
Changing political boundaries and geographical bias in post-socialist context - a case study from Hungary

György Vida*¹

¹Department of Economic and Social Geography, University of Szeged – Egyetem u. 2. 6722 Szeged, Hungary

Abstract

In most of the democracies, one of the central political questions is how the different types of electoral systems transform the citizens' votes into seats. The analysis of the general electoral process is an interdisciplinary research issue, however, the detection of the imbalance caused by territorial distortions, is a typical geographical topic. Analyzing geographical bias as "gerrymandering" and "malapportionment" (the distorting phenomena caused by the different sizes of constituencies of different sizes) are well explored in Anglo-Saxon geography. However, this phenomenon is a neglected topic in post-socialist literature, because of the relatively young pluralist democratic history after the single-party communist dictatorship in these areas. In the post-socialist context, I chose my case study is Hungary as my case study area as the governing because the electoral law changes governed by the conservative and Christian democratic party (Fidesz-KDNP) changed the electoral law in 2011. The mixed electoral system was kept, however, the boundaries of the single member electoral districts were redrawn substantially.

The presentation study deals with two main questions: Firstly what kind of geographical bias can be detected in the Hungarian electoral systems after 2000?; What are the main and another question is focusing the dynamic demographic and political opinion changes and interrelations to determining these geographical bias? Thus, the purpose of this study presentation is to have present a complex comparison about the Hungarian electoral systems have and its geographical bias. This analysis provides an overview of about the changes of the Hungarian electoral system and its consequences for unequal political representation. Based on the results of the Hungarian parliamentary elections after the millennium, the presentation also explores the geographical bias of the new Hungarian electoral systems with special attention to malapportionment and partisan gerrymandering. To sum up Summing up, as the nature of geographical distortions is dynamically changed by the society's demographic features, and by the political opinion, it is expedient to examine the unequal political representation in several regional scales, and with utilising different methods. Another challenge is the assessment of the Modifiable Areal Unit Problem issue in electoral analysis, as the same phenomenon due to different geographical delimitations could show diverse spatial patterns. Based on the results, however, it can be concluded that it is important to emphasize the complexity of the interpretation of these processes.

Keywords: electoral geography, electoral districts, geographical bias, modifiable areal unit problem, Hungary

*Speaker