

# Report on Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

<b>Student:</b>	<b>Bc. Natália Dusková</b>
<b>Advisor:</b>	<b>Barbara Pertold-Gebická, Ph.D.</b>
<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>The geography of the populist vote in Slovakia</b>

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT** (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):

## Short summary

The thesis builds spatial econometric models of the parliamentary election outcomes in 2016 and 2020 in Slovakia. The specific interest of the author is in the electoral support of two populist Slovak parties (LSNS and SMER). The key idea is that in addition to demographic characteristics (age, income and education), there are local components to preferences that may reflect various spatially correlated/dependent channels (such as local labor markets, local infrastructure but also possibly local experience with the parties). The thesis wants to test if these channels are in force.

The thesis analyzes three sets of problems: First, H1 examines the role of education (a demographic characteristic that was not included in her previous work). Second, H2-H4 look into spatial correlations/dependencies. Third, H5 compares results from 2016 and 2020 to see if the spatial relations exist in both elections.

## Contribution

The thesis is fairly advanced as the author builds on her knowledge gained during writing of her previous (excellent) undergraduate thesis. The author provides a variety of spatial models and discusses their performance (using AIS criterion) as well as interpretation of the models (see Section 8.4.2 in particular).

## Methods

The thesis applies a variety established spatial econometric tests and estimation methods but also uses OLS as a useful baseline regression.

## Literature

The covered literature is relevant. It contains primarily methodology plus studies reflecting electoral behavior in Slovakia which is inevitable to gain a proper perspective on the problem.

## Manuscript form

The thesis has been formatted and edited properly.

## Overall evaluation and suggested questions for the discussion during the defense

Although the thesis covers a topic from another field (electoral studies), it is relevant to economists that seek to understand which economic and non-economic variables affect political support of economic policies. It is also important to analyze whether local factors influence electoral outcomes in nation-wide elections or not.

I highly appreciate that the thesis has mastered and successfully applied spatial econometrics techniques that are not part of the standard curricula at IES.

The thesis offers a large set of results; in my view, the thesis would benefit from presenting the results and effects in a bit more organized way. In that respect, I find visualizations (LISA clustering) very helpful.

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I only have two topics for discussion:

- Please clarify exactly the differences to the bachelor thesis. Which differences to your previous work are the most substantive in your view? Is the key novelty including of a new demographic variable (H1), checking stability (H5) or should we treat the analysis of spatial correlations/dependencies and the related methodological considerations (H2-H4) as the biggest move?
- To what extent can these spatial models guide the electoral outcome prediction? That is, based on recent changes in observables (e.g. demographics), can you predict changes in the electoral outcomes? Are there attempts to generate such predictions?

The results of the Turnitin analysis do not indicate significant text similarity with other available sources.

In my view, the thesis fulfills the requirements for a Master thesis at IES, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University. I recommend it for the defense and suggest a grade A.

## **SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED** (for details, see below):

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Contribution</i> (max. 30 points)	26
<i>Methods</i> (max. 30 points)	30
<i>Literature</i> (max. 20 points)	18
<i>Manuscript Form</i> (max. 20 points)	20
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b> (max. 100 points)	<b>94</b>
<b>GRADE</b> (A – B – C – D – E – F)	<b>A</b>

**NAME OF THE REFEREE:** doc. Martin Gregor

**DATE OF EVALUATION:** June 12, 2023

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**Referee Signature**

**EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:**

**CONTRIBUTION:** *The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. There is a distinct value added of the thesis.*

**METHODS:** *The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed.*

**LITERATURE REVIEW:** *The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.*

**MANUSCRIPT FORM:** *The thesis is well structured. The student uses appropriate language and style, including academic format for graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables and disposes with a complete bibliography.*

**Overall grading:**

TOTAL	GRADE
91 – 100	A
81 - 90	B
71 - 80	C
61 – 70	D
51 – 60	E
0 – 50	F