Slovak Extreme Right and its Support based on Local Roma Incidence

Peter Spáč (spac.peter@gmail.com)
Masaryk University

Petr Voda (petr.h2o@gmail.com)
Masaryk University

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Abstract

In recent years the radical right changed in Slovakia. Once powerful Slovak National Party weakened while a new and more extreme People’s Party Our Slovakia (LSNS) started to rise. Though the party gained only lower results in its first two general elections 2010 and 2012, last year its leader got elected as regional president while beating the candidate of ruling party Smer-SD which currently dominates the domestic politics.

The ideology of LSNS is aimed strongly against Roma minority, which represents nearly one tenth of Slovakia’s population. Our paper concentrates on the support of LSNS in respect to local Roma incidence. Using linear regression we analyze the party’s results in general elections 2012 on the municipal level. As for the independent variables, we include the share of Romas in towns and a unique typology of the character of their settlement. We also test these variables while controlling for the towns’ population.

Introduction

The last decades of the 20th century witnessed an emergence of a new wave of far right parties in Western Europe. These subjects differed from their ancestors as they no longer followed the historical idea of fascism. Instead, they reacted to existing challenges of the postindustrial society, largely to changes on the labor market and to the phenomena of immigration from foreign countries. In the following years, the role of the far right increased and in several countries these parties gained considerable influence.1

This progress encouraged the interest of researchers to focus more on the topic as whole. One of the main dilemmas was to conceptualize the far right as a party family and its features (Ignazi 2006; Betz and Johnson 2004). Mudde (2000; 2007) provided a thorough clarification of this phenomenon. Based on him the far right is characterized by the presence

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1 Out of many moments, several are worth mentioning. In 1999 the Austrian Freedom Party ended second in general election which allowed it to enter the government. Three years later, Jean-Marie Le-Pen made it to the run off of French presidential election, thus creating a strong voter mobilization which helped his rival Jacques Chirac to win the presidency. In the same year the Pim Fortuyn List ranked second in Dutch general election, with its leader assassinated during the campaign.
of nationalism, xenophobia, belief in a strong state and welfare chauvinism, which represents an understanding of the country’s social policy that should help its own nation and not the ‘other’ people. Due to such wide range of values, the homogeneity of the far right tends to be sometimes relativized among the authors (Halla, Wagner a Zweimüller 2012). However there are indications which oppose such statements and conclude that the group of far right is coherent in a comparable way as the other party families (Ennser 2010).

After year 1989 the far right parties started to emerge also in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. The conditions in these countries, significantly different when compared to Western Europe, had a solid impact here. The local far right could thus not react to postmaterialism, multiculturalism or immigration as these topics were irrelevant or not present in the region and it had to found its own specific themes. Due to this it focused primarily on the interstate and intrastate national and ethnic tensions, a region’s legacy from the previous historical development.

Slovak far right was no exception here. Starting from the beginning of the 90s it gained a quite stable, though rather weaker position in the country’s party system. The last years however showed a possible change here. The traditional main protagonist of the Slovak far right the Slovak National Party (SNS), successful for nearly two decades, diminished. Though this might have been seen as a decline of the far right in Slovakia in general, the development proved otherwise. A new formation The People’s Party – Our Slovakia (LSNS), holding an extreme right position with a strong negative stance against the Roma minority began to gain support. Although it was not able to enter parliament yet, in regional election 2013 its leader Marián Kotleba got elected as one of the eight regional presidents while beating the candidate of the ruling party Smer – Social Democracy which at that time held a majority in national parliament.

Our aim is to explore the support of LSNS in general election 2012. We expect that its support has a connection to the topic which it targets at most – the Roma minority and its presence on the local level. The structure of the paper is as follows. First, we introduce theoretical assumptions about the support of the far right parties. After that follows a brief characteristic of LSNS and its ideology. Third part deals with methods and used data. Finally we present our findings and discuss their possible consequences.
The primary aim of this chapter is to provide the initial theoretical insight. Our study presumes that the voter’s decision in Slovak regional election may be different based on presence and character of the local Roma community. What is more, some other factors as level of unemployment or education may play a role here, though their effects may vary. Due to lack of theory regarding relation between Roma minority and Slovak far right, our theoretical assumptions focus on the literature devoted to Western European countries. Although it might seem that their conditions are fairly distinct from the Slovak case, the basic principles remain the same. It is irrelevant whether the ostracizing minority are the immigrants in Belgium or Roma Slovakia as all these groups are similarly negatively labelled based on their race, social behavior or lifestyle in general (Vašečka 2003).

The existing literature shows a noticeable interest in the relation between the electoral support of the far right in Western Europe and the phenomenon of immigration. This link is not entirely surprising as immigrants and multiculturalism were the primary topics of the far right parties since from their emergence in the region in the close of the 20th century. The framing of immigrants by far right parties has been consistently negative and used in various ways. This social group was marked as the threat to the national identity, the main source of criminality and also as a subject which abuses the welfare system (Rydgren 2008). These points helped the far right to mobilize its voter support.

The literature provides some important findings here. One of such outcomes is that the immigration is a key topic for supporters of the far right (Brug, Fennema and Tillie 2005; Brug and Fennema 2003). A comparative research conducted by Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers (2002) on sixteen Western European countries further confirmed this statement. Based on its results, the negative stance towards the immigration is one of the key predictors leading to the support of the far right parties.

One may expect a positive correlation between the share of immigrants in the country’s society and the support of the far right. Papers working with such a presumption may be found but they provide rather mixed results (Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers 2002; Golder 2003; Norris 2005). As Rydgren (2008) critically points out, these analyses use data from the national level and thus they cannot present outcomes applicable for lower territorial
units. The point is that it may be exactly the sub-national level, which is of key importance, as this is where the daily contact between people takes place. Rydgren correctly states that it is a fallacy to conclude that all people living in a multiethnic country also live in an ethnically heterogeneous locality.

This logic is backed up by a vast amount of research. In their work, Halla, Wagner and Zweimüller (2012) analyzed the territorial support of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and found a strong effect of immigration. Their results show that each percentage point of immigrants’ share in the local community increased the electoral support of FPÖ by 0.4 percentage points. The authors also discovered that the skill composition of immigrants was important too as only low-skilled and medium-medium skilled immigrants helped to increase the support of FPÖ while this was not true for high-skilled ones. Similarly interesting study was done by Rink, Phalet and Swyndedouw (2008) who concentrated on the Belgian Flemish Bloc (VB). As they found, the raising share of immigrants on the municipal level increased the probability of voters supporting VB. Also, their work showed the importance of focusing on regional or local units, as the results of their calculations would not indicate such effects if done on the national level.

Literature thus points to more underpinning factors than just immigration alone. Several works (cf. Rydgren and Ruth 2013; Bowyer 2008; Bjørklund 2007; Golder 2003) showed that the support of far right parties is affected by the presence of immigrants, but also by the level of unemployment and education. In their study of far right Sweden Democrats (SD) Strömblad, Malmberg (2014) found unemployment to be the key factor. According to their analysis the rising contact with the visible minorities led to higher support of SD in times of high unemployment. On the contrary, in locations with low unemployment, the stronger contact with the minority had an opposite effect.

The theoretical discussion found more ways, how immigration, unemployment, education and support of the far right may be related. While these parties receive support from all parts of the society their core voters usually come from lower social groups who find immigrants a threat. Higher willingness to support the far right was found among men, younger age groups, people with middle education and those being self-employed or having manual and routine non-manual jobs (Arzheimer and Carter 2006).

The importance of socioeconomic factors for developing a demand for the far right is recorded in the so called loser hypothesis (Rydgren and Ruth 2013; Van der Brug, Fennema...
and Tillie 2005). Its idea is that several groups in the society, challenged by their unstable position on the labor market, seek someone they could blame. In Western European countries this aversion may point to immigrants and asylum seekers and thus it may result in the support of a political party which promises a more restrictive immigration policy. The hypothesis is supported by the fact that in most Western European countries the willingness to vote for the far right is higher namely among unemployed and those with lower education (Norris 2005).

The character of the contact with the minority and emergence of a negative stance against it which may lead to support of the far right is described by two contradictory theories (Strömblad, Malmberg 2014). The first of them is interpreted as a possible result of competition for limited resources. It presumes that members of the majority or a domestic group (in-group) will view the minority with suspicion or even hate. Because of this, the arriving immigrants need help from the state, which is perceived as a burden, mostly by the people with weaker position on the labor market who thus feel endangered. If such people notice immigrants in their surroundings, their feelings may result in willingness to support the far right.

Another theory holds that ethnic conflict may arise from rational action (Sherif and Sherif 1953). It sees xenophobia as a result of conflict between immigrants and lower social classes of the majority society for unstable resources, such as low paying jobs or social benefits. The discrimination against immigrants, advancing of racial stereotypes and the support of the far right may be interpreted not as an emotional reaction, but as an instrumental strategy. Despite their high unemployment rate and the fact that the Roma in Slovakia are not immigrants, but a resident ethnic minority, this theory may be easily applied to them. In case of Slovakia a theory may apply that for voters with lower education, unstable job or the jobless the Roma may be perceived as a rival on the ‘social welfare market’. Their negative stance may be even exacerbated by unfounded information about various social benefits and reputed advantages of Roma minority.²

The role of scapegoat (e.g., Dollard et al. 1939) may be attributed to Roma in Slovakia for several reasons. In public surveys they typically represent the group towards which the

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² One example of many may be an article in the newspaper of regional president of Banska Bystrica region (post occupied by leader of LSNS Kotleba). The text claims that a ‘white’ mother of three children is discriminated when compared to mother from Roma minority who gives birth to the same amount of children in a short period. (Our Region, 2/2014)
majority keeps the most distance. This stance is fully independent of age, sex, education, nationality (Slovak or Hungarian\textsuperscript{3}) or political preferences. Different culture and lifestyle of the Roma minority are perceived negatively by the majority. In accordance with that the prevailing opinion of the majority is that a significant share of the Roma does not want or is not willing to get used to the mainstream norms (Vašečka 2003). This social distance however does not end only on the field of opinions. Based on Puliš (2003) Roma in Slovakia are the main target of Slovak far right extremists, which gives relevance to our study and its aims.

**Far Right in Slovakia**

As in other Post-communist countries after 1989, far right emerged also in Slovakia. For nearly two decades, the most prominent subject in this area was the SNS. Created in 1991, this party officially claimed the need for an independent Slovakia. After fulfillment of this effort in 1993, SNS had to find different topics to mobilize its support. In the following years it focused on strong anti-Hungarian stances usually oriented towards the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. This programmatic core was added by negative sentiments towards EU, NATO, Roma or homosexuals (Kopeček 2007).

SNS kept a prominent or even exclusive position in the area of Slovak far right for a long time period (cf. Mudde 2007; Kupka, Laryš and Smolík 2009; Kopeček 2007; Spáč and Voda 2013). The reason was quite straightforward, as it was the only far right party with a significant success in the national politics. With an exemption in years 2002-2006, which was caused by a temporary internal split, SNS held a parliamentary status permanently from its emergence. It also got into the government led by Vladimír Mečiä in the 90s and later by Robert Fico. However, in recent years the position of the party continuously faded. In 2010 general election it only hardly crossed the threshold and in early election two years later it even fell out of parliament.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{3} Hungarians are the most sizable ethnic minority in Slovakia, accounting approximately for one tenth of the country’s population and live in the southern regions alongside the borders with Hungary.

\textsuperscript{4} In 2013 the party even excluded its longtime leader and its most popular representative Ján Slota from its ranks.
Decline of SNS had far from an end of far right in Slovakia. On the contrary, the most recent period witnessed a rise of LSNS and its leader Marián Kotleba. The party’s origins date back to second half of the 90s to a civic association the Slovak Togetherness (SP) which was transformed to a political party in 2005. Due to its problematic actions often including violence, the party was abolished by court just one year later, only several months before the general election. As a solution, the leaders of SP were placed on a list of a marginal party, but without any success. The list received only 0.16 per cent of votes, far below the needed five per cent threshold. This failure was followed by a quiet period, which ended with creation of LSNS in beginning of 2010 (Mikušovič 2007; Kluknavská 2012).

Based on its ideology, LSNS may be labeled as an extreme right party. This profile needs to be understood in a wider context, as the party had organizational and personal ties with the abolished Slovak Togetherness. During its existence the SP followed a variety of topics. It intensively praised the wartime Slovak state, which collaborated with Hitler’s Germany and following its example it called for a corporative model of the country. It further showed strong anti-Semitism and negative stance against various subjects including Americans, Hungarians or Roma (Kupka, Laryš and Smolík 2009). This profile was not fully adopted by LSNS and the new party significantly modified it. First of all, the glorification of the wartime state and its ideas was reduced to minimum. Second, LSNS started to use strong populist appeals and criticized the existing establishment for its corrupt practices. Finally, the key point of LSNS activity was its focus on Roma minority in Slovakia (Kluknavská 2012).

The Roma issue has a prominent position in the party’s manifesto and the party’s magazine Our Slovakia issued monthly. The latter shows the real picture even more markedly as Roma occupy the headlines of most of its editions (cf. Our Slovakia 2013). In general, LSNS labels Roma strictly negatively. First, it understands this ethnic group as a burden of the social welfare system. According to it the Roma represent an entity which is unduly favored unlike the ‘tidy’ majority and thus receives resources at the expense of others (LSNS Manifesto 2012; Kluknavská 2014). Second point is connected to criminality. LSNS repeatedly talks about the ‘terror of Gypsy extremists’ and criticizes the state for weak reactions which leave the society unprotected from this threat (Our Slovakia 9/2013). LSNS thus uses similar framing of Roma minority as the far right in Western Europe uses for labeling immigrants. Their depiction as threat to national security, cause of unemployment,

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5 Officially Kotleba does not hold the post of the party’s leader, although undoubtedly he is the core figure of its structure. In general elections in 2010 and 2012 he was on the first position of the party’s list.
source of criminality and abusers of social system may be found more or less also in the case of LSNS with the stress on the last two points.

In respect to electoral support, LSNS still belongs to parties below the threshold. However the recent years have shown the party’s rising potential. In its first general election in 2010 it got 1.33 per cent of votes and two years later it scored slightly better at 1.58 per cent. Although in none of these elections was LSNS able to enter the parliament, compared to election 2006, its results fairly improved. The biggest success was though only about to come.

In regional election 2009 leader of LSNS Kotleba competed for the post of regional president and got nearly ten per cent of votes. Four years later Kotleba made another attempt, now with strikingly different results. Not only did he make it to the runoff, but here he was able to beat the candidate of the party Smer-SD, which at that time held majority in national parliament. His election for the regional president was a huge victory for LSNS. What is more, it also opened a question regarding the chances of the party to progress also in the arena of national politics. Due to extreme character of LSNS and its possible consequences on the party system, this shows an utmost relevance in studying its electoral support as it may explain various aspects of its chances and prospects.

Data and Methods

The theoretical part brings several assumptions about factors influencing support of LSNS and how these factors work. Support of this party, as the outcome of xenophobic thoughts of voters, should be influenced by the presence of Roma communities in municipalities, by unemployment and level of education. More precisely, the electoral result of LSNS should not be influenced only by the proportion of Roma but the type of their settlement on the local level should also make a difference. In areas with Roma concentrated in the center or living dispersed among the majority, the support of the party should be lower than in municipalities with Roma concentrated in outskirts or in a segregated settlement. The

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6 A significant share of Roma minority lives in segregated settlements outside towns and cities. These settlements have typically bad living conditions lacking access to water or electricity and thus contribute to bad image of Roma people among the majority.
explanation is that the latter mentioned settlements lead into less intensive everyday contact thus preventing to break the existing stereotypes.

The hypothesis about influence of presence of Roma minority (in the term of percent share on total population) is even more complicated as it is meaningless to expect linear relation to support of LSNS. On the contrary, we assume that the party’s results should be low in cases with both low and high share of Roma. The latter has a straightforward logic as in places where Roma form majority, there are only few voters for the extremists to catch. It is thus the municipalities where Roma are present, but do not compose a majority where LSNS can earn most from the hate and fear of the Slovak population.

Unemployment and education are another important concepts mentioned in theoretical part. Both play a different role here. Unemployment (together with fear from it) has a function of a “trigger” of the whole process as it helps to create the dissatisfaction and distrust among working class and low-cost workers. Therefore the higher unemployment should lead into higher support of LSNS.

The assumption about role of education is following. Inter-ethnic relations can lead into mutual understanding in areas with higher level of education, because things like tolerance or debugging of stereotypes are part of the educational process. Education also can be considered as an indicator of knowledge about society and social situation, i.e. about differences in standards of living between different social groups. Therefore we expect the negative relation between education and LSNS results, because with higher education there should be less extent of xenophobic attitudes in locality and therefore smaller amount of voters willing to vote the extreme right. To catch this we operationalize the factor of education as per cent of people with university degree.

Beside the share of Roma minority, unemployment and education, the share of Hungarian minority has to be taken into account, because for a party promoting Slovak nationalism, this group is completely irrelevant. Citizens belonging to Hungarian minority can be hardly willing to vote for candidate such as Kotleba, despite they can be in other respects very same as his actual voters. Therefore the analysis is restricted only to areas with less than 30 % share of Hungarians. However, even for the municipalities which fulfill this condition, we still control this variable. To improve the analysis it also controls for the variables used for explanation of regional differences of established parties. Therefore the set of variables
includes also the proportion of entrepreneurs, workers in agriculture and share of people of no denomination.

We may now move on to data. As the unit of analysis we use the structure of the so called micro-regions. These units were created in 2005 as an alternative to the existing territorial division of Slovakia (Slavík, Kožuch and Bačík 2005) and they follow natural borders, economic and social structure of the population. Together there are 160 micro-regions with an average population exceeding 30 thousand people. However, two of the regions, which include two biggest cities in Slovakia, the capitol Bratislava and city Košice are enormously populated when compared to the remaining units. For the sake of the research we divided these two regions into smaller parts which follow the existing division into districts. As such, we work with 169 micro-regions and after the exclusion of those with at least 30 per cent of Hungarians we end up at 140 territorial units.

As the base for analysis, we use census data and official results of regional election provided by Slovak Statistical Office. Due to specific conditions the data about Roma minority are gathered from the Atlas project (see below). Some data about the Roma minority in Slovakia are available from regular census, however their relevance is questionable. Due to bad image of this minority, many Roma tend to state a different nationality than their own. This results into a vast underestimation of number of Roma in the country’s population. Studies working with these official data are thus at risk of spoiled results due to incorrect inputs.

As a solution which provides better and more precise data, the project Atlas of Roma Communities (2013) will be used. This unique project was realized in cooperation of national and international bodies and its results are based on thorough terrain work mapping all towns in Slovakia. It does not catch only the numbers of persons belonging to Roma minority, but it also describes the way how Roma people are concentrated in municipality. Its outcomes differ between four types of Roma presence on the local level. These include the dispersion of Roma minority in whole municipality, concentration of this minority in the center, concentration of the minority at the outskirt and the concentration in a segregated settlement. These categories are not exclusive and therefore several types of presence of Roma minority can be valid for one municipality.

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7 According to census in 2011 only 105 thousand Roma lived in Slovakia, which equaled about two per cent of the country’s population. (Census 2011)
For the purpose of analysis, two sets of dichotomous variables are constructed. The first one addresses the types of Roma presence on the local level. However we do not work with the category of dispersion of Roma in majority as this variable is present in nearly all of the analyzed geographical units thus allowing nearly none variation. We thus focus on the three remaining categories, the concentration of Roma in center and outskirts and in segregated settlements. The second set of variables monitors the share of Roma minority in municipalities and as we do not expect a linear relation here, we divide it into several categories. The first category is “without Roma minority” which is also the referential one. Other categories are given by intervals 0.1 – 5 per cent, 5.1 – 10 per cent, 10.1 – 15 per cent, 15.1 – 25 per cent and 25.1 – 50 per cent.

The remaining variables are based on census data. Unemployment rate is computed as a share of unemployed people on all economic active people. The share of entrepreneurs and workers in agriculture is also related to economic active population. The amount of people with university degree education is calculated as a share of those with higher than secondary education on all inhabitants older than fifteen years of age. The denominator for the construction of variable of people with no denomination is the total population.

Most of the variables are aggregate in their nature. It means that the value of variable for each micro-region is made up by the sum of individuals belonging to this area. Although the individuals are base of data, the results of analysis cannot be attributed to individual behavior of voters but only to the characteristics of micro-regions and their influence on the support of LSNS.

It has to be noted that there are some connections between the independent variables, which can violate assumption of no correlation between supposed causes in the statistical models. Values of Pearson coefficient indicate an especially deep relation between unemployment, share of Roma population and level of education. In principle, with higher share of Roma minority there is higher unemployment and lower share of highly educated people. Although the correlation between unemployment and share of Roma is very high, it is unreasonable to simplify to equation “Roma = unemployment”, because there are several municipalities without Roma minority with high unemployment. Because the share of Roma population is recoded to set of dummy variables, the possible collinearity between these two variables is not a problem in the respect to technical requirements of the analysis. However,
the problem with connection between education and unemployment remains and coefficients of these two variables can be affected by this relation in the analysis.

**Results**

The final part is dedicated to present the results of our analysis. Together we created six different models using various sets of variables. Their results prove most of the expected predictions which derive from the theoretical assumptions. The support of LSNS thus shows its connection to the presence of the Roma minority as anticipated, though this is not the only important factor which was observed.

**Table 1.** The OLS regression model explaining support for LSNS in 2012 general election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
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<td><strong>Intercept</strong></td>
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<td>Centrum</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.20</td>
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<td>Outskirt</td>
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<td>Settlement</td>
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<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.59</td>
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<td><strong>Share of Roma</strong></td>
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<td>0.1 – 5</td>
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<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 – 10</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.1 – 15</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.50</td>
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<td>15.1 – 25</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.53</td>
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<td>0.51</td>
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<td>25.1 – 50</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>3.26</td>
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<td>University</td>
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<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
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<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.01</td>
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<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No denomination</td>
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<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
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<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>R square</strong></td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.55</td>
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Results of the first two models show that the presence of Roma minority is a tool which can help to explain differences between micro-regions in respect to electoral support of LSNS in general elections. This applies especially for model 2 which includes different levels of share of Roma on population as it is capable to explain about one third of variance in support of the Slovak extreme right party. Model 1 built on various types of Roma community is slightly weaker.

These models reveal the nature of conditions that are favorable towards LSNS. Their outcomes show that the party’s support gets higher with rising share of Roma on the population. A substantial increase may be noticed in micro-regions with 25.1 to 50 per cent of Roma, where LSNS got more than nearly four per cent of votes when compared to areas without any Roma presence. The effects of different types of Roma community observed in model 1 work fully in accordance with the expectations derived from the theory. The higher support of LSNS in micro-regions with segregated settlements supports the prediction leading to better results of extremists if the minority stands ‘out’ of the central parts of municipalities.

Results of the first two models are confirmed in Model 3 where both sets of variables are used together. However, the values of all unstandardized coefficients are slightly lower. The reason of this might be that the factors work together, f.e. that some types of Roma community are connected to their share on population. The explanatory power of this model is higher when compared to previous ones, though it does not exceed the sum of their R squared. It explains nearly 40 percent of the variance of support of the Slovak extremists, a slightly more than the model 2 based only the share of Roma population.

Model 4 is built solely on socio-economic factors of the micro-regions. When compared to model 3 it explains nearly the same amount of variance of the dependent variable, reaching to 40 percent. In respect to the measured effects, all included variables of interest work in the expected way. The electoral support of LSNS gets higher with rising unemployment and decreasing share of highly educated people, what brings another support to the looser hypothesis. This concept presumes that some members of the majority will assess the ‘alienate’ minority with suspicion or even hate as they find it as a threat to their access to limited resources. Further control shows that for high support of LSNS a rather agricultural environment and lower religiosity is more favorable. Not surprising, the same counts for the proportion of the Hungarian minority.
When the above mentioned variables are combined together in the same model, the effects of most of them do not change rapidly. The only exception here is the unemployment, which is highly correlated with the share of Roma on the population. If these two factors are included into the same model, then the effect of unemployment is reversed as its explanatory power is ‘stolen’ by the share of Roma. Therefore model 5 does not include the share of Roma while the same counts for model 6 and the unemployment.

A comparison of the models shows interesting results. The outcomes clearly reveal that the latter model is more powerful as it explains 55 per cent of the dependent variable, a substantial progress when compared to the former model. A partial reason of this may be also due to recoding of variable representing the share of Roma to several categories, an effort which is impossible for unemployment as it ranges from seven to 56 per cent across the micro-regions. This limit however should not be overestimated and we may conclude that for the support of LSNS in Slovak general elections the share of Roma on the population seems to be a better predictor than unemployment. To sum up, the model 6 which combines both variables connected to Roma minority and to socio-economic structure of the micro-regions represents the best fit for our data.

**Conclusion**

Our paper analyzed the support of LSNS, an extreme right party in Slovakia with a continuous rising potential for entering the national politics. We found that local presence of the Roma minority is of vital importance to the party’s results. Our outcomes show two key points connected to Roma. First, LSNS scores better in areas with rising share of Roma minority in the population. Second, the type of Roma local communities also plays a role as it affects the possible ways of contact between this ethnic group and the majority. The results of the analysis reveal that regions with established segregated settlements create conditions which favor the far right. This may be explained due to the problematic character of the settlements and also to the limited direct contact between the Roma and the majority.

The support of LSNS has also a socio-economic basis. As we found, the party got better results in micro-regions with higher unemployment and lower share of highly educated people. These results are in accordance with the previous research from Western European
countries, although the used data do not allow us to apply them on the individual level. LSNS is also more successful in areas with lower religiosity and with a higher share of people working in the agricultural sector. This could indicate that the party gains more votes in areas of a less developed countryside.

Previous research showed that immigrants are an important element for the success of the far right parties in Western Europe. Our paper concludes that the role of an ‘alienate’ group does not necessarily need to be played by a foreign minority. As our results about LSNS indicate, the role of a scapegoat may be fully attributed even to a resident minority. Roma in Slovakia thus fully act as a substitute for absenting immigrants in the country and create a solid basis for the local far right.

References


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