

POLITICAL CLEAVAGES OR TENSIONS? GENERAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS IN POST-COMMUNIST DOBRUDJA (1992-2008)

Aurelian Giugăl¹

Abstract. Les débats sur l'évolution des partis politiques dans la Roumanie postcommuniste ont été nombreux. A partir de la théorie classique de Rokkan et Lipset sur l'évolution des partis politiques dans l'Europe Occidentale, il y avait des auteurs qui ont accepté ce modèle pour l'Europe Orientale (De Waele), et d'autres qui, par contre, ont sollicité une prudence maximale en ce qui concerne l'application du modèle rokkanien sur l'évolution des partis politiques dans l'Est de l'Europe (Seiler). Cristian Preda et Sorina Soare ont proposé une autre interprétation. Ils soutiennent que le système politique postcommuniste de Roumanie est organisé autour de la négation des clivages politiques. Dans la vision de deux auteurs, les partis et les représentants du postcommunisme roumain transposent les conflits internes au niveau des leaders. Le clivage fondateur de la société roumaine, l'opposition néo-communiste vs anti-communistes, n'est, pour les deux auteurs, qu'une tension superficielle de la société roumaine, tension qui se dilue après les élections générales des années 2000. Le but principal de cet article est, dans ce contexte, de tester ces hypothèses, à partir des exemples offerts par les élections générales et locales de Dobroudja postcommuniste (1992-2008). La géographie électorale de la région de sud-est de la Roumanie offre des indices significatifs dans ce sens. Les résultats électoraux ont mis en évidence des aspects importants: l'espace politique autochtone n'est pas marqué par des clivages politiques ; la distinction initiale néo-communiste vs anti-communistes a une certaine relevance dans la période 1992-1996 mais, après les élections des années 2000, elle devient superflue. La dynamique de la géographie électorale au niveau des unités administratives de Dobroudja est une preuve relevant dans ce sens. La partitocratie (Daniel Barbu) et le clientélisme électoral sont les réalités substantielles de notre système politique.

Keywords: *political cleavages, political tensions, general elections, post-communism*

1. Introduction

In post-communist Romania we can identify the main characteristics of a representative democracy: the right to vote, the right to be elected, the right of the political leaders to compete for support and votes, free and fair elections, the liberty of associating, the freedom of expression, the diversity of the means of information, institutions that deal with the public politics concerning the vote (Robert A. Dahl, 1971). If democracy is an obvious reality, what can we say about the political cleavages? We wonder whether the Romanian partisan families could be analysed using Rokkan's conceptual scheme? Or is it rather necessary to redefine Rokkan's model when we refer to the new democracies in South-Eastern Europe? Or perhaps the ideological delimitations between the opponent parties in Romania

¹ Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Bucharest, giugal.aurelian@fspub.unibuc.ro

have different causes than those generating the partisan distinctions in West Europe and using the term of political cleavage is not appropriate for the Romanian case.

At the end of the '60, Stein Rokkan and Martin Lipset provided the most coherent and rigorous explanation concerning the genesis of the system of parties and multi-party systems in Europe. According to them, the cleavages system that was spread in Europe at the end of the '60 was the same as it was ruled as a consequence of the generalization of the universal suffrage, after the First World War (Daniel-Louis Seiler, 2003). The four fundamental cleavages were generated both by the national and the industrial revolutions. The national revolution imposes two kinds of cleavages, centre vs. periphery and state vs. church. The industrial revolution produces two other cleavages. The first one opposes the owners to the workers and the second one concerns the opposition between urban and rural localities (S. M. Lipset, M. Rokkan, 1967). The ideological delimitations of the parties were made in accordance with these classic cleavages (the socialist parties supporting workers' interests, and those from the liberal wing proposing policies in the favour of owners and bourgeoisie).

Referring strictly to the Romanian space, many authors have proposed different ways of interpretation. Jean Michel De Waele, considers that three of the four classic cleavages of Rokkan and Lipset can be found without any friction in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (hence in Romania as well). He has in mind the cleavages urban vs. rural, centre vs. periphery and state vs. church. Plus, he identifies another three cleavages generated by the international revolution:

- maximalist vs. minimalist (cleavage would oppose the sustainers of fast economic reforms to those who believe that a gradual approach is far more appropriate). In Romania the Democratic Party (PD) and the National Liberal Party (PNL) would be classified on the maximalist side of the cleavage, the minimalist axis being represented by the Party of Social Democracy in Romania²;

- authoritative vs. democratic, a cleavage that would correspond to the accumulation of the cultural historical conflict between the traditionalists and the pro-western supporters;

- communist vs anti-communist includes on the one hand the dissidence movement (the opponents of the communist regimes) and on the other hand, those inheriting the structure of the former regime (J. M. De Waele, 2003).

D.-L. Seiler doesn't spread the Rokkan's model to the Eastern Europe having into the consideration the culture and the actual history of each country. Two elements are decisive in this respect: firstly, the industrial revolution has developed in the Eastern Europe under the rule of the communist governments, secondly, the lack of a representative democracy before the Second World War. Consequently, Seiler believed that the international revolution at the end of the communism is that which splits up from the parties' point of view the societies in Eastern Europe. As for Romania, as a part of South-Eastern Europe, Seiler finds suitable the cleavage between neo-communists vs. democrats, which intersect with the centre vs. periphery cleavage characteristic to Transylvania.

Finally, a different opinion was formulated by Cristian Preda and Sorina Soare. In their opinion, the post-communist political system in Romania is based on negating the cleavages and this way is going ahead the will of the communist government, will based on the explicit negation of all cleavages. The parties and the representatives of the Romanian post-communist express first and foremost conflicts between leaders, which was considered to be the foundation cleavage in Romanian society, meaning the opposition between anti-communists vs. post-communists is nothing more than a superficial tension of Romanian

²These were the name of the parties when De Waele's article was published (2003).

society, which becomes frail after 2000, when PNȚCD didn't reach the parliament (Cristian Preda, Sorina Soare, 2008).

These conceptual approaches didn't win the indispensable empirical support. They remained at the theoretic level, sustained only by the intellectual authority of the mentioned authors. In post-communist Romania there were six general elections and five local elections, and the electoral evolution offered enough empirical material in order to sustain one theory or another. Beside the fact that the electoral map of Romania has changed a lot in the last 20 years of democracy (many parties which in the '90 were getting pretty high electoral score have vanished), as a rule the important parties, descending at the initial moment (December 1989) had continuity thing that could validate the theses with reference to the political cleavages above mentioned. It's well known the fact that most of political parties have a mixed social electorate (J. M. De Waele, 2003) – a characteristic which is ever more present in the western countries (there is a tendency of diluting the political cleavages). How much does the electoral geography change at the administrative unit level? The political urban-rural dichotomy is well known, with an urban electorate which is more liberal (having into account the economic conditions) and a rural one which is more redistributive, less dynamic and closer to the social-democrat agenda.

Using these two demographic levels, the political distinction has been made, the cleavage and the tension neo-communists vs. democrats, the first being elected more in the rural areas and the former picking their votes in the urban areas. This way a political distinction in Romania occurs in the first post-communist decade. Therefore, our study would like to be empirical in order to test the above mentioned hypotheses.

Our assumption is that the dynamics of the electoral geography from South-Eastern Romania (Dobrudja) can give us enough clues concerning the post-communist ideological delimitations in Romania. This hypothesis indicates as well the object of the present study. Our motivation for having chosen the region of Dobrudja lies in its multiethnic and multiconfessional characteristic and secondly because there is an obvious contrast between the less economically developed regions (Western Danube area, the central parts of the Dobrudja Plateau) in opposition to the more economically developed areas and last but no least the demographical differences regarding the different urbanization rate of the two counties that form this historical region Dobrudja (Tulcea and Constanța).

2. Methodology

In the present study we use two different (but complementary) sides of the statistics: the statistical description, meaning the specifying the data resulted after the processing all kinds of information and the statistical inference, which involves a theoretical approach of the observation data in order to draw the logical conclusions.

We used electoral data from each locality: the general (Chamber of Deputies) and local chamber elections results (1992-2008 intervals). The data were processed by National Institute of Statistics (INS). While analysing them we used constitutive methods (the statistical description, the analysis of the main components, correlations) as well as graphic and cartographic methods (graphs, electoral choropleth maps).

3. Results and discussions

3.1 Local and general elections

The results at the local and general elections in Dobrudja show the following important aspect: the two counties from south-eastern part of Romania has shown an inconstant evolution along the electoral suffrages. Tulcea and Constanța counties behave quite differently. On the one hand, Tulcea evolved from a dominant vote for FSN and its successors PDSR and PSD (in the first post-communist decade) to one opposed to the social-democrats (after the local and general elections in 2000) and on the other hand Constanța had a completely different behaviour. For instance, at the general elections in September 1992, in Tulcea, FDSN won with a big difference in front of CDR (37.67 % for FDSN and 17.68 % for CDR) and in the south part of Dobrudja (Constanța) CDR won the suffrage with 23.14 %, a bit more than FDSN (21.51 %). If we cumulate CDR's and FSN's votes (the latter has formed after the National Salvation Front scission), then it gets even more obvious as we obtain 40.66% in Constanța and 26.36% in Tulcea. At the 1996 general elections the electoral behaviour difference between the two counties is even more obvious: in Constanța CDR won with 35.39 % ahead of PDSR, which only got 13.73 %). Moreover, in Constanța PDSR was behind USD as well (20.75%). In Tulcea, CDR is the winning party in the county and the difference between it and PDSR was quite small – 28.76 % for CDR and 28.33% for PDSR. The difference is getting bigger as we analyse the capitals of the two counties, Constanța and Tulcea. In Constanța city, CDR hav accumulated four times the PDSR percentage (42.57 % for CDR comparing to only 10.08 % for PDSR), whilst in Tulcea city the gap between two parties was smaller (37.42 % for CDR comparative to 18.95 % for PDSR). The electoral results at 1996 general elections were pretty much the same, if we analyse the other towns and localities in both counties.

Starting with 2000 general and local elections, the electoral geography of Dobrudja has known significant changes. At 2000 local elections, PDSR won the elections in Tulcea city with 40%, as for the others: PD got only 14.31%, PNL 5.25 %, and CDR 4.02 %. 2000 local electoral results in Dobrudja foresaw CDR fail at general elections (which happened four months later), when the alliance did not reach the electoral threshold and did not enter the parliament (see table 1). On the other hand, regarding the local electoral results, the success of PSDR was not a significant one, excluding the results in the urban areas of Tulcea County. After this local electoral suffrage, social-democrats (PDSR) have become the main political party in Constanța County, and in Tulcea County PNL, and especially PD (which became PDL later) won the leading position.

Table 1: The voting results at 2000 local chamber election in Dobrudja

	PDSR (%)	PNL (%)	PD (%)	CDR (%)	PRM (%)
Dobrudja	23,71	9,27	15,13	7,44	7,35
Urban Dobrudja	23,71	7,25	13,86	6,91	8,54
Rural Dobrudja	23,70	12,71	17,31	8,34	5,31
Urban Constanța	21,59	7,60	13,80	7,55	8,37
Rural Constanța	22,43	13,93	21,95	9,87	5,37
Urban Tulcea	34,16	5,55	14,16	3,72	9,42
Rural Tulcea	25,77	10,66	9,73	5,85	5,22
Constanța city	24,93	6,84	5,73	6,55	9,47
Tulcea city	40,00	5,25	14,31	4,02	9,66

Source: National Institute of Statistics

The 2000 elections tendency were amplified at 2004 local and general elections, when PSD (former PDSR) was getting stronger in Constanța County and PD (today PDL) in Tulcea County. This new electoral order which was stable in Dobrudja's counties was reconfirmed by the 2008 general and local elections. At the local chambers elections in Constanța, PSD got 42.32 %, as the second party PDL only got 22.39 %. In Tulcea, the situation was quite the opposite, PDL on the first place with 41.23 % and PSD on the second place with 23.97 %. The same situation we can remark for the capitals of these counties, PSD won in Constanța city with 59.02 %, and PDL won in Tulcea with 62.89 % (see table 2).

Table 2: The voting results at 2008 local chamber election in Dobrudja

	PSD (%)	PDL (%)	PNL (%)
Dobrudja	38,12	26,70	17,74
Urban Dobrudja	41,24	26,76	16,35
Rural Dobrudja	33,00	26,59	20,03
Urban Constanța	44,68	21,34	17,87
Rural Constanța	37,38	24,57	20,46
Urban Tulcea	23,37	54,85	8,46
Rural Tulcea	22,44	30,53	19,18
Constanța city	59,02	17,03	10,73
Tulcea city	20,42	62,89	6,00

Source: National Institute of Statistics

The new electoral map in Dobrudja remained the same at the general election, as for the Parliament in Tulcea, PDL won most of the mandates (2 of 4 for the Chamber of Deputies), and in Constanța, PSD+PC won 5 of 10 mandates (the same Chamber of Deputies). This electoral dynamics in these two decades is pointed out very clearly in the vote ratio maps between the main parties. Comparing the vote ratio maps of 1996 general elections (we have got this ratio by dividing PDSR votes to those gotten by CDR and USD) and 2008 general elections (ratio by dividing PSD+PC votes to those of PDL and PNL) we can observe the asymmetrical electoral disposal (see the ratio vote maps, figures 1 and 2) compared to that identified in France, in XIXth and XXth centuries, by the founder of the electoral geography, André Siegfried. Studying Ardèche region during the French Third Republic (1841-1940) and interpreting the voting models, the French geographer has discovered that the areas preferring the left wing parties in 1871 have almost the same behaviour in 1936. He separated 31 regions, 17 voting for the left wing and 11 for the right one. Only 3 of them had significantly changed during this long period of time (P. J. Taylor, R. J. Johnston, 1979). As far as Dobrudja region is concerned, the electoral geography is quite fluctuating from a suffrage to another, the electoral situation which is obvious as well in the rural, as in the urban areas. Therefore, considering this particularities of Dobrudja, we find it necessary to pursue studying this region based on the electoral data in the localities, not just in the counties. By stating this we consider that from electoral geography point of view there is an obvious discrepancy between the analysis at the national level (having the county as a unit) and that at the regional level (where Dobrudja constitutes a good example (where we analysed the electoral data for every locality)). The electoral contradiction consists in fact that at the national level there is a coherence regarding the electoral geography – a stability underlined by the analysis of the main components (Aurelian Giugăl et al., 2011), as for Dobrudja, the instability is far more conspicuous. The vote for one party or another has consecutively changed, which indicates its chaotic dimension, both for the general and local selection. For the most localities, this goes as a rule, not as the exception, which is characteristic for voting behaviour in the new

democracies (C. Flint, P. J. Taylor, 2007). Principal component analysis for the ratio vote shares calculated between the principal political groups (PDSR vs. CDR in 1996, PDSR and PNL, PD in 2000, PSD+PUR and DA in 2004, PSD+PC vs. PNL, PDL in 2008) during 1996-2008 (general elections, the Chamber of Deputies). The results constitute a proof in this matter.

Table 3: Factor loadings for the ratios vote shares, 1996-2008 (PDSR vs. CDR, PDSR vs. PNL & PD, PSD+PUR vs DA and PSD+PC vs PDL & PNL)

Elections	Loadings
1996	0,63
2000	0,78
2004	0,77
2008	0,51

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Reducing the number of political parties represented (that pass the electoral threshold) and decreasing the turnout happened at the same time with this extremely fluctuating electoral geography. There is a symbiosis with regard to the evolution of the parties' political system represented either in the national Parliament, or at the counties or local level, between the national and the dynamics of Dobrudja, considering the fact that the system has changed from a form with many parties political represented, to one where the important parties played an significant role. There were and there still are small parties that are represented at the local suffrage (local or city councils), but this is a minor feature which depends on the local political characteristics. Currently, in Romania as well as in Dobrudja, only the important parties play a role in the electoral suffrages. Considering the fact that UDMR is strictly regional party, we can mention that PDL, PSD and PNL are the most important three parties in Romania. The ethnic parties in Dobrudja (South-Eastern Romania is a multiethnic region, in some localities Romanian is not the main ethnicity) do not play a significant role. Except the minority of Russians-Lipovans (partly of course), the ethnic structure does not require voting behaviour: the party representing the significant minority does not get the votes of its own community. The most part of the votes go to the parties with national representation. This particular situation was characteristic to Dobrudja in the interwar period as well, excepting the fact that during that time the ethnic minorities' parties were restricted in Dobrudja, so they couldn't submit candidates for the general election. In this respect, Dobruja particularly and Romania, in general, had pretty much the same electoral behaviour *i.e.* the vote for the main central parties with national representation (Aurelian Giugă, 2011). Over the decades, in post-communism, the picture of the ethnic parties remained unchanged, despite the fact that no restrictions are applied to the ethnic minorities.

The electoral reality in post-communist Romania reveals an important aspect: there is no kind of premise to lead us towards individualization of the political cleavages in the our political space, by saying this we take into consideration that the electoral results in the two countries mentioned do not last in time on the electoral pathes we suggested in the introduction chapter: cleavage neo-communists vs democrats (Seiler, De Waele). In turn, Constanța and Tulcea are quite fluctuating in terms of political support. If during the first years after the revolution, to place Dobrudja on the reformist, anti-communist, more centre-right ideologically coordinate, as to use a language related to the West European partisan delimitation, seemed addequate, then, after the 2000 general election, PSD (social democrats) becomes the most important party. Therefore, many interpretations regarding this electoral

behaviour can be made, but not in order to identify the political cleavages, tension or ideological boundaries.

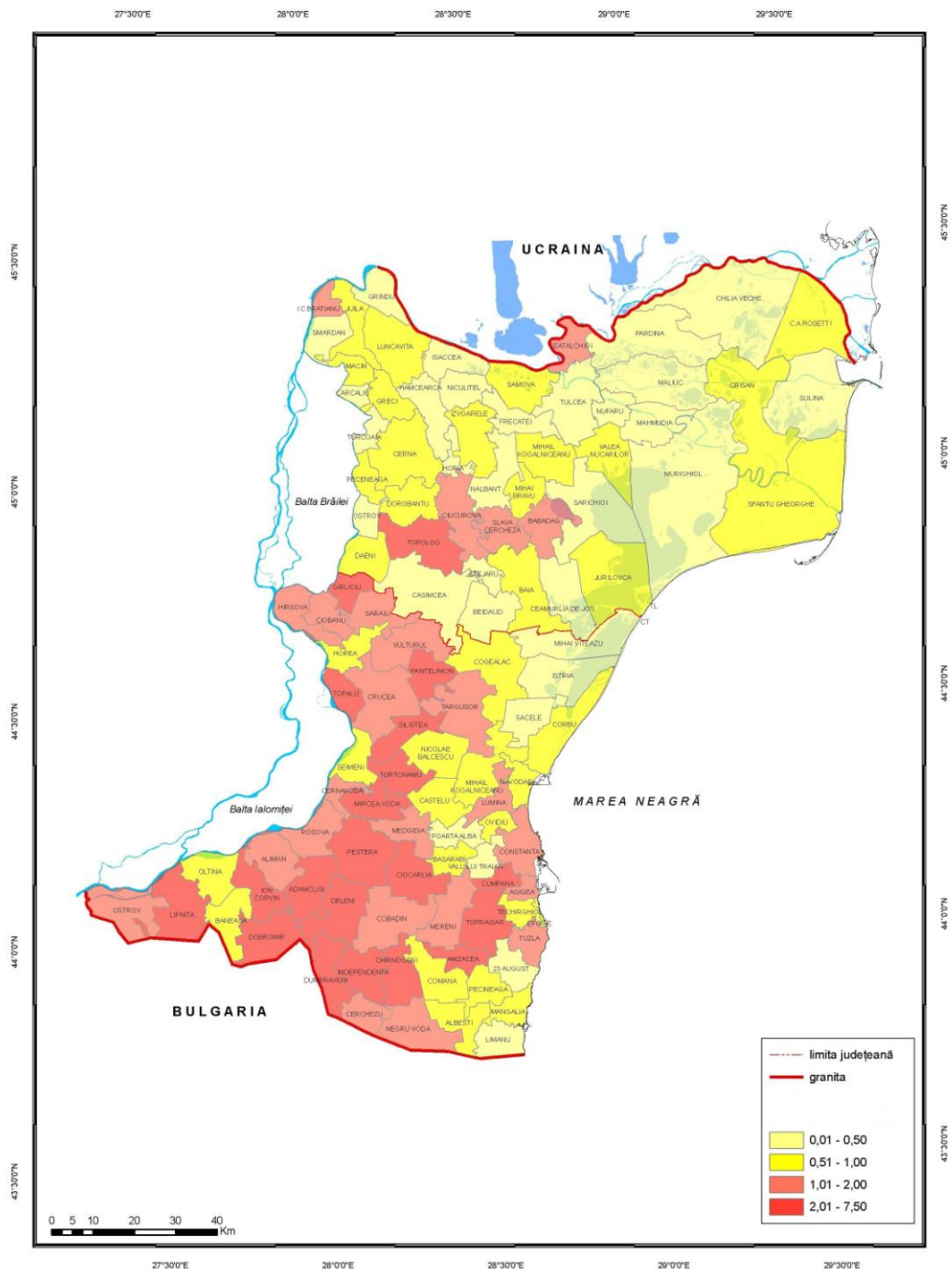


Figure 1: The vote ratio map in 1996: PDSR vs CDR + USD

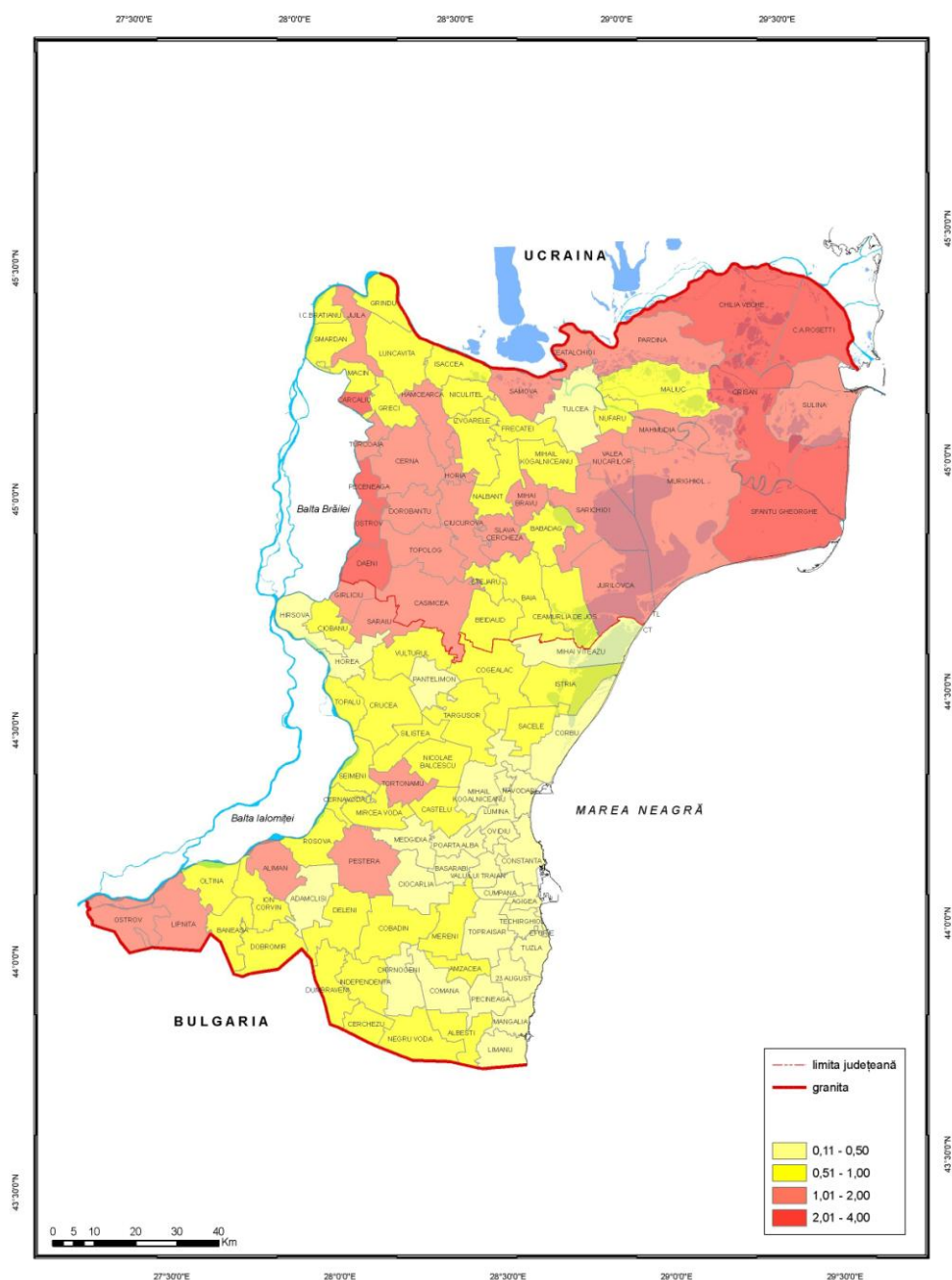


Figure 2: The vote ratio map in 2008: PSD + PC vs PDL + PNL

3.2 The interdependence between poverty rate and voting behaviour?

All over the world in strong democracies (and beyond) the left-wing parties, adherents of salary increase, differentiated taxes by income, support for the union movement, win most of the votes in rural areas and industrial areas of cities (S. M. Lipset, 1983). In Britain, for example, the Labour Party is always the first in the industrial Liverpool – Manchester area,

while the Conservative Party always wins in inner London. In Dobrudja, the rural voters was voting in a higher share for the Social Democratic Party (FSN/FDSN/PDSR/PSD), compared with urban voters, but at the last election, this aspect has become obsolete, because PSD won even in the city of Constanța (if we limit the studied area). In the post-communist period has always been made the distinction between urban voters which were more dynamic, more liberal counterweight to the rural voters, which were economically poorer and therefore more inclined to left wing parties, considering their so-called left programs. This evidence seems to become an axiom in the collective mentality in Romania of the last 20 years. Our question is simple, if limited economic resources of the rural areas influence the voting behaviour as the lower the economic level is the higher the social democratic vote gets and can we empirically test this premise? To check this aspect, we use economic data (poverty rate) for the rural localities in Constanța and Tulcea counties (data were published on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development), which were correlated with vote for the social-democrats. We are aware that there are certain limitations in our approach, in the sense that we know precisely the poverty rate in a particular locality in Dobrudja, appearing the limitation considering the fact that we do not have any voting record on social categories in the locality and this is goes for all localities in the studied area. Therefore, we know that the poverty rate in a given community is 30 % (random figure), but how many of these 30 % really voted at a suffrage or another? Considering these aspects, we might say that our approach is limited. The depth of such a research needs an approach from the electoral sociology point of view (case studies including electoral data and complex variables), a plausible working trail for future electoral studies.

The correlational shows us a concrete, clear evidence: the vote for the Social Democratic Party (PSDR, PSD), was not and is not influenced by the poverty rate (at least for the South-East region), in any suffrage in general elections took place from 1996 until 2008 (Chamber of Deputies) and there is no causal relationship between the vote for the mentioned party and the poverty rate (figures 3 and 4). For the accuracy of the calculation, we have eliminated those communes that have a large proportion of ethnic minorities and could lead us to fake scores for PSDR / PSD, although as we have already mentioned, in Dobrudja, with few exceptions, the parties ethnic do not play an important electoral role.

At 2008 general elections, for example, there were localities (communes) with a high poverty rate (Beidaud – 59.80 %) where the Liberal Democratic Party won a very high % (59.76 %). Conversely, in localities with a poverty rate lower in the Dobrudja region, Agigea, with the lowest poverty rate calculated of all the South-Eastern localities (20.30 %), PSD + PC was voted in higher proportion (38.86 %) than the sum of the PDL and PNL votes (37.73 %). There are other numerous examples that indicate this important issue: in rural Dobrudja, there is no interdependence between voting one political party or another and the poverty rate.

Only by following the electoral evolution of PDSR/PSD in some localities (rural or urban) in Dobrudja, we can easily remark that the degree of the electoral incoherence (and of electoral geography as well). There are many localities, including urban (even Constanța to relate to a very good example), which radically changed the electoral option from one suffrage to another, in many cases the differences appeared only after a few months (from local elections to the general elections). There are some localities where the social-democrats has constantly increased (figure 5) or, conversely, localities with a contradictory vote for PDSR/PSD, periods of growth, other of regression (figure 6).

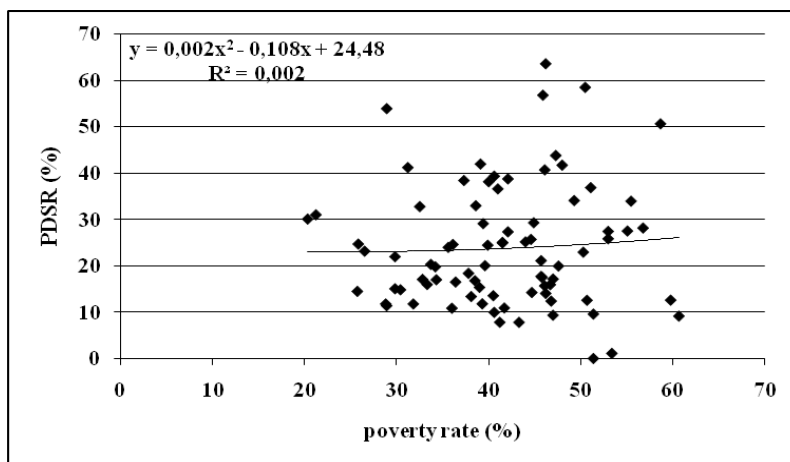


Figure 3: Poverty rate and PDSR vote (1996 general election) in rural Dobrudja

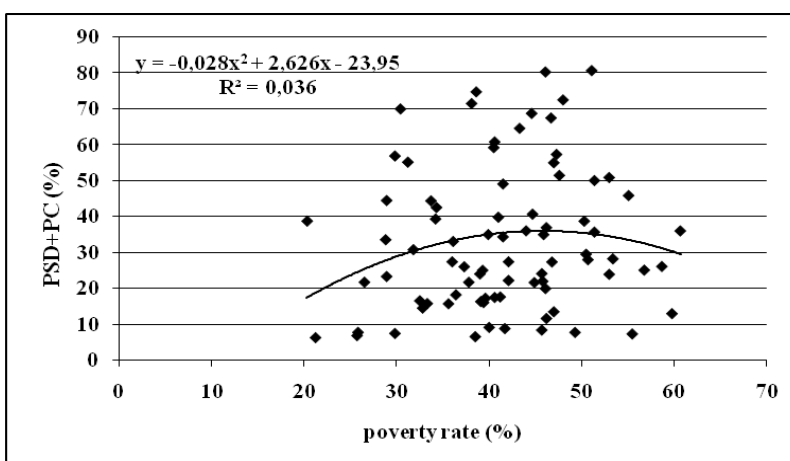


Figure 4: Poverty rate and PDSR vote (2008 general election) in rural Dobrudja

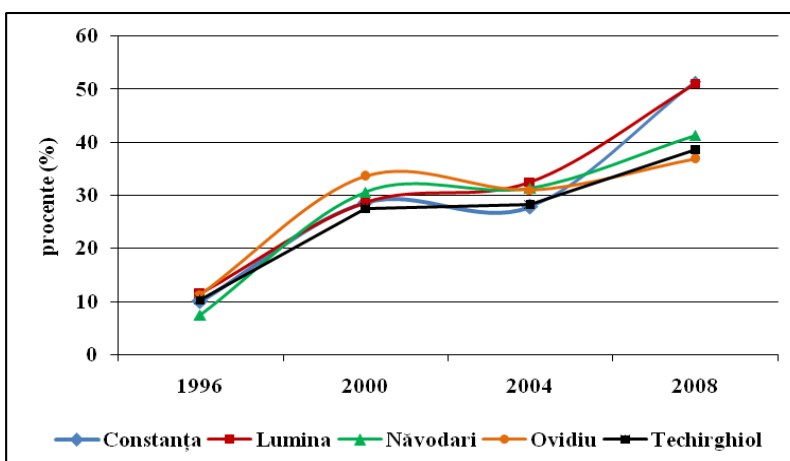


Figure 5: PDSR/PSD+PUR/PSD+PC trends in Dobrudja localities (general elections – Chamber of Deputies)

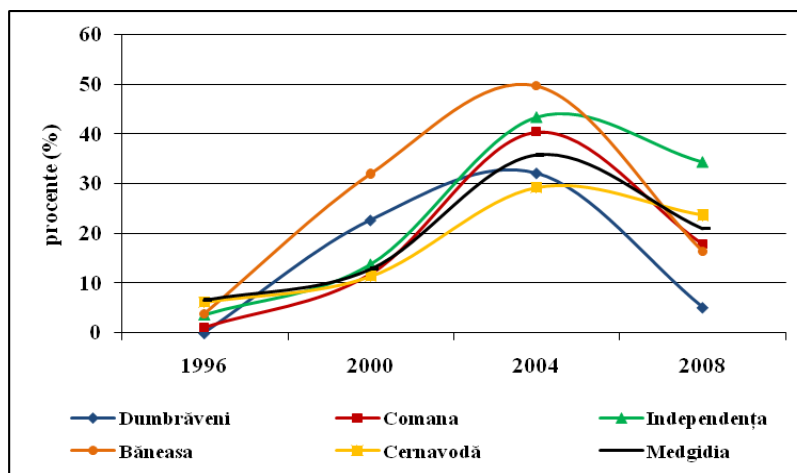


Figure 6: PDSR/PSD trends in Dobrudja localities (local chamber elections)

Based on these results we can state that there are no elements that allow us to conclude that the vote for the PSD can be explained in terms of economic development level (poverty rate). Studying the poverty rate index is not enough to explain the voting behaviour; therefore it needs to be researched in some other fields. On the other hand, the analytical sophistication can gain consistency as far as sociological approach (survey data) in the form of case studies would complete the present paper.

Conclusions

One of the conclusions to be drawn by analysing the voting behaviour in post-communist Dobrudja concerns the unstable aspect of the electoral geography, a situation similar to that of countries with incipient democracy (Taylor and Flint's theory is practically confirmed). We dare state that our electoral behaviour is closer to that of some countries, like Ghana and India, far from those in Western Europe. The corollary of this reality is the lack of electoral divisions or political tensions. If in the first post-communist decade the distinction FDSN/PSDR versus CDR have a minimum degree of coherence and understanding (considering the cleavage maximalists vs. minimalists, or the tension neo-communist vs. anti-communist) and with rural voters more inclined to collectivist version of distinction and the urban one – more liberal in its political options, along with the disappearance of the Convention (CDR) and the political resize that took place later, the initial tension lost its original meaning (aspect noted by many other Romanian political science researchers). Our assertion is also strengthened by an electoral event that is rather an abnormality than an electoral logic frame. Everywhere in Western Europe, the liberal parties are much more voted by the middle and wealthy classes, their score being insignificant if we refer to the class of industrial workers and farmers. The electoral results in Dobrudja refute all these European tendencies. At the 2004 local council elections in Tulcea County, the National Liberal Party (PNL) had a better performance in rural areas compared to urban areas, an almost double rate (23.27 %) in the communes of the county compared to the five cities (13.78 %). In many localities, the electoral success was very high, well above the rate the party ever got at the national, regional or county level (we give two examples, the communes: Nufăru – 67.30 %, and Baia - 55.64 %, where the poverty rate is high 35.60 and 39.90 %). Therefore, we ask ourselves whether, in this context, we can still take into account the notions of cleavages,

political tensions or other partisan boundaries when the electoral results speak differently from themselves?

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