

REGIONAL AND SOCIAL CLEAVAGES IN THE SLOVAK ELECTIONS AFTER THE CHANGE OF THE REGIME

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The article gives an overview on the regional features of voting behaviour in post-socialist Slovakia. The aim of this study is to identify the main cleavages in the Slovak society through the analysis of the spatially solid voter base of the parties. It presents how enduring and strong are the traditional cleavages and those connected to the change of regime. Post-socialist Slovakia's elections show that some of the regional and social cleavages (re)emerged immediately after the change of regime and have remained stable in the last twenty years. Due to the characteristics of the electoral system the election results clearly reflect the spatial embeddedness of the parties. A significant change of the party structure of Slovakia has undergone since 1992. It still does not fit the Western European patterns. The classic cleavages have proved to be durable in this period. The party preferences indicate that the division and stratification of the Slovak society are still determined by the classic cultural (ethnic and religious) and centre-periphery (urban-rural and West-East) cleavages. Along these cleavages five or six main, geographically identified, seemingly solid political blocks can be defined.

Key words: political geography, electoral geography, voting behaviour, cleavages, Slovakia

INTRODUCTION

The formulation of the party-systems in the Western European democracies after the Second World War went on along the main cleavages separating the major social groups. These processes were described by the cleavage theory which claims that the individuals' political orientation can be articulated along four types of relations (state–church, centre–periphery, work–capital and minority–majority – Lipset and Rokkan 1967). This concept was meaningful in the developed industrial societies for two or three decades after the Second World War, but its validity was weakened by the socio-economic changes in the 1970s. First of all, due to the processes associated with modernization (the increasing level of qualification and the formulation of the mass media institutions) not only the class structure was transformed, but its influence on the party preferences decreased, as well. The earlier determinisms were replaced or rather supplemented by less substantive party preferences (Dalton 2006). The most important of these latter were the cleavages between the materialist and postmaterialist values, which separated the voters of the old- and the new political parties, especially the emerging newleft parties (Inglehart 1977). In the late 1980s, as a reaction to massive migration, the anti-immigration policy became the buzzword of the new radical right-wing parties (Kitschelt 1992). One can also detect some differences between the social characteristics (e.g. qualification

and status) of the voters of the newleft and the radical right party families, but these are less strong compared to differences between the supporters of the classic left and right parties. We still do not know the degree of stability achieved by the Euro-sceptic and the various left and right populist parties that started to strengthen after the 2008 crisis. Although there is little information on the attitude and political orientation of their voters, we have reason to believe that the protest voting – triggered by the economic dissatisfaction and in some cases by the anti-establishment attitude – led to these parties' success.

For describing the parties of the post-socialist countries, Sitter (2002) partly modified the cleavage theory. Stressing that his theory is only valid for these parties, he identified the main cleavages between the pre-1990 opposition and post-communists and between different attitudes toward economic reforms. According to Whitefield (2002), the new cleavages were jointly shaped by the revival of the pre-socialist cleavages (religion and ethnicity), the nature of the communist regime (whether the state party was a hard-line or reformist type at the time of the change of regime), the economic transformation and the characteristics of the new party system. Analytical research works studying the territorial differences of the party preferences highlighted the survival of the formerly prevailing patterns and the characteristics of the political transformation (e.g. Kostelecký 1994, Kovács and Dingsdale 1998).

According to the results of a comparative research on voting attitudes in Western and Eastern Europe, the social structure, political affiliation and ideological self-identification (positioning on the left-right scale) have much weaker influence on the voting behaviour in the post-socialist countries (Schmitt and Scheuer 2011). This is explained mainly by the socialist past, the lack of experience in shaping party preferences and getting identified with various political ideologies. Although the freshly formed post-socialist party systems went through tremendous changes in the last quarter century, these changes reflect only a few characteristics of the post-war Western European party-system development owing to the different social structure and the belated development. Contrary to the Western European trends, the newleft/green parties in the post-socialist countries appeared only in the second half of the 2000s and have not proved to be stable (Fábián 2010 and Jehlička et al. 2011). However, local variations of western-type xenophobe far-right parties gaining advantage from the anti-Roma attitude (Bíró-Nagy and Róna 2013) and populist protest parties are also emerging.

The case of Slovakia is unique from various points of view. Its Czechoslovakia past and the similar electoral system to that of Czechia would presuppose the development of a party structure similar to the Czech one. Nevertheless, rather different party structures have emerged in the two countries (Whitefield 2002). While in Czechia the attitude towards socialism has become the main cleavage, in Slovakia the attitude towards the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the revived cleavages of the interwar period have gained importance. Another essential factor is the strong political presence of the Hungarian minority living along the Hungarian border, which on the one hand generates cleavage in the party preferences of majority and minority (ethnic voting), and on the other hand it creates differences among the Slovak parties in their attitudes towards the minorities. As a result, ethnic voting plays an important role in strengthening the stability of the voter bases (Birni 2007).

Based on the above specificities, the aim of this study is to explore the main regional and social cleavages in Slovak society through the analysis of the spatially solid voter base of the parties. We will present how stable and strong are the traditional cleavages and those connected to the change of the regime. Unlike Deegan-Krause (2007), whose definition is based on the full cleavage, in which attitudes, institutions and structures must coincide, we use the term cleavage in a wider sense¹ (called census divide). In our geographical analysis, the stability of classic socio-demographic differences is in the centre, thus the role of the issues is less important.

Furthermore, the present article tries to find the similarities and differences between the East Central and Western European party families. For these comparative purposes we should identify the Slovak party families anyway because they are needed for the international comparison of voting behaviour (von Beyme 1985), but we think this classification is also useful in the national analysis of the very fragmented Slovak party system. On the basis of the parties' ideological stance and international affiliation, we have created seven groups, that is why our classification differs from that of Hloušek and Kopeček (2010). For example: in our classification the HZDS forms an independent group, the SDKÚ is a centre right party, and the SMER² (despite its populist rhetoric) belongs to the left³.

As the paper focuses on the regional patterns of the solid voter bases, the continuity of the outstanding results of parties was examined. For this purpose the results (percentage of the total valid votes) that each party achieved in preferably three or four consecutive elections were ordered into deciles on the level of all the approximately 2900 municipalities. Then we assigned scores to the deciles: the localities belonging to the highest decile received score 10, those belonging to the lowest decile received score 1. The scores were summed up, and their highest values were displayed on maps. Using this method we could clearly identify the regions where the given parties reached their constant best results. In order to present the solid voter bases, we generally selected the results of at least three consecutive elections, but in some cases it was not possible to analyse more than two successive elections. The worst results of the parties were neglected for two reasons. First, all the non-ethnic parties reached their worst results in areas inhabited by Hungarians. Second, the best results in certain localities or regions differ from their national average to a much greater extent than the worst results.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SLOVAK PARTY STRUCTURE AFTER THE CHANGE OF REGIME

The party structure of post-socialist Slovakia is considered to be basically open. The candidature for parliamentary election depends on caution, which – as opposed to collecting nominations – does not give space to pre-filtration based on the extent of voters' support. Due to the single national list, the party palette is the same in

¹ The factors included in this wider definition of cleavage have all played an essential role in dividing voting bases of the parties, and have had impact on the party preferences and voting behaviour, therefore they fit into the cleavage theory.

² We are aware that the SMER is classified as a populist party by some authors (Meseznikov and Gyárfássová 2008), but we prefer to classify it on the basis of the party's position and its voters' attitude.

³ Our classification of and our knowledge about Slovak political parties are based on the literature written in English and Hungarian.

the 2 900 municipalities. The one-round electoral system does not allow withdrawal or a common list; the voters are nowhere forced to choose from a narrower supply thus the election results clearly reflect the party preferences. The electoral threshold is 5 percent, raised from 3 percent in 1992, which is in accordance with the usual European standards. The elevation of the electoral threshold for party alliances (from 10 to 15 percent) launched a process of party unification in the middle of the 1990s, but later it was reversed, and the elections in 2010 and 2012 proved that more political parties can be viable within the certain political wings.

Tab. 1. The results of the parties entering the parliament between 1992 and 2012 (in percent)

Abbreviation	Name	1992	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2012
ANO	Alliance of the New Citizen				8.0	1.4		
DÚ	Democratic Union		8.6					
HZDS	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia	37.3	35.0	27.0	19.5	8.8	4.3	0.9
KDH	Christian Democratic Movement	8.9	10.1		8.3	8.3	8.5	8.8
KSS	Communist Party of Slovakia	0.7	2.7	2.8	6.3	3.9	0.8	0.7
SMK-MKP	Party of the Hungarian Community	7.4*	10.2	9.1	11.2	11.7	4.3	4.3
Most-Híd	Most-Híd (Bridge)						8.1	6.9
OLaNO	Ordinary People and Independent Personalities							8.6
SaS	Freedom and Solidarity						12.1	5.9
SDK	Slovak Democratic Coalition			26.3				
SDKÚ - DS	Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party				15.1**	18.4	15.4	6.1
SDĽ	Party of the Democratic Left	14.7	10.4***	14.7	1.4	0.1	2.4	0.2
SMER-SD	Direction – Social Democracy				13.5	29.1	34.8	44.4
SNS	Slovak National Party	7.9	5.4	9.1	3.3	11.7	5.1	4.5
SOP	Party of Civic Understanding			8.0				
ZRS	Union of the Workers of Slovakia		7.3	1.3	0.5	0.3	0.2	

Data source: authors' elaboration based on the data by slovak.statistics.sk

* The result of the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement – Coexistence

** The result of the SDKÚ

*** The result of the Spoločná voľba (Common Choice)

The social and spatial characteristics of the various political blocks were well identified during the last 20 years. In the seven parliamentary elections between 1992 and 2012⁴ only the HZDS, SMER and SDK could gain more than 20 percent

⁴ The paper does not deal with the 1990 elections because the party preferences were rather underdeveloped at that time, thus the results of this otherwise politically very important election would not be helpful in studying the solid electoral bases of the parties. The results of the 2016 elections came out after the manuscript had been completed.

of the total votes. Most of the parties achieved a result below 20 or rather 15 percent on the national level, which means that the party palette is quite wide. While the smaller parties could gather 40–50 percent of the total votes in some regions, they did not even receive 10 percent of the votes in most of the localities. This clearly shows their strong spatial embeddedness. The facts that at least 5 parties could enter the parliament at each of the seven analysed elections and that – except for 2006 – new parties could also enter the parliament proves the openness of the system (Tab. 1).

Among the parties, HZDS and SNS are described in the literature as non-standard formations that did not get integrated into the international party families (Krivý 1995). The positioning of the HZDS on the political palette is rather demanding, mostly it is labelled as national-populist. The two significant parties of the centre right, the more traditional conservative KDH and the modernized Christian-democratic SDKÚ fit more easily into the classic party structure. On the left, the communist-successor SDL resembles the other socialist parties of Central and Eastern Europe while the SMER, although seceded from the SDL, is rather a mixture of this latter and the populist-nationalist HZDS. Up until 2010, the SMK-MKP was the only significant ethnic party. Among the parties labelled as centrist, the SaS (and perhaps the OĽaNO) seems to be a stable formation. Apart from these, there were more cases when various parties had a significantly high support in the year when they entered the parliament, but it disappeared by the time of the next elections. Although they are widely diverse in ideology, in the following part of the paper these parties will be referred as ‘non-stable parties’.

THE MAIN POLITICAL CLEAVAGES BETWEEN 1992 AND 2012

At the beginning of the 1990s, like in other transition countries, the most important political cleavages were related to the newly developing Slovak state: both the relationship with the socialist past and the opinion about the split of Czechoslovakia were determinative questions. However, the emerging classic cleavages, namely the state-church, the centre-periphery and the majority-minority relations, also divided the voters (Gyárfášová and Krivý 2007). The voting behaviour in the 1994 elections revealed that the voters were settled along two main axes: the main dividing line was between the paternalist-authoritarian and free market-liberal values. While the governing parties (HZDS, SNS and ZRS) belonged to the former group, the opposition parties belonged to the latter one (Krivý 1995). At the 1998 parliamentary elections, one of the most important dividing issues was the evaluation of the 6-year-long governance of the HZDS. For some previously distinct groups of voters, the anti-Mečiar attitude became the common point (Hloušek and Kopeček 2008). Besides the SDK consisting of five parties⁵, the SMK-MKP, the left-wing SDL and the SOP also became the members of the governing coalition after the 1998 election. The conflicts among the parties of the rather heterogeneous government came to the surface quite early and resulted in a realignment process. On the left, the economic reform was the main trigger of the realignment: the nega-

⁵ The SDK was formed by the alliance of the KDH, the DS (two parties that had entered the parliament earlier), the DÚ, the SDSS, and the SZS.

tive effects of the liberal reforms were rejected by Robert Fico and some other SDĽ-representatives, who thus left the party and established the SMER-SD. On the other hand, the centre-right SDK split up very soon into the SDKÚ led by the prime minister Mikulaš Dzurinda and the KDH led by Ján Čarnogurský. By the 2002-elections, the different social character (e.g. demographic, educational, employment status) of the voters of the left and right parties became more visible aligning to the classic left-right axis (Gyárfášová and Krivý 2007). The (in)tolerance towards the national minorities (and especially towards the Hungarians) turned out to be another important cleavage which crosses the traditional left-right scale. The least tolerant group consists of not only the voters of the far-right SNS and the populist HZDS but also those of the left-wing SMER. After 2002, the centre-periphery (called socioeconomic by Hloušek and Kopeček 2008), the ethnic and the religious (or state-church) cleavages still remained the most important dividing lines within Slovak society. The only new cleavage that seems to play a significant role appeared within the Hungarian minority and bisects Hungarians according to their open/refusing attitudes towards the majority.

THE SPATIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTY PREFERENCES

The openness of the Slovak electoral system makes it easy for the spatial differences of the various voting bases to come to the surface. Even despite the fluctuation of some parliamentary parties and the emerging party alliances in the 1990s, the territorial characteristics of the voting bases seem to be continuous. In agreement with the classification of party blocks of Gyárfášová and Krivý (2007), five blocks with solid regional characteristics can be differentiated (the nationalist-populist HZDS, the far-right, the conservative and liberal right, the left, and the Hungarian parties).

The nationalist-populist party

The only real broad based party of the 1990s was the HZDS that had seceded from the VPN⁶, the ruling party at the change of regime in 1991. In 1992 and 1994, HZDS received more than third of the votes. The results of the party started to decline in 1998, however HZDS remained the strongest party until 2002.

The social-demographic profile of its voters was close to the average in 1992, but by 1994 it clearly became the party of the elder, less educated people living in small towns and villages characterized by paternalism, authoritarianism, nostalgia for the 1980s and isolationism (Krivý 1995 and Leška and Koganová 1995).

Apart from being the only broad based party, the HZDS had also a rather strong spatial embeddedness. At the beginning of the 1990s – though HZDS gained a significant share of the votes (at least 20 percent) almost everywhere outside the areas inhabited by Hungarians – it achieved outstanding results mainly in Central and Western Slovakia, while east of the Lučenec-Poprad axis its support was much lower⁷. Since the 1998 election this picture has somewhat changed: the East-West

⁶ Public Against Violence: a movement that played a significant role in the Velvet Revolution and won the elections in 1990.

⁷ While in 1992 the rate of the HZDS voters in the districts west of the Lučenec – Poprad axis (with the exception of the districts inhabited by Hungarians) varied between 40 and 62 percent, this rate fluctuated between 27-37 percent in the districts east of the axis.

differences have weakened, though its main bases have remained the North-Western and the Central parts of Slovakia, especially the municipalities in the valley of the Váh River. This distribution shows a partial overlap with the location of the SNS voters.

The far-right

One of the most solid formations on the Slovak political palette has been the SNS, the far-right party that could not enter the parliament only in 2002 after the temporary split of the party and in 2012. At the beginning of the 1990s their voters had a middle class profile. Mainly the young with secondary level education voted for the party, including a lot of employees and intellectuals, as well as a few agrarian and industrial workers (Leška and Koganová 1995). By the end of the decade, the voting base of the party was somewhat transformed; its voters' socio-demographic characteristics became similar to those of the HZDS supporters (Gyárfášová and Kúska 1999). This manifested in spatial terms as well: in the early 1990s a significant number of people from Bratislava and other big cities voted for the party (moreover, in 1992, West Slovakia was its most important base), but the SNS gradually lost these voters after 1994 and the party more and more retreated to the area around Žilina in the Northwest (Fig. 1).

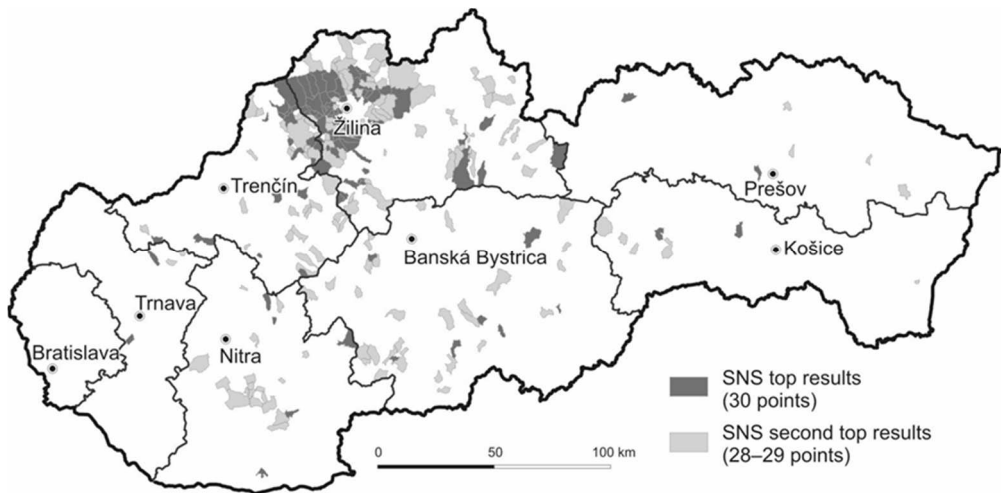


Fig. 1. The best results of the SNS between the 2006 and 2012 elections

Source: authors' elaboration.

The position of the SNS – similarly to that of the HZDS – has been the strongest in the territories that formed the main basis for Hlinka's Slovak People's Party during the interwar period (that is, in Northwest Slovakia), which may refer to a historical continuity, as it was proposed already in 1994 (Krivý 1995). Their territorial concentration has become even stronger during the 2000s. While the party achieved outstandingly good results in ethnically homogenous areas in the North and Northwest, it was permanently underperforming in the Slovak-Hungarian con-

tact zone. The party collected similarly few votes in multiethnic (Slovak-Roma) areas in East Slovakia, which refers to the fact that the SNS, despite the use of racist slogans, is not one of those far-right parties that gain popularity in areas stressed by ethnic tensions, like in several cases in Western Europe. Rather, the SNS is similar to the traditional far-right parties turning up after 1990 in the post-socialist countries (Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009).

The centre-right block

The KDH and SDKÚ represent two rather different types of the parties considered to be centre-right-conservative parties. After the breakup of the SDK, the voter base of the newly formulated KDH and SDKÚ highly differed from each other both in terms of social characteristics and spatial location. Though the SDKÚ was established by Mikuláš Dzurinda, founder of the former KDH as well, its voter base mainly consists of the heirs of the DS and DÚ, which also joined the SDK. At the same time, the KDH counted on those voters even after 2002, who had voted for this party before 1998.

According to research on attitudes carried out in 2006, the voters of the two parties are mainly identical in anti-communism (Gyárfášová and Krivý 2007). The main characteristic of the KDH voters is their religiousness⁸ and intolerance towards minorities, while the SDKÚ voters are situated more in the middle of the religious axis and relate positively towards the ethnic minorities. Even the opinions about basic economic issues of their common governance were diverse in 2006 as the voters of the KDH considered the economic reforms and the dismantling of the state redistribution more negative.

The KDH is one of the most solid formations in the centre-right block. It gained 8-10 percent of the votes at all the elections between 1992 and 2012. According to surveys, the KDH-voters mainly belong to the elder, less educated strata of the rural population (Gyárfášová and Krivý 2007). They are predominantly Roman or Greek Catholics with Slovak mother tongue. Accordingly, the KDH is elected primarily in regions with the highest proportion of religious (Catholic) population like in the North (Orava) and Northeast (the Spiš, Šariš and Northern Zemplín Regions) (Fig. 2). The party is the least supported – besides the Hungarian settlements – in the regions inhabited by Lutherans.

In contrast, the SDKÚ won the majority of its votes in urban territories (e.g. Bratislava, Košice and Banská Bystrica), their agglomeration, the westernmost part of the country and the main tourist centres of the Tatra area (e.g. Vysoké Tatry, Poprad, Demänovská Dolina – Fig. 3). As all the cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants were permanently among the places where the SDKÚ achieved its best results, the party can clearly be regarded as an urban party.

⁸ It was already shown by Buzalka (2003) that religious confession plays a rather strong role in influencing the results of elections and these differences are deeply embedded in the Slovak society. In his study Buzalka deduces the differences mainly from the different cultural framework of the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Slovaks and claims that these differences have been detectable since the 19th century and have their effects still today. Thus it is true also for the 1992-2012 period that the Roman Catholics preferred the right and the Lutherans the left-wing parties.

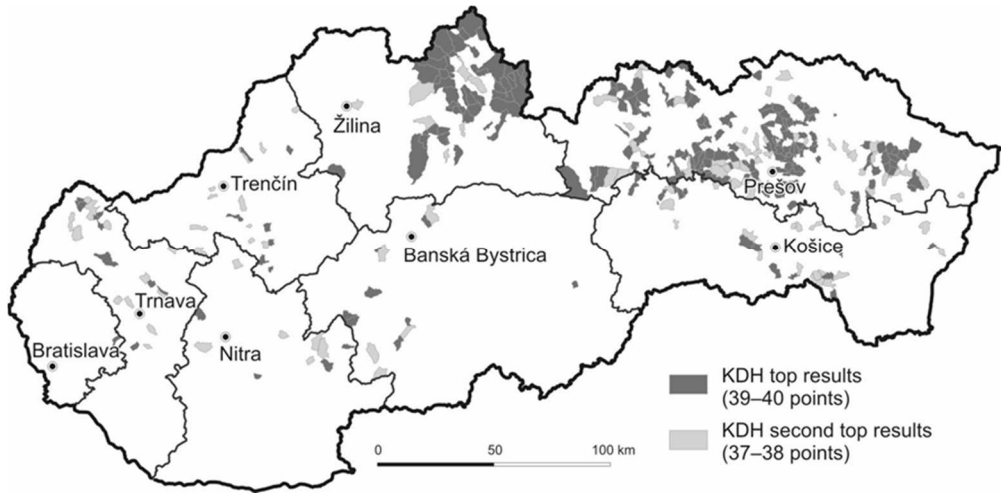


Fig. 2. The best results of the KDH between 2002 and 2012

Source: authors' elaboration.

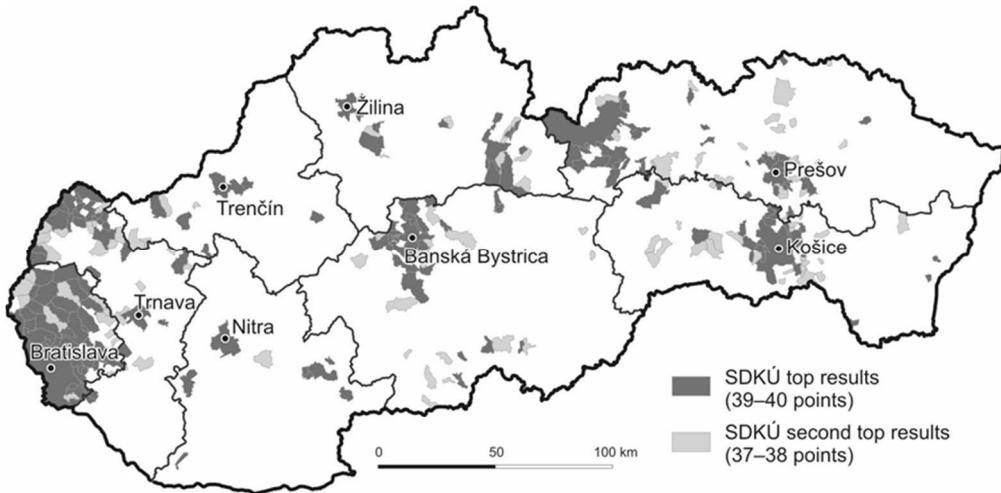


Fig. 3. The best results of the SDKÚ between 2002 and 2012

Source: authors' elaboration.

The left-wing block

The only significant party on the left in the 1990s was the reformed successor party, the SDE which was opposing the Mečiar government. In the 1990s the party received 10-14 percent of the votes. Its voter base comprised rather young and highly educated voters (Kopeček 2002), whose attitudes showed similarities simultaneously to the HZDS voters in their paternalist views and the conservative and Hungarian parties in rejecting authoritarian governance (Gyárfášová and Krivý

2007). Due to the economic reforms accompanied by significant restrictions, their popularity declined, and in 1999 a group seceded from the party and established the SMER-SD.

The SDĽ had two markedly distinct regional bases in the 1992 elections. One of them was the North-Eastern Slovakia area characterized by small villages and poverty and inhabited mainly by Greek Catholic and Orthodox people with Rusin/Ukrainian origin, who – due to their marginal socio-economic position – have been receptive to the left-wing ideas since the middle of the 20th century. The other area where the SDĽ could perform outstandingly was in Košice and the mining-industrial zone west of Košice to the valley of the Rimava river (namely the eastern part of the Slovak Ore Mountains), which shows the left-wing commitment of the industrial workers.

By 1998 the SDĽ-voters' territorial concentration had diminished. At the same time, SDĽ reached its best results in Central Slovakia (mainly in the Banská Bystrica-Levice-Rimavská Sobota triangle). It is likely that the former voters of SDĽ living in industrial zones in East Slovakia were attracted by the ZRS in 1994 and the SOP in 1998.

At first sight it looks like a logical presumption that most of the former SDĽ-voters supported SMER in 2002. However, the regional distribution of the ballot cast shows that in the Northern and Northwestern areas the SMER's results were far better in 2002 than those of the SDĽ in 1998, while in the industrial areas of Central Slovakia (the upper valley of the Hron River and the Slovak Ore Mountains) the opposite was true. The SMER pulled voters not only from the SDĽ but also from the HZDS: already in 2002 the SMER obtained a significant support in Western and Northwestern Slovakia (especially in the Trnava Region), where the HZDS had been the leading party previously. By 2006 the HZDS lost most of its voters exactly in the areas where the SMER achieved its best results. A similar flow can be observed in the voter base of the SNS between 2006 and 2012. In 2010 and 2012 the SMER's new votes proved to be the most numerous in those localities where the combined loss of the SNS and HZDS was the biggest. It is not surprising that, compared to all other parties, the SMER's highest decile comprises the least municipalities, as the party addressed different electoral target groups at each of the last four elections. In the first years it attracted the left-wing supporters and partly the voters of the HZDS, in 2006 a significant part of the HZDS- and KSS-voters, then in 2010 the rest of the HZDS- and SNS-voters. By 2012, the regional differences within the SMER voting base weakened because of the sweeping victory of the party. It gained voters from all the other parties, including both the unsatisfied ones turning away from the governing parties and the former voters of its rival, the SNS.

The territorial distribution of the SMER-voters is characterized by duality since SMER achieved its best results not only in East and Central Slovakia as did the SDĽ prior to 2002, but also in the Northeast inhabited by Rusins and Ukrainians and in the Western areas (especially in Hlohovec and Trnava districts) where the HZDS had a dominant role in the 1990s (Fig. 4). By receiving 44 percent of the votes in 2012, SMER's regional duality has not changed: large areas both in the backward eastern parts and the more affluent western parts of Slovakia are still considered as SMER "strongholds", which predicts the blurring of the solid regional differences described above.

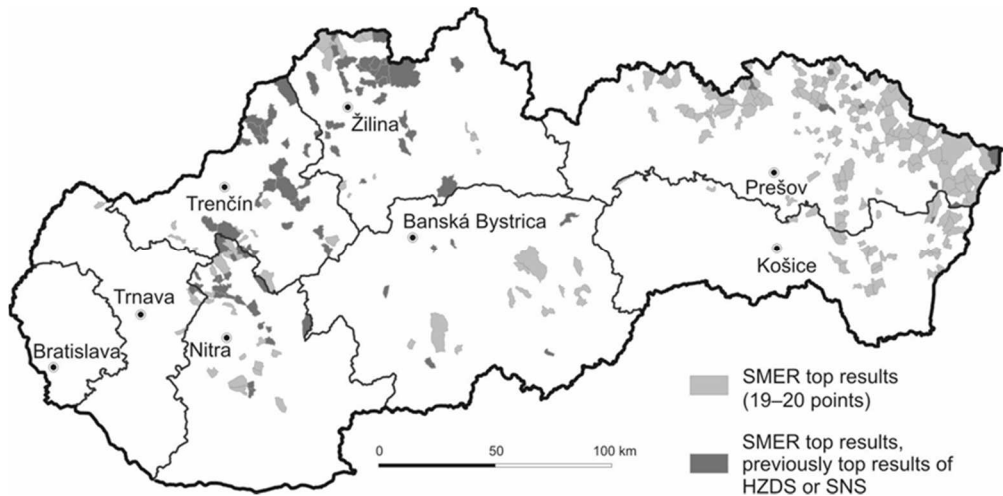


Fig. 4. The best results of the SMER in 2010 and 2012 in coincidence with previous top results of HZDS or SNS

Source: authors' elaboration.

Ethnic parties

Out of the three most numerous national minorities of Slovakia (Hungarians, Roma, and Rusins/Ukrainians) only the Rusins/Ukrainians have not organized their own ethnic party yet. Since 1992 five different formations aimed to represent the Roma in the elections⁹, but all of them failed to enter the parliament. These formations gained very few (less than 25 thousand) votes compared to the size of the Roma population shown by the census or estimates¹⁰. This phenomenon can be explained by, on the one hand, the heterogeneity of the Roma population that does not allow the formation of a unified voter base. On the other hand, the mobilizing ability of the Roma politicians and leaders looks quite weak and works only on regional or local level (Vermeersch 2003). However, the main characteristic of the Roma electors has been their low (far below the average) participation in the elections – regardless of whether their minority parties also ran for the elections. Otherwise, Roma voters supported mostly the national-populist and etatist-leftist parties (e.g. HZDS, HZD, KSS, SMER) in localities where Roma are in a marginal situation or they constitute the local majority, and Hungarian parties in regions where Hungarian speaking Roma live (Petőcz 2009).

A colourful Hungarian party structure emerged in Slovakia immediately after the change of regime but due to the unification process the SMK-MKP became the exclusive representative of the Hungarian interests between 1994 and 2009. Up to 2009 the strongest connection in the political life of Slovakia existed between the

⁹ 1992: ROI, 1994, 2000: ROISR, 2002:ROMA, 2010: SRK, 2012:SRÚS.

¹⁰ According to the 2011 census 151 thousand people self-identified as Roma, while the survey by Mušíňka et al. (2014) estimated their number as 403,000 in 2013.

Hungarian political parties and their voters. Hungarian parties were mainly chosen by the Hungarians (see Mariot 2003 and Gyárfášová and Bútorová 2013), and vice versa (Lamp1 2006)¹¹. This political cleavage sharply divided the election map of Slovakia into two pieces (North vs. South), and overwrote all the other cleavages attributed to the different levels of education or different settings (urban vs. rural accommodation), even within the minority Hungarian society (see Lamp1 2006). There are two major factors in the background: the anti-Hungarian political attitude of some Slovak parties and the Hungarians' intention to represent their interests (partly against the Slovak far-right nationalism). The ethnic voting guaranteed that the SMK-MKP could enter the parliament for a long time. Due to the very few ethnic boundary-crossings from either side, the ethnic differences definitely stabilized the voting behaviour (Bir1ir 2007).

This picture changed in 2009 with the appearance of the Most-Híd, a Hungarian-Slovak joint party by its self-definition that also bore the characteristics of ethnic parties on itself¹². The Most-Híd entered the parliament both in 2010 and 2012, while the SMK-MKP did not cross the electoral threshold in these years. The regional distribution of the votes shows that the SMK-MKP achieved its best results in the homogenous Hungarian settlements close to the Hungarian border (except for the Western part of the Žitný ostrov – Great Rye Island), while the Most-Híd gained its highest share of votes in the Hungarian-Slovak ethnic contact zone, in ethnically mixed settlements and in the main cities and towns of South Slovakia (e.g. Bratislava, Nitra, Levice, Lučenec and Košice – Fig. 5). Moreover, the Most-Híd could also address the non-Hungarian population¹³. However, as most of the Slovak votes for the Most-Híd derived from the Slovak-Hungarian ethnic contact zone, one can assume that many of these voters have some Hungarian relations (e.g. living in or descendant of interethnic marriage, self-identifying both as Hungarian and Slovak).

Comparing the two ethnic parties, we find that SMK-MKP traditionally focuses on the representation of Hungarian interests, while the Most-Híd is rather a party of the young and the intellectuals, simultaneously addressing both the ethnic minority and the majority society. This explains the different voting behaviour of the Hungarians living in ethnically homogenous vs. diverse or urban vs. rural settings. In addition, the economic orientation of local Hungarians also has an influence on the East-West difference of the results of the two parties. This impact is especially salient in the Žitný ostrov. In its western part (the agglomeration zone of Bratislava), where lots of Hungarians commute, work and study in the capital, the Most-Híd is the dominant party. At the same time, in the eastern part of the Žitný ostrov (Great Rye Island) and eastwards along the Danube, where the economic orientation towards Hungary is much stronger (especially in municipalities predominantly inhab-

¹¹ In the 1990s lots of Hungarians voted for the Slovak parties with the aim of facilitating the overthrow of the Mečiar-regime. By contrast, in the 2000s fewer and fewer people crossed the ethnic borders with their votes. According to Sándor (1999), 68 percent of the Hungarians who were entitled to vote supported the SMK-MKP in the 1998 elections, while according to the research of Lamp1 (2006) this rate was about 75 percent. In the 2012 elections it is likely that only 17-18 percent of the ethnic Hungarians voted for Slovak parties (Ravasz 2013).

¹² According to the definition by Horowitz (1985, p. 291) the support of an ethnic party is mainly ensured by the given ethnic group, and the party represents the interests of this group, which highly fits Most-Híd.

¹³ 78 percent of the Most-Híd-voters and 94 percent of the SMK-MKP-voters were ethnic Hungarian in 2010 (Gyárfášová and Bútorová 2013). In the 2012 elections, the estimated share of ethnic Slovak voters of the Most-Híd was about 44 percent according to Gyárfášová and Bútorová (2013), but only 24–27 percent according to Ravasz (2013).

ited by Hungarians), the SMK-MKP gained most of the votes. Here a significant part of the population commutes to Hungary to the industrial factories of Győr, Komárom and Esztergom.

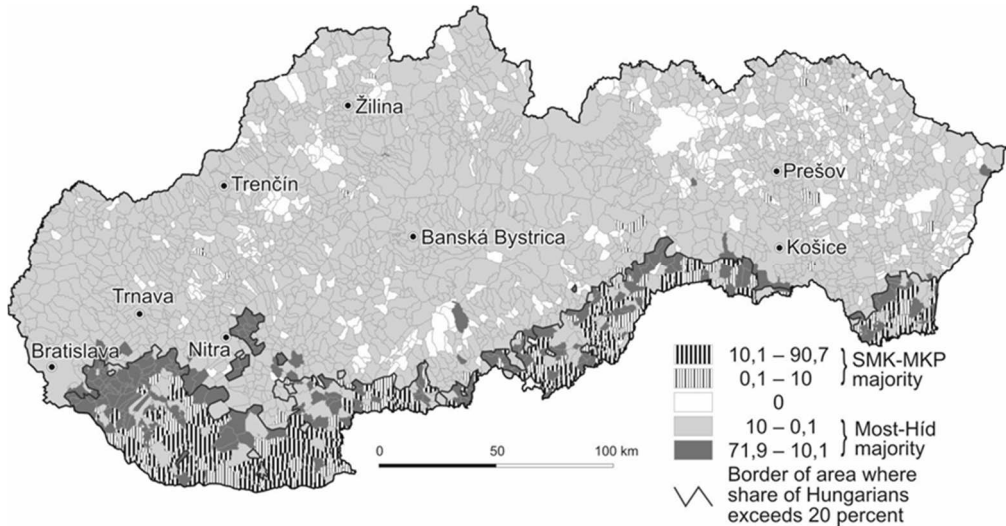


Fig. 5. The differences in the results of the SMK-MKP and the Most-Híd in 2012 (in percentage point)

Source: authors' elaboration

Centrist parties

The centrist parties can be positioned on the political palette between the left-wing and the centre-right parties. When entering the parliament, the SOP, the ANO and the OĽaNO won 8 percent of the votes, and in the case of the SaS this rate amounted to 12 percent. Their voter bases comprised numerous young, first time voters, and “non-religious” voters (Gyárfášová and Krivý 2007 and Bútorová and Gyárfášová 2011). From an ideological point of view, the OĽaNO is the least mature; it could convince mainly the voters who were disappointed by the governing parties (Spáč 2014).

While the spatial continuity cannot be detected in the voter base of the SOP and the ANO, the regional distribution of the SaS-voters – though their number was halved – did not significantly change between 2010 and 2012. The SOP is regarded as a regional party; in the 1998 election it reached its best results around Košice, while it won relatively few votes west of the Rožňava-Poprad axis. The ANO also gained most of its votes in Eastern Slovakia in 2002. Its outstanding areas were the region of Košice and Poprad and the Liptov basin. The SaS was performing well in 2010 and 2012 in the areas where the SDKÚ also did well, thus their spatial results are sensibly similar. The OĽaNO, like the SaS, gained votes above its average in urban areas. Besides, it achieved outstanding results in two areas: in the broad agglomeration of Bratislava and in the Orava Region, the main “stronghold” for the KDH, which illustrates that this party mainly attracted the votes of people who were disappointed by the parties governing between 2010 and 2012.

The far-left parties

The far-left won mandates only twice, thus it – contrary to the Communist party of the Czech Republic – is not a dominant political force. The ZRS entered the parliament in 1994, while the KSS, the Slovak successor party of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, ran for all the elections under study but it succeeded in winning a parliamentary mandate only in 2002.

The voter bases of the two parties are similar, characterized by the nostalgia towards the previous system and by the need for state paternalism. Mainly the less educated and elderly people vote for both parties (Leška and Koganová 1995 and Gyárfášová and Krivý 2007). Though the voters of the two parties are geographically separated from each other, they cannot be sharply divided based on their social characteristics. The single success of the ZRS is explained by the decline of SDĽ. ZRS achieved its best results in regions stricken by economic problems and a high unemployment rate: mostly in the small villages of Eastern Slovakia and in the Slovak Ore Mountains, former strongholds for SDĽ and in the Turiec basin. By 1998 the ZRS lost 80 percent of its voters, in their previous strongholds the voter base of the SDĽ (in the East and around the town of Brezno) and the SOP (in the settlements situated between Košice and Dobšiná) increased significantly.

By 2002 the KSS – by winning an extra 100 thousand voters compared to its earlier results – more than doubled its voter base. In the territories where the KSS was the most successful, the HZDS's support decreased by 15 percentage points compared to the previous election. Its lost voters were probably split up between the SMER and the KSS, however, the failure of the SDĽ also contributed to the success of the KSS (Haughton and Rybář 2004). This success can also be explained by the economic crisis, the high unemployment rate in the industrial areas, and by two cultural-social factors. The spatial concentration of the votes of the KSS in Western and Central Slovakia shows a rather significant coincidence with the location of the Lutheran and non-religious population. In the background one can identify the connection between non-religiousness and leftist political preferences as well as territorial overlap between regions inhabited by Lutheran and non-religious populations and industrial areas (e.g. Slovak Ore Mountain, Liptov and Turiec basins and Myjava Hills). Furthermore, during state socialism the Lutherans were relatively overrepresented in the elite, and out of the Christian churches the Lutheran was regarded as the least oppositional one (Buzalka 2003). In Eastern Slovakia not the industrial-workers, but the already mentioned left-wing oriented regions with Rusin/Ukrainian and Greek Catholic/Orthodox population is considered to be the main basis of the KSS.

CONCLUSIONS

Though the party structure of Slovakia has undergone a significant change since 1992, the classic cleavages have proved to be durable in this period. However, certain experts emphasize the role of politicians instead of cleavages (Deegan-Krause, 2006), which seems to be adequate for the Mečiar-era. No doubt, a strong charismatic leader has influence on the voting behaviour, as happened in the case of the HZDS and later SMER, but we argue that about two thirds of the voters belong to well-structured cleavage-based voter bases. The party preferences reveal that the division and stratification of the Slovak society is still determined by the classic cultural and centre-periphery cleavages. Out of the cultural cleavages the role of

ethnic (e.g. Hungarian vs. Slovak) and religious (e.g. religious vs. non-religious, Roman Catholic vs. Lutheran) differences must be highlighted, while the centre-periphery cleavage consists of the urban-rural and the East-West development gap.

Along the above mentioned cleavages five or six major, geographically identified, seemingly solid political blocks can be defined. Within the family of conservative parties two main streams can be differentiated: a religious, rural, traditionalist centre-right with strong regional characteristics and a modern, Christian-democratic with an urban voter base. The group of liberal parties (treated separately earlier) seems to join the latter one. In the 2012 election numerous swing voters were detected in the voter bases of parties belonging to this group.

Within the Hungarian minority a new political cleavage emerged in 2010, which developed mainly along the issue of opening towards the majority. The appearance of the new interethnic party has multiplied the ethnic border-crossings in terms of voting.

During the last decade the left-wing block has been transformed significantly and attracted many voters of the nationalist-populist and the traditional far-right parties that existed as independent blocks from the 1990s. With this realignment the East-West slope reflecting the economic cleavage was overwritten, furthermore the Slovak-Rusin (Ukrainian) cultural differences became overbridged, as well. Thus the leftist and nationalist slogans successfully reached the heterogeneous population living in different regions under various socio-economic circumstances.

The significant spatial differences in the party preferences, described in this study, show that the importance of the ethnic and religious cleavages have only slightly decreased in the period following the change of regime, and the urban-rural dissimilarities are still rather strong (see also Madleňák 2012 and Plešivčák 2013). However, the appearance and the success of the Most-Híd bridging the ethno-linguistic cleavage and the SMER's shifts towards a populist direction and its superior victory at the 2012 election suggest that the spatial stability has decreased in the last period, and the significance of the traditional cleavages has declined.

The changes in the Slovak party structure and the results of the elections highlight that, though the political palette remained rather colourful and kept changing, the party structure did not start to resemble the Western European pattern. The only similarity is the emergence of new populist, radical-right political forces not only in Slovakia but also in other post-socialist countries (e.g. Czechia, Hungary and Poland). Moreover, the mainstream parties started to diverge from their Western counterparts in the post-socialist countries, and there are hardly any signs that the progressive political parties will strengthen.

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REGIONÁLNE A SOCIÁLNE KONFLIKTNÉ LÍNIE VO VOĽBÁCH NA SLOVENSKU PO ZMENE REŽIMU

Článok poskytuje prehľad o regionálnych rysoch volebného správania na postsocialistickom Slovensku. Cieľom tejto štúdie je identifikovať hlavné konfliktné línie alebo štiepenia v slovenskej spoločnosti prostredníctvom analýzy priestorovo stabilnej voličskej základne politických strán. Poukazuje na to, aké trvalé a silné sú tradičné rozpory a ako sa prejavujú štiepenia a rozdiely spojené so zmenou režimu.

Hoci štruktúra strán na Slovensku prešla od roku 1992 významnou zmenou, tradičné konfliktné línie sa v tomto období ukázali byť pretrvávajúce. Preferencie strán poukazujú na to, že rozdelenie a stratifikácia slovenskej spoločnosti je stále určovaná tradičnými kultúrnymi štiepeniami a konfliktnou líniou centrum verzus periféria. Z mnohých kultúrnych rozporov je potrebné zdôrazniť úlohu etnických (napr. Maďari verzus Slováci) a nábožen-

sých (napr. veriaci verzus neveriaci, rímskokatolíci verzus evanjelici) rozdielov, zatiaľ čo rozdiely medzi centrom a perifériou vychádzajú z odlišností v rozvoji medzi mestom a vidiekom a medzi východom a západom.

Popri uvedených rozporoch môžeme definovať päť alebo šesť významných, geograficky identifikovateľných a zdanlivo pevných politických blokov. V rámci skupiny konzervatívnych strán sa dajú rozlíšiť dva hlavné prúdy: náboženský, vidiecky, tradičný stredne pravicový so silnými regionálnymi črtami a moderný, kresťansko-demokratický s mestskou voličskou základňou. Skupina liberálnych strán sa pravdepodobne pripojila k druhému zo spomínaných prúdov. V ostatných voľbách bol zistený veľký počet nestálych voličov v voličských základniach strán patriacich do tejto skupiny.

V rámci maďarskej menšiny bolo v ostatných voľbách badateľné nové politické rozdelenie, ktoré sa vyvíjalo hlavne v súvislosti s otázkou otvorenia sa voči majorite. Objavenie sa novej medzietnickej strany znásobilo tzv. etnické prekračovanie hraníc vo voličskom správaní.

Počas posledného desaťročia sa ľavicový blok výrazne transformoval a prilákal aj voličov nacionalisticko-populistických a tradičných krajne pravicových strán, ktoré existovali ako samostatné bloky od roku 1990. Týmto preskupením došlo k zmene západovýchodného rozdelenia odrážajúceho ekonomické rozdiely a tiež boli preklenuté slovensko-rusínske (ukrajinské) kultúrne odlišnosti. Preto ľavicové a nacionalistické slogany úspešne oslovili heterogénnu populáciu žijúcu v rozličných regiónoch v rôznych sociálno-ekonomických podmienkach.

Významné priestorové rozdiely v preferenciách politických strán opísané v tejto štúdii ukazujú, že etnické a náboženské rozpory nestratili svoj význam ani v období po roku 1989 a odlišnosti medzi mestami a vidiekom sú stále pomerne veľké. Avšak vznik a úspech strany Most-Híd, ktorá preklenula národnostno-jazykové rozdelenie, posun Smeru k populistickému orientácii, ako aj jeho suverénne víťazstvo v ostatných voľbách naznačujú, že sa priestorová stabilita v poslednom období oslabil a význam tradičných štiepení sa znižuje.

Zmeny v štruktúre strán na Slovensku a výsledky volieb upozornili na to, že hoci politická paleta zostala pomerne pestrá a stále sa mení, štruktúra strán sa nepribližuje západoeurópskemu vzoru. Jedinou podobnosťou je vznik nových populistických, radikálne a pravocovo orientovaných politických síl, a to nielen na Slovensku, ale aj v ďalších postsocialistických krajinách (napr. v Česku, Maďarsku a Poľsku). Navyše, tradičné politické strany v postsocialistických krajinách sa začali odkláňať od svojich západných partnerov a nevidno takmer žiadne známky toho, že by progresívne politické strany mali posilniť svoje pozície.