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VOTER BEHAVIOR IN THE EXAMPLE OF THE ORAVA REGION

Abstract

This article deals with voter behavior in a selected natural region of the Slovak Republic - Orava. The current administrative segmentation of Slovakia divides the Orava region between three districts – Dolný Kubín, Námestovo, and Tvrdošín district. The Orava region is also situated only in one self-governing region – Žilina self-governing region. The Orava region is known as a very religious part of Slovakia, so that´s why we are thinking citizens would vote more conservatively. The main goal of this paper is to analyze the voter behavior in three cities of the Orava region – Dolný Kubín, Tvrdošín, and Námestovo. All those cities are located in the Orava region, but two of them are more northern than others. We predict that the voters in two northern towns – Tvrdošín and Námestovo would vote more conservatively than the voters in Dolný Kubín, which is located in the southern part of the Orava region. The subject of the analysis was the parliamentary elections held in 2020 in comparison with the regional and municipal elections held in 2022.

Key words: elections, Orava region, voters, voter behavior, parliamentary elections, combined elections

1   INTRODUCTION

Free elections are one of the main pillars of a democratic society. In the Slovak Republic, we register several types of elections: parliamentary elections, presidential elections, elections to the European Parliament, regional elections, and municipal elections. Every single citizen of the Slovak Republic thus has the opportunity to participate in the management of the state at any level, whether internal or external. Citizens can vote or be elected, using active or passive suffrage. Each Slovak region has its own culture, customs and traditions.

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Some of them are more conservative and religious, while other regions are less religious and may be more liberal. However, none of the regions ever fit exactly into the above-mentioned description. In the same way, each of the regions can have different characteristics, depending on the location of different cities and municipalities in it, which may not exactly copy the overall characteristics of a particular region. In this article, we are aiming mainly at parliamentary and combined regional and municipal elections. These characteristics of regions often also reflect which political representatives the citizens of individual regions choose. The political spectrum is generally very broad, and the citizens of cities and municipalities can choose politicians as their representatives either from the more conservative political spectrum or from the more liberal one, or various combinations of left-wing, right-wing, or centrist politicians.

The main goal of our paper is to use the analysis of the results of the parliamentary and combined regional and municipal elections of three district towns in the Orava region to find out how the residents of the Orava region elect their representatives. The three district towns chosen by us represent all geographical parts of Orava. Using the analysis of the selected elections and their results, we will try to point out the differences between individual parts of one region.

1 THEORETICAL DEFINITION OF THE ELECTORAL GEOGRAPHY AND THE VOTER BEHAVIOR

Electoral geography and voter behavior are very closely related concepts. In its essence, it is voter behavior that is the main point of political research. In this sense, the task of electoral geography is to explain the relationship between the space and the voters (Buček, Plešivčák, and Przybyla, 2017).

1.1 Electoral geography

Electoral geography is a part of political geography, which is part of human geography. But it can be said that political geography deals primarily with the development of the territories of individual states and their borders, and lately, it has focused attention especially on the matter of border areas and also borders. The subject of political geography research is the structure and function of political regions, the socio-economic space, as well as the research of changes that have occurred in it over the years. This makes it possible to follow the dynamics of the investigated space, changes, and their direction, conditionality, and results (Baar, Rumpel, Šindler, 1996). Electoral geography is therefore a part of political geography, one of its branches. Madleňák (2012) also defines electoral geography as a dynamically developing part of political

geography, and so does Buček (2006).

Electoral geography has been developing since the early 20th century when connections between geography and elections began to be explored. The Frenchman André Siegfried and his work Tableau Politique de la France de l′Ouest sous la Troisième République from 1913, which was created by comparing maps of election results in France, are considered to be the founder. This field has seen the most significant development since the 70s, associated mainly with the names of American scientists Johnston, Taylor, Shelley, and others. Rokkan and Lipset followed them up with their works. In the area of Central and Eastern Europe, this scientific discipline began to develop only after the changes that occurred after 1989, and when free elections were allowed.

According to the authors Johnston, Gregory, and Smith (1994), electoral geography deals with the study of geographical aspects of the organization, course, and results of various types of elections. Furthermore, electoral geography provides information on how the support of individual political subjects is spatially distributed, which applies to this support of citizens - voters in elections that are repeated at regular intervals. Electoral geography mainly reflects the assumption that election results, various changes or differences that may have occurred concerning previous elections, etc., depending on many different factors. According to Kostelecký (1993), we divide these factors into external and internal. At the same time, electoral geography deals with external factors that can be observed in a specific location. These factors include, for example, the political situation, the economic situation, the communication network and transport, meteorological conditions, but especially demographic and socio-economic factors. It is therefore possible to claim that this scientific discipline combines various knowledge from various other scientific disciplines, such as political science, economics, demography, sociology, and geography.

Individual types of electoral systems have different specificities and require a special approach from the point of view of electoral geography. This is precisely the reason why the electoral geography is different in every country (Kostelecký, 1993). According to Pink (2005), electoral geography mainly focuses on the following 5 areas:

1) Spatial organization of elections – this concerns the definition of electoral districts and the possibility of influencing the election results in case of a redraw of the borders of these districts.
2) Spatial differentiation of election results - what factors influence election results? In this case, factors such as religious orientation, distribution of social strata, unemployment, occurrence or number of national minorities, etc. are taken into account.
3) The influence of local geographical factors on the political opinions of citizens - in this case, the influence of the friends and neighbors effect,

issue voting, campaign effect, or the contagion effect, where the influence of the voter by the opinions of others in his surroundings, is monitored.

4) Spatial differentiation of election results and its impact on the creation of representative bodies - whether votes have the same weight in individual districts and whether it is equally difficult to elect a given representative.

5) Spatial variability of power and policy implementation - whether any specific area is favored to increase support for a particular political party or candidate (Pink, 2005).

In this case, we are particularly interested in the spatial differentiation of election results, where we mainly take into account the factor of religious belief and the influence of local geographical factors on political opinions, where, based on the election results, we will explain the action of the individual named effects.

1.2 Voter behavior

Elections in general can be understood as a very extensive issue, where it is possible to observe and examine a wide range of different aspects. One of the essential aspects is how the actors participating in the elections behave in the implementation of the elections themselves. This behavior has a social but also a political form and is understood not only as the behavior of an individual but also as the behavior of groups of citizens in society (Hloušek, Kopeček, 2007).

We can also call this behavior voter behavior and it is a part of one of the types of political behavior. Political behavior in its essence is any social behavior that contains some political dimension, and therefore political behavior can be understood as a different form of social behavior that is related to political power in a particular state (Sopóci, 2004).

As it follows from the previous paragraph, one of the forms or manifestations of political behavior is voter behavior. One of the biggest influences on this behavior of citizens can be the fulfillment of pre-election promises from the previous election period, trust, sympathy, election campaign, and the like. Last but not least, interest in elections, in general, plays a role, along with public opinion research and the opinions of friends and family.

As the phrase itself implies, voter behavior as a manifestation of political behavior is mainly connected with the behavior of citizens of cities and municipalities in elections, their participation, level of interest, reasons for choosing a specific candidate, or factors that influence this behavior. According to Sopóci (2002), we have been encountering regular investigations of voter behavior since the first half of the 19th century. These researches provide the

basis for monitoring the development of voter behavior.

Tóth (1998) claims that to ensure the development of voting behavior, it is necessary to ensure certain basic conditions, which are:

1) Equal access to the same amount and quality of information.
2) The same ability to process acquired information and know how to handle it.
3) The same role when participating in the electoral process (Tóth, 1998).

We can state that these conditions are not always ideal or fulfilled. As an example, we will use different rural areas, where every citizen has the right and access to the same amount and quality of information, but cannot always access it, as there is often no internet connection or even television. In addition to the absence of the technical background for receiving information, the interest in receiving such information may also be absent in this case. In the same way, the ability to handle the information obtained is not the same everywhere, as there are, for example, educational barriers in various areas of Slovakia. The latter condition is also not always fulfilled. Every eligible voter has guaranteed the same role and the same status in the electoral process, but not everyone uses this status, as voters have the right not to participate in the elections.

The very decision of the voter to participate and elect a particular candidate is based on rational and irrational motives. Those are motives that have the majority influence on decision-making and are primarily related to current political and social issues or situations. Among these we include, for example, the rate of unemployment, crime, the impact of reforms, and the like, these represent the rational component of motives. According to Žúborová, irrational motives can be associated with nationalism or anti-system ideas (Žúborová, 2010).

Štefančík (2007) explains three approaches to explaining the behavior of voters in elections. The first approach is a sociological approach, where Štefančík distinguishes two others, namely micro-sociological and macro-sociological. The micro-sociological approach emphasizes the environment in which the voter is located and in which he lives. In this case, the voting behavior of a particular voter is influenced by the social group in which he is located. The macro-sociological approach, on the other hand, precisely defines certain groups that have a strong political opinion, for example, churches or trade unions.

According to Štefančík, the second important approach is the social-psychological approach. In this case, the voter's decision-making is not influenced by his socio-economic background but is rather the result of the long-term effect of various influences of the political environment. In this case, voter behavior is derived from the voter's relationship to a certain political party. Among the factors that influence voter behavior in this case, we include

ideological-party affiliation, the voter's value orientation, the popularity of individual politicians, the election campaign, or even a personal attitude to a specific social problem. In contrast to the sociological approach, according to the socio-psychological approach, the voter is considered to be an independent, self-determining personality.

The third approach that Štefančík explained in his work is the so-called „rational choice theory". This approach is based on economic theory and says that the voter decides on a political entity whose action will bring him the highest profit. According to this approach, a citizen compares costs and revenues in elections, just like a seller or a buyer on the market. In this case, the voter notices the work of the governing parties, or the potential of fulfilling the pre-election promises of the opposition in case it gets a share of the government. According to this approach, voter behavior depends not least on the current economic situation or current political problems. In contrast to the socio-psychological approach, in this case, sympathy for certain political subjects does not play a role. In the same way, belonging to a certain social group or a long-term relationship with different ideological directions does not play a key role in this approach (Štefančík, 2007).

2   METHODOLOGY OF THE CONTRIBUTION

The topic of elections and electoral behavior, in general, is not much researched, and in Slovakia, we have many different regions that are culturally, naturally, but also politically very different and thus interesting. As a result, various opportunities arise for researchers to investigate various aspects of individual regions. From a political point of view, the voting behavior of the citizens of individual regions of Slovakia is interesting to us. It is somewhat more interesting when the boundaries of a natural region do not correspond to politically defined boundaries. However, this is not the case in the case of the Orava region we are examining, as the natural region of Orava is defined by the districts of Dolný Kubín, Námestovo, and Tvrdošín, which are already mentioned above in the text.

First of all, we theoretically defined terms such as electoral geography and voter behavior. It is necessary to know these two concepts to be able to analyze them using specific examples. The practical part of our contribution followed.

The practical part of our paper takes the form of a small case study. A case study is usually classified among qualitative research methods. On the other hand, however, we can claim that case studies of a similar type, such as ours, are a kind of combination of qualitative and quantitative research. In this case, we also have a specifically defined issue, but we also work with a lot of

different numerical data.

First, we defined the types of elections that we would deal with in the post, then we started to analyze the individual elections. In the elections we selected, which are the parliamentary elections held in 2020 and the combined municipal and regional elections held in 2022, we analyzed various aspects.

During the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic, we first compared the nationwide voter turnout with the voter turnout in the three Orava districts, and then we entered the summary election results into an overview table. Subsequently, we use the data from the table for comparison with data from three cities in the Orava region. We mainly focus on the political orientation of the residents of the district towns we have chosen and the districts belonging to them, namely Dolný Kubín, Námestovo, and Tvrdošín.

From the point of view of combined municipal and regional elections, we again first compared the national turnout with the turnout in individual districts, and then we also analyzed how politically oriented residents of individual districts and district towns are. As far as the municipal elections are concerned, here we focused on the three already mentioned district towns and on how and from which political subjects the residents of individual towns elected their mayors and representatives to the local council. We were primarily interested in party representation other than independent candidates.

Subsequently, we also analyzed the results of regional elections at the level of district towns, where we also monitored the party representation of elected candidates for chairmen of self-governing regions, as well as elected candidates for deputies of the Žilina self-governing region.

All the data that we collected for the practical part of the contribution came mainly from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, where the detailed results of all elections are presented. On the website of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, we searched in detail for the individual information necessary for our research.

3   ANALYSIS OF THE ELECTIONS IN THE ORAVA REGION

In the next part of the contribution, we will focus on the analysis of the last parliamentary elections that were held in 2020 and the last regional and municipal elections that had the attribute combined and were held in 2022.

2.1   Parliamentary Elections 2020

Parliamentary elections in Slovakia for 2020 were announced for February 29 (Rozhodnutie č. 351/2019 Z. z.). In Slovakia, a total of 65.80% of all eligible voters voted on the day of the election, which is a total of 2,916,840

citizens (ŠÚ SR, 2020a). Compared to the previous parliamentary elections, which were held in 2016, the all-Slovak turnout increased slightly. According to the ŠÚ SR (2016), the electoral turnout in Slovakia was 59.82%. In terms of voter turnout in individual districts, to get closer to the Orava region, voter turnout was 72.39% in the Dolný Kubín district, 72.31% in the Námestovo district, and 75.44% in the Tvrdošín district. For comparison, in the cities themselves in the same order, the voter turnout was 71.42%, 72.30%, and 72.50%. Based on these data, we conclude that the voter turnout in the three Orava districts is somewhat higher than the nationwide voter turnout, while we can state that the voter turnout in individual district towns almost copies the voter turnout in entire districts.

Based on the examination of voter participation in individual municipalities, we further note that the lowest voter turnout is recorded mostly in small municipalities, even if some are exceptions. As an example of a municipality with a significantly higher voter turnout than the district town and surrounding municipalities, we can use the village of Beňadovo, which is located in the Námestovo district and ŠÚ SR (2020b) measured the voter turnout in it at 82.60%.

Graph 1. National results of parliamentary elections 2020
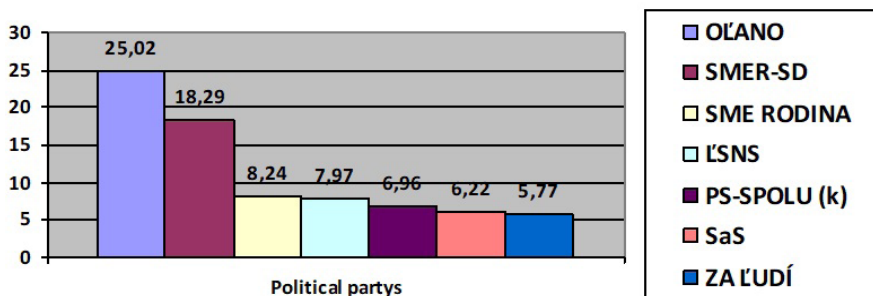
Source: own processing according to the ŠÚ SR (2020c).

In the previous elections, 6 political entities fought their way into the National Council of the Slovak Republic. Specifically, it was OĽANO (25.02%), SMER-SD (18.29%), SME RODINA (8.24%), ĽSNS (7.97%), SaS (6.22%), and ZA ĽUDÍ (5.77%). Despite exceeding the 5% electoral quorum, PS-SPOLU did not get into the parliament, as they ran as a coalition of parties, and so with a percentage of 6.96%, they did not exceed the electoral quorum for coalitions of parties, which is 7%. (ŠÚ SR, 2020c). In the next part of the article, we will focus on the comparison of the Orava region with the results of the Slovak elections and we will review the individual distribution of voters' votes among

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individual political entities.

In the Dolný Kubín district, citizens voted as follows. According to the residents of the Dolný Kubín district, only five political entities would make it to the parliament. The winner, in this case, was the OĽANO movement, which won 29,73% of all votes in the Dolný Kubín district. The second place was the same as in the all-Slovak scale - SMER-SD, which got 16.01% of the votes, but in third place, with a percentage of 11.06%, was the non-parliamentary KDH. The last two political entities that would get through the gates of the parliament from the Dolný Kubin district were ĽSNS with 6.91% of votes and SME RODINA with 6.83% of votes. Compared to the Slovak election results, the Dolný Kubín district stands out mainly by the representation of votes for the Christian movement KDH. The residents of the Dolný Kubín district did not vote for the other named political parties and movements that made it to the parliament in the 2020 elections. This is the SaS party and the ZA ĽUDÍ movement. These entities did not receive even 5% of votes from voters in the district.

For comparison, in the city of Dolný Kubín, residents voted almost similarly, for the first three entities mentioned, namely OĽANO, SMER-SD, and KDH. In the case of these three parties or movements, the results of the city roughly copy the results of the entire district. However, the change occurs in the last two entities that the people of Dolný Kubín would elect to the parliament. Dolný Kubín would also elect the SaS party to the parliament, with a percentage of 8,23%, which is slightly more than at the national level, and in this case, the coalition of parties PS-SPOLU would also pass through the gates of the parliament, as the citizens of Dolný Kubín expressed confidence in them up to 7,70% votes. In this case, we can state that the inhabitants of the city of Dolný Kubín, despite the representation of candidates from the conservative KDH, are somewhat more liberal than the district average. In this case, we also see that part of the voters from the Dolný Kubín district vote for the extreme right; ĽSNS.

In the Námestovo district, the distribution of voters' votes is somewhat more interesting, even though the OĽANO movement finished in first place in this district as well, with a percentage of 27.58%. Although in the Námestovo district, the same parties and movements as in the Dolný Kubín district would generally get into the parliament, in the case of Námestovo the Christian movement KDH significantly outpaced the SMER-SD party. The KDH movement received 22.35% from the residents of the district, so we can see that even the OĽANO movement was not as clear a winner as in the Dolný Kubín district. The next place was occupied by the SMER-SD party, which was trusted by 13.18% of voters. The ĽSNS would be one of the last to reach the parliament with 9.08% of votes and SME RODINA with 6.83% of all votes.

As for Námestovo itself, in this case, the distribution of political forces is copying the entire district. The percentage of votes for the city of Námestovo is as follows: OĽANO received 23.15% of the votes, followed by the KDH movement, which received support from 20.10% of voters. Next in line is SMER-SD, which received 14.85% of the votes of residents in Námestovo city, the SME RODINA movement finished with 6.95%, and finally the ĽSNS party, which received 6.90% of the votes of all voters in the city of Námestovo.

In the case of the Námestovo district, some municipalities are worth mentioning, in which the winner of the all-Slovak elections - OĽANO - did not win, but the conservative Christian movement KDH. These are the municipalities of Beňadovo, Klin, Krušetnica, Lomná, Oravská Polhora, and Rabčice. In the village of Krušetnica, the KDH movement even exceeded 50% of the vote. Similarly, the KDH received higher percentages of votes in the municipalities of Beňadovo and Lomná, where this movement received the support of over 40%. We can therefore conclude that the inhabitants of the Námestovo district are more conservative and religious than the inhabitants of the other two districts on Orava.

The Tvrdošín district is in the same situation with the distribution of political forces as the Dolný Kubín district. OĽANO took first place with a percentage of 29.39%. In second and third place, the SMER-SD party and the KDH movement share the votes, whose percentages are distributed as follows, in the same order, 13.81% and 13.50% of all votes. In this case, the ĽSNS party would end up in the parliament as penultimate, with a percentage of 9.30%, and the SME RODINA movement would be the last to enter the parliament with 7.00%.

In Tvrdošín city, the distribution of political forces does not reflect how residents voted in the entire district. OĽANO also won the elections in the city of Tvrdošín, with a profit of 25.20%, followed by the SMER-SD party, with a percentage of 16.31%. In the case of the city of Tvrdošín, the SNS party, which received support from 11.26% of all participating voters in this city, would pass through the gates of the parliament. The fourth place was taken by the KDH, which was trusted by 10.36% of the voters, and the extreme right-wing ĽSNS would be the last to pass through the gates of the parliament. Those in the town of Tvrdošín won 8.61% of the votes.

In the case of the Tvrdošín district, we are also following one interesting point, namely the village of Štefanov nad Oravou, where the KDH movement would win the elections as the only village from the Tvrdošín district. This municipality is also located on the border with the Námestovo District (ŠÚ SR, 2020d).

2.2   Combined Elections 2022

The combined elections were held on the territory of the Slovak Republic in 2022. The chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic announced them for Saturday, October 29, 2022 (Rozhodnutie č. 209/2022 Z. z.). The nationwide voter turnout in the municipal elections in 2022 was 46.1%. and all-Slovak participation in the elections to self-governing regional bodies was 43.7%. In the elections to municipal self-governing bodies in the case of the Orava region, the turnout was as follows: Dolný Kubín district 51.66%, Námestovo district 60.38%, and Tvrdošín district 58.90%. In the same order, the turnout in the city of Dolný Kubín was slightly lower than in the whole district, namely only 41.27%, in the town of Námestovo 55.74%, and in the town of Tvrdošín 50.39%. Thus, we conclude that district cities do not copy district participation. In terms of regional elections, participation in the districts is similar, namely the Dolný Kubín district; at 51.10%, Námestovo district at 60.02%, and Tvrdošín district at 58.51%. In the city of Dolný Kubín, participation in the regional elections was 41.25%, in the city of Námestovo 55.70% and in the city of Tvrdošín 50.39%. In the same way, even in the elections to self-governing regional bodies, district cities do not copy the electoral participation of the entire district (ŠÚ SR, 2022a, ŠÚ SR, 2022b).

The recent municipal elections brought a trend of independent candidates. This trend was also observed in other municipal elections. It is no different in the city of Dolný Kubín, where the independent candidate Ján Prílepok won the mayoral seat, and 88.90% of the people of Dolný Kubín voted for him. His opponent was only Ján Slosarčík, who applied for the post of mayor as a candidate for the political entity National Coalition and Independent Candidates. As for the distribution of political power in the city council, power is shared between 4 political entities and independent candidates. Of the 19-member council of the city of Dolný Kubín, there are 9 deputies as independent candidates, 6 deputies from the KDH movement, two deputies from SaS, one deputy from OKS, and one deputy from Starostovia a nezávislí kandidáti(ŠÚ SR, 2022c).

Erika Jurinová, a candidate with the support of the coalition around the OĽANO movement, won the elections to regional municipalities both in the entire Žilina self-governing region and the city of Dolný Kubín. This was won by 38.40% of Dolný Kubín residents. A little less, 30.44% of the votes were won by the candidate with the support of entities around the KDH movement, Igor Janckulík. Igor Choma from SMER-SD took third place with 14% of the votes. The other candidates received less than 5% of the votes each (ŠÚ SR, 2022d). Voters in the city of Dolný Kubín would elect three candidates to the council of the Žilina self-governing region, of which two made it to the council and one did not. The people of Dolný Kubín elected two independent candidates

and one with the support of the KDH movement to the regional council (ŠÚ SR, 2022e).

In the town of Námestovo, the municipal elections in terms of the election of the mayor brought victory to the candidate for the SMER-SD party - Ján Kadera, who received the support of 48.72% of the voters. The other opposing candidates were all independent candidates. Here, too, the trend of independent candidates is confirmed in the case of the city council, where there are up to 8 independent candidates out of the 12-member council. In addition, the residents of Námestovo elected one representative from HLAS-SD, one from the KDH movement, one from SMER-SD, and one from SNS (ŠÚ SR, 2022f). From the point of view of the regional elections in the city of Námestovo, as expected, the candidate Erika Jurinová did not win in this city, but the already mentioned Igor Janckulík with the support of the KDH movement. He won almost unopposed in the city of Námestovo and received 72.81% of all voters' votes. Erika Jurinová received only 10.33% of the votes. Opponent Igor Choma in the city of Námestovo received more than 5%, namely 6.63% of the votes. The other candidates, even in the case of this city, did not receive even 5% of all votes (ŠÚ SR, 2022g).

In the Námestovo electoral district, 5 deputies were elected to the Žilina self-governing region, but the residents of Námestovo would elect only four. Of these four, one candidate is independent and the other three ran with the support of the KDH movement. The fact that the citizens of the city voted for these candidates only confirms the religiosity of the Námestovo district and the city itself (ŠÚ SR, 2022h).

In the town of Tvrdošín, only two candidates competed for the post of mayor in the municipal elections, both of them coming from the spectrum of independent candidates. In this case, candidate Ivan Šaško won, who received support from 65.71% of the population who came to the polls. In terms of elections to the local council, independent candidates elected by the city's residents prevail in this case as well. However, in the case of Tvrdošín, independent candidates do not have such an advantage. Of the 13-member city council, there are 6 independent candidates, which is not even half. 4 elected members of the city council are for the SNS party and three for the KDH movement (ŠÚ SR, 2022i). As for the regional self-government elections, a similar scenario is repeated in the case of the city of Tvrdošín as in the city of Námestovo, namely the victory of the unsuccessful candidate Igor Janckulík. In this case, however, he did not win with such a margin, he received "only" 50.13% of the voters' votes. In this case, too, Erika Jurinová finished in second place with a percentage of 24.86%, and Igor Choma for SMER-SD, who received support from 12.19% of Tvrdošín residents, finished in third place as well. Even in this case, the other candidates did not receive a single 5% of votes (ŠÚ SR, 2022j).

Also in the case of the Tvrdošín district, three representatives were elected to the Žilina self-governing region council, and just as in the case of the towns of Dolný Kubín and Námestovo, not even the residents of Tvrdošín elected all the representatives themselves. The voters from Tvrdošín also elected only two of the three representatives. Of these two representatives elected by the citizens to the council of the self-governing region, one is for the KDH and partners party and the other is for the SNS party (ŠÚ SR, 2022k).

CONCLUSION

Based on our analysis of the results of the two types of elections we selected, we found that even though it may seem that the Orava region is culturally and politically the same, or at least similar, this may not be the case. In the case we investigated, we found that geographical specifics, but especially religious belief, have a significant influence on the decision-making and behavior of voters in individual parts not only of Orava but also of Slovakia as a whole. It is known that especially the northern part of Orava, around Námestovo or Tvrdošín, is largely religious. In addition to religion, there are also many villages in the northern districts of Orava, and therefore, in addition to the towns of Námestovo, Tvrdošín, and Trstená, there are also many rural settlements in these parts of Orava. These aspects are reflected precisely in the results of individual types of elections, as we can see that in the vicinity of the town of Dolný Kubín, which is the southern part of Orava, residents voted for fewer Christian candidates or parties. These candidates and these parties won mainly around the Námestovo district. It is in this district that the most rural areas are located. On the other hand, we could notice that in the town of Tvrdošín and its surroundings, the residents voted more for national parties, such as the SNS. In our research, we found that we often record large differences in voter behavior, especially in small villages.

Based on our research, we also found that there are not only interregional political disparities but also that the region itself is not politically united. We therefore also record intra-regional disparities, even though it may seem that the region is politically united and that the results of individual elections in individual parts of the region would be at least similar. In this paper, we found that even if a certain region is considered a cultural and political whole, the inhabitants of its parts have different political opinions and feelings, and this is reflected precisely in different types of elections. Individual elections in the following years can thus be the basis for further research into voter behavior and electoral geography

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