



Posudek oponenta habilitační práce

Masarykova univerzita

Fakulta

Fakulta sociálních studií

Obor řízení

Politologie

Uchazeč

Mgr. Michal Pink, Ph.D.

Pracoviště uchazeče, instituce

Fakulta sociálních studií Masarykovy univerzity

Habilitační práce

Teritoriální homogenita a heterogenita českých senátních voleb 1996 - 2016

Oponent

doc. Andrew Lawrence Roberts, Ph.D.

Pracoviště oponenta, instituce

Fakulta sociálních studií Masarykovy univerzity

The aim of this habilitation thesis is to consider the spatial context of Senate elections and the effect of cleavages on these elections. The work provides considerable new data and detailed analysis of Czech Senate elections from 1996 to 2016. It also proposes a number of interesting questions about patterns in these elections. It is less successful in explicitly specifying its hypotheses and testing them in a systematic way. The work is thus a good first step towards an important contribution to our knowledge of the Czech Senate and senates more generally, rather than a final statement. On the basis of his previous work, both articles and monographs, I believe the author is capable of taking the next step. Below I will discuss the methods and results of the thesis and make suggestions for improvements.

The theoretical side of the work considers two areas: cleavages and second-order election theory. The work begins by discussing the concept of cleavages and the way that they structure political competition. This discussion is reasonable and I was intrigued by the focus on the cleavages of center/periphery and town/country in the Czech Republic as they are not traditionally central in discussions of Czech politics. Some background on the evolution and significance of these cleavages in the Czech lands, however, would provide a better grounding for the thesis.

A little more confusing was the division of the country into three macroregions (cities, non-urban Bohemia, and non-urban Moravia). In particular, the author did not provide a theoretical basis for this division, nor did he draw distinct hypotheses from this concept. What differences should we see across these three regions? Even better would be to think more deeply about why such differences would exist – is it a matter of economics and the winners and losers from the new economy, differences in culture, or historical ties to particular parties? More thought to these issues connected with clear hypotheses would have raised the level of the work considerably.

A second framing concept for the work is second-order elections. Again the description of this theory was reasonable and had the advantage that it provided clearer expectations and hypotheses. These included the idea that second-order elections favor opposition parties and smaller parties, that this advantage differs according to the temporal distance from

parliamentary elections, and that voters in these elections are less concerned with parties. These are important ideas and the Czech Senate provides a reasonable test of them. The worry here would be whether this work brings much novelty to the subject. While the author is generous in citing the work of others, there is not so much space for him to produce original findings.

I will now turn to the methods and results of the empirical parts of the thesis. I will discuss the arguments in the individual empirical chapters separately because they are not strongly linked to each other or to a larger framework, although the ideas of macroregions and second-order elections do recur periodically. For each chapter, I will try to summarize the method and argument, my evaluation of both, and my suggestions for improvement.

The empirical part of the work begins in Chapter 5 with a description of the positions of the main political parties on the utility of the Senate. These descriptions are interesting and could form the basis for theories about institutional formation. For example, did parties accurately forecast whether they would benefit or be hurt by the new Senate or were their opinions driven by other forces? Their preferences could thus be paired with his later analysis of the penalizing effect of Senate elections for different parties. In the present version, the chapter simply presents the opinions of the major parties in the early 1990s and today.

In Chapter 7, the author presents intriguing data on trends in the number of candidates for the Senate and in trends in the number of candidates without party support. Interestingly, both have been rising over time, though there is no explanation why. An attempt to analyze the roots of these trends could potentially yield new theories about institutions. The same goes for findings about the under- and over-representation of specific parties, another part of the chapter. While size seems to make a difference – large parties tend to be overrepresented – this is not universal. Liberal parties tend to do better than expected, while the Communists do worse. Is it then a matter of ideology? More thought here could produce important gains. As in other chapters, the analysis here is broken down across the three macroregions (cities, Bohemia, Moravia), but these comparisons are not based on clear hypotheses nor do they yield clear conclusions. It is not clear that these three macroregions have much explanatory power.

In Chapter 8, the author looks at congruence in voting between parliamentary and Senate elections. He borrows the concept of congruence from Schakel and proceeds to apply Schakel's three measures of congruence to Czech elections. It might have been useful to explain at the start whether Schakel's concept applies to Senate elections given that it was developed for regional elections.

The main results appear to be a trend toward more congruence over time and higher congruence when parliamentary and Senate elections are closer in time. While this second association makes sense, it is unclear where the first trend comes from. One might expect decreasing congruence given the large shifts in the party system since 2010. The author has done good work compiling, disaggregating, and presenting this data, but the text leaves readers without much guidance in understanding what the data mean.

Chapter 9 turns to the success of individual parties in Senate elections over time. Again, the chapter presents a mass of data, disaggregated in many different fashions (by party, by

macroregion), but it is hard to make sense of so much data without clear hypotheses and comparisons across units. Thus, the reader is left with many descriptive facts: CSSD is most successful in Bohemia outside of cities, several parties benefit in certain years but not others, ODS often loses to liberal parties in the second round, each party has specific “volebni basty”, etc. However there are few unifying themes that help to make sense of these many individual findings.

There are a few larger points. Government or opposition status seems to matter (candidates of government parties tend to be penalized), for example. But the author could have thought more deeply here and at least produced explicit comparisons between parties whether in tabular form or through some sort of multivariate analysis. It would be interesting to know the effect of ideology or personality (this might explain why ODS often loses to smaller liberal parties). It would help to think about why the more personality-based populist parties do not fare very well. One could also think about the resources that different parties put into Senate elections – do some try harder to win them? It would also be useful to think more about the effect of the breakdown in the party system since 2010 and its effect on Senate elections – for example, the increasing success of small parties. The author might have additional ideas here – for example, concerning differences between the macroregions – but presently there are few larger themes connecting these results and the chapter ends without a conclusion.

Chapter 10 briefly describes the time periods when governments held majorities in the Senate and when they did not. Given that the author cites data on the extent to which Senate vetoes are overruled, it would have been useful to look at the correlation between majority status and the success of Senate vetoes, amendments, and proposals. This would give the author a basis for arguing that Senate elections truly matter instead of a description of these periods.

Chapter 11 considers turnout in Senate elections. The beginning of the chapter mostly summarizes previous research on these questions: close elections, polarization, and the participation of the Communists seem to increase turnout in the second round. The author’s original analysis focuses on the turnout effect of different combinations of second round opponents (government party versus opposition party, government party versus government party, etc.). These data are a useful contribution, but besides presenting averages for each combination and each election, they are mostly underutilized. The tables indicate a lot of variability and the author mainly describes this variability. A multivariate analysis testing clear hypotheses might have produced useful findings.

Chapter 12 considers what would happen if the second round of Senate elections was eliminated. This thought experiment is somewhat problematic because it ignores the fact of strategic voting. If voters knew that there was no second round, they would vote differently in the first round. Nevertheless, the question of why first-round winners sometimes lose in the second round is a worthwhile one. While the author again presents a considerable amount of descriptive data on this question, he does not make use of it to test specific hypotheses. It is not clear if it is party size or ideology or participation in government that systematically affects these reversals.

Chapter 13 looks at the neighborhood effect – whether candidates receive more votes in areas close to their hometown. This chapter mainly extends the work of Malcova to two recent elections in 2014 and 2016. While the analysis is competently done, it again mainly provides

a mass of results which mainly show that the neighborhood effect exists for most but not all candidates. A stronger contribution would take the coefficients from these analyses and ask why they are higher and lower in some cases than others. Or it would consider whether these effects survive the addition of controls like incumbency, government party, type of hometown, and vote share. A larger multivariate analysis would add a lot to our knowledge here.

In chapter 14, the author looks at the determinants of vote shares for all Senate candidates in six races, using variation across election wards. It considers the effect of wealth, unemployment, religiosity, education, and proximity to the candidate's hometown. The analyses clearly required work and could be the basis for useful conclusions, but that would require a more general analysis that puts the many individual findings together and links them with clear hypotheses. As it is, the more general results are only ones that have been well-confirmed before such as the relationship between religiosity and votes for KDU-CSL or high income and votes for ODS or liberal parties.

Finally, in chapter 15, the author returns to the theory of second-order elections and mostly finds confirmation. Thus, elections to the Czech Senate feature lower turnout, more support for new and smaller parties, more invalid votes, vote losses for governing parties, and stronger neighborhood effects. These findings are useful, though they mostly confirm other work and conventional wisdom. The author could have better highlighted what is original here.

Overall, the author has put together an impressive collection of data and disaggregated summaries of that data on many different aspects of Czech Senate elections. Together all of these pieces of evidence could be used to make a set of original arguments about these elections. The present work thus represents a first step, a taste of what a fuller analysis could yield.

To fulfill the promise of this work the author would need to take a number of additional steps. These would include a stronger set of hypotheses and theories that could be used to interrogate the data and broader analyses that bring together the many disaggregated results both in multivariate models and in larger arguments that unite the disparate chapters. Based on my reading of other works by the author, I believe that he is capable of taking this next step. My analysis of the individual chapters above suggests ways that he might do this. At present this work is incomplete, but it does point the way towards a more complete theory of Czech Senate elections.

Dotazy oponenta k obhajobě habilitační práce (počet dotazů dle zvážení oponenta)

1. What is the justification for dividing Senate elections into these three „macroregions“ and what are the effects of these macroregions on Senate elections? Why are they more useful than other possible divisions?

Závěr

Habilitační práce Michala Pinka “Teritoriální homogenita a heterogenita českých senátních voleb 1996 – 2016“ *spĺňuje po zpracovani uvedenych uprav* požadavky standardně kladené na habilitační práce v oboru Politologie.

V Brně dne 23.4.2018

podpis

