

## THE PARTICIPATION AND ELECTORAL PREFERENCES OF PETRŽALKA'S INHABITANTS

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Participation and electoral preferences are important questions of political behaviour. In Bratislava's part Petržalka is participation of voters lower than Bratislava's and Slovak average. Electoral preferences are closer to similar habitations preferences and to general Slovak political orientation, with stronger Slovak National Party support. Party preferences within Petržalka's territory are very dispersed and too perplexed.

Geographical aspects of election have been drawing particular attention of political geographers for fairly long period. In broad concept of research carried out in Petržalka, political processes must have been taken into account. Although pure electoral geography in my interpretation is not scientifically too ambitious, it can achieve more significance if it is supported with detailed analysis of local politics.

In presented article attention has been focused to following issues:

- ♦ general role of local electoral preferences in national electoral process,
- ♦ situation of electorate participation in Petržalka at the lowest possible level of electoral units - electoral districts,
- ♦ electoral preferences' specificity of Petržalka's voters, comparing with preferences in Slovak Republic (SR), Bratislava and remaining parts of the City of Bratislava,
- ♦ electoral preferences at the electoral districts level concerning main political parties.

The whole study has been based upon investigation of legislative framework of electoral processes, including its applications and consequences. That approach has been combined with basic analysis of electoral results in Bratislava's 359 electoral districts (in that number 87 districts in Petržalka).

The possibilities of more complex methodology have been limited by the fact that only the latest electoral results had been applicable. The development of the political scene in Slovakia has been rapid, political parties are not consolidated yet, their political orientation has been changing in time. Their splitting or their merging is to be expected in future, as well as the occurrence of some new coalitions. All that will transform the face of the present political structure.

### **GENERAL ELECTORAL PRECONDITIONS IN SLOVAKIA - 1992**

Since 1989 Slovak Republic has been forming its new pluralist and democratic political system. It features two types of elections: national parliament election (to former Slovak National Council, that was renamed to National Council of Slovak Republic in 1993, and to Federal Assembly) and local self-government election. Because of the Czecho-Slovakia's division to two independent states that took place in 1992, the focus has been devoted to the Slovak National Council electoral results. The Council remains the only parliamentary structure in function after Jan.,1st,1993 and has been fully responsible for the execution of the parliamentary power in Slovakia.

The parliamentary election in Slovak Republic was organized on the proportional principle applied to four electoral regions (volebný kraj). Those multimandate regions were created according to former administrative regions. That system gives Bratislava the privilege of an electoral region, equivalently to great regions of West, Middle and East Slovakia. Bratislava has got a unique position among Slovak cities - it has formally its own representatives in the Council. The prospects to gain the electoral region status could be attractive for the second biggest city of Slovakia - Košice (235 000 inhabitants, Bratislava - 442 000 inhabitants - in 1991). The rest of Slovak cities would be too small for the application of the principle of multimandate electoral regions. An issue of new electoral regions is expected to be under discussion after a new administrative division of Slovakia will be applied. This could be a serious challenge to the present electoral system and may end up in its reform.

Electoral regions consist of hierarchical structure of territorial electoral units. The lowest and basic electoral territorial unit is an electoral district (volebný okrsk). It serves as a main institution of direct preparation and realization of election (list of voters, act of voting, first sum of votes, etc.). Each electoral district features an electoral room and hence this relationship represents a particular geographical problem. Some characteristics of the relationship are expressed by means of the participation in election, usually explained as a question of accessibility and distance. The legislature recommends the size of an electoral district to be about 1,000 voters, but it provides the opportunity to create autonomous districts for remote parts of municipalities, supposed there are more than 50 voters.

Electoral regions play an important role - candidates' lists of political parties are submitted for each of them. After the results at the national level are approved, parties obtain mandates for each respective electoral region. The number of mandates depends to some extent on the level of participation in electoral regions (Bratislava obtained in the 1992' elections 11 mandates from total 150 seats of the Council). Members of the parliament in this system represent their parties and regions, but success of parties depends on their national results. Very important is the 5 per cent limit for entering parliament at the national level (7 per cent for a coalition of two or three parties, 10 per cent for a coalition of four and more parties). This means that regionally and locally oriented parties lost their political influence at the national level, especially when the voter's participation in their regions has been low. Provided the national limits would apply to results at the level of electoral regions, more political parties which are recently absent in parliament would have their deputies in the Council.

### THE PARTICIPATION IN THE 1992' ELECTION

The participation of citizens in various social processes is crucial for forming new democracy and for that reason it has to meet suitable conditions. Supposing an electoral room is placed in remote or uncommon site, sometimes inadequately labelled, it can dissuade a more comfortable electorate. That problem can be acute especially in areas where higher proportion of new immigrants can be found, where a homogenous physical structure of habitation is prevailing, often without key dominance in space, or where a stronger identification with community is just to be developed. These presumptions are apparently applying to Petržalka's electoral context:

The level of participation in the Council election as to entire Slovakia was 84.2 per cent of total (in Bratislava 76.52 per cent). The participation of Petržalka's voters was only 73.47 per cent (Fig.1). This figure resembles to figures from other similarly new Bratislava's habitations e.g. Dev. Nová Ves, Pod. Biskupice, Vrakuňa. However it is far behind more stabilized and consolidated city parts represented by Staré Mesto (Old Town); Jarovce, Čunovo - last two having more rural than urban character. The share of invalid votes (the difference between the number of passed and valid votes) exceeded in Petržalka (2.9 per cent) the average, surpassing Staré Mesto and the western parts on the left bank of the Danube (Lamač, Karlova Ves, Dúbravka, Dev. Nová Ves). The percentage of valid votes in Petržalka (70.57 per cent) belongs to the lowest ones in the city. This means that the real valid participation represented only 58,499 voters of 82,893 voters enlisted on electoral lists in Petržalka. The number of invalid votes in the biggest part of Bratislava - Petržalka (23 per cent of Bratislava's voters) requires a better explanation and instructions regarding voting procedure before the next election. Although the participation in election

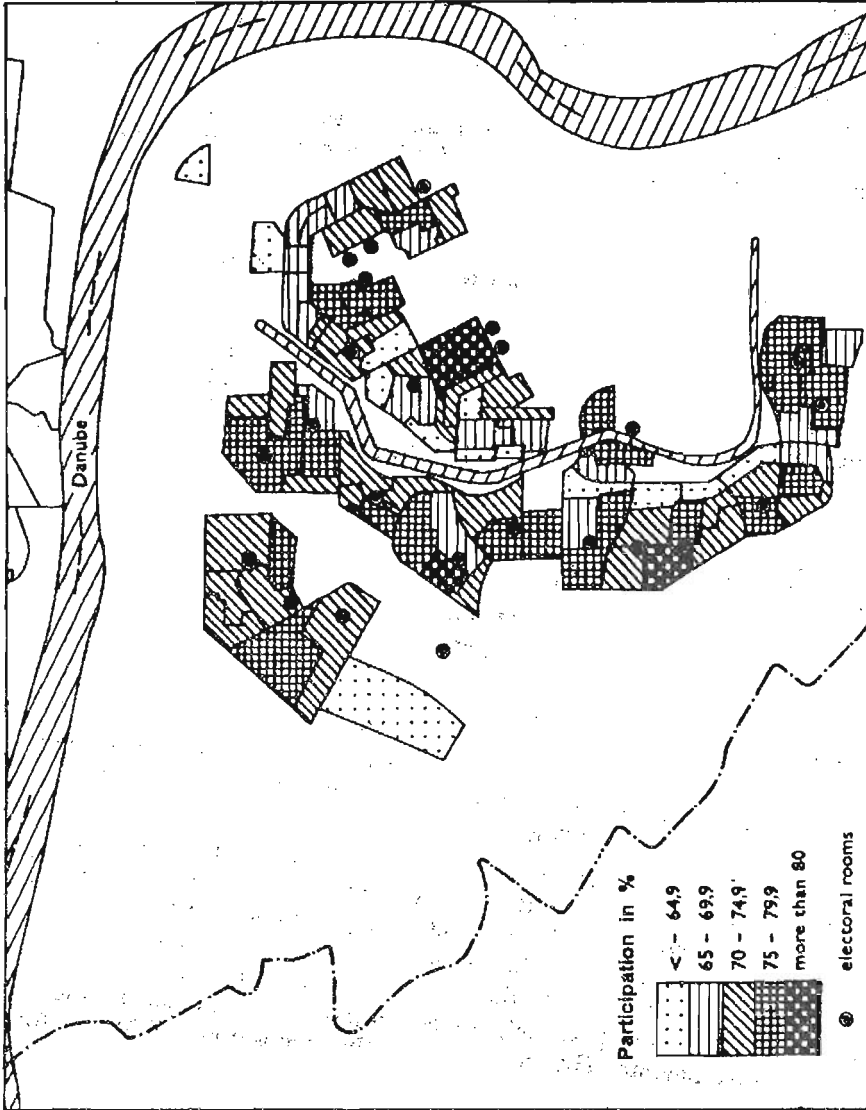
will probably go down, procedural losses of voters who have inclined to vote should be avoided. This is particularly important for Bratislava, which can lose parliamentary seats against the rest of Slovak electoral regions, because of their higher participation.

*Tab. 1. The Level of Electoral Participation (Slovak National Council Election 1992)*

<i>City part</i>	<i>Level of participation (%)</i>	<i>Participation valid votes (%)</i>	<i>Incorrect votes (%)</i>	<i>Share on total city's votes (%)</i>
Staré Mesto	79,80	78,09	1,71	13,10
Pod. Biskupice	74,72	72,34	2,38	4,42
Ružinov	78,78	76,00	2,78	18,84
Vrakuňa	74,17	71,84	2,33	3,46
Nové Mesto	74,73	72,99	1,74	10,60
Rača	81,99	80,16	1,83	5,01
Vajnory	63,56	61,50	2,06	0,95
Devín	83,04	79,79	3,25	0,21
Dev. Nová Ves	73,50	71,80	1,70	2,82
Dúbravka	75,17	73,48	1,69	8,71
Karlova Ves	75,88	74,14	1,74	5,80
Lamač	83,87	82,79	1,08	1,74
Záh. Bystrica	85,84	80,62	5,22	0,44
Jarovce	88,30	84,16	4,14	0,27
Rusovce	82,25	78,55	3,70	0,43
Čuňovo	89,24	84,72	4,52	0,19
<i>Petržalka</i>	<i>73,47</i>	<i>70,57</i>	<i>2,90</i>	<i>23,00</i>

Another specific issue of Bratislava has been electoral districts' establishing. Experiences with the creation of the election districts' map of Bratislava confirm that the districts are more or less results of spatial administrative division without detailed territorial overview. This approach lead in some cases to discontinuous nature of election districts which in many cases consist of few rather distant parts. The districts of Petržalka are more compact units based on a projected block urban structure.

More attention has been paid to the relation between the districts and their electoral rooms. Far from being rare is a case when one building with several rooms serves for more districts. In this way some districts have their electoral rooms within the district, while other ones vote in neighbouring districts, occasionally in remote sites. The prevalence of buildings containing electoral rooms were schools, as well as common sites. Petržalka disposed of 24 buildings for 87 electoral districts. An extreme case was the one when one building served for 6 electoral districts. Although the participation is regarded to be a multicausal issue, as demonstrated by Map.1, the lower participation of districts more distant to electoral rooms is evident.



Map. 1. Petržalka - Participation in 1992 Slovak National Council Election

Another important question is the territorial extent of electoral district. Bratislava has got extensive districts mainly in residential (single family houses) and industrial zones (function mixed with housing). As Map.1 shows, Petržalka features only a few extensive districts in its western part. The number of voters in districts provides a view from different perspective. The number of enlisted voters in Petržalka varies from 559 to 1253. The territorial structure of its electoral districts belongs to the best in Bratislava. Just in one case, the lower participation correlated with a large, remote district, electoral room of which was situated in a state enterprise.

### THE ELECTORAL PREFERENCES CONCERNING MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES

Only the results of main political parties, which had been most active in 1992' elections - namely Civic Democratic Union (ODÚ - lead by M. Čalfa and I. Mikloš), and oppositional Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS - lead by V. Mečiar) were worked with. Both political bodies were descendants of Public Against Violence (VPN) - a movement founded in 1989. Traditionally represented in the parliament are Christian-Democratic Movement (KDH - lead by J. Čarnogurský), leftist Party of the Democratic Left (SDL - lead by P. Weiss), and Slovak National Party (SNS - lead by J. Prokeš and J. Černák) aiming to establish an independent Slovak Republic. Among supporters of the economic reform running for the 1992' election are to be named Democratic Party (DS) and the Slovak branch of V. Klaus's Civic Democratic Party (ODS), which formed a coalition. The significance of parties addressing minorities was in Bratislava, including Petržalka, very marginal (below 3 per cent). The decisive aspect of the election seems to have been social unbearableness of the economic reform with its consequences in Slovakia and concern about the future of the common state of Czechs and Slovaks.

A comparison of electoral results at the national and Petržalka's level reveals the high relative proportion of pro-SNS votes in Petržalka (Slovakia - 7.93 per cent, Petržalka - 20.74 per cent, Fig.2). Another party relatively more successful in Petržalka than at the national level was SDL and also a hypothetic combination of ODS, DS, ODÚ (as an expression of rightist, liberal and conservative electoral potential) would surpass the national average. The will-to-be-governmental HZDS as well as the oppositional KDH performed worse.

**Tab. 2. Electoral Preferences Concerning Main Political Parties.**  
(Slovak National Council Election 1992) \*

	<i>Mov. for. Dem. Slovakia-HZDS</i>	<i>Party of Dem. Left - SDL</i>	<i>Christ.-Dem. Mov.-KDH</i>	<i>Slovak Nat. Party - SNS</i>	<i>ODU, ODS DS**</i>
<b>Slovak rep.</b>	<b>37,26</b>	<b>14,7</b>	<b>8,88</b>	<b>7,93</b>	<b>7,34</b>
<b>Bratislava</b>	<b>30,05</b>	<b>14,38</b>	<b>6,74</b>	<b>17,42</b>	<b>13,6</b>
number of seats in the Council	5	2	1	3	0
Staré Mesto	24,61	11,81	9,30	13,48	21,75
Nové Mesto	30,25	13,83	7,31	15,92	15,65
Rača	34,80	16,10	6,12	18,89	9,81
Vajnory	30,88	10,32	15,44	21,88	6,07
Pod. Biskupice	29,02	13,81	3,78	16,83	9,02
Ružiov	30,75	13,57	7,61	15,83	14,04
Vrakuňa	32,41	15,77	5,10	19,47	8,57
Devín	36,60	22,00	2,21	8,87	13,86
Dev. N. Ves	34,20	13,70	4,85	20,23	9,98
Dúbravka	29,97	17,04	6,22	18,09	12,67
Karlova Ves	27,02	15,16	7,16	18,15	15,05
Lamač	30,77	11,29	9,84	18,76	12,12
Záh. Bystrica	41,17	7,45	5,68	25,20	6,30
Jarovce	37,21	10,49	11,49	6,32	11,49
Rusovce	36,21	12,25	5,44	9,35	10,62
Čuňovo	31,35	13,11	16,8	4,30	14,75
<b>Petržalka</b>	<b>31,55</b>	<b>16,00</b>	<b>5,08</b>	<b>20,74</b>	<b>11,50</b>

\* All data in %, with exception of number of seats in the Council

\*\* Civic Democratic Union, Civic Democratic Party, Democratic Party

Comparing Bratislava's total results with Petržalka's ones there are no significant differences. Petržalka's electoral results show better for SNS, SDL and HZDS, on the other hand worse for KDH and a hypothetic combination of DS, ODS and ODÚ, when compared to Bratislava. Petržalka is one of the city parts with the highest support of SNS and SDL, at the same time its support of HZDS resembles the relative figures of Bratislava. The preference of KDH and ODS, DS, ODÚ was low. This brief outline of voter's preference shows that Bratislava, and above all Petržalka, is the Slovak National Party's most important electoral territory in the entire Slovakia.

The sensitive issue of the proportional electoral system that includes the 5 per cent limit is a share of lost votes. The figures of Petržalka were one of the best in Bratislava, due to the low preference of unsuccessful parties. That can be understood as a very high sensitivity to main streams in Slovak politics.

Important losers - ODÚ, DS, ODS, Social Democrats and parties of Slovak Greens, obtained only a fragment of Petržalka's votes. From that perspective Petržalka differs a lot comparing to Staré Mesto (Old Town), which have had very dispersed preferences. Mere four parties achieved as much as 70 per cent of votes passed in Petržalka (all of them becoming parliamentary), whereas in Staré Mesto the same value was shared by six parties. Similarities could be found in electoral preferences with other city parts such as Vrakuňa, Dúbravka, Karlova Ves, Dev. N. Ves. - similarly new habitations. Petržalka and similar habitations outnumbered electoral districts in older Bratislava (Staré Mesto, Nové Mesto), which showed dispersed preferences. Hence they had a crucial importance for electoral success of any party in Bratislava.

A strong position of HZDS in time of election was very visible in Petržalka's electoral districts. HZDS was the winner in all districts but one, where the winner was SNS. SNS performed as a second party in 77 districts, SDE in 9 districts (in one district the proportion between SNS and SDE was equal).

Territorial aspects of parties' preferences have been studied using extreme values of support (maximum, minimum). Provided there were three or more neighbouring districts with similar results, such spatial concentration was considered to be relevant. A stronger support (more than 32 per cent) was achieved by HZDS in electoral districts of Petržalka's parts Lúky I. - Lúky VI., then in the districts around Matador industrial plant. On the other hand HZDS performed worse (beneath 24 per cent) in Petržalka's parts Dvory IV. and Dvory I. SDE was given low preferences (below 15 per cent) in the northwestern part of Petržalka (Matador surroundings, Dvory V., VI.). The parts Dvory V. and VI. supported strongly SNS (more than 22.5 per cent). KDH achieved higher preference (that is more than 6 per cent) only in several districts in proximity of Matador and in the southwestern streets of Petržalka's part Háje I. The whole territorial structure is very dissipated and shows difficulties in revealing the sources of preferences.

## CONCLUSION

An important share of Bratislava's votes has not acquired parliamentary representation at all (e.g. of Staré Mesto's ones), and has been outnumbered at the parliamentary level by the recent national political structure. It was a lesson for regional political identity. Regionally and locally strong parties and interests groups lose their influence in national politics, a phenomenon especially interesting in a case of capitol. That could worsen the realization of the capital's interests at the level of the national parliament and the central government.

The results of election in Petržalka, when compared with Bratislava's figures, confirm that the most significant factors influencing the scope of participation in election at the electoral districts level are:



- ♦ size - the electoral district should not be too large
- ♦ dispersion - it should not be too dispersed, being only administrative cluster of remote groups of houses and blocks of flats,
- ♦ distance to electoral room - the electoral room should not be too distant (e.g. one that requires extra travel) and difficult to access (negative impact of urban traffic barriers)
- ♦ spatial familiarity - area in proximity of electoral room must be familiar to voters, that means a suitable site would be a well known marked building,
- ♦ location in public building - more suitable are electoral rooms in commonly attended buildings (easily accessible), less suitable the ones in private or corporate buildings.

These factors must be taken in account when preparing the election at the district level. A reasonable presumption is that increased number of electoral rooms combined with their more suitable location could increase the level of participation in Petržalka.

The detailed view of party preferences as for electoral districts revealed problems of analysing electoral results in such scale. Petržalka's territory could be described as a homogenous heterogeneity from the structural point of view. Its internal population structure is too perplexed, as it is affected by immigration, mixed age groups, different social status, education, property, etc. That leads to substantial problems in structural way of voting preference investigation as far as this habitation is concerned. Preferences based on classes or social groups, age, education, religion, etc., have been difficult to notice in that area. Such new habitations have not stable and clear party's preferences. Petržalka's influential position in Bratislava's electoral geography strengthens the need of a thoughtful and long term analysis.

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## **Participácia a volebné preferencie obyvateľov Petržalky.**

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### **Súhrn**

Na príklade výsledkov volieb do Slovenskej Národnej Rady v r.1992 sledujem problematiku účasti vo voľbách - participácie a volebných preferencií podľa politických strán u obyvateľov Petržalky.

Podrobnejšiu pozornosť som venoval otázkam:

- ♦ pozícii a vplyvu miestnych volebných preferencií na celonárodný volebný výsledok,
- ♦ situácii v účasti právoplatných voličov vo voľbách,
- ♦ špecifickému postaveniu volebných preferencií obyvateľov Petržalky v rámci SR a Bratislavy,
- ♦ volebným preferenciám na najnižšej možnej sledovateľnej úrovni volebných okrskov, podľa hlavných politických strán.

Súčasný proporcionálny, viacmandátový systém volebných krajov so vstupným limitom, je vážnou prekážkou pre vstup len lokálne a regionálne silnejších politických strán do SNR. Ich miestny volebný úspech bol prečíslený volebnými výsledkami na národnej úrovni. Toto sa týka i niektorých častí Bratislavy, ale menej Petržalky.

Pri skúmaní participácie vo voľbách, Petržalka zaostáva za úrovňou SR i úrovňou účasti vo voľbách niektorých častí Bratislavy (napr. Staré Mesto). Pozornosť si zaslúži pásma nižšej participácie v okolí Chorvátskeho ramena, ktoré spájam s otázkou vzdialenosti do volebnej miestnosti. Ak uvažujeme v prospech podmienok podporujúcich participáciu (vychádzajúc i z poznatkov volieb v celej Bratislave) ukazuje sa výhodnosť menších, kompaktnějších okrskov, bez nadmernej disperzie (administratívneho zlúčenia vzdialených úz. celkov), s bližšou volebnou miestnosťou, jej umiestnením v širšie známom prostredí a bežne verejne prístupnom objekte. Ďalšia špecifikácia si bude vyžadovať detailnejší výskum, pretože nemôžeme zjednodušiť problém participácie len na spomínané faktory.

Volebné preferencie obyvateľov Petržalky sa podstatne nelíšia od výsledkov v SR. Významná tu bola predovšetkým pozícia SNS, oproti jej priemernej podpore v SR. Preferencie boli podobné s porovnateľnými novšími sídliskami v Bratislave - Dúbravka, Vrakuňa, Karlova Ves. Pohľad na preferencie podľa volebných okrskov ukázal ťažkosť pri hľadaní zaužívaného štruktúrneho vysvetlenia volebných preferencií. Špecifický charakter politických preferencií tejto vplyvnej miestnej komunity v Bratislave (Petržalka tvorí 23 % voličov celého mesta), môže byť bližšie identifikovaný až podrobnejším a dlhodobejším výskumom miestnej politiky.