Strategic Voting at the Romanian 2008 Local Elections

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Abstract The aim of this article is to measure the extent to which voters cast their ballots strategically at the Romanian 2008 local elections. Our interest was prompted by the introduction of a mixed-member electoral system for local elections. One common characteristic of mixed-member electoral systems is that they present the voter with the opportunity for strategic behavior. For the purpose of measuring strategic voting we use three methods: 1. we compare the number of votes received by candidates in the single member district race with the number of votes received by their parties in the proportional representation race; 2. we calculate the difference between the votes received by the two best ranked candidates to determine whether the race between the two was tight, which would stimulate strategic behavior; 3. we calculate the second-first ratio (SF-ratio) proposed by Gary Cox. Our results show that that only a small percentage of the voters behaved strategically although the newly introduced mixed-member electoral system presents them with the opportunity to do so.

Key words: strategic voting, mixed member electoral system, SF-ratio, close race, local elections

Strategic voting has been an important concept in the study of elections and voter behavior for more than fifty years, as a defining characteristic of plurality and mixed-member electoral systems. With the introduction of a mixed-member electoral system at the local elections the opportunity to study this phenomenon in the Romanian context presents itself. This article aims to measure the extent to which the Romanian electorate voted strategically at the 2008 local elections.

1. Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this research we define strategic voting as "casting ballots for alternatives other than one's first preference in order to improve the expected outcome of the election" (Moser and Scheiner 2008, 2).

Maurice Duverger (1954) was the first political scientist to identify the situation in which voters have incentives to vote strategically. Duverger's Law states that the simple plurality rule in single member districts favors the two party-system (Duverger 1954, 217), as voters who are aware of the characteristics of the plurality rule will avoid wasting their votes on hopeless third party candidacies, while elites will avoid wasting their time, money and effort in launching what the voters will perceive as hopeless candidats, instead looking to form coalitions of sufficient size to win a plurality (Neto and Cox 1997, 150). Duverger claimed that societies naturally moved towards two-party systems by two complementary processes of fusion and elimination. The process of elimination is the result of two factors working together: a mechanical and a psychological factor (Duverger 1954, 215, 224). The mechanical effect refers to electoral systems'

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underrepresentation of third parties in the share of legislative seats as compared to popular votes (it is mechanic in the sense that no human manipulation or strategy is involved). The psychological effect refers to the tendency of the voters, realizing that votes for minor parties are not effectively translated in to seats, to rally to what they consider the least unacceptable of the two major parties. As a consequence the psychological effect reduces the number of votes for small parties. However, the psychological effect is not exclusively a function of voters reactions and strategy. Political elites and party leaders will anticipate the mechanical and therefore the psychological effects of electoral systems as much as voters will. For exemple, parties may not run candidates in those districts where they are very unlikely to win seats. In a plurality system, where the mechanical effect is most powerful, they should also be less inclined to form new parties or more inclined to merge old ones (Blais and Carty, 1991, 80-81). From this perspective, Blais and Carty state that the psychological effect should therefore encompass the anticipations of all political actors, elites as well as voters.

Strategic voting can also be seen as an expression of the purpose the voters are trying to acomplish. According to Alvarez, Boehmke and Nagler (2006, 2) voters may be trying to express their opinions about specific issues or they might be trying to influence the outcome of the election. Behavior generated by the first motivation can be characterized as expressive behavior. Behavior generated by the second motivation can be characterized as purposive behavior. This type of behavior can best be observed in multicandidate elections. The main contribution of the authors is accounting for the context in which voters have the opportunity to behave in a strategic fashion. In two-candidate elections, or in the situation where one of the candidates has such a lead that he cannot be defeated, there is no possibility for voters to exhibit strategic behavior. Michael Alvarez, Frederick Boehmke and Jonathan Nagler argue that previous measures of strategic voting significantly underestimated the willingness of voters to engage in strategic behavior when presented with the opportunity to do so. The incentive the voter has to behave strategically is based on two factors: how far behind the voter's first choice is in the voters constituency and *how close the race is between the remaining two parties* in the voters constituency. However, these considerations are only relevant when the voter's first choice is in last place and if the voter considers that he is wasting his vote by casting a ballot for his first preference, thus redirecting his vote to his second preference in order to influence the outcome of the election (Alvarez, Boehmke and Nagler 2006, 7). The idea that in order to avoid wasting their vote on hopeless candidates voters sometimes switch to less preferred but more promising candidates, usually on of the two top contenders, is also expressed by Michael Herrmann and Franz Urban Pappi in the article "Strategic Voting in German Constituencies" (Herrmann and Pappi 2008, 228).

Mixed-member electoral systems also present voters with the opportunity to behave in a strategic fashion. Under mixed-member systems, voters cast two ballots simultaneously to elect representatives to a single branch of the legislature. They cast one ballot for a candidate in a single member district and one for a party in a proportional representation contest. One common characteristic of mixed-member electoral systems is ticket splitting. Ticket splitting occurs when a voter casts his proportional representation ballot for one party and his single member district ballot for the candidate of another party. It is generally argued that much of split-ticket voting in mixed-member systems is founded on strategic voting (Cox 1997). Such analyses use as evidence of strategic voting ticket splitting in which a larger number of votes are cast for a competitive single member district candidate than the candidate's party receives in proportional representation balloting. One of the reasons why ticket splitting appears is due to the fact that voters can feel more confident that proportional representation rules will permit their most preferred party to win representation and so there are far fewer incentives to cast a strategic vote in a proportional system. Therefore, most studies assume that votes cast in proportional representation balloting are the representation of voters' true preferences (Moser and Scheiner 2008, 2). We have already outlined the reasons why the situation is different in single member district contests.

Thomas Gschwend and Henk van der Kolk (2006, 164) argue that, in order to understand why some voters split their ticket and why the percentages differ across nations, we need to identify relevant individual

and contextual factors affecting split ticket voting. The authors distinguish between two sets of factors. The first set is related to the supply side of politics, namely political parties and candidates, while the second set is related to the demand side of politics, namely voters. Regarding the supply side, ticket splitting may appear because political parties have to decide whether they will present candidates in a particular constituency. If a party does not compete in all constituencies, its supporters will be unable to cast a straight-ticket for their most preferred party. Sometimes political parties are not willing or unable to run on both the lists and the single member districts. After being nominated, party candidates have the option to run either a person-centered campaign where they personally try to win as many votes as possible or to run a purely party-centered campaign. The first strategy might stimulate "sincere" split ticket voting, whereas the second will not (Gschwend and van der Kolk 2006, 164-165). On the demand side, even if all political parties compete in all constituencies and all candidates run party-centered single member district campaigns, voters may still have good reasons to split their ticket. These motives can be subsumed under four different headings: sincere, strategic, coalitional and other motives. The first motive has to do with a sincere expression of the voters' preferences. Gschwend and van der Kolk call this type of vote choice behavior "sincere split ticket voting". If a voter supports a political party but sincerely prefers the single member district candidate of another party, either for personal or policy reasons, that voter might end up splitting his ticket (Gschwend and van der Kolk 2006, 165). The second reason is strategic. There may be various incentives to split a ticket strategically. The main one has already been discussed. Additionally however, for the proportional representation ballot, if a party is expected to win too many single-member district seats, it will not win one of the top up seats on the lists. In such situations, an additional list vote for the most preferred party does not change the outcome.

Some voters may thus vote strategically for a somewhat lesser preferred party on the list vote and, assuming a sincere single member district vote, consequentially split their ticket. A third motive is to express multiple-party preferences or to signal support for the voters' most preferred coalition simultaneously.

Although this seems to be strategic, it is not. The important difference is that such voters do not form expectations as to whether they are more likely to influence the outcome of the election by deserting their most preferred option. The forth possibility is that split ticket voting may arise from voter confusion or protest voting by large party supporters (Gschwend and van der Kolk 2006, 166).

Thus, in this paper we try to demonstrate that the introduction of the plurality rule for the election of the presidents of the district councils has lead to strategic voting at the Romanian 2008 local elections.

2. Research Design and Data Collection

We have chosen to study the Romanian 2008 local elections due to the fact that the voters had two ballots to cast, one for the election of the President of the District Council under a first-past-the-post rule, and one for the district councilors in a proportional representation system. Concerning the elections in Bucharest, we only find this situation in the first round of the elections for the City Council, where the city councilors and the district councilors are elected under a proportional rule while the city mayor and the district mayors are elected under a two ballot-majority rule. Given this fact, we have included in our analysis the first round of the elections where the voters had the opportunity to behave strategically.

In this paper we try to answer the question of whether the Romanian voters behaved strategically at the 2008 local election. In order to give an answer we developed a quantitative data analysis using three different methods.

First, we compare the number of votes received by candidates under the first-past-the-post rule with the number of votes received by their parties under the proportional rule. In regard of this issue, we calculate the ratio between the number of votes received by candidates under the first-past-the-post rule with the number of votes received by their parties under the proportional rule. If this ratio is 1, the vote is sincere given the fact that party supporters voted for the same party both in the single member district race and in the proportional representation race. If the ratio is above 1 than the candidates gained votes from the supporters of other

parties and if the ratio is under 1, the candidates lost votes in favor of the candidates of other parties.

Secondly, we calculate the difference between the votes of the first ranked candidate and the votes of the second ranked candidate in order to determine if the race between them was tight. By a tight race we mean that this difference is below 5%. Furthermore, we shall correlate the existence of a tight race with the losses of the third ranked candidate under the first-past-the-post rule when compared with the votes obtained by their party under the proportional rule. For Bucharest we also calculated the existence of a 'tight race' between the second ranked and third ranked candidates, analyzing every situation in its context.

The last method we used was developed by Gary Cox in *Making votes count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems* and implies the calculation of a ratio between the votes gained by the third ranked candidate and the ones gained by the second ranked candidate (SF-ratio). Cox starts with the assumption that, whenever there is a duvergerian equilibrium, the ratio between the votes gained by the third ranked candidate and the ones gained by the second ranked candidate tends to 0, expressing strategic voting, given the fact that the difference between the second ranked and third ranked candidates is high enough to allow the existence of incentives for strategic voting (Cox 1997, 85-86). Thus, the SF-ratio can take any value between 0 and 1, but, if he tends to 1, we cannot talk about strategic voting. Cox also argues that, when there is a tight race between the third ranked candidate and the second ranked candidate, voting shall be sincere (Cox 1997). In view of applying Cox's method, we defined the SF-ratio as tending to 0 in the situations when its values are between 0 and 0,5 and as tending to 1 when its values are between 0,5 and 1.

Also, it is important to underline that in our analysis of strategic voting at the local elections in Bucharest, we calculated both the ratio between the votes gained by the third ranked candidate and the ones gained by the second ranked candidate (SF-ratio1) and the ratio between the votes gained by the fourth ranked candidate and the ones gained by the third ranked candidate (SF ratio2). We made this decision due to the fact that the elections for the city mayor, as well as those for the district mayors are held in a two round system. If none of the candidates gain 50%+1 of the votes in the first round, then the two best ranked candidates (the two candidates who received the most votes) compete in the second round, during which the first-past-the-post system (the plurality rule) is used. In other words, if none of the candidates obtains a majority during the first round there are two winners who go to the second round.

In this context, there are three cases when there might be incentives for strategic voting at the elections for city and district mayors in Bucharest. First, whenever there is a tight race between the second ranked and third ranked candidates, the supporters of the forth ranked candidate might vote strategically. In this situation, the supporters of the forth ranked candidate have incentives to vote with the candidate they ranked second in their order of preferences so as to avoid wasting their vote given the small chances that the fourth ranked candidate would pass to the second round of the election. In this context, strategic voting might be implied by a value of SF-ratio1 that tends to 0. Secondly, strategic voting might be expected whenever there is a tight race between the first two ranked candidates but not between the second ranked and the third ranked candidates. Given this situation the supporters of the third ranked candidate have incentives for voting strategically in order to avoid wasting their vote. In this case, strategic voting might be indicated if SF ratio2 tends to 0. The last possible case is whenever there is a tight race between the first three ranked candidates. This situation might provide incentives for strategic voting to the supporters of the fourth ranked candidate. In these conditions, the presence of strategic voting might be indicated if SF-ratio1 tends to 0.

In our analysis, we use the election results at the local level provided by The Central Electoral Bureau on their official website.

3. Results

Our first method, the one concerning the ratio between the votes obtained by the candidates in the first-past-the-post race and the ones obtained by their political parties in the proportional race, was applied for the parties with the highest level of visibility at the national level. Thus, we analyzed to what extent the PNL, PDL,

PC, PNG-CD, PRM, and PSD voters behaved strategically. We also analyzed how much the UDMR[2] behaved strategically at the local elections excluding Bucharest's case where it didn't have candidates for the mayor offices. In the case of the National Liberal Party we analyzed if its voters behaved strategically in 40 departments, in the elections for mayor of the city of Bucharest and in the elections for the mayors of the city's 6 sectors[3]. At the departments level we can observe sincere voting in 16 constituencies. In 4 of those the PNL lost votes in the first-past-the-post race compared with the PR race, and in 20 of the constituencies it obtained more votes in the FPTP race than in the PR race. In departments like Satu Mare the fact that the ratio between the votes received by the candidate in the first-past-the-post race and the ones obtained by the political parties in the proportional race is far over 1 does not mean that there is a strategic voting because important political parties such as PDL and PSD did not have candidates in the FPTP elections and thus, their voters had to switch their vote.

In Bucharest we can observe that PNL had a better score in the FPTP race than the PR one in Sector 1 where its candidate got the mayor's office. In the cases of the general mayor's office and the sector 6 Mayor's Office there is a sincere behavior of the voters. In the other sectors PNL candidates lost votes when compared with the PR races in favor of other candidates.

In the case of Democrat Liberal Party, we took into consideration 38 of the 41 departments[4]. From the 38 analyzed constituencies, we can observe sincere voting in 15 of them whereas in 6 departments, the party candidates lost votes in the FPTP race when compared with the PR race and in 17 of them PDL obtained more votes in the plurality race than in the proportional one. Although the number of constituencies where we can observe sincere voting is lower than in the case of the PNL, it does not mean that PDL voters behave strategically because the ratio between the votes obtained by their candidates in the FTPT race and the ones obtained by the party in the PR race varies between 0.92 and 1.2, while in the case of NLP it varies between 0.89 and 1.53.

In the case of Bucharest, the PDL obtained more votes in the race for the mayor's office in sectors 1, 3, 5, and 6 and lost votes only at the elections for the general mayor's office and in sectors 2 and 4. Unlike the results from the department level, in Bucharest the ratio varies between 0.71 and 1.47, a ratio that demonstrates a higher level of strategic behavior from the city's voters.

Regarding the Conservatory Party, from the 38 analyzed constituencies, in the case of 9 of them sincere behavior of the voters can be observed, in 12 of them the PC obtained less in the FPTP race than the PR race, while in 16 of them they obtained more in the plurality one. The variation of our ratio is higher than in the case of the other analyzed parties, situated between 0.71 and 1.73.

In Bucharest the Conservatory Party obtained more votes in the FPTP race than the PR one only in sector 4, where their candidate won the mayor's office in the second ballot. In the other cases the PC lost votes compared with the proportional race.

From the 36 analyzed departments[5], New Generation Christian Democrat Party voters behaved sincerely in 10 of them. In 3 departments, the candidates for the department's council presidency lost votes compared with those obtained by the party in the proportional race and in 23 departments they won votes in the FPTP race in comparison with the proportional one. The variation of our ratio is between 0.85 and 2.04. In Bucharest, the variation is lower, between 0.5 and 1.13, a fact that shows more strategic behavior on behalf of the voters. For the Greater Romania Party we analyzed 35 constituencies[6]. In 8 of them we can

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[2] PNL – National Liberal Party, PDL – Democratic Liberal Party, PC – Conservatory Party, PNG-CD – New Generation Christian Democrat Party, PRM – Greater Romania Party, PSD – Social Democrat Party, UDMR - Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania.
[3] In Covasna, PNL did not have candidates in neither the FPTP race, nor the PR one.
[4] In Mureș and Satu Mare, PDL did not have candidates in the PR race and in Covasna it did not have candidates in either FPTP or PR race.
[5] In Covasna, Harghita, Ilfov, Satu Mare and Sibiu, the Conservatory Party did not run in either the FPTP race or the PR one.
[6] In Cluj, Covasna, Dâmbovița, Mureș and Satu Mare, the Greater Romania Party did not run in either the FPTP race or the PR one.

observe sincere behavior on behalf of the voters, in 16 of them, the candidate for the department council presidency lost votes compared with those obtained by the party in the race for the council and in 11 of them they obtained more votes than the party they were representing. In Bucharest, in all 7 constituencies, PRM candidates lost votes compared with those the party obtained in the PR race. From the total of 39 analyzed departments for the Social Democrat Party[7], in 17 of them we can observe a sincere behavior on behalf of the voters, in 4 departments the candidates in the FPTP race lost votes compared with those obtained by the party in the PR race and in 18 departments the candidates in the FPTP race won more votes than the party did in the PR race. The variation of the ratio between the votes received by candidates under the first-past-the-post rule and the ones received by their parties under the proportional rule is between 0,86 and 1,37. In Bucharest there is sincere voting only in sector 6. We can observe strategic behavior in favor of PSD in sectors 2 and 5 and in the case of the race for the general mayor's office while for the elections in sectors 1, 3 and 4 we can observe a migration of the PSD voters to the candidates of other parties.

The analysis on the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania focused on only 12 departments[8] given the fact that those were the only cases where the party ran candidates in both the first-past-the-post race and the proportional one. Thus, in 4 departments there is sincere behavior on behalf of the voters, in 3 departments the candidates lost votes compared with those received by the party and in 5 departments; they won more than the party.

Before moving forward to the next method used in order to determine the extent of strategic voting at the Romanian 2008 local elections, we have to mention some of the issues raised by this one.

First of all, by comparing the results we can observe that small parties have a higher variation of the ratio between the votes received by candidates under the first-past-the-post rule with the ones gained by their parties under the proportional rule than the big parties. We have to mention that if a ratio of 1.14 – the case of PDL in Caraş-Severin – represents a gain of 8000 votes in favor of the candidate in the FPTP race while a ratio of 1.71 – the case of PC – represents a difference of only 700 votes in favor of the candidate in the FPTP race.

Secondly, we have to mention the fact that in the departments where one or two of the big parties did not have candidates in the FPTP race, but ran in the proportional one, the high ratio observed in the cases of other parties does not imply strategic voting, but the fact that the voters had to redirect their vote to the candidates of other parties.

Thirdly, the fact that the majority of the analyzed cases show that the ratio is above 1 is due to the fact that at the department level there were a lot of small parties that only ran in the proportional race[9]. In Bucharest there is sincere voting only in the case of Sector 6. In the other cases taken into consideration there is strategic behavior in favor of the candidates that gained the mayor's office. In the competition for the general mayor's office we cannot talk about strategic voting given the fact that there was a strong candidate that gained votes from the other parties' supporters.

This kind of situation appears where there are strong candidates. Thus in Satu Mare there was no strategic voting due to the fact that there was a strong independent candidate – Marian Valer – but also because political parties such as PSD and PDL did not have candidates in the FPTP race.

The second method consists of calculating the difference between the votes received by the first ranked candidate and the votes received by the second ranked candidate in order to determine if there was a "tight race" between them. In the case of Bucharest we also calculated the existence of a 'tight race' between the second ranked and third ranked candidates, analyzing every situation in its context. We made this decision due to the fact that the elections for the city mayor, as well as those for the district mayors are held in a two round system. If none of the candidates gain 50%+1 of the votes in the first round, then the two best

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[7] In Covasna and Satu Mare Social Democrat Party did not run in either the FPTP race or the PR one.
[8] UDMR run in both races only in Alba, Arad, Bacău, Bihor, Cluj, Covasna, Harghita, Maramureş, Mureş, Satu Mare, Sălaj şi Timiş.
[9] Usually, this is the case of the parties representing the national minorities.

ranked candidates (the two candidates who received the most votes) compete in the second round, during which the first-past-the-post system (the plurality rule) is used. In other words, if none of the candidates obtains a majority during the first round there are two winners who go to the second round. If there is a high probability that none of the candidates will win during the first round and if there is a tight race between the second and third ranked candidates, then voters have three possibilities to vote strategically, depending on the their second preferred party. If there is a tight race between the first and second ranked candidates (TR 1,2) and if there is a tight race between the second and third ranked candidates (TR 2,3) then the supporters of the fourth ranked candidate can vote strategically with any of the three best ranked candidates. If there is a tight race between the first and second ranked candidates (TR 1, 2) but there is no tight race between the second and third ranked candidates (NTR 2, 3) then both the supporters of the third ranked candidate as well as the supporters of the forth ranked candidate can vote strategically with either the first or the second ranked candidates. If there is no tight race between the first and second ranked candidates (NTR 1, 2) but there is a tight race between the second and third ranked candidates (TR 2, 3) then the supporters of the fourth ranked candidate can vote strategically with any of the three best ranked candidates.

The results of the 2008 local elections reveal tight races in the single member district contest (at most 5% between the first and second ranked candidates) as follows (we designate candidates by party):

Table 1. **Tight race in the first-past-the-post race**

		Frequency	Percent
Tight race	Yes	14	34.1
	No	27	65.9
Total		41	100.0
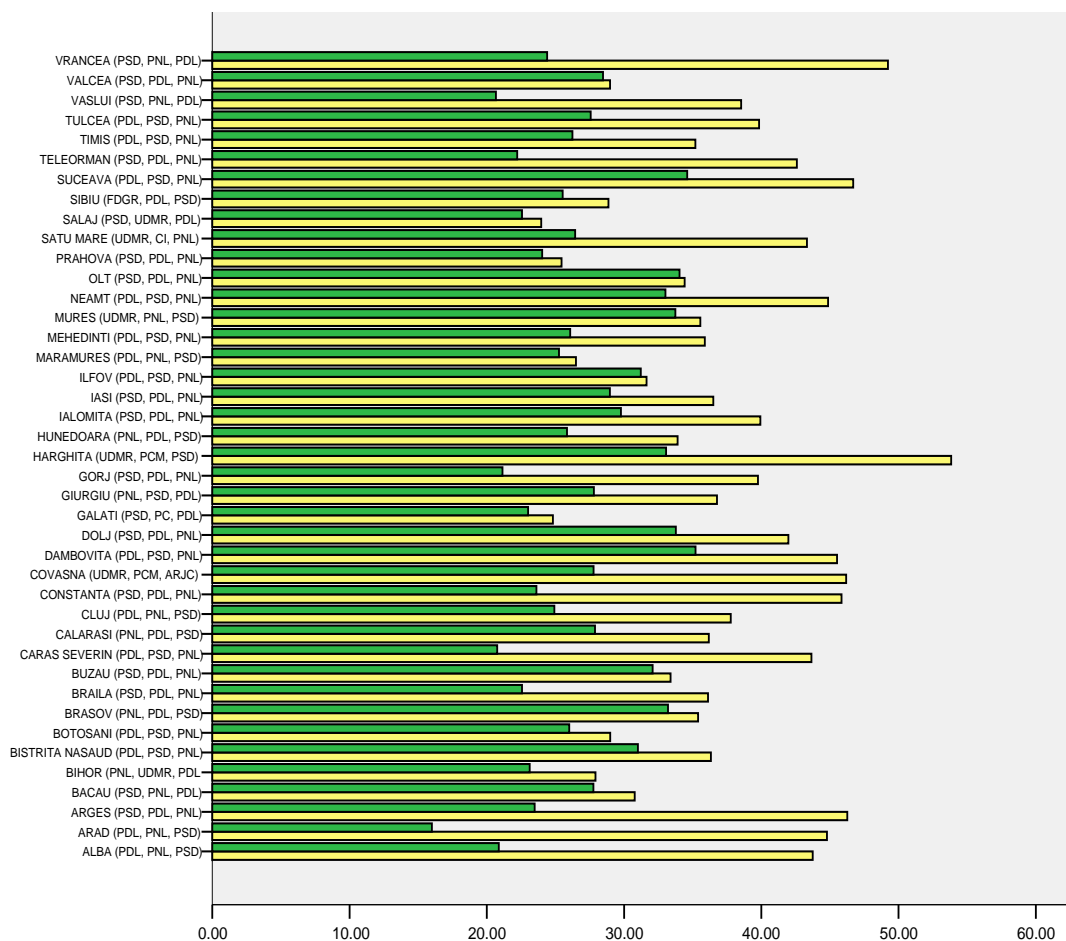
- In the district of Bacău the first ranked candidate was PSD with 30,77%, followed by PNL with 27,77% and PDL with 21,21%. The difference between PSD and PNL was 3%. PDL received 21,6% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PDL lost 0,39% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Bihor the first ranked candidate was PNL with 27,92%, followed by UDMR with 23,12% and PDL with 23%. The difference between PNL and UDMR was 4,8%. PDL received 23,34% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PDL lost 0,34% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Botoşani the first ranked candidate was PDL with 28,99%, followed by PSD with 26% and PNL with 25,85%. The difference between PDL and PSD was 2,99%. PNL received 27,6% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PNL lost 1,75% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Braşov the first ranked candidate was PNL with 35,39%, followed by PDL with 33,2% and PSD with 16,78%. The difference between PNL and PDL was 2,19%. PSD received 18.06% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PSD lost 1,28% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Buzău the first ranked candidate was PSD with 33,39%, followed by PDL with 32,08% and PNL with 22.6%. The difference between PSD and PDL was 1,31%. PNL received 23,44% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PNL lost 0,84% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Galați the first ranked candidate was PSD with 24,82%, followed by PDL with 21,17% and PNL with 19,43%. The difference between PSD and PDL was 3,65%. PNL received 19,69% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PNL lost 0,26% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Ilfov the first ranked candidate was PDL with 31,64%, followed by PSD with 31,22% and PNL with 27,17%. The difference between PDL and PSD was 0,42%. PNL received 28,28% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PNL lost 1,11% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Maramureş the first ranked candidate was PDL with 26,49%, followed by PNL with 25,26% and PSD with 22,13%. The difference between PDL and PNL was 1,23%. PSD received 22,22% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PSD lost 0,09% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Mureş the first ranked candidate was UDMR with 35,55%, followed by PNL with 33,74% and PSD with 18,96%. The difference between UDMR and PNL was 1,81%. PSD (in alliance with PRM) received 14,11% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PSD won 4,85% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Olt the first ranked candidate was PSD with 34,41%, followed by PDL with 34,04% and PNL with 18,98%. The difference between PSD and PDL was 0,37%. PNL received 18,22% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PNL won 0,76% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Prahova the first ranked candidate was PSD with 25,44%, followed by PDL with 24,03% and PNL with 17,77%. The difference between PSD and PDL was 1,41%. PNL received 18,19% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PNL lost 0,42% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Sălaj the first ranked candidate was PSD with 23,97%, followed by UDMR with 22,56% and PDL with 16,94%. The difference between PSD and UDMR was 1,41%. PDL received
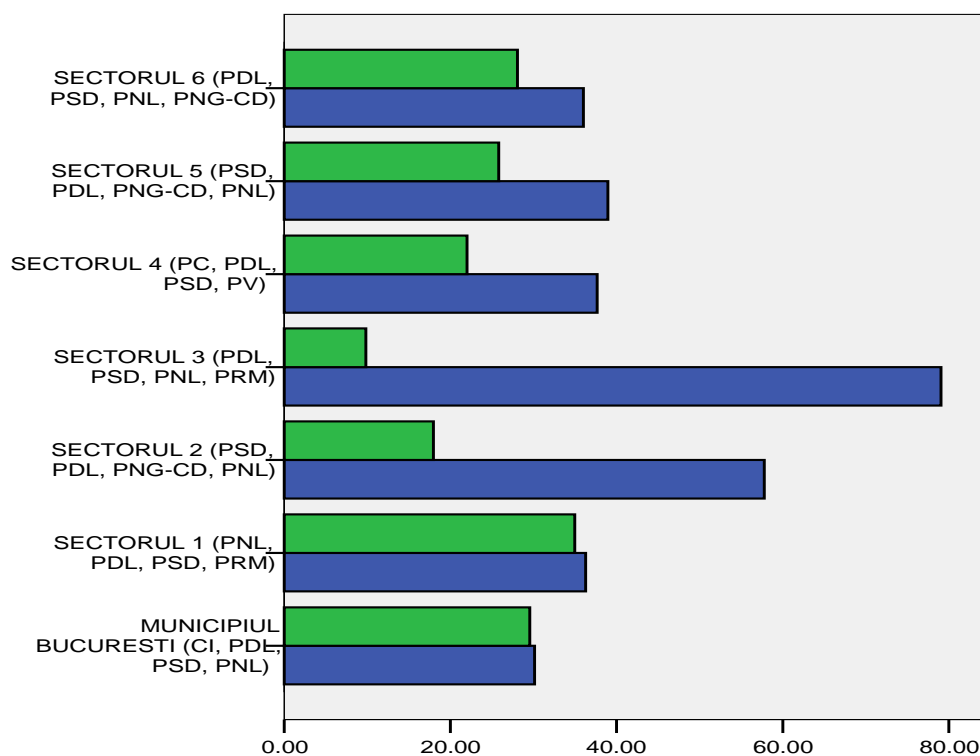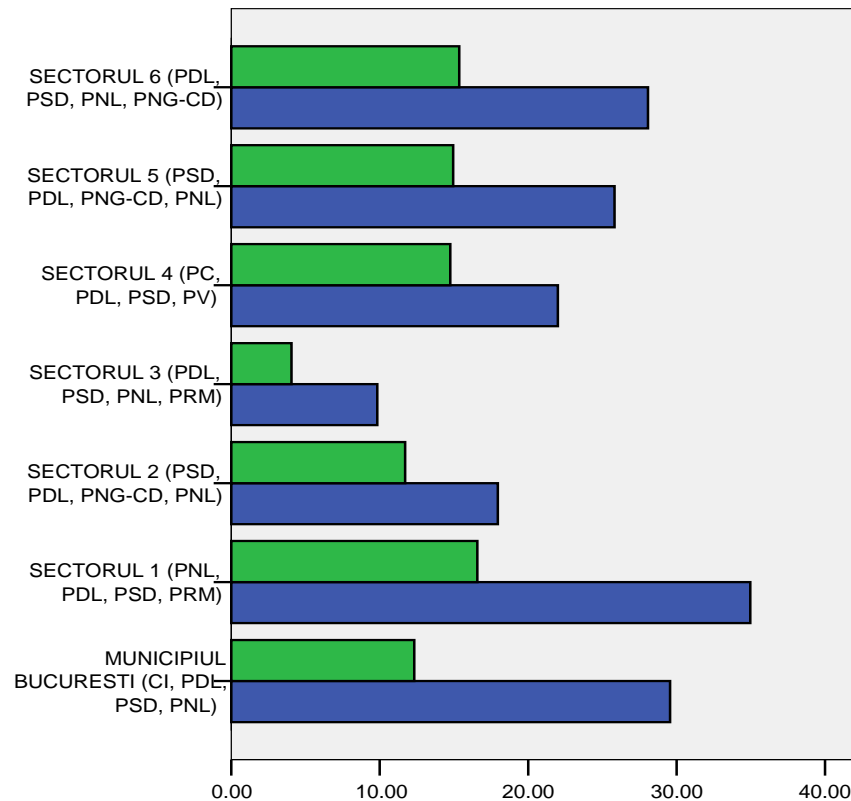
16,05% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PDL won 0,89% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Sibiu the first ranked candidate was FDGR with 28,86%, followed by PDL with 25,53% and PSD with 23,18%. The difference between FDGR and PDL was 3,33%. PSD received 22,15% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PSD won 1,03% in the single member district contest.

- In the district of Vâlcea the first ranked candidate was PSD with 28,98%, followed by PDL with 28,46% and PNL with 27,96%. The difference between PSD and PDL was 0,52%. PNL received 27,03% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PNL won 0,93% in the single member district contest.

The data shows that in 9 of the 14 districts where tight races occurred the third ranked candidates in the elections for president of the District Council lost votes in the single member district contests compared to the votes received by their parties in the proportional representation contests. However, the percentage of lost votes was less than 2 leading to the conclusion that relatively few voters behaved in a strategic fashion. One possible explanation lies in the fact that no surveys were presented to the electorate prior to the election with the effect that voters were unable to predict whether the race between the two best ranked candidates would be tight or not. Additionally, the lack of surveys might have lead to voters not knowing who the strongest competitors were. If such was the case voters would have had few incentives to vote strategically, as they would have believed that their preferred candidate might win the election. These factors may also explain why third ranked candidates in single member district contests won more votes compared to the votes received by their parties in the proportional representation contests in 5 of the 14 districts were tight races occurred.

In the case of Bucharest tight races between the first and second ranked candidates occurred in the election for city mayor and in the election for mayor of the first district. There were no tight races between the second and third ranked candidates.

In the elections for city mayor the first ranked candidate was Sorin Oprescu (independent) with 30,12% followed by PDL with 29,56%, by PSD with 12,33% and by PNL with 11,85%. The difference between Sorin Oprescu and the PDL candidate was 0,56%. PSD received 24,28% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PSD lost 11,95% in the single member district contest. PNL received 11,77% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PNL lost 0,08% in the single member district contest.

In the election for mayor of the first district of Bucharest the first ranked candidate was PNL with 36,29%, followed by PDL with 34,96%, by PSD with 16, 58 and by PRM with 3,09%. The difference between PNL and the PDL was 1,33%. PSD received 24,24% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PSD lost 7,66% in the single member district contest. PRM received 4,81% of the votes under the proportional representation system. Thus, PRM lost 1,72% in the single member district contest.

Unlike the vote losses suffered by third ranked candidates in the districts outside Bucharest, PSD suffered heavy losses in both elections. It is quite possible that PSD supporters voted strategically. However, at the election for city mayor it is also possible that the PSD vote got split between Sorin Oprescu, a former ranking member of PSD, and Cristian Diaconescu, the actual PSD candidate. There was much speculation prior to the election that Oprescu was going to rejoin PSD if he won the contest, which may have mislead PSD supporters. In the case of the election for mayor of the first district of Bucharest strategic voting is the most likely explanation for PSD losses.

Regarding the losses suffered by forth ranked candidates in the single member district race when compared with the votes received by their parties in the proportional representation system when there was a tight race between the two best ranked candidates these were 0,08% (PNL) and 1,72% (PRM). This may indicate some measure of strategic voting but as in the case of districts outside Bucharest the losses were relatively unimportant.

Concerning our third method, in order to analyze whether there was strategic voting at the 2008 local elections, we used Cox's method, that is, we calculated the ratio between the total votes obtained by the third ranked candidate and the ones obtained by the second ranked candidate. As we mentioned above, we look

at Bucharest case separately given the fact that in this circumstances we may identify three situations where there are incentives for strategic voting due to the two ballot majority system.

Next we underlined the constituencies where the ratio between the total votes obtained by the third ranked candidate and the ones obtained by the second ranked candidate closes to 0, followed by the correlation of the data with the ones showing the duvergerian equilibrium.

Table 2. Frequencies of SF-ratio tending to 0 and 1 in 41 departments.

	Frequency	Percent
SF-ratio tends to 0	5	12.2
SF-ratio tends to 1	36	87.8
Total	41	100
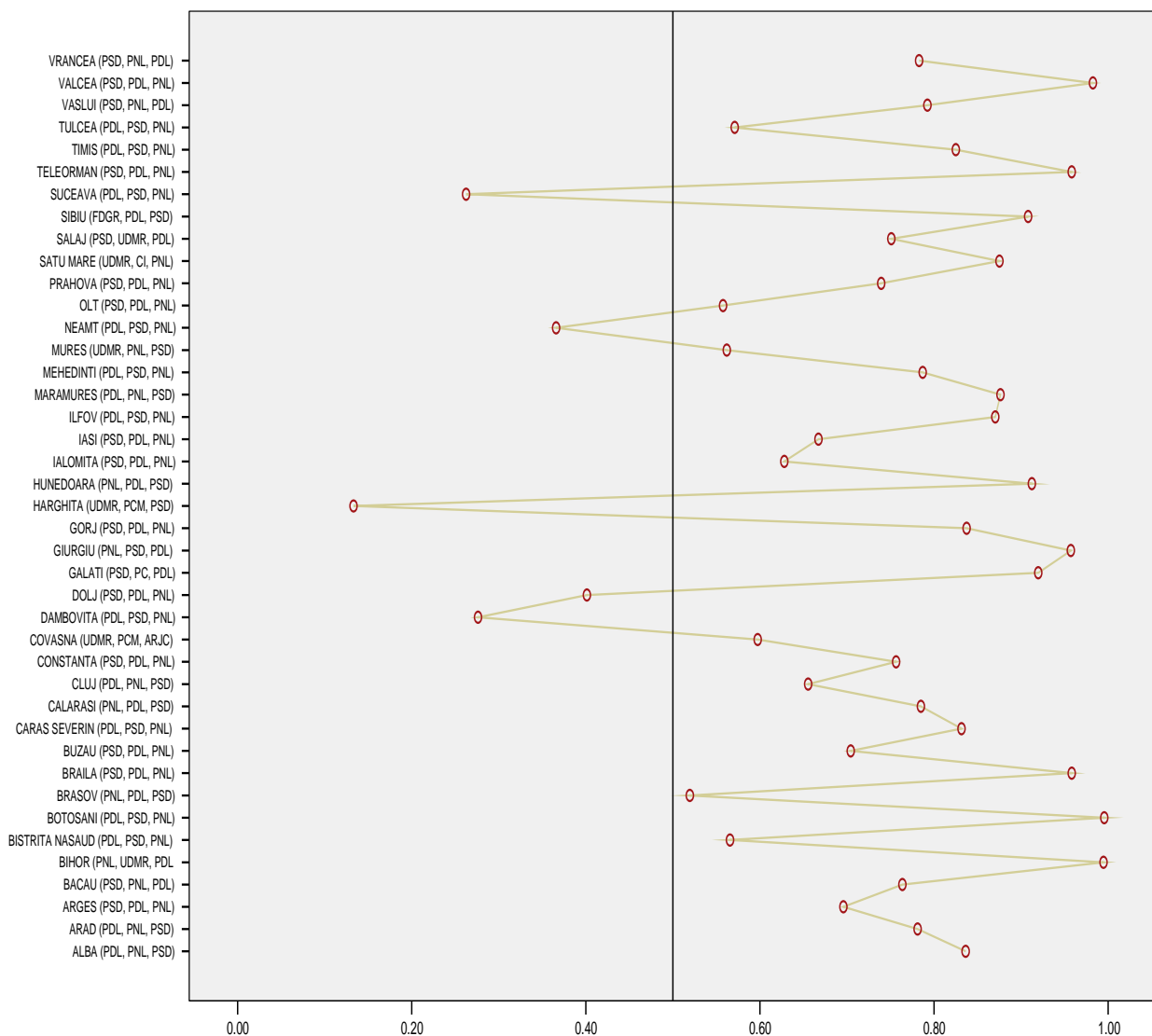
- In Dambovita, the second ranked candidate was the one representing PSD and the third ranked candidate was the one representing PNL, the difference between them being 25.29%.
- In Dolj the second ranked candidate was the one representing PDL and the third ranked candidate was the one representing PNL, the difference between them being 20.22%.
- In Harghita, the second ranked candidate was the one representing Magyar Civic Party and the third ranked candidate was the one representing PSD, the difference between them being 28.66%.

- In Neamt, the second ranked candidate was the one representing PSD and the third ranked candidate was the one representing PNL, the difference between them being 20.94%

In order to test whether there are incentives for strategic voting, we cross tabulated the results concerning the SF-ratio and the ones concerning the presence of duvergerian equilibrium (close race between the first two ranked candidates).

Tabel 3. Close race*SF-ratio crosstabulation

		SF-ratio		Total
		SF-ratio tends to 0	SF-ratio tends to 1	
Close race	Yes	0	14	14
	No	5	22	27
Total		5	36	41

We thus may observe that in the five departments where SF-ratio tends to 0 there was no close race between the first two ranked candidates in the FPTP race and thus there were no incentives for strategic voting in any of the 41 constituencies. We also have to mention that in the five departments where SF-ratio tends to 0 the difference between the first two ranked candidates was somewhere close to 10-12%. Moreover, in the 14 departments where there was a close race between the first two ranked candidates, SF ratio tends to be close to 1, which confirms the results obtained using our second method. Thus this cross tabulation supports the idea that in the 41 Romanian departments we can talk mostly of sincere voting.

The analysis shows that there are no incentives in the FPTP race for the appearance of strategic voting. An explanation might be the fact that in 2008 was the first time in the local elections the first-past-the-post system and thus the voters did not have sufficient information about the possible outcome in order to vote strategically (Moser, Scheiner, 2008:7).

Concerning Bucharest, we chose to apply our third method separately because, as we shown above, there are three types of situations regarding the appearance of incentives for strategic voting. We designated as SF ratio1 the ratio between the votes received by the forth ranked candidate and the votes received by the third ranked candidate in the first round of the election for mayor of the city of Bucharest, as well as in the elections for sector mayors. We designated as SF ratio2 the ratio between the votes received by the third ranked candidate and the votes received by the second ranked candidate in the first round of the election for mayor of the city of Bucharest, as well as in the elections for sector mayors. In the following pages we present the cases when SF ratio1 or SF ratio2 respectively tend towards 0 and then we shall separately analyze the three cases where there were incentives for strategic voting in the first round of the election for mayor of the city of Bucharest, as well as in the elections for sector mayors.
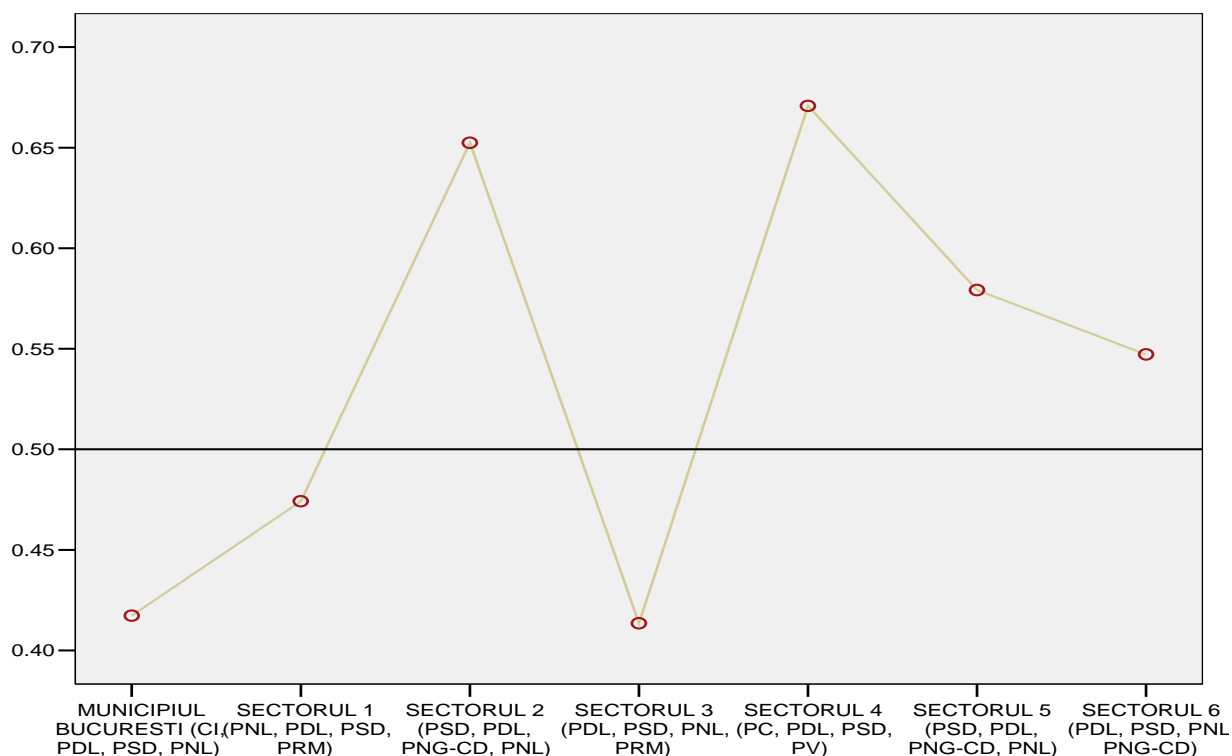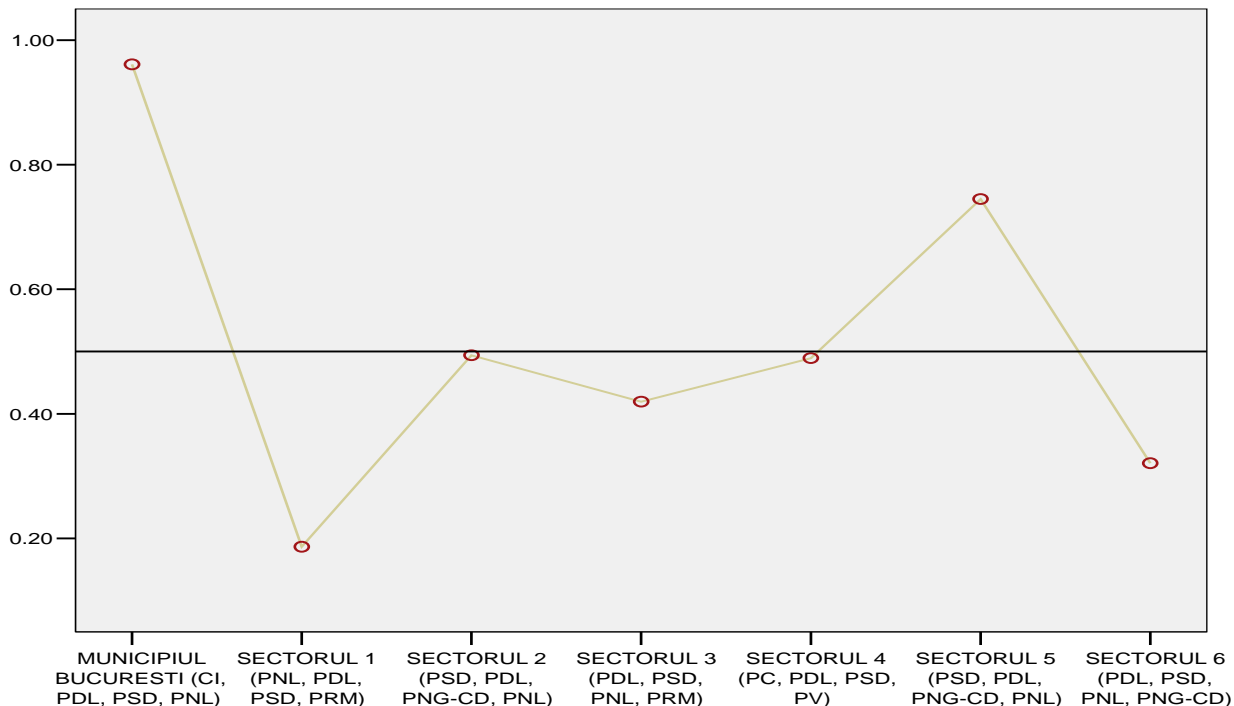
In regards to SF ratio1 it tends towards 0 in the elections for mayor of the sectors one, two, three, four and six while in regards to SF ratio2 it tends towards 0 in the election for mayor of the city of Bucharest and in the elections for mayor of the sectors one and three.

    The first case we shall analyze is the one where there was a tight race between the second and third ranked candidates in the first round and SF ratio1 tends towards 0. This is a context in which the supporters of the forth ranked candidate have the opportunity to vote strategically. When we correlate the existence of a

close race between the second and third ranked candidates with the ratio between the votes received by the forth ranked candidate and the votes received by the third ranked candidate we discover that neither in the election for mayor of the city of Bucharest, nor in the elections for sector mayors do we find a close race between the second and third ranked candidates. Consequently, we may conclude that, in the first round of the elections, the supporters of the forth ranked candidate didn't have incentives for strategic voting.

The fact that there were no close races between the second and third ranked candidates in any of the analyzed cases means that the supporters of the forth ranked candidate also didn't have incentives for strategic voting in the third scenario (close race between the three best ranked candidates and SF ratio1 tending towards 0).

The second scenario involves the existence of a close race between the two best ranked candidates, the absence of a close race between the second and third ranked candidates and a SF ratio2 that tends towards 0. In this scenario the supporters of the third ranked candidate are presented with the opportunity to behave in a strategic fashion. When we correlate the existence of a close race between the first two best ranked candidates with a SF ratio2 that tends towards 0 we find two cases where the supporters of the third ranked candidate had incentives to vote strategically, in the election for mayor of the city of Bucharest and in the election for mayor of sector 1. However, we cannot conclude that the opportunity for strategic voting actually led to such a phenomenon.

4. Conclusions

Our three method analysis of strategic voting at the Romanian 2008 local elections leads to the conclusion that, although there were instances when voters had the opportunity to behave in a strategic fashion, there are various factors other than strategic voting that may explain the election results. It was therefore necessary to analyze contextual factors.

Regarding the first method we were unable to conclusively identify strategic voter behavior due to factors that influence the difference between the number of votes received by candidates in the single member district race when compared with the votes received by their parties in the proportional representation system other than strategic behavior. There were several political parties that only entered candidates in the proportional representation contest, a decision that forced their supporters to vote for their second preference in the single member district race. Another factor that may have influenced voter behavior was the existence of independent candidates, as there are significant numbers of voters that cast their ballot based on personal preferences for the candidates rather than the party the candidates belong to. Sorin Oprescu's victory at the election for mayor of Bucharest seems to point in this direction.

Regarding the second method we found that that in 9 of the 14 districts where tight races occurred the third ranked candidates in the elections for president of the District Council lost votes in the single member district contests compared to the votes received by their parties in the proportional representation contests. However, the percentage of lost votes was less than 2 leading to the conclusion that relatively few voters behaved in a strategic fashion. One possible explanation lies in the fact that no surveys were presented to the electorate prior to the election with the effect that voters were unable to predict whether the race between the two best ranked candidates would be tight or not. Additionally, the lack of surveys might have lead to voters not knowing who the strongest competitors were. If such was the case voters would have had few incentives to vote strategically, as they would have believed that their preferred candidate might win the election. These factors may also explain why third ranked candidates in single member district contests won more votes compared to the votes received by their parties in the proportional representation contests in 5 of the 14 districts were tight races occurred.

Regarding the third method our analysis revealed that the frequency of the cases where the ratio between the votes received by the third ranked candidate and the votes received by the second ranked candidate approaches zero is quite small (12,2% out of 41 cases). Moreover, none of these cases were

correlated with the existence of a two party equilibrium. This finding may be explained by the fact that the 2008 local elections were the first to use a mixed-member electoral system. In the case of the elections for mayor of the city of Bucharest and district mayors of Bucharest, although the system was used since 1992 (the proportional representation part of the system is used for the election of the district councilors and for the election of the council of the city of Bucharest) we only found two cases where there were incentives for voters to behave in a strategic manner. However, in the case of the election for the mayor of Bucharest the strategic voting hypothesis is mitigated by contextual factors that may just as well explain the election results.

To conclude, the data we have analyzed reveals that only a very small percentage of the voters behave strategically although the newly introduced mixed-member electoral system presents them with the opportunity to do so.

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