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The shakedown of the urban-rural division in post-communist Romanian party politics

An analysis of territorial patterns of party support in Romania

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The post-communist Romanian party system is characterised by two territorial divisions: the ethnic and the urban-rural conflict. Whereas the ethnic conflict has not lost its intensity over time, the urban-rural division was particularly strong in the elections in the 1990, and has declined ever since. Our analysis suggests that the decline of the urban-rural cleavage is closely related to the disappointment of voters with the political parties which they elected. As shown in the literature, retrospective economic voting has repeatedly led to high electoral volatility between blocs in Romanian elections. In this paper, we link this phenomenon with the decline of territorial divisions and with the homogenisation of party strength across the territory.

Keywords: Post-communist political parties; party nationalisation; urban-rural cleavage; ethnic cleavage; Romania; electoral volatility.

Introduction**

The geography of elections has become a widely studied field where territorially based social divisions are one of the main explanatory factors (Caramani 2004; Tucker 2006). In this literature, party nationalisation is employed as a term that captures the homogeneity of party strength across territorial units. Nationalised parties are those represented throughout the country, whereas non-nationalised ones win most of their votes in one or few areas. Nationalised party systems are composed through parties with high degrees of party nationalisation; non-nationalised party systems consist mostly of regional parties. Cross-country studies on the territorial structure of party systems in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have shown that the ethnic division is an important denominator of the party system nationalisation (Bochsler 2008). Namely, in countries where minorities live concentrated in small areas and electoral institutions allow the formation of ethno-regional parties, the nationalisation of party system is expected to be lower than in other countries. This explanatory approach works quite well for the degree of party nationalisation in recent elections (2000, 2004) in Romania (see appendix for details). In these elections, territorial differences in the Romanian party system emerged mainly due to the territorially concentrated vote for the Hungarian minority party UDMR, and the level of nationalisation of the Romanian party system can quite

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precisely be explained through the ethnic structure of the country. However, this was different in the early 1990s. Then, along with the ethnic division, a strong urban-rural difference shaped the territorial voting behaviour in Romania. In this paper, we discuss the reasons for the emergence of the urban-rural conflict in party politics, but, most of all, search for an explanation why the urban-rural conflict declined over time. The decline is even more interesting, with look at a different territorial divides in Romania, the one between ethnic Romanians and ethnic Hungarians: While the urban-rural conflict has lost importance, the ethnic division remained unchanged in all multiparty elections which Romania experienced so far. Explaining the decline of the urban-rural divide, within a single-case study, is theoretically relevant for understanding the evolution of social cleavages¹ and electoral behaviour in post-communist politics.

In established democracies, electoral behaviour has been extensively studied.² Research on voting behaviour and electoral changes in post-communist Central and Eastern European countries have however mainly focused on a few countries, notably Russia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland.³ The study of voting behaviour in post-communist Romania seems to have attracted limited interest of researchers so far.⁴ Alternatively to the study of individual voting behaviour, there is the possibility to draw conclusions from aggregated data from territorial units, such as polling stations, municipalities or districts (see King 1997; King et al. 2004). Such data has the advantage that it is easier available, and most important, survey data is usually not detailed enough to draw conclusions for geographical patterns of voting. Aggregated data for the forty-one Romanian counties is available for all Romanian elections, starting 1990.⁵ However, aggregated data allows only the investigation of variables strongly linked to the territory.

This is the case for the urban-rural division that is the focus of this paper. The division is characterised by a contextual, rather than an individual-level variable. Our explanations about the weakening of the urban-rural conflict draw on factors of economic voting and on the substantial volatility in

¹ The application of the social cleavage approach, as proposed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), on Central and Eastern European party systems is not free of problems. It is questionable, whether social groups in post-communist societies are comparable to Western ones, and might be a similar basis for party formation (cf. Elster et al. 1998; Gryzmal-Busse 2006: 422). During communist rule, the social and economic structure of the countries completely changed. The politicised division of ethnic groups might come closest to what in Western democracies we understand as social cleavages, while other parties are often rather differentiated through programmatic or personal differences, which lead to an electoral appeal to certain voting groups, or through clientelist networks. In order to avoid confusion, we address socially based differences in electoral behaviour in Central and Eastern Europe as divisions or social-political conflicts, rather than cleavages. However, party nationalisation and territorially based differences in party support are undoubtedly closely related to explanations which might concern classical social cleavages too.

² Instead of providing an overview over this literature, we refer to Dalton (2006).

³ See for instance Kitschelt et al. (1999), Tucker (2006), or many others. Tucker (2002) provides an overview over the literature.

⁴ For investigations of voting behaviour in Romania, based on individual data analyses, see Stanculescu (2008); Datculescu (1999b); Crowther (1998).

⁵ Sources: Essex Election project and Romanian Electoral Commission. In 1990, there were only forty counties.

post-communist Romanian elections. Earlier research has shown that voters in Romania were repeatedly disappointed with the incumbent governments (Roper 2003; Stanciulescu 2008). In the logic of retrospective voting⁶, voters punished the incumbents, switching to opposition parties. Accordingly, the parties – excepting the Hungarian minority party – did not manage to establish long-term ties to social groups of voters. Consequently, high electoral volatility and changes of governments after each election shaped the Romanian political landscape in every election. This provides the basis for the shakedown of territorial divides: repeatedly, the opposition and newly emerging anti-establishment movements win substantial ground and push forward into the governing party's strongholds. Not doing a better job in government, they lose the forthcoming elections. After a few cycles, regional differences and strongholds are levelled down and voting behaviour becomes homogeneous across the regions.

Our database with district electoral data from Romanian national elections and district level socio-cultural data allows us to analyse the Romanian electoral geography and territorial dynamics of the party system change.

In the following parts of this paper, we first summarise the results of previous studies on party nationalisation in CEE, in general, and Romania, in particular, and we describe the development of nationalisation of the Romanian party system. This is followed by a tentative hypothesis, which is based on electoral volatility. This concept is subsequently applied to analyse the swings in the Romanian elections.

Study of party nationalisation – state of the art

The study of territorial patterns of party support has revealed recent interest in the academic community. Most prominently, two recent books look at party nationalisation in Western Europe (Caramani 2004), North America, and India (Chhibber/Kollman 2004). Through party nationalisation they understand the homogeneity of electoral support of political parties across regions. These studies show that party nationalisation varies longitudinally to a high extent from country to country. Two different explanations might be appropriate for this variance. Chhibber and Kollman (2004) relate party nationalisation to *institutional determinants*. Using cross-country and time-series analyses, they conclude that party nationalisation is linked to the power distribution in the states: If economic and political power relies on central governments, parties will be nationalised: “Voters are more likely to support national political parties as the national government becomes more important in their lives. As this happens, candidates are also more likely to forsake local parties and assume the labels of national parties”, so that finally, “local parties are abandoned altogether and

⁶ Key (1966) and Fiorina (1981) figure are among the classics on electoral accountability and retrospective voting.

disappear” (Chhibber/Kollman 2004: 222). If the argument is inverted, we might come to the conclusion that when regional governments are strong, parties are less nationalised. In the view of Chhibber and Kollman, regionally based parties have best chances to be founded and to attract votes if there is a level of government at the regional and local level with substantial political competences. In such case, it becomes interesting for parties to compete regionally for such offices, and in such case, voters are more inclined to vote for them.

Caramani’s approach (2004) looks rather at social determinants of the electoral geography. In his view, party support across the territory is linked to the social structure of a country. According to this *cleavage perspective*, political parties are related to social conflicts, and the nationalisation of party systems follow the territorial structure of these conflicts. Parties along cleavages with a territorial dimension have low levels of nationalisation, whereas parties along non-territorial divides have a homogeneous support of voters throughout the country, thus they have a high level of nationalisation. Over the last centuries, politics in Western European democracies have become much more nationally oriented, along with a process of nationalisation of party systems, and of homogenisation and national integration of societies and economy.

Caramani’s arguments are reflected by two types of studies, which have been carried out for CEE too. An investigation with a cross-country design has shown that there is particularly one territorial conflict that can explain to a large extent different levels of party nationalisation in the region: the conflict between different ethnic groups. If the electoral system allows so, such minorities in CEE often vote for ethnic parties. This means that the ethnic division gets reflected in party politics: if minorities are territorially concentrated, ethno-regional parties emerge. Namely, ethnic parties are often much less nationalised than other parties, so that countries with ethnic minorities that live in a concentrated area have less nationalised party systems than ethnically homogeneous countries or where minorities are spread throughout the country (Bochsler 2008 and appendix).

Second, the cleavage argument can be used in studies which operate at the within-country level (or pool several within country-studies). This approach has been applied by scholars who have studied the *electoral geography* from aggregated data (Ersson et al. 1985; Zarycki 1999; Tucker 2006)⁷. Through an analysis of the economic and population structure and party strength in geographical territories, a number of studies tried to explain territorial patterns in election results and thus to conclude about the electoral behaviour. Methodologically, the studies rely on ecologic inference from aggregated vote results (see King 1997; King et al. 2004).

Studies of electoral geography and party nationalisation in CEE countries and Romania have remained rare so far. The previously mentioned works did not include Romania into their case

⁷ See Bochsler (2008) for a more extensive overview over studies on Central and Eastern Europe.

selection. So far, Lazăr (1999) and Roper (2003) remain the only studies, known to the authors, which analyse Romania's electoral geography with this methodology. They have looked at parliamentary elections until 1996, and – in the latter article – at the presidential elections in 2000. Parliamentary elections after 1996 have so far not been analysed in the same way on the basis of territorial electoral results. Two authors supply first numbers on party nationalisation in CEE, including Romanian parliamentary elections for the period 1990-2004 (Bochsler 2005, 2008), respectively for the period 1990-2000 (Tiemann 2005). The indicators employed by Bochsler (2005, 2008) show a clear increase of party nationalisation over this period.⁸

Descriptive analysis of party nationalisation in Romania

For the period 1990-2004, the Romanian party system has had, on the average, a standardised party nationalisation score of 0.79. This score measures party nationalisation on a scale from 0 to 1, where 1 means a perfectly homogeneous vote distribution throughout the country, while low values indicate that votes of a specific party are heavily concentrated on a small area (Bochsler 2008).⁹ Compared to other post-communist countries in CEE, party nationalisation is moderate and, unlike in other countries, it has substantially varied over time. Figure 1 reports the development of party nationalisation in Romania in the national parliamentary elections for 1990-2004. After a drop in nationalisation of the party system in 1992, the level of nationalisation has continuously increased and reached its highest peak of 0.84 in the 2004 elections (see figure 1 and table 1).

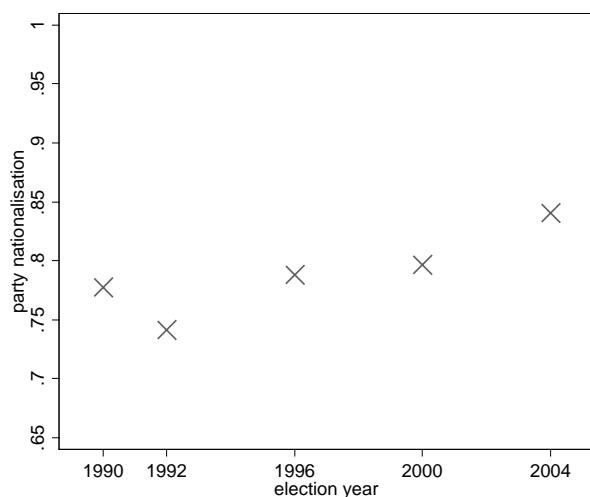


Figure 1: Development of party nationalisation in Romania, 1990-2004. Source: Bochsler 2008.

⁸ The measures employed by Tiemann (2005: 16) show a contradictory picture, some indicating an increase, others a decrease of the homogeneity across the country. The contrary results emerge from the employed indicators: they appear to be biased through the varying number of parties in the party system, the change in the number of electoral districts which occurred in 1992, and through different sizes of territorial units within Romania (see Bochsler 2008 for a critique). The size of Romanian counties is rather heterogeneous, with the largest one being ten times larger than the smallest one.

⁹ Standardised party nationalisation scores can be calculated with a Visual Basic program that runs under Microsoft Excel. It is available at <http://www.unige.ch/ses/spo/staff/corpsinter/bochsler/pns/>.

The nationalisation of party systems is an aggregate measure composed of the party nationalisation scores for single parties. To understand the development of the party system nationalisation that has occurred since 1990, it is important to have a look both at the electoral institutions that condition party nationalisation and at the development of single parties and party families.

Research suggests that national legal thresholds in the electoral system might have an important effect on party nationalisation, preventing the formation of potential regional parties. Such a national legal threshold has been introduced in Romania in 1992 at 3%, and increased to 5% eight years later. For electoral coalitions of several parties, a differentiated, slightly higher threshold applies.

The frequent changes in the structure of political parties in Romania make an in-depth analysis of the development of nationalisation of the Romanian party system not very easy. Before attempting to track party nationalisation over time for single parties, we first try to shed light on the party system developments. Despite frequent changes in the names and composition of political parties, the Romanian party system might be characterised as one which consists of two main party families and a few smaller ones.

The bureaucratic party

The party that succeeded the communist party changed its name and organisational structure in many instances, and went through several splits and mergers, but is characterised by clear personal continuity, around Ion Iliescu (president of Romania in 1990-1996 and 2000-2004).¹⁰ As founding member and chairman, Ion Iliescu had an important role in the large post-revolution movement, the National Salvation Front (Frontul Salvării Național, FSN) in 1990. It was created by the “Supreme Leadership” of the revolution in late 1989, and likewise to the “Supreme Leadership”, the FSN was led by members of the Romanian communist party (Crowther 1998: 298-301; Pop-Elecheș 1999). The anchoring in the Romanian communist party and the survival of networks from the authoritarian period are among the reasons why the family of parties to which the FSN belongs is addressed as the bureaucratic party (sometimes, it is referred to as “antireformist” or “national-conservative”¹¹). Politically, this party family represents economic left and patrimonial values and – particularly in the 1990s – a societal authoritarianism:

¹⁰ It is not the goal of this paper to give a detailed account of the development of the party system in Romania, rather to give the information which is necessary to locate the parties which are studied. See Pop-Elecheș (1999), or Abraham (2007) for a more detailed account of the history of the today’s Social Democratic party, and Roper (2003) for an analysis of the non-bureaucratic parties in the period 1992-2000.

¹¹ Pop-Elecheș (1999) describes the main dimension in the party system as “reformist” versus “antireformist”, Datculescu (1999a) as “national-conservative” versus “cosmopolitan-liberal”.

“Once the FSN government was in place, Iliescu showed little inclination to engage in any type of reform programme. The FSN government supported the return of the former Communist bureaucracy at the local level, and at the national level to a certain extent. With the bureaucracy restored, and the state security forces reorganized and strengthened, Iliescu had built a governmental structure not unlike that of Nicolae Ceaucescu.” (Stevenson Murer 1999: 215).

In allegedly not fully free and fair vote in 1990, the FSN won two thirds of the votes in the parliamentary elections, and its president Iliescu a landslide victory in the presidential elections. Elections were held only few months after the revolution of December 1989, and the opposition parties had not yet reached the organisational strength that they would have been needed for electoral success. Further, the electoral campaign was dominated by harassment and intimidation of opposition activists; the fairness of the voting process is doubtful. The FSN subsequently controlled all state institutions in the period 1990-1992 (see Gallagher 1991a). However, after an internal conflict between prime minister Petre Roman and state president Ion Iliescu, the FSN split off in 1992 into two parts. Petre Roman, rather reform oriented, held a majority of the votes inside the FSN and this way could keep the formal control of the organisation. Nevertheless, Ion Iliescu is considered as the political successor of the FSN: with his successor organisation, the Democratic National Salvation Front (Frontul Democrat al Salvării Naționale, FDSN), he won much more votes than Petre Roman’s party (which will be introduced below). After this major milestone in 1992, the communist successor party had – in the Romanian context – a rather calm history: from 1993 on, it called itself Social Democratic. First, it adopted the name Party of Social Democracy in Romania (Partidul Democrației Sociale din România, PDSR), and after in 2001 it could merge with a minor party, it was called Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat, PSD). The latest merger was important to the party, because it allowed the party to become member of Socialist International (Grecu 2006: 210; Abraham 2007)¹². Table 1 helps readers following track over the frequent name changes of the party.

Date	Event	Old Name	New Name
1992	Split after internal elections within FSN. The losers left the party	FSN (National Salvation front)	FDSN (Democratic National Salvation Front)
1993	Name change	FDSN	PDSR (Party of Social Democracy in Romania)
2001	Fusion PDSR-PSDR	PDSR	PSD (Social Democratic Party)

Table 1: The evolution of the communist successor party after 1989.

In the 1990 elections, the bureaucratic party, called FSN at this time, was dominant in all Romanian regions, reflected in a high party nationalisation level of 0.89. However, in the 1992 elections, it

¹² Due to its authoritarian orientation and its ties to ultra-nationalists in the 1990s, the PDSR was not able to become member of the Socialist International. Instead, it could inherit the membership from its partner in the merger in 2001, the Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSDR).

could only keep a rather dominant position in rural areas, so that its vote share became much more heterogeneous throughout the country, and the party nationalisation score dropped to 0.80. Only slowly, the party reduced the regional differences in its support, so that party nationalisation steadily, but slowly, increased, reaching a level of 0.90 in the 2004 elections (see table 2).

	eff nr of parties	whole party system	communist successor FSN/FDSN/ PDSR/PSD	non-bureaucratic parties			Hungarian minority UDMR	ultra-nationalists	
				PNTCD/CDR	PNL	PD		AUR-PUNR	PRM
1990	2.2	0.78	0.89 [67%]	0.77 [3%]	0.79 [6%]		0.32 [7%]	0.18 [2%]	
1992	4.8	0.74	0.80 [28%]	0.85 [20%]	0.87 [3%]	0.84 [10%]	0.35 [7%]	0.63 [8%]	0.84 [4%]
1996	4.4	0.79	0.82 [22%]	0.88 [30%]		0.89 [13%]	0.33 [7%]		0.86 [4%]
2000	3.6	0.80	0.86 [37%]	0.79 [5%]	0.86 [7%]	0.85 [7%]	0.33 [7%]		0.93 [19%]
2004	3.4	0.84	0.90 [37%]	0.72 [2%]	0.90 [31%]		0.33 [6%]		0.91 [13%]

Table 2: Party nationalisation for the major parties in Romania, 1990-2004, and effective number of parties in Parliament. Source: Bochslers 2008.

The non-bureaucratic parties

We distinguish a second main bloc of parties, the non-bureaucratic bloc, which is characterised mainly due to its opposition to the bureaucratic communist successors, and often attempts to stigmatise the bureaucratic party due to its communist legacy (even if some leaders of the non-bureaucratic parties come from previous communist structures, cf. Abraham 2007: 4). The bloc consists of Liberal parties, the Agrarian Party and the Democratic Party. The parties of the non-bureaucratic bloc favoured rapid introduction of market economy, decentralisation, private ownership of land, opening of the country for foreign investments, and rapid Euro-Atlantic integration (Gallagher 1991a: 87; Datculescu 1999a: 174).

The Liberals' history is marked by many fusions and splits (see table A2 in appendix), but no relevant ideological shift or modification. Irrespective of splits and fusions, the Liberals kept their name as National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal, PNL).¹³ Arguably, the PNL is among the significant Romanian parties one of the most favourable to economic reforms and liberal values in society. Twice, the party competed in national elections in alliances with parties of the non-bureaucratic bloc: 1996 with the Agrarian party PNT-CD, and in 2004 with the Democratic Party.

The second party that shall be mentioned, the Christian-Democratic National Peasants' Party (Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin Democrat, PNT-CD), hardly ever competed on its own in parliamentary elections, and when it did, in 1990 and 2004, it scored just some 2-3%. Nevertheless, the party gained importance as one of the main pillars of the Democratic Convention (CDR), the

¹³ Absorptions worth mentioning are 1998 the Party of Civic Alliance (PAC), 2001 the Alliance for Romania (ApR), and 2004 the Union of Right Forces (UFD).

main non-bureaucratic electoral alliance which lasted from 1992 until 2000, and the PNȚ-CD even lead the government from 1996 until 1999. Besides liberal economic policies, the PNȚ-CD represents as well nationalist ideas and has a strong rural affiliation, different from PNL.

Finally, the third major non-bureaucratic party, Petre Roman's Democratic Party, emerged in 1992 from the National Salvation Front (FSN) split as previously mentioned. After Petre Roman gained in 1992 a majority in the internal election of the FSN, he transformed it and adopted (through a merger with a tiny party in 1993) the party name Democratic Party. The party adopted a Social Democratic program, became member of the Socialist International, but joined in 2004 an electoral alliance with the liberal PNL party, due to their common opposition to the bureaucratic PSD party.

In most occasions, the most relevant parties of this non-bureaucratic bloc had a degree of party nationalisation that was similar to the party nationalisation of the bureaucratic party, or slightly higher. Similarly, party nationalisation slightly increased in the period of the first five democratic elections in Romania, reaching its maximum of 0.9 in the latest elections in 2004.¹⁴

The urban-rural division in Romanian party politics

The urban-rural division might be one of the most important conflicts that is visible in the post-communist Romanian party system (Crowther 1998; Daculescu 1999b; Sandu 1999). Particularly in the elections in the 1990s, the strength of the bureaucratic and the non-bureaucratic parties was closely related to the urbanisation of an area (see figure 2, left part, for an exemplary visualisation of the correlation in the 1996 elections). Whereas the bureaucratic parties were strong in the countryside, the non-bureaucratic ones made their best results in cities. Surveys in which investigated the behaviour of individual voters in Romania in the 1990s highly confirm the conclusions which we draw from aggregate data.¹⁵

The bases for the urban-rural conflict in Romania were set decades ago. Until the twentieth century, however, peasants did only have a limited voting right; their votes did not count as much as the wealthy ones. The urban-rural cleavage got first important in party politics of Romania in 1923, when universal male suffrage was introduced. The inter-war period witnessed increased differences between urban and rural areas, with industrial development in the former and agriculture dominance

¹⁴ Only when some small parts of the bloc competed on their own, with some 2%-7% of the vote, their support was not always as homogeneous across the Romanian territory as the one for larger lists of this bloc. Small lists had party nationalisation around 0.72 to 0.87. This should, however, not be of greater importance for our paper. It is typical that the vote for small parties is territorially more heterogeneous (see Caramani 2004: 64-8), so that levels of party nationalisation as the observed ones are not astonishing. Further, it should be noted that the party nationalisation scores of small parties influence only the overall nationalisation score of the party system only to a minor extent.

¹⁵ Such survey results are briefly reported in Roper (2003: 91), Deletant/Siani (1998: 166), and Lazăr (1999).

in the latter. This cleavage could also be noticed at party level where the Liberals and the Peasants' Party (the predecessor of PNȚ-CD) had different target groups (Stan 2005). Two processes that took place during communism might have contributed to the fact that the urban-rural division persisted. First, the collectivisation and lack of private property and, second, the urbanisation and industrialisation of the countryside, related to a relocation of people to urban areas in the 1970s. Immediate property policies proposed by FSN in the aftermath of the communist regime fall, even before the first multiparty elections, reflected the interests of rural population and allowed the regaining of land property. Although land owners were also in urban areas, the direct beneficiaries of this law (in 1991) were the peasants that for a long period associated Iliescu and his party with the chance to receive back their rights and properties.

A patrimonial system of communication and mobilisation that was established in rural areas reinforced the political contrasts between urban and rural areas. Namely, the bureaucratic parties could rely on organisational reminders of the communist regime and on the continuity of personal ties. As former officials of the communist regime, members of the bureaucratic parties had an established network of influence in rural areas, and often they were in charge of the position of local opinion leaders (such as mayors, teachers, or priests). The bureaucratic party is reported to have profited in the 1990s from its control over information in rural communities, spreading manipulative information, namely about its main competitors.¹⁶

The effect of the 1989 revolutionary events might have contributed to a more negative view of the ex-communist establishment in cities than in rural areas, which were less directly touched by the 1989 happenings. The geographical proximity to the events created differences in the perception of the news of the revolution, namely due to the way of reporting in the state-controlled television. Only the state-run TV Channel 1 had an effective penetration in rural areas (Datculescu 1999b: 268). Only as time passed by, voters might have become more aware and better informed about politics, and accordingly the impact of such campaigns might have changed, particularly in rural areas. On the other hand, the emphasis of the non-bureaucratic parties in their campaigns on issues related to the revolutionary events and on the ties of the bureaucratic parties with the communist establishment might be more fruitful in urban centres than in the countryside.

¹⁶ See Popescu (1997: 176) for anecdotic evidence: "Certain supporters of PSDR spread rumours in some villages remote from information sources (where is a low level of ownership of television sets), where the population is politically poorly informed and naive, about a possible attack by Hungarians who allegedly wanted to occupy Transylvania. a farcical situation arose when leaders of the DCR [Democratic Convention, CDR] were 'welcomed' with pitchforks and axes by the peasants of a Moldovan (Romanian Moldova) village, because of the scaremongers' rumours."

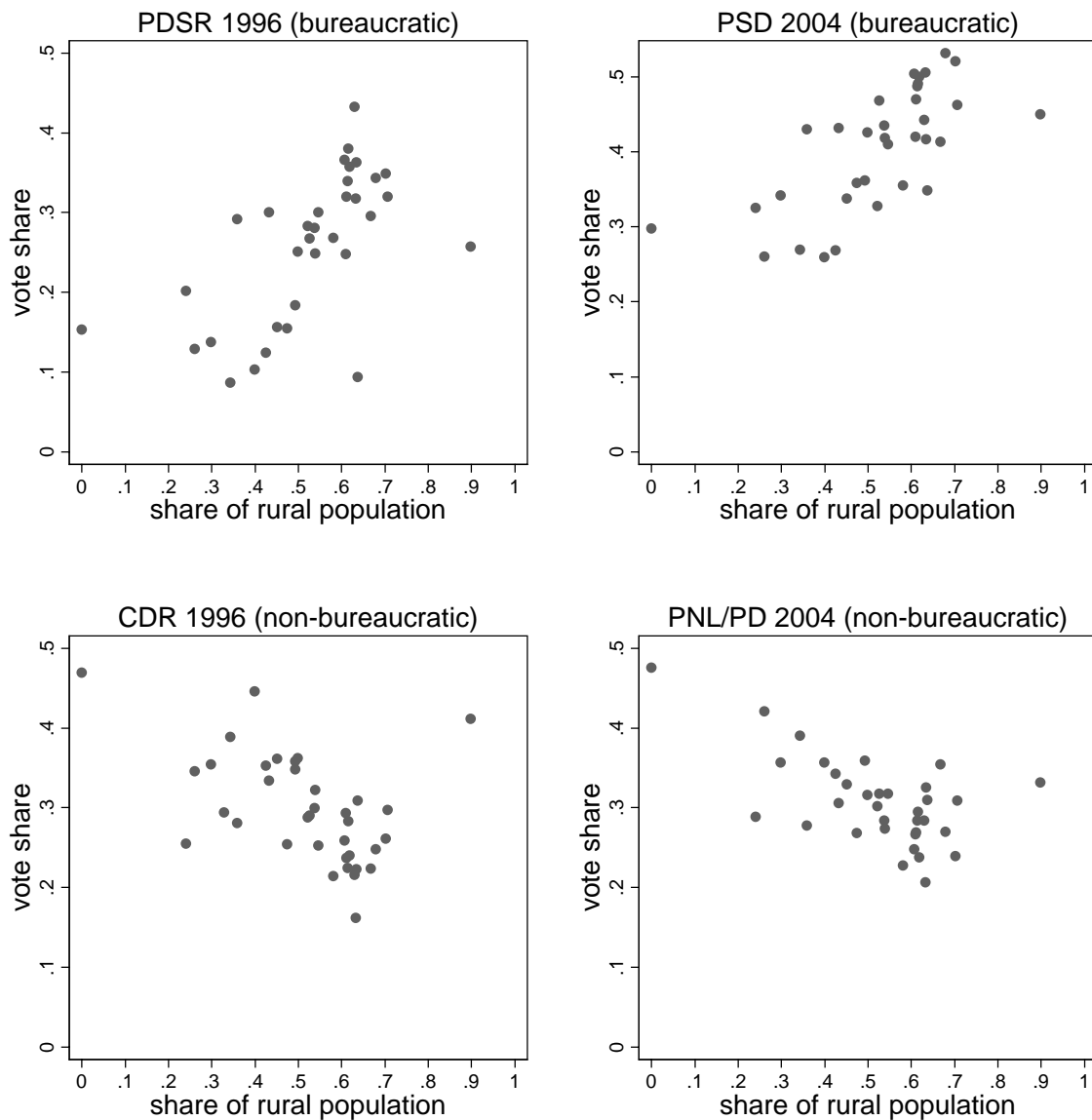


Figure 2: The urban-rural division in the 1996 and 2004 elections, vote share of the bureaucratic party (PDSR 1996 and PSD 2004) and of the non-bureaucratic coalition (CDR 1996 and PNL-PD 2004) by county, and share of rural population in the counties. Counties with more than 20% Hungarian minorities excluded. Source: Bochsler (2008).

Convergent with the previous points, the first two years of transition are characterised by contradictory attitudes in urban and rural environments with respect to the role of the state and privatisation. With the dismissal of the communist regime, many of the state owned enterprises went bankrupt, and collective farms (SMA and CAP) closed down, resulting in massive lay-offs that affected primarily the rural areas. Accordingly, rural areas displayed a negative attitude towards privatisation, while the same was perceived much more positive in urban areas (Sandu 1999: 39).

In this respect, the social policies proposed by the FSN- and later FDSN-lead governments, emphasising less the privatisation process and maintaining a strong state, were preferred in the rural areas (Crowther 1998: 305). In contrast, the urban population could profit more from economic and

social reforms, and this way was more in favour of the reform policies promoted by the liberal, non-bureaucratic parties. Adding to this, urban and rural voters were divided over questions related to authoritarianism or national identity, “with urban dwellers being less hostile [towards minorities] than their rural counterparts” (Crowther 1998: 304).

As shown in figure 2, the urban-rural differences in party support persisted until 2004; however, the relative differences became weaker. While in 1996, the vote share of the PDSR varied from some 10% in rather urban counties up to more than 40% in rural counties, eight years later, these differences for the PSD were not only smaller, ranging from some 30% to 50%, but as well relatively less important, since the party increased its electorate by more than half. Accordingly, the party nationalisation score grew from 0.82 to 0.90 in this period. The increase in party nationalisation for its non-bureaucratic counterpart (CDR in 1996 and PNL-PD in 2004) was not so pronounced.

Ultra-nationalist parties

Besides the two main party blocs, we shall mention the Union of the Hungarian minority, which constantly obtained the largest part of the votes of the Hungarian minority, and the ultra-nationalist parties AUR-PUNR and PRM, which occasionally gained major importance, on the one hand through inclusion in the Socialist-lead government of 1992, and on the other hand due to their very substantial vote share in elections from 2000 on.

The ultra-nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM) has constantly scored high levels of party nationalisation, up to 0.93 in the 2000 elections. This implies that its voters are very evenly represented in all counties of Romania. This, quite in contrast to an earlier ultra-nationalist party, the Party of Romanian Unity (AUR/PUNR) that got in Parliament only in the first three elections and whose electorate was mostly concentrated in multi-ethnic Transylvania and particularly in the Mureş and Cluj counties as party leaders lived there, and since the party had its headquarter in Cluj.¹⁷

¹⁷ A quantitative analysis shows that for the case of PUNR, in the 1992 elections, a curvilinear relation of the party's vote share, as a function of the share of ethnic Hungarians in a district, can be found (whereas, after controlling for the Hungarian minority, other minorities do not have any impact on the party's vote share). The PUNR vote share can be expressed as follows: $y = 0.04 - 0.14 \cdot \text{minority share} + 1.26^{**} \cdot \text{Hungarians} - 1.37^{**} \cdot \text{Hungarians}^2$. This is evidence for Key's effect, which looks at the strength of nationalist parties in ethnically divided societies (Key 1949). This is confirmed for the early 1990s at the level of individuals by Crowther (1998: 304-5), who found higher levels of ethnic hostility in areas with a high share of ethnic Hungarians among the population. In the case of the PRM, which became important a decade later, the ethnic structure of districts seems not to have a significant impact on vote shares.

Parties of ethnic minorities

Romania counts more than a dozen ethnic minorities, with the Hungarian speaking minority being officially the demographically and politically most important group.¹⁸ Many other minorities are represented with their parties in parliament, due to the guaranteed minority seats (eighteen for the 2000 and 2004 legislatures), but the cumulated support for these parties has little importance,¹⁹ and in many cases, it is not very territorially concentrated. The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) is by far the largest ethnic and the largest regionalist party at the same time. Its support is almost exactly related to the population share of Hungarian speakers, and accordingly it gets its votes almost exclusively in Transylvania, the North-Western region where most Hungarian speakers live, and most importantly in Harghita and Covasna, the two (out of forty-one) Romanian administrative districts, where the Hungarian speakers are a majority. Its party nationalisation score remained throughout the period of investigation stable around 0.33. The case of the UDMR is well-related to earlier findings on Central and Eastern European democracies: it confirms the rule that the nationalisation of the party system is closely to with the ethnic structure of a country and that party nationalisation is related to the ethnic background political party.

The analysis of party nationalisation in Romania shows thus an interesting puzzle: On the one hand, the Romanian party system has experienced a visible and steady increase in party nationalisation since the 1992 elections. This increase did however occur only to a lower extent at time when the national legal threshold was introduced (1992), or increased (2000), but most importantly in the two other elections (1996, 2004). It appears that the overall increase in party nationalisation resulted not at least from a territorially more homogeneous electorate of the two major blocs (bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic parties), which have mobilised in the 1990s namely along the urban-rural division. Quite in contrast, the nationalisation degree of the most important regional party, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians (UDMR), remained constantly low throughout the period of investigation. In the following parts of this paper, we shall attempt to identify the reasons why one of Romanian territorial conflicts, the urban-rural one, has lessened.

¹⁸ The Roma minority might be even slightly larger than the Hungarian one, at least before recent emigration from Romania, but they appear to be heavily under-estimated in official data. Roma are however politically badly organised and split, so that there is no strong Roma party which might concentrate the Roma vote (CEDIMR-SE 2000).

¹⁹ In none of the five elections from 1990 to 2004, the cumulated support for sometimes several dozens ethnic minority parties and organisations (apart from UDMR) counted more than 3-4% of the votes. The weighted average of party nationalisation of these parties was about 0.55 in the 2004 elections.

Volatility and changes of the electoral landscape

For the explanation of the change of territorial conflicts, we develop a concept which draws on volatility, the aggregated shifts of votes between two elections. With the focus on dynamic processes, we distinguish our study from the major part of the cited literature on party nationalisation and electoral geography. Mostly, party nationalisation is investigated for single elections, or as an average of a series of elections in a rather static way of analysis. One of the rare exceptions to this rule is work of the political scientist Donald Stokes (1965, 1967), and very few scholars who employed his concept. The core of Stokes' argument was the focus on the territorial character of electoral swings: Is electoral volatility homogeneous throughout all the territorial units of a country? Are the relative changes in party strength similar in all districts of a country. If a party nationally wins (loses) votes from one election to the other, is this national gain (loss) related to uniform gains (losses) of approximately the same vote share in every district, or are gains (losses) due to well-(bad-)performing in a certain region or district?

Drawing on Stokes' considerations, we distinguish three different types of electoral swings, and relate them to party nationalisation (see table 3 below).

- *Parallel or uniform swings* are electoral shifts which occur at the national level of analysis and which capture homogeneously (almost) all electoral districts. This means that a party wins or loses approximately the same share of votes in all the regions. Uniform gains might occur because a party performs a national campaign which is universally particularly attractive, and helps the party to attract differently minded voters across the country. Alternatively, if a party attracts a new group of voters (or gains attraction among a group of voters) which is spread throughout the territory, it gains uniformly. Uniform gains lead to a higher level of party nationalisation. Namely, a party with a previously exclusively regional voter basis (typically: with a basis of voters which are related to a territorially concentrated social group) can widen its territorial scope and gain voters across the country. On the other hand, a uniform loss of voters signifies that the level of party nationalisation of a non-nationalised party declines: in percentages, losses are similar in its strongholds and in other areas, but they signify that the party becomes essentially reduced to its strongholds.

Swings, which Stokes considered as regionally or district-based, can be further distinguished into two different cases.

- *Proportional swings*. In this second type of swings, gains or losses of voters are proportional to the previously scored result of a party. For instance, a party might lose half its voters across the country, both in its strongholds and in other areas. This might occur if a party appears little attractive to its previous voters. If the group of voters is regionally concentrated, this

means that the losses occur mainly in the region where they live. Proportional swings do not affect the level of nationalisation of a single party: The party does not change the sociological structure of its voters; it only increases or decreases its attraction among the typical supporter group. The territorial distribution of the party's vote remains the same. However, proportional swings might increase the overall level of nationalisation of a party system: If a party with a low nationalisation degree loses votes, it weights less in the whole party system, and its former voters might even increase the level of party nationalisation of other parties.

- *Other regional swings.* Other swings occur either at random only in one or few territorial units, or they regard a specific group of voters, who are territorially concentrated (but do not belong to the previous electorate of the party). If a party gains in an area where it has been previously weak, this leads to a more equilibrated appeal to different regional groups of voters, and to a more homogeneous distribution of votes across the country, so that party nationalisation increases. In other cases, previous strongholds get even more important, and the regional character even more dominant, so that party nationalisation decreases. The opposite is the case if a party loses voters in certain regions or districts.

	Parallel swings	Proportional swings	Other regional swings
Characterisation	Party wins (loses) the same vote share in all territorial units.	In each territorial unit, the party wins (loses) a vote share which is proportional to its last electoral results.	The relative gains (losses) vary by territorial units, but are not correlated to the last electoral result.
Impact on party nationalisation: a) National vote share increases	Party nationalisation increases.	Party nationalisation is not affected, but the level of nationalisation of the party system might decrease.	Party nationalisation increases (unless the new voters come from previous strongholds).
b) National vote share decreases	Party nationalisation decreases.	Party nationalisation is not affected, but the level of nationalisation of the party system might increase.	Party nationalisation decreases (unless the losses are over-proportionally in the earlier strongholds).

Table 3: Three types of electoral swings and their impact on party nationalisation.

Electoral volatility

We suspect that the type of electoral swings might be related to different types of electoral volatility. *Intra-bloc volatility* is characterised as a net flux of voters between two parties which both belong to the same bloc. In contrast, *inter-bloc volatility* is characterised as a net flux of voters between two party families. We argue that if inter-bloc volatility occurs between party blocs which are separated by a social division, this will lead in the long-term to a less pronounced articulation of

this social division in the party system. Similarly, if inter-bloc volatility captures parties which are separated through a territorial divide, the territorial differences in the party system will become less important, and accordingly, party nationalisation will increase.

This can be shown with an analysis of the previous territorially based distinction into different kinds of electoral swings. Often, inter-bloc swings signify that the governing party loses a part of its electorate, and the opposition attracts new voters. Typically, one would expect that the incumbent governing party loses disappointed voters, proportionally to its result in the previous elections. If a party has been elected by one or several social groups in previous elections, then it is likely that a little satisfying governing period leads to an erosion and diminution of this voter group. In contrast, the expected gains of the outgoing opposition are expected to be homogeneous throughout the country. More specifically, the opposition mobilises voters with the claim of being an alternative to the incumbent government. Such appeals are targeted at all voters, indifferent of their social group and party affiliation. This corresponds to the case of a uniform swing. Alternatively, if the opposition attracts specifically voters which were previously voting for the governing party, it is likely to win an over-proportional share of voters in the strongholds of the governing party. This would constitute a regional swing, through which the opposition party gains substantially in areas outside of its previous strongholds. Both phenomena are linked to an increase in party nationalisation.

When electoral swings are repeated, parties gradually lose the attachment to certain voter groups: strongholds and social attachments are eroded, and replaced with a heterogeneous electorate, which is mobilised less due to its group affiliation and more on the grounds of campaigns which address all voters equally. This way, cleavage- or group-oriented parties weaken their social attachments, and appeal rather to voters irrespective of their social groups.²⁰

The same can be observed with respect to the development of party nationalisation. We have previously seen that proportional gains or losses of votes do not affect the level of party nationalisation of a certain party. However, proportional losses can increase the level of nationalisation of the whole party system, and uniform gains increase the level of party nationalisation. This means that regional strongholds are eroded through electoral swings, and such voters are in the long-term replaced by voters from areas where a party is traditionally not particularly strong. As a consequence, party nationalisation increases. In the following section, we shall discuss to what extent this might explain the vote swings in the Romanian case, and have led to the decline of the urban-rural division in the Romanian party system.

²⁰ Similar phenomena were discussed in the literature as the emergence of catch-all parties. See Kirchheimer (1966) for Western countries. Sitter (2002) looks at catch-all parties in post-communist democracies.

Electoral changes in Romania, 1990-2004

Romania belongs to the group of countries with the highest electoral volatility rates in Central and Eastern Europe (see Tavits 2005: 285). We have re-calculated electoral volatility, in order to be able to distinguish it into intra-bloc and inter-bloc volatility. There are two common indicators which are used to measure electoral volatility, the Lee index and the Least-Square-Index (see Gallagher 1991b; Taagepera/Grofman 2003). We employ the Lee index, because thanks to additivity, it allows the more straightforward comparison of total volatility with its components, inter-bloc and intra-bloc volatility (see table 4).

	Total volatility (Lee index)	Inter-bloc volatility (Lee index)	Inter-bloc volatility of bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic parties*	Inter-bloc volatility of the Hungarian minority party*
1990-1992	35.7%	28.3%	20.3%	0.1%
1992-1996	21.2%	12.9%	8.4%	0.5%
1996-2000	35.4%	30.7%	20.4%	0.3%
2000-2004	15.1%	9.9%	4.8%	0.4%

Table 4: Electoral volatility in Romania, 1990-2004.

* Part of inter-bloc volatility which is related to vote losses and gains through the bureaucratic and the non-bureaucratic party bloc, respectively the Hungarian minority party (calculated on the basis of the Lee index, only considering the relative change of the bureaucratic and the non-bureaucratic party bloc, or of the Hungarian minority party).

In Romanian post-communist elections, the net volatility has counted up to 35% of the voters. Only in the 2004 elections, volatility declined to a moderate level of 15%. Mainly, the volatility is due to shifts of voters from one party family to the other. Two aspects appear as particularly important for the study of the metamorphosis of the territorial voting patterns in Romania: The development of the inter-bloc volatility with look at the bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic parties, which are closely related to the urban-rural division, and the inter-bloc volatility that affects the Hungarian minority party, because it is related to the ethnic conflict.

The Hungarian minority party has an almost stable electorate: of 15%-35% total volatility, only some 0.1-0.5% being related to the Hungarian minority party. Quite in contrast, the election results reveal that the inter-bloc volatility affecting bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic parties is much more important. In some elections, some 20% of the voters switched from one bloc to the other. This high level of volatility and particularly of inter-bloc volatility in Romania does not come as a surprise. As shall be shown in detail, the vote shifts in Romanian elections can to a high extent be explained through retrospective voting behaviour of disappointed voters. A number of studies has shown that voters in post-communist democracies base their electoral decision often on the performance of the incumbent government (see for instance Tucker 2006). In the period of political, economic and foreign political transition, voters had high expectations in their governments. Often, parties would

all make quite similar electoral promises, namely economic growth, fight against corruption and mismanagement, and advances in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration, but subsequently fail. Quite to the contrary of the expectations raised, the transition created however social hardships. Political and economic success was less immediate than many voters would have hoped and expected and than they had been promised, and bad governance and corruption a widespread problem. As a consequence, it is plausible that voters often used elections in order to punish the incumbent government, and to shift to the opposition. Alternatively from switching to another party, voters might decide to abstain in subsequent elections.²¹ However, results from aggregate data analysis regarding changes in the levels of abstention should be taken with care, because they might be heavily biased through ecologic fallacies.

Most studies of Romanian elections stress the retrospective character of electoral decisions (cf. Roper 2003; Datculescu 1999b, see more details below). Stanciulescu (2008) has found impressive evidence for retrospective patterns of economic voting in Romanian elections, based on an analysis of individual voting behaviour. Similar to other post-communist countries in Europe, Romanian voters have often been disappointed by the performance of the party in office, and deserted it in subsequent elections. In the following part, we will show how retrospective voting has affected the main parties in the bureaucratic and the non-bureaucratic field – the main protagonists of the urban-rural division. It would be of little interest to show similar figures for the second territorial conflict, the ethnic division, because the vote for the main protagonist of this division, the Hungarian minority party was extremely stable.

1992

The 1992 elections have set an end to the uncontested domination of the Romanian political institutions through the communist successor party, and brought an opposition that was numerically worth mentioning to parliament. Two years before, the National Salvation Front of Ion Iliescu had won a majority of two thirds in the first legislature that had been elected in multiparty elections. Such a dominance can hardly be kept in (partially) plural elections. On the other hand, the economic reforms which were expected by the voters were delayed. In the election year, the National Salvation Front came in troubles, what was reflected in the brutal dismissal of the prime-minister and the following split of the Front (see above). This provided a fruitful terrain for the non-bureaucratic opposition to gain a substantial amount of votes in the elections of 1992. The

²¹ With exception of the 1996-2000 period, however, we will not be able to investigate the phenomenon of vote abstention empirically. The number of votes by party and county is available on the internet for all Romanian elections, and all parties. However, for the 1990, 1992, and 2004 elections, results do not include the number of entitled voters or turnout.

opposition could further profit from the authoritarian image of the governing party. The first year of transition had been overshadowed by incidents and authoritarian flashbacks: miners called by the president to overthrow the government, violent repressions against supporters of democracy, and street violence tolerated and encouraged by authorities. Two years later, in the 1992 elections, the governing party might have paid the price for this behaviour.

With its government action in the 1990-1992 period, the National Salvation Front was looking for ties with the voter segments which were not supportive for fierce market reforms. Instead, the government was supportive of the idea of a strong state which should protect the national economy from being sold abroad, and this way stigmatised market liberalism and privatisation. (Stevenson Murer 1999: 216). Particularly, the rural population belonged to the beneficiaries of the Front's policies: Iliescu gained further popularity among farmers, due to his land reform policies, which were aimed at restoring agriculture land and property to them (Crowther 1998: 301; Datculescu 1999b: 267). This did not remain without consequences on the territorial distribution of votes in Romanian counties (see figure 3).

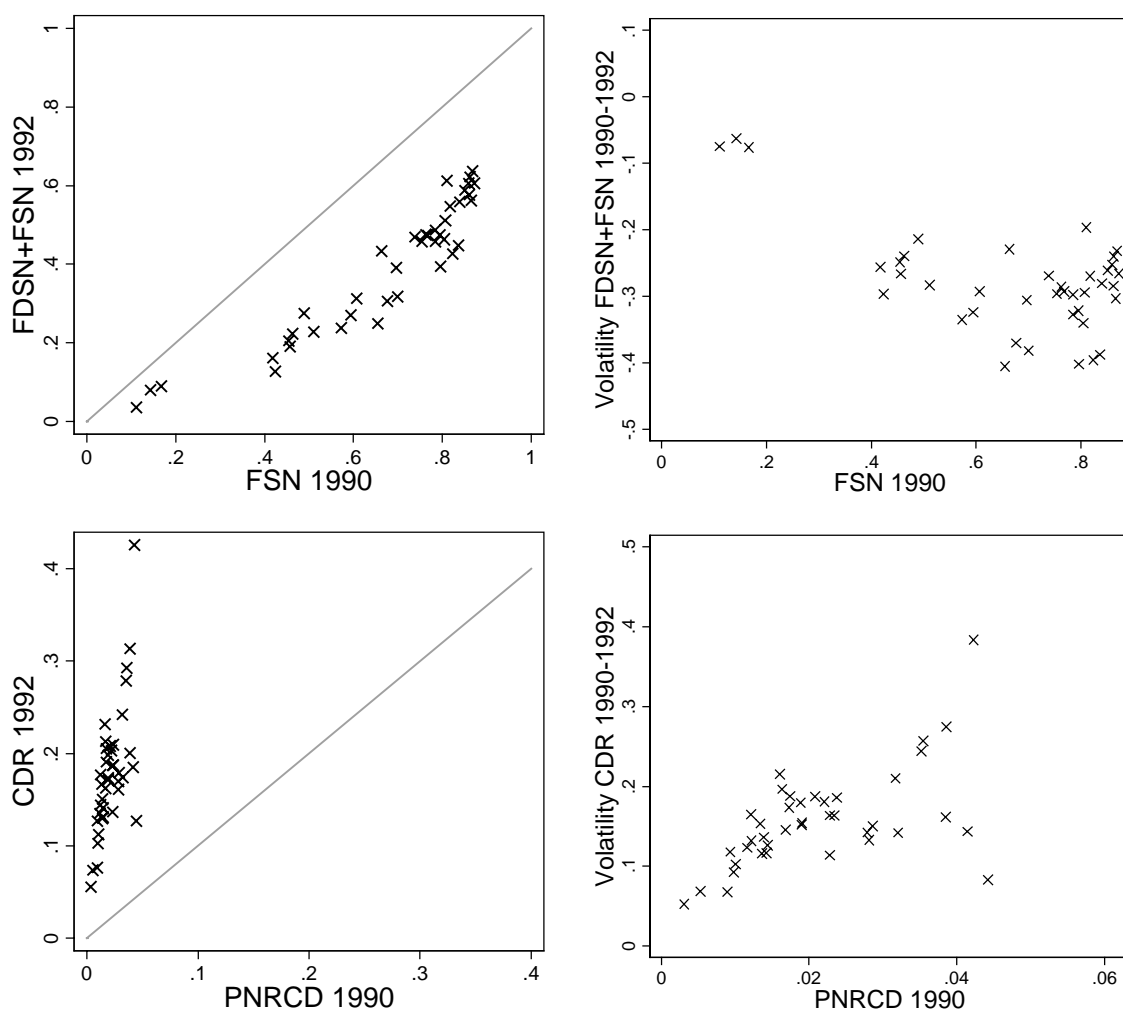


Figure 3: Electoral changes in the Romanian counties in 1992: FDSN+FSN 1992 versus FSN 1990, and CDR 1992 versus PNRCD 1990.

The two first graphs show the change of the vote shares that occurred between 1990 and 1992 for the FSN (1990) and its both successors FDSN and FSN in 1992. According to the official results, the party has obtained some 67% of the votes in 1990, but only 28% (FDSN) and 10% (FSN) two years later. The graph on the left shows the vote share of the parties in each of the forty districts in Romania in 1990 and 1992.²² First, it is clearly visible that the vote shares in 1990 and 1992 are highly correlated; the strongholds of the parties remained the same as before, but all the data points are below the equality line $x=y$, what signifies that throughout the country, the parties lost votes. This alone is not further astonishing, due to the substantial losses of votes at the national level. More relevant however is the pattern of the losses, which is shown in the graph on the right side: it shows the losses (changes of vote shares compared to 1990), dependent on the party support in the previous elections. On the Y-axis, the values for all forty counties are negative, what signifies that FSN/FDSN lost votes in all forty counties. Apart from three counties with strong Hungarian minorities, a low FSN vote of just 11-17% in 1990, and accordingly low losses in 1992, the swing appears not to be correlated to the 1990 result: in most counties, the parties lost some 25-40% of their previous vote. Adding to this, the party split up in the democratically oriented FSN of Petre Roman and the patrimonial-authoritarian FDSN of Ion Iliescu. Roman kept the control over the organisational structure of the FSN, including the control of the territorial headquarters across Romania (Ciornei 2004). This organisational strength across the territory might explain why Petre Roman's FSN could win votes across the country in the 1992 elections, and became one of the most nationalised parties in these elections (party nationalisation degree of 0.84). On the other hand, this means that the position of the FDSN in urban areas got weakened in three ways: First, already in 1990, political pluralism was much more developed than on the countryside, so that the National Salvation Front could score "just" about 50% of the vote. Second, the successor parties of the FSN in 1992 lost more than 25% votes in the cities, due to the uniform losses to opposition parties. And finally, Petre Roman took more than 10% of the voters over to the new FSN, so that there were not many urban votes left for Iliescu. After a massive parallel swing of votes to the opposition and due to the split from FSN, Iliescu's FDSN has become a party with strong differences between urban and rural areas, much more than in 1992, reflected in a drop of the party nationalisation score for the FDSN to 0.80.

The opposite pattern is visible when looking at the non-bureaucratic parties (figure 3, two graphs at the bottom), which competed in the Democratic Convention alliance (CDR) in the 1992 elections. The parties which scored just some 2-3 percentages of the vote in 1990, could win some 10%-15%

²² Due to a reform of the Bucuresti district, the capital and its surrounding area (Ilfov) can not be taken into account.

new votes in rural districts, and 20-30% in urban areas, apart from the districts with a high concentration of Hungarians. The vote shares of the party reflect the urban-rural and the ethnic division, and the party nationalisation score with 0.85 reflects some moderate heterogeneity.

In brief: Whereas the 1990 elections were characterised by a far-going unity of the vote and an oppression of the opposition, in 1992 pluralism and social divisions did emerge more clearly in the party system.

1996

The vote swings in 1996 were dramatic, with the incumbents losing their positions after a period of economic problems, corruption issues, and international isolation. The failure in copying the Czech voucher privatisation, the incapacity to privatise former state owned enterprises, the high amount of subsidies provided by the state lead to bad economic status in Romania, competed only by Bulgaria in this respect. The inflation of up to 256% in 1993 is only one out of many aspect which illustrates the economic crisis. Corruption reached high levels. Finally, the international isolation, due to initially reluctant positions of the government towards the Euro-Atlantic institutions, came as a disappointment for many voters. On the basis of this evaluation, it is well plausible that in an exit poll in 1996, 79% of the electorate declared that they wanted a change (Deletant/Siani 1998: 165).

Against this background, Liberal parties competed with the promise of far-going reforms, and a program against economic stalling and corruption. CDR, in a new format that gathered the centre-right forces, took advantage of these failures and promoted radical reforms, advertising the so-called “Contract with Romania” in which most of the problems could be solved within 200 days (Shafir 1996). The unrealistic document treated in a left wing manner the issues that the incumbents did not solve and promised effective measures to diminish corruption, improve the economic performance, privatise, decrease inflation, new working places, NATO integration, and political stability (Popescu 2003: 327).

In consequence, voters were highly disappointed by the non-success of the incumbent government, and attracted by a little realistic program of the opposition. This explains why the bureaucratic party lost votes, whereas the Liberal parties’ vote share increased. Figure 4 shows that when disaggregated to counties, the gains and losses widely correspond with the hypotheses: A proportional swing (loss) for the bureaucratic parties, and a uniform swing (increase) for the non-bureaucratic parties. The losses of the bureaucratic parties (FDSN 1992 vs. PDSR 1996) were widely proportional to its vote share in 1992, and accordingly they were strongest where the party used to be strong. This is no surprise, if we assume that voters were similarly disappointed across the country (cf. Deletant/

Siani 1998: 166). The gains of the Liberals however were not related to the coalition's previous strongholds. We expected that, as a general rule, electoral success (electoral gains) is – if it is not due to an electoral change of certain voter groups – widely homogeneous across the country, and uniform for all groups of voter. Through the homogeneous increase of its vote share, the coalition gets a nationally more homogeneous basis of support than in previous elections. Overall, such development increased the nationalisation of the party system.

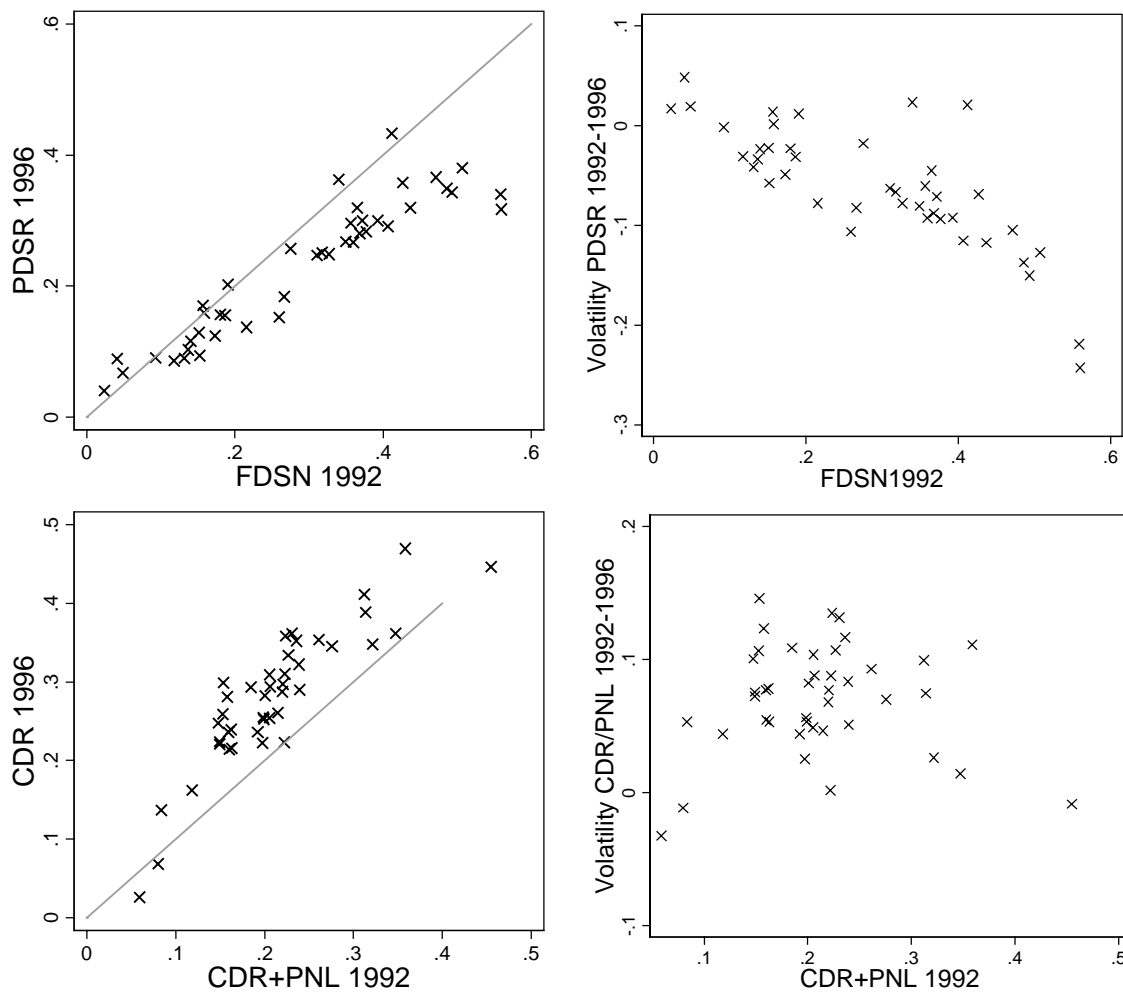


Figure 4: Electoral changes in the Romanian counties in 1996: PDSR 1996 versus FDSN 1992, and CDR 1996 versus CDR and PNL 1992.

2000

After the 1996 elections, the non-bureaucratic, liberal coalition CDR could form a governing majority. The CDR government started liberal market reforms, and the economy, which created economic and social hardship. In a first time, the real GDP dropped more than 6% in 1997, and prices exploded in the same year, leading to a hyper-inflation of 151% in 1997, and still 40% in 2000. Similarly, the unemployment almost doubled in the period of 1996-2000, from 6.6% to 11.5% in

1999. In 1999, the country was close to bankruptcy, following the Asian financial crisis that affected the Romanian banking sector. Adding to the high social costs of the economic transition, the governing coalition started to engage into infinite quarrels (between CDR, and an alliance of PD and the Social Democratic PSDR party), so that the prime-ministers changed three times. The coalition proved not able to fight corruption, and the political agenda was dominated by scandals. In the eve of the 2000 elections, the CDR alliance fell apart, when PNL left. Although in international terms, Romania got closer to NATO and started the EU negotiations, domestic issues were more salient on the public agenda at that moment.

The performance of the liberal coalition in government was seen thus as disastrous, and likewise, disappointed voters turned away in 2000. Overall, the parties which formed the CDR alliance in 1996 lost half of their votes in the 2000 elections. “Exit polls indicated that the vote was essentially based on the poor economic record of the CDR” (Roper 2003: 89). Figure 5 shows that the drop resembled highly a negative, proportional swing. In all counties, the coalition lost about half of its previous vote share. The CDR alliance – reduced through the split-off of the PNL – did not even pass the threshold of 8% for coalitions to get access to parliament. At the end, of the once 30% of the alliance, only a 7% representation through the PNL was left over. As a matter of mathematic regularities, and as nicely shown in our figure, a loss of half of the voters is more substantial in the urban former strongholds of the alliance than in the countryside, where the parties were weak already before. Accordingly, the proportional losses decrease territorial differences in the party system, and might have increased the overall level of nationalisation of the party system.

In change, the bureaucratic party (PDSR) promoted new faces on the political scene, tried to diminish the corruption within the party and to come with a pro-international discourse. The PDSR could celebrate a sweeping success in the elections. In net numbers²³, the party could increase its vote share from 22% to 41%, and, apart the heavily Hungarian populated areas, the swing was uniform in all counties. The ultra-nationalist PRM became the second largest party.

Figure 6 suggests that the electoral change had two components: Whereas a part of the voters of governing parties in 1996 might have switched to other parties four years later, it appears that others have decided to abstain. Namely, in the strongholds of the coalition partners CDR and of the Hungarian minority Union UDMR, turnout dropped substantially from 1996 to 2000. Even if aggregated data does not allow us to make conclusions on the question whether previous CDR or UDMR voters might have abstained in the 2000 elections, the difference between CDR/UDMR strongholds and other regions appear very strong, and it is plausible that many among the voters who decided

²³ We need to account that the party in the meanwhile suffered the defeat of 4% of votes through the split-off of the Alliance for Romania (APR). Our figures for 2000 include thus the cumulative vote for the PDSR and the APR.

for a first time in 1996 not to vote in parliamentary elections were former voters of the governing parties.

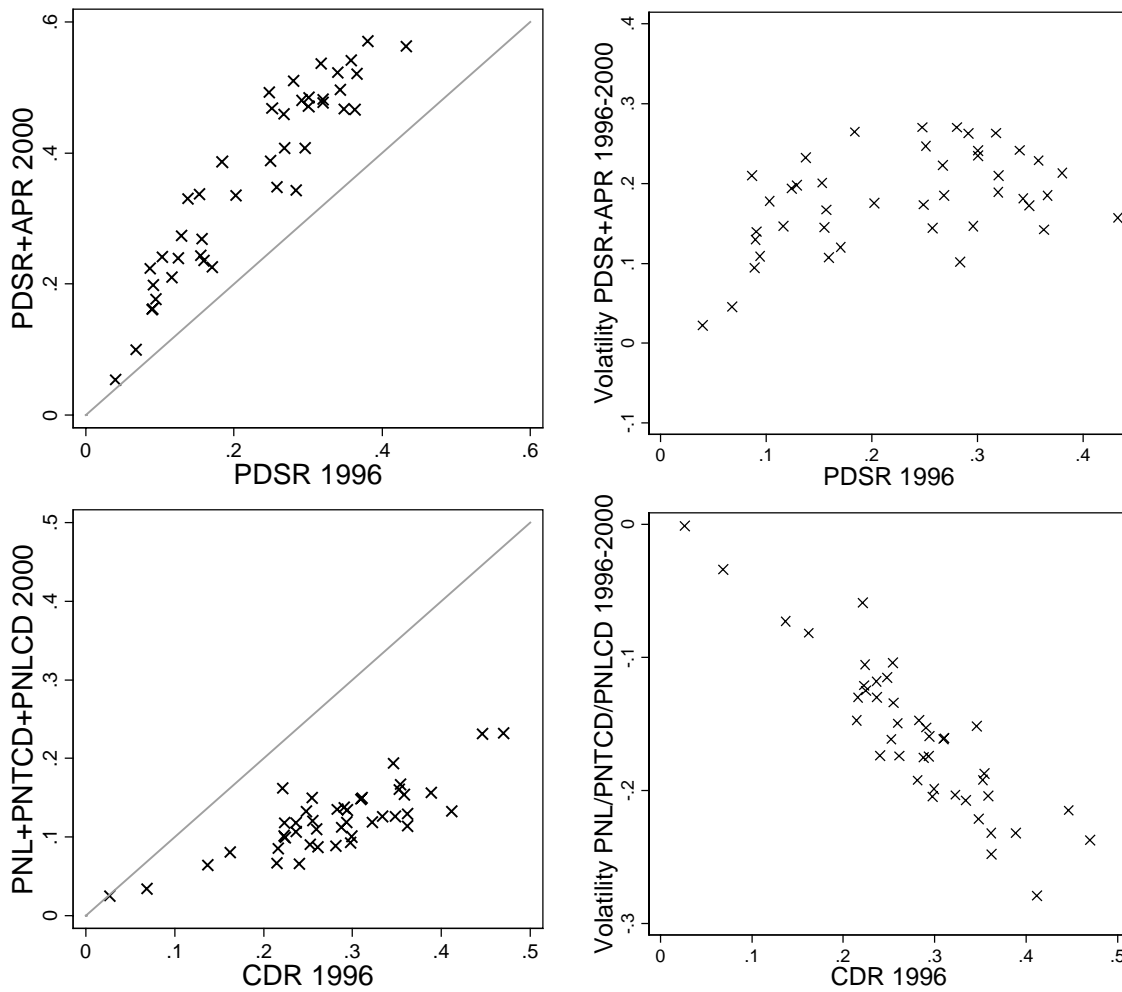


Figure 5: Electoral changes in the Romanian counties in 2000: PDSR (incl. APR) 2000 versus PDSR 1996, and PNL, PNTCD, PNLCD 2000 versus CDR 1996.

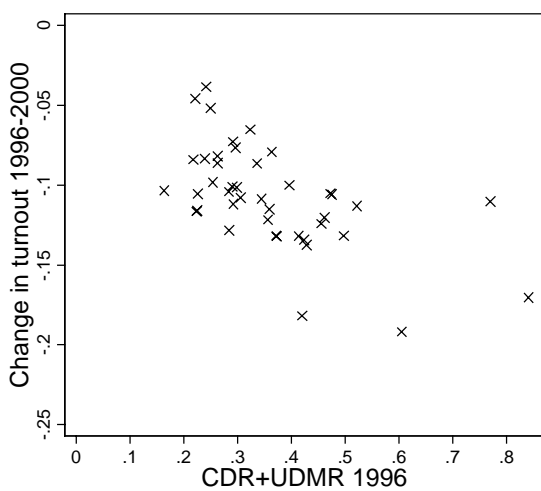


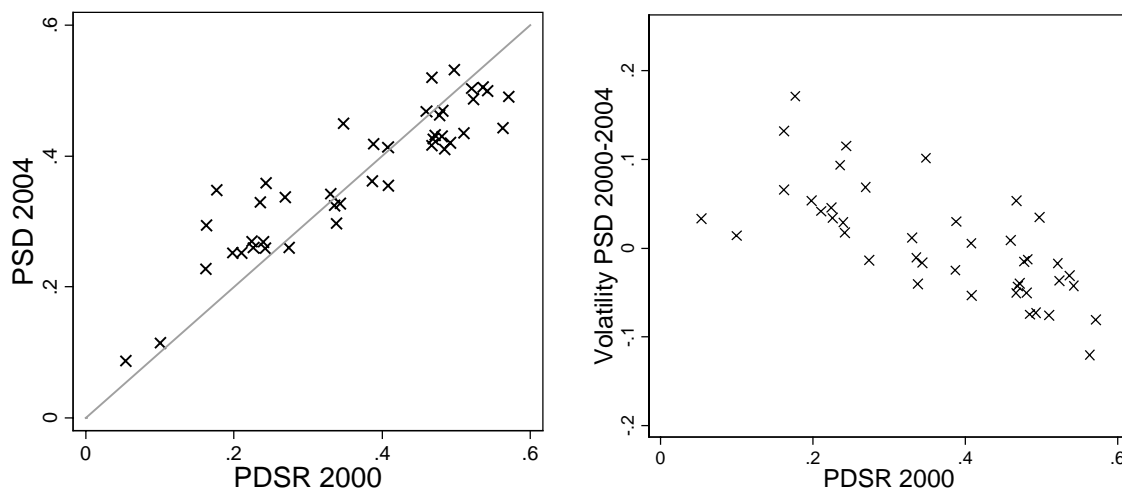
Figure 6: Change in turnout from 1996 to 2000, related to the cumulative vote share of the governing coalition (CDR and UDMR) in 1996.

2004

The 2004 elections are different from the previous ones: The economic and political performances of the 2000-2004 period allowed the bureaucratic party (PDSR/PSD) to hope for a new mandate after the 2004 elections. The party further tried to attract a large number of municipal mayors, partly putting them under pressure, using its power to control the budget. This way, it could achieve its goal of expanding its representation in the territory. This was rather successful, the party this way within three years (2000-2003) doubled the number of mayors affiliated (Institutul pentru Politici Publice 2003: 14).

In the 2004 elections, both the governing party (PSD) and the non-bureaucratic opposition alliance of Liberals and Democrats, PNL-PD, had quite similar programs in economic and political aims. The opposition alliance of Liberals and Democrats, PNL-PD, centred its campaign on European issues and flat taxation, justice and corruption. The performance of the government could explain why in the 2004 elections, for the first time in post-communist Romania, the incumbent party did not lose votes.

There were some changes to the electoral geography, as shown in figure 7: Even if the overall national vote share of the PSD remained stable, it could slightly win votes in areas where it was weak in previous elections, and lost slightly in its previous strongholds, leading to a further increase of its party nationalisation score to 0.90. The PNL-PD coalition could increase its vote share in almost all counties, so that we once more can observe an increase of votes which occurs in a uniform swing (although with some variance which is not related to the previous electoral result), leading to a further increase of party nationalisation.



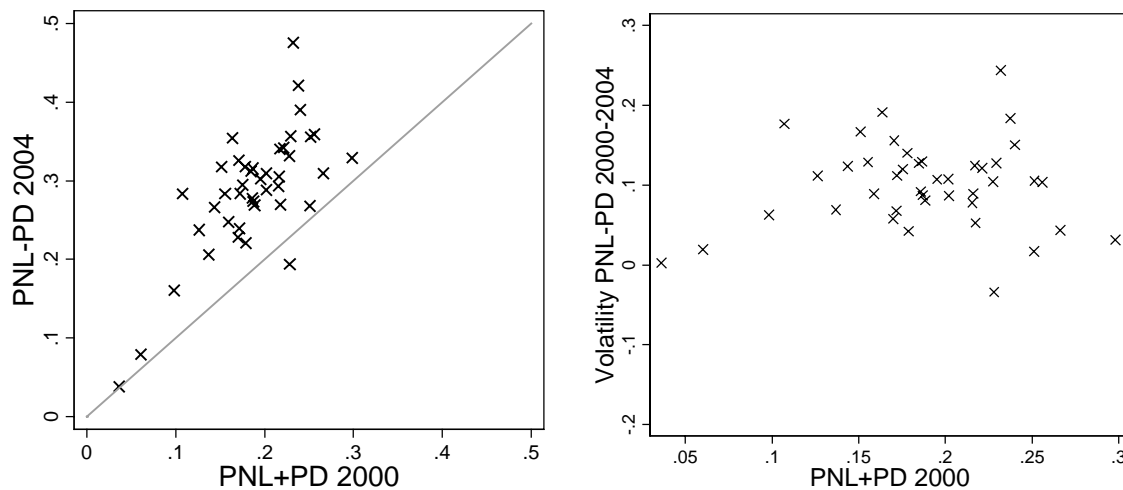


Figure 7: Electoral changes in the Romanian counties in 2004: PSD 2004 versus PDSR 2000, and PNL-PD 2004 versus PNL+ PD 2000.

Conclusions

This paper provides the first in-depth analysis of the development of party nationalisation in post-communist Romania. The sequence of five national parliament elections shows a homogenisation of the electoral behaviour across Romanian counties. This change makes Romania a very interesting case for the study of party nationalisation in Central and Eastern Europe.

Regional differences in party strength in Romania are mainly related to two territorial divides. In terms of party nationalisation, the ethnic conflict emerges mainly through the dominance of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians (UDMR) among ethnic Hungarian voters. Since Hungarians live mostly in Transylvania, and are a local majority in two counties in Central Romania, this leads to a high territorial concentration of the UDMR vote on some parts of Romania. On the other hand, the territorial voting behaviour has been characterised by a strong urban-rural conflict in the 1990s: The attraction of rural voters for the “bureaucratic” communist successor party (FSN-FDSN-PDSR-PSD) can be partially explained by the restoration of agricultural land to the farmers by the FSN government in 1991, but as well due to the nationalist-paternalistic policies and governing structures in the 1990s. On the other hand, urban voters were much more likely to vote for the “non-bureaucratic” liberal (PNL, PNTCD/CDR) and democratically oriented parties (PD), for two main reasons: Urban areas could profit more from economic reforms which were advanced by these parties, and because the happenings of the 1989 revolution were perceived differently in the cities where they occurred, than in the countryside, so that the legacy of the revolution for the party system was different for urban and rural areas.

Nevertheless, the urban-rural conflict has heavily declined in the period of investigation. In this paper, we present a suggestive hypothesis that explain why electoral volatility has contributed to the

decline of territorial cleavages. Even among the post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe, which are characterised through fast changes of party affiliation, volatility in Romania was rather high (Tavits 2005). Most importantly, in Romania it took mostly the shape of inter-bloc volatility, what means that there were net flows of voters between political blocs, and the electorate of the bureaucratic and the non-bureaucratic parties changed substantially from election to election. We explain this through the political and economic non-success of the Romanian governments in the period 1990-2000. Consequently, their voters were disappointed, and punished them in the subsequent elections. The incumbents lost votes in almost all elections (excepting 2004), whereas opposition parties could always gain new voters. As a result, these electoral swings have levelled down the importance of the urban-rural conflict and of regional strongholds. Usually, incumbent parties that perform badly lose a large part of their voters, irrespective of their social group. This means that their losses are proportional to the vote share in the previous elections – and thus involve particularly many voters in the regional strongholds. On the other hand, the opposition parties typically can gain votes throughout the country. This too leads to a lower relevance of their regional strongholds. Overall, inter-bloc volatility reduces the importance of territorial divides in voting behaviour, and leads to a more homogeneous electorate of the main parties throughout the countries. This might explain why the nationalisation of the major parties in post-communist Romania, and of the party system as a whole, increased. Due to the absence of inter-bloc volatility around the ethnic division, a similar process did not capture the Hungarian minority party.

Our paper provides a universally applicable explanation, how inter-bloc electoral volatility, the change of territorial divides, and the development of party nationalisation can be interrelated. If the explanation can be used in other contexts, and possibly extended to non-territorial divides, might be examined in further research.

For a further deepening of the hypothesis tested in the Romanian case, it would be favourable to include further aspects in this study. So far, we treated the impact of the economic development in a not very systematic way, and based on indicators for the national Romanian economy. However, the economic development occurred differently across counties. In a further development of this paper, we might take this into account. Second, the territorial representation of political parties relies on the organisational structure of parties, the involvement in local politics, and the representation through local notables. Occasionally, the organisational capacity has been employed to explain changes in the territorial structure of party strength. However, it has not been included systematically in the analysis. It would be of advantage to analyse this dimension more systematically in a further development of this paper.

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Appendix

Party names in English and Romanian/Hungarian

(only parties mentioned in the text)

Party name used in English	Country language	Abbreviation
National Salvation Front	Frontul Salvării Naționale	FSN FDSN
Party of Social Democracy of Romania	Partidul Democratiei Sociale din România	PDSR
Social Democratic Party	Partidul Social Democrat	PSD
Romanian Democratic Convention	Convenția Democrată Română	CDR
National Liberal Party	Partidul Național Liberal	PNL PD PNT-CD
Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania	Uniunea Democrată a Maghiarilor din România / Româniilor Magyar Demokrata Szövetség	UDMR
Party of Romanian Unity	Alianța pentru Unitatea Românilor	AUR
Greater Romania Party	Partidul România Mare	PRM

Table A1: Party names.

The evolution of the main party families

Date	Event	Old Name	New Name
1990	Split PNL-AT	PNL	PNL
1990	Fusion PNL-PSL	PNL	PNL
1992	Split PNL-CD	PNL	PNL
1993	Fusion PNL-NPL	PNL	PNL
1993	Split PNL Câmpeanu	PNL	PNL
1998	Fusion PNL-PAC	PNL	PNL
1998	Fusion PNL-PL	PNL	PNL
2000	Split PNL-Traditional	PNL	PNL
2001	Fusion ApR-PNL	PNL	PNL
2003	Fusion PNL Câmpeanu – PNL	PNL	PNL
2003	Fusion PNL-UFD	PNL	PNL

Table A2: The Evolution of the Liberals after 1989. Source: Stoica 2001, Gherghina 2007, Website of the Liberal National party, www.pnl.ro, last accessed February 27, 2008.

Date	Event	Old Name	New Name
27-29 March 1992	Split after internal elections within FSN. The winners kept the party	FSN	FSN
1993	Fusion FSN-PD	FSN	PD(-FSN)
2004	Split Democratic Force	PD	PD

Table A3: The Evolution of the Democratic Party after 1989. Source: Gherghina 2007.

Date	Composition	Vote share
1992	PNTCD, PNL*, two other Liberal parties (PNL-CD and PNL-AT – later known as PL '93), PSDR, Ecologist Party (PER), Civic Alliance Party (PAC), UDMR, and some other very small parties	20.01%
1996	PNTCD, PNL, PNL-CD**, Ecologist Party (PER), Civic Alliance Party (PAC), and some other very small parties	30.17%
2000 (CDR 2000)	PNTCD, Right Forces Union (UFD), Christian Democratic National Alliance (ANCD), Moldovan Party (PM), Romanian Ecologist Federation (FER)	5.04%

Table A4: The composition of the CDR. Source: Stoica 2001.

Explanatory model for party nationalisation in Central and Eastern Europe

A cross-country comparison of levels of party nationalisation in Central and Eastern European democracies has shown that the ethnic structure of a country and national electoral thresholds in the electoral system contribute substantially to the explanation of nationalisation of party systems (Bochsler 2008). Territorial ethnic divisions e_C (a measure between 0 and 1, which is calculated in analogy to ethnic fractionalisation, although taking into account only ethnic groups which are geographically concentrated), the level of the national legal threshold t , the ordinal number of the election in a row T , and an interaction term of thresholds and ethnic division $f(t, e_C)^{24}$ are used as explanatory variables.

Based on this model, the expected values can be calculated for each case, and compared to the measured values of party nationalisation.

$$n = 0.89 - 0.66 e_C - 0.33 t + 0.84 f(t, e_C) + 0.04 (1/T)$$

Table A5 reports the level of nationalisation of the Romanian party system which would be expected, and the real values. The differences are most pronounced in the elections in 1992-2000, when the level of party nationalisation was initially much lower than expected. This might be due to the pronounced urban-rural division in the Romanian party system.

year	eC	t	T	n expected	n real
1990	.186	0%	1	.723	.777
1992	.186	3%	2	.819	.741
1996	.186	3%	3	.826	.788
2000	.186	5%	4	.838	.797
2004	.186	5%	5	.840	.840

Table A5: Explanatory variables, expected and real values of party nationalisation for the five elections in Romania. Taken from Bochsler (2008).

* PNL left CDR immediately after the local elections so for the national elections, CDR was without them.

** The seats in Parliament were divided within CDR according to an algorithm of popularity, most of them going to PNTCD, followed by PNL and PNL-CD.

²⁴ $f(t, e_C) = \sqrt[3]{(t/e_C)} * e_C$ for $t < e_C$; $f(t, e_C) = e_C$ for $t > e_C$

Vote shares, evolution, and bloc affiliation of Romanian parties, 1990-2004

Party	Bloc affiliation	1990	1992	1996	2000	2004		
PNL	NB	6.41%	2.63%		7.0%	31.50%		
PNTCD/CDR	NB	2.56%	20.0%	alliance with PSDR	30.0%	alliance with PNL	5.0%	
PD (1992: FSN)	NB		10.0%	split from FSN	13.0%		7.0%	
FSN/FDSN/PDSR	B	66.31%	27.72%	22.0%	merged with PR	37.0%	37.0%	merged with PSM and PDSR
UDMR	HU	7.23%	7.50%	6.50%		7.0%	6.20%	
PRM	UN		4.0%	4.50%		19.50%	13.0%	
PUNR	UN	2.12%	alliance with PR	8.0%	4.50%	1.40%	0.53%	
PSDR	NB	0.53%						
PSM	UN		3.04%	2.15%		0.71%		
PDAR	OT	1.83%	3.0%					
MER	OT	2.62%	2.25%					
PR	B		1.63%					
PSDR	NB		0.87%					
SND	OT		0.73%					
NPL	OT		0.58%					
ULB	OT		0.51%					
PS	OT			2.29%				
PSMR	OT			1.73%				
ANL	OT			1.57%				
PPR	OT			1.44%		0.66%		
UNC	OT			0.87%				
PNT	OT			0.84%		0.43%		
ANLE	OT			0.79%				
PDNC	OT			0.57%				
APR	OT					4.07%	1996 in CDR	
PNL-C	NB					1.40%	1996 in CDR	
PER	NB	1.69%				0.84%	1996 in CDR	0.72%
PNG	OT					0.16%		2.20%
PFDR	OT							0.78%
PSD	OT	1.05%						
GDC	OT	0.48%						
Minorities ^a	MIN	1.36%	1.43%	2.48%		3.14%		0.0339329
Total		94.19%	93.89%	95.23%		95.31%		97.32%

Table A6: Evolution of Romanian parties, 1990-2004. Only parties above 0.5% of the vote listed.

^a All parties of ethnic minorities. Blocs: NB non-bureaucratic; B bureaucratic; HU Hungarian minority; MIN Minority parties; UN Ultra-nationalists; OT Others.