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Jarosław Szczepański

University of Warsaw

Demeny Voting in Poland: Introduction to a Research Concept

Abstract

Demeny voting is one of less known ways to modify the classic approach to organizing democratic elections. This paper is an attempt at identifying a proper approach to studies on the possible impact of the demeny voting system on the Polish political system. Moreover, it is devoted to identifying other fields that require further research which should precede proper investigation of possible application of demeny voting in Poland. Secondary interest of the article is to pursue the connection between demeny voting and the ideal of deliberative democracy.

The author refers to the results of the 2015 general elections and Polish demographic information published by the Central Statistical Office of Poland. The analysis of the data may serve as of a first step towards determining a hypothetical impact of demeny voting on the Polish political system.

Key words: *demeny voting; Poland; political theory; deliberative democracy*

Introduction

Thinking about democracy is thinking not only about procedures but also about how one should be involved into them. Commonly, when talking about democracy, journalists and even politicians mostly mean by it the liberal democracy, while the political studies differentiate between various types of the concept. One of those is deliberative democracy¹ in which not only a numerical majority of voters above a certain age threshold should count, but also the voice of diverse social groups. After all, the main reason behind democracy is to create space for a multilog of groups of interest. The more diverse the multilog, the better. In this case, allowing to introduce a proxy for those who are not able to speak for themselves is not only an option, but even a necessity. The institution of a proxy can be extended to the limits by introducing one for the future generations – those who will carry the burden of the current political decisions. Or, in other words, introducing a proxy for the as yet unborn. Leaving those extreme proposals aside, let us elaborate on and investigate demeny voting as a way of introducing a proxy for the young generations.

Even though the interest in organizing voting systems in ways examined in this paper is rather negligible in Europe², it has been discussed in Japan. In the Far East, a number of scientific papers have been published in this area, preceded by an experiment involving modelling of the new voting

¹ M. Tobiasz, *Demokracja deliberowana*, in: *Reprezentacja polityczna* ed. T. Żyro, Warszawa 2015.

² Although demeny voting was discussed in first half of the 20th century in European countries such as France and Germany.

system³. Nonetheless, there is no actual empirical evidence demonstrating the implications of demeny voting. Experiments such as the one performed by Oguro, Shimasawa, Aoki, and Oshio in 2012 using an overlapping generations model show that introducing demeny voting may decrease the tax burden of the working generation, but was it not sufficient to produce a general projection⁴.

The Japanese experiment brought up questions about changing patterns of electoral behaviors, differences between male and female proxy voters as well as whether ultimately outcomes of demeny voting reflect the interest of future generations. In this paper, I would like to investigate the possible approach to projecting demeny voting in Poland. In that case I would like to examine fields of research connected with the main issue and indicate necessary analyses that should be conducted in order to predict its impact.

Methods

In the course of the research, databases of the Central Statistical Office of Poland, as well as of the Public Opinion Research Center were searched for information on demographic indicators used in surveys about electoral behaviors. The main reason behind the research was to determine the type of performed surveys, type of available data as well as to analyze whether it is sufficient or not to design a simulation of the impact of demeny voting

³ Y. Kamij, Y. Hizen, T. Saijo, *Hearing the voice of future generations: A laboratory experiment of "demeny voting"*, "Social Design Engineering Series" 2015; R. Vaithianathan, R. Aoki, E. Sbair, *Support for Franchise Extension for Children: Evidence on Japanese Attitude to Demeny Voting*, Hitotsubashi University Repository 2013; P. Demeny, R. Aoki, I. Makihara, J. Ushiro, N. Yanagawa, *Demeny Voting and Its Impact. NIRA Round-Table*, Hitotsubashi University Repository 2011.

⁴ Y. Kamij, Y. Hizen, T. Saijo, *Hearing the voice of future generations: A laboratory experiment of "demeny voting"*, "Social Design Engineering Series" 2015, p. 3.

on the Polish political system. Another source was the Report on Large Families in Poland⁵ (Polish: *Rodziny wielodzietne w Polsce 2016. Raport*) prepared by the Association of Large Families “Three plus” in cooperation with Ipsos Poland. It was the first general survey of large families in Poland performed in 2016. The analysis of this document was focused on usability of the data for the purpose of projecting voting patterns and eagerness to participate in elections by parents in large families. It was also to verify the popular thesis that large families in Poland hold conservative or social conservative views and therefore are prone to vote for the parties perceived as right wing in Poland.

Results

The outcome of the research shows that the available data is not sufficient to perform satisfying projections for the introduction of the demerit voting in Poland. First of all, the surveys on large families included in the databases of the Central Statistical Office of Poland, as well as the Public Opinion Research Center focus on on their economic situation. Most of the available data on large families is connected with the problem of poverty⁶. Indeed, the research conducted in Poland, especially in the subfield of political sciences such as analyzing public policies, is focused on investigating large families from the economic perspective. There is little (if any) interest in performing a large survey on the political behavior,

⁵ *Rodziny wielodzietne w Polsce 2016. Raport*, Warszawa 2016.

⁶ In GUS database e.g.: *Zasięg ubóstwa materialnego w 2005 r.* (The range of material poverty in 2005); *Benficyjenci środowiskowej pomocy społecznej 2014 r.* (Beneficiaries of community social aid in 2014); *Benficyjenci środowiskowej pomocy społecznej 2015 r.* (Beneficiaries of community social aid in 2015); *Benficyjenci środowiskowej pomocy społecznej 2016 r.* (Beneficiaries of community social aid in 2016); *Ubóstwo ekonomiczne w Polsce w 2014 r.* (Economic poverty in Poland in 2014). In CBOS database e.g.: *Komu w Polsce żyje się najtrudniej?* (Who has the hardest life in Poland?).

political self-determination or impact of certain political doctrines on the members of large families.

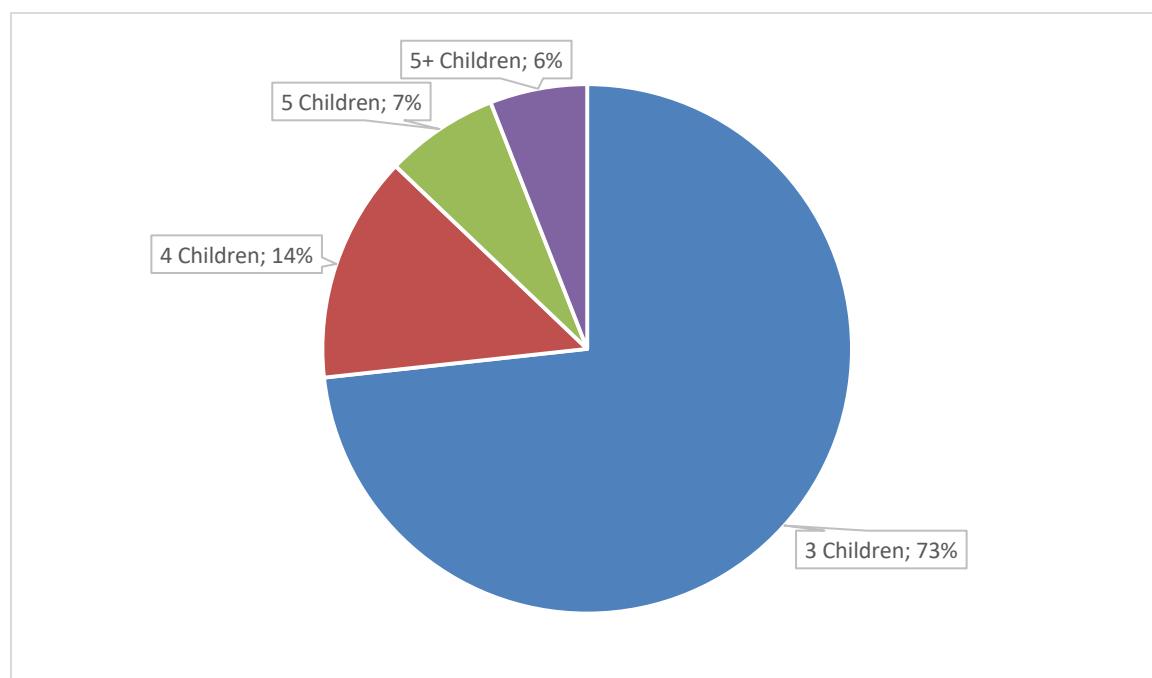
The above diagnosis has been confirmed after investigating the database in search of surveys on electoral behavior⁷. The electorate is not being analyzed according to their family status (e.g. a nuclear or a large family) or the number of children. Surveys take into account traditional factors such as the level of education, income, or the place of living. The approach to demerit voting, in these circumstances, would require conducting basic surveys that would determine the profile of voters from large families. In a report entitled *Who the voters are, or the socio-demographic portrayal of the largest potential electorates* words such as “child”, “children”, “family” do not appear even once. That shows how the current electoral system has determined the way of thinking about voters and whose interest politicians should bear in mind during campaigns. The voice of the guardians of the future generations (namely parents) – who under the doctrine of deliberative democracy could act as proxies – are not visible in the reports and surveys.

Due to this fact, the report on large families in Poland from 2016 can be seen as a unique source of information that can be useful in projecting research on the application of demerit voting in Poland. The authors of the report indicated that an average large family in Poland has 4 children living

⁷ In CBOS database e.g.: *Kim są zamierzający głosować w wyborach do Sejmu, ale niezdecydowani, kogo poprzeć* (Who are those intending to vote but still undecided in the elections to the Sejm?); *Kim są wyborcy, czyli społeczno-demograficzne portrety największych potencjalnych elektoratów* (Who the voters are, or the socio-demographic portrayal of the largest potential electorates).

under the same roof with their parents. However, the report mentions children under the age of 24 years and so some of them are eligible to vote.

Figure 1 - Children under the age of 24 living with parents



Source: Rodziny wielodzietne w Polsce 2016. Raport, Warszawa 2016, p. 2.

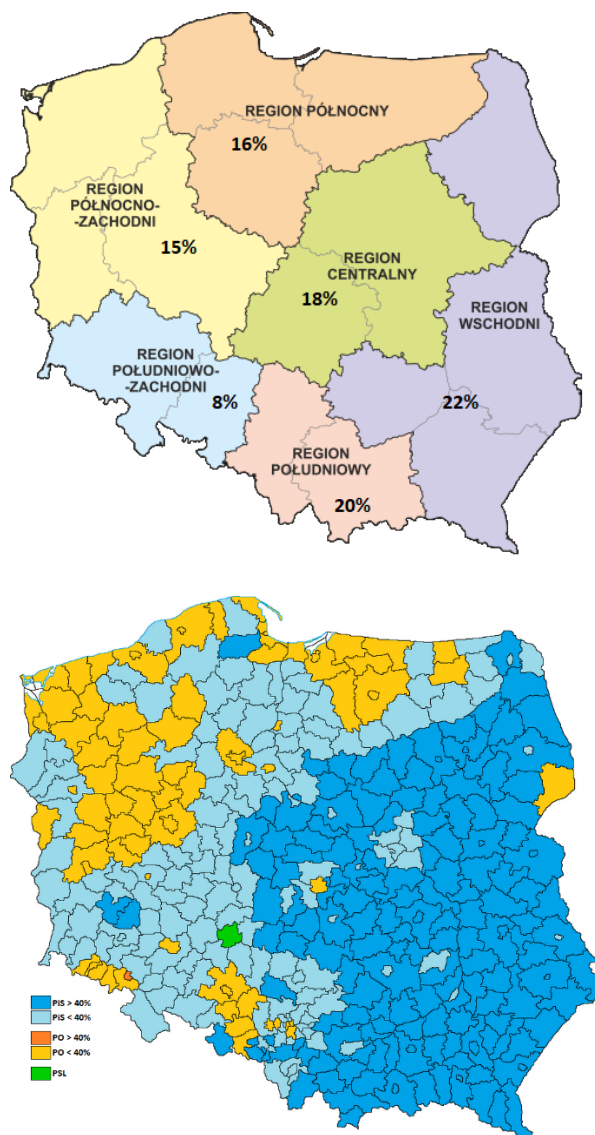
The Polish Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy indicated that in 2016 there were 520,000 large families having 3 or more children, with the total number of people living in such families amounting to 2,700,000. Those figures imply that such families included on average of 5.19 person, i.e. about 3 children per one large family. This number refers only to children who are minors.

The report indicated that 64% of all large family couples contracted church marriage, 20% - civil marriage, and 10% lived in informal partnerships. It is worth noticing that in the Polish society, contracting a

church marriage does not automatically imply sympathizing with conservative or right-wing views. It is safe to say that a large family is correlated with the stability of a formal partnership.

Other piece of information that can be useful in modeling the impact of demerit voting is regional distribution of large families. The highest percentage of such families lived in Eastern and Southern Poland (22% and 20% respectively). In other parts of Poland, the figures were as follows: Central Poland: 18%, Northern Poland: 16%, North-Western Poland: 15% and South-Western Poland: 8%. The percentage split in geographic regions is important as voters supporting major political parties are not distributed evenly throughout the country. The eastern, southern and central regions are dominated by the Law and Justice party. There lives about 60% of large families in those regions. Adding to that, in the northern region, in places with high support for or dominated by Law and Justice, there lives about 76% of large families.

Figure 2 - Regions of Poland as shown in the report and the outcome of the last general elections of 2015



General elections map: blue indicates support for Law and Justice, orange for Civil Platform.

Source: Rodziny wielodzietne w Polsce 2016. Raport, Warszawa 2016, p. 4; wyborynamapie.pl.

Lastly, the report indicates the willingness to participate in local, general and presidential elections among the members of large families. The numbers are as follows: 60%, 54% and 67% respectively. Matching those

numbers with the outcomes of respective elections one can say that the members of large families are more prone to participate in democratic procedures. During the last local elections in 2014 the voter turnout rate was 47.40% in the first round and 39.97% in the second. During the last general elections in 2015 it was 50.92%. And during the last presidential elections in 2015 it was 48.96% in the first round and 55.34% in the second. The sole numbers suggest that the hypothetical impact of large families voting according to the demeny voting system on the results of local and presidential elections is worth initial research.

As a conclusion it must be pointed out that the available data is not sufficient to perform research or simulations of the impact of demeny voting on the Polish political system. Basic surveys and qualitative research on families that would answer questions about the connection of the political affiliation with the number of children are still to be conducted. Polish researchers could also consider performing a similar simulation to the one performed in Japan in order to investigate the question of changing voting patterns under demeny voting system.

All the above studies might be carried out under the doctrine of deliberative democracy. In that case parents – the holders of additional votes (or the fraction of the votes – if they were to be split evenly between father and mother) should be seen as the proxies for the future generations. The proxies who would serve as the voice of those who are not eligible to cast a vote, but whose narrative should be included in the Polish deliberative democracy.

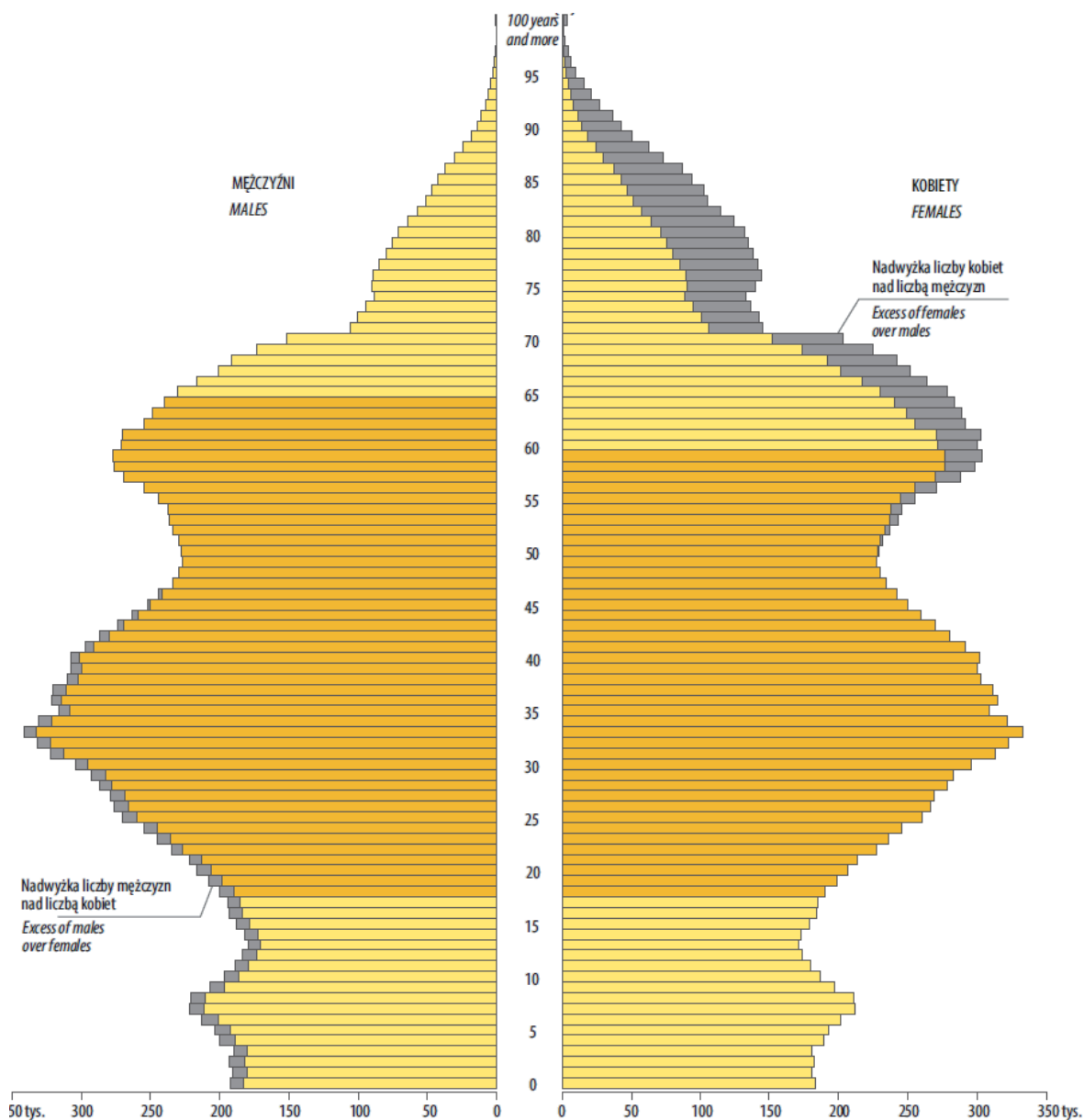
Discussion

The analysis of the available research data brings up a question about the possible impact of the studied phenomenon and gives some hints on where to look for answers to it. The popular opinion that social conservative parties such as Law and Justice are supported by large families is yet to be verified. The impact on the general elections might not be as striking even though the turnout rate among the voters from large families is similar to the general one. Moreover, the percentage of children living in large families in comparison to the whole population of children basing on the data shown above and the ones from the Central Statistical Office of Poland is not favourable with respect to the first group.

According to the Central Statistical Office of Poland, in 2015 there lived more than 6,876,000 children in Poland in the age between 0-17 years⁸. In the same year, 15,595,335 (50.92% eligible to vote) of Poles casted their votes in general elections, of which 15,200,671 were valid. If one applies the principle of demeny voting to that elections, no less than 3,400,000 additional, proxy votes would have been cast. Assuming a slightly higher turnout among large family members and the geographical distribution the Law and Justice party might have secured an even better final result. And following this logic, the presidential elections in the same year could have resulted in an easy victory of Andrzej Duda, as large families from the regions dominated by Law and Justice would have provided additional votes.

⁸ <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/ludnosc/ludnosc-piramida/>

Figure 3 - Population By Sex And Age In 2016



Source: Demographic Yearbook of Poland 2017, Warsaw 2017, p. 511.

Yet, the problem with demeny voting is that all the statements above are pure speculations as there has been no support (and demand) for research that could determine the impact of this institution on the Polish political system. Furthermore, all forecasts of the Central Statistical Office of Poland concerning the number of children in years after the last general census of

2011 proved to be wrong and underestimated⁹. In such circumstances, predictions about the impact of demeny voting on the future elections are hard to perform given the current state of research.

However, due to the general demographic situation in Europe, such topics as demeny voting may move to the mainstream of political debates. At the same time, an institution like that could be seen as part of the state's public policy aimed at encouraging people to have more children. This in turn would ensure their political interest at the ballot box. On the other hand, continuous waves of democracy give the right to vote or to participate in public deliberations to ever broader groups. Applying proxies for the future generations of voters might be seen as a step towards an even more democratic system.

In Japan the discussions about the ways of representing the interest of future generations have been launched. As Keiichiro Kobayashii¹⁰ states: "future design research may change the nature of human knowledge in a broad spectrum of fields including not only social science but also neuroscience and political philosophy".

⁹ The predictions are available at:

<http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/ludnosc/ludnosc-piramida/>.

Compering number of children predicted to be born in 2017 with actual number of birth, the underestimation is as high as 57 130. With estimation of 345 870 the mistake was at the rate of 16.5%.

¹⁰ Keiichiro Kobaashii, *How to Represent the Interests of Future Generations Now*, <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2018/interests-of-future-generations>

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