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ELECTORAL SYSTEM OF SLOVAKIA - PERSPECTIVE OF POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

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Abstract: More than twenty years after fall of communism Slovakia has experienced unprecedented fall of electoral turnout. It is important to look into the problem of how low turnout may impact ability to get elected in different stages of elections. In the past, there were problems with gerrymandering. This article follows how Slovakia was able to deal with the biggest flaw of its electoral system of the past and investigates its problems today. The article gives a short historical overview of the elections in the region of Slovakia. The stress of the article is on the analysis of the official electoral results of 3 stages of elections to parliament, self-governing regions and municipalities. As electoral systems within the different stages of elections are varied, it is necessary to give an overview on that as well. Analysis of the data will be in the years 1990-2013 with stress on the years 2001-2013. All input data has been provided by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. If low voter turnout combined with mobilization of extremists or dissatisfied electorate it may result in election of extremists into office like in Banská Bystrica self-governing region in the 2013 elections.

Key words: electoral system, gerrymandering, voter turnout, democracy, Slovakia

Introduction

Today we are witnesses to the growing apathy of people towards politics not only in Slovakia, but also in many other European countries. It seems that the enthusiasm towards democracy that followed the fall of communism has faded away. We can feel the movement of attitudes from this quotation of A. Lincoln: "Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people" ,to the simple government which means according to Pierre- Joseph Proudhon : "to be watched, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, regulated, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, checked, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right nor the wisdom nor the virtue to do so". We must not forget that democracy cannot be democracy without one of its main attributions, elections. Elections give opportunity to every person not only to affect public affairs but also to take

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partial responsibility for what is going on in the republic as well as in society. We can agree with Sir W. Churchill who proclaimed democracy to be the worst form of government. It has a lot of negatives, which change with time and place; therefore it is interesting to look into how these differences change in the electoral system of different stages of elections in Slovakia.

Data and Methods

All of the data used for the analyses of the voter participation and electoral support were gathered from Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic or its counterpart from Czech Republic.

Results and discussion

A brief look into past elections in region of Slovakia

We know of elections as a part of the political establishment from ancient Greece or Rome. In our region, elections were established slowly from the end of the Middle Ages, yet the elections of the “Stolica regions” had nothing to do with democracy. Elections of the modern type in Hungary were introduced in the first half of the 19th century. The revolutionary year of 1848 was one of the main breaking points, but it is true that the dream of fair, equal, universal elections was fulfilled after 1918 and after the creation of Czechoslovakia. Equal and universal voting rights for men were introduced in the Austrian part of the monarchy in 1906. In the Hungarian part of the empire in electoral systems restrictions were introduced to get unwanted groups of people out of the voting system via social, language or wealth restrictions (Kovač 1998).

The formation of Czechoslovakia brought democracy to the region of Slovakia and along with it universal, equal and secret voting for each and every one. During the first republic the election system was manipulated in different ways to eliminate unfavorable factors. Undoubtedly the first Czechoslovak Republic was the only democratic society in central Europe that lasted until 1938, but we have to admit that some deformations to the electoral system have been made. The republic was threatened by revisionist demands from basically all of its neighbors. Revisionists used “tactical weapons” to achieve their goals. “Primary weapons” were the minority groups within the state (German, Hungarian) and “Secondary weapons” were the Slovak and Ruthenic separatists within the Czechoslovak nation. This is why the central government had to lower the influence of these destabilizing elements on politics. One of the most effective ways to do this was to change electoral districts. There were different numbers of voters needed for the election of one representative of central government in

each of the regions of the Republic (24 000 Bohemia, 27 000 Silesia, 26 000 Slovakia and 32 500 Carpathian Ruthenia). There were even larger differences within the electoral districts (Figure. 1). Slovakia was divided into 6 electoral sub districts. Liptov needed approx. 23, 5 thousand votes per one mandate, but in nationally mixed sub districts Nové Zámky or Košice (with a high proportion of Hungarian minorities), candidates needed 33,5 /39 thousand votes per mandate. The vote of people in Bratislava or Košice had 30-40% lower strength than the vote of people from for example Ružomberok (CSO). The deformation caused by the formation of electoral districts was not the only deformation. Other problems were electoral mathematics (calculation of electoral votes to acquisition of individual mandates) or one of the main factors of deformation which was the inability to vote for individual candidates. People could vote only for collective party lists (Kršák, 2009).



Figure 1. Electoral districts of Slovak part of Czechoslovakia from 1918 to 1939.

After the World War 2 we can consider having only one partially democratic election in 1946. Political parties were forced to form a united National Front. After 1948 elections became more of a puppet show rather than an implementation of democracy. Changes occurred in the year 1990 after the fall of socialism, with the first free elections after more than 40 years of oppression. Within the next years the electoral systems experienced extreme changes.

Parliamentary elections in Slovakia

From the fall of communism in the year 1989 there were two elections into the Slovak national parliament within ČSFR and have been six elections in the existence of Slovak Republic. Three of the elections (1994, 2006 and 2012) were early elections after problems within ruling coalitions and three elections that occurred in regular periodicity (1998, 2002 and 2010). Elections to the national

parliament are announced by the head of the national parliament. The total number of elected parliament members is 150.

Slovakia is divided into one 150-seat electoral district or according to the new legislation electoral county. In the past the situation was very different. During socialism there were 150 one-mandate districts. There was always only one candidate per each district with no opposition to vote against (No.55/1971). In electoral years 1990, 1992 and 1994 Slovakia was divided in 4 more-mandate districts (Bratislava, Western, Central and Eastern district of Slovakia). One 150-mandate district was established for the election of 1998.

The electoral system can be characterized as a proportional register electoral system (Chytilek, 2009). Political parties use registers of candidates according to which candidates get voted into the position into the parliament. Voters can use 4 preferential votes that are given only to candidates of one political party. This is the only way voters may break the order of the candidates in the registers of the political parties.

The character and influence of these preferential votes changed over time. This part of the electoral system was incorporated by as early as the 1990 elections, but the effect of the votes was minimal as candidates needed to achieve 50% of all the votes of their political party (No.80/1990). Because of this absurdity changes were made in the legislation in 1992. An individual candidate could influence the order of the register of the party after achieving 10% of all the votes of their political party (No.104/1992). The most influential changes came with the bill No. 333/2004 which lowered the needed percentage of the parties vote to 3%. To prove this point we can point to the number of candidates that took advantage of preferential votes. In the years 1998 and 2002 it was only 29/31 candidates that moved within the registers. The movement within the registers was not more than an average of 2-3 positions. Altogether, only 50-60% of the voters of the parties used preferential voting at all. In comparison in the years 2006, 2010 and 2012 with 63/63/73 candidates that took advantage of preferential votes, there was a big change. The movement within the registers started to oscillate more. Candidates in the last two elections were able to move from the last positions of the registers to the front where they were able to move to voted positions (SaS 2010 and OLaNO 2012)². The percentage of voters of the parties using preferential voting rose to 75-84%. Preferential votes started to influence politics as well as the formation of electoral strategies of individual candidates (Table 1.).

² For meaning see table. 1

For the need of the elections, there needs to be regional division of electoral districts and institutions that are responsible for smooth running of the elections. Today the institutional organization responsible for the whole election process is the Central Election Committee; lower instances are District election committees. The third and the lowest instances are Zone election Committees which are the instances responsible for the actual administering of the elections in the municipalities. The number of all of the units varied in time (Table 2.). Usually the electoral zones have a radius covering approx. 1000 people (No.237/1998). In the last election the number of electoral zones reached 5956.

Electoral participation in the elections to the Slovak National Parliament, has recorded continual drop of interest of voters from 1990 (95%) to 2006 (54%). The only exception was the mobilizing anti-Mečiar elections of 1998³. In the last two elections 2010 and 2012, it seems that electoral participation stabilized on levels around 60% (Table 3.). Different characteristics of electoral participation can be found in cities and villages. Usually the participation in the villages is 2-3 % higher than in the cities. The only exception is the city of Bratislava that is able to have participation above the national average.

Because of the characteristics of the electoral system of Slovakia with one 150-mandate district, the problem of electoral geometry mentioned in the first part of this article is gone. This system has its pros and cons. On one hand the problem of deformation of different districts is gone, yet there is a different problem. Many experts argue that the parliament lost contact with the regions, what can be supported by a high proportion of deputies elected from the Bratislava region in the elections of 2012. Bratislava has only approximately 8, 8% of the whole population, but was able to occupy 32, 7% of the parliament (49 seats). This system of election is very suitable for smaller parties and political parties with strong election leaders, which are able to address a wide spectrum of voters. Some of the political parties are strongly dependent on electoral votes from Bratislava only (SDKÚ-DS or SaS).

³ Vladimír Mečiar is a former prime minister of Slovakia (1992-1994, 1994-1998). During his rule Slovakia was left out during entry of countries from central Europe into NATO as well as postponement of negotiation process with EU. Just before elections of 1998 he passed the law No. 187/1998 that was to stop the success of opposition parties, nonetheless he was unsuccessful because of the enormous mobilization of voters. Law was proclaimed against constitution and some of its content was later abolished.

Table 1. Percentage of voters using preferential votes, number of candidates that benefited from preferential voting and the maximum jump in the register of political parties that achieved quorum to be in the Parliament in the years 2002-2012

Political party	1998			2002			2006			2010			2012		
	Maximum jump in the register	Number of candidates above 10% of support	Percentage of voters using preferential votes	Maximum jump in the register	Number of candidates above 10% of support	Percentage of voters using preferential votes	Maximum jump in the register	Number of candidates above 10% of support	Percentage of voters using preferential votes	Maximum jump in the register	Number of candidates above 10% of support	Percentage of voters using preferential votes	Maximum jump in the register	Number of candidates above 10% of support	Percentage of voters using preferential votes
SMER-SD	x	x	x	1	5	63.1	20	8	75.53	2	9	72.79	11	10	77.08
SDKU-DS	1	4	48.74	0	5	63.24	9	8	75.16	24	10	72.6	14	14	86.28
KDH	x	x	x	2	6	68.1	68	11	79.08	11	10	77.12	26	10	83.23
SMK	2	5	57.13	19	5	75.34	23	17	86.3	x	x	x	x	x	x
Most-hid	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	30	16	82.88	9	17	85.42
SNS	4	4	52.7	x	x	x	12	7	75.96	12	8	73.74	x	x	x
HZDS	1	4	56.76	2	4	75.15	25	12	85.5	x	x	x	x	x	x
SDL	3	7	58.05	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
SOP	2	5	54.1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
KSS	x	x	x	0	3	55.4	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
ANO	x	x	x	2	3	65.03	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
SAS	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	146	10	69.09	11	11	80.66
OL'aNo	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	149	11	87.68
TOGETHER	Max 4	29	54.58	Max 19	31	66.48	Max 68	63	75.59	Max 146	63	74.54	Max 149	73	83.39

SMER-SD: SMER - sociálna demokracia (The Way – Social Democracy), SDKU-DS: Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia - Demokratická strana (Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party), KDH: Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie (Christian Democratic Movement), SMK: Strana maďarskej komunity (Party of the Hungarian Community), Most-hid (Bridge-hid), SNS: Slovenská národná strana (Slovak national party), HZDS- LS: Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko - Ľudová strana (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia – People's Party), SDL: Strana demokratickej ľavice (Democratic left party), SOP: Strana občianskeho ozromenia (Party of Civic Understanding), KSS: Komunistická strana Slovenska (Communist party of Slovakia), ANO: Aliancia nove'ho občana (Alliance of New Citizen), SaS: Sloboda a Solidarita (Freedom and Solidarity), OL'aNo: Obyčajni Ľudia a Nezávislé Osobnosti (Ordinary people and independent celebrities)

x – Party did not participate in the election

Source: SOSR

Electoral mathematics which is used for division of seats in the parliament is based on the Hagenbach-Bischoff method. (Chytílek, 2009) The method is based on the creation of a republic electoral number. The number is a count of all valid electoral votes divided by 151 (number of seats in parliament plus one). This number is created for every party that made the quorum for entering the parliament and it is used to divide valid count of the individual party votes. If not every mandate has been allocated, the rest will be divided according to the method of the biggest remainder after division (No.333/2004).

Table 2. Hierarchy of the statistical electoral regional units

Electoral units	1990	1992	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2012
Electoral zones	5662	5738	5837	5862	5885	5900	5929	5956
Electoral districts/regions	5*	5*	5*	79	79	50	50	50
Electoral district/county	4	4	4	1	1	1	1	1

* - electoral regions of Bratislava, other parts of Slovakia were not divided into electoral regions
Source: SOSR

Table 3. Voter turnout in Slovakia, Regions, cities and villages in Parliamentary elections, 1990-2012 (in %)

Regions	1990	1992	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2012
Bratislava	x	x	x	x	70.77	56.16	62.90	62.06
Trnava	x	x	x	x	68.15	53.07	59.93	59.40
Trenčín	x	x	x	x	71.71	57.18	60.44	62.35
Nitra	x	x	x	x	72.20	56.62	60.56	58.40
Žilina	x	x	x	x	72.44	57.55	60.95	63.75
Banská Bystrica	x	x	x	x	70.50	55.55	58.37	57.28
Prešov	x	x	x	x	67.05	50.70	54.57	57.01
Košice	x	x	x	x	66.74	50.28	54.25	53.78
cities and city districts	x	x	x	x	x	53.32	58.00	57.86
villages	x	x	x	x	x	56.42	59.88	60.67
SLOVAKIA	95.39	84.20	75.65	84.24	70.06	54.67	58.83	59.11

x – statistics do not exist

Source: SOSR

The needed quorum for entering the parliament was set to 3% of the popular vote in the year 1990. From the year 1992 till today the quorum has been set to 5% of the popular vote for single parties, 7% for two-three party coalitions and 10% for four party coalitions.

Thanks to the analysis of the electoral statistics and legislation, we can say that the main influences on the composition of parliament are electoral participation and preferences of the voters. In general we can say that in the mobilizing year 1998 political parties had to achieve 168 thousand votes (the republic electoral number is 20 960 votes) to enter the parliament with 84% of general electoral

participation. In 2012 a party needed only around 130 thousand votes with 59% of general electoral participation. The republic electoral number reached 13 644 votes, which means this number was the minimum votes needed for election of one Member of Parliament (if the party reached the quorum). The 25% decrease in voter turnout meant an approx. 23% decrease of the electoral quorum and the need for the electoral votes per mandate decreased 35%. The electoral mathematics of today allows an even further decrease in the number of needed votes depending on the number of votes given to the parties that did not make the quorum. The republic electoral number can be lower and fewer votes are needed to achieve a parliamentary mandate for those who reached the quorum. Let's give one more example from the 2012 elections. The potential republic electoral number would have been 29 089 with full voter participation and votes only given to the parliamentary parties. If only parliamentary parties' votes are considered with 59 % voter turnout, the republic electoral number reaches 16 912 votes. This was to show the strength of the voter turnout and the strength of individual votes. In conclusion in the year 2010 SNS was able to get to the parliament with the reserve of only 1775 votes. Only thanks to preferential votes for ex-hokey player V. Lukáč, the party got 4 329 votes. Relatively little was necessary to change the election results.

Elections to the Self-governing regions

The problem of the geometry of districts disappeared from the parliamentary election system. The problem did not wholly disappear. It only transferred itself to the lower instances of election, specifically self-governing regions. This issue is not a problem of the elections of the heads of the self-governing regions because of the system of one-mandate electoral district (No.303/2001). Slovakia elects eight heads of self-governing regions. The electoral system for these elections can be characterized as a majority two-round system with a closed second round. The winner of the first round must achieve 50% or more of the electoral votes. If no candidate can achieve it, a second round will take place between the two most successful candidates from the first round (Chytilek, 2009).

For the elections of self-governing parliaments there are two levels of electoral districts set up: one-mandate electoral districts and more-mandate electoral districts (No.303/2001). The numbers of elected representatives in the self-governing regions has changed overtime. In the 2001 elections, 401 representatives were elected; in 2005 it was 412 representatives and in 2009 it was 408 representatives (SOSR). In the elections of 2013 for the first time the number of seats to regional governments did not change at all. Until 2013 the

Bratislava self-governing region changed the number of seats every election. On the other hand Košice, Trnava, Trenčín and Banská Bystrica self-governing regions were without any change (Table 4.). The electoral system can be characterized as semi-proportional with unlimited votes. Voter can give as many votes as there are seats for a voter's specific electoral district (Chytilek, 2009).

There are more specific characteristics that are typical of these elections in general. There is a continual general decrease in how many votes are needed to be elected as a representative (Table 5.). These elections are typical of "Intentional coalitions" aimed against SMK⁴. Another typical characteristic is the mobilizing effect of the Hungarian minority that can be seen in the number of votes needed to be elected in the regions of Nitra and Trnava, where the largest portion of the Hungarian minority lives. In these regions candidates needed 2-4 times more votes to be elected than in other regions (Table 5.). A similar trend could be observed in all elections to self-governing regions.

Table 4. Number of representatives in each of the self-governing regions in elections to self-governing regions 2001-2013

Self-governing region	2001	2005	2009	2013
Bratislava	46	50	44	44
Trnava	40	40	40	40
Trenčín	45	45	45	45
Nitra	52	52	54	54
Žilina	52	57	57	57
Banská Bystrica	49	49	49	49
Prešov	60	62	62	62
Košice	57	57	57	57
Slovakia	401	412	408	408

Source: SOSR

Electoral committees are created as well as in parliamentary elections. The only difference is the formation of self-governing region electoral committees. The number of electoral districts was set in the years 2001 and 2005 to the exact number of counties (79). The county of Štúrovo was added for the elections of 2009. The number of election zones was raised each new election: 5812 (2001); 5852 (2005), 5902 (2009) and 5932 (2013).

⁴ Hungarian minority party; for meaning see table. 1

Table 5. Average number of votes needed for candidates to be elected in each of the self-governing regions in elections to self-governing regions 2001-2013

Self-governing region	Number of voters valid to vote 2001	Minimum number of votes needed 2001	Number of voters valid to vote 2005	Minimum number of votes needed 2005	Number of voters valid to vote 2009	Minimum number of votes needed 2009	Number of voters valid to vote 2013	Minimum number of votes needed 2013
Bratislava	498.647	4.777	525.536	1.735	545.707	1.432	563.131	1.960
Trnava	429.462	7.295	445.140	2.711	460.869	3.075	469.160	3.161
Trenčín	471.297	2.949	483.599	1.390	493.810	2.086	496.864	1.934
Nitra	559.940	8.630	572.536	7.902	582.148	4.390	584.770	3.346
Žilina	520.008	1.956	538.121	1.585	553.640	2.077	564.208	2.153
Banská Bystrica	511.735	2.110	523.084	1.660	530.098	2.088	530.301	2.447
Prešov	568.685	1.722	593.025	1.774	614.500	2.328	630.452	2.238
Košice	581.798	1.924	601.029	1.604	616.847	2.046	624.153	1.884
Slovakia	4.141.572	3.920	4.282.070	2.545	4.397.619	2.440	4.463.039	2.390

Source: SOSR

Elections to the self-governing regions suffer from very low voter turnout. There is also a huge difference between the first and second round of elections, where in the second round voter turnout is approx. 5% lower than in the first round. The only exception was the election in 2013 for the Banská Bystrica region, where Marián Kotleba, head of the extreme right party ĽSNS⁵, was able to mobilize the electorate in the second round to win against the governmental candidate of the party SMER-SD. There is also huge difference between different self-governing regions. As mentioned before thanks to the mobilization in Trnava and Nitra self-governing regions, these regions achieved relatively high voter turnout in comparison with other self-governing regions (mainly 2001 and 2005 elections) (Table 6.). Slight change came with elections of 2009 and specifically 2013. Even though candidates needed a lot of votes to get elected to Trnava and Nitra self-governing regions it was not accompanied by high voter turnout. “Hungarian mobilization effect” seems to have lost its strength. On the other hand mobilization in Banská Bystrica region might have been triggered by anti-Roma sentiments of Marián Kotleba⁶.

Table 6. Voter turnout in both rounds of elections to self-governing regions 2001-2013 (in %)

⁵ Marián Kotleba is considered to be the leader of extreme right in Slovakia at the moment. In the past he was a leader of Slovenská pospolitost' (Slovak Congregation) party. This party was the only political party that was abolished by the interior minister. The party was accused of extremism and canceled just before 2006 elections. In 2010 Marián Kotleba and his colleagues took over a minor prank political party of Priateľov vína (Friends of wine) later transformed to minor extreme party of Ľudová Strana naše Slovensko (People's Party Our Slovakia)

⁶ Marián Kotleba did not offend Roma openly in his 2013 campaign, yet in public opinion he is strongly connected to the critique of the Roma.

Self-governing region	First round 2001	Second round 2001	First round 2005	Second round 2005	First round 2009	Second round 2009	First round 2013	Second round 2013
Bratislava	23.96	x	14.45	10.72	19.46	20.18	21.65	17.89
Trnava	33.73	36.87	14.5	9.41	20.46	x	17.46	17.28
Trenčín	21.55	16.17	12.3	7.12	20.59	15.77	17.37	x
Nitra	34.69	39.49	27.67	16.19	21.81	x	17.9	15.52
Žilina	23.47	10.85	15.69	9.19	23.68	x	21.57	x
Banská Bystrica	24.16	19.92	18.65	10.65	27.06	18.01	24.59	24.61
Prešov	25.5	18.37	19.47	13.2	26.31	19.22	22.13	x
Košice	21.79	x	19.27	10.82	22.93	x	17.77	12.21
Slovakia	26.02	22.61	18.02	11.07	22.90	18.39	20.11	17.29

Source: SOSR

Elections to municipalities

Topic of communal or municipal elections is somewhat left behind. There are many specific characteristics of municipal elections in Slovakia due to the extensive fragmentation of municipal level of government. This level of government is composed of 2 924 municipalities, cities and city districts. The problem lies in the fact that around 50% of the municipalities have less than 500 voters and 6 % have less than 100 voters. This fact gives a huge opportunity for individuals and smaller parties that are able to (ab)use local problems of municipalities for their own benefit.

Table 7. Change in the number of mayors in elections to municipalities for the parties with the most influence (above 100 mayors) and “local authorities”

Political party	2002	2006	2010
NEKA	951	895	979
HZDS-L'S	384	212	78
SMER-SD	68	419	599
SDKU-DS	127	129	159
SMK	233	215	129
KDH	206	162	161
SDL'	128	x	x
Number of elected representatives	2911	2903	2907
Total number of seats	2924	2924	2924

NEKA: Nezávisly kandidati (Independent candidates), for other parties see Table 1.

x – Party did not participate in the elections

Source: SOSR

Municipality forms one-mandate electoral district for the election of the heads of the municipalities (mayors). The number of mayors did not change from the 2002 elections, simply because no new municipalities were formed. The number is 2 924 mayors in total and 2 mayors of specially divided cities: Bratislava and Košice. The electoral system of mayor elections can be characterized as a majority electoral system with a principle of being “first at the finish line”,

meaning: candidate with the most votes is the winner (Chytílek, 2009). Unlike the other elections there is a huge influence of the “local authorities” without any political affiliation (NEKA). In all of the examined elections (2002, 2006, 2010) these local authorities held an approx. 30% of all the mayors and had more support than any political candidates, with the exception of 2006, where the political party SMER-SD had more successful candidates (Table 7.).

For the election of the municipal councils, more-mandate electoral districts are formed. The number of elected representative of the municipalities decreased over time. In the elections of 2002 there were 21 492 seats; in 2006 there were 21 337 seats and 2010 there were total of 21 032 seats (SOSR). The electoral system of the council elections can be characterized as a semi-proportional with an unlimited vote. Similarly to the self-governing regions voters can vote for as many candidates as there are seats per electoral district. (Chytílek, 2009). The number of successful candidates without any political affiliation rose during the whole analyzed time period. With the exception of 2006, where the political party SMER-SD had more successful candidates, candidates without any political affiliation were the most successful candidates (Table 8.).

Table 8. Change in the number of representatives of the municipal councils in municipal elections for the most influential political parties (without coalitions, above 500 representatives) and representatives without political affiliation

Political party	2002	2006	2010
NEKA	2892	3638	4764
HZDS-L'S	3564	2492	1245
SMER-SD	968	4043	4576
SDKU-DS	1066	1446	1772
SMK	2050	1952	1194
KDH	2904	2605	2591
SDL'	1619	x	151*
SNS	673	1169	938
ANO	626	175	x
Number of elected representatives	21477	21272	21020
Total number of seats	21492	21337	21032

NEKA: Nezávisly kandidati (Independent candidates), for other parties see Table 1.

x – Party did not participate in the elections

* - new political party

Source: SOSR

The voter turnout is different from the self-governing regions. The average turnout is an approx. 50 %. There is a huge difference between the turnout in the villages and in the cities similar to the voter turnout in parliamentary elections, but with enormous difference between the two. The voter turnout in the villages is twice the turnout in the cities (Table 9.).

Table 9. Voter turnout in municipal elections

Region	2002	2006	2010
Slovakia	49.51	47.65	49.69
Cities + city districts	36.33	36.76	39.78
villages	66.94	61.93	62.9

Source: SOSR, own calculations

Conclusion

Elections with all of its levels are the main attributes of democracy. Even if central Europe (mainly Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary) suffers from disillusion from after-totalitarian political development, we cannot avoid the fact that the elections are the only way to influence political development in one's country. Even if it seems that after so many political scandals, party fracturing and divisions, people have no influence on the politics, it is the other way around. First of all we need to realize that politics are not just parliamentary elections. It is a huge paradox that mainly people in the villages with lower average education are able to appreciate this gift of democracy, which can be exemplified by the voter turnout in municipal elections. We can see that in smaller communities with stronger bonds within which one can more easily follow the elections as well as the process of governing afterwards. On the other hand practice has shown a very common (ab)usage of power on municipal level, sometimes in very barbaric manners and against the law. In the bigger cities and in higher stages of elections the bond with the voter is much weaker, yet we cannot proclaim that the influence of the decisions of the politicians on the voters is weaker. The influence is the same, but it is more anonymous. There are people behind every institution, most of which were given positions by elected representatives that were given mandate due to elections. Many politicians use their friends within the mass of the voters to get voted in and many politicians get voted in only because of others that do not use their right of vote to decide otherwise. That is why we need to quote Edmund Burke once again: "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little"

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