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Switching Political Affiliation: Electoral-List Mobility in Poland, 2005–2015

Abstract: The goal of this article is to establish (a) the relationship between electoral lists, party membership, and changes in party affiliation in the context of (b) electoral-list mobility. Our basic premise is that the illegible institutional rules for placing candidates on electoral lists favors mobility between lists. We use data from the EAST PaC Database (2005–2015), which allows us to estimate to what extent the composition of electoral lists differs in terms of the party affiliation of candidates and to track the mobility of parliamentary candidates between electoral lists in consecutive elections. Our basic findings confirm that candidates who changed party affiliation and those who were independent were most likely to change electoral lists. This is a quite surprising finding because according to studies (Shabad and Słomczyński 2002, 2004) such candidates, whose election potential is uncertain, should be unwelcome on new electoral lists.

Keywords: political affiliation; party membership; electoral-list mobility; party switching

Introduction

There is a growing body of research regarding the political affiliation of politicians and the circumstances of party switching. Examples of the relevant studies include Aldrich and Bianco (1992), Kreuzer and Pettai (2003, 2009), Shabad and Słomczyński (2002, 2004), Desposato (2006), Thames (2007), Desposato and Scheiner (2008), Heller and Mershon (2005, 2008), Mershon and Shvetsova (2005, 2008, 2009), McMenamin and Gwiazda (2011), Nikolenyi (2013), Morgan (2014), Fell (2014, 2017), Klein (2016, 2018), Tunkis (2016, 2017), and Hix and Noury (2018). In these studies, “party switching” is defined as either any change in belonging to a parliamentary party group (PPG), or as any change in a declared party affiliation. It is assumed that there is a close link between party affiliation or membership and parliamentary or electoral activity, resulting in the representation specific political organizations by candidates in elections and parliamentarians. Until recently, this assumption was justified in Poland as well. In recent years, the number of independent candidates in parliamentary elections has increased. These candidates are not members of political organizations but may represent informal associations whose fate—formalization as association or party, combination with other political groups, or dissolution—may be decided only after elections. None of these situations requires candidates to formalize their

membership in the political organization, even if they obtain a parliamentary mandate as a result of the election.

Currently, however, switching political affiliation involves more than changing formal party membership. The definition used in this paper encompasses any change among politically organized entities, including changes that involve politicians (or legislative candidates in general) not having a party designation or those belonging to larger entities than a particular political party. The connection of party membership with political activity and candidacy in parliamentary elections has been significantly weakened.

Previous studies rarely considered the new phenomenon of increasing political activity among categories of people who do not have formal party membership (Bolleyer and Weeks 2009, Weeks 2009) but who are forced to use the existing legal regulations to be able to stand for election. However, these solutions are still provided in a situation where political parties and their members strongly dominate among candidates as well as among parliamentarians. Currently in Poland, more and more often people who do not formally belong to any political organization decide to stand for election, and moreover members of political organizations (not only parties) take part in elections as candidates from other organizations' electoral lists.¹ In the nineties, when we were dealing with the fragmentation of the Polish party scene, the mechanism of creating ballots operated, paradoxically, in a much more legible manner, in that there was a very close relationship between the committee issuing the electoral list and the political affiliation of the candidates.² This combination has been used in previous studies, which have treated any change of political affiliation as a change of party affiliation *per se* (e.g., Shabad and Słomczyński 2002, 2004).

The transformations of the political scene that we faced in Poland after 2001 brought about fundamental changes in the way electoral lists were used by entities participating in elections.³ Candidate lists submitted by electoral committees (electoral ballots) may still, as

¹ Mechanisms used in the construction of electoral lists seem to be less and less transparent, and the process of allocating candidates on electoral lists is widely discussed many months before parliamentary elections—<http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114884,25047098,po-pierwsze-partia-po-drugie-podtapianie-dawnych-sojuznikow.html#s=BoxOpImg4#BoxWOpImg1> [01.08.2019].

² Wasilewski (1994) points to three essential processes shaping the post-communist Polish political scene. First is the split in Solidarity, which led to the emergence of a number of smaller political parties, often displaying radically different visions for a new social order. Second is the institutionalization of parties representing the opposition to Solidarity. Third is the disintegration and reintegration of former communist parties (cf. Ostrowski 2004). These processes were reflected during the appointment of independent or coalition electoral committees.

³ In order to better understand the institutional conditions of this persistent party-switching among Polish parliamentarians between 2005 and 2015, it should be remembered how the party and electoral system evolved before 2005. The gradual institutionalization of the party and electoral systems in Poland after the first free elections can be divided into three stages. The first stage (1991–1993) saw an “excess of alternatives.” During this period, there was intense migration of candidates between ballots, which led to discussions about changing the electoral rules, but there was no stabilization of the party system (Gebethner 1993, 1995). The second stage (1997–2001) saw a “reduction of alternatives.” In parliamentary elections in 1997 and 2001, there were only fifteen lists put forward by election committees, which mobilized groups on the ideological right to consolidate (see also Markowski and Cześniak 2002). The third stage in the institutionalization of Poland's electoral and party system began with the implementation of a new electoral law before the 2001 elections, which abolished the so-called national list (69 of the 460 seats in Sejm were assigned to the national list to balance the proportional distribution of seats won in constituency-based ballots). In the 2001 elections the Sainte-Laguë method was used for the last time. Thus, after 2005, all candidates standing for parliamentary elections competed under the same conditions. New parties (Civic Platform—PO and Law and Justice—PiS) created in 2001 ran again for the 2005 elections, and it was after this point that the electoral scene began to consolidate and polarize (Markowski and Stanley 2016). In this article,

in the nineties, include not only party lists but party-independent voters' lists or inter-party coalition lists,⁴ but now electoral committees have completely different election strategies. The Polish electoral system for the period 2005–2015 allows us to analyze the complexity of an electoral process in which committee electoral lists do not necessarily coincide with the party affiliation of the candidates. In particular, in this system a given party and non-party committee could put candidates without party membership, or candidates belonging to other entities, on its ballot. Moreover, voters' lists and party-coalition lists could be composed of candidates from various parties as well as independent ones. Thus, being placed on a specific electoral list is different from being affiliated with a specific political party. In this paper, we not only examine the relationship between the two but we also analyze the circumstances that promote mobility between electoral lists. We discuss the placement of candidates on electoral lists in elections to the Sejm in regard to the candidates' party affiliation, and in this context we assess the likelihood that candidates who participate in successive elections will change electoral list. We analyze elections to the lower house of the Polish parliament, the Sejm, because they are a good example of mobility between electoral lists.

To our knowledge this is the first examination of patterns of mobility between electoral lists in connection with candidates' declared party affiliation. By focusing on mobility between electoral lists during the election process, we provide insight into the institutionalization of the electoral system and express doubts about the consolidation of the political elite in Poland.

Theoretical Background

Despite the long tradition of research on the phenomenon of switching political affiliation, most empirical studies have been limited to legislators' mobility among parties or parliamentary party groups (PPGs) and still cause controversy (Thames 2007; O'Brien and Shomer 2013; Xuclà 2014; Kerevel 2017). Switching political affiliation raises questions about the relationship between electoral lists and formal party membership in terms of the candidates' motivations (candidates' political loyalty related to possible changes within the PPG). Such changes also give rise to questions about party cohesion and policy coherence in parliament (McElroy and Benoit 2010), coherent and consistent roll-call behavior (Nokken 2009), and the possibility of forming stable government coalitions (Ibenskas 2016). The latest research also indicates that the method for placing candidates on electoral lists may

we focus on the third stage: the "polarization of alternatives" (2005–2015). These years were a time of rivalry between the two largest political parties, which after 2005 received the greatest voter support. Thanks to this, Civic Platform managed to repeat its electoral success in 2007 and 2011, and this was the first time after 1989 that a governing party won a second term. Law and Justice won in 2005, but the parliamentary term was shortened by snap elections. In 2015 Law and Justice won a parliamentary majority capable of creating a government. It was supported by a president from the same political group and became the first party since 1989 to have an absolute majority (but not a constitutional majority) of seats in the lower house of parliament (Kwiatkowski and Szczegółka 2017).

⁴ Ustawa z dnia 5 stycznia 2011 r. Kodeks wyborczy; Dziennik Ustaw z 2018 r. poz. 754, poz. 1000 i 1349 oraz z 2019 r. poz. 273. (Law of January 5, 2011, Election Code, Journal of Laws 2018, pos. 754, pos. 1000 and 1349, and Journal of Laws 2019, pos. 273).

affect the unity of weaker parties (Cordero and Collier 2014; Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier 2016; Jonsson 2017). The phenomenon produces legitimate concerns about effective governance and, above all, questions about political representation, and electoral control and accountability (Desposato 1997; Przeworski et al., 1999; Herron 2002; Zielinski et al. 2005; Hicken 2006; Shabad et al. 2008; Olsen 2017).

Traditionally, when attempting to explain the phenomenon of candidates' switching political affiliation, researchers have referred to motivations related to policies or vote seeking (Strøm 1990; Müller and Strøm 1999; Gwiazda 2009; McMenamin and Gwiazda 2011), the desire for a political career to follow an expected direction (Høyland et al. 2017), or re-election or attaining an office (Klein 2016, 2018). Moreover, research on inter-party mobility combines the subject of such changes with constitutional issues. Such research tends to focus on patterns of switching party affiliation, the conditions under which it occurs, and its impact on the functioning of party systems, that is, its contribution to the instability of post-communist party systems due to the changing loyalty of politicians and of voters' electoral preferences (Kreuzer and Pettai 2003), the impact of party switching on legislation and party behavior (Desposato 2006; Heller and Mershon 2005, 2008; Mershon and Shvetsova 2005, 2013), and the effects of anti-defection laws (Janda 2009). These previous studies can be divided into two categories, depending on the time when the change in political affiliation was recorded. The first, much more extensive category focuses on party switching among members of parliament, mainly during parliamentary terms (e.g., Laver and Benoit 2003; Desposato 2006; McMenamin and Gwiazda 2011; Hug and Wüest 2012; Evans and Vink 2012; Di Virgilio et al. 2012; Nikolenyi 2013; Tunkis 2017). The other category refers to party switching at election time, or between one election and the next (Shabad and Słomczyński 2002, 2004; Kreuzer and Pettai 2003, 2009). These two approaches result from an assumption that both the frequency of changes in party affiliation and politicians' motivations to make such a change depend on the period of the parliamentary term. For example, Mershon and Shvetsova's (2008, 2013) model includes five different stages at which politicians (parliamentarians) can make decisions about party switching. Such changes in the pre-electoral period may be relatively frequent and based on the current results of public opinion polls (Mershon and Shvetsova 2008, 2009, 2013). However, this does not fully explain the reasons for electoral-list mobility during elections. Changing political affiliation, which is defined as changing party affiliation *per se* and/or changing electoral lists (which we consider to be a type of changing political affiliation) is possible not only for incumbents wishing to be re-elected but also for all candidates running again in elections. This is an important observation because, according to Shabad and Słomczyński (2002, 2004), running in subsequent elections on the same or on a different electoral list may be key for a candidate's electoral and parliamentary future.

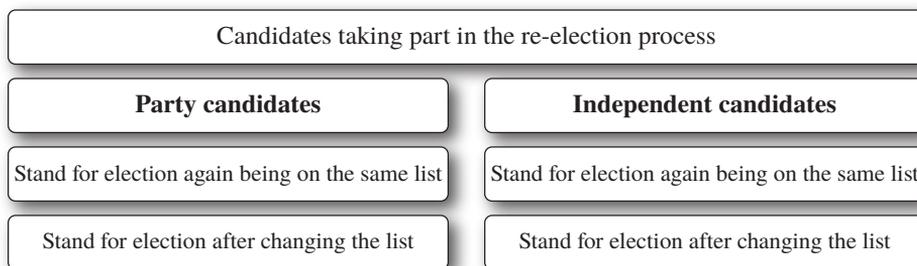
Candidates who participate in succeeding elections are an interesting but relatively small category in Poland. In the years 2005–2007, 2007–2011, and 2011–2015, less than 20% of candidates ran again for election to the Sejm and even more intriguingly, some of them decided to switch lists between elections regardless of their current political affiliation. Situations where all the candidates starting from a common list change to another common list are rare. In the years 2001–2015 in Poland, this situation occurred only a few times. The remaining cases of switching lists between elections involved the candidate's

having to decide which election list to transfer to in order to increase his or her chances of election. In extreme cases, in the next election, candidates who were previously on one list together started from twelve different lists. As can be seen, attention should be drawn to candidates' repeat participation in elections.

Shabad and Słomczyński (2002), using information on the party affiliation of all candidates in the parliamentary elections in Poland between 1985 and 1997, demonstrated that in the first elections after the fall of communism in 1989 (in 1991, 1993, and 1997), political loyalty was questionable, especially in relation to "political nomads." This volatility has been seen as supporting the idea of the unfinished institutionalization of the Polish political system at an early stage of the post-communist transformation (Wasilewski 1994; Kamiński and Kurczewska 1994; Olson 1998; Kreuzer and Pettai 2003, 2009; Desposato 2006). However, party switching persisted, even though it was expected that the behavior of politicians would become more consistent, with electoral calculations typical of established democracies (Lijphart 1992; Bielasiak 1997; Birch 2001; Wnuk-Lipiński 2001; Von Beyme 2005; Raciborski and Ochremiak 2006; Tworzecki 2008; Bertoa and Walecki 2012). Indeed, even among the post-communist democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, Poland features one of the highest frequencies of shifts in political affiliation (Hug and Wüest 2012; O'Brien and Shomer 2013; Tunkis 2017, 2018). Recent studies indicate that this problem persists despite the fact that the Polish party and electoral system have undergone significant transformation after 2001 (McMenamin and Gwiazda 2011; Tunkis 2016, 2017). Since large political volatility—measured by switching parties—has persisted in Poland during its transformation into a stable democracy (until 2015 at least), the question why this has happened becomes particularly interesting.

Partially, the question can be answered by referring to the degree of institutionalization of Polish political parties (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). Generally, the scale of political (and also electoral) disloyalty has its foundations in something that can be called the "short life cycle" of political parties in Poland. Although today we may have the impression that both the Law and Justice party (PiS) and Civic Platform (PO) have existed on the Polish political scene almost forever, they were established in 2001. Thus in the period we are examining they were relatively young parties, and this fact was reflected in their many internal, structural, and membership changes. The short average life span of the majority of Polish parties has two major effects: first, it limits the party's ability to create a relatively long-term ideological identity and a mechanism by which activists can identify with the organization. The base of such activists, as is typical for catch-all parties, is also relatively small. This means that potential candidates wishing to take part in elections on a specific list must be sought among supporters who do not have formal party affiliation. This has far-reaching consequences for their potential loyalty. In connection with the next elections, the level of internal party conflicts increases with competition for places on the lists. A process of creating new political initiatives is stimulated and then takes the form of moving between lists. In our analyses, therefore, we will focus not only on those candidates who have formal party affiliation but also on independent candidates. In both cases, we will be interested in the mobility of only those candidates who take part in elections again, whether on the same or a different electoral list.

Scheme 1

Model of inter-electoral list mobility

Source: own compilation.

Mapping Electoral Lists and Political Attachments and Affiliations

Between 2005 and 2015 the Polish electoral system was based on the division of the country into 41 multi-mandate electoral districts, in which mandates were distributed between the lists of three types of electoral committees: political parties, voters, and party coalitions. The key difference between them is the use of the so-called statutory threshold, which is 5% for committees of individual parties or voter committees and 8% for election coalitions. Candidates were placed on lists according to the following rules: (a) only one person can run from one electoral list in one district, (b) the order of candidates on the list is determined by the election committee, and (c) being on a particular list does not have to be linked to being a member of a political party (for more details see [Markowski and Czeŝnik 2002](#); [Marcinkiewicz 2014](#); [Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier 2015](#)).

In the years 2005, 2007, 2011, and 2015, electoral committees submitted between 10 and 22 lists before each parliamentary election: 56 in total. The electoral lists of political parties were the most numerous ($N = 40$), followed by electoral lists of voters ($N = 14$), and the lists of coalition committees ($N = 2$). [Table 1](#) shows the candidates' party attachment on these electoral lists.

The percentage of candidates on party lists who were affiliated with their original parties decreased (from 68.2% in 2005 to 54.1% in 2015). Furthermore, on the same type of lists, the share of candidates representing other parties than the one issuing the list decreased, while the share of independent candidates increased. We should also note that during the 2005 and 2015 elections, there were not only independent candidates on the voters' lists but also candidates affiliated with specific parties (23.7% and 6.1%, respectively). It became quite common for candidates without party membership to appear not only on voters' electoral lists but also on party or coalition electoral lists. The increasing share of these cases in the group of candidates intensified the problem of effective control over the loyalty of legislative candidates.

During the 2007 and 2015 elections, respectively 15.5% and 27.8% of party-coalition lists were composed of candidates from the "wrong" party—that is, the candidates were not affiliated with the parties issuing the electoral-coalition list. As a result, a candidate's

Table 1

Percentage of candidates on electoral lists according to party affiliation

Type of electoral lists	Total number of candidates N = 100%	Type of candidates by party affiliation		
		Candidates affiliated to the party that formed the list (%)	Candidates affiliated to another party (%)	Non-party candidates (%)
2005				
Party electoral committee	10270	68.2	10.2	21.6
Electoral committee of voters	388	—	(23.7)*	76.3
Coalition electoral committee	—	—	—	—
Total	10658	65.7	10.7	23.6
2007				
Party electoral committee	5277	68.8	6.8	24.3
Electoral committee of voters	21	—	—	100.0
Coalition electoral committee	889	77.8	6.6	15.5
Total	6187	69.9	6.8	23.3
2011				
Party electoral committee	7011	57.2	4.6	38.2
Electoral committee of voters	24	—	—	100.0
Coalition electoral committee	—	—	—	—
Total	7035	57.0	4.6	38.4
2015				
Party electoral committee	5376	54.1	1.9	43.9
Electoral committee of voters	1607	—	(6.1)*	93.9
Coalition electoral committee	906	71.0	1.2	27.8
Total	7889	45.0	2.7	52.3

*Candidates with party affiliation on the lists of electoral committee of voters.

decision to be on a different electoral list in subsequent elections might be relatively independent of their current party affiliation. In particular, those belonging to party A and being on the list of this party in one election could run for the next election on the list of another party (B), on the list of voters, or on a party coalition list (of parties C and D), without changing their original political party affiliation. Moreover, candidates may change their party affiliation (e.g., from A to B) but stay on the same list of candidates (e.g., the list of party A). For example, the elections in 2015 in Poland featured the Citizens' Electoral Committee "Kukiz '15" headed by the rock star Paweł Kukiz, in which the majority of candidates (91%) were not tied to any particular political party. Alternatively, the electoral list sponsored by the currently governing Law and Justice party (PiS) was actually an informal coalition list formed with two other parties: United Poland (SP) and Jarosław Gowin's Poland Together (Razem—PRJG). Let us recall the additional consequences of this electoral-list mechanism which appeared after the United Right, the ruling coalition, won the presidential election in 2020. It seemed that the United Right's victory would contribute to its consolidation. However, this did not happen. Signs of problems with maintaining program unity and unity between members within the coalition began to appear. Groups known as PiS attachments tried to reshuffle forces within this informal coalition, and in response to these actions they received a clear signal that their participation in the con-

struction of electoral lists in the next parliamentary elections would be reduced or that they would be deprived of the possibility of running from the lists of their informal coalition partner PiS. The vagueness of this situation—the formal and legal conditions for the functioning of the ruling coalition, which was established on the basis of an informal electoral coalition—led to heated conflicts, both program-related and personal. These often led to the use of arguments of force—in regard to hastening parliamentary elections or forming a minority government, all in the context of actions allegedly intended to encourage politicians to transfer from one coalition partner to another. The aim of such actions was to discipline the MPs representing two smaller groups: United Poland (SP) and Agreement (earlier Razem—PRJG). From the perspective of voters such actions seem pointless.

Hypotheses

This phenomenon, namely, the incoherent electoral allocation of candidates on ballots without regard for their current party affiliation, can be explained in at least several ways. What Tunkis (2018) calls “relying on attachment to nonpartisan identities” (Tunkis 2018) could be mentioned. Morgan offers an interesting approach to the problem of politicians’ switching parties in Poland. Using the latent path model in analyzing the party-switching network in Poland he states that changing political affiliation during a political term may not be a significant problem in the institutionalization of political parties. Instead, he advances the theory that “party switching in Poland has allowed politicians to sort into more homogeneous groups” (Morgan 2014: 38). According to Morgan, during the parliamentary term there is a significant number of changes in party affiliation (or PPG affiliation) caused by the need for more homogeneous parliamentary groups. But the question is what causes this behavior? Consideration of the genesis of political groups in Poland reveals how strong the informal reasons for placing specific candidates on electoral lists can be, and that these reasons often involve social ties, favors, or current interests. Civic Platform’s and Law and Justice’s fate intertwined repeatedly after 1989, as did the fate of the members of these organizations, and Civic Platform’s and Law and Justice’s current electoral strategies must take into account the difficult relations and dependencies between the individual factions forming these parties.⁵

According to our data, the illusory program and ideological homogeneity of the parliamentary party group is not confirmed at the moment of parliamentary elections. In looking at the arrangement of ballots for the entire group of candidates, the existence of a mechanism that causes political groups to be heterogeneous during elections is noticeable. Understanding the mechanism is crucial for understanding why Polish members of parliament persistently change their political affiliations. Lack of formal institutional restrictions in re-

⁵ The two largest and most powerful political groups after 2001 (Civic Platform and Law and Justice) were built on the basis of several dozen larger or smaller political groups, some of which no longer exist. Civic Platform today brings together politicians who have often followed very intriguing paths on the political scene. Civic Platform’s internal diversity does not reflect the diversity of roots of professional politicians (parliamentarians). Bearing in mind the events of 2005–2007, i.e., the parliamentary elections won by Law and Justice, the coalition stalemate and then the accelerated elections won by Civic Platform, it should be noted that Civic Platform also included former activists associated with Law and Justice, and earlier yet with Center Agreement—on the basis of which Civic Platform’s main competitor, namely Law and Justice, was established.

gard to the election participation of candidates who have changed their party affiliation during the term or at election time is not conducive to party loyalty or loyalty to voters. On the other hand, this mechanism also encourages electoral committees to put forward electoral lists partly in isolation from program criteria. The ambiguous formal political affiliations of candidates in the Polish electoral system make it easier for electoral committees to do so. In other words, the method for forming the lists of candidates is a possible source of the persistent high level of PPG switching during the parliamentary term in Poland (Tunkis 2016, 2017, 2018).

Patterns of mobility between electoral lists

What factors favor the mobility of candidates between electoral lists should be explained. Candidates are probably trying to improve their electoral situation in this way (Black 1972; Schlesinger 1966; Müller and Strøm 1999; Heller and Mershon 2009). Such mobility might be an effective method of increasing their chances of getting more votes, or they might have a higher probability of being elected when running from the list of a committee with generally better electoral results. Still, the basic condition for placing a candidate on an electoral list should be identification with the program and axiological values of the entity producing the list (Wojtasik 2013). Moreover, as Rogowski and Tucker say (2018: 6), “voters want to know what they are buying.” However, in the case of the Polish method of placing candidates on ballots, it often becomes impossible to assess the candidate’s attitude to the party program. From the voter’s perspective, it is hard to determine which candidate should be preferred, because it is difficult to estimate how close individual candidates are to each other, ideologically and axiologically. Thus, as we can see, the consequences of the extent of internal electoral list heterogeneity and the consequences of candidate allocation methods are far-reaching. Recent studies have not produced unequivocal data, and some of them suggest that the decision to change lists may even worsen electoral perspectives (Klein 2016; Fell 2017; Kerevel 2017). As Mershon and Shvetsova (2013) state, voters who might have supported the candidate might want to punish him or her for changing party affiliation before the election. Shabad and Słomczyński (2002, 2004) also claim that party loyalty seems to facilitate electoral success.

We assume that the major causes of mobility between electoral lists in Poland result from illegible institutional rules (cf. O’Brien and Shomer 2013). Klein (2018) points out that candidates tend to change party affiliation more often in systems with open electoral lists. In Poland, aside from the method for calculating seat allocation, other institutional mechanisms—the methods for constructing electoral lists and placing candidates on the list—probably play an important role. Although the placement of candidates on different types of electoral lists is not subject to formal regulation, their internal diversity (in terms of political affiliation) results from the types of electoral lists. Thus, with respect to the previous research results and current patterns of mobility between electoral lists, we can formulate the following basic principle: in the pairs of elections 2005–2007, 2007–2011, and 2011–2015, in regard to party membership and changes in party affiliation, the illegible and misunderstood institutional rules for placing candidates on electoral lists favored mobility between those lists.

Explaining mobility between electoral lists

To determine the chances of mobility between electoral lists by candidates repeating their participation in the pairs of elections 2005–2007, 2007–2011, 2011–2015, we propose three models, taking into account the impact of six variables. Two basic variables pertain to party affiliation and change in party membership. In addition, we take into account three variables that are traditionally treated as predictors of change in political affiliation during an election (e.g., Desposato 2006; Heller and Mershon 2005; Mershon 2014): the individual result in the previous election, individual electoral experience, and the committee's previous election result. We also include gender.

Party membership effect. Shabad and Słomczyński (2002, 2004) prove that the candidates with stronger loyalty to their political environment have the best chances for success. Placing these candidates on the electoral list may seem a better strategy than having candidates not formally associated with the party. Therefore, it seems reasonable to expect that candidates who are members of parties will be less motivated to look for a place on the electoral lists of other committees. Contrarily, independent candidates and candidates who were on the electoral list of a party but were not members of the party would be more willing to change electoral list in the next election. They are less connected with a given party and have less chance of obtaining a high position on the electoral list than party candidates have. Therefore, our first hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Non-partisan attachment to the party issuing the list will significantly increase a candidate's probability of switching electoral list between consecutive elections in the pair under analysis.

The effect of switching party affiliation. Shabad and Słomczyński (2002, 2004) also confirm the assumption that the type of inter-party mobility influences candidates' likelihood of election success. Those loyal to their party have the best chance for re-election. It seems rational to expect that the candidates who have decided to change party affiliation before elections will be interested in participating in the elections again, though they will not be put forward by their previous party. Thus, it is expected that the candidate who changes party affiliation will run as a candidate on the list of the new party or on the list of another electoral committee. Therefore, the second hypothesis is as follows:

H2: A change in formal party affiliation between the pairs of elections will significantly increase a candidate's probability of switching electoral list.

Basic controls. Bearing in mind that voters and election committees reward political loyalty (Shabad and Słomczyński 2002, 2004; Gherghina 2016), the candidates most motivated to run for election again on the same electoral list seem to be those who won a seat in the previous election. In contrast, individual failure in an election may favor the decision to change electoral list in the next election (control variable—Individual electoral effect in previous elections). However, for the individual electoral result, the percentage of votes obtained by the election committee is of key importance (control variable—Committee electoral effect in previous elections). Therefore, the candidates who were on electoral lists that did poorly and who did not obtain a seat will be more motivated to change electoral list and choose one that provides a higher probability of being elected (Desposato 2006; Desposato and Scheiner 2008; Thames 2007; McMenemy and Gwiazda 2011; O'Brien

and Shomer 2013; Young 2014). It also seems that less experienced candidates (in terms of standing for elections and winning seats) may be less attached to one party than those who have been on the lists previously (control variable—Individual electoral experience). They use party resources (organizational and financial) to a much lesser extent than do experienced party activists (Klein 2018). Their experience in adopting specific strategies to increase their chance of participating in the distribution of seats is smaller. At the same time, their relationship with the political circles issuing a given list and their dependence on this environment is less strong. Therefore, their loyalty may be weaker, and they may be more willing to change electoral list. The electoral costs will also be lower for them as many of them may have views that are less compatible with party ideology and thus it will be easier for them to find an alternative electoral list.

Data

We use the unique EAST PaC-POLAND data set (Dubrow and Palaguta 2016) with information that helps track the electoral activity of all candidates. The EAST PaC-POLAND database covers a broader scope of information than POLCAN (a unique data set of the electoral activity of all the candidates for parliament since 1985, constructed under the direction of Kazimierz M. Słomczyński and Goldie Shabad within the CONSIRT program, which contains information about candidates for both Polish chambers of parliament in the 1985–2007 elections and which was conducted by the sociology and political science departments of Ohio State University and by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology and Graduate School for Social Research at the Polish Academy of Sciences, source: consirt.osu.edu) (Shabad and Słomczyński 2002, 2004, 2008; Nyćkowiak 2013, 2014, 2020; Nyćkowiak, Dubrov, Kołodziej 2016). EAST PaC-POLAND contains data on all parliamentary and senate elections between 1985 and 2015. The EAST PaC-POLAND collection, which covers the years 2005–2015, was completed with data published on the official website of the National Electoral Commission (PKW) regarding party attachment and affiliations and the electoral lists represented by the candidates. In addition, we checked if all the data of the original variables regarding the lists of election committees accorded with the data provided by PKW.

The issue of candidates' changing their political affiliation during an election is usually ignored due to the lack of access to data enabling the dynamic tracking of the participation history of all candidates in the election period. Therefore, having access to such data, we can treat a candidate's changing list in consecutive elections as a unique example of a change in political affiliation, which is only sometimes related to party switching *per se*. The analyses in this article focus on candidates for election to the Sejm who started in elections between 2005 and 2015. The analyses of candidates' changing lists in consecutive elections were conducted across three individually treated (for analysis purposes) pairs of elections: 2005–2007 (N = 1,892), 2007–2011 (N = 1,190), and 2011–2015 (N = 1,137). Individuals who took part in more than one election pair can be found in more than one analysis. The data was pooled so that the candidate was the observation unit and all the characteristics of his or her participation in consecutive elections were covariates.

Patterns of Mobility between Electoral Lists

Mobility between electoral lists is when individual candidates move from one electoral list to another in subsequent elections. We distinguish between the basic dynamics underlying mobility between electoral lists: standing for re-election as a candidate on a different electoral list and being a candidate on the same electoral list. Both are related to three types of structural determinants and one of a voluntary nature (see also [Shabad and Słomczyński 2004](#)).

Types of mobility between electoral lists

Table 2 shows the types of mobility between electoral lists. The first type of change applies to cases where the electoral committee that previously put forward the candidate ceases to exist, forcing the candidate to choose a new committee from the available alternatives (electoral-list dissolution). The second type is a consequence of the merger of previously separate electoral lists. The third type comes from the split of previously merged electoral lists. The fourth type involves a situation where the candidate's previous electoral list is registered in successive elections, but the candidate chooses to run on a different list (voluntary mobility between electoral lists).

Table 2
Types of inter-electoral list mobility

Type of change		2007 (%)	2011 (%)	2015 (%)
Stayers				
Type A ₁	Stand for election again being on the same list	70.8	73.6	73.1
Type A ₂	Stay after list merge	14.5	—	15.3
Type A ₃	Stay after list split	—	11.5	—
Total		85.3	85.1	88.4
Movers				
Type B ₁	Change after list dissolution	9.3	6.1	5.1
Type B ₂	Change after list merge	1.6	—	2.2
Type B ₃	Change after list split	—	2.0	—
Type B ₄	Voluntary list change	3.8	6.7	4.3
Total		14.7	14.8	11.6

On the basis of this distinction we differentiate between A—No change of electoral list, with the values (A₁) Standing for election again from the same list, (A₂) Staying after list merger, and (A₃) Staying after list split, and B—Change of electoral list, with the values (B₁) Change after list dissolution, (B₂) Change after list merger, (B₃) Change after list split, and (B₄) Voluntary list change.

We can draw five main conclusions from the data in **Table 3**. The number of candidates who decided to run again for election decreased (from 2007, the total number of this type of candidates decreased by about 40%). However, in three consecutive parliamentary terms there was always a constant percentage of those who decided to run again for election

on the same electoral lists as previously (between 85% and nearly 89%), and at the same time, between 11.6% and nearly 15% of candidates decided to change electoral lists. The most common structural reason for moving between electoral lists was dissolution of the electoral list, but at the same time the number of those candidates who were forced to look for new alternatives because their previous list ceased to exist clearly decreased (from over 9% to slightly over 5%). Interestingly, from nearly 4% to almost 7% of the candidates who repeatedly participated in the elections changed their electoral lists, even if there was no structural need related to electoral-list dissolution, merger, or split. Therefore, how changes of electoral list, party attachment, and changes in party affiliation are related to each other should be considered.

Types of mobility between electoral list by party affiliation

If the ballot placement system worked properly it would favor the inclusion of candidates who identify themselves with the program and axiological background of the entity that composed the electoral list (Wojtasik 2013). Formal party affiliation should be the best indicator of such identification. If there is no such clear identity candidates can be expected to decide to switch electoral lists even without structural conditions. Table 3 shows the frequency of switching electoral list by party affiliation.

In column one of the table, candidates are presented according to their affiliation or non-affiliation to the party issuing the electoral list. Among the candidates who decided to change electoral lists in spite of the lack of institutional necessity for such a move the percentage of non-members of the party that put forward the electoral list clearly increased (from nearly 18% to 67%). It seems that these candidates were ever more ready to switch electoral lists voluntarily. Meanwhile, it should also be noted that there was a decrease in the percentage of voluntary mobility among party members (from 82% to 33%), which may strengthen the thesis about the institutionalization of political parties.

In the case of the dissolution of a list, non-party candidates also constituted a majority of those who, if they wanted to participate in the elections again, were forced to change lists between elections. However, during the terms analyzed, the percentage of those candidates decreased from 85% to nearly 57%. At the same time, the percentage of party members who were forced to change electoral lists because of the dissolution of a list clearly increased: from almost 15% to 43%.

It turns out that the fewer the electoral lists, the more frequently candidates distance themselves from their current party affiliation when deciding on which committee list to run from (in the pair of the 2005–2007 elections—22 to 10 electoral lists; in the pair of the 2005–2007 elections—10 to 11 electoral lists; in the pair of the 2007–2011 elections—11 to 17 electoral lists). This forces electoral committees to change their method of candidate recruitment and placement on the lists. Party affiliation ceases to be a key argument in the process. The relationship between the candidate's political affiliation and chosen electoral list is thus weakened. Consequently, changes in party affiliation, which also indicate lack of strong formal party identification, may be linked to mobility between lists. In column 2 of the table, candidates are presented in regard to their change of party affiliation between successive elections. It should be expected that the candidates who decided to change lists,

Table 3

Inter-electoral list switching by party membership and change in party affiliation

<i>Types of candidates by inter-electoral list mobility</i>	Total N = 100%	Column 1		Column 2	
		Party membership ^d		Changes in party affiliation ^e	
		Members (%)	Non-members ^a (%)	Party-switching ^b (%)	No party-switching (%)
2005–2007	1892				
Electoral list dissolution ^c	9.3	14.8	85.2	41.5	58.5
Electoral list merge					
Stayers	14.5	86.1	13.9	4.4	95.6
Movers	1.6	45.2	54.8	54.8	45.2
Voluntary mobility	3.8	81.7	18.3	84.5	15.5
Stayers	70.8	88.1	11.9	8.8	91.2
2007–2011	1190				
Electoral list dissolution	6.1	28.8	71.2	49.3	50.7
Electoral list split					
Stayers	11.5	90.5	9.5	10.2	89.8
Movers	2.0	66.7	33.3	58.3	41.7
Voluntary mobility	6.7	71.3	28.8	80.0	20.0
Stayers	73.6	85.6	14.4	14.8	85.2
2011–2015	1137				
Electoral list dissolution	5.1	43.1	56.9	50.0	50.0
Electoral list merge					
Stayers	15.3	80.5	19.5	33.3	66.7
Movers	2.2	60.0	40.0	72.0	28.0
Voluntary mobility	4.3	32.7	67.3	13.1	86.9
Stayers	73.1	82.6	17.4	13.1	86.9

^aCandidates affiliated to another party and non-party candidates

^bChange from party membership to non-party, from one party affiliation to another, from non-party to party affiliation.

^cThe complexity of problems regarding decisions of candidates whose electoral lists are not reissued means that it is impossible to create a sensible categorization that could become the basis for distinguishing more specific categories than the collective category of candidates whose electoral lists no longer exist.

If the election list is not reissued the situation of candidates who were party members seems quite complicated (It must be remembered that both party and non-party lists may include candidates with or without party affiliation). The fact that an electoral list is not issued does not necessarily mean that the political party has ceased to exist. Candidates may still be members of the same party and run from a different list (both party and non-party) and, in principle, it is only about the current political situation on the new electoral list that determines whether the candidate's current party affiliation will have any significance. There may also be a situation where there is no previous list, but an agreement has been concluded between several parties to create a joint list without a party label, or where people with different affiliations are invited to a re-constructed list (party or non-party). On the other hand, non-party candidates may be in a difficult situation. From their point of view, no one can find fault with the party affiliation, but their previous list yes, and what is more because they were not embedded in party structures, they can be perceived as a threat to the current party candidates.

^dConcerns the first of the pair's parliamentary elections.

^eConcerns the second of the pair's parliamentary elections.

when they were not forced to do so by structural circumstances, would change their party affiliation. However, this was not always the case: in 2007, 15.5% of voluntary movers did not change their affiliation; in 2011 the number grew to 20%; and in 2015 the number

reached 87%. It can also be seen that with such a definition of switching parties one possible conclusion is the linkage of data from both columns in Table 3. In the case of mobility caused by the merger or split of electoral lists, the number of candidates who decided to change their party affiliation grew from 55% to 72%.

The data also indicate that in the case of mobility between electoral lists caused by the dissolution of an electoral list less than 50% of candidates changed their party affiliation. The fact that party affiliation did not play the most decisive role in enrolment on electoral lists is also confirmed in the case of candidates who decided to stand again for election on the same electoral list. These candidates might have been expected to remain with their current party affiliation. However, from nearly 9% to almost 15% of these candidates changed their party affiliation. This category might also include people who had decided to confirm their party affiliation formally, although they had not previously felt the need to do so.

Explanation of Mobility between Electoral Lists

Models of mobility between electoral lists

The dependent variable—the change of electoral list by a candidate running in two consecutive parliamentary elections—and all the independent variables in our model are dichotomous. In this situation, logistic regression has been applied, which makes it possible to assess the chances of a specific event's occurring. The following model has been used to test the hypotheses on the influence of two factors—party membership and change in party affiliation—on the chances of a candidate's moving between electoral lists.

$$P(Y = 1 | x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5, x_6) = P(X) = \frac{e^{a_0 + \sum_{i=1}^k B_i X_i}}{1 + e^{a_0 + \sum_{i=1}^k a_i x_i}}$$

where: $a_i, i = 0, \dots, k$ are regression coefficients, and x_1, x_2, \dots, x_6 are independent variables.

Dependent variable: Y—Inter-electoral list change (1—yes, 0—no) including events described in subsection 6.1.: (B₁) change after list dissolution, (B₂) change after list merger, (B₃) change after list split, and (B₄) voluntary list change.

Independent variables: x_1 —No membership in the party issuing the list (membership in the party putting forward the list on which the candidate was enrolled in the previous election) (1—no, 0—yes); x_2 —Switching party affiliation between successive parliamentary elections (1—yes, 0—no); x_3 —Individual electoral effect in previous elections (1—failure, 0—success); x_4 —Individual electoral experience (1—two runs, 0—more than two runs); x_5 —Committee electoral effect in previous elections (1—did not win seats, 0—won seats); x_6 —Gender (1—male, 0—female). For each pair of elections an independent model has been tested. We are not stating that results for the models can be clearly compared, but each model separately illustrates a situation at a given moment in time and in specific political and social conditions. Each model takes into account the whole population of candidates

who decided to run again in two consecutive elections. All the candidates included in each pair of elections operated in the same political situation.

Mobility between electoral lists, 2005–2007

The first term analyzed began in 2005 with the victory of the Law and Justice party. It ended in 2007 with a snap election resulting from problems in maintaining a parliamentary majority. Pre-election polls in 2007 predicted the victory of the Civic Platform party, Law and Justice's main competitor. But not all committees that won seats in 2005 had a chance to be awarded seats in the new parliament. One of the reasons was the policy pursued by Law and Justice against their coalition partners, which resulted in only ten electoral lists being put forward in 2007, in comparison to twenty-two in 2005. This reduction in the number of alternatives available to candidates caused numerous transfers to other electoral lists. In this regard, some candidates may have decided to change their political affiliations to increase their chances of standing in the upcoming elections. Data for this model is presented in [Table 4](#).

Table 4

Logistic regression of inter-electoral list mobility in Poland on party membership and switching party affiliation (2005–2007)

<i>Independent variables^a</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
2007 Election^b		
No membership in the party issuing the list (2005) ^c	0.000	6.147
Switching party affiliation (2007) ^d	0.000	10.262
Individual electoral effect (2005) ^e	0.509	1.225
Individual electoral experience to 2007 ^f	0.047	0.691
Committee electoral effect (2005) ^g	0.000	6.311
Gender ^h	0.000	2.584
Constant	0.000	0.010

^a Candidates changing the electoral list are the reference category.

^b $-\text{Log L} = 933.9$, $\text{CS-R}^2 = 0.289$, $\text{N-R}^2 = 0.511$.

Note: $-\text{Log L} = \text{Log Likelihood}$, $\text{CS-R}^2 = \text{Cox and Snell R}^2$, $\text{N-R}^2 = \text{Nagelkerke R}^2$

^c Candidates affiliated to another party and non-party candidates (1), Candidates affiliated to the party that forms the list (0).

^d Switching party affiliation (1), No-switching party affiliation (0).

^e Not winning a seat (1), Winning a seat (0).

^f No more than two-time participation in the election (1), More than two-time participation in the election (0).

^g Non parliamentary (1), Parliamentary (0).

^h Male (1), Female (0).

The odds ratio for switching electoral lists in subsequent elections increased five-fold among the independent candidates (vs. those who were party members). Over 85% of the candidates who in 2005 were not members of the party that put them forward, decided to appear again on the electoral lists of parties to which they did not formally belong. Furthermore, just over 35% of candidates standing for election in 2005 as candidates of their parties decided in 2007 to switch electoral lists and change their party affiliation (usually affiliation to the party that produced the list). The change in party affiliation increased the odds

of a candidate's switching electoral lists by up to nine times. Among the candidates who changed their party affiliation between 2005 and 2007, almost 54% of them also changed electoral list. Thus, a strong influence of the traditionally perceived change in affiliation was visible, and during the election period, a change in affiliation increased the probability of a candidate's switching electoral lists. Surprisingly, failure in 2005 was not conducive to the decision to change electoral list. This could have been the result of intense competition in the 2007 election for places on the lists, which made this variable statistically insignificant. It should be noted, however, that a candidate's having little experience in elections slightly reduced the probability that the candidate would decide to change electoral list. The gender of the candidate had only a slight influence on the decision to change electoral lists. We can say that for the 2005 and 2007 pair of elections hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 were confirmed.

Mobility between electoral lists, 2007–2011

It should be noted that Civic Platform won the 2007 election as expected, and formed a government in coalition with the Polish People's Party. In 2011, pre-election polls also predicted the victory of Civic Platform and that its coalition partner would cross the election threshold. Electoral committees were mainly formed by parties that were successful in 2007. During this period, new parties were also founded and put forward their own electoral lists. The situation was different in the case of candidates who decided to change their political affiliation, which was done by 56% of non-party candidates.

In the 2011 election, the value of factors clearly changed. The impact of the main model independent variable—party attachment—decreased, as is shown in [Table 5](#).

Table 5

Logistic regression of inter-electoral list mobility in Poland on party membership and switching party affiliation (2007–2011)

<i>Independent variables^a</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
2011 Election^b		
No membership in the party issuing the list (2007) ^c	0.000	3.038
Switching party affiliation (2011) ^d	0.000	9.380
Individual electoral effect (2007) ^e	0.000	5.820
Individual electoral experience to 2011 ^f	0.538	0.882
Committee electoral effect (2007) ^g	0.000	0.102
Gender ^h	0.009	1.896
Constant	0.000	0.010

^a Candidates changing the electoral list are the reference category.

^b $-\text{Log } L = 707.3$, $\text{CS-}R^2 = 0.216$, $\text{N-}R^2 = 0.379$.

Note: $-\text{Log } L = \text{Log Likelihood}$, $\text{CS-}R^2 = \text{Cox and Snell } R^2$, $\text{N-}R^2 = \text{Nagelkerke } R^2$

^c Candidates affiliated to another party and non-party candidates (1), Candidates affiliated to the party that forms the list (0).

^d Switching party affiliation (1), No-switching party affiliation (0).

^e Not winning a seat (1), Winning a seat (0).

^f No more than two-time participation in the election (1), More than two-time participation in the election (0).

^g Non parliamentary (1), Parliamentary (0).

^h Male (1), Female (0).

Hence the role of the factor connected with the traditional model, in which a change in party affiliation meant a change of electoral list, did not significantly weaken. This could also be the reason why a candidate's standing for election in 2007 on a list that did not win a seat in Parliament reduced the chances of his or her changing electoral list in 2011. However, it should be noted that the influence of the result obtained by the candidate in the 2007 election increased. For candidates who failed at that time, the odds of changing electoral list (vs. not changing it) were 5.82 times higher than for candidates who did not fail, all other variables being constant. However, the significance of gender decreased, and having little electoral experience ceased to be statistically significant. In the case of the elections in 2007 and 2011 hypotheses 1 and 2 were confirmed.

Mobility between electoral lists, 2011–2015

The 2011 elections were won by Civic Platform and its coalition partner, the Polish People's Party. After the election, the two parties once again formed a government, but general support for their government gradually decreased before the next elections in 2015. The pre-election polls in 2015 predicted the victory of the main opposition party, Law and Justice. Moreover, at that time, new political entities were formed and put forward electoral lists with primarily non-party candidates. This situation could have been an incentive for independent candidates to seek new opportunities to increase their chances for a good election result.

It should be noted that the importance of the main model variable increased the probability of changing electoral lists. The decision was made easier by the fact that in the 2015 election as many as seventeen electoral lists were put forward, which opened new possibilities for the candidates. The conclusion seems to confirm a clear increase in the significance of the factor related to whether the list on which the candidate was placed in the previous election participated in the distribution of parliamentary seats. Data for this model is presented in [Table 6](#).

For candidates who stood for election in 2011 and were on lists that did not win any seats (vs. candidates on winning lists) the odds ratio for changing list in 2015 increased six fold.

It must be borne in mind that between 2010 and 2013 smaller groups emerged from the largest opposition party, Law and Justice. Two remained closely related to the original party and did not put forward separate lists in the 2015 election. As a result, their members were placed on the list of their previous party, even though they had changed their party affiliation. It should be noted that this was not an officially declared coalition list in which the parties appeared as equal partners. It was an unusual situation in which the ruling political party accepted candidates who, during the parliamentary term, had left the party and changed their party affiliation. This may explain the decrease in the influence of a change in party affiliation on a change in electoral list. It is also worth noting that the role of failure in the 2011 election decreased. Furthermore, a candidate's having little experience slightly reduced the probability of his or her changing electoral list, and the candidate's gender ceased to be statistically significant. Therefore, hypotheses 1 and 2 were confirmed for the period 2011–2015.

Table 6

**Logistic regression of inter-electoral list mobility in Poland on party membership
and switching party affiliation (2011–2015)**

<i>Independent variables^a</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
2015 Election^b		
No membership in the party issuing the list (2011) ^c	0.000	4.041
Switching party affiliation (2015) ^d	0.000	2.902
Individual electoral effect (2011) ^e	0.008	2.370
Individual electoral experience to 2015 ^f	0.014	0.544
Committee electoral effect (2011) ^g	0.000	7.144
Gender ^h	0.079	1.538
Constant	0.000	0.015

^aCandidates changing the electoral list are the reference category.

^b–Log L = 559.9, CS-R² = 0.184, N-R² = 0.362.

Note: –LogL = –Log Likelihood, CS-R² = Cox and Snell R², N-R² = Nagelkerke R²

^cCandidates affiliated to another party and non-party candidates (1), Candidates affiliated to the party that forms the list (0).

^dSwitching party affiliation (1), No-switching party affiliation (0).

^eNot winning a seat (1), Winning a seat (0).

^fNo more than two-time participation in the election (1), More than two-time participation in the election (0).

^gNon parliamentary (1), Parliamentary (0).

^hMale (1), Female (0).

Conclusion

This study has contributed to an understanding of the institutionalization of the party and electoral system in Poland. It focuses on changes in party affiliation of all candidates who stood for pairs of consecutive parliamentary elections in Poland (2005–2007, 2007–2011, and 2011–2015). The data presented documents the phenomenon of mobility between electoral lists in the entire candidate population in consecutive elections—a fact that is rarely noticed by political commentators, who usually focus on the behavior of parliamentarians. The analysis of the three periods in time, which were determined by the dates of subsequent elections, provides an interesting picture of the Polish political scene between 2005 and 2015. Successive pairs of elections should be considered separately and cannot be directly compared with each other. However, similar tendencies can be observed in each of them.

In each of the analyzed pairs of elections it was confirmed that the candidates who were not members of the party issuing the electoral list were more likely than the other candidates to change electoral list before the next election. Our hypotheses were positively verified for each of the pairs of elections analyzed. The growing number of independent candidates may lead to a situation where party loyalty in the traditional sense, and the stability of parliamentary policies based partly on formal party membership, will be endangered.

Our analyses also allows us to state that the process of creating lists of candidates for parliamentary elections in Poland does not allow electoral committees to check the future loyalty of politicians effectively. Despite the fact that the current legal regulations give political parties very effective tools to discipline their candidates and parliamentarians, it is difficult to resist the impression that this lack of order in party affiliations leads increas-

ingly often to serious political crises. For instance—to mention only the most recent and serious crises of this type—there was Jarosław Gowin’s lack of consent for holding the “envelope elections,” and Agreement’s refusal to support the Election Act (followed by the resignation of the deputy prime minister, while interestingly his party remained in the ruling coalition). Another example is the conflict over the “Kaczynski’s five” legislation regarding animal protection and the “Impunity Act,” which caused a very large collapse in the coalition and reshuffles in the government. During the negotiations, arguments about the future construction of parliamentary electoral lists were used. Thus, once again the issue of composing election lists became a tool for disciplining recalcitrant coalition partners—facilitated undoubtedly by the unclear system for constructing these lists. Such informal electoral coalitions, which in the event of election victory form the government majority, dilute political agendas in favor of personal issues. It is difficult to state unequivocally whether votes for this type of electoral list are guided by sympathy for the program of the party that is issuing such an informal coalition list. The expectation that after winning the elections all MPs will support the program of the strongest coalition partner contradicts the idea of a coalition. The level of complexity of this situation far exceeds the perception of the average voter and is not conducive to sensible election decisions. Therefore, the phenomenon we described has far-reaching consequences for the functioning of the political scene in Poland, and the questions concerning the construction of electoral lists should be thoroughly reviewed in terms of regulations destabilizing the political situation and political market in Poland.

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