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*Impact of regaining independence
on the shape and autonomy of the self-government structures
in the territories formerly under Russian partition*

Summary

The foundations of local self-government in Poland developed in the nineteenth century, when the country was still under foreign rule. It was the time when the three partitioning powers started to implement, in the territories they governed, the first forms of self-government.

The degree of the decentralisation of power varied. This paper focuses on the nature and depth of the changes that influenced the shaping and structures of the local government being formed in the territories of the former Congress Kingdom of Poland and the lands taken away by the Russian Empire, so-called Western Krai, after Poland regained independence in 1918. The primary aim of the study was to determine whether the transition from the local self-government existing under the Russian occupation to the local self-government structures at the beginning of the Second Polish Republic (1918-1939) were evolutionary or revolutionary in character. In order to achieve the research objective, the authors discuss the solutions for local self-government adopted in the Congress Kingdom of Poland and in Western Krai and compare them with the solutions applied in the Second Polish Republic. The findings of the research indicate that after regaining independence, the structures of local self-government were not created entirely new, but were merely modified and given more competences to increase their efficiency and to democratise the principles upon which they functioned. At the same time, however, also in the Second Polish Republic, likewise under the Russian partition, the far-reaching restrictions of independence of local authorities were maintained and were subjected to strict central government supervision.

Keywords: self-government, Second Polish Republic, decentralization