

Прикладная эконометрика, 2022, т. 67, с. 74–96.

Applied Econometrics, 2022, v. 67, pp. 74–96.

DOI: 10.22394/1993-7601-2022-67-74-96

**E. A. Podkolzina**, **L. E. Kuletskaya**, **O. A. Demidova**<sup>1</sup>

## Spatial modelling of voting preferences: The “Mystery” of the Republic of Tatarstan

*We argue neighbors play a crucial role in voting behavior for the main candidate in Russia. Moreover, the official status of the region and connectedness with the ruling party matter. The neighborhood effects we explain with the idea that voters base on public choices and illustrate it on the example of Privolzhskiy federal district regions with an emphasis on Tatarstan and its effect on voting on the municipal level. The Republic of Tatarstan is an interesting case also because it is the republic in Russia that has reference to sovereignty in its constitution and at the same time is loyal to the Kremlin. This paper presents a detailed spatial analysis of voters' responses at the municipal level covering Russian presidential elections in 2018 year using the example of the Republic of Tatarstan and its surrounding regions. The preferred 2-step OLS specification with instruments shows that Tatarstan had a strong positive effect on neighboring regions in terms of voting for the main candidate, while surrounding regions voted differently and negatively affected each other. Municipalities with better economic conditions had a negative impact on the share of votes for the main candidate and positive for the opposite.*

**Keywords:** spatial autocorrelation; electoral preferences; local economic conditions; GMM; 2-step OLS; Russian 2018 presidential elections.

**JEL classification:** C21; C31; R5.

### 1. Introduction

Much empirical research provides the deep analysis of the political behavior of voters with spatial modeling of electoral choice and the determination of factors that affect the political preferences of voters. While most of these studies are focused on general economic or political factors in the country that affect the election results (and in this case, spatial econometric methods become only a necessary tool), the rest of the research is devoted to describing and predicting the impact of membership in social groups, mobility across regions on voting results or mutual influence of voters on the propensity to join certain parties and vote for specific candidates (Kuletskaya, 2021). The main position in such studies is the hypothesis of positive spatial autocorrelation: for almost all socio-economic and political actions spatially close units (territories) are more likely to behave similarly than spatially distant units (Darmofal, 2006; Huckfeldt,

<sup>1</sup> **Podkolzina, Elena** — HSE University, Moscow.

**Kuletskaya, Lada** — HSE University, Moscow; lada.kuletskaya@gmail.com.

**Demidova, Olga** — HSE University, Moscow; demidova@hse.ru.