

“Three Children, Three Rooms, Four Wheels” – Did The Slogan Work?

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Executive Summary

In this paper I have examined the effectiveness of Fidesz's (Alliance of Young Democrats) slogan: "Everyone should have three kids, three rooms, and four wheels" in reaching the voters it was meant to influence in the 1998 elections in Hungary. I have also looked at people's perceptions of Fidesz's effectiveness in keeping this promise from 1998 to 2002, by looking at the results of the 2002 elections. I chose three variables to represent the three components of the promise: "three kids" is represented by the percentage of families with children in each district, "three rooms" by the average number of people per room in each district, and "four wheels" by the ratio of employed people per family, since data on automobiles per district was not available and I felt this reflected the main goal of the slogan well. I then examined the correlation between these variables and the percentage of votes received by Fidesz in each district in 1998. I found that the correlation is weak; I could not find any proof that the slogan had influenced the voters' decisions, though other factors such as percentage of people with higher education clearly did. Next, I ran the same regression for the 2002 election results but added a dummy variable that allowed me to examine the districts where Fidesz won in '98 and those where they did not separately. I found that in districts where Fidesz won in 1998, people did not feel they had kept the promises of the slogan; in these districts there was a strong and unfavorable correlation between two of the the three variables and the percentage of votes received by Fidesz in 2002. In the other districts the correlation was, as in the 1998 elections, much less evident. I concluded that the slogan had little effect when it was initially introduced in 1998, but in areas where Fidesz candidates won in '98, people felt they had not kept their word, and were less likely to vote for Fidesz in 2002. The result was that Fidesz did not gain any new districts in 2002, but lost many of the ones they had in 1998.

Background

When the first democratic elections were held in Hungary in 1990, *Fidesz* – or Alliance of Young Democrats – was a party basically made up of radical college students who had taken an active role in the demise of the communist regime. Their appeal to everyone was undeniable, but the battle for the governance of the newly independent country was fought between parties with older, “more experienced” (of course, not necessarily in politics, though some former Party members surfaced as well) politicians. *Fidesz*, though it received a respectable number of votes, was really more of a fashion statement, with teenagers (including myself) proudly displaying the *Fidesz* pin in the exciting new atmosphere of freedom.

Following the first two elections in 1990 and 1994, *Fidesz*, with its now more experienced and increasingly respected leaders, underwent a transformation of sorts. Understanding the need for conquering a different segment of the population, the previously radically liberal group of youngsters became more and more conservative and very appealing to those who felt disappointed by the first two democratic governments. *Fidesz* won the 1998 elections, and though their defeat of the Socialist Party was only by a slim margin, it managed to win over a large group of borderline-fanatic followers while others - myself included - felt betrayed by this sudden change of face.

A favorite slogan of the revitalized *Fidesz* was a promise: “Everyone should have three children, three rooms, and four wheels.” This witty propaganda was aimed at a very large segment of the population: the hard-working, “average” families, who had watched many get rich quick while they themselves were struggling to get by in the new capitalist economy.

In this paper, I will analyze two aspects of this slogan. First, I will examine whether or not it had an effect on the outcome of the 1998 election. Second, I will look at how people felt about *Fidesz*’s promise in 2002: whether those whom the slogan was

aimed at favored *Fidesz* in districts where its candidates were elected to the Parliament in 1998, or if they wanted change in 2002.

The Model

To answer the first question, I wanted to compare whether *Fidesz* got more votes in districts where people whom the three elements of the promise were aimed at made up a larger percentage of the population. For example, “three children” should appeal to people who have any children, because it was a promise to support families with children financially, on a per child basis. If the slogan found its target, then districts with a larger percentage of families with children should have had higher *Fidesz* votes. Similarly, “three rooms” was aimed at families where the person per room ratio is high, so districts with a high ratio should have had more *Fidesz* votes. The third part of the promise, “four wheels” was more difficult to define. Although literally the promise was that owning an automobile should be within reach for anyone, I soon found out that finding data on automobile ownership by region is impossible. So I looked further behind the promise, and assumed that making “four wheels” possible means making it financially possible, which, in such a recently capitalized economy struggling with newly present unemployment, could be seen as a promise to increase employment. I found data on the average number of people employed per family for each district, which seemed like a reasonable variable for my purposes, since families exist as a unit, which is definitive in terms of their perceptions and voting preferences. So, in regards to the third variable, if a district has a high employed per family ratio the *Fidesz* campaign should be less appealing and should have received fewer votes.

I found the data I needed in three places: the results of all past elections for each district were available from the website of Index, a Hungarian online news provider, and the information about the population of the districts was available on the websites of KSH (the Central Statistical Bureau of Hungary), and Tarki, a social sciences research university.

The equation I used for the first question was the following:

$$\text{Fid98} = a + \beta * \text{havechild} + \gamma * \text{pplprroom} + d * \text{emplprfam}$$

I had 32 observations, one for each district of Budapest, the capitol. I had decided to use only the data from Budapest because of the fact that Hungary is very much divided into two parts: Budapest and the country, and the differences between these two are very strong. Looking at the districts of Budapest only gave me a group of pretty much homogenous districts. The examination of the differences between the voting preferences of voters from the capitol compared to those from elsewhere promises to be very interesting, but could not be included within the scope of this paper, so I left it for another time.

To answer the second question, I wanted to examine the results of the 2002 elections specifically in districts where *Fidesz* had won in 1998. To see how the people felt about the performance of their representatives in those districts, I wanted to compare the effect of the same three variables I used above separately for districts where *Fidesz* won in '98 and those where they lost. I created a dummy variable, *fidwindum*, which equals one if *Fidesz* won in that district in '98 and zero otherwise. Looking through the data I immediately noticed that there were many districts in which *Fidesz* had won in '98 and lost in 2002, but none the other way around. This seemed to support my theory that voters had been disappointed by their representative's performance.

I used the following equation for this purpose:

$$\text{Fid02} = a + \mu * \text{fidwindum} + \beta * \text{fidwindum} * \text{havechild} + \gamma * \text{fidwindum} * \text{pplprroom} + \delta * \text{fidwindum} * \text{emplprfam} + \gamma * (1 - \text{fidwindum}) * \text{havechild} + \gamma * (1 - \text{fidwindum}) * \text{pplprroom} + \gamma * (1 - \text{fidwindum}) * \text{emplprfam}.$$

For districts where *Fidesz* was a winner in '98 (*fidwindum*=1) this equation becomes:

$$\text{Fid02} = a + \mu + \beta * \text{havechild} + \gamma * \text{pplprroom} + \delta * \text{emplprfam}.$$

For the other districts (*fidwindum*=0) it is

$$\text{Fid02} = a + \gamma * \text{havechild} + \gamma * \text{pplprroom} + \gamma * \text{emplprfam}.$$

The Results

The first regression, pertaining to the 1998 elections, yielded unpromising results. The coefficients of the three variables were very small: -.0318 for *havechild*, .6303 for *pplprroom*, and 3.6 for *emplprfam*. The signs of these coefficients do not support the effectiveness of the slogan. If it had appealed to those whom it was aimed at, then an

increase in havechild should have meant an increase in votes for *Fidesz*, but the coefficient shows that this was not so. The coefficient for pplprroom makes sense according to this logic, but the positive coefficient of emplprfam does not: districts with a higher number of employed people per family should have found the promise less appealing. More importantly, the indicators of the validity of the regression were very disappointing: the R-squared value was 0.0966, showing that the variables did little to explain variations among the districts' votes, the t-statistics were very low for each variable (the largest being 1.07), with high probabilities, as was the F-statistic, which was .99 with a probability of 41%.

Although these may seem like dismal results, the question I was seeking to answer was whether or not the slogan had an affect on the votes cast by those whom it was aimed at, so I had, in fact found my answer: it did not have a significant impact. On a side note, I was interested in finding out what variables were important factors in the results of the elections, and I found that one such variable was the percentage of the population with higher education, which had very strong indicators of significance. It seems that an increase of one in the percentage of people with higher education in a district would increase the percentage of *Fidesz* votes by about four tenths of a percent. The "educated districts" favored *Fidesz* strongly in both the '98 and the 2002 elections. Since highed could be correlated with emplprfam or the other variables, this raised the question of whether the inclusion of this variable along with the slogan variables could change my findings. I found that it did not significantly impact what was previously stated: the slogan's impact was still imperceptible.

Another issue I had to consider was that perhaps the results were due to a correlation between the three variables, so I ran a regression for each one separately, as well as with one dependent on the other. I found that the results improved, especially for havechild, which now had acceptable t- and F-statistics, with an R-squared around 10%, which seems reasonable. The correlation seems to be strong between havechild and emplprfam, perhaps because in families with children the mother is more likely to stay home, thus decreasing the number of employees per family.

The results of the regressions of the second issue, that of the 2002 elections, were luckily much stronger. By using least squares I got the following results:

$$\text{Fid02} = 47.48 + 18.71 * \text{fidwindum} + .697 * \text{fidwindum} * \text{havechild} + (-.409) * \text{fidwindum} * \text{pplprroom} +$$
$$(.287) * \text{fidwindum} * \text{emplprfam} + .243 * (1 - \text{fidwindum}) * \text{emplprfam} + (-.134) * (1 - \text{fidwindum}) * \text{havechild} +$$
$$.004 * (1 - \text{fidwindum}) * \text{pplprroom}.$$

The t-stats for the districts where Fidesz had won in '98 were higher, closer to the 5% critical value for each of the variables, and the F-stat was now acceptable as well. The R-squared was .56, which is reasonably high in this case. The variables did seem to affect the outcome in the case of these districts: families with children seemed pleased with their representative's performance, while Fidesz seemed to have done much worse on the "three rooms" part of their promise. Districts with high people per room ratios had a strong disfavor for *Fidesz*, which fits in with my personal experiences: their supposedly incredible new measures regarding loans for building new apartments and lower taxes for buying them were all talk but little real significance. It seems that districts with higher unemployment rates seemed to favor Fidesz, rather than those with lower rates, so this part of the promise was unfulfilled in the eyes of the voters as well. Overall, the coefficients indicating the voters' disappointment are much higher than that of havechild, which seemed to be *Fidesz*'s one accomplishment.

Looking at the districts where *Fidesz* had lost in 1998, the significance of the three variables seemed to have decreased considerably. The coefficients of the three variables are much lower for these districts than in those with $\text{fidwindum}=1$. The t-statistics (the highest being .6) were significantly lower for this part of the regression compared to the previous one, suggesting that the three variables had considerably less effect on the 2002 vote in districts where a candidate other than *Fidesz*'s had won the elections in 1998.

Conclusion

The results of this analysis seem to indicate certain things very clearly. The slogan did not have a significant effect on voters when it was initially introduced in 1998. Those it was aimed at – families with children, those living in cramped quarters, and those going through tougher times financially, mostly due to unemployment – did not seem to support *Fidesz* more than anyone else. In the 2002 elections, however, voters were

keeping *Fidesz* at its word: in districts where a *Fidesz* representative had been at work for four years, voters had expected them to help those they had promised to help, and seemed to have felt that they had not. In the other districts, where *Fidesz* had not been responsible for any changes, the variables had a much smaller effect on the outcome. The preferences of the different groups were not especially affected by the slogan, or its unkempt promise. The results seem to explain, at least partially, why *Fidesz* lost in the 2002 elections. They started out promising too much in order to win more votes – a fact that is of course typical of any political race, but *Fidesz* took it to a new level – and disappointed many of their voters when they could not fulfill their promise.