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ELECTORAL GEOGRAPHY AS A NEW MEAN OF ANALYZING SOCIAL CHANGE. KRAKÓW CITY AND MAŁOPOLSKIE VOIVODSHIP CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT. The paper describes political support for Polish political parties as aggregated into four principal options (left-wing, liberal, populist, and right-wing) as well as flux in the electorate in Małopolskie voivodship in the last two decades in order to show regions of electoral stability that tend to do favour the four principal social and political options. Stabilization of cultural and political identity and gradual changes therein are shown by comparing dominant political options with selected social and economic data. The comparison should also allow for a reasonable prediction of future gains and losses for each political option.

KEY WORDS: Poland, Małopolskie voivodship, Kraków, electoral geography, political preferences.

INTRODUCTION

Electoral geography is a new field that has emerged over the last two decades in social and demographic research in Poland. It is the product of the democratization of public life in Poland and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe. Electoral geography is not merely a fascinating new discipline with great analytical potential but also a practical solution rooted in systematic databases. The fundamental research goal of the discipline of electoral geography is to study electoral behaviour driven by a variety of social attitudes. The most important of electoral behaviours are gauged via rates of voter turnout and electoral preferences as manifested in public support for different electoral committees.

The territory currently part of Małopolskie voivodship has not seen any significant population shifts in its most recent history. The region had not changed

hands either, politically speaking, as had been the case with areas in western Poland following World War II. Today, the ‘residency index’ for Małopolskie voivodship is rather high, which translates into a general tendency of stable voting patterns. The conservative and populist ideologies of the pre-World War I era (contemporary territory of the Małopolskie voivodship as the part of Austrian province of Galicia) were tinged with nationalist undertones and put Małopolskie voivodship squarely to the right of centre during the era of the Second Polish Republic (prior to World War II).

The northern part of the voivodship, however, had been part of the Russian Partition prior to World War I. This particular area was strongly influenced by populist political parties up until World War II. Today, Małopolskie voivodship stands out nationally in terms of its tendency to favour a variety of political affiliations, which can be broadly considered right-wing. This state of affairs is a logical consequence of the influence of social structures and attitudes that can be best described as ‘conservative’.

The paper presents the electoral preferences of the citizens of the Małopolskie voivodship based on Sejm (lower house of the Polish Parliament) election results from 1993–2007. The election results are then analyzed with respect to selected social and economic characteristics in order to show potential political trends, which may take hold in the near or distant future in Małopolskie voivodship society.

The paper takes into account all major electoral committees (political parties). The results of data analysis are presented on a gmina (administrative region of the 3rd order). The electoral committees analyzed in the paper are listed in Table 1. The committees have been placed in four groups of major political, social, and economic orientations: 1) left-wing, 2) liberal, 3) populist, and 4) right-wing. This classification system applies to the Polish political scene since the early 1990s due to an incomplete separation of the left and the right. This typology is normally accepted in the geographic sciences (Kowalski, 2003, 2004) and in the humanities (Żukowski, 1993; Zarycki, 1997). The system is based on two independent pairs of values – social conservatism and cultural liberalism as well as free market beliefs and socialist beliefs (Kitschelt, 1992; Kabath, Sobczak, 1999).

The classification system presented above can be debatable and is not the only means of grouping the political parties of interest. Nevertheless, most mathematical methods show that this system reflects actual differences between political viewpoints (Kabath, Parysek, 2002). Some parties present very specific platforms and are easy to classify. On the other hand, other parties involve multiple orientations and tend to evolve on the Polish political scene. Parties of this type had to be classified on the basis of common social perceptions of the parties in question rather than specific electoral platforms. It is also important

Table 1. Selected political parties classified based on four major orientations

Year	Left-wing	Liberal
1993	Democratic Left Alliance (DLA) Union of Labour (UL)	Democratic Union (DU) Liberal-Democratic Congress (LDC)
1997	Democratic Left Alliance (DLA) Union of Labour (UL)	Freedom Union (FU)
2001	Coalition Democratic Left Alliance – Union of Labour (DLA-UL)	Freedom Union (FU) Voters’ Civic Platform (CP)
2005	Democratic Party – demokraci.pl (DP) Polish Social Democracy (PSD) Democratic Left Alliance (DLA)	Civic Platform (CP)
2007	Coalition the Left and the Democrats Populist	Civic Platform (CP) Right-wing
1993	Polish Peasant Party (PPP) Polish Peasant Party – Popular Alliance (PPP-PA)	Catholic Coalition ‘Fatherland’ (CCF) Confederation for an Independent Poland (CIP) Solidarity Centrist Alliance (CA) Real Politics Union (RPU) Coalition for the Republic of Poland (CRP)
1997	Polish Peasant Party (PPP)	Solidarity Electoral Action (SEA) The Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland (RPM) Right-wing Union of Poland (RWUP) Bloc for Poland (BP)
2001	Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland (SDRP) Polish Peasant Party (PPP)	Coalition Solidarity of the Right-wing Electoral Action (SREA) Law and Justice (LJ) League of Polish Families (LPF)
2005	Polish Peasant Party (PPP) Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland (SDRP)	Patriotic Movement (PM) League of Polish Families (LPF) Law and Justice (LJ) Homeland Party (HP)
2007	Polish Peasant Party (PPP) Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland (SDRP)	League of Polish Families (LPF) Law and Justice (LJ)

Source: Author’s work based on NEC data

to note that the terms ‘left-wing’ and ‘right-wing’ do not have an unequivocal meaning. Both terms can be interpreted in a number of ways, especially with respect to social and cultural issues as well as strictly economic ones. This problem is discussed in detail by T. Zarycki (2002) both in the context of Poland and Europe as a whole.

A good example of this type of dualism is the difference between the Law and Justice Party and the Real Politics Party. Social perceptions of political parties were used to supplement the classification system presented earlier. The creation

of four groups of political parties goes beyond the traditional right-left model and enables a comprehensive view of the Polish political scene and the changes that have shaped it over the last two decades. For example, the populist movement and the union-oriented movement campaigning under the banner of Solidarity are two examples of parties that operate 'outside the box' (left-wing vs. right-wing). The populist movement has taken on a number of forms, while the Solidarity-labeled union movement can be considered liberal, especially with respect to non-economic issues. The classification system introduced earlier affords the luxury of ignoring fluctuations in political preferences among different political parties, given the fact that normally there are several parties that offer similar platforms. Voters tend to easily switch between the parties within the designated political orientations without having to change their fundamental social views.

Political committees in Poland have taken on many different roles based on on-going political needs, opportunities for collaboration, and other strategic issues identified during the course of each particular campaign. Political orientations, however, are a more stable concept which tends to evolve slower than individual political parties. It can, therefore, be assumed that there exists a need for a party from each of the four orientations identified, and the party labels are just fleeting responses to temporary social states of mind. It must be noted that many more electoral committees were registered during each parliamentary election than are discussed in this paper. The selection process can be rationalized in the following way. Committees with marginal rates of voter support (less than 1%) were not included in the paper. This made the analytical results easier to interpret and no less accurate. The Polish political scene is slowly beginning to consolidate with fewer and fewer political committees taking part in elections. One the one hand, this outcome was forced via changes in national election law, including the creation of electoral thresholds. On the other hand, the different pieces of the Polish political scene have begun to fall into place following the chaos that ensued the demise of the Communist system in 1989.

This explains why it has been so difficult to classify political parties taking part in elections in the 1990s. In some cases, especially the case of 1993, some parties with more than trace amounts of support had to be eliminated from the analytical process employed for this paper. This included the Nonparty Block to Support Reform (Polish acronym: BBWR; 7.57%) and the X Party (1.74%). Both entities possessed no specific ideology and were short-lived. It would be difficult to identify any party that could be called the successor of either of these two groups. Fig. 1, 2, 3, and 4 show electoral preferences for a number of committees grouped into four categories.

An additional advantage of this type of classification system and a 15-year time scale is the opportunity to disregard the flux of voters between different

political parties over time. This type of flux is the result of macro-social changes and does not occur uniformly on a national scale. It is not the purpose of this paper to compare public support levels for a single political party or a single political preference over time. On the other hand, permanent electoral trends can be used in electoral geography to attempt to predict social changes in the future. Fig. 1, 2, 3, and 4 indicate that the spatial relationships between different regions in Poland are quite stable regardless of national trends that affect public support levels for different political parties.

THE LEFT-WING OPTION

The Małopolskie voivodship is a region that traditionally does not favour left-wing parties, especially those rooted in Post-communist ideas. The Left enjoys support primarily in gminas located in the part of the Małopolskie voivodship that used to be a part of the former 19th century Russian Kingdom of Poland up until 1918. Today, this includes the poviats (administrative region of the 2nd order) of Olkusz and Miechów. Another area where the Left enjoys a significantly higher level of support is the eastern end of the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area, which was part of the Upper Silesian Industrial District from 1975 to 1998. At that time, the area – Oświęcim poviat, Chrzanów poviat, Olkusz poviat – had enjoyed strong economic bonds with the aforementioned industrial district. In addition to receive support from voters in the northwestern part of the Małopolskie voivodship, the Left also does receive an appreciable level of voter support in Gorlice poviat and the town of Krynica-Zdrój with its vicinity in the southern part of the voivodship. The two southern poviats are, however, quite different from northwestern poviats in Małopolskie voivodship in terms of social and economic structures.

This is the only part of the Małopolskie voivodship that experienced partial depopulation and subsequent repopulation following the end of World War II. At the time, the town of Krynica-Zdrój was located on the western fringe of the Łemko Region – a culturally unique region stretching across the southern part of the poviat and towards the east of Poland. The tendency to support left-wing and liberal parties is a characteristic of most ethnic minorities and populations relatively new to a given geographic area. This tendency can be found in the southeastern part of the Małopolskie voivodship. The supremacy of urban areas over their surrounding rural areas can also be easily observed across the voivodship. This is especially true of large cities and midsize towns. Cities and towns such as Kraków, Tarnów, Nowy Sącz, Bochnia, and Zakopane tend to offer more support to left-wing candidates.

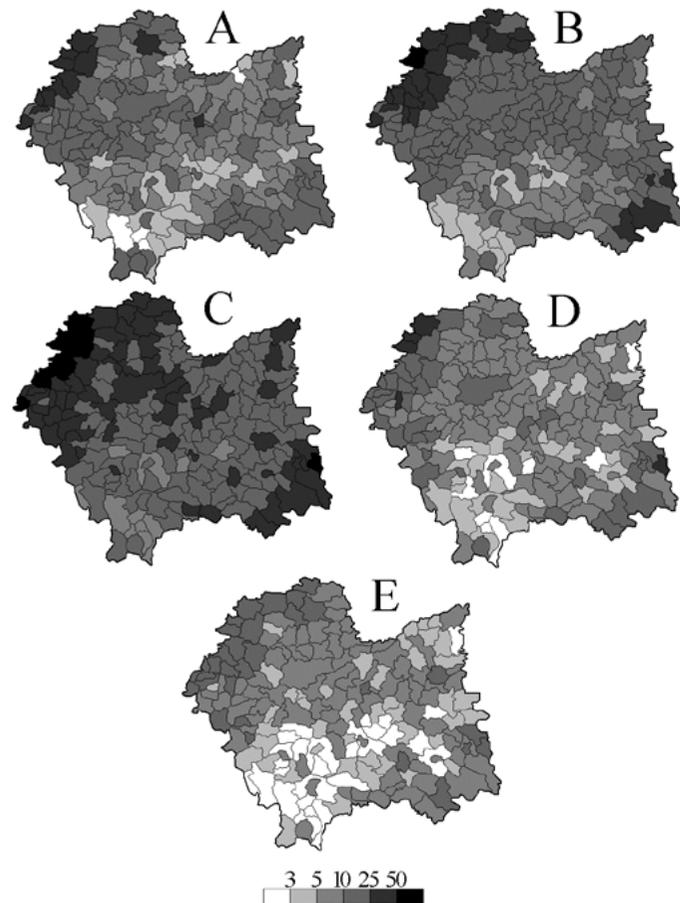


Fig. 1. Percentage of voters cast for left-wing parties by gminas
 Explanation: (see Table 1) A – 1993 DLA-UL; B – 1997 DLA-UL; C – 2001 – DLA-UL; D – 2005 DLA-PSD-DP; E – 2007 The Left and the Democrats

Source: Author's work based on NEC data

THE LIBERAL OPTION

The name itself may not be the best, as this political orientation started out with individuals from the left-leaning Democratic Union as well as from some organizations that may be considered right-wing. In general, however, this group of political entities tends to connect best with non-economic issues, treating them in a rather liberal manner. Territorial analysis for the liberal option is more difficult than that for the left-wing option, whose main pillar of support

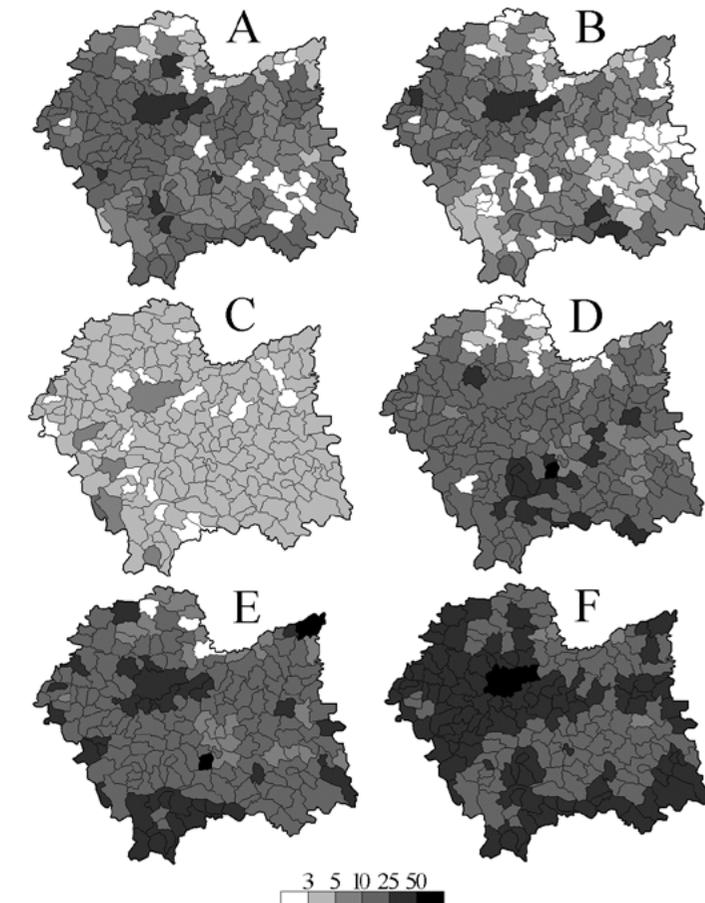


Fig. 2. Percentage of voters cast for liberal parties by gminas
 Explanation: (see Table 1) A – 1993 DU-LDC; B – 1997 FU; C – 2001 FU; D – 2001 CP; E – 2005 CP; F – 2007 CP

Source: Author's work based on NEC data

throughout the period of research has been the Democratic Left Union. In the case of the liberal option, however, three different parties need to be considered: 1) Democratic Union, 2) Freedom Union and Liberal-Democratic Congress (both later), 3) Civic Platform (today). This is why voter support for the liberal option is not that easy to map.

A number of fundamental characteristics can, however, be discerned. The liberal electorate is first and foremost associated with large and midsize cities. The influence of the city of Kraków is yet another factor that needs to be

considered when analyzing its immediate vicinity, which is experiencing the process of suburbanization (Fig. 2, support for the Civic Platform in 2005). It is also worth noting that support levels for the liberal option tend to rise along the narrow Slovak border zone, where tourism is an important industry. There are two possible reasons for this: (a) local business growth tied to the tourist industry; (b) a host of sociological phenomena associated with tourist psychology and its impact on local communities. One explanation may be that traditional communities are becoming more liberal under the influence of ideas brought in by tourists (Zaręba, 2006).

This type of liberal social phenomenon can be observed in the following poviats: Krynica-Zdrój, Muszyna, Piwniczna-Zdrój, Szczawnica, Krościenko, and Zakopane. This notion has been partially discredited by territorial differences in support levels for the Democratic Union and its successors vs. support levels for the Civic Platform. Unlike the Democratic Union, the Civic Platform was initially viewed as a right-leaning party, which gained higher levels of support in 2001 in an area (Mszana Dolna, Limanowa) traditionally associated with the right-wing option. Finally, the Democratic Union has been largely rejected by the Catholic electorate and the conservative electorate, especially in 1997 in Grybów, Nowy Sącz, and Orawa.

The two options described above are not the dominant options in Małopolskie voivodship, which tends to be right-wing and traditional. Political entities connected with agrarian, populist, and regional traditions as well as conservative, Christian, and nationalist traditions constitute the principal political orientation of the western and central part of former Austrian province of Galicia. It should be noted that the right-wing option is dominant both in terms of territory and number of votes (see Table 2), while the number of votes cast for the populist movement does not exceed that cast for the liberal option. However, the populist option is dominant across large rural areas of the voivodship, which makes it important from a territorial point of view.

Table 2. Political support for selected options from 1993 to 2007 (in%)

	1	2	3	4
1993	18.3	17.7	17.4	33.9
1997	20.0	14.9	7.1	55.0
2001	30.1	20.4	17.8	31.4
2005	11.9	24.9	13.6	46.9
2007	8.7	38.3	8.7	42.8
mean	17.8	23.2	12.3	42.0

Explanation: 1 – left-wing; 2 – liberal; 3 – populist; 4 – right-wing

Source: Author's work based on NEC data

THE POPULIST OPTION

The populist option does not have a consistent platform. Prior to World War II and immediately following World War II, the populist movement was clearly dominated by non-leftist factions – ones that could even be said to resemble the nationalist-democratic movement. Today, however, the core of the populist movement (Polish Peasant Party) and the maverick Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland Party can be rather easily identified with the Left, especially with respect to economic issues. A unique region on the map of the Małopolskie voivodship – unique from a populist perspective – is its northern fringe, found outside the former Austrian administrative region of Galicia, along the border with Świętokrzyskie voivodship. Adjacent to this region are the Galician areas of northern Tarnów powiat and Dąbrowa Tarnowska powiat. This region tends to lean more to the left and tends to support the less conservative wing of the populist movement. This is especially true of Proszowice powiat, Miechów powiat, as well as parts of Olkusz powiat and Kraków powiat.

This is an area characterized by low rates of participation in religious services in relation to other rural areas in the voivodship. At the same time, this area offers a strong degree of support for the Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland Party, a party far removed from right-wing traditions. Another important area of support for the populist option is the central-eastern part of the voivodship, on the border of Tarnów powiat and Nowy Sącz powiat. In this area, support for the populist movement is primarily the result of conservative traditions. In 1993, it was this region where the conservative Polish Peasant Party – Popular Alliance gained its highest support. A populist electorate does not exist in Kraków and remains very small in other municipalities, especially larger cities. The populist option is slowly being driven out of the Kraków area. This is primarily the result of the migration of city residents into suburban areas, where a different type of lifestyle is taking root. The populist option is finding itself at the opposite end of the social and political spectrum from the liberal option, as seen in Fig. 2 and 3.

THE RIGHT-WING OPTION

The right-wing option is dominant on the political scene in the Małopolskie voivodship (Table 2 and Fig. 4). It is particularly strong in former Nowosądeckie voivodship (according to previous administrative division of Poland in 1975–1998), especially areas around Grybów and Nowy Sącz as well as Podhale and Orawa. The central part of Tarnów powiat also favours the right-wing option.

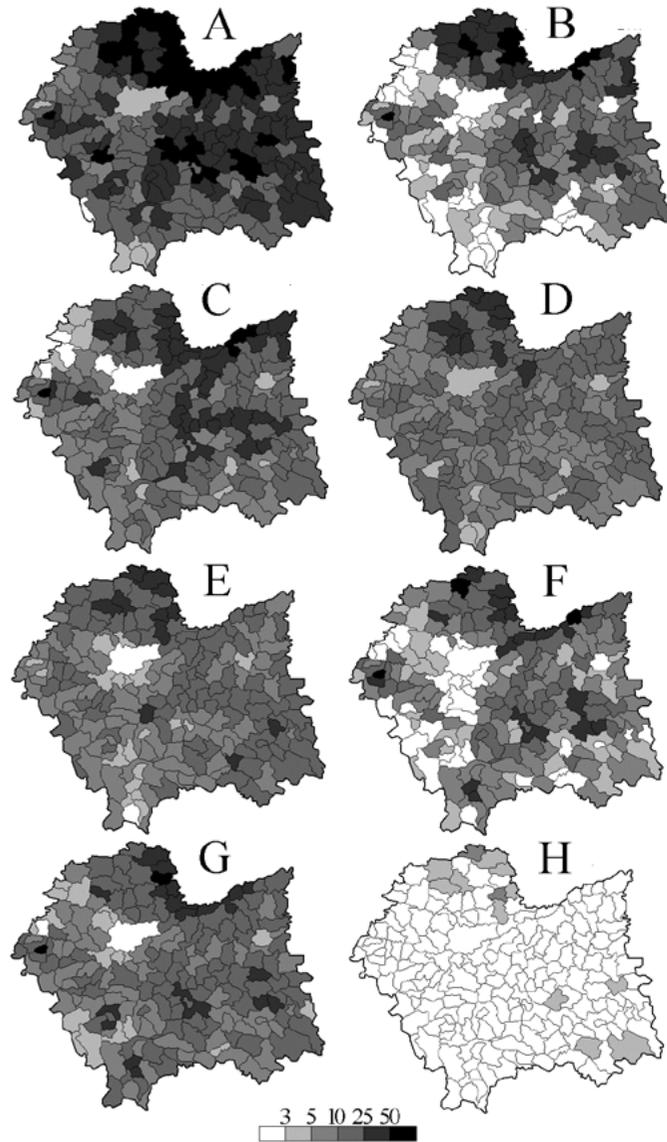


Fig. 3. Percentage of voters cast for populist parties by gminas
 Explanation: (see Table 1) A – 1993 PPP-PPPPA; B – 1997 PPP; C – 2001 PPP;
 D – 2001 SDRP; E – 2005 SDRP; F – 2005 PPP; G – 2007 PPP; H – 2007
 SDRP

Source: Author's work based on NEC data

Levels of support lower than in the surrounding areas are found in large cities such as Kraków and Tarnów. While the right-wing has been represented by a number of different political groups over the years, which explains its spatially fractured pattern of support, there is one geographic area that has consistently not offered appreciable support for the right-wing.

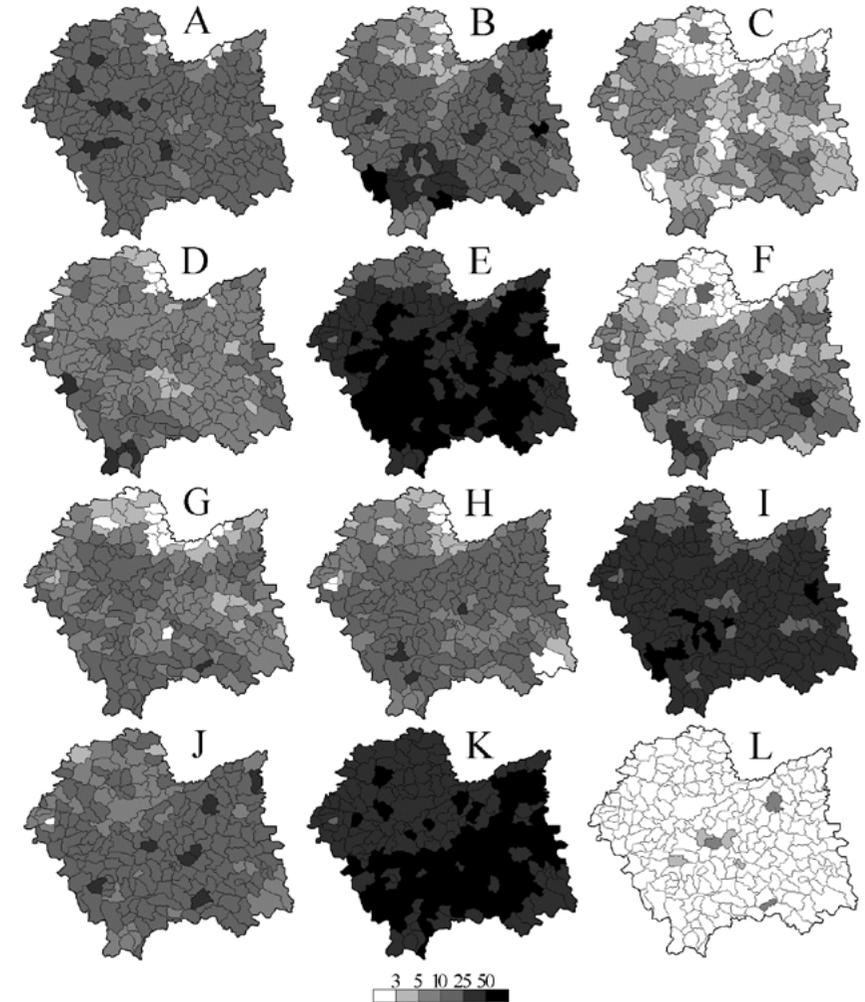


Fig. 4. Percentage of voters cast for right-wing parties by gminas
 Explanation: (see Table 1) A – 1993 CA-CIP-CRP; B – 1993 CCF-RPU; C – 1993
 Solidarity; D – 1997 RPM-RWUP-BP; E – 1997 SEA; F – 2001 SREA; G – 2001 LJ;
 H – 2001 LPF; I – 2005 LJ; J – 2005 LPF-PM-HP; K – 2007 LJ; L – 2007 LPF

Source: Author's work based on NEC data

This is true of the northern agricultural fringe of the voivodship, and to a lesser extent, the highly urbanized area of the eastern fringe of the Upper Silesian Industrial District between Bukowno, Olkusz and Kęty. Even in areas that offer strong support for the right-wing, it is possible to find little support for one right-wing party vs. another. Right-wing parties tend to draw support away from other right-wing parties in a number of areas in Małopolskie voivodship.

Phenomena of this type are interesting, as they show the different expectations that local communities have of the Right and their perceptions of it. A good example of this is Podtatrze (the Lower Tatra Region), which strongly leans to the right, however, offers consistently low rates of voter support for nationalist options. This is true of both the League of Polish Families as well as its predecessor, the Catholic Coalition ‘Fatherland’ Committee (1993).

ANALYSIS

Given the number of political parties for which election data has been analyzed for the 15-year period of interest, voter support has been aggregated into the main four political categories in order to show a more comprehensive view of the political landscape. Table 2 contains averages for each of the four political categories. Fig. 5 contains median rates of political support for each political option. Finally, the gminas that offered the highest and lowest rates of support – top 10% and bottom 10% – for each political option were identified (18 gminas). The information herein is designed to be presented in a comprehensive manner and does not factor in the issue of time, which can alter the proportion of support for a given political option.

The use of average values helps identify areas that always tend to support a particular political option (vs. voivodship’s average), even if that particular option does not dominate the political scene at a given moment in time for macro-social reasons. An example of this would be support for unpopular right-wing parties in 2001. This was precisely the case with support for the Solidarity of the Right-wing Electoral Action Party in 2001 in the southern part of the voivodship. This was also the case with support for the left-wing – unpopular in 1997 and 2001 – in the northwest and the southeast of the voivodship.

Fig. 6 shows 72 gminas offering the greatest degree of political support – 18 gminas per political option. It must be noted that each area – except Libiąż gmina – is completely distinct. There is no evidence of political permeation from one area to another. The political map of the voivodship is largely determined by where voters live.

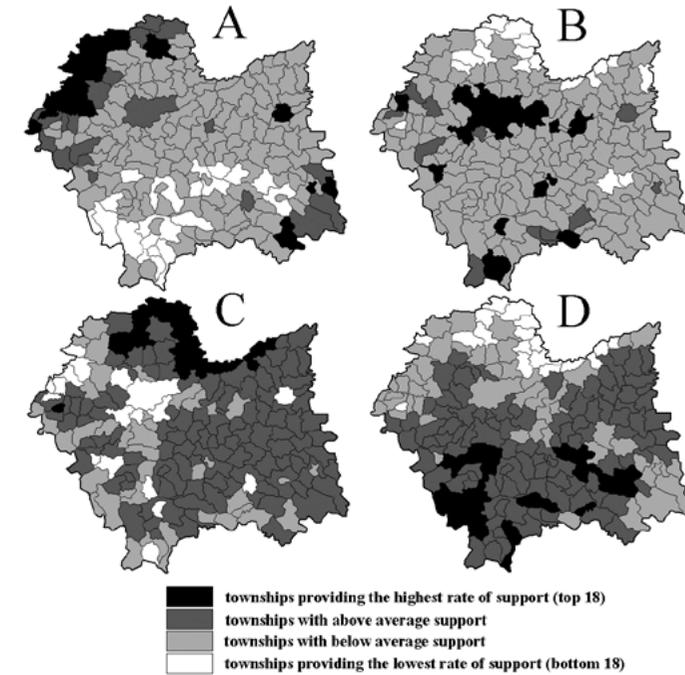


Fig. 5. Political map of Małopolskie voivodship
 Explanation: A – left-wing option; B – liberal option; C – populist option;
 D – right-wing option

Source: Author’s work based on NEC data

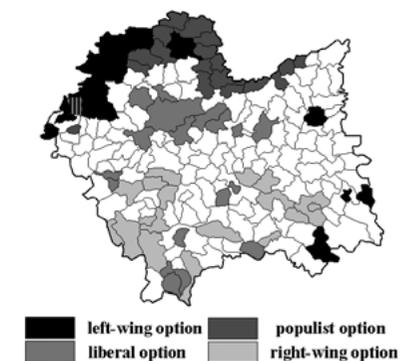


Fig. 6. Location of gminas that best represent each political option

Source: Author’s work based on NEC data

It has been shown that there exists a correlation between the size of a city and the willingness of its residents to support the liberal or left-wing option. This is true to some extent even in strongly conservative and populist areas such as Tarnów powiat and the southern part of the voivodship. Areas economically linked to the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area and strongly urbanized areas tend to lean towards the left-wing as well as the liberal option. This is especially true in towns (Libiąż). On the other hand, the northern fringe of the Left-wing Belt, which includes the urban-rural gminas of Wolbrom and Miechów, is characterized by a rural population largely engaged in agriculture. This area offers a strong degree of support to populist parties.

Only four left-wing gminas can be found outside of the 'left-wing zone' in Małopolskie voivodship. The other two are the urban-rural gmina of Krynica-Zdrój and the rural gmina of Lipinki. It is important to note that Tarnów also offers an above average level of support to the right-wing option and the liberal option. Hence, the left-wing's advantage is not that substantial. Tarnów is classified as a left-wing stronghold primarily because the number of left-wing gminas is so small.

The area that offers the most support to the liberal option is the city of Kraków as well as its suburban zone, which includes the towns of Zielonki, Zabierzów, Skawina, Wieliczka, Niepołomice, and Kłaj, as well as to a lesser extent, the town of Mogilany. The suburban zone features a large population of former Kraków residents and a strongly declining agricultural sector. Other areas that lean towards liberal politics are mainly towns such as Libiąż, Zakopane, Nowy Targ, Sucha Beskidzka, Szczawnica, Bochnia, Brzesko, Limanowa, and their immediate vicinity. Podtatrze is unique in terms of leaning towards liberal politics without having any affinity for the left-wing movement. The result is a neo-right-wing mindset with negligible conservative content.

The Civic Platform and the Real Politics Union enjoy higher rates of political support in Podtatrze than in adjacent regions. The opposite is true of other parties such as Law and Justice, League of Polish Families, and the Catholic Coalition 'Fatherland' Committee (1993). This may reflect the fact that the economy and the society of Zakopane and its vicinity is uniquely affected by the tourism industry and the employment structure associated with it. The same can be said of Szczawnica gmina, and to a lesser degree, Krościenko nad Dunajcem gmina and Czorsztyn gmina.

The geographic area leaning the most towards the populist option forms a distinct region, with the exception of three gminas in Tarnów powiat. The area was not linked administratively with Galicia and Kraków until World War II. The northern part of the region was administratively separate from Kraków once

again from 1975 to 1998. This area bears all of the historical characteristics of Świętokrzyskie voivodship. The parts of the region that lean towards populist parties do so when the populist party in question is more left-wing than conservative. It is important to note that the populist option enjoys support – to a lesser or greater extent – in most gminas in the central, eastern, and northern part of the voivodship, where its level of political support is above average.

The total rate of support for populist parties is relatively low as a result of lack of a populist electorate in major cities and midsize towns. This illustrates a substantial discrepancy between 'territorial popularity' and poor 'numerical results' on a voivodship's scale. It has also been shown that the rate of support for the populist option does not depend primarily on where voters live (urban vs. rural) but on the function of their community (Kowalski, 2003). Rural areas located close to cities or close to the tourist industry offer little support for the popular option.

The right-wing option appears to be particularly well established in the southern part of the voivodship. The gminas that offer the highest rates of support to the right-wing can be found south of Myślenice and include most of Podhale and all of Orawa. Another core right-wing region is found in the Nowy Sącz area between the towns of Limanowa and Grybów. While not as large as in the case of populist parties, declines in voter support for right-wing candidates in cities and towns in comparison to surrounding areas can be observed in Kraków, Bochnia, Sucha Beskidzka, Nowy Targ, Szczawnica, and Krynica-Zdrój. In general, Małopolskie voivodship can be divided into a southern part (right-wing) and a northern part (non-right-wing). The one exception, of course, is Gorlice powiat.

Six social and economic statistics were analyzed for the gminas listed in Fig. 6. Age and gender were omitted, as both of these traditional factors have already received a great deal of attention in the literature. A traditional statistic such as education was used in the study. Education is often seen in the sociological literature as a simple statistical element used to describe the profile of individuals expressing their support for different political parties (Dzwończyk, 2006; Wojnicki, 2006). In this study, however, education is treated as an indicator of voter turnout as well as regional economic development. Table 3 lists the six statistics used in the research study. Each statistic is an arithmetic average of values obtained for each of the 18 gminas analyzed for each given political option. The rubric labeled 'gmina average' lists the arithmetic average for all 182 gminas in Małopolskie voivodship.

The smallest differences between groups of gminas were observed in the middle school education index. This index was used in the study because, unlike elementary schools, middle schools are not found in remote gminas and middle

Table 3. Selected social and economic data for selected groups of gminas

Data for 2008	1	2	3	4	5
Middle school education index	94.8	96.9	98.4	94.4	95.1
Higher education (%)	4.1	7.0	7.4	2.8	2.9
Incomplete elementary school education or lack thereof (%)	3.3	2.6	2.6	4.0	3.7
Gmina revenue per capita (PLN)	874	1,449	1,503	667	616
Entities of national economy registered in the REGON system (private sector only; listed per 1,000 residents)	65.6	85.4	100.4	49.2	54.4
New residential floor space (m ² /100 residents)	46.5	27.8	83.9	19.6	40.3

Explanation: 1 – gmina average; 2 – left-wing gminas; 3 – liberal gminas; 4 – populist gminas; 5 – right-wing gminas

Source: Author's work based on Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Bank Danych Lokalnych data

school education is mandatory in Poland. The index tends to be higher for liberal gminas, although, it does not vary much across the voivodship. It is also interesting that its value is below 100 (1) across the entire voivodship.

The middle school education index is lowest in populist and right-wing areas, where students tend to leave home towns, which do not have a middle school. In some cases, students pursue education in other areas featuring better middle schools. Index values below 100 for liberal gminas are generated mainly by the city of Kraków, which serves as an educational commuter hub for most suburban children, where the index is very low. Commuting is a challenge but it enables the selection of a top school and is generally related with parents' commuting needs. The middle school education index, however, does not differentiate gminas in a fundamental manner.

A different picture emerges in the case of other levels of education. The study analyzed the percentage of individuals with higher education, with incomplete elementary education, and with no education at all. The disproportions between groups of gminas are large, reaching over 250%. The educational level of liberal and left-wing gminas is similar, although they occupy different geographic spaces. The liberal population is largely associated with Kraków and its metropolitan area. The left-wing population lives in small and midsize cities located between the Kraków Metropolitan Area and the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area. The 'other form of education' index is 50% lower in right-wing and populist gminas.

Regardless of the reason (2) behind this state of affairs, right-wing and populist gminas cannot expect rapid changes, as they do not have a mobile population capable of prompting local change. The disproportions found in the 'least educated' category are smaller, however, they also do not favour right-wing and populist gminas. There are historical reasons for this and differences in this category are diminishing simply because the uneducated population is becoming smaller with time. This is not a factor that will play an important role in shaping differences between particular areas in Małopolskie voivodship.

The remaining three statistics are more economic in nature and vary quite a lot from region to region. In 2008, gmina revenue per one resident clearly puts liberal gminas with left-wing gminas and right-wing gminas with populist gminas. This state of affairs not only illustrates potential for regional economic development but also points to wider differences in the future. A wide divide between the two aforementioned groups of gminas will likely create a social and economic divide throughout Poland. Gminas that do not focus on change (read: education) find fewer economic opportunities and do not utilize their own potential to the extent that they could. It is reasonable to expect that if some of the gminas located in attractive tourist areas (Jabłonka, Ochotnica Dolna, Rytro) make an effort to attract tourists and change their employment structure to better serve tourist traffic, they will start to lean more towards more liberal political options. This is what happened to other tourist gminas such as Zakopane, Poronin, and Szczawnica.

Low income across the agricultural northern fringe of the voivodship, characterized by less non-agricultural economic development than the Carpathian fringe, are one sign of the lack of a driving force able to improve the economic situation and prompt social change. The population in this area supports the left-leaning populist option and does so with a sense of entitlement deepened by the relatively high rate of unemployment (vs. the provincial average). This is where the Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland Party gained most of its support. This area is expected to continue to sink below voivodship's averages faster than areas considered to be more right-wing. Its decline in terms of social and economic development will result in an even wider gap with growth drivers such as large cities as well as other non-urban parts of the voivodship.

Gmina revenue is directly related to the number of entities of national economy (REGON system) registered per 1,000 residents. Revenue is high in liberal-leaning gminas, somewhat lower in left-wing gminas, and 50% lower or more in populist and right-wing gminas. It is important to note that this is not solely the result of different levels of urbanization. There is large number of rural gminas across Małopolskie voivodship with a large number of entities

of national economy. This is especially true of tourist gminas located along the Slovak border. This results in two types of gminas: progressive and stagnant. Progressive gminas are better at facing change and are able to effectively fight recession when it affects some of its business sectors, as they possess a number of different business sectors and a diverse range of educational backgrounds. Stagnant gminas, especially agricultural gminas, are less sensitive to dynamically changing economic conditions, however, they are also not able to quickly change their economic bases, which results in their inability to produce social change.

The number of residential buildings completed, as measured by the amount of floor space available per 100 gmina residents, is one way of gauging economic development from gmina to gmina. Liberal gminas, once again, rank best in this regard. Large amounts of residential floor space can be the product of many different construction projects. In a large city such as Kraków, this is simply the norm. Kraków residents also tend to migrate to suburban gminas, which also boosts their available floor space. However, urban gminas other than Kraków also boasted large amounts of residential floor space in 2008.

The amount of residential floor space as well educational background help classify gminas into liberal and non-liberal, with left-wing gminas offering less floor space than even populist gminas. Further research is needed to learn whether this is the result of market saturation or lack of demand. Other potential causes for this could be a gmina's unwillingness to invest in new residential infrastructure or its residents' inability to purchase a flat for financial reasons. The latter factor might create a false sense of market saturation, with some individuals renting or simply being stuck living with their family because of their inability to afford their own flat. Right-wing gminas possess twice as much residential floor space as populist gminas, which is a sign that economic development is taking root there. Gminas that lean towards the populist movement are the worst off in this respect.

CONCLUSIONS

Finally, it must be noted that there is a strong relationship between the social and economic factors in question and political preferences. Of course, it is not political preferences that are primarily responsible for the disproportions. They merely supplement the disproportions, often contributing to their extent. Areas that are currently more urbanized, more affluent, and affected by fewer social problems resulting from unemployment also tend to lean towards the liberal option or the left-wing option. One distinction needs to be made: the left-wing option has been traditionally more associated with heavily industrialized areas

and the liberal option has been more associated with the Kraków Metropolitan Area as well as large tourist towns.

Małopolskie voivodship has significant potential for further tourism development, with Kraków as a strong driver of growth as well as a source of innovation and cultural development. In light of this, the liberal option should be able to garner more support in the future. The left-wing option does not possess this type of natural base for growth and is not expected to dominate the voivodship in the future. In fact, it is expected to decline. One niche area of support for the left-wing option may be left-leaning populist poviats, which may choose to support the left-wing in the event of political disintegration of the populist movement. Another reason why traditionally populist poviats may choose to support left-wing candidates would be a shift in the employment structure characterized by a decline in the number of farmers. This does not seem likely in the near future and not so near future in Małopolskie voivodship.

The populist option will remain an important factor on the political scene in Małopolskie voivodship, however, its decline may occur more rapidly in places where non-agricultural development will stimulate changes in employment structure. Such changes may take place outside of poviats where the populist option is particularly popular. This includes Miechów powiat, Proszowice powiat, and the northern fringes of adjacent ones. It is not possible to identify the factors that would, in the long term, create new electoral segments sympathetic to the populist movement. In the long term, the movement must be willing to make substantial changes in its platform in order to maintain a meaningful position in the political marketplace of Małopolskie voivodship.

Due to historically moulded cultural shape of Małopolskie voivodship society (Kowalski, 2003) the right-wing option is the most important option in terms of the number of votes cast during the last 15 years and one of the two most important options – the populist option being the other – in terms of territorial coverage. For this reason, the right-wing option is also supported in gminas that offer above-average rates of support to liberal and populist parties. On the other hand, it does not garner much support in left-wing gminas. In a political sense, the right-wing option has also been historically the broadest of options, incorporating a variety of political entities. Its basic core consists of economically disadvantaged gminas featuring lower quality infrastructure and standard of living. The only effective and permanent means of changing this situation is regional economic development. Studies in tourism-oriented gminas have shown, however, that this type of solution shifts the electorate towards centrist and liberal parties. This does not mean that such shifts occur rapidly. Social changes driven by a variety of factors take place rather slowly across Małopolskie voivodship, which is a region rooted in conservative values. Another reason for the slow rate of social change

is the region's relative lack of population mobility. On a national level, lack of mobility is generally associated with support for conservative political options, while highly mobile populations tend to support left-wing and liberal factions (Kowalski, 2000; Kowalski, Śleszyński, 2001).

Voter turnout data generated by the democratic election process is a very important source of spatial information. Its usefulness is determined by the degree to which it is processed. Basic election data can be correlated with other social, demographic, and economic variables. Historical factors must not be omitted either, as they often shape the social and economic characteristics of different regions in different ways. The study of relationships between electoral preferences and economic as well as social issues can supplement existing population research. It can also help to develop a more in-depth look at future directions in the social and economic arena.

NOTES

- (1) This is the result of the method used – arithmetic average for gminas of interest.
- (2) This may be related to a locally lower affinity for higher education or with the emigration of local individuals with higher education. Such individuals have a better chance of finding a job in urbanized liberal and left-wing gminas.

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