

# STATE OF URBAN-RURAL CLEAVAGE IN ELECTORAL PREFERENCES CAUSED BY SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION IN FUNCTIONAL URBAN REGIONS OF WESTERN SLOVAKIA

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## Abstract

Electoral behaviour of citizens is subject to a wide range of social, economic, political, institutional, legislative and psychological factors that ultimately modify the electoral choice of individuals. The spatial pattern of dependence between voters' electoral preferences and their socio-economic background creates a space for application of geographic research within outlined issues and therefore geography is able to comment on existing regional discrepancies with detailed explanation. Social cleavage based on different political preferences is manifested in several dimensions, which relevance is changing in time and spatial context as well. One of the classic social cleavages is framed by urban-rural conflict line, whose character is to be evaluated in presented contribution using example of functional urban regions located in western part of Slovakia. The time period of upcoming analysis is 1998-2010, when the country held four elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

**Key words:** conflict line, urban-rural context, electoral preferences, functional urban regions, regional disparities.

## INTRODUCTION

The term “social cleavage” was first applied in the fifties of last century in connection with the upcoming revolution in the scientific examination of the citizens' political behaviour. At this time there was a boom in political science literature specifically focusing on voter behaviour. And just social cleavages seen as objective characteristics dividing individuals into specific social groups were considered to be crucial in the voter's behaviour explanation process. The theoretical basis for defining the social cleavages was formulated by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). These authors have

defined them as the conflict lines, which are based on the structure of social relations between groups of political community. They identified four long-existing social cleavages that can be understood as a consequence of the national and the industrial revolution: urban vs. rural, employers vs. workers, centre vs. periphery and state vs. church. After nearly half a century, introduced social cleavages are still significant in relation to the explanation of voters' electoral choices. Some authors call these long-term predispositions as ethnically given (Chandra and Boulet, 2003) or adhesive (van der Veen and Laitin, 2004). Eckstein (1966) have previously distinguished between “segment

cleavage” (political division, which closely replicates the objective social differentiation) “cultural divergence” (disparities resulting from dissimilar interpretations of the world) and “specific disagreement” (differences of specific policies).

Slovak electoral research accentuating the spatial context of the electoral behaviour is represented by valuable analysis from sociologist Krivý (2000), who assesses the political preferences of different groups existing within Slovak society, while he does not also forget to pick up the geographic scope of interest issue manifested in the differential electoral pattern of Slovak towns and villages according to their size structure, which ultimately generates quite significant differences between the electoral preferences of urban and rural area. Valuable contribution to geographic exploration of the Slovak population's electoral behaviour is illustrated by the example of Orava region introduced by Madleňák in 2006. A significant urban-rural conflict can be registered for lower Orava mainly due to locating the largest town (Dolný Kubín) of whole region. Results of Szöllös's study (2006) evaluating the degree of stability in electoral support of the crucial areas for political parties in the Slovak Republic after 1998 confirm long-term affiliation of certain political groups to a particular type of social environment. As an example, he mentions SDKÚ and its dependence on the preferences of the most urbanized regions of Slovakia typical by high degree of socio-economic development. Conversely, Krivý (1996) determines the HZDS and SMK-MKP as parties that receive preferential support mainly from the rural environment. These findings may indicate that the urban-rural profile of political parties is long-term valid and highly resistant to any turbulence. However, Baráth, Szöllös and Černák (1995) give notice that the electoral support for political parties is able to migrate from rural to urban environment, and vice versa.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Currently, there are no territorial units in Slovakia that would respect the principle of internal voting preferential coherence or at least would partially try to, therefore a concept of functional urban regions

(hereinafter also “FUR” in short) established for this country by Prof. Bezák (2000) is accepted as the most appropriate for the purpose of analyzing the urban-rural conflict. Although the daily urban systems as representatives of objective socio-spatial relations were based on apolitical criteria non-reflecting the electoral preferences of the population, the quality of link between towns and countryside may be important indicator catching the nature of urban-rural voting preferential differences between urban and rural areas in case of similarly oriented works such as this one. In fact, they are the most real territorial units of the regional level taking into account long-term relationships formed between the centre and its hinterland. For the purposes of this paper, “A” level was used (51 functional urban regions in total), and Western Slovakia consists of the following 18 regions: FUR Bánovce nad Bebravou, FUR Bratislava, FUR Dunajská Streda, FUR Hlohovec, FUR Komárno, FUR Levice, FUR Nitra, FUR Nové Mesto nad Váhom, FUR Nové Zámky, FUR Piešťany, FUR Senica, FUR Skalica and Holíč, FUR Šaľa and Galanta, FUR Štúrovo, FUR Topoľčany, FUR Trenčín, FUR Trnava and FUR Zlaté Moravce (Table 1).

To meet the targets of this study, final results disaggregated at the municipal level of four parliamentary elections carried out in Slovakia during the period 1998-2010 have been used. We have considered political parties attending the National Council of the Slovak Republic at least once since 1998. Rurality index of electoral preferences for political party (rurality index  $R_i$  in short) utilized in this research poses an elementary statistical measure defining the urban-rural character of given political party in particular region of Slovakia (Table 2). It means ratio between the share of the vote for particular party in the rural space and share of electoral preferences gained by the same party in urban environment at parliamentary elections during the period of 1998-2010. Subsequently, the political party having the highest rurality index of electoral preferences within the region was considered to be representative of the rural space. Conversely, the political party with the lowest rurality index of its electoral support was conceived as a political representative of urban environment within the given region. In the

**Table 1** Voter turnout in functional urban regions of Western Slovakia in the period of 1998-2010.

Data source: author (research).

	Urbanisation rate (%)	Voter turnout (%)			Rurality index of voter mobilisation
		Overall	Rural	Urban	
Bánovce nad Bebravou	54.09	67.98	72.56	63.77	1.134
Bratislava	79.72	67.96	66.36	68.35	0.971
Dunajská Streda	40.97	73.35	76.48	68.78	1.123
Hlohovec	60.43	65.71	66.64	65.08	1.026
Komárno	58.11	68.02	70.64	66.13	1.078
Levice	45.97	67.59	68.46	66.57	1.028
Nitra	59.34	68.64	68.75	68.56	1.004
Nové Mesto nad Váhom	50.68	66.80	67.24	66.35	1.012
Nové Zámky	41.49	69.02	70.12	67.47	1.039
Piešťany	53.63	67.37	68.21	66.64	1.023
Senica	60.99	61.15	62.58	60.20	1.036
Skalica a Holíč	60.66	56.86	58.76	55.59	1.053
Šaľa a Galanta	45.71	67.14	69.56	64.16	1.091
Štúrovo	35.30	72.23	73.36	70.33	1.052
Topoľčany	44.60	68.54	71.50	64.85	1.107
Trenčín	60.68	69.83	70.14	69.63	1.011
Trnava	54.14	66.84	69.14	64.78	1.069
Zlaté Moravce	38.03	72.26	73.53	70.04	1.058
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	<b>56.18</b>	<b>66.64</b>	<b>68.01</b>	<b>65.59</b>	<b>1.036</b>

particular election, the difference between rurality index of the party with the highest value on the one hand and the party with the lowest one on the other may be understood as the level (size) of urban-rural conflict in given region. The larger this difference is, the more significant socio-political conflict between urban and rural environment can be expected, and vice versa. Average value for the whole period is utilized (see Table 3).

Another ambition of this study is to analyze the relationship between parties' electoral support and socio-economic base of towns and countryside in particular regions through correlation analysis. For this purpose, ten mainly socio-economic indicators derived from census of 2001 were selected, which are expected to reach significantly different values depending on being in urban or rural environment and therefore in their case a significant

socio-political conflict of the population may be awaited: the share of economically active population working in the primary sector of economy, the share of economically active population working in the secondary sector of economy, the share of economically active population working in the tertiary and quaternary sector of economy, the share of economically active people working as entrepreneurs, the share of economically active people commuting to work outside the place of residence, unemployment rate, share of population with elementary education, share of population with university education, urbanization rate and voter turnout.

Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was selected as correlation indicator quantifying the relationship between electoral results of political parties and socio-economic characteristics of the population.

**Table 2** Rurality index for political parties in functional urban regions of Western Slovakia in the period of 1998-2010. Data source: author (research).

	ES- HZDS	SMK- MKP	SDKÚ -DS	SNS	Smer -SD	KDH	SOP	SDE	KSS	ANO	SaS	Most -Híd
Bánovce n. B.	1.449	1.454	0.710	0.902	0.863	1.434	0.701	0.680	1.010	0.739	0.720	0.864
Bratislava	1.195	3.990	0.607	1.131	0.977	0.889	0.804	0.727	1.093	0.861	0.777	1.864
Dunajská Streda	0.499	1.139	0.372	0.340	0.429	0.307	0.416	0.521	0.583	0.571	0.529	1.040
Hlohovec	1.224	1.375	0.630	1.170	1.077	0.952	0.729	0.937	0.786	0.983	0.722	0.537
Komárno	0.937	1.333	0.312	0.607	0.573	0.833	0.377	0.323	0.542	0.390	0.367	1.050
Levice	1.444	1.374	0.548	1.098	0.933	1.451	0.652	0.749	1.052	0.692	0.574	0.990
Nitra	1.190	7.841	0.536	0.878	0.919	1.111	0.831	0.643	0.957	0.709	0.616	2.955
Nové Mesto n. V.	1.250	1.154	0.676	1.149	1.068	1.291	0.723	0.660	1.123	0.669	0.676	0.799
Nové Zámky	1.291	1.570	0.432	1.151	0.981	1.536	0.669	0.579	0.863	0.511	0.496	1.073
Piešťany	1.632	0.359	0.536	1.470	1.142	1.117	0.715	0.658	1.058	0.584	0.701	0.412
Senica	1.648	0.701	0.831	0.971	0.921	1.536	0.652	0.706	0.779	0.613	0.743	0.806
Skalica a Holíč	1.083	1.182	0.915	1.144	1.059	1.250	0.741	0.667	1.096	0.798	0.980	1.159
Šaľa a Galanta	0.792	2.902	0.390	0.592	0.588	0.763	0.459	0.385	0.693	0.526	0.406	1.905
Štúrovo	0.440	1.373	0.331	0.361	0.399	0.270	0.385	0.386	0.688	0.562	0.450	0.879
Topoľčany	1.329	0.611	0.670	0.972	0.942	1.539	0.755	0.636	1.008	0.779	0.630	0.651
Trenčín	1.546	0.361	0.530	1.219	1.091	1.278	0.573	0.626	1.045	0.645	0.643	0.427
Trnava	1.404	0.469	0.652	1.303	1.067	1.370	0.754	0.638	0.994	0.672	0.789	0.577
Zlaté Moravce	1.441	3.789	0.674	1.025	0.956	1.079	0.659	0.667	0.687	0.739	0.662	1.149
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	<b>1.438</b>	<b>2.227</b>	<b>0.518</b>	<b>1.129</b>	<b>0.995</b>	<b>1.221</b>	<b>0.688</b>	<b>0.655</b>	<b>1.046</b>	<b>0.684</b>	<b>0.574</b>	<b>1.285</b>

## RESULTS

### FUR Bánovce nad Bebravou

In comparison to the national mean, presented territory shows slightly below-average level of urbanization. Interest to participate in ballots is there slightly higher compared to the statewide average. The region belongs to those with the highest rural voter turnout within whole Slovakia. Conversely, in terms of active participation in the polling, its urban population reaches only below-average voter turnout. Region of Bánovce nad Bebravou ranks of those with almost no difference between the turnout registered in urban and rural areas. People's Party-Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (ES-HZDS) poses the political party with the highest long-term index of rurality in this region. On

the other hand, right-wing Slovak Democratic and Christian Union-Democratic Party (SDKÚ-DS) is considered to be traditional political representative of urban environment. The region is one of those with below-average socio-political conflict between towns and countryside. The highest positive statistical significance was found in the region between the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) and the electoral preferences of the persons with elementary education, the electoral results of the Party of the Democratic Left (SDĽ) and people with tertiary education and as well as the electoral support of the Bridge (Most-Híd) and the population with tertiary education. On the contrary, the highest negative correlation was identified between the electoral gain of Alliance of the New Citizen (ANO) and spatial distribution of population with elementary education, the election result

**Table 3** Size and acceleration of socio-political urban-rural conflict in functional urban regions of Western Slovakia in the period of 1998-2010. Data source: author (research).

	Size of urban-rural conflict					Acceleration of urban-rural conflict 1998-2010
	1998	2002	2006	2010	1998-2010	
Bánovce nad Bebravou	0.706	1.013	0.958	0.657	0.833	0.93
Bratislava	3.698	2.649	3.026	1.202	2.644	0.33
Dunajská Streda	0.770	0.810	0.836	0.653	0.767	0.85
Hlohovec	0.589	0.804	0.541	0.742	0.669	1.26
Komárno	0.985	0.921	1.044	1.141	1.023	1.16
Levice	0.793	1.020	1.069	1.030	0.978	1.30
Nitra	7.246	5.081	6.535	2.407	5.317	0.33
Nové Mesto nad Váhom	0.750	0.793	0.661	0.636	0.710	0.85
Nové Zámky	1.250	1.131	0.893	1.554	1.207	1.24
Piešťany	0.994	1.278	1.068	1.147	1.122	1.15
Senica	0.763	1.118	1.044	1.068	0.998	1.40
Skalica a Holíč	0.729	0.520	0.301	0.305	0.464	0.42
Šaľa a Galanta	2.618	1.942	2.142	3.472	2.544	1.33
Štúrovo	0.944	0.904	1.031	1.313	1.048	1.39
Topoľčany	0.706	0.966	1.052	0.818	0.886	1.16
Trenčín	0.973	1.212	1.058	0.910	1.038	0.93
Trnava	0.791	0.981	0.853	0.758	0.846	0.96
Zlaté Moravce	0.596	0.777	0.914	0.432	0.680	0.73
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	<b>1.643</b>	<b>1.388</b>	<b>1.595</b>	<b>0.767</b>	<b>1.348</b>	<b>0.47</b>

of the same party and voter turnout, as well as the electoral preferences of the Slovak National Party (SNS) and the geographic proportion of working people in the tertiary and quaternary sector of economy.

#### **FUR Bratislava**

Region of Slovakia's capital city is the most urbanized part of the country. On average, just four out of five people live in urban environment here. In Bratislava and its catchment area is achieved only an average turnout at the elections to the national parliament. However, the difference exists in electoral participation between rural and urban areas of this region. While, compared to the national average, voter participation in countryside is at a relatively low level, urban turnout belongs to

the highest. Region of capital is one of only four in Slovakia, where interest to attend the ballots is higher in towns than in rural areas. Here, the socio-political urban-rural conflict is represented by two parties that were already shared the coalition government two times (1998-2002 and 2002-2006) with other political parties during the era of country's independence (since 1993). Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK-MKP) records the significantly rural voting preferences, meanwhile the urban space is highly important for electoral success of SDKÚ-DS. This region has the third largest urban-rural conflict reflected in the political behaviour of citizens across the whole Slovak Republic. The highest positive correlation dependence was found in the case of electoral preferences of Dzurinda's party (SDKÚ-DS) and the spatial distribution of persons with higher

education. Electoral support of former right-wing party leader reacted positively also to the geographic composition of the population working in tertiary and quaternary sector of economy. Election results of SMK-MKP were the better, the greater the turnout in particular municipalities was. Conversely, a negative causal relationship was registered between territorial dispersion of SDKÚ-DS's electoral preferences and spatial distribution of people with elementary education. Similarly, a negative response to the same population group was identified in relation to the geographic structure of voting results in case of liberal Freedom and Solidarity (SaS). For Direction-Social Democracy (Smer-SD), higher voter turnout meant a less party's electoral support in the Bratislava region, and vice versa.

#### **FUR Dunajská Streda**

Town of Dunajská Streda and its catchment area extend in territory typical of highly rural character. On average, six out of ten people live in the countryside here. In the reporting period of 1998-2010, when four elections to the national parliament took place, the highest voter participation among all regions of Slovakia was just recorded there. However, interest in voting between urban and rural areas showed some discrepancies. While voter turnout in rural area was the absolutely highest across the whole Slovak Republic there, interest in election of the urban population was significantly lower, but still well above the national mean. In this region, the difference in interest to actively participate at the ballots between urban and rural areas in favour of the latter falls into the highest ones across the country. The most rural character of voting preferences has been recorded in the case of SMK-MKP, while the towns pose environment the most important for electoral score of SDKÚ-DS. In the region of Dunajská Streda, the socio-political conflict followed through the urban-rural dimension is at below-average level. According to results of correlation analysis can be stated that the most positive statistical link has been registered between territorial composition of SDE's electoral preferences and geographic dispersion of population with tertiary education, between voter

support declared to SMK-MKP and geographic distribution of population employed in primary sector of economy, and between votes given at polls to Party of Civic Understanding (SOP) and spatial concentration of persons working in the tertiary and quaternary sector of economy as well. On the other hand, with increasing territorial share of population working in agriculture, forestry, fishing and fish farming, the voting preferences of SOP, Smer-SD and SDKÚ-DS has been declining in the region.

#### **FUR Hlohovec**

In this populationally and territorially small region situated on the west of the country, the degree of urbanization is at above-average level. Interest in the election expressed by the local population is slightly lower than the statewide standard. Voter turnout in the countryside reaches average values, while the participation of the urban electorate ranges on average. Difference between participation at ballots in urban and rural environment of the region is not significant and belongs to the smallest ones in Slovakia. Rural votes are most important to the overall election outcome of Mečiar's party (ĽS-HZDS), while support of the urban electorate is crucial for the SDKÚ-DS there. In this part of Slovakia, one of the least significant socio-political urban-rural cleavages within the entire state has been recorded. The closest positive correlation dependence was registered in the case of voting preferences for ĽS-HZDS and their relation to both the geographic composition of workers employed in the primary sector of economy and the population with elementary education. Statistical link of the same orientation was also identified between geographic composition of electoral support for SDE and territorial share of persons working in the tertiary and quaternary sector of economy. Conversely, the most negative correlation was registered in the case of electoral preferences for Dzurinda's SDKÚ-DS and both the spatial distribution of population with elementary education and the people employed in first sector of economy. Geographic dispersion of votes cast at polls to Most-Híd reacted negatively to territorial composition of voter turnout.



### **FUR Komárno**

Urbanization rate of the region located in the south-west of the country is at a slightly above-average level. Voter turnout of the local population exceeds the statewide mean as well. Rate of electoral participation in both the urban and rural space is mildly higher than the national average registered in those environments, but in the case of the rural electorate the difference is more significant. Inequality between electoral interest in towns on the one hand and countryside on the other (in favour of the rural area) is higher than the average expected in other parts of Slovakia. The highest rural votes' share of the total party gain was registered by SMK-MKP, while the urban environment was the most important for election result of SDKÚ-DS. Compared to the nationwide situation, the difference in rurality index of electoral preferences between political party with the lowest value of this variable on the one hand and party with the highest value on the other was at slightly above-average level there. The highest positive correlation of parties' election results were recorded in relation to the geographic distribution of entrepreneurs in the region. In connection with the territorial composition of this socio-economic population group, the highest positive Pearson's correlation coefficient of the electoral preferences was identified by political parties of SDKÚ-DS, SaS and surprisingly of KSS, too. This strong statistical dependence can be explained by the spatial distribution of parties' votes, which are almost solely tied to the urban environment of the region, which is also characterized by a high concentration of entrepreneurs. Conversely, electoral gains of the parties reacted negatively especially to the presence of people with elementary education. In relation to this social group, the most pronounced negative statistical relationship was found in the case of ANO, SDĽ, SaS and their electoral gains.

### **FUR Levice**

In comparison with national average, the degree of urbanization in this region with one hundred thousand inhabitants is at a lower level. However, participation at polls by local electorate slightly exceeds the Slovak standard. The same statement

can be said even looking at the partial components of the analyzed territory - the rural and the urban environment, which also declared a slightly higher interest of their population to vote in elections. Compared to the nationwide situation, the inequality between voter turnout in urban and rural areas is mildly lower in this part of Slovakia. The highest rurality of votes has been identified in electoral support for ĽS-HZDS, while the urban environment is the largest contributor to preferential base for SDKÚ-DS. In this region, the intensity of social conflict expressed by different political preferences of urban citizens and rural communities just slightly surpasses the Slovak standard. The strongest positive statistical relationship was observed between the election results of Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and the geographic composition of both the persons commuting to work outside the place of their residence and the population with tertiary education. Significant positive correlation was also registered in the case of electoral support for KSS towards the territorial share of persons employed in primary sector of economy. Conversely, negative statistical link was identified for electoral preferences of KDH and spatial dispersion of unemployment rate, the electoral gains of KSS and territorial distribution of entrepreneurs and the votes cast at ballots for SMK-MKP and geographic composition of persons with tertiary education.

### **FUR Nitra**

Region situated in the west of the country belongs to those with the largest population in Slovakia, while the urbanization rate is at above-average level there. Nodal Nitra region is characterized by relatively high voter turnout. Although the electoral participation of voters in the countryside reaches only average value, interest to attend the ballots in the case of urban population ranks to the highest in Slovakia. The difference between voter turnout in urban and rural area is almost zero - both environments enjoy nearly identical voter turnout at the polls. In this region, SMK-MKP poses the political party with the greatest share of rural votes, while the urban voting preferences are a major part of the electoral gains of SDKÚ-DS. Size of socio-political

conflict between towns and countryside is in Nitra and its catchment area very strong, the second highest across the Slovakia. The highest intensity of the positive correlation could be observed in the case of election results of SDKÚ-DS and SaS as well towards the spatial composition of university-educated population. In general, electoral preferences of ĽS-HZDS have reacted positively at higher voter turnout, which, in turn, has not played into the hands of the ANO. Conversely, electoral gains of right-wing parties as SDKÚ-DS and SaS have correlated negatively with the geographic distribution of population with basic education.

### **FUR Nové Mesto nad Váhom**

In this part of Stredné Považie region, share of people living in towns and countryside is absolutely balanced. Compared to the national mean, interest in active participation at ballots is at average level there. While the voter turnout in rural space is slightly below-average, the relative number of those casting their votes in urban area is mildly higher than the average registered in the same environment for the entire Slovak Republic. Difference between voter turnout in urban and rural space is seen as one of the smallest in the whole country. The highest share of rural votes within the party's electoral gain was registered in the case of KDĽ, while SDKÚ-DS was a political party with the greatest dependence on the preferences coming from urban areas. In the region of Nové Mesto nad Váhom, the level of socio-political discrepancy between urban and rural environment is relatively low. Electorate with tertiary education is the social group of population, which has showed the highest positive correlation dependence towards the preferences of political parties. The tightest relationship of this type was identified for SaS, SDKÚ-DS and SĽ. A strong negative statistical link has been found between the spatial composition of the KSS's electoral support and territorial dispersion of entrepreneurs, the election gains of SDKÚ-DS and geographic concentration of elementary-educated population and the votes cast at ballots for the liberal SaS and territorial pattern of persons commuting to work outside the place of residence.

### **FUR Nové Zámky**

Urbanization rate of the region spreading in the southwest of Slovakia significantly lags behind the national mean. Voter turnout belongs to the highest ones across the country there. Electoral participation is above average in both the rural and urban environment. In the region of Nové Zámky, the difference between the interest in active participation at parliamentary elections between towns and countryside is considered to be average. The most rural are votes cast for SMK-MKP, while the historical leader of the right (SDKÚ-DS) is regarded as political party the most relying on electoral support coming from the urban space. Social conflict reflected in the distribution of political forces in the towns and countryside of mentioned region ranks to absolutely largest in Slovakia. The highest positive correlation dependence was identified in the case of electoral preferences for liberal SaS and spatial composition of university-educated people. Relatively high values of positive correlation were also registered between electoral support for SNS and ĽS-HZDS and spatial concentrations of people departing for work outside the place of residence. Conversely, election results of Most-Híd responded negatively to the presence of this population group. In this region, relatively strong indirect correlation dependence was also recorded for both the electoral gains of Smer-SD and geographic composition of the persons with basic education and the votes cast at polls for the SNS and spatial distribution of people working in first sector of economy.

### **FUR Piešťany**

In statewide comparison, this territory situated in the region of Dolné Považie is characterized by below-average urbanization rate. However, electoral participation of citizens living there exceeds the national standard. Slightly above-average turnout was identified in the case of rural and urban part of the population as well. The inequality in interest to actively participate at elections registered in these two environments is regarded as one of the smallest in Slovakia. The largest part of the rural electoral gains belongs to ĽS-HZDS, while the electoral preferences of the urban environment are most obvious



in the election results of SDKÚ-DS. Compared to the national situation, the size of the socio-political conflict between towns and countryside is at above-average level in the region. The highest positive values of Pearson's correlation coefficient were registered for SDKÚ-DS and SaS and spatial composition of their election results on the one hand and university-educated population on the other. The latter represents a political party with strong direct dependence to the territorial distribution of entrepreneurs as well. Conversely, mentioned parties showed a negative correlation of their electoral preferences to geographic distribution of employees working in secondary sector of economy. With the increasing territorial proportion of this socio-economic population group, the electoral gains of SDKÚ, SaS and Most-Híd have been declining, and vice versa.

#### **FUR Senica**

In this region, urbanization rate belongs to the highest in the whole Slovak Republic. The interest of the local population in public affairs expressed by its active participation at elections is the fourth lowest across the country. Turnout in both analyzed environments (in rural and urban) lags behind nationwide mean. The difference between the rate of electoral participation in urban and rural space of the region is considered to be standard. Mečiar's ĽS-HZDS is the political party having the largest share of rural votes in the party's regional election result. On the other hand, right-wing SDKÚ-DS poses the political party which is the most dependent on electoral support coming from the urban environment. In town of Senica and its catchment area, the socio-political conflict registered between urban and rural population is at slightly above-average level. The most intensive correlation of the positive nature has been identified between the SOP's election results and territorial shares of the population with tertiary education, between the voting preferences of SaS and spatial composition of employees working in the second sector of economy and between the votes cast at ballots to SMK-MKP and geographic dispersion of the persons employed in the tertiary and quaternary sector of economy as well. Statistical link of opposite orientation was observed in

the case of electoral support declared for ANO and spatial distribution of persons working in the primary sector of economy, the election results of SaS and territorial composition of population commuting to work outside the place of residence and also the voting preferences cast for SOP and geographic pattern of elementary-educated citizens.

#### **FUR Skalica and Holíč**

Region situated in the northern part of Záhorie is characterized by above-average degree of urbanization. However, this territory of fifty thousand population suffers from absolutely lowest voter participation, because turnout in parliamentary elections just exceeded the 55% threshold in the reporting period there. The electoral interest of the local rural population is the poorest one in Slovakia, while participation in elections declared by the urban citizens is the second lowest. Compared to nationwide mean, the difference in the reached level of voter turnout between rural and urban area of the region is slightly above-average. According to structure of its electoral preferences, KDH may be considered as political representative of rural areas, while the support of urban voters are most reflected in the electoral gains of SDKÚ-DS. In addition to the lowest level of electoral participation, Skalica and its catchment area is also typical by the lowest socio-political conflict existing between urban and rural electorate throughout the Slovak Republic. In other words, the voting preferences of towns and countryside are the most similar just in this region. The most intensive positive correlation dependence was found between the KDH election results and voter turnout, the electoral preferences of Smer-SD and spatial composition of unemployment rate and the territorial distribution of votes cast at ballots for SDKÚ-DS and geographic concentration of population with tertiary education as well. On the other hand, the most negative response to both the presence of people commuting to work and spatial mosaic of voter turnout was experienced by the election results of ANO. A significant negative correlation relationship was also observed between the electoral support of SOP and territorial composition of population working in the first sector of economy.

### **FUR Šaľa and Galanta**

Region located in the southwest of Slovakia is characterized by below-average rate of urbanization. Electoral participation of the local population just slightly exceeds the nationwide average. Difference can be seen in voter turnout declared by both environments under study. While the interest in elections of rural electorate is above-average in comparison with Slovak standard, willingness to vote expressed by urban population of this region lags behind that at the national level. The inequality in active participation at ballots between towns and countryside in favour of the latter is relatively strong due to the statewide conditions. SMK-MKP poses the political party drawn the largest part of its electoral support from rural areas, meanwhile the regional election results of SDKÚ-DS are affected the most by votes coming from urban space. In the region of Šaľa and Galanta, the socio-political conflict existing between urban and rural part of the electorate reflected in different electoral preferences of these two very distinct environments ranks to the highest ones across the country. Among the investigated socio-economic characteristics, the closest correlation links of the positive orientation towards election results of political parties were recorded by the categories of population different in level of attained education. The spatial distribution of university-educated citizens was positively correlated with electoral support of right-wing political parties as SDKÚ-DS and SaS, while the territorial composition of the population with elementary education related statistically the most to electoral gain of Most-Híd. On the other hand, above-mentioned right-wing parties of SDKÚ-DS and SaS responded negatively to the presence of persons with basic education. Indirect statistical relationship was also registered between intraregional election results of SDE and geographic composition of voter turnout.

### **FUR Štúrovo**

Populationally smallest region of Slovakia with fewer than 35,000 inhabitants is of a distinctly rural character, because degree of its urbanization reaches one of the lowest values within the Slovak Republic. However, voter participation

of local electorate is the fourth highest in inter-regional comparison. In this region, the participation of both the urban and rural citizens as well counts among the absolutely highest within the country. The difference in active participation in parliamentary elections between the two social environments under study slightly exceeds the Slovak standard. Within the examined territory, SMK-MKP can be considered as the political representative of the rural space, while SDKÚ-DS relies mainly on the electoral votes coming from the urban environment. The size of socio-political conflict between towns and countryside is above the standard in Štúrovo and its catchment area. In relation to electoral preferences of political parties, the highest values of Pearson's correlation coefficient were registered in the case of spatial distribution of social groups dividing on the basis of attained education. In the period under study, the most intensive positive correlation was identified between election results of both the SOP and SDKÚ-DS on the one hand and geographic composition of university-educated population on the other. Election results of the preferably strongest political party in the region (SMK-MKP) correlated positively with the territorial dispersion of the elementary-educated citizens. Conversely, the electoral support declared to political parties of SOP, SDKÚ-DS and SDE as well, whose voting preferences in the region are characterized by extremely urban character, responded negatively to the spatial distribution of aforementioned social category.

### **FUR Topoľčany**

Compared to the statewide mean, urbanization rate of the region lying on the Ponitrie is at relatively low level. However, voter turnout goes beyond the Slovak standard. In this indicator, a significant urban-rural difference can be observed. While the interest to participate actively at polls from the side of the rural population exceeds clearly the national average, voter turnout in urban space of the region lags slightly behind the nationwide standard. In the region, the difference between electoral participation of voters in urban and rural areas in favour of the latter is quite significant. Based on the

structure of electoral preferences, KDH can be regarded as a representative of rural space, while votes of urban electorate are reflected the most in the regional election result of SDKÚ-DS. In the region of Topoľčany, discrepancy in electoral preferences reflecting the existing socio-political cleavage is slightly below-average compared to nationwide standard. In the area under study, the closest correlation dependence of the positive nature was registered between electoral gains of SaS, SDKÚ-DS and SDE as well and geographic distribution of tertiary-educated citizens. The relevant statistical relationship, but of the opposite orientation, was recorded in territorial composition of university-educated population and election results of ĽS-HZDS. A statistically significant negative correlation was also observed by both the electoral support of KSS and spatial concentration of employees working in the secondary sector of economy and the territorial mosaic of electoral preferences cast for SDKÚ-DS and population working in the first sector of economy.

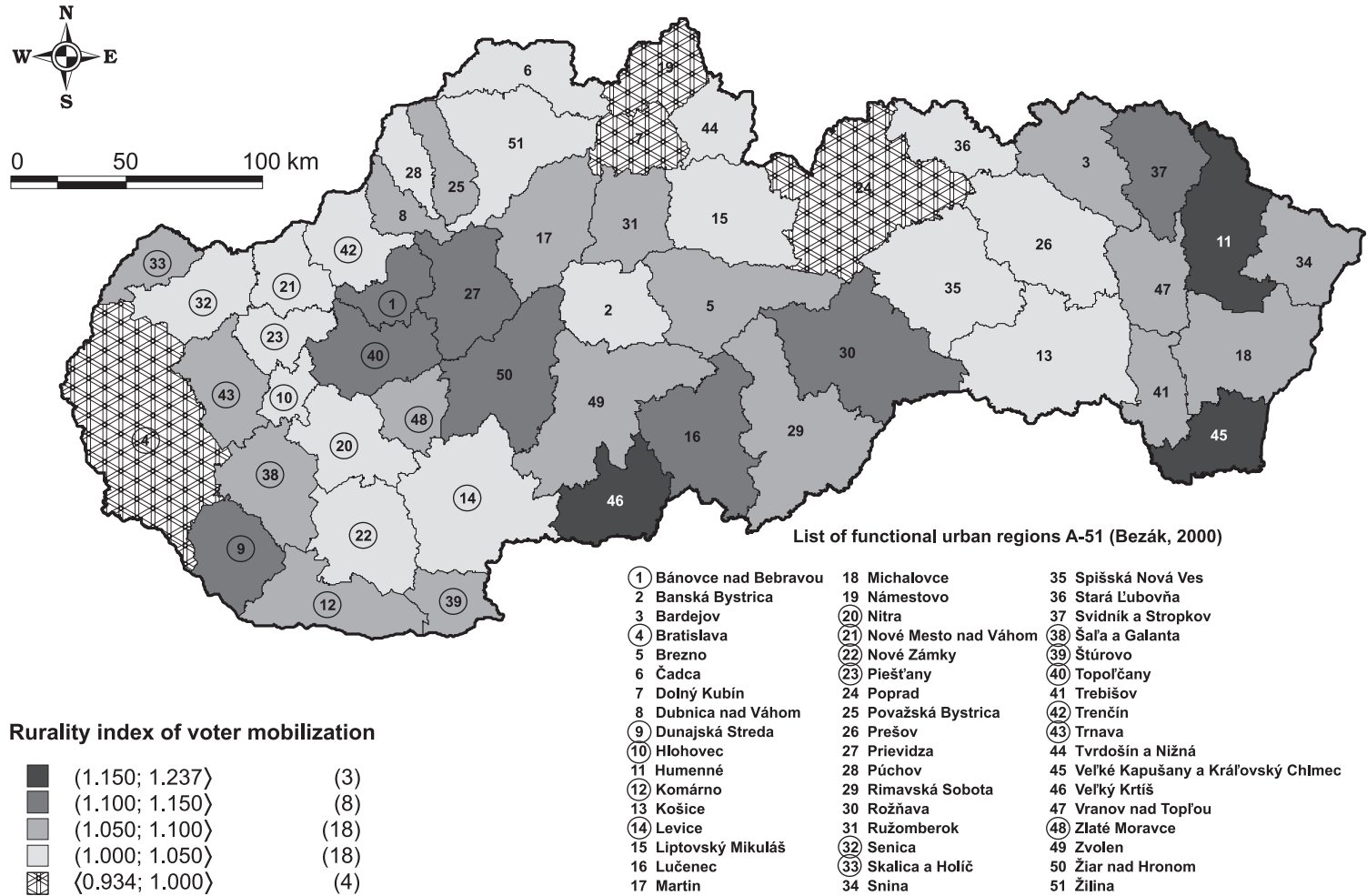
#### **FUR Trenčín**

Compared to the national situation, urbanization rate of the region located in the Stredné Považie is at above-average level. Similar statement can be said even if we consider the electoral participation of people living there, which ranks to the highest in Slovakia. In the region, in both studied environments is observed comparatively high interest to take a part at ballots in comparison with rest of the state. Even in inter-regional comparison, electoral participation of the local urban population count among the absolutely highest in the country. The difference between voter turnout achieved in urban and rural areas of the region is the third lowest in Slovakia. Compared to other political parties, Mečiar's ĽS-HZDS poses the party drawing the most of its electoral support from the rural environment of the region, while historical leader of the right (SDKÚ-DS) relies to the largest extent on voting preferences coming from urban space. Socio-political cleavage occurring in different electoral preferences of towns on the one hand and countryside on the other is slightly above-average there. In Trenčín and its catchment area,

population differentiated on the basis of highest attained education is a social structure linked statistically the most to the spatial composition of the electoral preferences cast at ballots to political parties there. In the studied area, the highest positive correlation was recorded between the election results of SDKÚ-DS, SOP and Most-Híd as well and the geographic composition of university-educated persons. Conversely, the most intensive statistical link of opposite orientation was identified in relation of the electoral support declared to SOP, SaS and also SNS to spatial distribution of population with elementary education.

#### **FUR Trnava**

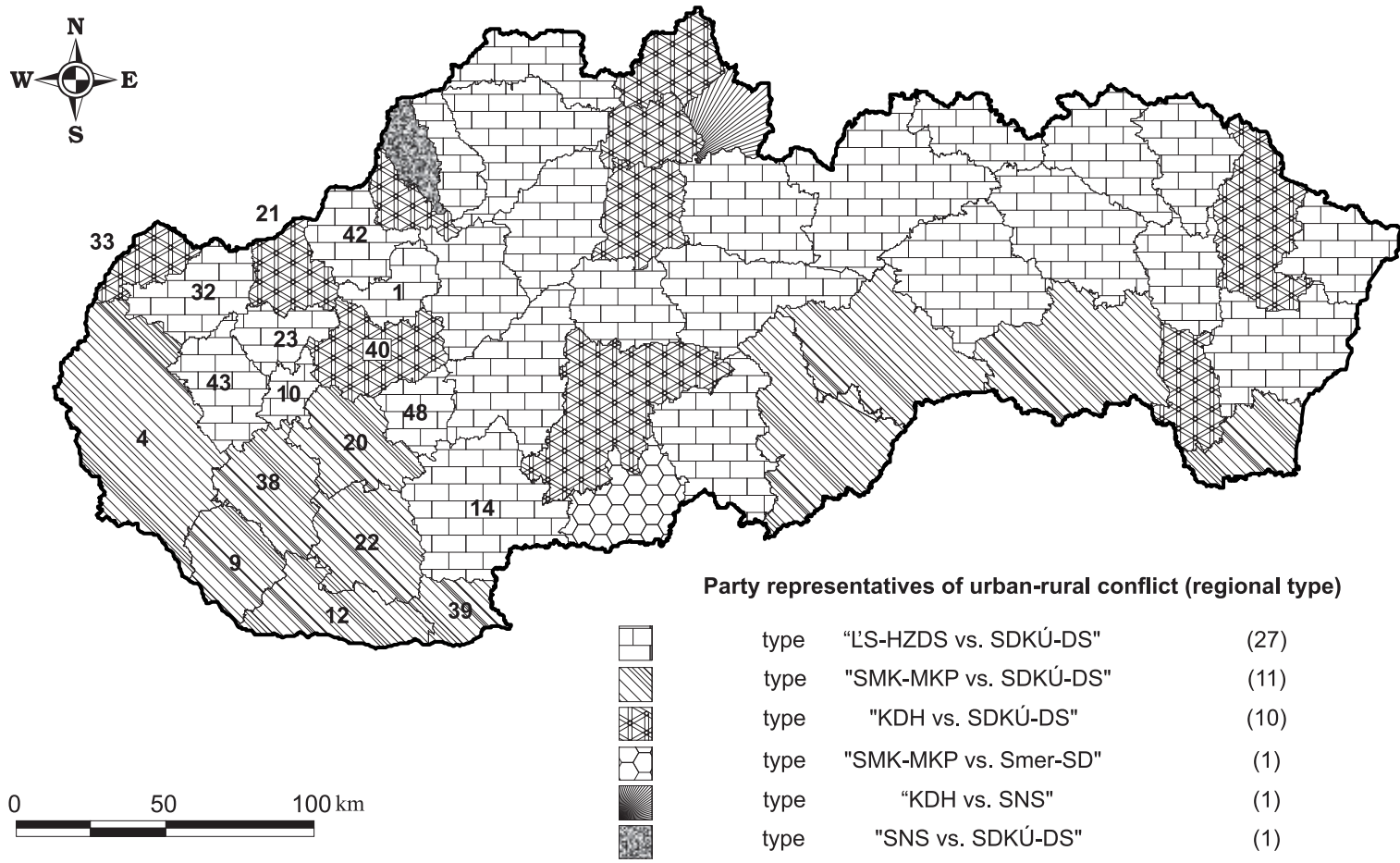
Territory located in the Dolné Považie is typical of a slightly below-average urbanization rate. In terms of voter turnout, the region can be included to those reaching its average values. While the rate of electoral participation manifested by rural voters of the region moves just above the national average, the interest to attend the polls by urban population lags slightly behind the statewide mean. The difference in electoral participation of both environments under study exceeds the average level. The largest part of the regional electoral gains coming from the countryside was identified for ĽS-HZDS, while the share of urban votes is the most significant within election results of SDKÚ-DS. In the region, the size of the socio-political conflict reflected in the electoral preferences of urban and rural parts of the electorate was just slightly behind the national average. The tightest positive correlation link was registered between both the electoral gains of SDKÚ-DS and SDE as well and spatial composition of the population with university degree and the voting preferences of SaS and geographic dispersion of employees working in tertiary and quaternary sector of economy. On the other hand, a significant negative statistical relationship was recorded in the case of the spatial distribution of votes cast at polls for SDE and SaS too and spatial distribution of persons working in the primary sector of economy. Quite significant negative correlation was also found between election results of KSS and territorial shares of voter turnout.



Data source: author (research)

Note: Regions of Western Slovakia are marked by a circle

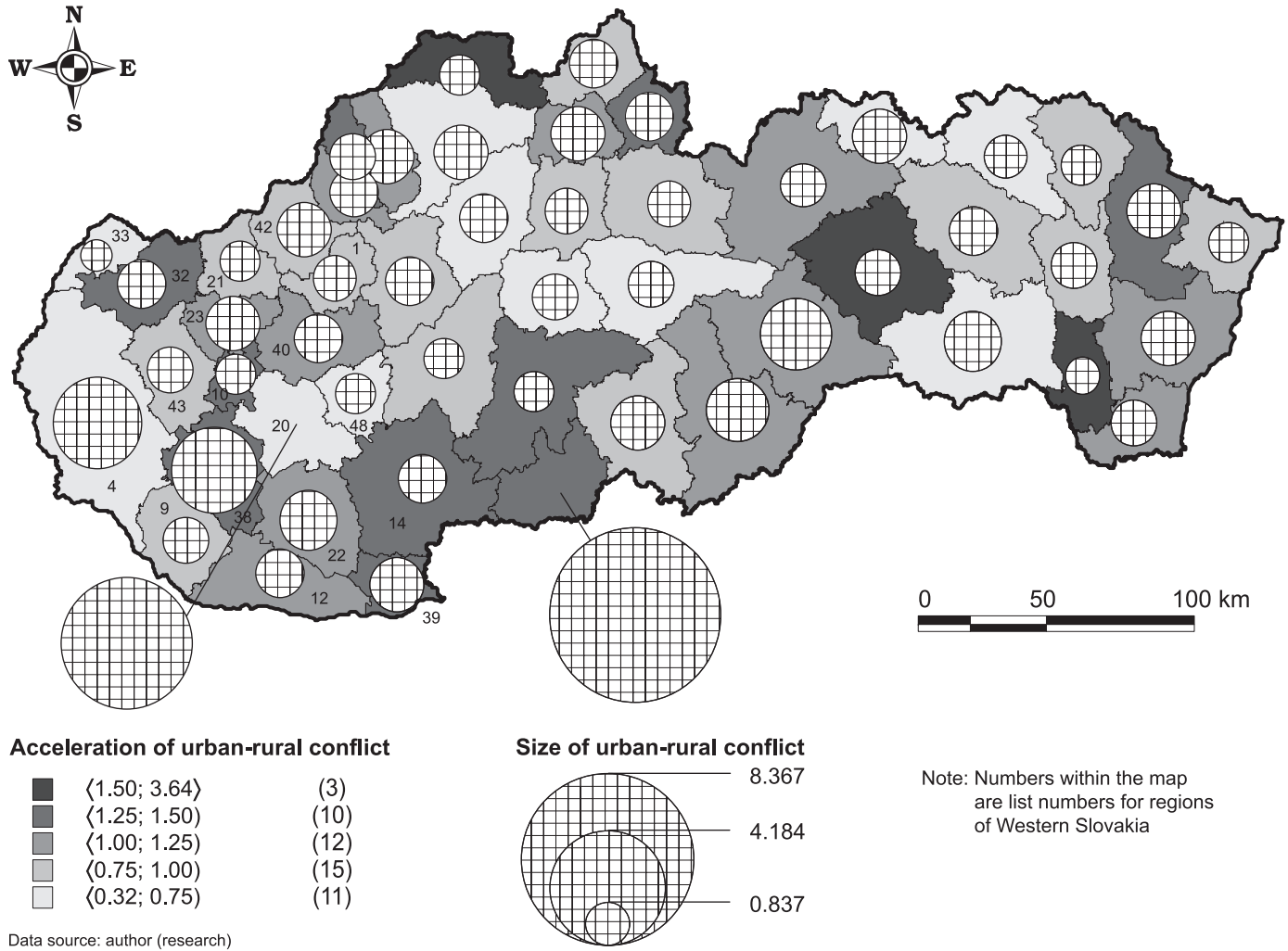
Figure 1 Regional rurality index of voter mobilization at parliamentary elections of 1998–2010.



Data source: author (research)

Note: First party of given twosome is mean as "rural" (with highest rurality index), the second as "urban" one (with lowest rurality index). Numbers within the map are list numbers for regions of Western Slovakia

**Figure 2** Typization of Slovak regions according to long-term party representatives of socio-political urban-rural conflict based on parliamentary election results in the period of 1998-2010.



**Figure 3** Size and acceleration of socio-political urban-rural conflict in particular regions of Slovakia based on parliamentary election results in the period of 1998-2010.



## FUR Zlaté Moravce

One of the populationally and territorially smallest regions of the Slovak Republic is characterized by significant rural character. The urbanization rate of the region is less than 40%. However in terms of voter turnout, town of Zlaté Moravce and its catchment area rank to the most successful in Slovakia. High levels of electoral participation are typical for rural and urban environment of the region as well. In the studied area, difference in the interest of the population to participate at ballots between urban and rural environment is slightly above-average. Within this territory, the highest rurality index of electoral preferences was registered in the case of ĽS-HZDS, while SDKÚ-DS was dependent to the largest extent on preferential support flowing from the urban area. In the region of Zlaté Moravce, the rate of difference in voting preferences cast in rural and urban space representing the existing socio-economic cleavage is at low level, which suggests a weak socio-political conflict between the urban and rural environment there. The highest positive statistical correlation was identified between the election results of ANO and territorial distribution of entrepreneurs, the geographic composition of electoral support for KDĽ and people working in the secondary sector of economy and also the electoral gains of SOP and spatial concentration of university-educated population. Conversely, the tightest negative correlation link was recorded in the case of the territorial dispersion of votes cast at polls to SOP and geographic distribution of persons commuting to work outside the place of residence. Election results of this political party also correlated negatively with the voter turnout. In the area under study, with the increasing territorial shares of the elementary-educated population, electoral score of liberal SaS has declined, and vice versa.

## CONCLUSION

Compared to the rest of the country, the western part of the Slovak Republic has traditionally been characterized by increased electoral participation of the population. Among the eighteen regions that were the object of research in the presented study was only one of them registered as area

with higher voter turnout in urban space than in rural one (in FUR Bratislava, which is traditionally seen as a stable core of preferential support for Slovakian right-wing parties possessing the ability to mobilize mainly urban voters). On the other hand, the rural environment has involved in the most obvious way compared to urban environment in region lying to the southeast of FUR Bratislava (Dunajská Streda region) and also in Horná Nitra region (FUR Prievidza and FUR Bánovce nad Bebravou) situated in the north of analyzed territory. In the case of territories located in the south of Western Slovakia, increased electoral interest of countryside can be explained through the territorial composition of the population with Hungarian nationality, which is characterized by a high rate of voter participation and spatial concentrated in the rural area of south-western Slovakia (see Figure 1).

In terms of party representatives of socio-political urban-rural conflict there were allocated three types of regions in Western Slovakia (see Figure 2). Most abundant type are those in which the urban area has been inherently important during the period 1998-2010 to the electoral success of right-wing SDKÚ-DS on the one hand and countryside for the ĽS-HZDS on the other. Regions of this type (eight in total) can be identified only in the north and east of the investigated area. South-western parts of this territory are typical of long-term rural inclination towards classical party representing the Hungarian ethnic group living in Slovakia, SMK-MKP, while support coming from the urban space of this area is most relevant for SDKÚ-DS (seven regions). Voting preferential conflict between rural and urban environment categorized as type of KDĽ (rural) vs. SDKÚ-DS (urban) was recorded in regions of Skalica and Holíč, Nové Mesto nad Váhom and Prievidza lying in north.

However, West was considerably differential also according to size and dynamics of socio-political cleavage between urban and rural part of the electorate (see Figure 3). The biggest difference in the electoral preferences of both tracking environments has been registered in the regions of Nitra, Bratislava and in FUR Šaľa and Galanta.

Conversely the mildest socio-political conflict of towns and countryside was recorded in populationally and territorially smaller regions of Skalica and Holíč, Hlohovec, Zlaté Moravce and Nové Mesto nad Váhom. An important voting preferential similarity of urban and rural environment can be seen even in southern areas of Western Slovakia situated on the border with Hungary characterized by high geographic concentration of Hungarians. During the period under study, examined socio-political urban-rural electorate splitting has strengthened the most in the region of Senica, Štúrovo and Šaľa and Galanta. On the other hand, the difference between electoral choices of urban and rural voters has diminished in most significant way in the populationally biggest regions of Western Slovakia affected by suburbanization (FURs Bratislava and Nitra), but also in both the Skalica and Holíč and their catchment area located in the northwest and in the region of Zlaté Moravce lying in the eastern part of examined area.

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## Résumé

### Urbáně-rurální konflikt volebních preferencií obyvatelstva ve funkčních městských regionech západního Slovenska v kontextu jejich socio-politické situace

Termín „sociální štěpení“ byl poprvé použit v padesátých letech minulého století v souvislosti s nastupující vědeckou revolucí v oblasti zkoumání politického chování občanů. V tomto období dochází k rozmachu politicko-vědní literatury speciálně zaměřené na voličské chování. A právě oblasti sociálního štěpení chápané jako objektivní charakteristiky rozděluující jednotlivce do konkrétních sociálních skupin se pokládaly za klíčové v procesu vysvětlování chování voličů. Teoretický základ

sociologického definování oblastí sociálního štěpení byl formulován Lipsetem a Rokkanem (1967). Tito autoři definovali sociální štěpení jako oblasti konfliktů, které vycházejí ze vztahů v sociální struktuře mezi skupinami politického společenství. Zároveň identifikovali čtyři dlouhodobě platná sociální štěpení, která lze chápat jako důsledek národní a průmyslové revoluce: město vs. venkov, zaměstnavatelé vs. dělníci, centrum vs. periferie a stát vs. církev. Uvedené oblasti sociálního štěpení jsou i dnes, po téměř půlstoletí, stále významné ve vztahu k vysvětlení volebních preferencí obyvatelstva.

Západní část Slovenské republiky je ve srovnání s ostatním územím země již tradičně typická zvýšenou volební účastí obyvatelstva. Mezi osmnácti regiony, které byly objektem výzkumu v rámci představené studie, byla jen v jednom z nich registrována vyšší volební účast v městském prostředí při srovnání s venkovským (konkrétně ve FMR Bratislavy, který je chápán jako stabilní jádro preferenční podpory slovenské pravice disponující schopností volebně mobilizovat především urbánního voliče). Naopak venkov se v komparaci s urbánním prostředím nejvýraznějším způsobem volebně angažoval v přílehlém regionu Dunajské Stredy a v severně situovaných regionech Horní Nitry (FMR Prievidze a FMR Bánovců nad Bebravou). V případě území nacházejících se na jihu západního Slovenska lze zvýšený volební zájem venkova vysvětlit na základě územní kompozice obyvatelstva maďarské národnosti, pro které je charakteristická vysoká míra volební participace a které je teritoriálně koncentrováno právě v rurálním prostoru jihozápadního Slovenska. Z hlediska stranických reprezentantů socio-politického urbánně-rurálního konfliktu byly v rámci západního Slovenska vyčleněny tři typy regionů. Nejpočetnější typ představují ty, v nichž byl urbánní prostor v období let 1998-2010 bytostně důležitý pro volební úspěch pravicové SDKÚ-DS, a naopak venkovský pro ĽS-HZDS. Regiony tohoto typu (celkem 8 regionů) lze identifikovat výhradně na severu a východě zkoumaného území. Jihozápadní oblasti této části země jsou však typické dlouhodobou inklinací venkova směrem ke klasickému stranickému reprezentantovi maďarského etnika žijícího na Slovensku, SMK-MKP, naopak na podpoře města je v tomto prostoru nejvíce závislá

SDKÚ-DS (7 regionů). Volebně-preferenční konflikt mezi rurálním a urbánním prostředím typu KDĽH (venkov) vs. SDKÚ-DS (město) byl evidován v severně ležících regionech Skalice a Holíč, Nového Města nad Váhom a Prievidze.

Západ byl však značně diferentní i z hlediska samotné velikosti a dynamiky socio-politického štěpení urbánní a rurální části voličů. Největší odlišnost volebních preferencí obou sledovaných prostředí byla registrována v regionech Nitry, Bratislavy a ve FMR Šaly a Galanty. Naopak nejmírnější socio-politický konflikt města a venkova byl zaznamenán v populačně i územně menších regionech Skalice a Holíč, Hlohovce, Zlatých Moravců a Nového Města nad Váhom. Významnou volebně-preferenční shodu urbánního a rurálního prostředí bylo možné evidovat i v jižních oblastech západního Slovenska, situovaných na hranici s Maďarskem, typických vysokou geografickou koncentrací obyvatelstva maďarské národnosti. Zkoumané společensko-politické urbánně-rurální štěpení voličů se ve sledovaném období nejvýraznějším způsobem upevnilo v regionech Senice, Štúrova a Šaly a Galanty. Naopak rozdíl mezi volebními výběry městských a venkovských voličů se nejdynamičtěji stírá v populačně největších regionech západního Slovenska zasažených suburbanizací (ve FMR Bratislavy a Nitry), stejně však na severozápadě ve Skalici a Holíci a jejich spádových územích a ve východní části zájmového prostoru v regionu Zlatých Moravců.

