level of governance quality	low level of governance quality
high level of ethnic diversity	Kolonowskie (number of inhabitants: 6582; ethnic fractionalization index: 0.55; governance quality index: 14.91)	Walce (number of inhabitants: 6215; ethnic fractionalization index: 0.66; governance quality index: 8.73)
low level of ethnic diversity	Paczków (number of inhabitants: 13962; ethnic fractionalization index: 0.04; governance quality index: 15.32)	Domaszowice (number of inhabitants: 3897; ethnic fractionalization index: 0.05; governance quality index: 6.66)

Source: the authors' own work.

- b) Walce – an ethnically diversified commune holding the lowest position on the scale of governance quality;
- c) Paczków – an ethnically homogeneous commune holding the second highest position on the scale of governance quality³²;
- d) Domaszowice – an ethnically homogeneous commune holding the lowest position on the scale of governance quality.

Selecting these communes, we had to face a major dilemma, namely differences in their respective demographic potentials. The commune of Paczków has 14,000 inhabitants, Kolonowskie – 6,600 inhabitants, Walce – 6,200 inhabitants, and Domaszowice – 3,900 inhabitants. Thus, it seems that there may be some problems with their comparability, especially in view of the conclusions drawn from the quantitative analysis of relations between demographic variables and governance quality. Nevertheless, we decided to keep these cases³³, because we

32 The highest position on the scale is held by the commune of Głuchołazy, but as it is also the largest of the communes under examination (more than 25,000 inhabitants), we decided to exclude it from the groups of our case studies.

33 For the particular communes, we took into consideration various options. For example, instead of the commune of Paczków, we were considering the smaller (10,000 inhabitants) commune of Byczyna, which also had a high position on the governance quality scale, but still 2.5 points fewer than the exceptional Paczków. Instead of the small commune of Domaszowice, we were thinking of choosing the larger commune of Łambinowice (8,000 inhabitants), but the latter's ethnic fractionalization index was just 0.17 and its place on the governance quality scale was higher. Walce was chosen instead of the commune of Gorzów Śląski, which was larger (8,000 inhabitants) and

assumed that their comparison was only one of the objectives of our research. What was of primary importance for us, leaving aside the comparative context, was to understand each case as a separate microworld offering data important from the point of view of the conducted research. Cases a and b themselves provide a significant insight in the relations included in our hypothesis, and either case c or case d offers an opportunity to ponder on local determinants of governance quality specific for a given context (after all, such opportunities are also provided by cases a and b). It does not rule out comparisons and particular conclusions drawn from such comparisons. The issue of the influence of demographic factors on governance quality acquires an interesting meaning when we focus on the fact that, slightly bigger than the commune of Walce, the commune of Kolonowskie managed to achieve a completely different result (see tab. 15). It is also worth noting that the selected communes are located far away from large urban centers (thus, they do not collect any location rent, although their locations may also influence their positions on our governance quality scale) and are peripheral units on the map of the Opolskie province.

The studies of the aforementioned cases were to allow the exploration of the following three major problems:

- a) a deeper exploration of our, already disproved, hypothesis by attempting to answer the question about the significance of multiculturalism in the selected communes in the context of governance quality;
- b) an explanation of potential reasons for a given commune's high or low position on the good governance scale;
- c) a comparison of the features common to the communes with a high level of governance quality which, simultaneously, do not occur in the communes with a low level of governance quality, which is to make it possible to abstract the factors that influence a given commune's high position on the governance quality scale.

had a lower place on the governance quality scale, but its ethnic fractionalization index was too low. We decided to stick to the commune of Walce because of its high ethnic diversity and a very low position in the governance quality ranking, which is especially important from the perspective of the major hypothesis for this research (Walce is a complete contradiction of this hypothesis). Thus, our choice was the result of various compromises within the attempt to maintain the extreme values of the ethnic fractionalization index, the governance quality index, and demographic potential – the most important were the extreme values on the governance quality scale, but they were adjusted by taking into consideration the degrees of ethnic diversity.

The attempt to clarify the foregoing problems will be based on an analysis of each of the communes. Such an analysis will include a description of the following dimensions of a commune:

- a) a commune's governance quality profile (a more detailed presentation based on the values of the particular sub-indexes);
- b) a commune's geographic and demographic position;
- c) a commune's economy;
- d) a commune's specific features in the material area (e.g. architecture, infrastructure, natural environment) as well as the symbolic and identity-related area;
- e) a commune's political elite (the governing coalition, political leaders and their personality profiles, e.g. a bureaucrat, a visionary, a businessperson).

The case studies are based on the analysis of both secondary and primary data. The former include documents concerning a commune such as development strategies and other data published on a commune's website (or a Public Information Bulletin); academic, popular, and promotional publications; data provided by the State Electoral Commission, and press materials. We also used minutes of commune council sessions for the year 2016. They constituted a basis for an analysis of the activity of commune authorities (commune councillors), the most important issues a commune had to cope with in 2016, as well as relations between the commune leader/mayor and the commune/town council. Access to the minutes allowed us to formulate a general view on the political situation in a commune and certain conclusions concerning the political culture of local authorities. In general, the analysis of the secondary data made it possible for us not only to obtain an insight into the unique character of a given commune, but also to prepare properly for partly structured interviews with the representatives of each commune. On the basis of the knowledge acquired from the analysis of the existing data, it was determined which issues should be raised in the particular communes in order to take into account their respective specific characters. We did not inform our respondents that the interviews concerned the quality of governance, but, similarly to the conducted questionnaire, local democracy. Selecting questions for the interviews, we were inspired by the individual interview scenario developed by Cezary Trutkowski and Sławomir Mandes (Trutkowski and Mandes 2005: 301–305) for the purposes of research on social capital in small towns. On this basis, the following general questions were formulated for each of the communes:

- a) **Introductory questions:** How do you assess the commune's position in comparison to those in the neighboring communes? What are the most important

advantages and disadvantages of living in the commune? Has the commune benefited from Poland's accession to the EU? What changes have occurred in the commune in connection with Poland's accession to the EU? Who, in your opinion, has the greatest influence on what happens in the commune? Is this individual persons or rather groups of people?

- b) **Assessment of the local authorities:** How do you assess the commune council and its activities for the benefit of the commune? How do you assess the commune leader and the offices subordinate to the commune leader? Do the commune authorities have a commune development vision? If so, what are the characteristic features of such a vision? If not, what are the reasons for the lack of such a vision? Do the commune authorities cooperate with anybody from outside the commune authorities with a view to solving the commune's problems? In your opinion, are commune inhabitants satisfied with the services provided by the commune offices? What are the criteria for employing people in the commune/town office? Are contacts necessary or is employment based first of all on qualifications? Are the commune authorities involved in dialogues with inhabitants? Do they inform inhabitants of their activities, invite them to consultation sessions before making important decisions, encourage them to participate in common activities for the benefit of the commune? What should be changed in the functioning of the commune authorities?
- c) **Assessment of the other local stage actors**

Are inhabitants interested in commune matters? If so, how does this interest manifest itself? If not, what are the reasons for the lack of interest? Are there any groups or organizations critical of the activities of the commune authorities? Do inhabitants get involved in activities for the benefit of the commune, e.g. solving the commune's problems? Do you think that inhabitants have any influence on the situation in the commune, i.e. on decisions made by local politicians, the commune's economy, infrastructure or cultural life? If such influence exists, how is it exercised? Which business enterprise has the greatest influence on life in the commune? Where does such influence result from? Do the commune authorities cooperate with businesspeople? If such cooperation exists, what does it consist in? Is there any local press (printed or online)? If so, who is the publisher? If not, what are the reasons for the lack of the press? What issues are raised by the existing press? Are there any issues that should be raised, but are not?

Thus, the case studies presented below are based on qualitative data. We are aware that an in-depth analysis of the functioning of local communities allowing

for their comprehensive description requires rich factual materials and a genuine insight into the imagined world of the inhabitants of each commune. The collection of such materials requires a lot of time and financial resources, and the authors of the research were rather limited in their access to either of them. It seems that what acquires special significance in the examination of the quality of governance at the local level is trust from potential interviewees. It is trust that determines access to respondents and the quality of materials obtained during interviews. A solid examination of informal relations, often constituting an important dimension of governance processes at the local level, requires time necessary for winning the trust of respondents and their genuine opinions on local politics. Thus, it should be noted that temporal, personnel, and financial limitations allowed us to present a rather general picture of each commune, and the conducted case studies are of an exploratory character which is to allow a formulation of preliminary conclusions constituting an inspiration for subsequent, more in-depth research. Such conclusions will be present in the last part of the book.

1 Kolonowskie

Governance quality profile

The commune of Kolonowskie had the third highest governance quality index with the score of 14.91 points³⁴. It is simultaneously a commune with a high ethnic fractionalization index (0.55). The commune is inhabited first of all by people declaring their Polish (51 %) and German (43 %) identification. The percentage of the Silesian population is small and equals approximately 6 %.

In the sub-index of participation, the commune had 3.57 points (the fourth highest value among the communes covered by the research). Analyzing the particular indexes, we can indicate the following characteristic features. The commune has 18 active non-governmental organizations, including public benefit entities. Under the 1 % mechanism, the public benefit organizations received 8,700 zlotys (1.33 zlotys/inhabitant). The percentage of voters supporting voters' election committees was 100 %: Kolonowskie is one of the nine communes included in the research that did not have any party-based election committees. However, as it has been indicated in Chapter II, a low

34 Among the 60 communes included in the research, only the communes of Paczków and Głucholązy had higher index values. As it has been mentioned above, Głucholązy was not selected for case studies because of its large population.

party dependency level is characteristic of small communes with up to 20,000 inhabitants. The number of people using the services of the commune library is relatively low (76 persons per 1000 inhabitants; the average for all communes included in the research is 128). The average mark in junior secondary school social science and history examination is 58.4 %, which is the fourth highest result in the research.

With respect to equality, the commune received a low score of 1.69 points. The analysis of the particular components of the sub-index shows that among 15 councillors there are 9 women (the average for the 60 communes is 30 %) and women hold two of the four managerial positions distinguished in the research (treasurer and social assistance center manager). The commune does not have a youth council or a senior citizens council. The poverty risk index is moderate and equals 0.591³⁵.

With respect to efficiency, the commune scored 2.98 points, which is the second best result in the research. This result is based on high capital expenditures per inhabitant (336.04 zlotys), average income (1490.90 zlotys per inhabitant in 2015) and relatively high current expenditures on public administration per inhabitant (408.92 zlotys in 2014). Among all beneficiaries of social assistance, 41 % were permanently dependent on it. The commune also received 1 point for using a quality management system, being one of only three communes with such a system.

With respect to accountability, the commune scored 3.67 points. The free press is present in the commune; the “Strzelec Opolski” is a weekly with a circulation of 6300 copies distributed in the Strzelecki district³⁶. One of the journalists working for the newspaper is allocated to the commune of Kolonowskie. The newspaper as well as the website belonging to the publisher (strzelecopolski.pl) presents a lot of information on the commune’s local matters. The “Strzelec Opolski” is published by the Silesiana Publishing House, which is independent of local authorities. Besides the “Strzelec Opolski”, the commune has one more newspaper, the “Colonnowska”. Published by the Kolonowskie Town and Commune Office, it fulfils mainly the informative function. The commune’s website contains a subsite with the complete documentation of conducted inspections. The level of electoral competition is also relatively high: in 2014

35 The values of the poverty risk index range from 0 to 1, where 1 means the lowest risk of poverty, and 0 the highest. More information on this index is presented in the annex.

36 <http://www.strzelecopolski.pl/strona/oferta-reklamowa> (Accessed 22 May 2019).

there were 3 candidates running for the post of town mayor. As far as property statements are concerned, all councillors and the mayor had had their statements published before 2 June 2017. Four (out of fifteen) councillors have higher education.

With respect to openness, the commune scored 3 points. It fulfilled its obligation to provide public information, answering the questionnaire in a timely manner. The commune has adopted a special resolution regulating the matter of social consultations. Minutes of council sessions are published on the commune's website. The process of cooperation with local non-governmental organizations is assessed as ineffective: organizations provide no comments on the cooperation programme as part of social consultations, and the commune has not published the said programme of cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

Geographic and demographic position

Kolonowskie is an urban-rural commune located in the eastern part of the Opolskie province, in the Strzelecki district. The commune consists of four communities: Kolonowskie, Staniszcze Wielkie, Staniszcze Małe and Spórok, as well as the quarter of Fosowskie (an administrative part of the town of Kolonowskie, with its own quarter council and chairperson). The commune is inhabited by close to 6000 people, of which 3380 in Kolonowskie. In the years 1945–1950 the seat of the commune authorities was the village of Staniszcze Wielkie. The commune is characterized by a low population density (71 persons/km²), which results from a large share of forests in the commune's surface area (75 %). It is located in the northern part of the Strzelecki district, close to the borderline between the Opolskie province and the Śląskie province. The location is peripheral with respect to both the provincial capital (35 km along a provincial road or a railway line) and the district authorities seat in Strzelce Opolskie (23 km along local roads). Nevertheless, the commune has other advantages resulting from its location and historical development. It is located in the valley of the Mała Panew River, which is used for tourist purposes. In the 18th and 19th centuries, on the initiative of count Filip Collona, the local landowner, the commune became the place of the intensive development of the steel industry.

There are 18 active non-governmental organizations in the commune. These are five voluntary fire service units, four DFK (Deutsche Freundschaftskreise) circles, a choir and orchestra, as well as three sports clubs. There are also associations whose scopes of activities are broader than local. These are the Success Embassy Association providing assistance to people after laryngectomy procedures and the "Siedlisko" Association offering help to people with

disabilities and running a nursing home in Staniszcze Wielki and a social enterprise offering employment to young people with intellectual disabilities³⁷.

Economy

The history of the town of Kolonowskie is connected with the establishment of a steelworks by count Filip Collona in 1780. From the beginning of its existence Kolonowskie was a place where the steel industry was developing intensively. At some time there were two blast furnaces operated in the territory of the commune. In the middle of the 19th century a railway line was laid through Kolonowskie. At the beginning of the 20th century a cardboard factory was opened in the town. It is still an active enterprise operating under the business name of Packprofil sp. z o.o. The commune's largest enterprise is the factory run by the company Izostal specializing in anti-corrosion protection of steel pipes. The company moved its operations to Kolonowskie from the neighboring commune of Zawadzkie in 2009. It was an important event for the local economy. In the territory of the commune there are a number of small and medium-sized businesses representing the steel, wood processing, paper production, and transport industries. There are also many inhabitants providing tourist services (rental of kayaks and bicycles, organization of kayak trips, agrotourism, lodging services, organization of anniversary events). Altogether there are 190 business enterprises registered in the commune³⁸. The commune's characteristic feature is a very low level of unemployment. In comparison to the neighboring communes, a high percentage of inhabitants are employed in the territory of the commune and thus do not have to spend time and financial resources on commuting to work (Wywiad z przedstawicielem kierownictwa gminy 06.06.2019). In 2016 the share of the unemployed in the working-age population was 3.2 %³⁹. Kolonowskie is the least agriculturally developed commune in the Opolskie province. This is caused by both the low percentage of agricultural land (21.4 %) and the low quality of soil.

It is worth mentioning that in the 1990s Kolonowskie and the neighboring communes of Ozimek and Zawadzkie were hit by the collapse of the steel industry

37 http://www.siedlisko.org.pl/firma_spoleczna.html (Accessed 5 July 2019).

38 *Strategia Rozwoju Gminy Kolonowskie na lata 2016–2022*; <http://www.bip.kolonowskie.pl/download/attachment/22828/uchwala-nr-xv10716-w-sprawie-przyjecia-strategii-rozwoju-gminy-kolonowskie.pdf> (Accessed 27 May 2019).

39 https://opole.stat.gov.pl/vademecum/vademecum_opolskie/portrety_gmin/strzelecki/gmina_Kolonowskie.pdf (Accessed 05 June 2019).

and the consequent sudden increase of unemployment and falling importance of the Fosowskie rail hub⁴⁰. The development of tourist services became an idea for dealing with the economic problems of the local population and time has shown that it has been a successful plan. At present many inhabitants provide tourist services (rental of kayaks and bicycles, organization of kayak trips, agrotourism, lodging services, organization of anniversary events). The commune actively uses available European and domestic funds, executing various projects in the areas of tourism, education and infrastructure. It has a wide network of contacts with partner towns in Germany, Slovakia, Austria and the Czech Republic. Kolonowskie is the only Polish commune to have joined the Climate Alliance (in 2006)⁴¹.

Specific features in the material, symbolic, and identity-related areas

Present in the consciousness of its inhabitants, the specific features of the Kolonowskie commune include the multicultural identity of its inhabitants, as well as its natural and tourist advantages. The history of settlement in the commune is not long. The oldest village is Staniszczce Wielkie, which in the Middle Ages functioned as a small hunting settlement of the Upper Silesian Piasts⁴². The development of settlement in the territory of the commune is connected with Frederick's colonization, i.e. the establishment of German settlements in Silesia in the second half of the 18th century. It was in that period that count Filip Colonna, the owner of the local land, established the villages of Spórok, Kolonowskie and Fosowskie (at present a quarter of the town of Kolonowskie) and started to develop the steel industry. In the whole valley of the Mała Panew River, sixty new colonies were established. The Silesian and German populations living together and the industrial character of the settlement structure defined the identity of the local community in the 19th century (cf. Rajman 2003). Some of the original settlements do not exist anymore, but their remains are present in the area's topography (e.g. the old hamlet and steelworks of Regolowiec on the Bziniczka River, which now is a camping ground of the Zawadzkie Forestry Commission, with the preserved traces of old buildings and information boards).

40 An interview with Józef Kotyś in Radio Opole on 20.08.2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gI2cDv4ZnaE> (Accessed 20 June 2019).

41 <http://kolonowskie.pl/6911/9427/wolfsgaben.html> (Accessed 27 May 2019). The Climate Alliance is an initiative of over 1700 towns and communes from 26 European countries (<http://www.climatealliance.org/about-us.html>; Accessed 27 May 2019).

42 <http://kolonowskie.pl/2891/9400/staniszczce-wielkie.html> (Accessed 28 May 2019).

That the tradition of multiculturalism is important for the commune is proved by the content of its mission included in the Commune Development Strategy for the Years 2016–2022: “The development of the economy and services oriented towards the improvement of the standard of living in the commune with the simultaneous preservation of the natural environment and the multicultural character of the local community”⁴³. Multiculturalism is closely connected with the cultural, social and political activities of the commune’s inhabitants and authorities. In the commune there are four DKF (Deutsche Freundschaftskreise) circles. In three churches located in the commune, Sunday masses are celebrated in the German language. Within the scope of the project executed by the commune of Kolonowskie in cooperation with the Czech microregion of Hranicko, all local sites of memory (roadside crosses and figures, shrines, sculptures, architectural monuments) were provided with information boards in the four languages: Polish, Czech, German, and English. The commune’s educational units take advantage of an additional subsidy for the teaching of the German language: in the 2016/2017 school year the subsidy amounted to 1.086 million zlotys⁴⁴. In comparison to the other communes and taking into consideration its size and resources, Kolonowskie is also involved in relatively many projects in which foreign partners participate. Under the Operational Programme of PL-CZ Transborder Cooperation, the commune has carried out or is currently carrying out five projects together with the Czech commune of Belotin and the Czech microregion of Hranicko⁴⁵.

The other important element of the local community’s identity is the awareness of the commune’s tourist potential and the related care of the environment. As it has been mentioned above, Kolonowskie is the only Polish commune to have joined the Climate Alliance. Membership in this movement is connected with Kolonowskie’s partnership with the Austrian commune of Wolfsgرابen – also a member of the Climate Alliance. On the initiative of a former inhabitant of Kolonowskie, on the very same date (20 June 2006) the commune signed

43 Strategia Rozwoju Gminy Kolonowskie...

44 Informacje o wysokości środków przeznaczonych dla poszczególnych samorządów na oświatę mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych oraz na nauczanie języka regionalnego w ramach części oświatowej subwencji ogólnej w roku 2017. Accessed 28 May 2019 at: <http://mniejszosci.narodowe.mswia.gov.pl/mne/oswiata/informacje-dotyczace-o-rok-szkolny-20162017/10697,Informacje-o-wysokosci-srodkow-przeznaczonych-dla-poszczegolnych-samorzadow-na-o.html>.

45 <http://kolonowskie.pl/2927/9368/program-operacyjny-wspolpracy-transgranicznej-rcz-rp-2007-2013.html> (Accessed 28 May 2019).

a partnership agreement with Wolfsgraben and joined the Climate Alliance⁴⁶. In consequence of this, the commune authorities undertook to implement the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol.

The importance of environmental protection is also emphasized in the commune's development strategy. It is its second most important strategic objective pursued, among other things, through the implementation of the Low-carbon Economy Programme, the elimination of asbestos products, educational activities, the liquidation of illegal landfills, and the proper disposal of waste from water treatment plants⁴⁷. The higher than average ecological culture of the local community can also be noticed in other projects. In the recent years considerable capital expenditures were incurred on connecting successive villages to the natural gas network, which will allow a reduction of households heated with hard coal. Furthermore, various initiatives are to draw attention to the commune's natural environment and its protection. A case in point is the composting toilet at Little Bird Pond in Spórok that was opened in May 2018. It is one of the elements of the so-called Eco-stop: a place of rest in the forest near the village where, beside tourist infrastructure, visitors can take advantage of an environmental education center (Interview 1). In 2018 the Eco-stop won the first award in the "Beautiful Regional Village" competition⁴⁸.

Care of the environment in the commune is connected with expenditures on the development of tourist infrastructure. Kolonowskie was one of the first communes in the province that started to mark out recreational bicycle paths. These activities were initiated by the then mayor of Kolonowskie in 2001⁴⁹. On the initiative of the Kolonowskie commune council, seven communes of the region signed an agreement for the joint marking out of a network of bicycle paths (Stecki 2001). At present there are a few bicycle routes running across the

46 <http://kolonowskie.pl/2938/miasta-partnerskie.html> (Accessed 31 May 2019).

47 *Strategia Rozwoju Gminy Kolonowskie...* p. 9.

48 http://www.odnowawsi.eu/docs/14_informacja_o_laureatac2.pdf (Accessed 6 July 2019).

49 See the pre-election debate of candidates for mayor in the 2018 elections in Radio Opole: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qU8GXii9DGs> (Accessed 2 June 2019). As the then mayor mentioned in one interview, the idea for the development of tourist services had originated from the observations of how the inhabitants of the German commune of Gehrden spent their free time. It is an interesting example of the efficiency of the international partnerships among towns and communities. See the interview with Józef Kotyś in Radio Opole on 20 August 2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gl2cDv4ZnaE> (Accessed 20 June 2019).

Tab. 16: The composition of the Kolonowskie commune council during the terms 2002–2018

Name of election committee	2002–2006	2006–2010	2010–2014	2014–2018
Concord and Dialogue	3	-	5	1
German Minority	12	10	10	6
Safe Commune	-	5	-	-
Our Commune Kolonowskie	-	-	-	8

Source: the authors' own work based on the data from the National Electoral Commission.

territory of the commune. One route was marked out around the commune of Kolonowskie. Also, there are three bike rental establishments in the commune.

Another activity, even more important from the point of view of taking advantage of the commune's tourist potential, is the development of the Mała Panew River for the purposes of kayak tourism. It was initiated in 2006 when the first agrotourism farm bought a set of kayaks (Interview 2). At present there are at least eight micro-enterprises specializing in the rental of kayaks and the organization of kayak trips. The commune has a few kayak marinas and offers kayak routes of various lengths. All enterprises providing kayaking services in the territory of the commune have 614 kayaks altogether. The commune supports these entrepreneurs, for example by participating in tourism fairs, organizing kayak traffic along the river, providing sanitary facilities at kayak marinas, modernizing and developing roads and car parks at marinas, and publishing tourist maps⁵⁰.

Political life

A characteristic feature of the commune's political life is the long-lasting domination of the German minority, which, however, is accompanied by a gradual development of effective political competition from non-party election committees (see tab. 16). Already in the years 1990–1994, i.e. during the first term of local government authorities elected in free elections, one of the regional leaders of the German minority was elected mayor of the commune. The same politician held the post of mayor in the years 1998–2006 to be replaced by another

50 An interview with deputy mayor Konrad Waclawczyk in Radio Doxa, 26 July 2019 (Accessed 2 August 2019).

German minority representative, who at present holds this post for the fourth term (2018–2024). This phenomenon of the same person's holding the post of mayor for a few terms in a row is characteristic of small communes (Bartnicki 2015: 67)⁵¹. It should be emphasized that the aforementioned mayors had been elected with the clear support of the majority of the inhabitants already in the first round of elections (in 2010 the incumbent mayor had no rivals and won the non-competitive elections with the support of 76 % of the voters). The situation changed in 2014 when the "Our Commune Kolonowskie" Voters Election Committee nominated its own candidate for mayor. In the 2014 elections the second round was necessary. The winner was the incumbent mayor, who won with the majority of 55 % of votes. In the subsequent elections – which are outside the scope of this analysis, but illustrate a certain trend – the mayor representing the German minority lost the first round, but because his rival from the "Our Commune Kolonowskie" Voters Election Committee did not pass the threshold of 50 % of votes necessary for victory (he received 49.95 % of votes), the second round had to be held. But in the second round, the inhabitants supported the incumbent mayor, who won with a slight majority of votes (51.1 % to 48.9 %)⁵².

Table 16 shows also that the town council was dominated by councillors representing the German minority. In the years 2002–2010 the town council was dominated by two committees: Concord and Dialogue and German Minority (registered as the German Minority Election Committee or the Election Committee of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia). The 2006 elections constituted a certain exception because the "Concord and Dialogue" Voters Election Committee did not register a list of candidates and all seats in the council were taken by the "German Minority" Election Committee and the "Safe Commune" Voters Election Committee. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that in 2006 the councillors representing Concord and Dialogue in the previous and subsequent election were candidates in the lists of Safe Commune and the two Election Committees that appeared in 2006: Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PiS), and Silesian Autonomy Movement. The nomination of one PiS candidate in the elections to the town council in 2006,

51 This phenomenon is characteristic first of all of small rural communes. After the 2014 elections 32 % of 1569 such communes had commune leaders who had been in office since 2002 (the percentage of commune leaders who had not held the post during the previous term was the same). In the case of urban-rural communes, 21 % of them had mayors who had held their posts non-stop since 2002 (Bartnicki 2015: 67).

52 All data included in this paragraph come from the website of the National Electoral Commission: www.pkw.gov.pl.

who eventually did not win a seat on the council, was the only party-related element in the latest history of the local government in Kolonowskie. The party structures in the commune are weak and the political parties may count on support only in the case of the highest level elections (Interview 3).

In higher level elections, it is politicians representing the German Minority or the Civic Platform that receive the most support. In the recent years the most votes were cast for the following parties:

- in the 2014 district council elections: the Civic Platform and the German Minority,
- in the 2014 provincial assembly elections: the German Minority,
- in the 2015 parliamentary elections: the Civic Platform and the German Minority.

Thus the Civic Platform is the party enjoying the greatest support in the commune. Nevertheless, at the local level, this party has never organized an election committee in the commune. The phenomenon of support for the Civic Platform is partially explained after a personal analysis of votes cast for the party's candidates in the commune. In the 2014 district council elections, out of 852 votes cast for Civic Platform candidates, 761 were won by Janusz Żyłka, a member of the Strzelecki district board (an inhabitant of the Kolonowskie commune). Similarly, in 2015, out of 611 votes won by the Civic Platform in the parliamentary elections, 514 votes were cast for Mr. Żyłka. Thus, it is a phenomenon of a strong leader rather than a strong political party as such. In the years 2014–2018 Janusz Żyłka was a member of the Strzelecki district board, and in 2018 he was the rival of the incumbent mayor in the local government elections. He has sat on the regional board of the Civic Platform in Opole since 2017 (Janowski 2017). He is also a member of the popular duet of Dominika and Janusz Żyłka composing and playing so-called Silesian hits⁵³.

What attracts attention is the commune's low support for the Polish Peasants' Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – PSL), a party traditionally strong in small communes. There are two reasons for this state of affairs. Firstly, in communes with a high percentage of Germans or Silesians, the PSL is replaced by the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia. It is a non-governmental organization animating the social and political life of the German minority. It also nominates its own candidates in various elections (usually as the German

53 <http://www.januszzyłka.pl/> (Accessed 5 June 2019).

Minority Election Committee)⁵⁴. Secondly, Kolonowskie is not an agricultural commune. In comparison to other small urban-rural communes, Kolonowskie's high percentage of the population working in the production and non-agricultural services sectors determines to a certain extent the electoral profile of the community.

As it has been mentioned earlier, the year 2014 witnessed a new electoral initiative called the "Our Commune Kolonowskie" Voters Election Committee. It was established as an alternative to the German Minority, which had governed the commune for many years. It should be noted that some groups of the inhabitants became convinced that the long period of the German Minority's rule was not good for the commune as its beneficiaries were a small group of people connected with the local authorities. Such opinions critical of the German Minority and the mayor were presented, for example, in the "Strzelec Opolski" newspaper. During the 2014 election campaign and the 2014–2018 term of office there appeared anonymous accusations of the commune's being controlled by the "minority mafia" (or the "Kolonowskie" mafia), i.e. a network of connections advantageous first of all for the members of the German Minority⁵⁵. The mayor was accused of the lack of competences ("besides being a German Minority mayor, he has no talent, knowledge, or professionalism")⁵⁶. The campaign of the candidates for the post of mayor (in the 2014 elections, the second round was necessary) contained also negative elements (e.g. spreading rumors about the rival), and the contenders themselves described it as fierce⁵⁷. The most controversial incident was putting up electoral obituaries that notified of "the departure of the incumbent mayor into political oblivion". Despite reactions from the provincial office of the State Electoral Commission and a notification filed with the police, it was impossible to establish who had initiated such a negative form of the election campaign (ibid. 2014).

54 About the role and strength of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia as the main platform of the German minority's political participation in local government authorities – see Mazurkiewicz 2017a. The issue of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia appears also in the next case study.

55 See for example comments of readers under one of the articles in the "Strzelec Opolski": <http://www.strzelecopolski.pl/artykul/o-wlos-od-zwyciestwa> (Accessed 4 May 2019).

56 See a comment for an article in the "Strzelec Opolski": <http://www.strzelecopolski.pl/artykul/trzeba-sprzedac-przystan#comments> (Accessed 4 July 2019).

57 <http://www.strzelecopolski.pl/artykul/mamy-burmistrza> (Accessed 5 May 2019).

Already in the first elections after its establishment the “Our Commune Kolonowski” Voters Election Committee won the majority in the town council with 8 seats (see the Table)⁵⁸, and its candidate for mayor became a real threat to the incumbent mayor representing the German Minority, only to lose in the second round with the political capital of 45 % of votes. The property statements of the councillors representing “Our Commune Kolonowski” show that they are self-employed entrepreneurs or people working in the private sector. Therefore, as councillors, they are “independent” of the mayor because they do not need to participate in the local system of commune institutions in order to use public resources to build their political positions. Despite this, an analysis of the minutes of town council sessions shows that cooperation between the mayor and the council is of a conciliatory character. In view of the fact that the mayor’s group does not have a majority in the town council, the commune’s political regime can be classified as a model of a strong mayor controlled closely by a council (Swianiewicz and Klimska 2003: 23). The strategy followed by the majority group of “Our Commune Kolonowski” is one of cooperation as opposed to one of competition. Draft resolutions proposed by the mayor are not torpedoed, just the opposite, the decisive majority of them are passed unanimously (95.4 % of the resolutions on which the council worked in 2016 were passed unanimously; only one resolution was rejected). On the other hand, fulfilling the idea of serving the community and being responsible before it, the mayor treats the council as an important political entity, which manifests itself, for example, in undertaking interventions in matters reported by the councillors and implementing resolutions adopted on the council’s initiative. The councillors representing the mayor’s political group are more active in the council than the councillors of the majority group (taking into consideration the average number of questions asked and motions proposed per councillor). During the eight analyzed council sessions held in 2016 out of the 139 questions or motions, 133 of them came from the councillors (the others came from village leaders). Each of the councillors was active at least once during the course of the year and eight of them were very active, putting forward questions or motions on more than ten occasions.

The tendencies described above prove the gradually growing dissatisfaction with the rule of the German Minority, despite the objective successes of the

58 In the 2018 elections, the “Our Commune Kolonowski” Voters Election Committee increased the number of seats on the council to 11 at the expense to the German Minority Voters Election Committee, which holds just four seats on the council during the term of office 2018–2022.

commune authorities that are reflected in both our governance quality index and all-Poland community rankings⁵⁹. During the course of the conducted analysis we did not identify any deep social or political conflicts, despite the appearance of effective competition in the form of the “Our Commune Kolonowskie” Voters Election Committee.

The compact character of the settlement network and the small number of the villages cause the commune to be well integrated; there are no conflicts among the villages and the local communities are not shut to the outside world. The topics that raised discussions and controversies during the term of office 2014–2018 concerned mundane matters such as the sequence of local road modernization operations or the activities of the local water supply and sewage disposal enterprise. A case in point was the discussion concerning the repair of Szkolna Street, which was initiated during the election campaign. The rival of the incumbent mayor was of the opinion that it was one of the most important streets in the town, which should have been repaired a long time before. The mayor defended himself, claiming that because he lived at Szkolna Street, he had not wanted to be accused of taking advantage of his position for private gains⁶⁰.

Attempt to explain the governance quality profile

In our opinion, the high quality of governance in the commune of Kolonowskie is determined by a few factors the most important of which are the industrial and tourist character of the commune’s economy, the high level of the local leaders’ social capital, and the strong rootedness of the local community.

The contemporary development of the Kolonowskie commune results from historical conditions. The commune does not have agricultural traditions and since the 18th century, i.e. the beginning of intense settlement in its territory, its character has been industrial. The local population worked first of all in the metallurgical and timber processing industry. The high level of afforestation did not allow the development of agriculture on a large scale. On the other hand, the specific character of the population’s economic activities was reflected in the settlement network, which is compact and sometimes resembles factory workers’

59 For example, in the ranking prepared by the “Rzeczpospolita” daily in 2018, Kolonowskie took the 51st place among 857 urban and urban-rural Polish communes, and the third place in the same category in the Opolskie province (behind Brzeg and Grodków). Source: <https://rankingsamorzadow.rp.pl/wyniki#result> (Accessed 8 April 2019).

60 See the pre-election debate between Norbert Koston and Janusz Żyłka in Radio Opole: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qU8GXii9DGs> (Accessed 2 June 2019).

housing estates. All this has positive consequences for governance quality. For example, the compact arrangement of buildings made it possible to connect 98 % of the households in the commune to the sewer system (Interview 3)⁶¹. Such a spatial arrangement is also a factor facilitating social integration at the level of the particular villages. They are located close to one another, sometimes without any visible borders. Spórok is the only village located at a clear distance from the others; it lies 3 km to the south-east of Staniszcze Małe. The commune has a high urbanization index (0.56), which in our research correlates positively with governance quality (see Chapter 4). The status of the town and the development of tourism in the commune cause a high percentage of its territory to be public space where inhabitants meet one another or people visiting the commune. Examples of such public space include kayak marinas on the Mała Panew River, agrotourism farms, boarding houses, restaurants, and public facilities belonging to the commune such as schools, kindergartens, day-care rooms, sports fields, a concert hall, squares, offices, a museum, etc.).

The lack of strong agricultural traditions in the commune is connected with the relative weakness of the agricultural model of life and system of values. According to sociologists and ethnographers, in this model, land and farm are of primary importance, and the life of a family is subordinate to their needs pursuant to the rhythm of passing days and seasons. In this model, a family provides cheap labor and social life concentrates on assistance provided by neighbors or relatives in the performance of agricultural work, while the manner of spending free time is determined by the church and religious customs (cf. Drozd-Piasecka 1988; Halamska 2013). Hence, we assume that in such conditions, particularisms characteristic of so-called amoral familism will play a smaller role and the appearance of bridging social capital will be more probable.

A big share of tourist services in the commune's economy results also in frequent meetings between the local population (the owners of kayak rental businesses, agrotourism farms, restaurants) and people coming from other regions to take advantage of Kolonowskie's tourist offer. During such meetings people talk, share their experiences and good practices, exchange opinions, and build interpersonal relations. On the other hand, the commune's inhabitants working in the tourist sector travel to various cities for promotional purposes

61 According to the Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office, in 2017 the percentage of the inhabitants of the Kolonowskie commune with access to a sanitary sewage system was 86 %, which is a very high ratio in view of the fact that the average for the Strzelecki district is 77 %, and for the Opolskie province – 73 %.

(e.g. tourist fairs in Opole, visits to partner communes) and return home with new ideas for the improvement of the quality of life. In a commune of such a character, the mobility of inhabitants is greater than in a typically agricultural commune.

In our opinion, another important factor is the high level of the local leaders' social capital. For example, the deputy head of the Strzelecki district office and the former deputy marshal of the Opolskie province come from Kolonowskie. Both of them exert influence on the local cultural and political life. In 2018 the deputy head of the district office (previously a member of the district board) was the candidate of the "Our Commune Kolonowskie" Voters Election Committee for the position of mayor. He is also an active member of the regional structures of the Civic Platform. The former deputy marshal is now director of the Library and Cultural Centre in Kolonowskie. He is also one of the leaders of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in the Opolskie province. The activities of both politicians exceed the limits of local politics. Both of them have acquired strong social and political capital, which may constitute an important "asset" in the political life of the commune. Such capital is based on the practical knowledge of how district and provincial offices function, announced competitions, recruitment procedures, regional or national programs, etc., as well as contacts with people operating in this area. These two politicians are the most prominent examples, but it should be added that a few other persons who can be regarded as having considerable social capital of a bridging or linking character are also connected with the Kolonowskie commune personally or professionally.

It is also worth noting that membership in various associations or organizations aiming to improve the quality of provided public services is a natural phenomenon in the commune. Selected tasks from the scope of communal services are carried out within the framework of an association of communes called "The Clean Region". Public transport services are provided by the communal association called "Ride with Us"⁶². In the opinion of the commune authorities, cooperation within such organizations is beneficial for Kolonowskie, while

62 Established in 2008, "The Clean Region" Inter-communal Association specializes in waste management. It comprises eleven communes from the Strzelecki, Kędzierzyńsko-kozielski and Krapkowicki districts. "Ride with Us" Special Purpose District and Communal Association carries out tasks related to public transport on roads. It consists of the Strzelecki district and all seven communes located in the territory of the district. Inter-communal associations perform public tasks entrusted to them by particular communes. Such a solution allows small communes to fulfil their public tasks with greater efficiency.

communes that perform such tasks individually have to wrestle with problems. A decision to establish cooperation with the inter-communal association was, among other things, the effect of observations of solutions functioning in Kolonowskie's partner communes in Germany (Interview 3). Taking advantage of good practices observed in partner communes appears often in the utterances of local leaders (also in the context of creating a network of bicycle paths or developing kayak tourism). In our opinion, it is yet another proof for the positive use of social capital held by local leaders. Another example of well used social capital of a linking character is how the commune coped with the flood in 2010. Despite the fact that for coping with such critical situations, the commune has only a network of voluntary fire service units, according to the mayor, the commune dealt with the flood so well that no help from the outside was necessary and the commune's voluntary fire service units were able to help the neighboring commune to deal with the consequences of the flood (Interview 3).

The last factor which, in our opinion, deserves closer attention is the rootedness of the commune's inhabitants in the local community and the maintenance of the continuity of local social institutions. In comparison to many other communes in the province, Kolonowskie did not suffer much in consequence of the two world wars. Post-war relocations affected a relatively small part of the local community. Also, the number of relocatees from the Eastern Borderlands was not large. The pre-war enterprises such as the timber preserving plant and the cardboard factory had not been destroyed and resumed operations soon after the war, maintaining the local structure of industry and employment. The current owners of these enterprises refer to their pre-war history: Packprofil (cardboard manufacture), Kopgard (timber preservation).

The local collective memory is fostered not only by businesspeople. In consequence of the joint execution of a project with a Czech partner, the commune inventoried and documented all local places of remembrance. They were subsequently provided with detailed information boards in the Polish, Czech, German and English languages. There are several dozen such places in the territory of the commune. Similar information boards were put next to architectural monuments such as roadside crosses and shrines. Presented information is often based on the oral traditions of the local community. For example, one of the crosses standing in the forest commemorates a suicide committed by a local inhabitant; the roadside shrine in the centre of the village commemorates an accident in which a horse-drawn cart knocked down a groups of pilgrims on their way to the sanctuary on St. Anna's Mountain, and the stone shrine standing at one of the private buildings is a votive offering from the commune's former inhabitants who had emigrated to the United States before the war.

Many dozen such stories were collected in the territory of the commune. On the one hand, it enriches its tourist potential and, on the other hand, it proves a high level of the rootedness and a strong sense of community of the present inhabitants of Kolonowskie. In our opinion, rootedness in the local community combined with the spirit of enterprise and the predominantly non-agrarian model of life is one of the factors determining the high quality of governance in the commune.

With regard to the key issue of our research, i.e. the influence of ethnic diversification of governance quality, we observe a few regularities.

Firstly, in the everyday practice of local politics and in the media discourse concerning the commune, we observed no tendencies to distinguish Silesianness as an identity equivalent to the Polish and German ones. Silesianness is rather a cultural category related to the local dialect used by some inhabitants, secular and religious customs, local music, etc. Poles and Germans constitute two groups of inhabitants which are politically empowered; however, at the local level, ethnic issues are raised exclusively by German minority activists (through the name of the minority's association, the institutions of social life, and partly their programme). Holding the majority of the seats in the town council, the "Our Commune Kolonowskie" committee does not define itself with respect to any ethnic category.

Secondly, there are no social conflicts among the particular ethnic groups. Even the negative campaigns conducted by the competitors for the post of mayor in the local elections held in 2014 and 2018 did not result in any greater conflicts. Just the opposite, the commune offers numerous examples of cooperation for the benefit of the local community. We did not observe any activities which could be interpreted as manifestations of one group's hostility towards another (e.g. destroying bilingual village name plates, painting offensive texts on walls, ethnically motivated assaults).

The third regularity is the aforementioned monopolizing (but also participatory) mechanisms of the institutions of the German minority. Through their institutions and with the support of the regional structures of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans, local German minority activists are able to maintain a high level of their members' mobilization to ensure not only victory in local elections but also the smooth functioning of local social life organizations (voluntary fire service units, parish councils, village councils, sports clubs). Such monopolization, however, does not cause social polarization. It should be noted that a similar mechanism is observed in many communes in the Opolskie province, governed or co-governed by the German minority.

2 Walce

Governance quality profile

The performed quantitative analysis shows that the commune of Walce holds one of the lowest places on the governance quality scale and the lowest one among the communes with a high ethnic fractionalization index. In the case of Walce, this index equals 0.72. In light of the data from the 2002 census, 32 % of the commune's inhabitants (2014 people) declared to be of German nationality, 16 % (965 people) – of Silesian nationality, and 39 % (2412 people) – of Polish nationality. No national identity was established for 13 % (818 people) of the population. This means that inhabitants declaring Polish nationality constituted a minority in the commune of Walce. The value of governance quality index for the commune equals 8.73 points. Walce scored 3.53 points in the sub-index of participation. The analysis of the particular indexes shows that there are 20 non-governmental organizations conducting activities in the commune (including 7 voluntary fire service units and 7 regional units of The Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia). They include public benefit entities, which on average acquired 1.08 zlotys per inhabitant (in total 67223 zlotys) under the 1 % mechanism. The percentage of voters supporting voters' election committees is 100 %. The number of people using the services of the commune public library is relatively high (155 per 1000 inhabitants). The average mark in junior secondary school social science and history examination is 51.8 points.

With respect to equality, the commune scored 1.54 points. Women constitute 40 % of commune councillors and hold two of the four managerial positions in the commune (commune secretary and social assistance centre manager). The commune does not have a youth council or a senior citizens council. The poverty risk index is 0.639 (the value of 1 indicates the lowest poverty risk level), which constitutes a relatively good result against the background of the whole province.

In the dimension of efficiency, the commune's index equals 2.46. This resulted from relatively high capital expenditures (640 zlotys per inhabitant), a low level of the commune's own income (1112.19 zlotys per inhabitant) and 346.60 zlotys per inhabitant spent on public administration. Among all beneficiaries of social assistance, 33 % of them were permanently dependent on it (the lowest value in the district and the third best result among all communes under examination). The commune does not use any quality management system.

With regard to accountability, the commune scored 0.2 point, which is the lowest value in the whole research sample. There is no local press in the commune and the commune office does not publish internal inspection reports

(the Public Information Bulletin included only a list of inspections without post-inspection documentation). The elections of commune leader are of a plebiscitary character – in the 2014 local government elections, there was only one person (the incumbent commune leader) running for this post. On its official website, the commune office did not publish any property statement (of either councillors or the commune leader) by the statutory deadline⁶³. Among the 15 councillors, three of them have higher education.

With respect to openness, the commune scored 1 point because it responded to the CAWI questionnaire within the designated timeframe. The commune did not adopt any resolution concerning the matter of social consultations and did not publish any minutes of commune council sessions for the year 2017. The commune's website or Public Information Bulletin did not include an annual programme of cooperation with non-governmental organizations for the year 2017. Furthermore, during the consultations concerning the preparation of an annual programme of cooperation with non-governmental organizations for the year 2017 none of the organizations submitted any comments.

Geographic and demographic position

The commune of Walce was established in 1973. It is located in the south-central part of the Opolskie province, in the Krapkowicki district. In 2015 it was inhabited by 5550 people. The commune has a negative population growth. Walce is a rural commune consisting of 9 hamlets and 10 villages⁶⁴. The commune lies within the Opole Conurbation, although it is situated 36 km from the provincial capital. The commune is crossed by the DK 45 (Opole-Racibórz) national road, but it

63 It should be noted that at present the commune's website contains a complete set of property statements from the previous term of office. The scanned copies of the documents show that they were submitted to the commune office and the supervisory and legal department of the Provincial Office by the required statutory deadline. However, the obligation to publish them on the commune's website by the statutory deadline was not fulfilled. The analysis of the properties of the pdf files of the property statements posted on the commune office website indicates that the scans were made on 27 June 2017, while, according to the adopted analysis method, they should have been made available on the commune's Public Information Bulletin website on 2 June 2017 at the latest. A similar delay was observed in the following year when property statements were published on 14 June 2018.

64 https://opole.stat.gov.pl/vademecum/vademecum_opolskie/portrety_gmin/krapkowicki/gmina_Walce.pdf (Accessed 10 July 2019).

is characterized by a low level of public transport connections with the closest urban centers, including Opole⁶⁵.

Economy

For a long period of time Walce was an agricultural commune with arable land constituting 86 % of its area⁶⁶. However, at the end of the 20th century it lost its predominantly agricultural character in consequence of small and middle-sized farms' turning into intensive production enterprises specializing primarily in pig husbandry (Miczka 2006: 7). In the structure of business entities, 57 % are service enterprises, 39 % belong to the construction and industrial sectors, and 5 % represent agriculture. Out of 327 registered businesses, 317 are micro-enterprises employing up to 9 people. The others employ 10 or more people, with one having over 50 employees. The largest employers include the company Goodmills (production of flour), the company Bischof+Klein (production of industrial foils), and public sector enterprises⁶⁷. In 2015 the share of the unemployed in the working-age population was 4 %⁶⁸. The commune has some attractive environmental and historical characteristics connected with its location in the Odra River Valley. In its territory there are over 70 objects with the status of a historical monument. Despite this, the commune has not developed any tourist infrastructure, although its development strategy identifies potential for the development of tourism based on hiking, bicycling, horse riding, and water sports

Specific features in the material, symbolic, and identity-related areas

One of the commune's characteristic features in the identity-related dimensions is the strong position of Germans and Silesians, who, on the scale of the commune, constitute a majority of the population. After all, this is a feature constituting one of the criteria for choosing a commune for a case study. The political dimension of the presence of a minority will be presented in more detail in the following sub-chapter. At this point, we want to highlight its social and cultural significance. As it has been mentioned in Chapter 4, the presence of

65 Strategia Rozwoju Gminy Walce, pp. 76-79. <http://walce.pl/download/attachment/13298/strategia-rozwoju-gminy-walce-na-lata-2015-2022.pdf> (Accessed 10 July 2019).

66 Ibidem: 53.

67 Ibidem: 70-72.

68 https://opole.stat.gov.pl/vademecum/vademecum_opolskie/portrety_gmin/krapkowicki/gmina_Walce.pdf (Accessed 10 July 2019).

a minority has a positive influence on the participatory dimension of governance quality. Although Walce's governance quality index is one of the lowest among the communes covered by the research, in terms of participation it had one of the highest places in the ranking. At the institutional level, the presence of the minority manifests itself in the existence of 7 local units of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia and enriches the local cultural life. For example, since the beginning of the 1990s Walce has organized the Festival of the German Minority's Choirs and Bands in which numerous choirs and bands from the Opolskie, Śląskie and Dolnośląskie provinces participate (Ogiolda 2018). Walce is also the seat of the Silesian Women's Association established in 1994, whose activities go beyond the territory of the commune. The association's objective is to improve the social and economic position of its members and to strengthen the position of women in the rural environment. The association has 800 members divided into 30 regional groups⁶⁹. Its activities constitute one of the major factors responsible for a high representation (40 %) in the commune council. Brożec, one of the villages in the commune, is the birthplace of Rev. Archbishop Alfons Nossol, one of the most outstanding figures of the regional cultural, academic and social life, as well as an activist in the movement for a rapprochement between Poland and Germany (e.g. in 1989 he celebrated the famous reconciliation mass in Krzyżowa during which Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Helmut Kohl and prime minister of the government of Poland Tadeusz Mazowiecki exchanged the sign of peace). It should be also remembered that it was Stradunia, a village located in the commune of Walce, where the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia was established in April 1990 (Berlińska 1999: 393).

Political life

The main characteristic feature of the political life in the commune is the domination of the German minority and the long period of its control of the commune authorities. The data of the State Electoral Commission show that in the years 2002–2018 both the commune council and the post of commune leader were controlled by the representatives of the German Minority Election Committee. It should be noted that in the period 2010–2018, almost the whole commune council, with the exception of just one member, consisted of German minority members (see Table 17). From 2006 to 2018 the post of commune leader was filled by the same person. This political domination was accompanied by a low

69 See the organization's website: <http://www.kobiety-silesia.pl/historia.php>.

level of competitiveness. During the four consecutive elections for commune leader held in the years 2002–2014 only in 2010 there were two candidates for this post, and the candidate appointed by the German Minority received 78 % of votes already in the first round of the elections. In the elections held in the years 2002, 2006, and 2014 there was only one candidate who won with the overwhelming support of voters⁷⁰. A measure of the low level of competitiveness in commune council elections is the fact that in 2014 voting was conducted in two out of fifteen constituencies, which means that in thirteen constituencies German minority candidates had no rivals and became councillors without voting⁷¹.

Thus, for many years the commune has been controlled by the same political group and has not had any opposition capable of challenging this domination. There are no structures of political parties in the commune. The majority of non-governmental organizations are connected personally or institutionally with the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia. Consequently, civic society organizations cannot be expected to generate an alternative to the group governing the commune.

An analysis of the minutes of commune council sessions for the year 2016 shows that the commune leader enjoys complete support of the council and all proposed resolutions are passed, usually unanimously. Out of the 68 resolutions passed in 2016, only one resolution received one vote against it. The minutes allow the conclusion that the council is rather passive as a controlling body that initiates debates. During the eight sessions held in 2016 councillors asked questions or proposed motions on 16 occasions. Eight councillors did not speak during sessions at all, and three councillors took the floor just once. It was a period of a high level of unanimity, although it should be noted that in the pre-election period in 2018 there appeared cracks on this harmonious picture. During the session held in February 2018 one of the German Minority councillors accused the commune leader of failing to notify

70 In 2002 the candidate received 1152 “in favour” votes and 239 “against” votes; in 2006 – 1076 “in favor” votes and 133 “against” votes; in 2014 – 1122 “in favor” votes and 273 “against” votes (data of the State Electoral Commission).

71 This means that in 2014 there were only 684 people entitled to vote for candidates for commune council members in two constituencies; 305 of them cast their votes. Data for the years from 2002 show that it is a permanent feature of local council elections in the commune of Walce (with the exception of 2010 when the “Silesian Village” Voters Election Committee appointed its candidates in six out of the seven constituencies). In 2002 voting was not conducted in three out of the eight constituencies, and in 2006 – in four out of the seven constituencies.

the councillors of the activities of the commune authorities and to attract new investors (Kliszewski 2018). During the subsequent session the same councillor, supported by two others, declared the establishment of an Independent Councillors' Club and proposed a motion to withdraw the draft resolution on a change to the commune budget because, in his opinion, he had not been able to become acquainted with it. He claimed that such circumstances constituted a breach of Article 20 of the Local Government Act, pursuant to which a notification of the convening of a council session is accompanied by an agenda and draft resolutions. Eventually 12 councillors passed the resolution on a change to the commune budget. The councillor also asked why during the past 12 years no tendering procedures had been announced for the maintenance of roads and squares in winter and what amounts had been paid to the enterprises performing that task in the years 2007–2017 (Smolarz 2018). Thus, there appear some signs of controlling activities and critical opinions about the commune leader, but it seems that it is not a permanent trend in local politics⁷², but rather an attempt to emphasize one's presence in the commune council or an internal conflict within the local German Minority structures, which is also proved by the lack of support for the incumbent commune leader in the primary elections held in 2018 (more on this topic in the further part of the chapter).

Attempt to explain the governance quality profile

Attempting to explain Walce's low governance quality index, we should note that the commune scored the fewest points in the sub-indexes of accountability and openness (jointly 1.2 points), which raises the question about factors responsible for this. There are two basic and complementary directions towards a reliable explanation. One of them is the long lasting domination of one political group in the local governing bodies, which entails the necessity of taking into consideration the issue of multiculturalism and its impact on the quality of governance in the commune under examination. The other is the specific character of the local community and its relations with the commune authorities.

Walce is a multicultural commune inhabited by people identifying themselves as Germans, Poles or Silesians. Nevertheless, at the level of local political

72 It should be emphasized that a review of the minutes of the commune council sessions for the year 2019 shows that the March and May session lasted about 20 minutes.

Tab. 17: The structure of the council of the commune of Walce during the past four terms of office in terms of the number of seats held by the particular groupings

Name of election committee	2002–2006	2006–2010	2010–2014	2014–2018
German Minority	<u>9</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>14</u>
The Walce Village Council	3			
Education Sector Employees	1			
Supporters of Leszek Klosowski	1	1		
Supporters of Zygfryd Machoń	1			
The Walce Village Sports Club		3		
The Silesian Village RdO			1	1

Source: the authors' own work based on the data from the National Electoral Commission.

institutions, the German Minority has dominated the commune authorities for many years. The organizations of Silesian autonomists do not have any local structures in the Walce commune. This is a situation in which one national group has managed to monopolize power and base local politics on a high level of unanimity (possibly coerced by peer pressure) and local level cooperation. The political power of the German Minority, which constitutes a majority in Walce, is based, among other things, on its high organizational potential anchored in the local units of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia. It should be remembered that the Association, being a foundation for the German minority's political activity on the provincial scale, is one of the strongest non-governmental organizations in the region. Therefore, its local units in the commune of Walce are parts of a larger, well organized and financed structure⁷³. Moreover, while particular election committees competing

73 Local units (so-called German friendship circles) are established by the main board of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia, but they are subordinate to a local commune board of the Association, which functions as a middle-man between the central authorities of the Association and its local units. On

against the German Minority were active only in the pre-election period, the Association functions in the commune on a permanent basis as a driving force for social and cultural life (Interview 4). The local units of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia embrace active people interested in the life of their villages and commune, being simultaneously grassroots entities anointing candidates for councillors (Interview 5). The position of the German Minority in Walce may also be strengthened by the fact that it is one of the strongest groupings in the council of the Krapkowicki district and governed the district in the years 2002–2010 (Szczurbaniewicz 2011). Another important factor attracted the attention of one of the journalists of the newspaper published in the Krapkowicki district. In her opinion, critical comments in the discussion on the role of the German Minority are very rare and neutral journalists “find it very difficult to present negative comments on the environment of the minority” (Szczurbaniewicz 2015). The result is a situation in which the German Minority authorities receive nothing but praise, which distorts the true picture of this social group. As a journalist of a local newspaper published in the district where the German Minority enjoys considerable political influence, she emphasizes that there are people who complain in secret about the discrimination against Poles (Ibidem). Thus, we have a situation in which the local public opinion exerts pressure on eliminating criticism targeted at the German Minority authorities. It should also be noted that the German Minority peer tribunal received demands that the members from Walce and two other communes who ran for seats in the council from competitive election committees in the 2014 local government elections be punished for their actions⁷⁴. It shows that the German Minority is ready to prevent the appearance of any alternative political group among the German population. Commenting on this fact, Sebastian Fikus, a researcher specializing in the issues related to the German minority in Opole Silesia indicated that its elites follow an anti-intellectual strategy aimed at neutralizing the influence of the burgeoning middle-class groups within the German minority. It is to allow them to maintain their

the provincial scale, it is a three-level integrated structure whose governing boards are selected on a bottom-up basis by delegates. See: <http://skgd.pl/o-nas/statut/> (Accessed 1 July 2019).

74 The peer tribunal is one of the bodies of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia; its competencies are set forth in the Statute of the Association. The tribunal may punish a member with a warning, temporary suspension of a member's rights (for up to one year) or dismissal from the Association. See: <http://skgd.pl/o-nas/statut/> (Accessed 1 July 2019).

power anchored in folklore, hence their concentration on supporting initiatives of a folklore, popular, or light-entertainment character. Simultaneously, the expectations of the middle class are ignored and German minority activists who change their political affiliations and try to address people's new needs and expectations are being ostracized (Fikus 2015).

Thus, the commune is governed by a well-organized national group deeply rooted in local institutions and characterized by a strong sense of cultural identity. It seems that it is an important factor determining a low level of political competitiveness in the commune, that is a small number of, or no, rivals in commune council or commune leader elections, which may result from the conviction that chances for winning are low in light of the strength of the German minority. The absence of recognizable political competitors among people declaring Polish nationality is accompanied by the spirit of unanimity and conformism among the German minority, which reduces the risk of internal political rivalry⁷⁵. Consequently, we have a situation in which truly democratic elections are impossible and dissatisfied voters are not able to reject the local political elite. The only candidate for commune leader in the 2018 elections commented on this state of affairs, "As far as other candidates for commune leader are concerned, I haven't heard of any, and it's a pity. For a long time Walce hasn't had true elections where people could choose from more than one candidate" (Szczerbaniewicz 2018).

What requires explanation in the context above is the lack of a political representation of people declaring Polish nationality. It is possible to distinguish a few overlapping factors responsible for this. The German minority has been very active in the commune since the beginning of 1990s when it created and developed a basis for social organizations to form a strong platform of defence for the minority's interests. It was mobilized by the awareness that in a democratic system, a minority has a chance to make decisions important for it at least at the level of commune politics. It is also necessary to take into consideration the fact that despite the present appearance and politicization of Silesian identity, in that period the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia was a natural political representation for many Silesians. Thus, it represented both

75 It should be noted that in the 2018 local government elections, two constituencies had candidates for commune councillors who belonged to the German Minority, but represented election committees competitive with that of the German Minority. After being elected, they joined the German minority club in the commune council, thus ensuring 100 % of the seats in the council for the German minority (Interview 4).

those who declared openly to be German and those who preferred to define themselves as Silesians (but all of them had the same origin and a majority of them had two passports). In Walce, these groups constituted (and continue to constitute) a majority. Thus, the political domination of the German minority is the heritage of its organizational structures and influence developed already in the 1990s. Poles did not have such a vigorous organizational network and were a minority in Walce, hence it was difficult for them to overcome the real and imaginary barrier preventing their entry to the local political institutions. Furthermore, the divisions and antagonisms visible at the beginning of the 1990s gradually disappeared. Many Poles regarded the structures of the German minority as their own political representation and even ran for seats in the council from its election committees. Additionally, the present voting system applicable to small communes with single-mandate constituencies is advantageous for these groups that have an arithmetic majority at the level of a constituency and encourages political consolidation around one candidate (Interview 5).

Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the local ruling elite has internal accountability mechanisms, which was proved in the 2018 elections for commune leader when the incumbent leader holding office for 12 years did not receive recommendation from the local structures of the German Minority as its candidate in the next elections. The German Minority appointed its candidate for commune leader in a two-stage procedure. At the first stage voting was carried out in the seven local units, five of which supported the incumbent commune leader. It should be noted, however, that members voted in an open ballot, which, in such a small community, may have helped the incumbent leader. Subsequently, in May 2018 the Commune Convention of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans appointed the manager of the Commune Culture Centre as its candidate. He received eight of the eleven votes. The voting was preceded by the presentation of election programs, but the Convention was able to become familiar only with the programme of the eventually successful candidate because the incumbent commune leader failed to appear at the meeting. The chairperson of the commune board of the Association declared that he was not surprised with the result of the voting because for some time inhabitants and the local units of the Association had been complaining about the leader's style of management and expecting a new approach to matters important for the commune (Szczerbaniewicz: 2018a).

During the three years preceding the aforementioned election the new and only candidate for commune leader in the 2018 elections had become known as an important social activist and local leader holding the post of manager of the Commune Culture Centre. Besides managing the Commune Culture Centre, he

was also director of a local brass band, head of a local instrumental ensemble, member of the Opole Philharmonic Orchestra, founder of a football school, and member of a voluntary fire service unit. As manager of the Commune Culture Centre, he revived local cultural life, implementing a number of initiatives and winning the title of the friendliest official in a poll organized by a local district newspaper in 2017. In one of his interviews, he said that it was inhabitants that were encouraging him to run for the post of commune leader (Szczerbaniewicz 2018b). The case of the primary elections held by the German Minority in 2018 shows that, although in the local political system there are no competitive groups, there are some bottom-up mechanisms allowing the replacement of leaders in the ruling national group. Such a mechanism was launched in a situation of dissatisfaction with the rule of the commune leader and the simultaneous appearance of a new leader capable of winning the support of the local community. Withdrawing support for the incumbent commune leader during his third term of office (2014–2018), i.e. the period which was evaluated in the study, indicates indirectly that our assessment corresponds to the opinions of commune inhabitants. For example, the survey conducted among inhabitants within the scope of the commune's development strategy for the years 2015–2022⁷⁶, in which participants were asked to assess the execution of public tasks, shows that 41 % of them assessed such execution as bad or very bad, 26 % – as neutral, and 33 % – as good or very good. When asked about the quality of life in the commune, 57 % of respondents assessed it as average, 29 % – as good, 7 % – as very good, and only 7 % – as very bad. On the basis of these unrepresentative data, it is possible to read a tendency according to which an assessment of the general quality of life in the commune is better than an assessment of the commune authorities, which met with a higher level of discontent⁷⁷.

The issue of accountability in Walce should be complemented by reference to the issues of the local media and the publication of property statements. Although in the commune there are no media critical of the local authorities, this function is fulfilled by the district press which published articles showing irregularities in the commune office. The most significant example with far-reaching consequences is the matter of the director of the Commune Culture Centre which appeared on the front page of the “Tygodnik Krapkowicki” weekly

76 It should be emphasized, however, that the questionnaire was filled in by 14 inhabitants only, thus, its results are highly unrepresentative.

77 <http://walce.pl/download/attachment/13298/strategia-rozwoju-gminy-walce-nalata-2015-2022.pdf> (Accessed 10 July 2019).

in 2014. From 2008 the director of the institution had been simultaneously a member of the management board in a private enterprise, which constituted a breach of the so-called Anti-corruption Act of 1997⁷⁸. It is worth noting that the director every year declared such a fact in his property statement and when asked about the combination of such functions, he claimed not being familiar with the provisions of the Anti-corruption Act. Meanwhile, the commune leader, who was responsible for checking property statements, said in an announcement for the press that his deputy had dealt with property statements. It means that for many years the director of the Commune Culture Centre was breaking the law and was declaring it in his property statements, while his superior was doing nothing about it. This case shows that the procedure of publishing property statements does not guarantee compliance with anti-corruption standards, but creates certain conditions for initiating control mechanisms, if they exist. In this case, it was the local district media which revealed irregularities and forced the commune leader to act accordingly. Eventually, the director was dismissed disciplinarily and the commune announced a competition for a new director. The new director soon became a local leader and in 2018 – a new commune leader ('Dyrektor' 2014).

The matter described above also allows the conclusion that the local media are interested in the property statements of local public officials and use them in their everyday work. It should be remembered that one of the accountability indexes used in this research is the timely publication of property statements, which we regard as the index of "accountability culture" rather than true accountability. Under this index, the analyzed commune did not score any points, but it should be noted that the role of property statements in the commune of Walce is not deprived of importance and thanks to the media, they have an important controlling function to fulfil. A case in point is not only the matter of the Commune Culture Centre director but also a review of published property statements conducted by the media operating in the district. In April 2015, i.e. at the beginning of the new council's term of office, the "Tygodnik Krapkowicki" weekly published photographs of all councillors and lists of their property such as savings, real property, and movable property worth over 10,000 zlotys as well as debts ('Rolnicy' 2015). In December 2015 the paper published another article in which, on the basis of documents from a commune council session, it referred to the analysis of property statements carried out by the tax

78 The act on restrictions on business activities conducted by persons holding public offices of 21 August 1997 (Journal of Laws of 1997, no. 106, item 679).

office. In consequence of the analysis, the tax office suspected irregularities in the statements of two councillors (Szczerbaniewicz 2015a). It means that although the commune did not meet the accountability culture criteria related to the index, property statements themselves (after their publication) were monitored by the local media capable of disciplining the local authorities.

Another issue is the commune's low level of openness which should be considered in the context of specific relations among the local authorities and the inhabitants of the commune organized in local social integration institutions.

As it has been mentioned earlier, the commune is characterized by a high level of social participation which is accompanied by cooperation between the authorities and inhabitants through the agency of such institutions as the local units of the German Minority, voluntary fire service units, village leaders and councils, associations and parishes. The members of particular institutions' governing bodies often fulfil a few functions at the same time, e.g. a councillor can be a member of a parish council or a voluntary fire service unit. Similarly to other small communes, the number of active members of local organizations in Walce is several dozen. The same persons are cultural life promoters and decision makers in local politics (Interview 5). The characteristic feature of Walce is the protective (formal or informal) supervision of the Social and Cultural Association of Germans in Opole Silesia over the majority of such local groups.

It should be emphasized that as early as 1997 the commune joined the Rural Revival Programme of the Opolskie province. Since that time the particular villages of the commune have been getting involved in the programme within which so-called revival groups consisting of local leaders representing various environments are established. At the first stage of the programme revival plans were developed for the particular villages and various training events and seminars were organized. Subsequently, every year the villages from the Walce commune participated in competitions for the most beautiful village in the Opolskie province and won high positions in final ranking ('Gmina' 2017). For example, in 2016 the village of Stradunia was awarded the title of the most beautiful village in the province. This success was the effect of the grass-roots activities of its inhabitants, who established the Association for the Development of the Stradunia Village. Its head is the village leader, but cooperation between the association and the commune leader is also of considerable importance (Dimitrow 2016).

The role of the village leader deserves special attention because in the commune of Walce village leaders are not a façade institution deprived of influence and competences, but fulfil the function of true local leaders. They are responsible

for small projects financed from village funds, cooperate with village councils, voluntary fire service units, parishes, waste disposal businesses, and the commune German minority board (Malkusz 2014a; 2014b). In one of the interviews, the village leader emphasizes the special role of village leaders who “understand the idea of a village fund”. This is proved by the fact that 97 % of the available resources were used in 2016 (Marx 2017). Village leader elections are also in the centre of attention of the local media, which reported their course in 2015. Such reports included information on the voting process as well as the achievement of particular villages where elections were being held. Village leader elections are usually non-competitive (without rivals) and incumbent leaders are usually elected for another term of office with a great support of voters (over 90 %). Village leader and council elections constitute an important event in the life of a local community. For example, in 2015 88 voters participated in the elections for the Walce village leader and 86 of them supported the incumbent leader, whose success was received with an ovation (‘Jest’ 2015; ‘Owacje’ 2015).

The commune is dominated by a spirit of cooperation anchored in mutually related institutions constituting forums for the articulation of interests of particular social groups and everyday communication with the commune authorities. The village leaders, village councils, voluntary fire service units⁷⁹, local units of the German minority and their representatives in the commune council⁸⁰ or the commune office structures are in close, also informal, relations. In such conditions, from the perspective of the local community, typical solutions aimed at strengthening openness such as a resolution on social consultations, the publishing of commune council sessions or access to an annual programme of cooperation with non-governmental organizations may be defined as inessential because their substitute is a small distance between active village communities

79 It is worth noting that voluntary fire service units have been functioning in the particular villages of the commune for over a hundred years. Despite changes in the political borders in 1945, the local population maintained its institutions, which constitute a framework for social integration and identification with the local community (Miczka 2006: 8).

80 In a survey conducted among the councillors for the purposes of the Development Strategy of the Walce Commune for the years 2015–2022, analyzing the various areas of the commune’s functioning, the councillors gave the highest marks to their cooperation with the commune office (Strategia Rozwoju Gminy Walce: 102). Of course, it can be supposed that such positive opinions are connected with the councillors’ and the commune leader’s membership in the German minority monopolizing the local authorities.

and formal governance institutions. It should be stressed that such a small distance is not a result of the size of the population, but rather its organizational vitality. Thus, paradoxically, Walce's high participation index may explain the deficit in the selected sub-indexes of openness.

In summary, the picture of the quality of governance in the commune of Walce is not as unambiguous as it could be expected on the basis of the preliminary quantitative analysis. The commune's low position in the ranking is caused first of all by the dimensions of accountability and openness. Nevertheless, its score in the dimension of participation was very high. An explanation of this specific situation requires taking into consideration the commune's multiculturalism and the unique position of the German minority, which for many years has been monopolizing power in the commune, being simultaneously responsible for the high level of local participation. From the perspective of governance quality, the presence of a national minority which, in the commune under examination, constitutes a percentage of the population high enough to allow it to dominate the local political scene, is of a both ambivalent and paradoxical character. A long-lasting monopoly of one political group favors the weakening of some accountability (and maybe also openness) mechanisms, but the conducted analysis shows that it does not mean that there is no possibility of dismissing local leaders from their office. Simultaneously, such political monopoly is determined by the German minority's organizational resources and high level of participation, which allow it to maintain power in the commune. Thus, the high level of participation may facilitate long-lasting domination of one political group, which, subsequently, increases its mobilization potential, using local institutions. At the same time a spirit of participation and cooperation within local power structures generates a sense of access to inputs of a local political system, which replaces more formalized solutions aimed at ensuring the openness of commune authorities. Therefore, in this particular case, multiculturalism is not a factor unidirectionally influencing the holistic understanding of governance quality, but rather a state which can generate positive or negative phenomena, depending on the various dimensions of the quality of governance.

3 Paczków

Governance quality profile

The conducted quantitative analysis indicates that the commune of Paczków holds one of the highest positions on the governance quality scale with 15.32 points. It is simultaneously a commune with a low ethnic fractionalization index.

Paczków scored 2.6 points in the sub-index of participation. The commune has 18 active non-governmental organizations⁸¹, including public benefit entities. Funds donated to public benefit organizations under the 1 % mechanism amount to 0.92 zlotys per inhabitant (12,800 zlotys in total). The percentage of voters supporting voters' election committees is 81 %. The number of people using the services of the commune public library is relatively high: 173 per 1000 inhabitants (the average for the Nyski district is 120). The average mark in junior secondary school social science and history examination is 51 %.

With respect to equality, the commune scored 3.5 points. Among the 15 councillors there are 8 women (the average for the 60 commune councils covered by the research is 30 %), and women held 2 of the 4 managerial positions distinguished in the research (commune secretary and social assistance centre manager). The commune has a youth council and a senior citizens council. The poverty risk index as assessed by the Regional Social Policy Centre was relatively high and equaled 0.504 (the lowest value for a commune on a scale from 0 to 1 meaning the highest level of poverty risk was 0.482).

With respect to efficiency, the commune had a low score (1.85 points), which was caused by relatively low capital expenditures per inhabitant in 2015 (130.75 zlotys) and a low level of the commune's own income in 2015 (the lowest value among the Nyski district communes – 1,295.99 zlotys). In 2014 current expenditures on public administration per inhabitant amounted to 294.21 zlotys. Among all beneficiaries of social assistance, 34 % were permanently dependent on it (the commune had the best score in the district with 0.66 point). The commune does not use any of the indicated quality management systems. This criterion was fulfilled by only 3 of the 60 communes covered by the research.

With respect to accountability, the commune scored 3.32 points. Established in 2009, Paczków24 is a popular website in the commune. Its founder was an opposition councillor during the term 2010–2014 and a candidate for mayor in 2014. The website includes a tab called “Local Government” where local political events are described (e.g. town council sessions) and commented. Particular articles are followed by numerous critical comments. The website has 5000–6000 visits per day, and inhabitants propose on average 10 issues per week to be investigated by its journalists (Interview 6). The commune's Public Information Bulletin website contains a list of inspections conducted in the years 2015–2016

81 Although the website of the Paczków Town Office lists 35 non-governmental organizations (including 6 voluntary fire service units and 5 village sports clubs, it is important to remember the used methodology of counting such organizations.

(14 inspections in total), but post-inspection documentation (so-called post-inspection reports) is published only for inspections conducted by the Regional Accounting Chamber. During the local government elections in 2014 there were 5 candidates for mayor – these elections ended the long period from 1998 to 2014 when the post of mayor was held by one person⁸². As far as property statements are concerned, on 2 June 2017 the commune's Public Information Bulletin contained the mayor's property statement only. Among the 15 councillors, four of them have higher education.

With respect to openness, the commune scored 4 points. It fulfilled its obligation to provide public information, answering the questionnaire in a timely manner. The commune has adopted a special resolution regulating the matter of social consultations. Its website contains a current programme of cooperation with non-governmental organizations and minutes of commune council sessions for the year 2017. However, the process of consultation concerning this programme was assessed as ineffective: no non-governmental organizations submitted comments on the programme.

Geographic and demographic position

Paczków is an urban-rural commune located in the south-western part of the Opolskie province, in the Nyski district. The commune consists of the town of Paczków and 12 villages, covers the area of 80 km², and in 2015 had approximately 13,000 inhabitants, with 60 % of them living in Paczków. The commune is characterized by a high population density of 162 persons per km², which gives it the 10th place in the province⁸³. The commune is located on the periphery of the province. It borders the Dolnośląskie province to the west and the Czech Republic to the south. It should be noted that Paczków is peripheral with respect to both the provincial capital (the distance from Paczków to Opole is 80 km; the distance to Wrocław, who is a much more attractive migration destination, is also approximately 80 km) and its location at the border between Poland and the Czech Republic. The peripheral location of the town was one of the factors determining its selection as a subject matter of a discussion at a session of the Parliamentary Committee of the Local Government and Regional Policy. The town lies on the Nysa Kłodzka River between Otmuchowskie Lake and Paczkowskie Lake, near the Kłodzka Valley and the Golden Mountains. The commune is crossed by the

82 It should be emphasized that the incumbent mayor did not run for the office in 2014.

83 https://opole.stat.gov.pl/vademecum/vademecum_opolskie/portrety_gmin/nyski/gmina_Paczkow.pdf (Accessed 12 September 2018).

Opole-Kłodzko national road no. 46. Because of its location and rich history, the commune has some potential for the development of tourism⁸⁴. The commune is a member of the Polish Communes' Association of the Pradziad Euroregion; its cross-border partner is the Czech town of Jawornik. Cooperation between the partners includes, among other things, a project called the Virtual Eye of Culture in the Paczków-Jawornik Borderland⁸⁵.

Economy

After World War II the former German industrial enterprises located in the commune were nationalized⁸⁶ and the new state owner continued their development. A considerable part of the population was employed in a few industrial plants, which were the largest employers in the commune. According to the data for the year 1982 the five largest industrial enterprises employed the following numbers of people: the Paczków Furniture Factory (750), the "Famad" Paczków Plant of the Forestry Machinery Industry (340), the "Zremb" Repairs and Production Enterprise (320), the Opole Furniture Factory no. 5 in Paczków (300), the "Pollena" Paczków Household Chemistry Plant (295) (Białek 1983: 44). The political system transformation caused the privatization and bankruptcy of many businesses, which resulted in the problem of structural unemployment. According to the data for November 1994, among all communes of the Opolskie province, Paczków had the highest rate of unemployment (18.7 %; Dąbrowski 1996: 76)⁸⁷. The Local Revitalization Plan for the Town of Paczków until 2023 indicates that unemployment is the basic social problem in the commune. In 2004 the rate of unemployment in the whole Nyski district was 31.9 % (20 % in the Opolskie province), while in 2014 it was 16.8 % (11.8 % in the Opolskie province). Thus, the commune was located in the district which, together with the Brzeski district, was characterized by the highest rate of unemployment in the

84 <https://paczkow.pl/download/attachment/4961/lokalny-program-rewitalizacji-miasta-paczkow-do-roku-2023.pdf> (Accessed 12 September 2018).

85 The project's website: <http://wokppj.eu/19/8/aktualnosci.html>.

86 The industrial sector started to develop in Paczków as early as the 18th century with the establishment of a factory manufacturing candles and wax products. The 19th century witnessed the construction of enterprises manufacturing fire fighting products and extinguishers, matches, as well as soap. The most important business was a factory owned by the Schneider family and specializing in the manufacture of drawing equipment that was exported to many countries in Europe and both Americas (Głuszczał 2001: 27).

87 Dąbrowski K., *Paczków – szkice z dziejów miasta*, Opole 1996, p. 76.

province⁸⁸. In 2015 the share of the unemployed in the total number of working-age population was 8.5 % (6.8 % in the district), which shows a falling trend characteristic of the whole country.

According to the data for 2004, 39.3 % of the workforce were employed in the industrial and construction sectors, 37.1 % in the service sector, and 23.6 % in agriculture⁸⁹. In 2014 the commune's entrepreneurship index was 127/1000, while that for the whole province equaled 100/1000. A considerable part of enterprises (36 %) represented the commercial and automotive repairs sectors, the construction sector (18 %), and the industrial processing sector (9 %). Among all business entities, 96 % were micro-enterprises⁹⁰. Besides the Town Office, the group of large employers includes Famad, a factory producing industrial machinery and equipment (80 employees), and Wienerberger, the world's leader in the manufacture of bricks, which had bought the local brickyard in 2016. Simultaneously, it should be noted that despite its tourist attractiveness, the commune does not have a single accommodation facility with more than 10 beds⁹¹.

Specific features in the material, symbolic, and identity-related areas

The long history of Paczków as well as its urban and environmental advantages should be regarded as the town's specific features present in the identity of its inhabitants. The history of Paczków goes back to 1254 when a trading post was established under a location privilege issued by the bishop of Wrocław⁹².

88 <https://paczkow.pl/download/attachment/4961/lokalny-program-rewitalizacji-miasta-paczkow-do-roku-2023.pdf> (Accessed 12 September 2018).

89 In the Local Development Plan for the Years 2004–2013 which includes the aforementioned employment structure data Paczków is presented as an agricultural commune, although the employment structure contradicts this description. This shows the quality of some strategic documents prepared for communes in the period before accession to the European Union. See: http://www.archiwum.paczkow.pl/files/Plan_Rozwoju_Lokalnego_Gminy_Paczkow_2004-2013.pdf (Accessed 14 September 2018).

90 <https://paczkow.pl/download/attachment/4961/lokalny-program-rewitalizacji-miasta-paczkow-do-roku-2023.pdf> (Accessed 12 September 2018).

91 https://opole.stat.gov.pl/vademecum/vademecum_opolskie/portrety_gmin/nyski/gmina_Paczkow.pdf (Accessed 12 September 2018).

92 It is worth mentioning that according to a local legend, Paczków was established as early as in the 4th century by the Roman leader Lucca, who was coming through the territory of contemporary Paczków from a war expedition. Subsequently in the year 500 the town was allegedly destroyed by Hungarians. It is only one of many legends from the Paczków-Jawornik borderland. They were written down by Eugeniusz Mazurkiewicz, see (Mazurkiewicz 2017b).

According to historical records, the Town Council was established allegedly in 1345, but for a long period of time it was subordinate to the mayor who was a liegeman of the bishops of Wrocław (Steinborn 1982: 128). This medieval heritage is still present in inhabitants' everyday life, because the town still has its 14th century defence wall surrounding the centre and three towers constituting in the past starting points in journeys towards Kłodzko, Nysa and Wrocław. This is why the town is called *Polish Carcassone*, and because of its historical architecture, it has the status of a monument of history⁹³. Visible in the urban space, this centuries-old history appears to be a source of inhabitants' pride and an important element of local identity. Identification with Paczków as "a pearl of history" was to be built already after World War II when the town's schools taught the history of Paczków and the region as an obligatory subject (Szypowska 1965: 5)⁹⁴. For over 30 years the town's public library has organized the Paczków History Competition, which is a form of regional education for the town's school age inhabitants. The competition is addressed to young people from the town and commune ('Dużo' 2017).

An example of an activity aimed at building and developing identification with a local homeland is also the competition for the best poem about Paczków organized every year from 1997 by the town's Centre of Culture and Recreation. The competition was open for both young people and adults. Henryk Romańczyk, who for many years worked as director of the Paczków Centre of Culture and Recreation, writes that the competition concerns "the same and unchanging reality in which we live and which we create together with others, where people's thoughts committed to paper focus on just one theme: Paczków, my home town..."⁹⁵. There were 13 editions of the competition and its effect was 5 volumes of poetry about Paczków. Another similar initiative is a competition for limericks about Paczków organized by the "Pegasus" Association. It is addressed to "the lovers of Paczków" and aims to develop local patriotism, interest in history, and artistic talents⁹⁶.

93 For this reason, the National Heritage Institute in cooperation with the Polish Television Culture produced a documentary about Paczków (Pomnik Historii odc. 14 – Paczków 2016): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taGS8D7QuKk&feature=share&list=PL9WzZUUVLSKgO-MmuixQJWJgWJg6y6dHPf&index=14> (Accessed 18 September 2018).

94 One can only guess that it must have been a part of the propaganda justifying the appropriation of the so-called recovered territories by new communist authorities.

95 For example, the fifth edition of the competition held in 2002 attracted 52 authors who submitted 72 literary works. ('Paczków' 2002: 5).

96 The website dedicated to the competition: <http://pegaz.org.pl/wydarzenia/limeryk/>.

Political life

During the years 1998–2014 the commune was governed by the same mayor who decided not to run for the office in the 2014 elections. It is rather difficult to assess his terms of office unambiguously. An interview conducted with a representative of the new town office authorities indicates that it was a period of stagnation during which none of the 12 villages was equipped with a sewer system and there remained a number of households without access to a sewer system in the town itself. The commune has to repay debts incurred by the previous authorities, which also wasted many years without preparing any areas for business development purposes. At present the commune authorities are trying to make up for the lost time, which should be understood as dragging the commune from the state of backwardness, mainly by the intensive utilization of available EU funds (Interview 7). A similar image is presented by a local government activist from the commune according to whom the previous mayor's terms of office were wasted. For example, his effectiveness in acquiring EU funds was much worse than that of the new mayor. The former mayor's remaining in office for a long period of time resulted from the fact that he was generally liked by inhabitants, had numerous connections, and functioned in the capacity of an employer for many people, which provided him with a considerable support base (Interview 8). It should be noted, however, that in the 2014 local government elections, one of the 5 candidates running for the office of mayor was the former mayor's deputy, who symbolized the continuity of the previous style of government and offered voters "peaceful, reasonable development, without a revolution" (Strauchman 2014). That candidate took part in the second round of the elections, but lost, scoring 42 % of votes (with the voter turnout of 41 %), which indicates that still a considerable group of active voters had positive opinions about the previous mayor and his many terms of office. The winner of the 2014 elections had run for the office of mayor in 2010 as candidate of the Civic Platform. He had lost with the incumbent mayor in the second round, getting 43 % of votes, with the voter turnout of 40 %. He won eventually in the 2014 elections, when he was appointed by a voters' election committee. In the years 2006–2014 the new mayor was the sole representative of the commune of Paczków in the Nyski district council. It means that at present the commune has no representation at the district level, while the neighboring commune of Otmuchów has five district councillors. Such a low level of representation in the district council weakens the commune's position in such matters as expenditures on road maintenance, cultural policy (e.g. the district office's plan to shut down

the Visual Artists' House located in the Paczków market square), or health care ('Bez radnego' 2015).

The commune's local politics is characterized by a large number of political groupings in the subsequent town councils and a low level of councillors' dependency on political parties. The table 18 shows that since 2002 19 different organizations or voters' committees have had their representatives in the town council. The average number of political groupings in the town council during the past four terms of office is 7. The majority of councillors are not related to political parties. The average for the past terms of office is 4.5 councillors from party-based committees in the council consisting of 14 members. This indicates a high level of political competition, a high level of local political activity, representations of various environments and interest groups, as well as political fragmentation.

During the term of office 2014–2018 12 out of the 15 members are new councillors, which means that there had been a replacement of the local political elite. The council includes 2 councillors representing a political party. An analysis of the council session minutes for 2016 shows that the mayor enjoys considerable support among the councillors, although officially, just 5 of them represent his election committee. A measure of this support is voting on subsequent resolutions: out of the 106 resolutions passed in 2016, 102 were passed unanimously. In the remaining cases, one or two councillors abstained from voting. The most controversial issue was the vote on the resolution increasing the mayor's salary, when 3 councillors abstained from voting⁹⁷. According to the minutes, council sessions are conducted without interruptions and in an atmosphere of mutual respect. With the exceptions specified below, the mayor usually adopts a conciliatory attitude towards the councillors and an inclusive attitude towards groups interested in particular decisions. A case in point is the risk of the liquidation of the secondary school when the mayor said that, "the mayor, councillors, and teachers will have to do our best and find a solution"⁹⁸. The councillors ask questions, but their activity is diversified and rarely critical. In their statements, they submit requests and draw attention to concrete problems requiring the authorities' reaction. Altogether there were 75 questions asked and comments made during 12 sessions, with 16 statements made by inhabitants or village leaders participating in them. Three councillors did not take the floor a single time, and two councillors presented their opinions publicly only once. The most active councillor, who does not belong to the incumbent mayor's

97 <https://paczkow.bip.net.pl/?a=5962> (Accessed 10 August 2018).

98 <https://paczkow.bip.net.pl/?a=5964> (Accessed 10 August 2018).

election committee, spoke on 16 occasions. The second most active councillor, who represents the mayor's voters' election committee, took the floor during 8 council sessions. An analysis of the minutes shows that the mayor has no opposition and he himself is capable of persuading the councillor to accept his point of view and seems to be the main driving force for the process of governance in the commune. The strength of his influence can be measured by the fact that in the 2018 local government elections 10 councillors were running for seats in the council from his election committee, which means that the mayor had doubled the number of his supporters in the council during the term of office (Interview 7). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the mayor is also regarded as a man with domination tendencies (which is not reflected in the session minutes), who has managed to subordinate the council to himself (Interview 9). Thus, we can talk about local politics in which the mayor is the central driving force. He has managed to build a coalition of councillors supporting his vision of the commune's development and to start implementing this vision, taking advantage of available instruments. At the same time, the mayor's attitude of readiness for cooperation with the councillors and non-governmental organizations is accompanied by his tendencies towards domination characteristic of a resolute and sometimes uncompromising governor.

Attempt to explain the governance quality profile

The authors distinguished three factors which may determine the position of the commune of Paczków on the governance quality scale. The first factor is the role of the mayor as an entity initiating and conducting various activities in the commune. The second factor is the commune's rich cultural life and its presumed consequences. The third factor is the low level of party-dependence and fragmentation of the local political life.

The role of the mayor is particularly important because it allows observations of direct relations between his governance and the implementation of the solutions for which points are scored in the governance quality index. The mayor supports various forms of local participation. During his term of office in 2015 the senior citizens council was established. It consists of 10 persons: 2 persons appointed by the mayor and 8 persons appointed by non-governmental organizations⁹⁹. Already in his policy statement, among the priorities of his governance, the mayor emphasized the necessity of supporting senior citizens, announcing the construction of a daily care centre ('Expose' 2014). During one of the town

99 <https://paczkow.bip.net.pl/?a=5236> (Accessed 12 August 2018).

Tab. 18: The structure of the Paczków town council during the four terms of office in terms of the number of seats held by particular groupings, the number of groupings, and the number of councillors affiliated with political parties

Name of election committee	2002–2006	2006–2010	2010–2014	2014–2018
Supporters of Artur Rolka				5
“Local Government Forum” Association	2	5	5	2
Polish Peasants’ Party Horizon	2	3	3	2
Supporters of Mieczysław Wilczek				2
“Opportunity”				1
Tradition and Future				1
The Nyski District League				1
Paczków 24 PL			1	
Civic Platform		3	3	
Michael			2	
“Perspective”			1	
Supporters of Krzysztof Kumor				
The Common Commune		2		
Open to Everybody		2		
Everything for the Town		1		
Supporters of Ryszard Milczanowski		1		
Coalition of the Democratic Left Alliance and the Labour Union	2			
The Paczków Commune League	3			
“The Active Commune”	2			
Our Commune 2002	2			
Everything for the Town	1			

Tab. 18: Continued

Name of election committee	2002–2006	2006–2010	2010–2014	2014–2018
“The Commune Activist”	1			
Number of groupings holding seats in the town council	8	7	6	8
Number of councillors representing political parties	4	6	6	2

Source: the authors' own work on the basis of the data of the State Electoral Commission.

council sessions held in 2016 the chairperson of the senior citizens council presented the results of a survey conducted among 1000 senior citizens and consequent recommendations for the commune's particular policies. The mayor accepted the recommendations and expressed his readiness for further cooperation. It should be stressed that the preparation of the statute of the senior citizens council, and establishment of the council itself, and the organization of the survey were elements of the project called “Active Senior Citizens” carried out by the Plan B Foundation and financed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. In cooperation with the mayor and the director of the local cultural centre, the foundation established a senior citizens club and in all villages trained 21 leaders who subsequently, under a civic initiative procedure, submitted a request for the establishment of the senior citizens council¹⁰⁰. Thus, the establishment of the council was the effect of cooperation among a few institutions, and the mayor's support for it seems to be an important, if not decisive, factor. An interview with one of the local senior citizens and activists shows that the mayor played the major role in the mobilization of the local community. According to the interviewee, he is interested in cooperation with representatives of non-governmental organizations, which is proved by their participation in commune council meetings during which they can put forward their proposals. People have a sense of influence on the existing reality (Interview 10)¹⁰¹. During the new mayor's term of

100 <https://paczkow.bip.net.pl/?a=5962> (Accessed 10 August 2018).

101 It should be emphasized, however, that although the senior citizens council is perceived positively by its members, various problems appear. Sharing her opinions on

office in 2016 the council also re-established the young citizens self-government forum whose members are pupils from schools located in the commune¹⁰². The functioning of the forum is supervised by appointed teachers and the head of the education department of the town office (‘Młodzież’ 2017). In 2015 the commune authorities launched a citizens budget. It should be noted however, that this project had been approved during the council’s previous term of office on the initiative of the Horizon club (‘Paczków też’ 2014). The first edition of a citizens budget enjoyed considerable support and mobilized many local groups interested in distributing 100,000 zlotys. Nevertheless, the data in Table no. 20 show that this capital was largely exhausted. Also in 2016 the mayor reactivated the commune’s quarterly entitled the “Głos Paczkowa”, which had been published as a monthly magazine by the Paczków Friends’ Association before 2003. The periodical is distributed free of charge in 3500 copies by the town office (ads1 2016). Because of the character of the publisher, the “Głos Paczkowa” does not present information critical of the authorities, but it can be regarded as a factor increasing the transparency of local politics, providing information on the authorities’ initiatives, and promoting such initiatives. During his term of office the mayor introduced a few solutions promoting inhabitants’ greater participation. They received support from the town council and are regarded as important elements of local governance.

According to a representative of the commune authorities, the local non-governmental sector is becoming more and more active and the mayor is interested in supporting it financially, mainly in the form of grants. It can be observed that local non-governmental organizations attract more and more members (e.g.

the Third Session of the Senior Citizens’ Parliament held in 2017, one of the activists writes that, “in Paczków, a senior citizens’ council has been established and, in principle, there are no obstacles to its activities”. At the same time she notes that “there are very important matters that senior citizens would like to have some influence on, but somehow nothing can be done about it”. She adds that one of the problems in the functioning of the senior citizens’ council is conflicts among the leaders of particular groups organizing various events. She writes that, “sometimes our senior citizens activists lack something to be fully mature and responsible” (Popiel 2017).

102 In this context, an important mobilization function was fulfilled by Europa Juvenis, a non-governmental organization from Opole, which recommended that the commune establish youth councils. The mayor notified the councillors thereof during one session, adding that the topic “has been appearing since the beginning of this term of office” and “young people are willing to act in such a council”. See: <https://paczkow.bip.net.pl/?a=6319> (Accessed 30 July 2018).

Tab. 19: Financial support provided to non-governmental organizations and the number of organizations that received such support on the basis of the reports on the execution of annual programs of cooperation with non-governmental organizations in the Paczków commune

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 ¹⁰³
Financial support amount	51,000 zlotys	60,000 zlotys	35,000 zlotys	63,000 zlotys	81,000 zlotys	92,000 zlotys	121,000 zlotys	94,500 zlotys
Number of organizations receiving support	5	5	6	8	16	16	15	-??

Source: the authors' own work on the basis of the reports on the execution of annual programmes of cooperation between the Paczków commune and non-governmental organizations for the years 2011–2018.

the pigeon fanciers' association or the anglers' association), also from the neighboring communes, because "a lot is going on in them" (Interview 7). Interviews with a representative of non-governmental organizations also indicate that the mayor supports them financially: "Every year, whatever we plan to do, we eventually organize" (Interview 9). An example of such support for non-governmental organizations is making local sports facilities (a sports hall and a stadium) open to associations for free ('Dwa' 2015). This form of social mobilization is also visible in the reports on the execution of annual programs of cooperation with non-governmental organizations for the years 2011–2018. Table no. 19 shows that during the new mayor's term of office the number of non-governmental organizations receiving subsidies from the town office was doubled and the amount of provided financial assistance increased considerably (the average for the years 2011–2014 was 52,000 zlotys, while for the years 2015–2018 – 97,000 zlotys).

Non-governmental organizations are also invited in the capacity of partners to participate in some EU-funded projects aimed at town revitalization ('Zrewitalizują' 2017). They also often appear in the local press.

Nevertheless, this picture of support for local non-governmental organizations should be supplemented with critical opinions according to which there are no

103 A report for the year 2018 is not available yet. The given amount reflects the level of support specified in the 2018 programme of cooperation between the Paczków commune and non-governmental organizations (Uchwała nr XLIII/342/2017).

true partnership and honest dialogue between the mayor and NGOs. Cooperation with those organizations can be assessed in different ways and some leaders are not willing to cooperate with the mayor because of his authoritarian tendencies and uncompromising character, which put many activists off. For example, consultations about a large EU project connected with the renovation of the market square surface were attended by many inhabitants, but their character was that of unidirectional announcements made by the authorities. Participants' suggestions, for example those concerning the preservation of old cobblestones, were not taken into consideration. The lack of partnership was experienced particularly strongly by the lovers of the history of Paczków. They constitute a small group, but express great dissatisfaction with the conduct of work related to the revitalization of the Paczków market square. The asymmetry of relations between the authorities and non-governmental organizations results also from the financial weakness of the non-governmental sector, which depends on public funds (after all, this is the source of weakness of all NGOs in Poland). It should also be noted that the initial outburst of social activity stimulated by the first edition of the citizens budget (21 submitted proposals) was weakened after some time and now the citizens budget is much less popular among inhabitants. This is to a considerable extent the result of actions taken by the authorities. They changed the application preparation rules, introducing the obligation to submit detailed cost estimates (Interview 8). A comparison between the application forms effective respectively in 2015 and 2017 shows that the authorities not only introduced the obligation to submit a "detailed cost estimate" or "a detailed cost calculation" of a proposed project but also narrowed down the scope of proposals to initiatives related to construction, modernization, or renovations operations. Thus, the possibility of submitting proposals for so-called soft projects was eliminated. But it should be noted that the minimum number of people supporting a given project was reduced from 25 to 15.

Interest in the citizens budget decreased also because after one of the projects proposed by young people had won, it was not eventually executed in its original form, but was "scaled down", which means that the mayor and other officials narrowed down its scope, invoking issues related to security and costs (Interview 8). Consequently, in 2018 town inhabitants did not submit a single proposal and only two projects were proposed for the rural part of the citizens budget¹⁰⁴. It is worth mentioning that during one of the council sessions the mayor had to defend the subsequent edition of the citizens budget for the year 2017 when

104 The citizens budget in Paczków amounts to 50,000 zlotys to be spent on projects proposed by villages and 50,000 zlotys for projects proposed by the town itself.

Tab. 20: The citizens budget of the Paczków commune – the number of submitted project proposals and the number of participating voters

Edition	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of valid votes cast	3152	4176	4449	1879
Number of proposals put to vote	14	6	5	2
Number of rejected proposals	6	0	0	0

Source: the authors' own work based on the data from the Paczków town office.

two councillors opposed its organization. They indicated that some projects were “ill-considered”, “underestimated”. Referring to the necessity of modernizing the market square, they claimed that “instead of getting sidetracked, the council should do something concrete”. The mayor answered that he respects all opinions, but “eliminating the citizens budget, the council would move in the wrong direction” because “the citizens budget is a grass-roots social initiative”¹⁰⁵. Thus, we are in a situation in which some councillors show their lack of understanding for the idea of a citizens budget as a participatory tool, reducing it to a mechanism aimed at bringing about concrete and measurable infrastructural results. On the other hand, the mayor appears to be an advocate of this idea, emphasizing its mobilizing and civic functions, which he announced in his policy statement, declaring that “no decision concerning the commune without its inhabitants' consent” (‘Expose’ 2014).

Besides supporting participatory solutions, the mayor is involved in the execution of an extensive investment programme for the commune based to a considerable extent on external financing. He advocates “development through investment” (Interview 7). It is worth mentioning that he defines the commune as an area which has to be pulled out of backwardness caused by his predecessors¹⁰⁶. He started his governance from unpopular decisions and saving

105 <https://paczkow.bip.net.pl/?a=6319> (Accessed 10 September 2018).

106 For example, during a town council session the mayor said that Paczków was a backward commune and compared it to the better functioning commune of Otmuchów. According to him, the past 20 years were wasted, especially as regards funds available under EU programs (see: <https://paczkow.bip.net.pl/?a=6318> ; accessed 10 September 2018). In one of the interviews given at the end of his first term of office, he said that during 16 years the commune authorities had not managed to create a special economic zone for businesspersons: “This is the effect of many years of neglect on the part of my predecessors. It has to be said straight: the lack of workplaces and infrastructure, plots of land open to development didn't encourage young people to stay here. People

projects. The personnel of the town office was reduced from 64 to 53 employees and the number of lighting points on town streets and in commune institutions was decreased seriously ('Musieliśmy' 2016). In his policy statement, the mayor referred to the idea of an "efficient office" on four occasions and mentioned EU operational programs, drawing attention to the necessity of establishing a special economic zone for potential businesspeople ('Expose' 2014). In the years 2015–2018 the town office acquired 22.6 million zlotys of external financing for 72 projects with the combined value of almost 40 million zlotys. In the year 2015 the value of the commune's budget expenditures was 35 million zlotys. The budget for the year 2018 was planned at the amount of 67 million zlotys, including 23 million zlotys of capital expenditures (Wolniak 2018). The town office took actions aimed at establishing a special investment zone. It approved a new study on the commune's conditions and directions of spatial development¹⁰⁷. The commune carried out a few serious infrastructural projects. The most representative of them was the project of renovating the surface of the market square in Paczków. The aim of the project is to restore the historic character of the centre of the town. It is being carried out in partnership with the Czech town of Jawornik as part of the plan to establish a cross-border tourist services centre ('Rewolucja' 2016). The project is not only large (it is worth 9.5 million zlotys) but also visible and bothersome for all inhabitants of the commune as the centre of the town has changed into a construction site, which hinders vehicle traffic and activities of the businesses located in the market square. But it also shows the authorities' readiness and determination to carry out difficult tasks and symbolizes changes following the election of the new mayor.

Nevertheless, the mayor does not function in a social and political vacuum. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the commune's another distinctive feature – its rich cultural life. In our opinion, it does influence Paczków's governance profile. Located in the market square, the Visual Artists' House has been an important cultural institution and arts centre since the 1970s. The importance of this place for the local community was confirmed by its reactions to the district board's attempts made in 2013 to liquidate the arts centre and sell the building, which mobilized many inhabitants in its defence. The mayor and

don't want to live in a backward commune, without opportunities for development and prospects for the future. Whole families were leaving this place. We'll do our best to reverse this trend" (Wolniak 2018). This information is important because it yet again raises the question about the value of the indexes used in the research, but we will return to this matter at the end of this study.

107 paczkow.bip.net.pl/?a=7024 (Accessed 10 September 2018).

the town council adopted a resolution opposing the district board's decision and inhabitants established a Public Protest Committee which collected 1593 signatures of inhabitants demanding its withdrawal. The matter attracted the attention of the regional press, radio and television. Under the pressure of the inhabitants of Paczków, the district board withdrew its decision and ceded the title to the Visual Artists' House to the commune of Paczków (Ziółkowski 2014). The effectiveness of that defence shows also that the commune is capable of bottom-up integration around inhabitants' common interests anchored in local cultural institutions.

In the years 1985–2003 the Paczków Friends' Association published the "Głos Paczkowa", a local newspaper which presented also information important from the point of view of local government politics. Since 1989 the town has organized "Terepaczków", an all-Poland young people's music festival dedicated to travel songs popular among scouts spending summer holidays in the Bieszczady Mountains¹⁰⁸. Another dynamic institution is the Centre of Culture and Recreation, which cyclically organizes the Paczków Film Meetings in the Kopernik cinema. The fourteenth edition of this event was organized in 2017. The same year also witnessed the fifth edition of the "Vocal Camp" singing workshop. The centre was also the organizer of the aforementioned thirteenth competition for the best poem about Paczków.

Since 1978 Paczków has cooperated with the French town of Uzès and since then Polish and French delegations have been exchanging visits. The first such visit took place in 1978 when 44 inhabitants of Uzès visited Paczków. Such visits were co-organized by the Paczków Friends' Association, but its dissolution in 2007 froze cooperation. In 2015, on the initiative of the new mayor, the French visited Paczków again ('Delegacja' 2015). In 2016 a Polish-French Association was established in Paczków. Another important element is cooperation between the town authorities and the German town of Einbeck. In 1992 the authorities of the two towns entered into a cooperation agreement. Einbeck is a German town in which the inhabitants of pre-war Paczków had settled after the war. Thanks to the agreement, the towns organize youth exchange programs, and bee-keepers and voluntary fire service units share their experiences. The delegations of the local authorities visit their partner towns. For example, in 2003 the delegation from Einbeck visited Paczków under the motto of "Small steps towards Europe". In the years 1992–2003 this cooperation at the level of local governments was

108 More information about this event can be found on its website: <http://terepaczkow.pl/>.

part of the more general tendencies towards cultural integration with Europe and Poland's preparations to join the EU (Paczków-Einbeck 2002: 4).

What is worth noting is the intensifying activity of local non-governmental organizations, primarily those functioning in the areas of culture, science, history and sport. Since 2013 Paczków has been the seat of the "Idea of a Notion" Biernacki Family Foundation, which has established the Metamuseum of the Automotive Industry. The foundation also runs a modern art gallery which organizes various cultural events (e.g. an international plein-air workshop), and its founder has opened a vineyard, which is a regional attraction. Since 2014 the aforementioned "Pegasus" Association has organized cyclical events (e.g. a bicycle race) aimed at promoting tourism and the history of Paczków¹⁰⁹. The year 2016 witnessed the establishment of "The Three for Children", an association of teachers and parents connected with one of the primary schools. It is known for the organization of the so-called Paczków Ten or the Race of Mountains and Lakes.

In 2013 a so-called Paczków Tourism Card was established. It was a grass-roots initiative of local entrepreneurs, active also in non-governmental organizations, aimed at creating a discount card offering its holders discounts at about 40 establishments such as restaurants, shops, sports and cultural centers, as well as local tourist attractions. The card is to promote the commune and particular businesses participating in the project ('Paczkowska' 2013). The functioning of this "tourism product" shows that Paczków is a place of complex relations among the local non-governmental organizations, businesspeople and cultural institutions. These relations are based on a motive of cooperation aimed at developing local tourism as well as informal connections existing thanks to the sociological uniqueness of a small town. One of the local activists representing non-governmental organizations and familiar with the specific character of this initiative stresses the important role of informal connections facilitating cooperation among businesspeople, non-governmental organizations and the commune's public institutions (Interview 9). Thus, it is possible to indicate the shaping of unique social capital consisting in the integration of local groups representing various sectors, which support one another in promoting their respective interests. The commune's still unused tourist qualities become a force encouraging them to cooperate rather than to compete.

109 The information comes from the association's website: <http://pegaz.org.pl/o-nas/>.

The question can be posed about the role of a rich cultural and social life from the perspective of the commune's particular place on the governance quality scale. We are of the opinion that such a state of affairs indicates a large number of local leaders capable of expressing their opinions, manifesting their expectations, and mobilizing local communities. They promote their community's development, advance its interests (but also their own sector-specific interests), and constitute a force capable of influencing the local authorities, with which, after all, they have numerous relations resulting from the implementation of common initiatives. In such conditions, it is much more probable that local authorities will be characterized by openness, people will compete for power, local media will be established, and people will support solutions oriented towards participation. It should be noted that the commune's rich social and cultural life is accompanied by the aforementioned anchoring of many cultural initiatives in the building of people's identification with Paczków as their local homeland and the presentation of its unique features. One of our respondents indicates that the inhabitants of Paczków "love their town" and many households still keep local postcards printed before the war or during the town's glorious period in the People's Republic of Poland. The strength of this identification is also reflected in the establishment of the Paczków Friends' Association (Interview 8). Thus, the rich social and cultural life coexists with the clearly crystallized identity.

Finally, it is also of some importance that local politics is characterized by a low level of party-dependence and a high level of fragmentation in the town council. It has already been mentioned that the former is characteristic of small communes with 10,000–20,000 inhabitants. With only two councillors elected from party lists and the mayor representing so-called single non-partyism, the commune meets a certain general standard. Nevertheless, it does not change the fact that a low level of party-dependency is perceived as a positive phenomenon from the point of view of the quality of governance because it reduces ideological polarization and facilitates decision makers' focus on concrete problems of the commune. In such conditions, it is easier to pursue compromise and cooperation within the council and in relations between the council and the mayor. As it has been mentioned earlier, the analysis of the minutes of commune council sessions for the year 2016 shows that the commune is dominated by a spirit of cooperation and high support for the mayor. It seems that another influential factor is a high level of political fragmentation (8 groupings in the town council) which hinders the creation of strong opposition blocks, but also makes it easier for the mayor to acquire support for his own initiatives from individual councillors. In the long run it is possible that the absence of critical opposition groups may have a negative impact on the quality of local politics. Nevertheless, the effective

implementation of large investment projects and solutions oriented towards participation is easier in the conditions of consensus and a strong mandate of the executive body.

In summary, the commune of Paczków is characterized by the strong leadership of the mayor, who supports pro-participation solutions and has a clear vision of the commune's development. At the same time, his actions are performed and possible thanks to strong social, cultural, and political foundations. The commune's rich social and cultural life, bottom-up cooperation among the representatives of various groups, and inhabitants' identification with their local homeland constitute social capital making it easier for the executive body to govern. Simultaneously, such activities enjoy the support of fragmented and rather non-partisan political groups deeply rooted in the local reality and its interests. Thus, what we witness is mutual interactions and cooperation among the most important actors of the local political stage whose driving force is the executive body.

4 Domaszowice

Governance quality profile

The conducted quantitative analysis indicates that the commune of Domaszowice holds the lowest position on the governance quality scale. In three out of the five indexes, it scored not more than 1 point; it scored 2 points for efficiency. It is simultaneously a commune with a low ethnic fractionalization index.

The commune scored less than 1 point in the sub-index of participation. The number of people using the services of the commune public library is relatively low; in 2015 it was 48 per 1000 inhabitants. Slightly less than 8 % of voters supported voters' election committees. It means that citizens' election initiatives enjoy limited support of the local community. The average mark in junior secondary school social science and history examination is 45.6 %. The commune has about a dozen non-governmental organizations and no public benefit organizations. It should be noted, however, that associations in small communes may be characterized by a low level of formalization; if there are any non-governmental organizations in them, they are often local branches of big national organizations such as the OSP, PTTK or the Association of Pensioners (Trutkowski and Mandes 2005: 182–185). In the case under analysis, the majority of associations are voluntary fire service units and sports clubs related to particular villages. An interview with a representative of the commune authorities indicates that such organizations as voluntary fire service units or village housewives' associations still enjoy considerable respect in the commune and the most dynamic

grass-roots initiatives are the effect of cooperation among village leaders, housewives' associations, and voluntary fire service units. The respondent referred also to three other associations, but two of them do not exist anymore. These short-lived associations were initiated in the spring-summer season, which is a period of increased activity in the local public life, still influenced by the rhythm of the seasons of the year (Interview 11).

In the dimension of openness, the commune scored 1 point, which indicates the existence of the following features. Among the fifteen councillors there is only one woman; out of the five managerial positions distinguished in the research, two positions are held by women (commune secretary and social assistance centre manager). The commune does not have a youth council or a senior citizens council and the poverty risk index as assessed by the Regional Social Policy Centre was relatively high and equaled 0.52.

The commune has the highest efficiency index, which results from a high level of capital expenditures per inhabitant in 2015 (600.71 zlotys) and relatively high income per inhabitant in 2015 (1626.72 zlotys). As far as the other sub-indexes of efficiency are concerned, among all beneficiaries of social assistance, 64 % were permanently dependent on it¹¹⁰. The commune also had relatively high current expenditures on public administration per inhabitant in 2014 (509.83 zlotys), although it should be noted that this is a nationwide phenomenon, i.e. administration maintenance costs per inhabitant are higher in small rural communes (Swianiewicz 2014: 14–15). The commune does not use any quality management system distinguished by the authors.

As far as accountability is concerned, the commune does not have any local press independent of the authorities¹¹¹. It scored one point for publishing internal

110 In this respect, a picture of the commune is a reflection of a picture of the province because in the whole province, 64 % of the beneficiaries of social assistance depend on it on a permanent basis. This index has the lowest value in the commune of Turawa (26 %), and the highest (100 %) in the communes of Kamiennik and Świerczów (ROPS 2016b: 39).

111 Maybe this is why there are so many comments to some articles about the commune of Domaszowice published in the regional daily "Nowa Trybuna Opolska". The article describing the public prosecutor's charges against the commune leader and the commune secretary concerning illegal influence on the course of the 2014 local government elections received 191 comments. Their analysis shows that they were written by people familiar with matters related to the commune (e.g. some people commented the harvest festival in which they themselves participated) and clearly divided in their opinions about the commune leader. His opponents write that the

inspection reports for the years 2015–2016, but it should be remembered that the publication of just one document sufficed to fulfil this criterion. The accusation of the commune's failure to publish the Regional Accounting Chamber's post-inspection reports on its Public Information Bulletin was also mentioned in an interview with the leader of the opposition in the commune council. According to him, it is a deliberate action aimed at hiding irregularities identified by the Chamber from the public (Interview 12). There were four candidates running for the post of mayor in the 2014 local government elections. Before 2 June 2017 the commune's Public Information Bulletin had not contained any property statements. Among the 15 councillors, two have higher education.

With respect to openness, the commune scored 1 point because of the publication of the minutes of commune council sessions for the year 2017. It did not answer our questionnaire by the proposed deadline (eventually, we did not receive any response from it, even after asking the same questions under the procedure provided for in the Public Information Access Act) and did not provide us with an annual programme of cooperation with non-governmental organizations for the year 2017. None of the non-governmental organizations submitted any comments to such a programme during relevant consultations. The commune did not adopt any resolution specifying the procedure for, and principles of, conducting public consultations. An analysis of the minutes of commune council sessions held in 2016 showed that the matter of relations with non-governmental organizations did not arouse the councillors' interest. None of them took the floor during votes on the approval of the report on the execution of the annual programme of cooperation with non-governmental organizations and the approval of a new annual programme of cooperation with non-governmental organizations¹¹².

commune office functions as if it were a private property of a few persons ("Korea in the Domaszowice edition"); there appear accusations of unethical enrichment in the case of some officials, using commune office employees for the commune leader's private purposes ("lawn mowing"), or the lack of independent media that would present the true picture of the commune and counteract the authorities' "propaganda of success". Such critical opinions are, obviously, anonymous. Therefore, they should not be regarded as a reliable source of data concerning particular persons, but their number and content show that there are many people critical of the situation in the commune and feeling the need to share their opinions in a forum run by an independent medium (Staśkiewicz 2017).

112 See: <http://www.bip.domaszowice.pl/download/attachment/5799/protokol-z-xv-sesji-rady-gminy-domaszowice-w-dniu-15-kwietnia-2016-r.pdf> and <http://www.bip.domaszowice.pl/download/attachment/6100/protokol-z-xx-sesji-rady-gminy-domaszowice-w-dniu-16-listopada-2016-r.pdf> (Accessed 3 June 2018)

Geographic and demographic position

The commune of Domaszowice was established in 1973 as part of the historical Namysłów region. It is located in the northern part of the Opolskie province, where it borders on the Wielkopolskie province. Domaszowice is a rural commune; it consists of 11 hamlets and 13 villages (Morga, Bak 2012: 2). The commune is crossed by the Kluczbork-Oleśnica national road. It has a direct railway connection with Wrocław (1.5 hours), but does not have one with Opole (a change is necessary in Kluczbork). In 2015 the commune was inhabited by 3647 people, which made it one of the least populous communes in the Opolskie Province. In 2014 the average population of a Polish commune was 15,500 people (Kaczmarek 2016: 72). Thus Domaszowice should be classified as a small commune. According to the data for 2013, Poland had 618 small communes with fewer than 5000 inhabitants and the average rural commune comprised from 11 to 20 villages (Swaniewicz 2014:6–10). Domaszowice is an example of a small commune and does not constitute any exception in terms of its population. With respect to population density, in 2015 the commune was in the last but one place in the province with 32 inhabitants per 1 km²¹¹³.

Economy

Its character is typically agricultural; arable land constitutes 60 % of its area, and forests – 30 % (Morga, Bak 2012: 2–4). In 2015 the share of the registered unemployed in the total number of working-age population was 5.6 %, while the average for the Namysłowski district was 6 %¹¹⁴. According to the Local Development Plan for the Years 2007–2013 (the commune does not have an updated development strategy), the four major employers in the commune are the following entities:

- a) the state enterprise Ferma-Pol in Zalesie (pig husbandry),
- b) the Group of Schools in Domaszowice,
- c) the Domaszowice commune office,
- d) Fuels Trade Enterprise – Piotr Owczarek in Domaszowice¹¹⁵.

113 https://opole.stat.gov.pl/vademecum/vademecum_opolskie/portrety_gmin/namyslowski/gmina_Domaszowice.pdf (Accessed 22 May 2018).

114 https://opole.stat.gov.pl/vademecum/vademecum_opolskie/portrety_gmin/namyslowski/gmina_Domaszowice.pdf (Accessed 22 May 2018).

115 The last firm selling fuels is no longer located in Domaszowice; its registered office has been moved to Oława.

It also means that the commune and the entities subordinate to it are some of the major employers. In the territory of the commune, in the village of Zalesie, the Opolskie province's first biogas plant is located. It acquires methane from pig slurry generated in Ferma-Pol. The facility cost 30 million zlotys (PAP 2012) and appears to be the only large private capital expenditure project carried out in the commune in the past five years.

Specific features in the material, symbolic, and identity-related areas

Among the commune's characteristic features, it is possible to distinguish its natural and tourist advantages. In its territory there are 65 stationary and 9 movable monuments of history and nature (all 6 monuments of nature are located in the village of Gręboszów), archaeological sites, a manor park and a protected landscape area called the Forests of Stobrawa and Turawa (Morga, Bak 2012: 2–4). Despite having interesting natural features, the commune is not an attractive tourist destination and has no tourist infrastructure. It has no tourism development strategy or tourism product. There is also no possibility of overnight accommodation¹¹⁶. In the commune there are 64 archaeological sites and numerous monuments of architectural history (distilleries, manor farms, tombstones). Among the commune's buildings, it is possible to distinguish the 40th Anniversary housing estate (a number of small blocks of flats erected in the past for Ferma-Pol employees) and the small former hotel located in the centre of Domaszowice. Nevertheless, it is possible to venture an opinion that the commune's characteristic features constituting the elements of the local elites' identity include the long-lasting governance of the Democratic Left Alliance, which can be perceived as a local phenomenon in the context of the party's gradual weakening after 2005.

Political life

As it has been mentioned above, one of the major features is the long-lasting domination of one party governing the commune, namely the Democratic Left Alliance. The statements made by the former commune leader (in the years 1990–1994) and the councillor in the years 2014–2018 indicate that during the period of the People's Republic of Poland the structures of the Polish United Workers' Party enjoyed considerable support in the commune. According to one of the

116 Using an Internet search engine, the author failed to find any overnight accommodation in the commune of Domaszowice. He managed to find accommodation in an agrotourism farm located in a neighboring commune.

Tab. 21: The structure of the council of the commune of Domaszowice during the past four terms of office in terms of the number of seats held by the particular groupings

Name of election committee	2002–2006	2006–2010	2010–2014	2014–2018
SLD (in 2002 SLD-Unia Pracy; 8 in 2014 SLD Lewica Razem)	8	8	11	8
PIS			1	7
PSL	6	3	1	
The Namysłów Region Development Forum		3	3	
The National Party of Old Age and Disability Pensioners		1		
Gręboszów	1			

Source: the authors' own work based on the data from the National Electoral Commission.

jokes popular at that time, 104 % of the inhabitants of Domaszowice were party members (Staśkiewicz 2015). The data included in the table 21 show that after 2002 the majority of seats in the commune council were held by SLD councillors, and in the years 2010–2014 it was the decisive majority of 11 out of 15 councillors.

Simultaneously, the council was undergoing the process of political polarization because in the years 2002–2014 non-SLD councillors represented first two, and subsequently three different organizations, while in the years 2014–2018 the council was dominated by just two political groupings: SLD and PiS¹¹⁷. The incumbent leader has governed the commune since the times of the People's Republic of Poland, when he held the post of so-called prefect, with a break in the period 1990–1994, when the posts of commune leader was held by one of the present leaders of the opposition in the commune council (Staśkiewicz 2015). Thus, we deal with the case of one commune leader's remaining in power for many terms of office, which is characteristic of rural communes where holding power for four terms of office occurs the most often.

It should be noted that holding an office for many terms coexists with the commune council's being dominated by the same political grouping as the one represented by the commune leader. Thus, the commune leader enjoys arithmetic advantage in the council with respect to votes on resolutions concerning matters of key importance for the commune, such as a budget resolution, votes of approval, or

117 Although the councillors who had run as PiS candidates act officially as the Independent Councillors Club.

a long term financial plan. An analysis of the minutes of the commune council sessions held in 2016 with respect to councillors' activity showed that the councillors representing the majority rarely submitted requests or asked questions. Their activity in this area was limited to obtaining information on matters related to such problems as road repairs or the cutting of trees and bushes on particular plots of land. The eight SLD councillors took the floor on 17 occasions; the most active of them spoke 5 times, while the least active one did not take the floor even once¹¹⁸. Meanwhile, the seven opposition councillors took the floor altogether 134 times. It was mainly the leaders of the opposition in the council that were responsible for this result; they took the floor 49, 34, and 31 times respectively.

The analysis of the council meeting minutes projects an image of a group of 8 passive councillors supporting the commune leader in all votes and a group of 3 opposition councillors critical of the commune leader and accusing him of treating the commune as private property. There are many squabbles, accusations of absolutism, and demands that the commune leader resigns. During the 18th session, when one of the important items on the agenda was the restructuring of the commune's debt under so-called subrogation, the opposition councillors invited journalists to monitor the course of the meeting, which the commune leader referred to as a "spectacle" organized by the opposition councillors. During that session the opposition councillors accused the commune leader of bad management of the commune reflected in the debt of 5 million zlotys and demanded his resignation. It should be noted at this point that one of the councillors supporting the leader proposed that the opposition present an alternative solution to the commune's financial problems. The incumbent leader's main opponent and former leader answered that the commune's financial management was the responsibility of the leader and that the credits had been obtained during the previous council's term of office, that is before 2014¹¹⁹. Thus, the former leader did not put forward any constructive solutions, but implied that he was not responsible for the incurred debt.

During the vote on the resolution concerning subrogation the seven opposition councillors voted against the proposal submitted by the leader. Similarly,

118 This drew the attention of the deputy chairperson of the commune council, who accused the 8 councillors of being unprepared for council sessions, failing to ask questions, and getting excited about "tree branch cutting". <http://www.bip.domaszowice.pl/download/attachment/6006/protokol-z-xviii-sesji-rady-gminy-domaszowice-w-dniu-19-wrzesnia-2016-r.pdf> (Accessed 23 May 2018).

119 <http://www.bip.domaszowice.pl/download/attachment/6006/protokol-z-xviii-sesji-rady-gminy-domaszowice-w-dniu-19-wrzesnia-2016-r.pdf> (Accessed 23 May 2018).

during the 16th session seven opposition councillors voted against the resolution approving the leader's discharge of duties¹²⁰. These votes show a high intensity of conflict over the matters of key importance for the proper functioning of the commune. Also the deputy commune leader drew attention to a lack of constructive criticism on the part of the opposition. In the newsletter published by the commune office, he calculated that during the whole term of office, i.e. 32 sessions, the opposition councillors submitted only one of the total number of 204 resolutions¹²¹. At this point, it should be added that the commune's statute provides for the possibility of initiating a resolution by a group of 5 councillors¹²².

Attention should be drawn to the fact that the opposition councillors monitor and supervise the functioning of the commune authorities, which manifests itself in critical comments on the functioning of the commune. During the analyzed sessions the councillors asked questions concerning, for example, the course of a competition procedure for the appointment of director and deputy director of the commune's junior secondary school, agreements entered into with a consulting firm providing services related to the subrogation process and the costs of such services, or the problem of the poor effectiveness of acquiring EU funds¹²³. They also highlighted various cases of wastefulness. The opposition councillors also work for the sake of transparency. A case in point is a complaint

120 <http://www.bip.domaszowice.pl/download/attachment/5913/protokol-z-xvi-sesji-rady-gminy-domaszowice-w-dniu-21-czerwca-2016-r.pdf> (Accessed 23 May 2018).

121 <http://domaszowice.pl/download/attachment/6630/gazeta-gminy-domaszowice-nr-16-2018-wyd-styczen-luty.pdf> (Accessed 2 June 2018).

122 <http://www.bip.domaszowice.pl/download/attachment/5799/protokol-z-xv-sesji-rady-gminy-domaszowice-w-dniu-15-kwietnia-2016-r.pdf> (accessed 22 May 2018).

123 Enclosure 10 to minutes no. XV.2016 of the council session shows the position of the commune of Domaszowice with respect to the use of EU funds in comparison to the other communes in the district. The numbers of agreements entered into by the respective communes under the Regional Operational Programme of the Opolskie Province for the years 2007–2013 were as follows: Domaszowice – 1; Świerczów – 2; Wilków – 3; Pokój – 6; Namysłów – 22. With respect to agreements entered into under the regional component of the Human Capital Operational Programme for the years 2007–2013, the respective numbers were as follows: Wilków – 8; Pokój – 17; Świerczów – 18; Domaszowice – 19, Namysłów – 58. These data show that Domaszowice achieved a poor result in acquiring EU funds, which are spent to a considerable degree on infrastructure (so-called hard projects), while in the case of soft projects related to human capital, the commune was second best behind Namysłów (<http://www.bip.domaszowice.pl/download/attachment/5913/protokol-z-xvi-sesji-rady-gminy-domaszowice-w-dniu-21-czerwca-2016-r.pdf>; accessed 23 May 2018).

filed by one of them with the council chairperson and relating to the authorities' failure to publish the commune leader's orders, external inspection reports concerning the education system, or minutes of commune council sessions in the Public Information Bulletin. The chairperson proposed a motion to have the matter examined by the audit committee¹²⁴. It is an example of an activity aimed at increasing the commune's transparency and initiated by the opposition in the commune council, which is an institution responsible for accountability. This case shows causal relationships between the existence of accountability mechanisms and transparency because during the following session the deputy commune leader explained why the aforementioned documents had not been published (the lack of required software) and declared that the missing documents would be published by the end of the first quarter of 2017.

This critical and controlling attitude towards the executive body is accompanied by some kind of powerlessness on the part of the opposition councillors, which results from the arithmetic of support for the commune leader allowing him to force through his own ideas. It also seems that the commune leader's strong position in the council may go hand in hand with the opposition councillors' lack of understanding for the controlling function. A case in point is a statement of the council chairperson. Commenting on interviews conducted by journalists with some councillors, he said that "it's unbecoming" to assess other councillors¹²⁵. The newsletter published by the commune authorities constitutes a measure of their reaction to critical opinions about the functioning of the commune office. An interview with the leader of the opposition in the commune council indicates that the opposition councillors requested that at least one page in the newsletter be given at their disposal, but their request was declined. Justifying the negative decision, the commune office stated that the opposition would use such space in the newsletter to criticize the authorities. Therefore, the opposition is working on publishing its own newsletter entitled the "Echo Domaszowice" which is to be a counterbalance for the "commune authorities' propaganda mouthpiece"¹²⁶. The

124 <http://www.bip.domaszowice.pl/download/attachment/6099/protokol-z-xxi-sesji-rady-gminy-domaszowice-w-dniu-06-grudnia-2016-r.pdf> (Accessed 23 May 2018).

125 <http://www.bip.domaszowice.pl/download/attachment/6051/protokol-z-xix-sesji-rady-gminy-domaszowice-w-dniu-05-pazdziernika-2016-r.pdf> (Accessed 23 May 2018).

126 The respondent provided the author with the first trial page of the first issue of the newsletter being prepared for circulation. A fragment of the editorial: "Dear Inhabitants of the Commune of Domaszowice!!! Today we give you the first issue

councillor also emphasized that another problem was limited access to information on the office's activities – officials provide opposition councillors with information on the office's current work very unwillingly (Interview 12). An analysis of council session minutes shows that this accusation appeared also during one session because some information related to the functioning of the commune is submitted to councillors a few days before a session or on the day of a session, which prevents councillors from preparing properly for a council session.

The most significant example of controlling activity on the part of the opposition is an election complaint filed against the commune leader in connection with the conduct of the 2014 local government elections in the commune. The incumbent leader won with the candidate of the Law and Justice party in the second round, with the majority of 54 votes. According to one of the opposition leaders (and the commune leader of Domaszowice in the years 1990–1994), the victory was a result of election manipulations, therefore, he filed an election complaint accompanied by a list of 50 names of people who, in his opinion, did not live in the commune, but voted in the elections. The administrative court which examined the case dismissed the complaint, but the public prosecution office became involved in this matter and, in November 2016, charged the commune leader and the commune secretary with violating the freedom of voting by persuading people to vote for a particular candidate, driving voters to the seats of election commissions, entering ineligible people in the electoral register, or urging witnesses to make false statements (Staśkiewicz 2017). The same councillor filed also a complaint about the public prosecution office's sluggishness to the minister of justice and simultaneously the public prosecutor general, requesting that the investigation be under special supervision and the community be governed by a commissioner. The letter reads that before the elections, the commune office had received 70 requests for permanent residence registration from people who did not live in the village and were related to the commune leader, the commune secretary, the councillors supporting the leader, or the commune office's employees (Skarga 2017). On the one hand, it is a case of

of our new local government newsletter! We will do our best to convey the objective truth despite the commune office's propaganda mouthpiece, where the commune leader's subordinates sing his praises, while the commune is drowning in debt. It is only natural that newsletters published by communes are not objective and serve the authorities' interests only. We are independent, and to the best of our abilities, we are going to show the true face of those in power and their actions, and you will form your own opinions on them" (the material in possession of the authors).

local authorities being controlled by the opposition, but, on the other hand, it should be regarded as an element of electoral competition and an attempt to use the available accountability mechanisms (courts, public prosecutors, regional media¹²⁷) for the purpose of weakening a political opponent.

Attempt to explain the governance quality profile

To some extent, the conducted analysis touches on the issues of the quality of governance in a small rural commune and the influence of the size of a commune on governance quality. The literature on the subject indicates that in a small community, because of a short distance between authorities and inhabitants, it is easier to pursue the ideals of democracy, but there are barriers to the effective provision of public services. Based on a survey carried out in 2007, the research conducted by Paweł Swianiewicz shows that small Polish communes are characterized by greater interests in local politics, better knowledge of the functioning of local government authorities, and greater trust in such authorities. The inhabitants of small communes, particularly those with higher education, declare a greater sense of influence on the course of public affairs. With regard to the efficiency of authorities, inhabitants of small communes have better opinions of the quality of services provided by local government offices and public services (education, health, social assistance), while people living in larger communes are satisfied more with the development of infrastructure and the promotion of economic development (Swianiewicz 2010:12–16). It seems that the data gathered by the authors allow them to present a few basic themes.

First of all, attention should be drawn to the long-lasting domination of one political grouping, including its leader, as one of the important factors contributing to the commune's low government quality index. Both the representative of the opposition in the commune council and the representative of the commune authorities drew attention to one particular feature, mainly the centralized management model based on the commune leader. A professed opponent of holding an office for many terms, the leader of the opposition in the council described the commune as a "crystal clear" specimen of a "political scene embedded in concrete". He emphasized that comparing Domaszowice to other communes in the district, one could easily see civilization backwardness; additionally, the commune was "always last" in various rankings, e.g. one organized by the periodical

127 The councillor, who filed the complaint, willingly appears in the regional media that report the case.

“Wspólnota”. He also pointed out that Domaszowice was the most indebted commune in the district¹²⁸. He called the commune a “sorealistic backwater”, adding that already in the period of the People’s Republic of Poland, it had been one of the national leaders in terms of communist party membership, and at present it was governed dictatorially, with its inhabitants brainwashed with “the propaganda of success” and lied to by the authorities. This critical assessment of the commune’s reality caused the respondent to decide to return to politics and run for a seat in the council in 2014. In his words, it is “a fight for democracy” (Interview 12).

The representative of the commune authorities used a more delicate language in his description of the local political relations. In his opinion, it was one of the “more red communes” where the “eastern style of governance” dominated. Asked about the phenomenon of the commune leader’s holding the office for many terms, he referred to the “old style of governance” consisting in making decisions individually by the leader, where “the leader decides about everything and assumes responsibility for it”. According to the respondent, such a style of governance was received well by the inhabitants. He declared that he was aware of the increasingly fossilized character of the commune governance model and the necessity of modernizing the commune office, there were no areas available for new business undertakings, sports activities were practically non-existent, and there were no initiatives aimed at the integration of the whole community. He added that a more active attitude needed to be adopted in order to attract potential investors. Asked about the leader’s passivity in these respects, he indicated some kind of standstill preventing him from adopting a more development oriented strategy. Answering the question about potential for establishing a youth council or a senior citizens council, the respondent said that such initiatives were not undertaken because the model of single person decision making was too strongly rooted in the commune. Thus, he showed a clear connection between the style of governance in the commune and the fulfilment of the particular criteria for the principle of equality in the governance

128 After the interview, the respondent sent the author data concerning his activity as a councillor and data concerning the commune’s debt per inhabitant as published by the Ministry of Finance. According to these data, indebtedness per inhabitant in the communes of the district (in the third quarter of 2017) was as follows: Domaszowice - 1293; Namysłów - 1128; Świerczów - 1042; Pokój - 915; Wilków - 492. http://samorząd.pap.pl/depesze/wiadomosci_centralne/179893/Zadluzenie-gmin--Dane-Ministerstwa-Finansow-o-zadluzeniu-poszczegolnych-gmin (Accessed 3 July 2017)..

quality index. The commune leader regarded the potential establishment of such bodies as a threat to his authority and a risk of other groups' becoming stronger. According to the respondent, the commune was at a turning point because of the appearance of a new group of young voters (some of them became familiar with other standards while staying abroad) who expected governance based on "openness" and needed both changes and success (Interview 13).

The respondents also emphasized that such a manner of governing a commune turned out to be ineffective, which was proved by the commune's problems with modernization, absence of any ambitious plans ("no forward drive"), and the growing dissatisfaction of inhabitants expecting greater openness and modernity¹²⁹. It should be noted that one of the objective measures of the commune's approach to the issue of development is the lack of an up-to-date development strategy. The latest such strategy covered the period of 2007–2013. Although it is no longer valid, it makes it possible to draw conclusions about the efficiency of governance as one of the priorities indicated in the document was the construction of a sanitary sewer system. However, it is necessary to take into consideration the fact that sewer systems are a problem in many small rural communes where population density and the lie of the land hinder the construction of such infrastructure. Therefore, it may be concluded that the absence of such a system does not have to be a reflection of the inefficient governance of a commune, but rather decision makers' rationality justified by a diagnosis of the costs of a whole undertaking. Nevertheless, the commune's Local Development Plan for the Years 2007–2013 presents the construction of a sanitary sewer system as the most important project to be carried out in the territory of the commune¹³⁰. It means that the commune's strategic document identifies the project as a factual need of the local community (the plan was developed also on the basis of a survey conducted among inhabitants) and a local development priority. Such a diagnosis had already been established before 2007, and according to the data of the Central Statistical Office for 2015, in 2015 7 % of the commune's inhabitants had access to a sewer system (while the average for the district was 53 %). Thus, the commune authorities failed to achieve the major objectives clearly identified

129 In the commune there is no cash machine, although there is a small bank. Thus, the only opportunity for obtaining cash in the amount of up to 300 zlotys is provided by the Dino supermarket.

130 http://www.static.domaszowice.pl/download/1655/plan_rozwoju_lokalnego_gminy_domaszowice_na_lata_20072013.doc+&cd=1&hl=pl&ct=clnk&gl=pl (Accessed 25 May 2018).

in their own development strategy. It should be added that in 2017 the commune acquired funding under the Operational Programme for the Development of Rural Areas for the construction of a sanitary sewer system¹³¹.

Another characteristic feature which can help in interpreting the commune's place in the ranking is a high level of political polarization, which hinders constructive cooperation aimed at solving common problems and undertaking initiatives for the development of the commune. The results of the latest local government elections (in which the commune leader won with the majority of 54 votes), the council session minutes, and information acquired during the interviews show a strong division in the local community and a culture of political conflict. The representative of the commune authorities emphasized that the local opposition was pursuing a policy consisting in "bashing", lies, undermining the credibility of commune office employees, and spreading gossip about their private lives. In his opinion, the opposition is not interested in compromise (Interview 13). Meanwhile, the opposition leader accused the authorities of authoritarian tendencies, unwillingness to accept criticism, and preventing access to information on the functioning of the commune office. He also mentioned problems that he had to cope with in connection with the organization of a meeting with a PiS Member of Parliament. There is no village hall in Domaszowice, therefore, a room for a meeting with an MP had to be rented from the commune office¹³². According to the interviewee, the office was deliberately protracting the whole procedure until the closure of the office's cash desk at 2:00 pm so that it became impossible to pay a fee for the use of the meeting room. Eventually, the fee was paid in a bank and the meeting was held as planned (Interview 12). It is difficult to settle unambiguously to what extent the provided information is true and to what extent it is the result of political emotions and squabbles. Nevertheless, it shows evidently the absence of mutual understanding and the mutual attribution of bad intentions. This model of relations among the main political groupings may result from the long-lasting monopoly of the arbitrary governance of the commune by the leader wary of dialogue accompanied by the gradual appearance of a politically inexperienced opposition attempting

131 <https://bip.opolskie.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/zal.-3798.pdf> (Accessed 25 May 2018).

132 It also means that all events independent of the commune authorities have to be organized in the rooms of the commune office, which have to be formally rented from the office. This, in turn, allows the authorities to learn about the character of such events and to hinder their organizations.

to make use of the available instruments of exerting pressure on the executive body (without having resources comparable to those in the leader's disposal).

The division into the supporters and opponents of the commune leader extends also to relations with the commune office because the leader's opponents assume that they will not be treated impartially. There are inhabitants who do not go to the commune office because they do not trust anybody there (Interview 11). The aforementioned circumstances may cause the maintenance and strengthening of strong relations between the office and a separate group of satisfied citizens with the simultaneous lack of any critical feedback from dissatisfied citizens, which may facilitate the continuation of the current governance model.

The last important issue shedding light on the quality of governance in the commune is the condition of the local community and its relations with the institutions of the commune authorities. The conducted interviews indicate that the level of interest in commune matters and readiness to act for the common good is rather low. This does not mean that there are no grass-roots initiatives, but they are usually limited to the level of individual village and are implemented with traditional rural social integration institutions such as a village leader, a voluntary fire service unit, or a village housewives' association. According to one of the village leaders, "everybody lives for themselves". In a village of 400 people, a recent village meeting was attended by 15 people. The meeting concerning the possibility of selling alcohol in the village was attended only by the village leader and a representative of the commune office. According to one village leader, "people are self-contained" and leave local matters to the commune leader, council, and village leaders (Interview 14). At the level of villages, the attitude is that the commune is responsible for solving all problems – inhabitants push the whole weight of this responsibility onto commune authorities. Attendance at hamlet meetings is very low, despite the fact that such meetings are devoted, among others, to the distribution of funds for the financing of local undertakings.¹³³ In the particular villages, the level of integration is also low; loyalty and mobilization are determined by familial criteria. There is no sense of a self-governing local community or readiness to make small sacrifices of one's interests for the benefit of the other inhabitants and the commune budget. An example given by the representative of the authorities is school transport in the commune. Inhabitants would like the

133 According to the budget resolution for the year 2017, the village fund is to amount to 179,000 zlotys. Depending on a village, amounts available for individual projects oscillate between 8,000 and 30,000 zlotys (<http://www.bip.domaszowice.pl/download/attachment/6119/uchwalaxxii13420162016-12-29-w-sprawie-uchwalenia-budzetu-gminy-na-2017-r.pdf> accessed 23 May 2018).

school bus to pick up each child individually from his/her home; they demand a bus stop in every village so that they do not have to walk far to catch a bus, but do not want to take into consideration the procedural (the opening of a bus stop), temporal, and financial costs of such solutions. According to one of the respondents, many inhabitants are not able to look at their commune from a bird's eye view and grasp the whole self-governing community; because of particular interests, they want solutions which, in the long run, will turn out to be disadvantageous for them because of related costs (Interview 13).

Thus, the commune under analysis is divided into social microworlds dominated by identification with one's own village. An interview with one of the respondents indicates that the only plane of integration among the villages is the commune harvest festival during which the representatives of the particular villages decorate various places in Domaszowice, which constitutes a basis for "healthy competition". Activity at the village level depends to a considerable extent on local leaders who mobilize inhabitants. However, the most dynamic initiatives are the effect of cooperation among an active village leader, voluntary fire service units, and village housewives' associations. As far as the role of councillors is concerned, they act as middlemen between villages and the commune authorities. Defending their villages' interests, they simultaneously strengthen inhabitants' village-based identities (Interview 11). An important point is that village leaders often do not perceive their functions as political. The respondent (village leader) is not interested in being a part of local politics, adopting an attitude of a safe distance to politics because "if you are not careful, you can get burned" (Interview 14). Thus, politics is perceived as something reserved for formal political institutions, i.e. the commune leader and the commune council, and involvement in politics is regarded as a potential threat.

It appears that this state of inhabitants' being distanced from local politics, failure to identify with the local community, and placing responsibility for everything on the commune authorities can be explained by reference to a few factors. On the one hand, we can observe features characteristic of small, agricultural and rural communities focused on their own interests, indifferent to matters from outside their village, simultaneously obsequious towards and mistrustful of local authorities. In an interview with one of the local businesspeople who lived in a big city before settling down in the commune, Domaszowice is described as a place where "democracy is the village leader" and his own urban origin is still a barrier to integration with the local community (Interview 15).

Another important factor emphasized particularly by the representatives of the commune authorities is the borderland origin of a large part of the commune's population. According to them, the villages dominated by the population

coming from eastern Poland are characterized by more intense local ties rooted in familial structures than the villages dominated by settlers from central Poland (they refer to “clannish identities”). Settlers coming from the former Eastern borderlands still create closed communities where in time one surname starts to dominate and there is no lack of endogamous relationships. Thus, what we witness is villages characterized by what Robert Putnam referred to as binding social capital, where strong intra-group ties coexist with a lack of ties to the outside world. According to the respondents, coming from the former Eastern borderlands also influences the lower quality of managing one’s own property, the state of tidiness in a village, and the aesthetic qualities of households – there are still visible differences between the villages inhabited by the descendants of settlers coming from eastern Poland and those from central Poland (Interview 11; Interview 13).

The last factor explaining the low quality of the civic society is the already discussed model of one-man commune governance. It can be supposed that the specific character of the long-lasting politics of the commune leader which was a reproduction of the power exercise models inherited from the times of socialism facilitated the petrification of the aforementioned attitudes. The local population was being accustomed to the top-down and centralized formula of governance in which a community’s bottom-up mobilization was perceived as something redundant or a threat to those in power. It is necessary, however, to refer to one more feature characteristic of Domaszowice which weakens the argument of a low level of participation, namely a high voter turnout in successive local government elections.

In comparison to the other communes in the district, Domaszowice has the highest voter turnout in local government elections. Although not so big, this advantage is also true in the case of parliamentary elections. Taking into consideration the commune’s position on the governance quality scale, we can observe an interesting case showing that a high voter turnout is not always an indication of a high quality of governance. In this case, the high voter turnout can be explained by the unique character of local social and political relations connected with the commune leader’s power of mobilization and the fact that he has held the office for a long time. Thus, the question arises: How is it possible to hold power for many terms of office in the circumstances of a low quality of governance?

Firstly, it seems that during the many terms of office the commune leader managed to create a well-functioning system of connections with the local electorate. One of the methods of developing such connections was using public resources and distributing them in accordance with the logic of patronage and

clientelism relations. The interview with the representative of the commune authorities indicates that the commune has a clear pyramid-shaped political hierarchy comprising the commune leader, the local priest, the village leaders, and the voluntary fire service unit, and ensuring support for the commune leader. One of the instruments of strengthening this structure was the distribution of the commune budget, e.g. a considerable percentage of the budget was allocated to the local voluntary fire service units¹³⁴, which constitute a strong election base for the commune leader (Interview 13). The representative of the opposition also referred to the use of the commune's resources. He said that it was one of the methods of rewarding for loyalty and punishing for the lack of it. In his opinion, the uses of available communal resources are more diversified; they include employment in the commune office and its subordinate entities (according to one councillor, the result of any competitive procedure is obvious from the very beginning), dealing with matters in the commune office (disloyal persons have to cope with administrative hindrances, the course of their matters is delayed), and public works as an instrument of distributing employment opportunities in the commune (Interview 12).

The aforementioned newsletter entitled "Gazeta Gminy Domaszowice" constitutes an example of using the commune's resources to create a positive image of the commune office. The newsletter fulfils important functions in the lives of inhabitants as an instrument of providing information on communal matters and integrating the local community. Its circulation is 1000 copies so that every household could get its own copy (Interview 11). Simultaneously, an analysis of the first eight issues of the newsletter published from March 2017 to June 2018 shows that it is an instrument for promoting the commune leader and

134 In one of the interviews, the commune leader states that, among the communes of the Namysłowski district, Domaszowice allocates the largest percentage of its budget to the functioning of the fire protection system, i.e. approximately 2.5 % (in 2017 it was 336,000 zlotys). The commune leader participates in reporting meetings of the local voluntary fire service units and has a very good opinion of firemen and cooperation with their units. Simultaneously, in the interview he responds to some councillors' suggestion that the voluntary fire service units should undergo reviews and assessment, indicating that the commune leader can exercise no control over their structure or activities because formally, they are independent associations. It means that there appear critical opinions about the local voluntary fire service units, and the commune leader clearly plays the role of the protector of their autonomy and good reputation. <http://domaszowice.pl/download/attachment/6630/gazeta-gminy-domaszowice-nr-16-2018-wyd-styczen-luty.pdf> (Accessed 26 May 2018).

officials subordinate to him. Seven of the eight issues feature an interview with the commune leader, and every issue contains a page (usually page 3) dedicated to the presentation of the deputy leader's opinions. Opinions of local activists are also presented in the newsletter, and they have one page in every issue at their disposal. However, such activists are always people related to the commune authorities, e.g. SLD councillors, village leaders, the chairperson and chiefs of the voluntary fire service units, and the chairperson of the local sports club. In five issues of the newsletter there is no information on the opposition in the commune council, and in three issues there is criticism aimed at the opposition councillors.

Besides the distribution of resources as a method of building local support, it is impossible to disregard emotional ties between the commune leader and his supporters. It seems that some of his advocates support him because of his deep roots in the local community, personality traits, and ability to build personal relations with people¹³⁵. Back in the times of the People's Republic of Poland, in the capacity of the first secretary of the local unit of PZPR, he was regarded as a person who could arrange important things for local farmers, e.g. spare parts for tractors. This strategic position and personal charisma ensured that he was held in high esteem in the local community. Representing the peasants' party PSL, his main rival in commune leader elections (in the years 2002, 2006 and 2010) already in 2004 stated that the commune leader "had perfectly mastered techniques of social engineering", implying that his opponent from Solidarity did not know "how to talk to people" (Zyzik 2004). In an interview, one of the village leaders, a supporter of the commune leader, declared that he voted for the commune leader because he "knew him" and the leader "was from here" (Interview 14). One of the inhabitants, a supporter of PiS, emphasized that the commune leader was a polite man who said hallo to everybody, had lived in the commune for a long time, and was always ready to help; an example of "one of us", whose friends and acquaintances always voted for him in elections (Interview 16). Thus, the commune leader is defined as a fellow-countryman who skillfully builds personal relations constituting social capital which is converted subsequently into political capital during elections. This is a case of so-called prescription annuity whose important components are the recognizability of a local leader and the

135 The tab "Commune leader's profile" on the commune's Public Information Bulletin website informs the reader that the leader has a degree in sociology, and has been connected with the commune of Domaszowice since 1976. Privately, he loves "nature, forests, and gardening".

fact that people get used to a leader who has held an office for a few terms in a row (Żurek 2012: 176–177).

The final factor explaining the examined phenomenon of the commune leader's holding the office for many terms is the long-lasting absence of any attractive and strong alternative. It results also from the features discussed above such as the leader's style of governance, available power consolidation tools, potential sanctions against political opponents, and the weakness of the local community. According to one of our respondents, such an arrangement has functioned for a long time because the majority of inhabitants do not want to get involved in any activities being convinced that "after all, nothing will come out of it". The commune has no alternative leaders, some groups are interested in maintaining the status quo, and others are afraid of sanctions which the commune leader may impose on them (Interview 12). On the other hand, according to a representative of the authorities, in the commune there is no opposition competent in terms of knowledge, language and "visual imagery" (Interview 13).

The above interpretation of the phenomenon of holding an office for many terms complements a description of factors responsible for the commune's low position on the governance quality scale. It shows the dynamic character of self-strengthening relations among governance styles, holding an office for many terms, and governance quality. Allowing him to hold the office of commune leader for many terms, the governance style used by the leader simultaneously resulted in a rather low level of governance quality (at least in the light of the indexes proposed here). Nevertheless, there remained a group of the beneficiaries of this style of governance which was large and organized enough to ensure the reproduction of the existing power structure guaranteed by the commune leader during the periods of electoral mobilization. At the same time the number of those dissatisfied with the existing social and political relations remained relatively stable. Passive and silent for a long time, only in the recent years did it produce a stronger and coherent political representation by providing support to the local structures of PiS¹³⁶.

136 A party which, similarly to the SLD, attracts people experiencing social exclusion and demanding a moral cleansing of public life (Gdula, Dębska, Trepka 2017).

