LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN SLOVENIA: DYNAMICAL ASPECTS

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Review: Cirila Toplak, phd. associate professor
Language editing: Pia Pogorelčnik
Book design: Zaod KUM BUM

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CHAPTER ONE

NON-PARTISAN CANDIDATES AND LISTS ON SLOVENIAN LOCAL ELECTIONS 1994-2010

(Non-)partisanship in Slovenia

Political parties tend to form due to social, cultural and other inequalities (Bibič, 1992) and play at least a dual role as organisations. On the one hand, they have a social role and are social actors since they develop social ties with the society. In this manner, they interconnect voters and sympathizers, include citizens in the political system via their mobilisation function and attempt to represent the interests of society in institutions where policies and other decisions are formed. On the other hand, political parties are institutional actors, meaning that they perform tasks pertaining to governmental and parliamentarian actors, especially in the sense of regulating colliding social interests, of forming political institutions and of organising governmental and parliamentarian life (Van Biezen, 1998).

Political parties first appeared in Slovenian territory in the second half of the 19th century and were mainly representatives of

two large blocks (clerical and liberal) and one minor (socialist). Political parties disappeared prior to World War II and were even prohibited after the war (Lukšič, 2001: 37). One can only identify two periods in Slovenian history during which partisanship flourished: the early 1920s and the early 1990s (Lukšič, 1994: 23). Instead of witnessing the rise of partisanship, Slovenian politics were harshly criticised by partisanship, which developed new forms of political and social organisation instead of parties. An anti-party trend is – on the other hand – one of the more recent phenomena in contemporary democracies around the world (Bale & Roberts, 2002: 1).

In different periods of the 20th century in Slovenia, the Catholic side offered a corporatist state featuring the strong role of the Church, while the socialist side offered a corporatist state with the stressed role of a single class (Zver, 1990: 154). The tradition of the non-partisan organisation was first enhanced by *Ljudska fronta* – the People's Front – and even more so by *Osvobodilna fronta* – the Liberation Front. However, the Catholic side opposed the Liberation Front and, in so doing, opted against the non-partisanship type of organisation and strived towards the old-party structure in which it had played a hegemonic role. Thus, during the war, a battle for the type of post-war political organisation to be put in place was also being fought: a battle between partisanship and non-partisanship. The non-partisanship won. The People's Front, which later evolved into *Socialistična zveza delovnega ljudstva* – the Socialist League of the Working People, was deeply entrenched in a non-partisan sentiment of Slovenian polity; therefore, we can argue that it was a non-partisan party or a party of non-partisans (Lukšič, 1994: 24).

It was only in the late 1980s and early 1990s that political parties were revived, with the democratisation of political life,

culminating in the first post-war democratic elections, which were held in the spring of 1990. Thus, in Slovenia (only), an era of modern partisanship began in the early nineties. The end of the 1980s saw the formation of new political parties while the old socio-political organisations, which had, until then, enjoyed a guaranteed monopoly status in organising and leading all political interests and activities, were transformed into new political parties (Krašovec, 2000: 23). The first parties were able to register after The Societies Act had been amended, and during the 1990–1992 period 131 parties were registered. However, during the 1992 elections, much fewer had already made their appearance. At first, parties were based on the protection of interests of some social groups (peasants' party, intellectuals' party, pensioners' party, craftsmen's party, workers' party, etc.), and only later on did they widen their profiles to become political parties as we know them today (Kranjc, 1993: 70–71; Lukšič, 2001: 38).

The commentary on the Law on Political Parties (1994) mainly talks about the situation of parties in the legal system and not about parties in the political system. Political parties were defined as "a form of organisation with a clearly defined ideology (a party's programme is mentioned), whose goal is to contest or maintain political power through democratic elections. That is the reason political parties are organised groups with political goals that are distinguishable from other political organisations, whose members come together for the purpose of protecting defined interests with political means… political parties exercise their active role on all levels of public life". During the years Slovenia was seeking its independence, the newly established parties were primarily a vehicle of mass protest against the former regime and a form of striving for a more sovereign status of Slovenia, but they did not have any more precisely elaborated programmes encompassing the most important spheres of life.

The consequence of this was a low level of ideological differentiation, as the newly established political parties, though exhibiting greater ideological differences, had a single common goal for whose attainment they were prepared to push aside their ideological differences for some time (Krašovec, 2000: 24).

Political parties are organisations that, in society and in the state, perform several different functions. According to the law, they have the right to participate in the formation of bodies of power, whereas other organisations do not possess this privilege (Lukšič, 1994: 26). Through historical development, political parties have become actors that play key roles during elections to politically representative institutions and in candidate-selection processes for elections (Fink-Hafner & Krašovec, 2000: 143). The latter is corroborated by the currently valid Political Parties Act (2005),[1] as it stipulates in Article 1 that a political party is "an association of citizens who realize their political goals, adopted by a party's programme, by means of a democratic formation of political will of citizens and by proposing candidates at elections to the National Assembly, for the President of the Republic and to the bodies of local communities". Political parties are organisations that assist candidates in entering politically representative institutions; in exchange, the selected candidates are expected to be loyal to their political party and act in accordance with the party's expectations. As a reflection of the thesis that political parties are the main actors during parliamentary elections, we only see a relatively small number of independent candidates and an even smaller number of successful independent candidates. But this

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1   Political Parties Act. Available at http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava. jsp?urlid=2005100&stevilka= 4345.

description does not apply equally to the local levels of government, as will be discussed a little later.

A relatively strong resistance to party politics can be recognised in the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia since it only mentions political parties in a negative context (Lukšič, 1994: 26). Article 42 of the Constitution states that membership in political parties is forbidden for professional members of the police and the armed forces. The Constitution consistently reveals its liberal, anti-partisan nature, including an article that states that members of Parliament are representatives of the nation and are *not obliged to follow any directions.* The drafters of the Constitution realised that political parties exist and that Parliament will always be a partisan institution, but political parties were still not given a natural right to be included in the Constitution (Lukšič, 1994: 27). Moreover, the apex of Slovenian distrust of parties is represented by a corporatist body – *Državni svet* – the National Council. It was supposed to be beyond the influence of political parties since the candidates for it are chosen by associations, social organisations and unions, chambers and universities; that is, non-partisan organisations. However, half of its members, namely 22 representatives of local interests, are also elected to the National Council for each term of office, and these candidates appear on party lists. One, therefore, cannot say that the operation of this body is absolutely non-partisan. Despite all this, the National Council, besides the President of the Republic, still represents a certain locus within the Slovenian Constitution that deserves to be protected and cultivated in order to prevent the parties from completely dominating Slovenian politics (Lukšič, 1994: 28).

Alenka Krašovec (2000: 26) states that a common problem of all Slovenian political parties is the problem of unsatisfied structural

connections to society, as indicated in the negative public opin-ion of Slovenian political parties. Even though Slovenian public opinion strongly supported the pluralisation of political space back in the early 1990s, which was somehow expressed in the 1990 plebiscite, the trust in political parties began to decline sig-nificantly soon after the multiparty system had been established. Trust in political parties has declined rapidly since 1991; in 1991, 12.1 % of voters had high or moderate levels of trust in political parties; in 1995, this description only applied to 4.5 % of vot-ers (Toš in Krašovec, 2000: 26), and in 2001 (research Slovenian Public Opinion 2/2001), to 9.3 % of voters. At the end of 2008 (Politbarometer research, 12/2008), 9 % of voters had high or moderate levels of trust in political parties, although 43 % of vot-ers had extensive levels of distrust. If we compare these data with the most recent ones (Politbarometer research, 10/2010), we see that the percentage of respondents who trust political parties has been constantly decreasing (now only 6 %), whereas the share of those who express an open distrust in political parties has been on the increase (50 % of respondents). As an interesting fact, we can also mention the data of the public opinion poll called Slovenski utrip (2010; eng. CSlovenian Pulse"), as it shows that the question *"Which party would you vote for if parliamentary elections were held this Sunday?"* was answered with *"none"* by the largest percentage of respondents (24.7 %).

To some degree, the distrust in political parties originates from the installation of parliamentary polity in Slovenia. Following many years of the single-party system, the citizens were not ready for parliamentary debates that publicly exposed social controversies. Unfortunately, these controversies have not been interpreted in the spirit of a democratic confrontation of dissent-ing opinions, but as rows, and, hence, a view has emerged that the parliament is an unnecessary institution and that political

parties are generators of quarrels. It has been the open representation of differing interests, which is otherwise typical of a developed parliamentary democracy that has earned political parties a negative label. However, the political elite has also contributed its fair share, as it has perceived the non-acceptance of and dissent with their standpoints in the context of political debates as personal assaults and not as an ingredient of a political debate. The lack of trust in political parties is regarded as a consequence of the visible egoistic and ideologically burdened activity of political elites (Fink-Hafner, 1997: 152). A Politbarometer research (2003) ascertained that Slovenian political parties are among the least trusted institutions; moderate levels of trust in political parties could only be seen in 10 % of voters, but, on the other hand, 42 % of them had high levels of distrust.[2] The 2008 Politbarometer research found that political parties are the least-trusted political organisation among 24 listed political institutions and organisations.[3] The current data from the Politbarometer research (2010) places political parties in the last position among the nineteen

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2   For comparison reasons, we should mention that political parties are the least-trusted political institution (10 % of voters have at least moderate levels of trust; answers 1 and 2 combined); other institutions included in this survey: general courts (13 %), the Catholic Church (21 %), the Constitutional Court (23 %), etc. In the case of the answer "I don't trust", results worse than those of political parties (who are not trusted by 42 % of respondents) were achieved by the Catholic Church (47 %) and legal courts (53 %). The average mark (on a scale ranging from 1 – *"trust the least"* – to 5 – *"trust the most"*) – for political parties in November, 2003 was 2,52, a result that placed political parties in the second-to-last place among all the institutions (N=1,002).

3   On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents *"I trust the least"* and 5, *"I trust the most"*. For comparison, we can state that political institutions received an average grade (from three surveys conducted in April, June and December, 2008) of 2.46, the Catholic Church received 2.47; general courts, 2.50; the government, 2.77, etc. Source: Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Centre. N=944.

institutions, such that only 6 % of people expressed trust and 50 % expressed distrust. If we take into account the different Politbarometer surveys conducted from 1996 onwards, we can comprehend that political parties are, among the five most important political institutions,[4] constantly the foci of the majority of voters' distrust. The level of membership in political parties in Slovenia is quite low, especially in comparison with older EU members.[5] According to various sets of available data, around 10 % of voters were members of a political party at the end of the last decade (Krašovec, 2000: 26),[6] just below 5 % of voters were members of a political party in 2005 (Slovenian public opinion 2005/2)[7], and 6.5 % of all voters were members of a political party in 2007 (Brezovšek et al., 2008: 148). The trend of non-partisan lists at the local level, which have been gaining ever-greater weight at local elections due to the present distrust in political parties, is also displayed by the data of the Slovenski utrip opinion poll (2010), conducted in August, 2010, when non-partisan (local) lists were recognised as the most popular among survey

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4   The President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the National Assembly, the Government of the Republic and political parties.

5   Also, see Majcherkiewicz, T. (2005); Mair, P. & Van Biezen, I. (2001).

6   Membership in political parties as a percentage of eligible voters is calculated on the basis of data available from political parties and the official number of eligible voters for 1998 (Krašovec, 2000: 26). The Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS), at the time, had (according to its own data) 5,342 members; the Slovenian People's Party (SPP), around 40,000; the Social Democratic Party (SDP), around 20,000; the Slovenian Christian Democrats (SCD), 36,576; the United List of Social Democrats (ULSD), around 23,000 (Pašek in Krašovec, 2000: 26); the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DPP), 26,000; and the Slovenian National Party (SNP), 5,783 (Praprotnik in Krašovec, 2000: 26).

7   Question 7.17: *"Are you a member of a political party?"* There were 42 "*yes*", 948 "*no*" and 12 "*I do not know*" answers (N=1002). Source: Slovenian public opinion survey, 2005/2 & Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Centre.

respondents – gaining theoretical voters' support of 42.9 %. However, in the following section, we present the actual success of non-partisan candidates and lists at the recent local elections, whereby we also analyse in greater detail the results of the five consequent local elections, with an emphasis on the (growing) rates of success of non-partisan candidates and lists.

Electoral systems and their influence on non-partisan candidates

This chapter adopts the supposition that electoral systems have a strong influence on both the possibility of candidacy of non-partisan candidates and lists and on actual chances of being elected. The electoral system that is used for elections to the National Assembly discriminates in favour of established political parties; according to empirical evidence gathered from all five parliamentary elections carried out so far, it is clear that non-partisan candidates and lists only have a slim chance of being elected. Since the country's attainment of independence in 1991, no non-partisan candidate has come even close to being elected to the National Assembly and, in addition, the number of such candidatures has always been small or even non-existent. During the National Assembly election in 2000, there were seven non-partisan candidates, but not a single one managed to gather more than one percent of the votes; in 2004, there were three non-partisan candidates and none even managed to attract more than 0.1 % of the votes; and even worse, at the last election for the National Assembly in 2008, there were no non-partisan candidates at all.[8]

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8   Source: State Electoral Commission data, http://www.dvk.gov.si.

However, the situation is quite different on the local level of government. At mayoral elections, Slovenia applies a two-round absolute electoral system,[9] whereas at municipal council elections, both a one-round relative majority and a proportional electoral system are used depending on the size of the municipality.[10]

We will focus our analysis initially on mayoral elections where we can state that candidates can be put forward by either (registered) political parties or groups of voters. Non-partisan candidates can only run with the support of a group of voters; the size of the groups again depends upon the size of the municipality in which the candidature is lodged.[11] This allows non-partisan candidates to realise their passive eligibility in a relatively undemanding way. Empirical data concerning local elections since 1994 strongly confirm this, as non-partisan candidates were convincing winners of the last two mayoral elections with the highest share of municipalities in which at least one candidate

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9   The candidate is elected mayor if he receives the majority of the votes. If no candidate receives the majority of the votes, a second-round election involving the two candidates with the most votes is performed. If several candidates receive the same number of votes, the selection for the second-round election is performed by lot. Both candidates are listed on the ballot paper according to the number of votes they received in the first-round election. If the number of votes received is exactly the same, the order on the ballot is determined by lot.

10 If a municipal council has between 7 and 11 councillors inclusive, its members are chosen by a relative one-round majority electoral system. If a municipal council has 12 or more councillors, the members are chosen by a proportional electoral system involving the use of preferential voting (Local Elections Act, Article 9).

11 When a candidate for mayor is proposed by a group of voters, they need to accumulate at least two percent of the signatures of voters in the municipality who had universal suffrage at the last local elections, but no less than 15 and no more than 2,500 signatures (Local Elections Act, Article 106).

for mayor was running as a non-partisan.[12] The number of elected mayors at least formally running as non-partisans has been sharply rising since 1998; since the local elections in 1998, most municipalities have had a mayor who was not put forward by a political party – 43 non-partisan mayors were elected at the local elections in 1998 (192 municipalities), 59 at the local elections in 2002 (193 municipalities), 66 at the local elections in 2006 (210 municipalities) and 70 at the local elections in 2010 (210 municipalities).

Non-partisan candidates and lists are only fractionally less successful in elections to municipal councils. Here, one can detect a significant difference between small municipalities (where a one-round relative majority electoral system is used) and medium-sized and bigger municipalities (where a proportional electoral system with preferential voting is used). In municipalities in which a municipal council has between 7 and 11 councillors inclusive, its members are chosen by a majority electoral system. At local elections employing the majority principle, a vote is cast for an individual candidate. A voter can cast as many votes for the municipal councillors to be elected in a single electoral unit. The candidates with the most votes are elected. Candidacies can be put forward by either a political party or a group of voters with permanent residence in the electoral unit.

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12   Comparatively, the Slovenian People's Party was the most successful one during the 2002 and 2006 local elections; however, the percentage of municipalities where this party had its own candidates for mayors was much lower than the percentage of municipalities in which at least one non-partisan candidate appeared.

Table 1: Candidacies and electoral results for local elections in 1998, 2002, 2006 and 2010 – elections of mayors (in percentages)

Political party	Share of municipalities in which a political party had its own candidate for mayor with regard to the total number of municipalities in Slovenia	Share of elected mayors with regard to the total number of a party's candidatures	Share of municipalities in which a political party had its own candidate for mayor with regard to the total number of municipalities in Slovenia	Share of elected mayors with regard to the total number of a party's candidatures	Share of municipalities in which a political party had its own candidate for mayor with regard to the total number of municipalities in Slovenia	Share of elected mayors with regard to the total number of a party's candidatures	Share of municipalities in which a political party had its own candidate for mayor with regard to the total number of municipalities in Slovenia	Share of elected mayors with regard to the total number of a party's candidatures
	1998	1998	**2002**	**2002**	**2006**	**2006**	**2010**	**2010**
LDS	65	18	55	26	44	18	28	22
ULSD/SD	48	11	39	17	44	14	41	24
DPP	7	0	8	0	9	0	10	15
SCD	63	17	-	-	-	-	-	-
NS	-	-	23	9	38	13	24	16
SPP	72	29	41	56	49	48	39	50
SDP	66	17	35	24	56	22	61	26
SNP	4	14	5	11	10	10	3	0
ZARES	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	0
Non-partisan candidates and lists	57	40	85	36	79	40	67	50
Candidates of at least two parties	-	-	26	44	22	41	15	44

Legend: Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS); United List of Social Democrats (ULSD) / new name Social Democrats (SD); Democratic Party of Pensioners (DPP); Slovenian Christian Democrats (SCD) and its successor New Slovenia – Christian People's Party (NS); Slovenian People's Party (SPP); Slovenian Democratic Party (SDP); Slovenian National Party (SNP); ZARES – new politics (ZARES). Source: State Electoral Commission.

Groups of voters can demonstrate their support for a candidate by collecting the signatures of voters. Such a group of voters must gather supporting signatures from at least one percent of all voters in a municipality who had universal suffrage at the last local election, but no less than 15 signatures are required.[13] In other municipalities, a proportional electoral system is used and voters cast their votes on lists of candidates. Again, lists can be put forward by either a political party or a group of voters with permanent residence in the electoral unit. A group of voters must gather supporting signatures from at least one percent of all voters in a municipality who had universal suffrage at the last local election, but no less than 15 and no more than 1,000 signatures are required.[14] In this way, candidates who are not placed on the candidate lists of political parties can fairly simply realise their eligibility and be elected to the municipal representative body. This is confirmed by the absolute data about their candidacies.

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13   Local Elections Act, Article 54, Official Gazette of Slovenia, 94/2007.

14   Local Elections Act, Article 68, Official Gazette of Slovenia, 94/2007.

Table 2: Candidacies and electoral results for local elections in 200, 2006 and 2010 – elections of municipal councils in all municipalities*

Political party	Number of municipalities in which a political party put candidates forward for the municipal council (max: 193)	Number of municipalities in which a political party had at least one municipal councillor elected	Number of municipalities in which a political party put candidates forward for the municipal council (max: 210)	Number of municipalities in which a political party had at least one municipal councillor elected	Number of municipalities in which a political party put candidates forward for the municipal council (max: 210)	Number of municipalities in which a political party had at least one municipal councillor elected
	2002	2002	**2006**	**2006**	**2010**	**2010**
Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS)	180	176	189	173	163	136
United List of Social Democrats (ULSD) / Social Democrats (SD)	165	135	172	150	182	152
Democratic Party of Pensioners (DPP)	132	103	159	109	153	128
Slovenian People's Party (SPP)	181	171	196	173	193	153
Slovenian Democratic Party (SDP)	178	166	196	182	203	185
New Slovenia – Christian people's Party (NS)	160	138	172	132	184	121
ZARES – new politics	-	-	-	-	111	63
Slovenian National Party (SNP)	39	28	62	38	65	36
Non-partisan candidates and lists	160	104	182	147	187	162

* We have not included various coalition linkages among two or more political parties. Source: State Electoral Commission.

Table 3: Candidacies and electoral results for local elections in 2002, 2006 and 2010 – elections of municipal councils in municipalities with a majority electoral system*

Political party	Number of municipalities in which a political party put candidates forward for the municipal council (max: 48)	Number of municipalities in which a political party had at least one municipal councillor elected	Number of municipalities in which a political party put candidates forward for the municipal council (max: 60)	Number of municipalities in which a political party had at least one municipal councillor elected	Number of municipalities in which a political party put candidates forward for the municipal council (max: 61)	Number of municipalities in which a political party had at least one municipal councillor elected
	2002	2002	2006	2006	2010	2010
Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS)	35	32	40	25	28	17
United List of Social Democrats (ULSD) / Social Democrats (SD)	22	12	29	15	38	18
Democratic Party of Pensioners (DPP)	16	4	29	6	27	9
Slovenian People's Party (SPP)	37	35	47	40	52	40
Slovenian Democratic Party (SDP)	33	23	47	33	57	39
New Slovenia – Christian people's Party (NS)	26	16	32	17	43	20
ZARES – new politics	-	-	-	-	10	2
Slovenian National Party (SNP)	1	0	4	2	5	2
Non-partisan candidates and lists	36	30	52	45	55	46

* We have not included various coalition linkages among two or more political parties (in 2006, coalition candidates appeared in five municipalities with a majority electoral system; in 2010, in two municipalities with a majority electoral system). Source: State Electoral Commission.

The data in Tables 2 and 3 indicate that non-partisan candidates and lists also represent an important political force at municipal council elections, albeit not to such an extent as we just saw with mayoral elections. In our analysis, we sought to find out to what extent the electoral system is influencing the successfulness of non-partisan candidates and lists. We calculated (Table 4) the *electoral efficiency*[15] of seven parliamentary political parties and of non-partisan candidates and lists in both electoral systems that are employed at local elections. All political parties – with the partial exception of the Slovenian People's Party at the local elections in 2002 – were more successful in municipalities where the proportional electoral system is in use. The contrary applies to non-partisan candidates and lists whose electoral efficiency is much greater in municipalities with a majority electoral system. Both findings confirm the influence of the electoral system on the chances of election of candidates not running on lists put forward by political parties. In municipalities with a majority electoral system, the most successful political parties have been the Slovenian People's Party and Slovenian Democratic Party. In municipalities with a proportional electoral system, the most successful political party is the Slovenian Democratic Party, which at the local elections in 2006 and in 2010 managed to gain at least one municipal councillor in all municipalities where it had at least one candidate for the municipal council.[16] At the same time, we can see that the differences between political parties alone in municipalities having a majority electoral system

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15   Electoral efficiency is calculated as the quotient between the number of municipalities in which a political party or non-partisan list had at least one municipal councillor elected and the total number of candidacies in all municipalities with a certain type of electoral system (authors' own definition).

16   At the local election in 2006, there were 149 such municipalities; at the local election in 2010, there were 146 such municipalities.

are markedly larger than in municipalities with a proportional electoral system.

Table 4: The electoral efficiency* of political parties, non-partisan candidates and lists at the local elections in 2002, 2006 and 2010 with regard to the electoral system in the municipality (in percent)

Political party	Majority electoral system 2002	Majority electoral system 2006	Majority electoral system 2010	Proportional electoral system 2002	Proportional electoral system 2006	Proportional electoral system 2010
Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS)	91,4	62,5	60,7	99,3	93,1	88,1
United List of Social Democrats (ULSD) (2002) / Social Democrats (SD) (2006, 2010)	54,6	51,7	47,4	86,0	94,4	93,1
Democratic Party of Pensioners (DPP)	25,0	20,7	33,3	85,3	79,2	94,4
Slovenian People's Party (SPP)	94,6	85,1	76,9	94,4	89,3	80,1
Slovenian Democratic Party (SDP)	69,7	70,2	68,4	98,6	100,0	100,0
New Slovenia – Christian people's Party (NS)**	61,5	53,1	46,5	91,0	82,1	71,6
ZARES – new politics	-	-	20,0	-	-	60,4
Slovenian National Party (SNP)	0	50,0	40,0	73,7	62,1	56,7
Non-partisan candidates and lists	83,3	86,5	83,6	59,7	78,5	87,9

* Electoral efficiency is calculated as the quotient between the number of municipalities in which a political party or non-partisan list had at least one municipal councillor elected and the total number of candidacies in all municipalities with a certain type of electoral system. ** Non-parliamentary party in 2010. Source: State Electoral Commission.

The analysis of local elections following the reform of the local self-government system in 1994 indicates the strong growth of support for non-partisan candidates and lists in all types of municipalities, irrespective of the electoral system. The only deviations are medium-sized municipalities (from 10,000 to 30,000 inhabitants) where support for non-partisan candidates and lists is somewhat unstable from election to election, although the trend is still generally increasing. Here, we can also notice the smallest number of candidacies of non-partisan candidates and lists.[17] Obviously, it is true of 2010 local elections that non-partisan candidates and lists consolidated their position as the most important political power at the local level of government; these elections also showed that the results of previous local elections had not been a mere coincidence, and that non-partisan candidates and lists had persevered and had even been strengthened. Therefore, we must pay them the necessary attention in our analyses of understanding of local-level politics in Slovenia.

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17   For the local elections in 2002 in the city municipality of Murska Sobota, for instance, there was only one non-partisan candidate; in the city municipality of Velenje, only five non-partisan candidates (Savec, 2002).

Table 5: Share of electoral votes for non-partisan candidates and lists at the local elections during the period from 1994 to 2010

Size of municipality with regard to the number of inhabitants	Non-partisan candidates and lists in 1994	Non-partisan candidates and lists in 1998	Non-partisan candidates and lists in 2002	Non-partisan candidates and lists in 2006	Non-partisan candidates and lists in 2010
To 3,000	18,0	-	21,4	30,8	-
3,001-5,000	11,7	14,2	19,8	20,7	24,7
5,001-10,000	13,1	14,7	17,8	18,3	22,2
10,001-15,000	8,8	13,6	21,0	14,3	15,1
15,001-20,000	7,2	6,2	11,2	10,6	18,8
20,001-30,000	9,7	5,7	5,7	11,7	10,8
30,001-100,000	9,3	11,0	26,9	15,5	15,9
Above 100,000	7,9	8,0	15,4	32,0	37,1
Total Slovenia	9,5	11,7	17,1	21,4	22,0

Sources: State Electoral Commission and data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia.

Table 6: Shares of electoral votes for major political parties (LDS, SPP, ULSD/SD, SDP) and non-partisan candidates and lists with regard to the size of a municipality at the local elections in 2002, 2006 and 2010* (in %)

Size of municipality with regard to the number of inhabitants	LDS 2002	LDS 2006	LDS 2010	SPP 2002	SPP 2006	SPP 2010	ULSD 2002	SD 2006	SD 2010	SDP 2002	SDP 2006	SDP 2010	Non-partisan total 2002	Non-partisan total 2006	Non-partisan total 2010
To 3,000	19,1	11,1	15,6**	23,9	17,2	39,5**	3,8	6,3	9,9**	12,8	15,9	7,5**	21,4	30,8	0**
3,001-5,000	19,9	15,0	7,9	14,9	12,8	11,1	8,0	11,0	11,0	13,1	19,0	19,4	20,2	20,7	24,7
5,001-10,000	21,3	14,0	8,0	16,4	15,5	13,2	6,8	10,5	10,5	9,6	18,9	20,7	13,7	18,3	22,2
10,001-15,000	13,8	16,1	8,8	6,5	11,3	11,0	6,2	11,6	11,6	6,7	17,5	17,6	13,6	14,3	15,1
15,001-20,000	25,7	20,2	8,9	9,6	7,6	6,9	10,0	14,3	14,3	16,2	18,6	18,5	9,0	10,6	18,8
20,001-30,000	25,7	18,2	8,4	11,2	11,8	9,8	10,2	13,1	13,1	14,8	21,0	20,9	6,5	11,7	10,8
30,001-100,000	21,6	15,7	6,5	5,4	6,1	6,8	14,5	16,1	16,1	9,0	14,3	18,7	26,1	15,5	15,9
Above 100,000	24,5	9,9	3,9	4,4	4,4	6,2	13,1	10,6	10,6	11,9	14,0	16,0	16,7	32,0	37,1
Total Slovenia	**23,3**	**14,2**	**7,4**	**10,9**	**10,5**	**9,3**	**10,3**	**11,1**	**12,1**	**12,6**	**16,9**	**18,7**	**17,1**	**21,4**	**22,0**

Legend: Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS); Slovenian People's Party (SPP); United List of Social Democrats (ULSD) / new name Social Democrats (SD); Slovenian Democratic Party (SDP).

* Data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia & State Electoral Commission.

** Data only for one municipality (Gornji Petrovci) with a proportional electoral system.

Why are non-partisan candidates and lists successful?

When considering all of the local elections held thus far in the country, we face the inevitable question of why non-partisan candidates and lists are becoming (increasingly) successful. On the basis of ongoing debates and empirical research projects, we can assert that the phenomenon of the relative success of non-partisan candidates and lists at the local level[18] has at least three origins.

First, at the national level, non-partisan candidates have literally no chance of being elected to the national parliament due to the existing electoral system and the explicitly emphasised role of political parties. Accordingly, their only viable option for successfully realising their passive suffrage is to stand as candidates at local elections. There, the majority electoral system, which is used for mayoral elections and elections of the municipal council in small municipalities, is more supportive of non-partisan candidates and lists than the proportional electoral system applied at parliamentary elections or the municipal council elections of bigger municipalities. Yet, notwithstanding this and despite the

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18   It is important to hereby emphasise that the phenomenon of the growing successfulness of non-partisan candidates and lists is not an exclusively Slovenian peculiarity that would be determined by the specificities of a Slovenian setting, but it is a phenomenon many foreign authors expose in their analyses as well. For instance, Ylönen (2007: 7) and Wörlund (2007) find in the cases of Finnish and Swedish local elections, respectively, a several-fold increase of voters' support of Finnish or Swedish non-partisan lists over the recent decades, whereby it needs to be stressed that non-partisan lists have not yet become the key political force in either of the two countries. However, an altogether different picture is valid, e.g., for the Netherlands (Boogers, 2007), where non-partisan lists are the strongest local-level political force that won a quarter of all votes during both the 2002 and 2006 local elections.

proportional electoral system, we can (at the local elections in 2006 and 2010) already see that non-partisan candidates and lists are gaining ground also in bigger municipalities and even the big cities. Especially notable were successes of some non-partisan lists in the largest municipalities. Second, one can detect in Slovenia a strong tradition of non-partisanship; or, in other words, Slovenian political parties constantly attract some sort of distrust or criticism (Lukšič, 1994), which has, due to the deepening of the economic crisis in the last two years, achieved a new negative peak. While Slovenian public opinion is clearly not in favour of political parties, it is also true that for quite some time levels of trust in political parties are lower than in other political institutions. Finally, local elections are also more suitable for realising the passive suffrage of non-partisan candidates due to their narrower scope. Namely, at local elections, voters choose candidates who come from the same place they themselves originate from and live in and so party allegiance does not play as important a role as it does on the national level. It is often the case that voters know the candidates personally, especially in very small municipalities. The candidacy and election of someone not linked to a party can contribute to local inhabitants' perception that in their own municipality they actually can exercise their right to local self-government, as guaranteed by Article 9 of the Slovenian Constitution. The analysis of electoral results at local elections indicates the relative improvement of political parties' results with an increase in the size of a municipality, but, despite this, in bigger municipalities non-partisan candidates and lists are also at least equally successful as political parties (Kukovič & Haček, 2011).

When comprehensively analysing local elections, one should not forget another crucial issue, namely the problem of the actual independence of non-partisan candidates. We have clearly found

that the trends during Slovenian local elections have been and still are in favour of non-partisan candidates, which is peculiarly true of mayoral elections. For the average Slovenian voter, a candidate's independence is his second-most important quality, immediately after their previous experience.[19] Further, the average voter puts a candidate's independence before their affiliation to a political party and before personal familiarity with a candidate. In comparison with parliamentary elections, at local elections, a candidate's party affiliation is far less important to the average voter.[20] It is obvious that on the local level, there must be a ubiquitous anti-party frame of mind that is ultimately verified when looking at the results of numerous public opinion polls.[21] On the other hand, it is particularly interesting to consider the actual independence of many non-partisan candidates. If we only take the mayoral elections in 2002, 2006 and 2010 into consideration, when 60, 66 and 70 non-partisan mayors were elected, respectively, and we simply superficially browse though the list

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19   Question 3.20: *"How important for you are the following characteristics of individual candidates when voting at local elections? For each statement, choose a figure between 1 and 5, where 1 means it is not important at all, and 5 means it is essential."* The average values of the answers were: a) affiliation to a political party, 2.90; b) political experience, 3.90; c) gender of the candidate 1.78; d) I know the candidate personally, 2.56; and e) independence of the candidate, 3.23. N=1093 (source: Research Project "Viewpoints on local democracy", 2003).

20   Question 3.21: *"Is the party affiliation of a candidate more important for you at parliamentary or local elections?"* Scores of answers: it is more important at parliamentary elections (26.2 %); it is equally (in)significant at both elections (49.9 %); it is more important at local elections (6.8 %); do not know, cannot decide (17.2 %). N=1,093 (source: Research Project "Viewpoints on local democracy", 2003).

21   For instance, the Research Project "Viewpoints on local democracy" (2003), question 3.40: *"Who do you trust most in your municipality?"*. Scores of answers: the mayor (45.5 %); the municipal council (21.5 %); the municipal administration (5.0 %); political parties (2.7 %); do not know (25.2 %). N=1,093.

of names of the elected mayors, we can easily find names that are not only clearly (known) members of a major political party, but also current or former members of the national parliament (Kukovič & Haček, 2011). This simple, non-scientific finding should by itself be sufficient to allow some doubt in the true independence and anti-partisanship of several of these elected officials. An equally important indicator of the actual independence of the aforementioned candidates is their post-election coalition building since non-partisan candidates and lists tend to form coalitions with political parties just as frequently as candidates and lists proposed by political parties (see Haček et al., 2008: 167). Or, as Gramsci (1977: 1573) wrote a long time ago, "in a certain society no one is disorganised and without a political party,…, parties can act under different names and labels, even as "anti-parties" but, in reality, even so-called individuals are actually people-parties, they only want to be party leaders in acknowledgement of God and of the imbecility of those following them".

As a matter of fact, the 2010 local elections can be designated as elections during which trends from the preceding local elections (2002, 2006) still continued and even fortified; as elections at which the only true and undisputed winners were the voters, who, by virtue of their electoral choice, once again, but this time in the most explicit manner thus far, expressed their dissatisfaction with political parties and their ways of managing municipalities.

CHAPTER TWO

RE-ELECTION OF MAYORS IN SLOVENIAN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

Introduction

The question of political careers is one of the central aspects of democratic representation. Political representation implies politicians' desire to retain their function for a longer period of time. At the same time, it implies the ability of voters to decide whether or not to extend the political careers of their representatives (Mansbridge, 2003; Przeworski et al., 1999). The concept of political representation also implies politicians' duty to act in the best interest of their constituencies. Politicians are well aware of the fact that elections are a regular, periodical occurrence at which voters evaluate their past work in order to decide whom they are going to vote for. Hence, the preoccupation of politicians with the continuation of their political careers gives the voters a mechanism through which they make politicians accountable for their past (in-) action. This mechanism is termed *the electoral connection* by Mayhew (1974). Modern democracies inadvertently demand both the use of political debate and the process of decision making without the presence of all citizens (Dahl, 1989), since one of

the key characteristics of a democratic process is the presence of elected officials at the decision-making event. The preconditions that once used to limit who could be elected (restrictions such as race, sex and property) have long since been abandoned; nowadays nearly every citizen can be elected to most political functions. However, for the sake of the quality of democracy in a society, it is nevertheless not unimportant for a professional elite of individuals, or career politicians, to be formed, who are prepared to devote their entire careers to political activity (Botero, 2008: 5).

The idea of democratic representation is relevant to the construction of one's political career for two reasons. First, career politicians serve the citizens better. Through the instrument of elections, career politicians receive incentives to promote especially the interests of "their" voters, otherwise the politicians will not be re-elected by the voters. A career politician's connection with a constituency is of key importance to the voters, as the voters can demand that their representative acts in a responsible manner.[22] However, if politicians are *a priori* not interested in a longer political tenure, this otherwise powerful tool in the hands of voters becomes completely useless (Przeworski et al., 1999). Career politicians are a more desirable species in terms of the quality of democracy exactly because they tend to be more open to the demands and desires of their voters, especially compared to short-lived, single-term politicians. Many authors' (Cain et al., 1987; Mayhew, 1974; Rae, 1967) research finds that the behaviour of politicians is strongly influenced by their own career interests.

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22   Clearly, voters can inform their representatives of considerations and demands individually as well, or they can use various forms of petitions or exert pressure on them via their parties' leaderships. However, casting a vote at elections remains a powerful tool in the hands of a voter with which receptive representatives can be rewarded and inefficient ones can be punished (Botero, 2008: 5).

Politicians build long-term relationships with their constituencies simply because they are well aware of the fact that a loyal constituency will have a beneficial effect on their future career development. As a consequence, the construction of a political career stresses democratic representation as citizens tend to establish stronger bonds especially with career politicians who, because of their desire for a long-lasting tenure of office, are more responsive to the needs of their constituencies (Botero, 2008: 6).

The second argument, which is possibly even more important to the purpose of our chapter, states that more experienced politicians with a longer political career are more efficient and can therefore better represent the interests of their constituencies. A career politician assists his or her constituency in becoming more institutionalised and professional, and in having a stable membership, internal structure and clear rules (Polsby, 1968). In this way, career politicians whose objective is to achieve a longer political tenure, devote more of their time to both public policy making and implementation (Botero, 2008: 6). By virtue of a stable and clear division of labour and longevity, career politicians become experts in their specific field(s), regardless of whether they perform a function in the legislature or in the executive (Krehbiel, 1991). Some studies of legislative bodies indeed show that the seniority of their members is closely connected to a greater efficiency in their work. In a longitudinal study of the U.S. House of Representatives, Hibbing (1991) proves that the contribution[23] of long-time Members of Congress is incomparably greater than that of the Congressmen who are in their first or second term.

23　In the study mentioned above, this contribution refers to the proposals of amendments, the number of speeches and the number of submitted or sponsored draft legislative proposals or draft amendments to existing acts.

Incumbent career politicians, i.e., those who perform a political function for a longer period of time, eliminate the need for the initial introductory period at the beginning of a new term, as they have accumulated new knowledge and expertise in the course of several preceding terms and, in addition, are already familiar with the mode in which their political function is performed. On the other hand, voters can analyse the list of what an individual politician has so far achieved and compare the effects of their work with the needs of the community, and in this manner compel a politician to act responsibly. Through such conduct, voters send politicians a strong signal that their (in-) action in office is under the voters' meticulous surveillance. Hence, career politicians often adapt their actions to try and please their constituencies and thus to promote their own further careers. The studying of political careers therefore offers researchers an insight into the key aspect of democratic representation. On the one hand, it helps assess the power of electoral connection between voters and politicians, as well as the scope of use (or lack thereof) of votes as a means of rewarding or punishing the (in-) action of political officials. On the other hand, the studying of political careers also enables an insight into the structure of political organisations, their efficiency and the contribution of an individual holder of a political function. Modern democratic institutions require professional politicians, therefore the analysis of factors determining the decisions of politicians regarding the continuation of political careers or retirement is of key importance, as it is the analysis of factors that shed light on the reasons for longevity of individual political careers (Botero, 2008: 8).

The studying of political careers relies upon two major fields of scientific literature: the theories of legislative behaviour and the theories that attempt to explain the *incumbency advantage*. The core assumption of the latter is that political officials who hold

certain political functions and execute certain political duties, i.e., incumbents, have an advantage over other politicians who are (currently) not in an equal position. By definition, elections are events whose results are uncertain, since all participants/ candidates basically have at least a minimum chance of success (Przeworski, 1991). However, not all candidates have an equal chance. Theories that analyse the incumbency advantage claim that the probability of electoral victory or defeat is not evenly distributed among the candidates, for the possibility of success is positively influenced by several factors. Some of them are closely related to the question of political careers. Among them, seniority, membership of a political party, and electoral appearance are worth mentioning.[24] Leoni, Pereira and Renno (2004: 111) also hold that factors having a key influence on an incumbent political official's chances of re-election include success in past work, personal characteristics and electoral vulnerability. The authors discovered that electoral vulnerability decreases with a

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[24] Theories analysing the incumbency advantage claim that senior political officials can better serve their constituencies since they have better access to various positions and resources. Thus, seniority acts as an incentive for voters to give their votes to politicians who already perform some form of political duty (i.e., incumbents), as they otherwise risk that a person will be elected to a political function who lacks sufficient political capabilities to provide their election district with the goods and services it needs (King & Zeng, 2000; McKelvey & Reizman, 1992). Therefore, seniority is a factor that strongly influences the chances of electoral defeat. This has been confirmed by many studies, among which the study by Finocchiara & Lin (2000) is worth mentioning. In a study performed among the Members of the U.S. Congress they find that the probability of electoral defeat is highest after the first term and then slowly decreases during subsequent terms; after several terms of office (authors state the seventh or the eighth one), it again slowly increases, mirroring the "constituency fatigue". In other words, elected incumbent politicians seem to be vulnerable especially after their first elections; this is followed by a gradual increase of their advantage over non-incumbent political challengers and, only later, when several terms have passed, their advantage begins to decrease.

candidate's seniority and growing experience. This chapter is especially interested in the seniority of candidates in relation to incumbency candidature(s) and re-election. We analyse the political careers of mayors of Slovenian municipalities over the entire period since the re-introduction of local self-government (from 1994 onwards) and we test the hypothesis that directly emanates from the abovementioned theoretical grounds, namely that candidates' political seniority has a significant positive impact on their chances of re-election.

The status of mayor in Slovenian local self-government system

The two major bodies of Slovenian municipalities are the municipal council and the mayor; additionally, every municipality also has a supervisory committee (Brezovšek & Kukovič, 2012: 122). The mayor is an individual body, a political official elected at direct elections, for a term of office lasting four years, by secret ballot cast by voters who have permanent residence in the municipality (Local Self-Government Act, Article 42). Suffrage at elections of mayors is identical to suffrage at elections of the municipal council (Kavčič & Grad, 2008: 392). The right to vote for and to be elected as a mayor is granted to every citizen who has the right to vote at elections for the municipal council. The candidacy procedure is fairly simple in the Slovenian system of local self-government, as political parties and groups of voters can propose candidate mayors. Whenever a group of voters proposes a candidate for the office of mayor, signatures of voters residing in a municipality, amounting to at least two per cent of all the voters who cast a vote in the first round of the most recent regular elections of mayors, have to be collected. However, the number can be neither lower than 15 nor higher than 2,500. Elections for mayor use a double-round absolute-majority vote

system; the candidate who gets a majority of all the votes cast is elected. If none of the candidates receives an absolute majority of the votes cast, a second round is held for the two candidates who received the most votes in the first one. If more than two candidates receive the same highest number of votes or if two or more candidates receive the same second highest number of votes, the selection of candidates who are to run in the second round is decided by lot. The second round should be held no later than 21 days following the day of the first round. The order in which the names of the two candidates running in the second round appear on the ballot paper corresponds to the number of votes each received in the first round. If the number of votes won by each of the two is the same, the sequence of the candidates' names is determined by lot (Local Elections Act, Article 106 & 107). A mayor can be elected at regular or by-elections. Regular elections of mayors, which are held simultaneously with regular elections to municipal councils, are announced by the President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. By-elections of mayors are held in case a mayor's tenure of office ends before the official expiry of the mayor's term of office and are announced by a municipal electoral commission (Kavčič & Grad, 2008: 392).

In accordance with the organisation of a municipality's work and the distribution of competences between the bodies of the municipality concerning the municipality's tasks, the function of mayor is executive and coordinative at the same time. One of mayors' more prominent functions is the political and legal representation of the municipality and the municipal council. The mayor summons and presides over sessions of the municipal council, but has no right to vote. As an executive body, the mayor primarily executes the decisions made by the municipal council and also has the right of legislative initiative, as the

mayor proposes the draft budget, municipal decrees and other legal acts for adoption by the municipal council. The mayor is a "master" of the municipality as he or she looks after the municipality's assets, replenishes it and provides for an increase in its value on a daily basis, namely by virtue of signing various contracts, public tenders, the rational and economical implementation of the budget, plus a strict consideration of the principles of good management. His or her tasks also include the summoning of citizens' assemblies and the adoption of emergency measures when the lives and/or property of citizens are endangered (Prašnikar, 2000: 46). The most important function of the mayor is to be in charge of the municipal administration. The mayor is sovereign and practically untouchable throughout his or her entire term of office. Via the administration, of whom he or she is the head, the mayor can pursue a very independent policy, regardless of the policy pursued by the municipal council. However, this can lead to problems in case a mayor is elected who was not proposed by one of the parties having a majority of seats in a municipal council. As the head of the municipal administration, the mayor: (1) makes decisions on administrative matters within the scope of the municipality's competences in the second instance; (2) decides on appeals lodged against decisions made by a body of a joint municipal administration that fall within the territorial jurisdiction of a municipality; (3) decides in matters of disputes concerning competences between individual bodies within the municipal administration; (4) appoints and dismisses the secretary of the municipality (i.e., the CEO of the municipal administration) and heads of bodies of the municipal administration; (5) acts jointly with other mayors, appoints and dismisses the head of the joint body/-ies of the municipal administration; (6) determines the systematisation of posts in the municipal administration; (7) decides on the employment(s) or the conclusion

of employment relationship(s) within the municipality; (8) assigns tasks to the municipal administration the latter has to perform for the municipal council and for which the municipal administration is accountable to the municipal council in terms of its implementation of municipal council's decisions; (9) provides for expert and administrative assistance of the municipal administration to the supervisory committee of the municipality; and (10) directs the work of the municipal administration and the joint body/-ies of the municipal administration (Juvan Gotovac, 2000: 17). The mayor of the municipality plays a central role in the Slovenian system of local self-government and, due to the fact that the mayor is an individual, one-person body, the citizens find that he or she is the most recognisable one (Brezovšek & Kukovič, 2012: 127).

The re-elections of mayors of Slovenian municipalities

Every four years, incumbent mayors in the Slovenian local self-government system have an opportunity to run for the office of the key executive function in the municipality and to upgrade and continue their political careers. On the other hand, elections of mayors are a chance for citizens to decide whether or not to reaffirm their confidence in their representatives and to indirectly express their satisfaction with the (incumbent) mayors' performance. Or, alternatively, this is an opportunity for citizens to entrust some other persons with this function. In our analysis, we are predominantly interested in the electoral behaviour of citizens with regard to rewarding and/or punishing mayors in terms of their re-election. Hence, we approached the topic of mayors' re-election from two angles, namely a) we conducted an analysis of objective data on mayors of Slovenian municipalities in the period from the reintroduction of local self-government in

1994 to today, and b) we conducted an empirical survey among all the mayors currently in office.[25]

Statistical data (see Table 7) reveals that at the 1998 local elections, 90.5 % of incumbent mayors from the preceding term (1994–1998) decided to run for office again. At the subsequent 2002 and 2006 local elections, the percentage of incumbents' candidacies somewhat dropped (87.5 % and 84.5 %, respectively), whereas at the most recent local elections, this percentage once again slightly increased to 85.2 %.[26]

Table 7: Re-elections of mayors of Slovenian municipalities: comparison of 1998–2010 local elections

	1998	2002	2006	2010
Number of municipalities in which elections were held	192 (2nd round 75)	193 (2nd round 61)	210 (2nd round 73)	208+2 (2nd round 74+1)
Incumbency of mayors	133 out of 147 (90.5 %)	168 out of 192 (87.5 %)	163 out of 193 (84.5 %)	179 out of 210 (85.2 %)

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25   This research project was performed by the Centre for Analysis of Administrative-Political Processes and Institutions in February 2012 among mayors and deputy-mayors of Slovenian municipalities (200 mayors and 262 deputy-mayors were included in the survey; 11 mayors were excluded from our data set as they had been elected at parliamentarian elections in December 2011 and their function of the mayor automatically expired; by-elections of mayors were then held in March 2012). We received 114 completed questionnaires for mayors (57 %) and 123 completed questionnaires for deputy-mayors (47 %).

26   Hereby, we stress the fact that the number of municipalities in the given period was slowly, but steadily increasing (from 147 in 1994 to 210 in 2010).

Re-election rate	first round[27]	82 (80 %)	114 (86 %)	111 (83.5 %)	122 (82.4 %)
	second round	21 (20 %)	19 (14 %)	22 (16.5 %)	26 (17.6 %)
	total	**103**	**133**	**133**	**148**
Electoral success (%)		**77.4**	**79.2**	**81.6**	**82.7**
Proposer of a candidate	at least one political party	77 (74.8 %)	91 (68.4 %)	92 (69.2 %)	96 (64.9 %)
	a group of voters	26 (25.2 %)	42 (31.6 %)	41 (30.8 %)	52 (35.1 %)

Source: data provided by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia and the State Electoral Commission.

In our theoretical introduction to this chapter we already mentioned that the Slovenian system of local self-government relies upon the double-round absolute-majority vote system for the election of mayors, according to which the candidate who gets a majority of votes validly cast is elected as the mayor. In case none of the candidates receives a majority of votes cast, a second round is held for the two candidates who received the most votes. If elections of mayors from 1998 to 2010 are compared, one can see that the percentage of re-elected mayors in the first round increased at the beginning of the studied period (from 80 % in 1998 to 86 % in 2002) and then slightly declined (to

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27   Of the 82 mayors who were re-elected in the first round of the 1998 local elections, 11 (13.4 %) had no opponent candidates to compete with. Of the 114 incumbent mayors who were re-elected in the first round of the 2002 local elections, 18 (15.8 %) had no opponents. Of the 111 incumbent mayors who were re-elected in the first round of the 2006 local elections, 13 (11.7 %) had no competitors. Of the 122 incumbent mayors who were re-elected in the first round of 2010 local elections, 21 (17.2 %) were the only candidates.

83.5 % in 2006 and to 82.4 % in 2010). Also of interest is the fact that the percentage of mayors who had no opposition, which of course means automatic re-election, increased at the last local elections (2010). Because candidates for mayors can be proposed by political parties or groups of voters (in the latter case, such candidates are often referred to as "non-partisan candidates"), we also analysed the influence of the proposing entity on the prospects of mayors' re-election. The data shows that the percentage of re-elected mayors whose candidacy is supported by at least one political party has been decreasing ever since the 1998 elections of mayors (from 74.8 % in 1998 to 64.9 % in 2010), whereas the percentage of re-elected mayors whose candidacy is supported by a group of voters has been slowly, but steadily increasing (the highest being at the most recent, 2010, elections of mayors, namely 35.1 %). Hence a conclusion can be drawn that the electoral success rate[28] of re-elected mayors has increased with every subsequent election of mayors (from 77.4 % in 1998 to 82.7 % in 2010). At the same time, an ever-increasing proportion of re-elected mayors has consisted of those proposed by a group of voters. On the other hand, the respective proportion of candidate mayors proposed by at least one political party has been shrinking.

Our analysis of all the elections of mayors held thus far further reveals that, at a total of four elections from 1998 to 2010, only 99 incumbent mayors chose not to run for office once again. Since we were interested in the motifs behind their decisions, we attempted to ascertain what happened to these people after their

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28   Electoral success is computed as a quotient of the number of municipalities in which incumbent mayors have been re-elected and the overall number of proposed candidacies of incumbent mayors in all municipalities.

tenure of office had finished.[29] Table 8 shows that 46,5 % of all mayors who chose not to run for office again did so because they had already been executing their functions as retired persons, or they had retired during their term of office or just after their term had expired. Thirty-four point four per cent found employment elsewhere after their term of office had ended (among these, nine continued their political careers in the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia); 13.1 % chose not to stand as a candidate for personal reasons,[30] and 6,1 % mayors passed away during their term of office.

Table 8: Mayors who chose not to run for another term at 1998–2010 local elections

	1998	2002	2006	2010	Total
TOTAL	14	24	30	31	99
personal decision	4	4	4	1	13 (13.1 %)
retirement	7	10	11	18	46 (46.5 %)
got a new job[31]	3	9	11	11	34 (34.3 %)
died	/	1	4	1	6 (6.1 %)

Source: data provided by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, State Electoral Commission and data from own research.

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29   This data was gathered by telephone interviews, either directly with mayors who chose not to run for their office again or with civil servants of individual municipalities.

30   Personal decision: illness, political discord, decline of support among citizens, etc.

31   In 1998, all three continued their political careers in the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia; in 2002, there were two; in 2006, there was one, and in 2010, there were once again three.

Apart from objective statistical data, we wanted to gather certain other data on the re-election of mayors of Slovenian municipalities by using survey research. We therefore conducted a survey among current mayors of Slovenian municipalities and asked them about their standpoints on re-election. Of course, first of all we were interested in their opinions regarding a limitation of the number of terms of office. Almost two thirds of mayors included in our survey said that there was no need for it. Among the mayors who saw the need for a limitation of the number of terms of office, more than half claimed that the law should allow for no more than three terms; the remaining 46.2 % would limit the mayors' tenure of office to no more than two terms.[32]

Thereafter, we wanted to know how many of the incumbent mayors would stand as a candidate again if elections of mayors were held at that time. Nearly 60 % of mayors said yes; 27.4 % answered that they did not know yet; and only 15.9 % were determined not to run for office again. This data confirms that we can once again expect a high percentage of repeated candidacies by incumbent mayors, which has already been mentioned in relation to the objective data and which, at the same time, indicates one of the plausible trends at the coming 2014 local elections. All those mayors who said that they were not going to run for office once again were asked to reveal the reasons for their decision. One half responded that this was their own personal decision, nearly one third claimed that they were going to retire; and only 5.6 % said they were getting employed elsewhere.

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32   In response to this question, five mayors expressed their support of limitation of the number of terms, but at the same time argued for a longer, five-year term of office of the mayor.

Mayors who have been incumbent for at least the second time were asked what their central motif behind their renewed candidacy was. This open question was answered by 67 mayors. Their answers can be grouped into three categories. Most answers referred to the continuation or completion of already existing projects and investments in municipalities (76.1 %), followed by the continuation of general developmental programmes or the development of municipalities (9 %). The third group contains answers such as personal challenge, the creativity of the political function and citizens' support (14.9 %). Considering that a high percentage of mayors said that their candidacies were intended to assure the completion of investments and projects that had already commenced, for which a four-year term was too short, the extension of the term of office to five years may be worth contemplating.

Politicians are acutely aware of the fact that elections are periodically reoccurring events at which voters evaluate their past work when deciding whom to cast the ballot for. We therefore also asked mayors where, in their opinion, the trust of their voters originated from. The majority responded that the voters' trust was above all a consequence of their efficiency at work or of citizens' trust in their work and in their non-politicised style of leadership that transcended political divisions.[33] Additionally, a fairly high percentage of answers was recorded for responses *"personal recognisability within a municipality"* and *"the fulfilment of the electoral programme"*. However, the highest percentage

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33   58.5 % of mayors whose candidature was supported by at least one political party said that the trust of voters they enjoyed originated from their non-political style of leadership or their ability to surpass political divisions. As expected, this percentage was even higher (73.1 %) for mayors whose candidacy was supported by a group of voters.

of disagreement (at a surprising 96.2 %) was recorded with the statement that the trust of voters was due to the mayor's membership of the political party that enjoyed the greatest support in a municipality. Interestingly, 94.4 % of mayors who had been proposed as candidates by at least one political party shared the same opinion.

Conclusions

In the course of this chapter, we have argued that incumbent career politicians, i.e., those who perform certain political functions for a longer period of time, avoid the introductory learning period at the beginning of a new term of office, since they have already acquired the necessary knowledge and skills during their preceding tenure of office. They have also already gained acquaintance with the very nature of performing the function, therefore they can immediately continue with their work once re-elected. Since their political careers primarily depend on voters whose votes preserve (or call off) incumbent political officials, politicians often tend to adapt their actions to please the constituency and continue their political careers as a consequence. Since municipalities are the fundamental units of local self-government in Slovenia, that is, they represent the level of government closest to citizens, this chapter analyses the development of the key local-level politician's career, i.e., the mayor. We are interested in the number of mayors who were re-elected at the last local elections and now continue their tenure of office as mayors. Statistical data shows that at every election of mayors from 1998 onwards, somewhere between 80 % and 90 % of incumbent mayors have decided to run for office again, which indicates that mayors are highly motivated to stay on in their positions and to build their political careers in this way. In Slovenia,

the atmosphere is strongly in favour of the re-election of mayors – we have found that at all local elections held thus far, the electoral success rate of incumbent candidates has increased (at the most recent 2010 local elections, this rate was already 82.7 %). It seems that voters are obviously satisfied with mayors' work to such an extent that they want to make sure that incumbent mayors will be in charge of their municipalities during the next term as well. Even mayors themselves say that the efficiency of their work and the voters' trust in it are the key elements enabling their re-election if, of course, they decide to run again. On the other hand, unfinished work on various projects and investments is the essential motif for mayors to enter the electoral race again.

The following facts indicate that the atmosphere in our country is indeed quite favourable for the re-election of mayors: first, in 77 Slovenian municipalities, the incumbent mayors are now at least in their third consecutive term of office. Second, 19 municipalities have had the same mayors since 1994 (hence, they are currently serving their fifth term); 31 municipalities have had the same mayors since they were established.[34] Additionally, there are 27 municipalities that had the same mayors since 1994 or since they had been established to the 2010 local elections.[35] Third, in six municipalities, ex-mayors were re-elected after an interval of one or two terms. And, finally, of the current 211 municipalities, there is only one in which every election so far has seen a victory by a different

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34   In the current term, the Municipality of Mirna has had its first mayor since it was established in 2010.

35   If we considered only the data before the last parliamentarian elections held in December 2011, at which the term of office was terminated for eleven mayors who were elected to the National Assembly, this percentage would be even somewhat higher.

candidate mayor.[36] In all the remaining municipalities, at least one mayor has repeated his or her term of office.

The re-election of mayors as well as several years of a single mayor's leadership of a municipality is therefore a common and frequent occurrence in Slovenia. The legislation currently in force does not limit the number of terms of office a mayor may hold, which consequently has enabled quite a few municipalities to have the same mayors ever since they were established. A majority of mayors said that there was no need for the limitation of the number of terms. Additionally, we want to emphasise the age of Slovenian municipalities' mayors as well. The data reveals that at the last local elections (2010), the average age of mayors was 51 years (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2010).[37] The data we collected also indicates that members of a somewhat older generation decide to become mayors – let us bear in mind that nearly one half of the mayors who chose not to run for the office again retired either during their term of office or afterwards or had already retired. One third of incumbent mayors who said that they were not going to be candidate mayors at the next local elections were planning to retire. This may be the point at which a consideration of demographic characteristics of the central (executive) body of Slovenian municipalities could be relevant. However, our chapter ends with the answer to the hypothesis stated in the introduction. On the basis of the data we have analysed, we state emphatically that the political seniority of mayors has an exceptionally positive impact on the chances of their re-election and that this impact only increases with every subsequent election.

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36   Established in 2006, elections have been held only twice so far.

37   The youngest mayor was 32 and the oldest was 73 years old.

CHAPTER THREE

E-DEMOCRACY AND E-PARTICIPATION TOOLS IN SLOVENIAN MUNICIPALITIES

Introduction: e-democracy and e-participation

In the scientific study of e-democracy,[38] a baseline is inevitable interaction between society and technology. E-democracy is necessary to be examined from at least three aspects. Firstly, in terms of the importance of an active civil society for democratic action. Secondly, in terms of the development of information-communication capabilities that support this kind of action of

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38   The use of modern information and communication (ICT) technologies in democratic practices of the political systems, the authors name it differently. In some authors we can find the concept of e-democracy (e.g. Oblak, 2002), others use the concept of virtual democracy (e.g. Hagen, 1996) or digital democracy (Hacker & van Dijk, 2000). In basis the authors' baselines are despite differences very similar, among them, there are some differences in the focus on a particular aspect of e-democracy. In this chapter, we use the term e-democracy, both because of the appropriateness to the theme, as well as the generality of the prefix *"e-"*, which represents the technological and human progress in everyday social life.

the civil sphere operational. Thirdly, in terms of knowledge on the role of information-communication technologies (ICT) as key founders of the new era of the information society (Pičman Štefančič, 2008: 19). A clear correlation of these factors is crucial for when thinking about the future of e-democracy, to offer the civil society new possibilities of communication, information and participation, and to contribute from the standpoint of social organizations to the development of new processes, relationships and attitudes. The introduction of new technologies in democratic processes has at least four effects, which are: improving the condition of being informed of society, providing transparency functioning of the authorities, the expansion of participatory performance for citizens, and increasing the deliberative performances in the civil sphere (Pičman Štefančič, 2008: 24).

Before we delve deeper into the analysis of one of the following effects of the introduction of new information-communication technologies - the expansion of participatory performance for citizens - we must first explain the use of different names of e-democracy. Oblak (2003: 135) claims that there is not a clear and unambiguous answer to the question, what is e-democracy, and also this term could not be described with a single unanimous and undisputed definition. Clift (2006) says that in e-democracy, the question of how the internet can enhance the existing democratic processes and increase possibilities for interaction between groups and individuals with decision-makers and enables the decision-makers to get more information and data about the requirements and preferences of the citizens. Therefore, sees the internet as a tool that offers e-democracy new opportunities for both communication and participation between citizens and the state (Clift in Riley & Riley, 2003: 11). According to him, e-democracy represents the use of ICT and strategies within the

political and governmental processes at the international, national and local levels by democratic agents such as citizens and voters, political organizations, elected officials, government and the media. E-democracy allows greater active participation of citizens in direct forms of involvement (Clift, 2004). Hacker and van Dijk (2000) define e-democracy as the implementation of democratic practices without restrictions of time and space and any other physical limitations through ICT and computer communication. These new democratic practices mean an addition or upgrade to an already well-known existing democratic practices. Oblak (2003: 135) says that e-democracy is not a project that would compete with the existing democratic systems, but it is compatible with a variety of existing institutions, which in practice is often portrayed as a project trying to correct the deficiencies of institutions. Therefore e-democracy is not a new type or form of democracy, but simply adaptation of existing forms to new circumstances.

However, e-democracy is not only an access to the public information on the websites of government and public institutions and not just the ability of citizens to communicate with its political representatives via e-mail. E-democracy is a set of electronic tools that gives citizens the possibility of formation of opinions - so citizens become co-designers of the opinions published on the websites of political decision-makers and are, therefore, public. Political decision-makers seeking opinions of citizens and voters, can later include those in their decisions and plans. Citizens are therefore included in the communication and decision-making processes within the state and municipal institutions. In addition, e-democracy enables a greater democratization of political life upon at least three assumptions (Oblak, 2003: 28–31):

- *Simplicity, accessibility and interactivity of the technology* - it is primarily a phenomenon of modern society, which presents a problem of spatial, temporal and physical barriers that become irrelevant when using ICT. Information technology is simple and universally accessible;
- *Revitalization of the role of a citizen* - the principle refers to the need to redefine the role of a citizen. It is necessary to find new ways in which we could encourage them to public actions, for which ICT offers a simple solution;
- *Entry of citizens in decision-making processes* - taking part and the active involvement of citizens, where the political institutions also play an important role which enable citizen participation.

E-democracy thus opens the way for the utilization of ICT in *online* operation in areas, such as access to information, survey inquiries, political debates, political campaigning and fundraising, communication between citizens and decision-makers, delivering comments and suggestions on politic guidelines, forwarding opinions on draft laws and other general acts, wider social consultation on matters of common concern, petitions, voter registration, and last but not least voting or tuning in the vote (Pičman Štefančič, 2008: 36).

As an essential element of e-democracy is the construction of participatory channels. E-participation is the central core of e-democracy because in this sphere, democratic contribution of ICT is most obvious - new technologies bring to the decision-making processes tremendous opportunities for collaboration, participation and co-decision-making of citizens, so long-established democratic mechanism will have open new dimensions of until recently completely unthinkable extent of civic participation. E-participation refers to all forms of active civic

involvement, and technology-based communications, whether it be just for giving views and opinions, interactive participation in the preparation of proposals, or even equal (co)deciding (Pičman Štefančič, 2008: 43). E-participation is seen by so many political agents as a saviour of increasingly bigger issue of the democratic deficit at all levels of the political system. Nevertheless, the reality of e-participation is somewhat different, because it is not a definitive solution to the low political participation of citizens. Participation possibilities are also dependent on the willingness of citizens to use the possibilities that ICT offers for their active participation and to become better informed voters and actors of social life. Certainly, e-participation as one of the (most) important aspects of e-democracy can help tackling some of the key problems of the democratic deficit in representative democracies (for example, see Oblak, 2000: 121).

E-participation involves collaboration and co-decision-making of citizens in the process of making policies in political parties and civil society organizations, in the control of elected representatives, in the process of accepting policy and in the legislative process (E-Envoy, 2002: 23). The synthesis between the potentials of ICT and a (co-)action or (co-)participation of citizens in matters of public importance, Coleman and Gøtze (2001) point out the five areas where the introduction of technological performance can contribute to civic participation. These areas are providing information, consultation and collection of views, visions, collective decision-making, forming decisions and decision making (see Table 9).

Table 9: Models of civil participation

Providing information	Consultation and gathering of opinions	Design of visions	Collective decision -making	Design and accepting of decisions
▪ bulletin boards ▪ circulars ▪ information about associations ▪ the results of the surveys and consultations ▪ annual reports ▪ answers to frequently asked questions	▪ surveys ▪ focus groups ▪ public forums ▪ expert groups	▪ consulting workshops ▪ workshops of visions ▪ public presentations	▪ deliberative polls ▪ civil juries ▪ groups to deal with problems ▪ consensus conference	▪ referendums ▪ elections ▪ councils of local government ▪ citizens assembly

Source: Coleman and Gøtze (2001).

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has developed a three-stage model of e-participation or involvement of citizens in political decision-making (Coleman & Gøtze, 2001: 13):

- *Information* - a one-way relationship between the state and its citizens, in which they actively and passively acquire information which are a base and a prerequisite for political participation (for example, the official website);
- *Consultation* - a two-way relationship between the state and its citizens, in which the state obtains feedback about of citizens' opinions. The state defines the problem, and wants people's opinions (e.g. online consultations on legislative proposals);

- *Active participation* - a partnership between the state and its citizens, where citizens are actively involved in shaping of public policy and decision making about them; although the final decision is always taken by the state, a citizen of this relationship is recognized as a major player in the field of initiative and designing public policies and last but not least decision about them (e.g. referendum).

The foundation of democracy is the active participation of citizens in public life, not only at national but also at local level. Local authorities are in fact one of the main pillars of any democratic regime, the right of citizens to participate in public affairs is one of the fundamental principles of democracy. Low level of participation in the democratic process is a concern and an obstacle to the functioning of local democracy. At the democratically elected local government bodies are more important forms of direct participation of citizens in local democracy. It is therefore necessary to create systems of local democracy in which citizens have the greatest possibility of participation (Brezovšek & Nahtigal, 2011: 146–148). The use of e-participation is an important step in this direction. In this chapter, we analyze the extent of using e-democracy in Slovenian municipalities; we analyze the tools of e-participation in Slovenian municipalities and identify which communities (regarding their size in terms of population) offer the most tools. In addition, we present the state of e-participation by municipalities compared to the previous comparable researches. At the same time, we will, based on the theoretical assumptions, verify assumption that with the expansion of ICT the chances of e-participation of citizens are increasing in terms of the number of municipalities that offer citizens tools of e-participation, as well as the very diversity of e-participation tools.

E-participation tools

The introduction of ICT in democratic processes opens up new opportunities and civic participation. ICT enables e-democracy a range of different models of e-tools that allow more or less active involvement of citizens in the democratic functioning of the government. Citizens can freely and according to their own interests choose the desired form of cooperation, whether it relates to the use of new technologies for easy communication of initiatives, complaints and complements, or the transmission of criticism and comments, or expressing opinions, interests and points of view, or *on-line* access to already made suggestions and course of proceedings in connection with it, or launching petitions and collecting signatures, filing requests for information on topics on an open forum or just to communicate with decision-makers. Potentials of e-tools are limited only by technological capabilities and creativity of its creators; the final success of e-tools depends primarily on the activities and the willingness of citizens to use them.

In the field of e-democratic institutionalization of e-tools, the most used tool is classification based on the direct input of the participants.[39] With the aim of creating a legitimate and rational categorization it is proposed an alternative systematization of e-tools that considers both the nature of the activities

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39   See also the classification of the Organization for Economic Integration and Development (OECD, 2003), which highlights three groups of e-tools, such as information, consultation and active participatory; similar classification of the features and content of power sites can be found in Norris (2004: 21) that divides e-tools into information, communication and action tools, as well as at the United Nations (United Nations, 2005: 20) that divides participatory e-tools on e-information, e-consultation and e-decision making.

of co-participants as well as their contribution to openness and democratic decision-making structures:

- *Information e-tools:* refer to both dissemination and consummation of information, whether the authors of these are citizens, civic groups, or rulers. Conceptually such behaviour defines a rule that one side of participants remains inactive. This group therefore classifies various forms of e-access (e-mail alerts, e-browsers...).

- *Communication e-tools:* active participation of both the government as well as civil society is present, while the latter is not an equal participant in the decision-making processes. This category of e-tools is referring to the group of activity that requires activation of participants, but it also does not predict a direct correlation between this operation and the final decision. This category classifies e-forums (both those in which connects the level of civil society, as well as those engaging citizens and government representatives), e-surveys and e-petitions.

- *Participative e-tools:* this category represents a cluster of all those interactions between civil society and the state or decision makers, which require an active involvement of the participants and expect a response of the authorities, by which the latter can escalate from mere compulsory treatment results of communication in decision-making structures, the definition of given opinions, and to unconditional commitment to the expressed will. According to written criteria, this group classifies formally regulated forms of e-consultation, e-election or e-referendum (Pičman Štefančič, 2008: 57).

No doubt that e-tools are one of the most prominent attributes of e-democracy - whether it be applications that allow citizens a passive extraction of relevant information as a vital predispositions of democratic inclusion, or (inter) active applications.

E-participation can thus be implemented through a variety of tools. In the following section, we highlight those e-tools that embody the key mechanisms for ensuring the involvement and participation of citizens.

- *E-access* is a fundamental and inevitable point of continuing e-democratic functioning; represents the basis of transmission and acquisition of relevant information to enable citizens to have equal and informed access to the public sphere, participation in deliberative processes and active participation in the democratic functioning of modern societies. The aim of this tool is to enable citizens a better access, review and monitoring of the results of operation and decision making of their representatives in the various bodies and institutions at a national and a local level or to all public on-line information available. E-access is strictly a passive tool, but it is nevertheless, in practice, the dominant e-tool (Trechsel et al., 2003: 5).

- *E-survey* enables citizens to express their opinions on public affairs that are pre-determined by the government. This way it can be checked for opinions and possible reactions of the public on decision made by the authority. The aim of this tool is to determine the public pulse; with this tool, a citizen can actively express his views, but to a limited extent (for example, a pre-modelled possible answers).

- *E-petition* allows citizens to become catalysts of political action - firstly, to initiate a petition at the discretion of a public issue, and secondly, to support this initiative by signing it.

- *E-forum* is a tool that allows citizens an exchange of individual and other views and opinions about a public matter. The aim of this tool is to strengthen the process of creating civic views through a deliberative confrontation, which can take place before the political decision-making, after it or independently of it. On their websites, institutions of public

authority can provide through this tool the opportunity for the exchange of opinions and views of interested citizens.

- *E-consultation* is an interactive technique that involves a reverse communication between citizens and public authorities. This tool is used for integrating the various public, experts and/or stakeholders, NGOs and other public and political agents who have the option of commenting on individual topics about which decisions are made in certain policy areas. The aim of this tool is to cultivate a participatory/collaborative culture by encouraging general public, stakeholders and experts to participate in the decision-making process.

- *E-referendum* allows citizens to have direct participation in the decision-making process; their majority decision is binding for the public authority. The aim of this tool is to give citizens the opportunity to be clear on specific procurement solutions that should be adopted.

- *E-voting* is the digitalization of the electoral process. It is intended for citizens as voters to choose those representatives of public authorities or officers who need to be elected. This tool also includes additional mechanisms for on-line voter registration and other operations that are necessary for democratically elected representatives. The aim of this tool is to increase the participation of citizens in the electoral process.

- *Blog* contributes to strengthening political participation and expanding the space for political freedom through communication, solicitation, and education (see Pičman Štefančič, 2008: 59–89; Kvas, 2005).

Considerations on e-tools, for to as correctly and comprehensively summarize their potential in the democratic functioning of societies, should also include social factors, as they dictate actual suitability of particular e-tools and also to a large extent shape the success (failure) of e-democracy. Realization of e-democracy

is, in addition to legal, technological and system placements e-tools, always directly dependent on the overall participatory tradition and civil state of mind. The latter is a key factor affecting the choice and appropriateness of e-tools and requires a careful consideration of the specific social conditions for planning and selection of application-appropriate e-tools.

Slovenia has been clearly defined and deployed along the path of the information society, which provides an excellent basis for the introduction of technological developments in the democratic sphere on a state and on a local level, but (despite the defined strategic objectives and a clear commitment to e-democracy or participation and co-decision-making of citizens in decision-making processes), the situation regarding the implementation of strategies and achieving the objectives of general civic/citizens participation in decision-making processes is rather poor. As Delakorda notes (2008: 2), it is alarming that Slovenia is lagging behind in the global implementation of e-democracy and e-participation, since in 2004 it was in 41th place among 192 countries in the world, but in 2005 it was in 46th place. It should be pointed out that Slovenia by a common index of e-government in a UN study in 2008 is ranked with a relatively good 26th place among 192 countries, which kept its place in which it was ranked in the study in 2005. Delakorda (2008: 4) attributes this discrepancy between the general level of development of e-government as well as the relative stagnation and backwardness of Slovenia in the field of e-democracy and e-participation to the relatively late classification of e-democracy at the strategic level of development of e-government strategies in the Republic of Slovenia. From the United Nations report on the state of e-government, among other measures an index of electronic participation, it is clear that Slovenia in 2011 worsened the situation in the field of quality and usability of government information and services

for citizens participation in the design of public policies and in the field of promoting the consultation and participatory of decision-making. The report for the year 2009, the index had a value of 0.5143 and it was placed on the 20th place in the world, in the report for 2011 the ranking was significantly worse as the index value was 0.2105 and fell to 72nd place on the scale (along with Bolivia, China, Indonesia, Senegal, Grenada, Latvia, Georgia and the Philippines) or the 24th place in indexed value. On the other hand, in 2012 Slovenia has been awarded UN Excellence in Public Administration *Information support* for *preparation of processing rules* (IPP) in the category of Improving participation in field of decision-making, using new mechanisms. Both news - even though they are conflicting - illuminate the current state of citizen participation in the democratic processes and regulation in the context of e-government, and they call for further reflection on current challenges of e-participation in Slovenia. Based on these data, we can say that the Slovenia's e-government lacks of a conceptual shift towards citizen-oriented and by civil society placed e-participation.

Analysis of e-participation in Slovenian municipalities

As already stated, e-participation is not an activity that would take place only at the national level, but it is equally important for other levels of government, especially the local. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia, adopted the Strategy for the implementation of e-commerce in local communities (E-municipality) in 2003. The strategy defines the guidelines for introduction of e-commerce in local communities, problems, vision, success factors, objectives, institutional aspects and plan for the development of e-commerce communities. In the fifth chapter of the strategy, e-democracy is exposed, there are also listed the e-services that municipalities have

to provide to its citizens (such as forums, chats, surveys, etc.). The strategy also proposes regular weekly communication between citizens and the municipal administration. Municipalities must provide to its citizens the opportunity to participate and sending proposals, questions, ideas and opinions. Based on the strategy, municipal workers must provide at least one (written) response to every question, opinion or initiative; municipal workers also have to make arguments, if proposals, suggestions and opinions of citizens was taken into account or not. In addition, the strategy requires municipal employees to publish an online survey on his official website before any major decision to verify the response of citizens and respond to the question whether a particular decision or plan is support by citizen or not (Ministry of Information Society, 2003).

Because we were interested in the actual state of e-democracy and e-participation in Slovenian municipalities, we analyzed the official websites of municipalities and a review of the e-tools that individual municipalities offer to their citizens.[40] First, we've checked whether the municipality has an official website or not and if it allows for public to comment on published news. We then determined which e-participation tools are available to individuals. We were particularly attentive to whether the municipality has one of the most widely used e-tools: e-access; e-survey, e-forum and e-mail.[41]

40　The Research Project "E-democracy and e-participation in Slovenian municipalities" was performed at the Centre for the analysis of administrative-political processes and institutions, in the second half of March and in the beginning of April 2013. The data show the current state of e-tools for Slovenian municipalities, so their accuracy and relevance are of limited duration.

41　In reviewing and analyzing the tools of e-participation in Slovenian municipalities, we found that they appear in portals, such as "e-občina.si" or "savinjska-informative

We found that all Slovenian municipalities, i.e. 211 (100 %), have an official website and all of them provide there e-access to various official publications, such as local regulations, tenders, contests, events, strategies, forecasts, various reports, convocation of meetings of municipal councils (sometimes even records of meetings), applications, forms, and more.[42] If the latter is compared with the results of already conducted researches,[43] we can see that the percentage of Slovenian municipalities with official website is increasing, from 86.8 % in 2006 to 99.1 % in 2009, and to the present 100 %. The same trend can be seen with e-mail access, since it was offered by 174 municipalities in 2006, which presents 84.9 %, while in 2009, there were 184 municipalities, or 87.6 %.

The following e-tool is the e-survey.[44] We found that currently only 38 Slovenian municipalities (18 %) have published an

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social portal" where they have the option of publishing local news, as well as e-tools (for example, e-survey). There is also a portal "MojaObcina.si", which was created by a private company and allows the associated municipalities (currently consist of 31 municipalities, the most, 12 of them, are from Central Slovenia statistical region) publishing local news and events that registered users can comment on. Since one of the goals of this chapter is comparability with previous research on e-tools in Slovenian municipalities, we offer a similar methodology: we analyzed only official websites of the municipalities, and therefore not include e-tools in the analysis that appear in other portals.

42   We have detected that some municipalities have formed a special application for access to public contents, namely "e-commerce" or "e-democracy".

43   The source of data for the year 2006 (see Kvas, 2006) and for the year 2009 (see Maček et al., 2009).

44   Here we mention a few suggestions for designing surveys, so the e-survey should concern the current events in the community and hot topics, the question should be clear, the answers multifaceted and there should always be given the possibility of a neutral response. Time of survey questions vary depending on the topic or issue and relevance. The results are shown in figures, percentage and graphical form, and should be separated by male and female, as the answers often vary significantly between the sexes.

e-survey on their official website.[45] If we have seen an increase of percentage at e-access compared to the previous researches, we detect the opposite trend at this e-tool. In 2006, 31.2 % of the municipalities used the e-survey as a tool for e-participation, in 2009, the number fell to 19.5 % of the municipalities. Even when using e-forum,[46] we find the reduction of the number of municipalities that allow this type of e-participation tool. In 2006, 12.7 % of the municipalities offered e-forum to its citizens; data from 2009 already indicate a reduction in the use of e-forum (6.7 % of municipalities); currently, the number of municipalities with e-forum is only 8, which is 3.8 %.

We were also interested in how municipalities provide contact or consultations of citizens with the mayor and the municipal administration. We found that all Slovenian municipalities have a published e-mail address (either general or by sections or even by individual employees civil servants). Although the methods and applications of e-consultations vary between municipalities (for example, applications designed as forms where citizens write proposals, opinions, questions, suggestions and others; municipalities have different names for such applications, e.g. *"service of citizens", "Kr.povej", "Citizens Initiative", "Review of citizens", "Ask the Mayor", "Contact Us", "Citizens' questions", "Ask us", "Questions, suggestions and criticisms of citizens", "You question, Mayor answers", "E-initiatives",* and others), we can say that

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45   We took into account the presence of this e-tool on the official website of municipalities, even if in the time of measurement no survey was carried out.

46   The Forum should be divided into sections according to the current issues, discussion on a specific topic should be time-limited in relation to actuality and supervised by a moderator. Moderator should care control of the debate in the context of a civilized culture of dialogue, at certain intervals he should make a brief analysis and summarize comments, suggestions and opinions of individuals.

municipalities certainly allow citizens the opportunity to establish electronic communication.

Table 10: E-tools in Slovenian municipalities

Municipalities	Number of municipalities	Website	e-tools				Commenting the news/ posts
			e-access	e-survey	e-forum	e-mail	
Ordinary	200 (100 %)	200 (100 %)	200 (100 %)	32 (16 %)	6 (3 %)	200 (100 %)	3 (1.5 %)
Urban	11 (100 %)	11 (100 %)	11 (100 %)	6 (54.5 %)	2 (18.2 %)	11 (100 %)	0 (0 %)
Total	**211 (100 %)**	**211 (100 %)**	**211 (100 %)**	**38 (18 %)**	**8 (3.8 %)**	**211 (100 %)**	**3 (1.4 %)**

Source: Research Project "E-democracy and e-participation in Slovenian municipalities" (2013).

When analyzing the official websites of municipalities, we found that the vast majority of municipalities regularly updated their website with the publication of news and (upcoming) events. We've noticed that quite a few municipalities offer subscription to an e-newsletter, which already registered users receive in their e-mailbox. The interesting part is that only three (1.4 %) of the 211 municipalities enable commenting on posts.[47]

If we analyze separately urban municipalities, we see that six (56 %) of a total of eleven urban municipalities, that we have in Slovenia, are using e-survey as a tool for e-participation; only two urban municipalities (18 %) have an active forum at its

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47   Seen in comparison with the year 2009: none of the contemporary Slovenian municipalities did allow options of entering comments below the post.

official website. Out of two urban municipalities only one municipality (Municipality of Nova Gorica) offers an e-survey, and so it is the only municipality in Slovenia that offers its citizens four e-participation tools (e-access, e-survey or consultation, e- forum and e-mail). None of the urban municipalities allows commenting on public announcements and news.[48] According to better organizational and financial capabilities, that the urban municipalities have in comparison with the vast majority of ordinary municipalities, it would be expected a somewhat greater engagement and willingness to facilitate e-participation of citizens, thereby strengthening e-democracy.

In the following of our analysis of e-tools in Slovenian municipalities, we merged collected data in two ways: firstly, in groups of municipalities according to their size in terms of population,[49] and, secondly, municipalities were included in statistical regions. When comparing the groups of municipalities in terms of size of population (see Table 11), we find that in the group of municipalities with up to 3,000 inhabitants only eight (13.8 %) municipalities out of 58 use e-survey. Even in the group of municipalities from 3,001 to 5,000 inhabitants there are only eight (out of 53), which amounts to 15.1 % that

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48   Seen in comparison with non-urban/ordinary municipalities: 32 (16 %) of a total of 200 municipalities provides a tool e-survey to its citizens, six (3 %) have an e-forum, three municipalities (1.5 %) allow visitors to comment on public announcements and news.

49   The municipalities were divided into eight groups, namely: (1) municipalities up to 3,000 inhabitants, (2) municipalities of 3,001 to 5,000 inhabitants, (3) municipalities of 5,001 to 10,000 inhabitants, (4) municipalities of 10,001 to 15,000 inhabitants; (5) municipalities of 15,001 to 20,000 inhabitants; (6) municipalities of 20,001 to 30,000 inhabitants; (7) municipalities of 30,001 to 100,000 inhabitants, and (8) municipalities of over 100,000 inhabitants (for more Haček & Kukovič, 2012).

use e-survey. In the next group (municipalities with between 5,001 and 10,000 inhabitants), nine of the 47 municipalities use e-survey, which amounts to 19.1 %. In the group of municipalities with between 10,001 and 15,000 inhabitants, there are 19 municipalities and six (31.6 %) use the e-survey. In the next group (municipalities between 15,001 to 20,000 inhabitants), only two (11.8 %) of the 17 municipalities offer e-survey; in the group of municipalities with between 20,001 and 30,000 inhabitants (8 municipalities), there was only one (12.5 %). In the last two groups - i.e. the largest municipalities on the criterion of population - there are nine municipalities. Out of seven municipalities in the group of between 30,001 and 100,000 inhabitants three (42.9 %) offer this type of e-tool; and just one (50 %) of the two largest Slovenian municipalities (over 100,000 inhabitants) use e-survey. If we analyze these figures according to the total number of Slovenian municipalities (38), that offer its citizens an e-survey, we find that 25 municipalities belong to the first three groups of municipalities (with up to 10,000 inhabitants, total of 158 municipalities), with the relative proportion of municipalities with an e-survey of 15.8 %. There are 13 municipalities in group of municipalities with over 10,000 inhabitants (a total of 53 municipalities) offering e-survey, the relative proportion being 24.5 %. Similarly, we find in the use of e-forum. Out of the eight municipalities that use this e-tool, six of them are the smaller municipalities up to 10,000 inhabitants (the relative share of 3.8 %), and two in larger municipalities over 10,000 population (relative share of 3.8 %). According to the collected data, we can say that citizens in larger municipalities tend to use means of e-surveys and e-forum for e-participation (in addition to e-access and e-mail) more often than in smaller ones.

Table 11: E-tools in Slovenian municipalities – list of municipalities according to size of municipalities in terms of population

Group of municipalities	Number of municipalities	Website	e-tools			
			e-access	e-survey	e-forum	e-mail
Municipalities up to 3,000 inhabitants	58 (100 %)	58 (100 %)	58 (100 %)	8 (13.8 %)	3 (17.8 %)	58 (100 %)
Municipalities of 3,001 to 5,000 inhabitants	53 (100 %)	53 (100 %)	53 (100 %)	8 (15.1 %)	2 (3.8 %)	53 (100 %)
Municipalities of 5,001 to 10,000 inhabitants	47 (100 %)	47 (100 %)	47 (100 %)	9 (19.1 %)	1 (2.1 %)	47 (100 %)
Municipalities of 10,001 to 15,000 inhabitants	19 (100 %)	19 (100 %)	19 (100 %)	6 (31.6 %)	0 (0 %)	19 (100 %)
Municipalities of 15,001 to 20,000 inhabitants	17 (100 %)	17 (100 %)	17 (100 %)	2 (11.8 %)	0 (0 %)	17 (100 %)
Municipalities of 20,001 to 30,000 inhabitants	8 (100 %)	8 (100 %)	8 (100 %)	1 (12.5 %)	0 (0 %)	8 (100 %)
Municipalities of 30,001 to 100,000 inhabitants	7 (100 %)	7 (100 %)	7 (100 %)	3 (42.9 %)	2 (28.6 %)	7 (100 %)
Municipalities over 100,000 inhabitants	2 (100 %)	2 (100 %)	2 (100 %)	1 (50 %)	0 (0 %)	2 (100 %)

Source: Research Project "E-democracy and e-participation in Slovenian municipalities" (2013).

The municipalities were merged in the twelve statistical regions. Table 12 shows that the largest share of municipalities with the official website with e-survey, have Goriška region, Obalno-Kraška region

and Gorenjska region, and the smallest proportion of such communities is found in Zasavska region and Spodnjeposavska region where no county has one. In the e-forum, none of the Slovenian statistical regions is not represented by more than two municipalities.

Table 12: E-tools in Slovenian municipalities – list of municipalities according to statistical regions

Statistical region	Number of municipalities	Website	e-tools			
			e-access	e-survey	e-forum	e-mail
Pomurska region	27 (100 %)	27 (100 %)	27 (100 %)	3 (11.1 %)	1 (3.7 %)	27 (100 %)
Podravska region	41 (100 %)	41 (100 %)	41 (100 %)	6 (14.6 %)	2 (4.9 %)	41 (100 %)
Koroška region	12 (100 %)	12 (100 %)	12 (100 %)	3 (25 %)	0 (0 %)	12 (100 %)
Savinjska region	33 (100 %)	33 (100 %)	33 (100 %)	7 (21.2 %)	1 (3 %)	33 (100 %)
Zasavska region	3 (100 %)	3 (100 %)	3 (100 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)	3 (100 %)
Spodnjeposavska region	4 (100 %)	4 (100 %)	4 (100 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)	4 (100 %)
South-east Slovenia	21 (100 %)	21 (100 %)	21 (100 %)	4 (19 %)	1 (4.8 %)	21 (100 %)
Central Slovenian region	26 (100 %)	26 (100 %)	26 (100 %)	3 (11.5 %)	1 (3.8 %)	26 (100 %)
Gorenjska region	18 (100 %)	18 (100 %)	18 (100 %)	5 (27.8 %)	0 (0 %)	18 (100 %)
Goriška region	13 (100 %)	13 (100 %)	13 (100 %)	4 (30.8 %)	1 (7.7 %)	13 (100 %)
Notranjsko-kraška region	6 (100 %)	6 (100 %)	6 (100 %)	1 (16.7 %)	1 (16.7 %)	6 (100 %)
Obalno-kraška region	7 (100 %)	7 (100 %)	7 (100 %)	2 (28.6 %)	0 (0 %)	7 (100 %)

Source: Research Project "E-democracy and e-participation in Slovenian municipalities" (2013).

Conclusion

With the expansion of ICT, e-democracy enhances, and with it e-participation, which through various e-tools allows the participation and involvement of citizens in the decision-shaping processes to meet the widest possible audience. As written, e-democracy is not only important at a national level, but also at a local, underscoring the strategy of introduction of e-commerce in local communities or e-municipalities adopted in 2003. Although the strategy is to foresee exactly how to introduce e-democracy in the functioning of municipalities, we note that (according to the data collected), this strategy remains only a faint approximation of reality.

In this chapter, we were interested in the prevalence of e-democracy in Slovenian municipalities in connection with the issue of the provision of e-participation tools for citizens. Therefore, we analyzed the tools of e-participation in Slovenian municipalities, and we found that all municipalities (211) have an official website, e-access and e-mail, or allow some form of e-consultations for citizens. If we look at other e-tools, we find that e-survey is provided by 38 municipalities out of 211 (18 %), but e-forum only eight municipalities out of 211 (3.8 %). If we compare with data from 2006 and 2009 we see that the number of municipalities that have an official website and allow e-access and e-mail increases, while the number of proportion of municipalities that offers e-survey and e-forum to its citizens is decreasing. Based on the collected data, we can conclude that in municipalities with over 10,000 inhabitants is slightly more likely to choose (in addition to e-access and e-mail) for e-participation of citizens by means of e-surveys and e-forum. Merely as a curiosity, we highlight the fact that a greater proportion of municipalities with the official website of the e-survey is in the western part of Slovenia

(Goriška region, Gorenjska region and Obalno-Kraška statistical region), but in two statistical regions (Zasavska region and Spodnjeposavska region) none of the municipalities provides its citizens e-surveys and e-forum.

According to the analysis made, we can say that our assumption - the chances of e-participation of citizens in terms of the number of municipalities that offer citizens a tool of e-participation, as well as the diversity of the tools of e-participation increase with the expansion of ICT - in the case of Slovenian municipalities is only partially true. With the expansion of ICT, there also increased the number of municipalities that have their official website, which offers e-access and e-mail or any other form of e-consultation (minimum requirement of 2003 The Strategy), by contrast, in other e-tools the number of municipalities that offer e-survey and e-forum on previous years decreases. It is also notable that the number of municipalities that would offer its citizens various e-tools in decreasing, only one (urban) municipality offers four e-tools.

Given that e-democracy is certainly one way into the future and in many respects was cited as the saviour of participation deficit problems that is faced by modern developed democracy, Slovenia will in this field still need some work. Slovenian e-government needs a conceptual shift towards citizen-oriented and by civil society in place e-participation - the latter strengthens the capability of democratic and legal state, ensuring a high degree of social cohesion and justice, when eliminating the causes of the financial and economic crisis. On the other hand, we must be aware of that e-tools themselves do not guarantee success. When setting up e-democracy and e-participation, involvement of both sides is certainly necessary - the institutions that will enable e-participation tools, as well as the citizens that will be used.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Miro Haček is Professor at the Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Social Sciences. He runs pre-graduate courses on the "Introduction to Political System", "Introduction to Public Administration", "Comparative Civil Servants Systems", "Comparative Politics and Comparative Local Government", as well as class at the postgraduate level, namely, "Political and Administrative Management". From 2005 to 2007 he was the Head of political science department; he is currently again heading the same department (2013–2015); from 2007 to 2011 he was also Head of policy analysis and public administration department at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana. From 1999 to 2009 he was General Secretary of the Slovenian Political Science Association, while in May 2009 he was elected President of the Association and in June 2011 for the vice-president of the Association. In October 2012 he was elected for the Vice-President of Central European Political Science Association (CEPSA). He also conducts a class on "Decentralised and Local Administration in Europe Compared (III)" in the international master's programme at the University of Trento. He was a visiting lecturer at the Hong Kong Baptist University (January 2005, January 2007), South Dakota State University (September 2009, April 2010) and at Hughes Hall in Cambridge (July 2001). He has published many scientific articles, papers and books in the Slovenian and English languages