Leaders or ideologies? Voters, parties and personal vote in Slovakia

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Abstract

In this paper we use concentration of electoral support for individual candidates and divergence between party and electorate preferences for candidates to test hypotheses about the party-electorate relationship. We test them using data from preferential voting in Slovak general elections between 1998 and 2010. Our results suggest that low concentration is associated with parties based on ideology and high concentration is associated with parties based on leadership. Age of the party fails to predict the concentration or the divergence. For coalitions, type of coalition matters in regard to divergence. Furthermore, we document that divergence increases with the size of the electoral support though this seems to be true only for larger parties.

Keywords: preferential voting; Slovakia; party-electorate relationship

1. Introduction
Two fundamental questions about preferential voting are: (1) where do votes go, i.e. how big is the concentration of preference votes within the party list? and (2) how big is the mismatch between the party’s and electorate’s preferences, i.e. how big is the divergence between the party-ordered and the voters-ordered ballot? The literature suggests several determinants of the concentration and the divergence of preferential voting. The most prominent factors include leadership (Marsh, 1985; Lijphart 1974; Millard and Popescu, 2004), unity (Katz 1980; Wildgen, 1985; Millard and Popescu, 2004) and age of the party (Millard and Popescu, 2004).

The main aim of this paper is to problematize these hypotheses. To transcend often contradictory predictions of these hypotheses, we promote a theoretical framework based on the idea that concentration and divergence cannot be studied separately but are interrelated. The proposed framework is then examined using Slovak preferential voting data. The resulting classification of parties is then used to test the hypotheses, which predict different divergence and concentration for parties with different unity, age or leadership. Second, it enables us to trace changes in the prevalence of certain parties within the party system and examine the circumstances under which party-electorate relationship changes.

We also have specific findings that further our understanding of the preferential voting. First, the preference votes are more concentrated in case of leader-parties and less concentrated in case of ideology-based parties. Second, parties with competing factions are associated with a higher mismatch between the party-ordered and the voter-ordered
ballot than coalitions with less internal competitions. Third, age of the party does not determine the level of concentration or divergence. Finally, higher divergence is associated with increasing size of the party, as the large party encompasses groups of voters with different preferences.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First, we problematize the hypotheses about the preferential voting derived from the literature and propose an alternative approach to the study of preferential voting. We then discuss the methodology and, in the following section, test our framework on Slovak preferential voting data and present out findings. The final section concludes.

2. The preferential voting and the party-electorate relationship

The literature offers several hypotheses regarding the preferential voting. Leadership, unity/factionalism and the age of the party are the most commonly discussed factors that influence the concentration of electoral support for specific candidates and divergence between preferences of the electorate and the party.

2.1 The role of leadership

Leaders’ influence on individual’s voting decisions is contested. Some suggest that the leadership effects are weak when other factors, such as socio-demographic variables, values and economic perceptions are taken into account (King 2002). Others argue that
leadership perceptions play an important role in voter preference and choice of a candidate (Maurer et al., 1993; Shamir, 1994; Pillai and Williams, 1998). Period under study seems to be a mediating factor between the two perspectives. Whereas candidates (and issues) are considered short-term factors in determining voters’ choice, party is a more powerful predictor in the long-run (Niemi and Weisberg, 1993: 137).

Preferential voting provides further insights into this debate, as it opens space for personalization of electoral competition. Voters’ support tends to be concentrated on incumbent candidates and party leaders (Marsh, 1985: 374). This may be understood in terms of limits on citizens’ information absorption (Kinder and Sears, 1985). As Richardson (1988) pointed out in case of Japan, most voters do have good information about perhaps 1 or 2 candidates. In case of incumbents, visibility may not be the only factor. For example, by focusing attention on the prime minister as the individual who is accountable for the government’s collective performance, the voter finds it easier to deliver reward (or punishment), when compared to an abstract collectivity (McAllister, 2007: 7).

Higher concentration in case of leader parties may be related also to name-order effects, as leaders usually top the ballot. The position bias, i.e. the notion that election results are influenced by the order in which candidates’ names appear on the ballot, was documented for Ireland (Robson and Walsh, 1974), the United Kingdom (Upton and Brook, 1974) and for the United States (Taebel, 1975; Koppell and Steen, 2004).
In general, the more powerful and important the role of the leadership in a party, the weaker its ideology and administration (Katz and Mair, 1995; Panebianco, 1988; Webb, 2004). Thus, we expect to observe higher concentration of preference votes in case of leader-based and lower concentration in ideological parties, such as ethnic or religious parties, where the collective party identity and common goals are stronger than the personas that attempt to deliver these goals.

Hypothesis 1: Leader-based parties are associated with high concentration; ideology-based parties with low concentration of preference votes.

Effect of leadership on the divergence is unclear. On the one hand, followers who share a relationship with a charismatic or transformational leader are willing to “transcend self-interests for the sake of the collective” (Howell and Shamir 2005, 99). Transformational leadership should be therefore associated with lower divergence, as transformational leaders succeed in bringing the preferences of their voters closer to their own.

However, leadership is determinant on the context. The organization and managerial research suggests that there may be multiple collective identities within organizations, representing different and perhaps competing values, sources of identification and preferences (Shamir et al., 1998). Furthermore, a range of more or less fluid identities tends to be associated with large companies (Alvesson, 2000; Ashforth, 1989). Based on this, it is possible to hypothesize that the size of the political party will matter in regard to divergence. The larger the party, the more likely it is that its electorate will consist of groups of voters with competing preferences.
Hypothesis 2: Transformational leadership is associated with lower divergence. However, its effects might be mitigated by the size of the party: the larger the party, the larger the divergence.

2.2 The Role of Factionalism

Preferential voting can be understood as “an election within each party” (Katz and Bardi, 1980: 102). It enables voters to take part in intra-party conflicts and support candidates of their preferred faction (Marsh, 1985: 367). Voters are thus more likely to disrupt party list orders in case of parties with competing factions or electoral coalitions (see Marsh, 1985: 371; Katz and Bardi, 1980; Wildgen, 1985; Millard and Popescu, 2004). The higher mismatch between the preferences of voters on the one hand and electoral coalitions or parties with competing factions on the other hand was documented for Italy (Katz and Bardi, 1980; Wildgen, 1985) and post-communist countries (Millard and Popescu, 2004). On the contrary, Katz (1979) showed there was no relationship (across 14 countries) between formal or effective preferential voting on one hand and factionalism on the other.

However, interactions between factions, host parties and voters are dynamic (Belloni and Beller, 1978). Factionalism may acquire different faces in different parties at different times (Boucek, 2009). Boucek (ibid) defines these three faces as cooperative, competitive and degenerative factionalism. Cooperative factionalism provides a structure of cooperation between separate intra-party groups. It is a tool of consensus building. It
aggregates separate groups and blurs cleavages. In this case, it is reasonable to assume lower rather than higher mismatch between party's and voters' preferences. In contrast, competitive factionalism indicates fragmentation and splits. This type of factionalism diffuses conflict internally, widens voter choice and empowers party followers. Competitive factionalism is thus close to the view that factionalism will lead to a higher divergence between the preferences of the party and the voters.

Hypothesis 3: Parties or coalitions with openly competing factions have higher divergence.

2.3 The role of the Party Age

Millard and Popescu (2004: 8, 12, 27) hypothesize that voters of new parties tend to be less informed about other candidates and therefore their support concentrates on the few candidates with high visibility. In contrast, the relationship between the age of the party and the divergence is less clear. On the one hand, the divergence should be lower in case of older parties, which over time learn about their voters and better match their preferences (Millard and Popescu, 2004: 8). On the other hand, voters of new parties lack information about the candidates and these parties are often leader-based. Therefore, they should be associated with lower divergence as voters defer to the party choice (ibid: 8, 12).

Hypothesis 4: New parties tend to have higher concentration. Predictions regarding divergence are mixed.
However, the results of Millard and Popescu (ibid) suggest that voters for new parties did not vote more often for first-placed candidates in Poland, Estonia and Latvia or express fewer preferences in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. We believe that these findings are not surprising, especially in the light of the recent research on new parties (see Lucardie, 2000 and Sikk, 2011). Although it is true that new parties in Eastern Europe are often founded “from the top down” by regional or national government leaders, who are well-known and have the necessary resources (Lucardie, 2000: 179), the new parties may compete along two dimensions (Sikk, 2011). First, parties may have a strong ideological motivation, i.e. will be rooted in a fairly cohesive and comprehensive set of policies that they wish to pursue when in government. In case their ideology is not represented in the party system, Lucardie (2000) and Sikk (2011) speak of “prophets”. These types of parties are close to the traditional view of new parties as representing new issues inadequately represented by established parties (Harmel and Robertson, 1985; Hauss and Rayside, 1978; Hug, 1996, 2001; Kitschelt, 1988, 1995). In contrast, “purifiers” arise to cleanse an ideology already represented by existing parties. In regard to hypothesis 1, we should expect low concentration of preferential votes. However, parties may have also low ideological motivation to enter the electoral competition. But whereas the “prolocutors” essentially address a single issue that is disregarded by established parties, parties based on the “project of newness” step on an already-occupied territory, yet they wish to change just the manners of doing politics rather than the contents (Sikk, 2011: 3). As the emphasis on newness would have little potential for mobilizing voters, the newness often comes in a
bundle with the charismatic leader or considerable financial resources (ibid: 15).

According to hypothesis 1, we may expect higher concentration of preferential voting in the parties based on the project of newness.

Table 1 goes here

Based on these two dimensions, we expect parties to fall into four categories:

**Category 1. Non-responsive party (low concentration, high divergence)**

The combination of low concentration and high divergence is typical of the depersonalized party, in which the absence of the charismatic leader is substituted by party identity. This identity is strong enough to compensate for the apparent inability or unwillingness of the party leaders to match the preferences of their voters. Competing factions may play the role as well.

**Category 2. Leaders and followers (high concentration and high divergence)**

Leaders and followers party is a party where selection and ordering of candidates differs from what the electorate would prefer and the electorate also has a concentrated set of personal preferences. As discussed above, the high divergence may be associated with the size of the party, where a charismatic leader ensures a broad group of followers, which encompasses competing identities and preferences. Alternatively, it is reasonable to assume that the leader attempts to capitalize on his charismatic appeal and tries to convert his electability into an ordering that does not reflect the voters’ preferences.
Category 3. Black box/responsive (low concentration and low divergence)

The third type is a party where selection and ordering of candidates is consistent with views of the party electorate but the party electorate has diffused its preferences among a relatively large number of candidates. There are two competing explanations for this situation – either the party identity (distinct from any identity imprinted by individuals) is so strong that voters do not care for individual candidates or the party is an alliance of a large number of factions and their representatives, but the party ordering was constructed to be in line with electoral preferences. Such parties could be called “black-box party” – insides of the party list are not that important to the electorate.

Category 4. Coterie of the attractive (high concentration and low divergence)

In this final case, selection and ordering of candidates is consistent with preference of the party electorate and the preferences of the party electorate are relatively concentrated among a few individuals. Thus, we expect to see a strong leadership that responses to the voters’ preferences when ordering the ballot.

3. Methodology

We test our framework and the hypotheses using data from preferential voting in Slovak general elections 1998, 2002, 2006 and 2010. We are interested in exploring the preferential voting in Slovakia as a country for three reasons. First, Millard and Popescu
(2004) document that, in comparison with four other post-communist countries, Slovak voters proved the most willing of all to alter their parties’ candidate order. We are therefore interested to explore whether the high mismatch between party and voters’ preferences is universal across all Slovak parties and whether it changes over time.

Second, the Slovak party system combines several relatively stable parties with frequent emergence of new and sometimes short-lived parties (Harris, 2010: 188). This enables us to test the relationship between the preferential voting and the age of the party. Furthermore, the emergence of new parties is common in Eastern European countries (Sikk, 2011). Slovakia can thus serve as a representative case.

Finally, our framework implicitly requires data which capture both party and voter preferences. Slovak electoral system meets these criteria (for a recent overview of Slovak political system, see Harris 2010). Since 1998, it has been a single electoral constituency with a weak form of preferential voting. Voters can choose only one party list. However, they are able to modify the party-structured list by using 4 (or fewer) “preference votes.” In 1998 and 2002, a candidate with more than 10% of preferential votes was given priority and got to the first place on the list. If more candidates achieved this threshold, they were ranked according to the number of their preference votes. In the 2006 election, the threshold was reduced to 3%. Such a setting enables to gather data for both party (ballot ranking proposed by party) and voter (ballot ranking according to the preferential votes) preferences. As Slovakia is a single constituency, the data allow to easily draw conclusions for the country as a whole.
The time frame was defined by the electoral law change in 1998, which introduced the single constituency. The data are obtained from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. Our sample covers all parties elected to the 150-member National Council of the Slovak Republic since 1998 (for the list of all parties and cleavages, see Table 2). Although these elections were governed by an evolving electoral framework, they shared essentially the same system of “preference votes.”

To measure the concentration and the divergence, we rely on two quantitative indicators:

- index of concentration
- index of divergence

Index of concentration

To create a quantitative measure for the concentration of preference votes within a party list in a given election, we created an index of concentration based on the Herfindahl-Hirschman index, which is defined as the share of preference votes received by each candidate in the sum of preference votes received by all candidates on the particular party list. In other words, if all voters used just one preference vote and gave it all to the
same candidate, HHI would be 1. If voters evenly split the preference votes between all candidates, HHI would be close to 0. Such an index of concentration allows us to measure with a single metric how concentrated is the popularity of the candidates among the party electorate. This measure is an improvement over previous studies, which simply focused on the support for first-placed (or highly placed) candidates (see for example Millard and Popescu (2004) who focus on the percentage of votes received by the top three candidates at most).

**Index of divergence**

This index creates a metric for measuring the mismatch between the party’s and voters’ preferences. To measure the divergence between electoral preferences of the party and those of its electorate, two lists are compared. One is the ordering of the list as submitted by the party for the election. The other one is the ordering which would result purely from preference votes. We use the standard deviation – sum of the squared differences between the two orderings - and call it the „index of divergence“. Of course, the importance of divergence differs between various parts of the list, with declining importance towards the end of the list. Therefore, in our analysis we use the divergence between the first 30 places on the list and their ranking by preference votes. The number was chosen because parties represented in the parliament generally reach less than or only slightly more than 30 seats. Such a setting enables us to measure how much voters disrupted the party order in places deemed electable by the party leaders (and the voters themselves).
Both indices are normalized to a 0-100 scale for easier comparison. We calculate average values for parties, whose concentration and divergence levels were stable across time. Separate values are listed for parties, whose concentration and divergence levels changed over time. These parties enable us to examine the specific conditions, under which the party-electorate relationship shifts.

4. Slovak case study

In this section, we use the methodology from the previous section on a sample of 4 Slovak parliamentary elections since 1998 to test hypotheses presented earlier.

**Finding 1: Use of preferential votes is high and growing despite the fact that it has minimal effect on the actual composition of the parliament**

Since 1998, we saw a gradual increase in the number of voters using the option to cast preference votes, increasing from 54.1% of voters in 1998 to 77.5% in 2006 (see Table 3). Year 2010 witnessed a slight decline to 73.6%.

Table 3 goes here
This finding is puzzling because we would expect the utilization of votes to increase along with increasing “effectiveness” (Pederson, 1966) of preferential voting, i.e. the impact of the preferential voting on list order. The number of MPs elected through the mechanism of preferential voting began to increase only in 2006 when the threshold the candidate had to achieve for his preference votes to count fell from 10% to 3% of all the votes cast for the party (Table 4).

Table 4 goes here

In 2010 election there were 12 MPs who would not be elected if they did not receive the minimum number of preference votes. This represented 8% of all MPs elected. However, under the old rules, the number of MPs would have remained steady and equal a single MP. This contradicts findings summarized by Marsh (1985) that utilization of preference votes is directly related to relevance, i.e. the effective impact of the preferential voting on list order.

At the same time, number of preference votes cast by each voter utilizing the mechanism has decreased somewhat, indicating that voters are, on average, becoming more strategic in how they use the votes.

Finding 2: The party-electoral relationship indicated by patterns of preferential voting varies widely across the party system, but for most parties, the findings are relatively stable over time.
The majority of parties fall in the lower cells of the proposed typology, which is characterized by low divergence (see Figure 1). In other words, the mismatch between the party and the electorate preferences is relatively low. However, the casual relationship between the party’s and voters’ preferences is not clear. It is either that party responds to its voters or voters accept the preferences of the party.

Finding 3: Low concentration is associated with parties based on ideology, high concentration is associated with parties based on leadership.

Our findings support Hypothesis 1 that the low concentration is associated with parties based on ideology and high concentration of support valid for parties based on strong leaders “owning the parties” as evidenced by differentials in the rate of change of party leaders between the two groups.

There were six parties that experienced a low level of concentration (and two borderline cases). Out of these six parties, two were “coalition” parties created for the “critical” elections in September 1998 (Harriss, 2010: 189). A broad electoral coalition of five parties was formed in 1997 to challenge Vladimír Mečiar’s authoritarian rule and ensure integration into the Western clubs of EU and NATO. When Mečiar responded by the
controversial electoral law restricting the candidature of such coalitions, the coalition was transformed into a party under the name SDK (Slovak Democratic Coalition). In line with our hypothesis, the coalition leader Mikuláš Dzurinda “was initially seen as weak” (Haughton 2005: 134) and the coalition rested more on its pro-democratic and pro-integration program than on his personal appeal. The electoral coalition of three small parties representing Hungarian minority merged into a regular party (SMK) in response to the same electoral law. In contrast to SDK, which disintegrated into KDH and SDKÚ by the next election, SMK evolved into a regular ethnic-based party. In 2010 SMK was replaced in the parliament by Most-Hid, which had been formed by several SMK politicians after an internal struggle. As these two parties achieved similar levels of concentration and divergence and they compete along similar agenda, the average was calculated for both of these parties.

Additionally, there were four strongly ideological parties with low concentration. The party with the lowest concentration was KSS, a Communist successor party in terms of ideology and personnel, which promoted state ownership and rejected capitalism and European integration (Rybář and Deegan-Krause, 2008: 201-2). KDH is a center-right party which is highly conservative on social and moral issues and somewhat liberal on economic policy (Fitzmaurice, 2003: 165; Kopeček, 2007: 325), with a limited emphasis on nationalism. Over the course of its existence, the party was successfully depersonalized (ibid) and the voters became deeply and often lastingly identified with the party (Krivý 2002: 103). This is documented by two smooth leader replacements in 2002 and 2009 and stable electoral results. Finally, two new parties with low
The low concentration is thus associated with parties, which are not leader-based. All these parties changed their leaders at least once in their history. (The exception is SDK, which broke up into SDKÚ and KDH and disappeared and the new party SaS, which competed only for the latest 2010 election.) Looking at the common denominator of these parties it is possible to argue that the low concentration is associated with parties based on ideology (pro-democratic, Christian, ethnic/minority, neoliberal) rather than on leading figures.

We observe high concentration in case of six parties, which share strong personalization. These parties have not changed their leaders or, if they had, it led to electoral disaster, as was the case of the Slovak National party (SNS) in 2002.

HZDS was the dominant party on the Slovak political scene between 1992 and 2002 (see Haughton, 2001 and Baer, 2001), with its leader Vladimír Mečiar becoming Prime Minister three times. It was a personality-based party (Day, 2002: 413), combining the personal appeal of its leader with a broad appeal of managed economic reform, concern for those who lost out from marketization and the Christian aspect all articulated in a national accent (Haughton, 2005: 133).

SNS projects itself as the party of ethnic Slovaks (Haughton, 2001: 747). As such, it is a strong opponent of the civil concept of political nation and advocates the concept of ethnically-defined nation (Mesežníkov and Gyárfášová, 2008: 9). It is highly conservative on social issues (Kopeček 2007: 441) but relatively left-wing. Similarly to HZDS it revolves around the polarizing leader Ján Slota.
Finally, Smer gradually took over the positions of HZDS and has been the strongest political party since 2006. It was created by Robert Fico in 1999 on the basis of transcending the existing cleavages. As we discuss below, this concept of “newness” (Sikk, 2011) was central also in case of other new parties, namely SOP and ANO.

An apparently unlikely member of the group is SDKÚ, Slovak Democratic and Christian Union. The party was born from the SDK coalition right before the 2002 election as a result of the growing frustration of the Prime Minister Dzurinda and a number of senior colleagues over the persisting ties of those elected on SDK’s list to their mother parties (Haughton, 2005: 135). Approximately half of the SDK parliamentary club and all SDK ministers went over to SDKÚ. Although Dzurinda was initially a weak leader, he gradually asserted himself and became a more confident leader in his second term (Haughton 2005: 134). But although the attachment to the personality of Dzurinda was important, the potential of the party was based mostly on the heritage of SDK (Kopeček, 2004) and the bold program of economic reforms. Furthermore, in terms of personnel, SDKÚ was not a “one-man party” (ibid). In fact, the concentration just for the top name on the list would put this party into the low concentration camp. In this sense, it is different from the other parties with high concentration and unique in combining high concentration of support for the top team with low concentration of support for the individual leader.

**Finding 4: Age of the party fails to predict the concentration or the divergence of electoral support**
Although it has been suggested that new parties are usually leader-based and therefore enjoy higher concentration, the Slovak data do not fully support this hypothesis. There were a number of new parties in Slovakia (SOP, ANO, Smer, SaS), however, they did not form a single cluster. The first three entered the Slovak political scene in the lower-right box characteristic of high concentration and low divergence. These three parties can be characterized as the parties based on the project of newness (Sikk, 2011: 15). They promoted the cause of change; however, they were fairly vague on specific policy commitments.

SOP (Party of Civic Understanding) which entered the Parliament in 1998 was a catch-all populist party formed by the popular Mayor of Košice, Rudolf Schuster (Fitzmaurice, 1999). Although it appealed mostly to voters on the left, it attracted also disillusioned HZDS voters, looking for a new political product (ibid). After Schuster was elected president in 1999, the party became virtually leaderless (Fitzmaurice, 2004). The party did not cross the 5% threshold in the 2002 election. In 2003, it merged with Smer.

The 2002 election saw two new parties based on the project of newness, ANO based around the media mogul Pavol Rusko and Smer based around charismatic Robert Fico. Both parties attempted to offer an alternative to the existing parties. Survey evidence shows that whereas ANO provided a popular alternative for right-wing voters dissatisfied with Dzurinda, left-wing voters opted for Smer (Krause, 2003: 70). But whereas ANO disintegrated, mostly due to financial scandals of its leader, Smer turned out to be the most successful representative of the party based on the project of newness (Sikk, 2011: 15). The party originated as a rather populist centrist party (Harriss, 2010: 77) and
targeted those who were weary of polarization between the authoritarian and pro-democratic forces and sought an alternative to both (Rybář and Deegan-Krause, 2008: 502). After the disappointing performance in the 2002 election and the failure to enter the government, Smer decided to become a member of the Socialist International (SI) and Party of European Socialists (PES). The process of “socialdemocratization” was accompanied by substantial changes in the social and economic program of the party (Marušiak, 2006). This move away from the empty concept of the “newness” towards a concrete set of policies was probably the main reason behind Smer’s successful transformation into a regular party, which is in stark contrast with short-lived SOP and ANO.

SOP, ANO and Smer share several common features. Their original ideological motivation was rather low and parties served as locomotives to executive posts. All parties competed on the basis of “newness”, an alternative to existing parties. The concept of “newness” and new political culture was complemented by popular leaders (Schuster in SOP, popular television personas in ANO and charismatic Fico in Smer) and considerable financial resources spent on the electoral campaign. The non-ideological character of parties in combination with popular leaders is in line with hypothesis 1: all examined parties achieved high levels of concentration. Furthermore, they all scored low on divergence. This is in line with the hypothesis that low divergence is typical for new parties, whose candidates are less-known to the public. Indeed, the introduction of “new faces” was emphasized by Smer and its leader Fico in the 2002 electoral campaign.
However, as we discussed earlier the new parties cannot be associated solely with leader-based parties. SaS is a typical example of the “prophets” party. This type of party offers an ideology not represented by any existing party (see Lucardie, 2000 or Sikk, 2011). SaS attempted to meet the demand for the classical liberal party or civil libertarian party. It advocated freer market, fiscal conservatism, liberalization of drug laws and same-sex marriage. Its program, “120 ideas” offered a clear set of policies, and therefore attracted both the right-wing voters interested in increased economic freedom and left-wing voters interested in social-liberal issues (Hospodárske noviny, 3 June 2010). The ideological motivation of the party was reflected also in the concentration, which was remarkably low compared to other new parties, as well as most of the existing parties. Intense internet campaign was another factor that contributed to the wider spread of preference votes across candidates, who used personal blogs and Facebook to increase their visibility.

These results suggest that there are more important characteristics of the party that determine the concentration of support (leader-based versus ideology-based) and divergence (united versus fragmented parties).

**Finding 5: Type of factionalism matters in regard to divergence**

Our findings suggest that competitive factionalism is associated with higher divergence. As already discussed, SaS (Freedom and Solidarity) competed along liberal terms in 2010 election, but is better described as a de facto coalition, because the last four places on its ballot (147-150) were offered to the Christian conservative group “Ordinary People”, whose political profile significantly differed from the classical liberal agenda of
SaS. Despite their position on the ballot, Ordinary People were elected to the Parliament based on the high number of preferential votes. The divergence can be thus attributed to openly competing programs of the factions or to “competitive factionalism” (Boucek, 2009), which later translated to conflicts between the factions and eventually an exclusion of the faction leader from SaS parliamentary club.

However, it should be noted that coalition is not a clear-cut determinant of divergence. Our results suggest that the type of coalition matters more than the coalition per se. Other electoral coalitions (SMK and SDK in 1998, as well as Most in 2010, which similarly to SaS offered four positions on its ballot to members of other party) experienced much lower levels of divergence. As already discussed, both SDK and SMK emerged in response to changes in the electoral law. Each of the coalitions was held together by the shared goals. The parties forming SDK aimed to challenge Mečiar. Therefore, main concern was to show unity and its capacity to become the largest party (Fitzmaurice, 1998: 294). SDK thus served as a tool for aggregation of parties from different poles of political specter without threatening their identities. SMK was motivated by the protection of ethnic and minority rights. In contrast to SDK, which later split into two parties, the effect of “cooperative factionalism” on SMK was more profound. The coalition of three Hungarian parties motivated by the protection of ethnic and minority rights evolved into an integrated party.

A border-line case is KDH based on Christian ideology, whose divergence increased over time. In 2006 the increase can be attributed to competing factions, which led to the fragmentation of the party and the departure of four key members of KDH two years
later. This departure was probably reflected in the further increase of divergence: as the departed members were key figures of the party, the support for these members spread over other candidates.

Finding 6: Divergence increases with the increasing size of the party

High concentration and high divergence was documented only for two parties – Vladimír Mečiar’s Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), which dominated Slovak political scene for a decade between 1992 and 2002, and Robert Fico’s Smer, which won 2006 and 2010 election. Both parties are based around strong, charismatic leaders. The high divergence associated with charismatic leaders does not support hypothesis 2 that charismatic leadership decreases divergence. Furthermore, divergence levels of both parties significantly shifted over time. This enables us to examine the conditions under which parties move from one box of the two-by-two to another.

Figure 2 goes here

First, it should be noted that both HZDS and Smer moved to the upper-right box characterized by high concentration and high divergence at the point where they both
reached more than 25% of the vote and thus became large parties in the Slovak context (for other parties, the vote generally ranges between 5 and 15%). Figure 2 documents the positive relationship between the electoral result (% of votes) and the level of divergence. As HZDS decreased in size, so did its divergence. Similarly, as Smer began to take over the Slovak political scene, its divergence rocketed upwards. As HZDS and Smer are quite similar in nature (populist, nationalistic), we wanted to control for the party-type effects by including a party from the other part of the political spectrum. Therefore, we include the coalition SDK, the only party whose electoral support could match that of HZDS and Smer. Its position in the graph fits nicely into the exponential curve. These findings support the view that the large parties encompass groups of voters with competing preferences. However, it must be noted that the fact that SDK was a coalition may play some role in determining its divergence.

Furthermore, the ballots of HZDS and Smer seem to be a combination of very popular figures at the very top of the list and then an ordering which places a number of candidates with very low electoral appeal after the electoral favorites at the top. Once the party leaders expect their electoral results to be high, they are more willing to order their ballot in a way that does not reflect the preferences of their voters. Leadership can convert its electability into an ordering that reflects its other preferences without incurring a significant electoral penalty. This fact does not turn the voters off the preference voting, nor does it stimulate it – in both instances, the utilisation of electoral votes was around the average.
5. Conclusions

The main aim of this paper was to examine the party-electorate relationship using preferential voting data. To this end, we used concentration of voters’ support and divergence between party and electorate preferences as two inter-related dimensions, which enable to classify parties into four distinct categories: (1) non-responsive party (low concentration, high divergence), (2) leaders and followers party (high concentration, high divergence), (3) black box/responsive party (low concentration, low divergence), and (4) coterie of the attractive party (high concentration, low divergence). This taxonomy is helpful in conceptualizing the nature of parties’ relationship with the electorate, particularly in democracies with a high level of party turnover and dynamism or in environments where a mixture of parties with different levels of ideological clarity exists.

In the next step, we used this framework to examine the preferential voting in Slovakia. This enabled us to test the existing hypotheses, which suggest certain levels of concentration and divergence based on the unity, age or leadership of the party, as well as to examine the circumstances under which parties’ relationship with electorate changes. We come up with seven distinct findings.

First, the option to indicate preference for individual candidates in Slovakia is popular and increasingly so, despite the fact that it has minimal effect on the actual composition of the parliament. This contradicts findings from the literature, which linked utilization to relevance, i.e. the effective impact of the preferential voting on list order (Pederson
1966). We explain this decreasing utilization in terms of information: voters tend to have information about a very small number of candidates (see Richardson 1988 and Kinder and Sears, 1985). At the same time, the patterns of party-electorate relationship indicated by concentration and divergence of support differs widely across parties, giving rise to the following set of conclusions about individual parties.

Second, we observe higher concentration in case of leader-based parties and lower concentration in case of parties with collective identity, where the presence of the charismatic leader is usually substituted by the clear ideological agenda (pro-democratic, Christian, ethnic/minority, neoliberal).

Third, age of the party does not determine the concentration. New parties, whose main appeal rested on popular leaders and celebrities experienced high concentration. On the contrary, new parties that competed along ideological lines experienced low concentration. Thus, leadership was a more powerful predictor than age of the party. Similarly, older and stable parties did not have lower divergence between voters’ and party’s preferences, as suggested by the literature.

Fourth, in line with Katz and Bardi (1980), Wildgen (1985) and Millard and Popescu (2004) we observe higher divergence in case of parties with competing factions. However, factionalism per se is not able to predict divergence. Electoral coalitions achieve both low and high divergence. What matters is therefore the type of the factionalism. The divergence tends to be the highest in case of parties with factions with clearly identifiable and competing programs.
Fifth, for majority of the parties, the relationship between parties and their electorate is relatively stable. Most of the parties fall in the lower cells of the proposed typology, which is characterized by low divergence. Here, the distinction is made between “responsive parties” based on a concrete ideology and “coterie of the attractive parties”, which tend to be personality-based. The major shifts in the relationship are documented for parties, whose size and electoral strength significantly change over time. In Slovak realms, the threshold is approximately 25% of all votes cast. This is particularly true in case of two parties with charismatic leaders that at certain point of time dominated Slovak political scene. We dub these parties “coalition of leaders and followers” and argue that charismatic leaders convert their electability into an ordering that does not reflect their voters’ preferences without incurring a significant electoral penalty.

Sixth, there was a single instance of a party with high divergence, which was neither a coalition, nor a large party with a charismatic leader – Christian Democratic Party (KDH). In this case, we explain the increasing divergence by the fragmentation of the party and the departure of key members of the party. We believe that an increase in the divergence was the result of the spread of their preferential votes among other candidates in the following election.

Seventh, only a minority of parties in Slovakia achieved high levels of divergence relative to other parties. Thus, most of the parties seem to be on par with each other in matching their voters’ preferences. The high divergence was thus achieved only in case three types of parties: (1) coalitions with competing factions, (2) parties of leaders and followers, large in size and organized around charismatic leaders and (3) a single
exception – a party, whose key members left and the voters most probably spread their support among the rest of the candidates, hence the high divergence.

The major limitation of our framework is given by the fact that in order to calculate the index of divergence, one needs the data with both party and electorate preferences. The future research should therefore focus on countries with flexible lists, which enable voters to indicate their preferred candidates from the party-structured list. Based on the analysis by Ortega (2006), there is a prima facie case that the electoral systems in the following countries fulfill the criteria: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. Consequently, these countries could be a fruitful avenue for further research which would enable one to see whether any conclusions made based on the Slovak case could be generalized.

References


Belloni, Frank P. Dennis C. Beller (1978) Faction Politics: Political Parties and Factionalism in Comparative Perspectives. ABC-Clio Inc, Santa Barbara, CA.


Sikk, Allan (2011) ‘Newness as a winning formula for new political parties’, Party Politics, March. Published online before print.


Table 1: Party-electorate relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>divergence</th>
<th>concentration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>non-responsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>black-box/responsive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author
Table 2: Classification of Slovak political parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Name</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SDK (Slovak Democratic Coalition/Slovenská demokratická koalícia)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDKÚ (Slovak Democratic Christian Union/Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia)</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDH (Christian Democratic Movement/Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANO (Alliance of a New Citizen/Aliancia nového občana)</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SaS (Freedom and Solidarity/Sloboda a Solidarita)</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDL (Party of the Democratic Left/Strana demokratickej ľavice)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOP (Party of Civic Understanding/Strana občianskeho porozumenia)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMER (Direction)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSS (Communist Party/Komunistická strana Slovenska)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMK (Party of the Hungarian Coalition/Strana maďarske koalície)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most-Híd (Bridge)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HZDS (Movement for Democratic Slovakia/Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS (Slovak National Party/Slovenská národná strana)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: (1) Left (-) vs. right (+): economy, (2) Liberal (-) vs. conservative (+) in social attitudes, (3) Liberal democracy (+) vs. authoritarian/illiberal (-), (4) Ethnic/nationalist (+) vs. absence (0).
Sources: Fitzmaurice, 1999, 2004; Rybář and Deegan-Krause, 2008; Haughton, 2001; Kopeček 2007; Harriss, 2010; Hospodárske noviny 3 June 2010; Pravda 15 June 2010. See also text.
Table 3: Utilization of preference votes by voters, 1998-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of voters casting preference votes</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>73.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference votes per number of voters utilizing preference votes</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic
Table 4: MPs elected through the mechanism of “preference votes”, 1998-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MPs elected through the preference vote mechanism</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of all MPs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author
Figure 1: Party-electorate relationship in Slovakia

Source: author
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Source: author