

Mapping and Analysing Political Science Research in a Post-Communist Country: Thirty-three Years of Insight into Research on Czech Local Politics¹

Jakub Čapek, Jakub Hornek²

Abstract

The extreme territorial fragmentation of the Czech Republic, characterised by over 6,250 municipalities, makes it a uniquely valuable testing ground for international theories on local democracy, decentralisation, and democratic resilience. This study aims to map and analyse the evolution of political science research on Czech local politics from 1993 to 2025. The authors compiled a comprehensive database of 324 peer-reviewed articles extracted from Web of Science, Scopus, and 28 domestic Czech journals. The analyses reveal significant changes within the discipline. Most notably, there is a shift from publishing in Czech to English, driven by national research evaluation frameworks and the pursuit of global visibility. The most productive authors are distributed across a wide range of universities and research institutions, indicating a healthy lack of institutional monopolisation. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that Czech local politics is a highly interdisciplinary field, spanning numerous thematic strands from traditional political science to public administration, sociology, and economics. However, a significant structural challenge persists as the discipline remains heavily male-dominated, with a pronounced gender gap in publication output. By synthesising thirty-three years of scholarly output, this study not only identifies existing thematic gaps but also establishes a foundational framework for future comparative research within the Central and Eastern European context.

Keywords: local politics; Czechia; research mapping; publication output

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² Jakub Čapek, PhD Student of Political Science, Institute of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, U Kříže 8, 158 00, Praha 5, Czech Republic. E-mail: jakub.capek@fsv.cuni.cz. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2848-0339>. Jakub Hornek, research fellow at the Institute of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, U Kříže 8, 158 00, Praha 5, Czech Republic. E-mail: jakub.hornek@fsv.cuni.cz. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6378-0970>.

1. Introduction

In democratic states, municipalities generally represent the basic territorial units with the right to decide on their own matters. Fundamentally, they are political entities with their own political systems, the level of governance closest to citizens, and the one in which they participate daily. On a global scale, this is a massive phenomenon. In OECD member states alone, there were more than 132,000 municipalities in 2020 (OECD, 2021). Municipalities most often deal with agendas that fall directly within the scope of the lowest level of governance.

At the same time, in the recent decade, municipalities have faced a growing range of responsibilities and an expanding spectrum of problems, whether related to the struggle against the climate change crisis, such as floods, droughts or high temperatures (e.g., Fünfgeld, Fila & Dahlmann, 2023; Schwartz, Koski & Siulagi, 2019), the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Clement, Esposito & Crutzen, 2023; Jüptner & Klimovský, 2022), with waves of migration (e.g., Bassoli & Campomori, 2024; Čermák, Mikešová & Špaček, 2025), the phenomenon of shrinking cities (e.g., Haase, Bernt, Großmann, Mykhnenko, & Rink, 2016) or the emergence of new technologies and the rise of cybersecurity threats (e.g., Hossain, Yigitcanlar, Nguyen, & Xu, 2025).

Political science, as the discipline under which research on self-governance falls, was clearly defined after the Second World War.¹ Between 1970 and 1976, the International Political Science Association (IPSA) created its first 14 Research Committees (RCs). As of 2025, IPSA has 53 Research Committees covering a wide range of areas within political science (IPSA, 2025). Research on local politics and the self-governing functioning of municipalities holds a prominent and irreplaceable position within political science.

From the 1960s onward, membership in IPSA was also held by countries of Central and Eastern Europe that, at the time, belonged to the sphere of influence of the former Soviet Union.² In these countries, the study of political science was fully developed only after 1989. In many of them, political science as an academic discipline had to be built entirely from scratch. This was also the case of Czechoslovakia, and later of the Czech Republic.

Within the EU and globally, the Czech Republic represents a unique case that does not reflect the broader trend of territorial consolidation. Considering the country's area and population, the number of independent municipalities is exceptional.³ The Czech Republic contains 6,258 self-governing municipalities, each with its own elected council, mayor, and budget.⁴ In 2022, during the most recent local elections, 59,228 councillors were elected.

From a comparative perspective, the Czech local political system is highly fragmented and represents an extreme case in Europe, comparable only to France, Slovakia, and Spain (e.g., OECD, 2021; Hornek & Maškarinec, 2025). At the same time, this part of political science is often overlooked not only in the

Czech Republic but also in other countries. In the past, numerous overviews of European political science have been published. (e.g., Krauz-Mozer et al., 2015; Carammia, 2022) as well as in Central and Eastern Europe (e.g., Jokić, Mervar & Mateljan, 2019; Schneider, Bochsler & Chiru, 2013) or in the countries themselves (e.g., Šanc, 2009; Warczok & Zarycki, 2018).

In Czech political science, there is a tradition of overview analyses of publishing activities within the field (Eberle, Smekal, Ocelík, & Krpec, 2021; Holzer, Chytilík, Pšejka, & Šindelář, 2009; Kouba, 2011) or analyses of publications within a single journal (Janák & Klobucký, 2014). However, similar overviews or analyses are lacking in the field of local politics. This is despite the fact that it is an important part of large political associations such as IPSA or ECPR⁵ and also note the increasing importance and interest in this discipline (Le Galès, 2021; Trounstein, 2009).

In the Czech context, local politics was identified as one of the areas in which research interest increased significantly 20 years ago already, as noted by Holzer & Pšejka (2007). Furthermore, it is a significant part of political science study programmes at Czech universities, and it can be assumed that many bachelor's theses fall within this field.

Despite the growing number of works on Czech political science, there is still a lack of a systematic, data-driven overview of how scholars have approached the study of local politics. Existing articles have typically addressed the development of the discipline as a whole or focused on other thematic areas. It is therefore natural to ask how this research field, which plays an important role both in the Czech Republic and in Europe, has developed since the establishment of independent Czech political science as a discipline.

This article examines how the relatively new field of political science in the Czech Republic has addressed the issue of local politics. **The aim of this text is** therefore to map and analyse the development of research on local politics in the Czech Republic, which has a unique system of local self-government, and to present the findings on these local specificities to an international audience.⁶ Such findings are aided by the creation of a continuously updated database of published articles on research in local politics in the Czech Republic.

2. Disciplinary context

Research on local politics has established itself as an important subfield within international political science. However, systematic reviews or analyses of this discipline are relatively few (e.g., Gendźwiłł, Kurniewicz & Swianiewicz 2020; Narbón Perpiñá & De Witte 2018a & 2018b). In the Czech context, the development of local politics is linked to the restoration of political science as an academic discipline post 1989.

By the end of 1989 and in 1990, the first departments at the universities were established. These were subsequently expanded in the following years (see Appendix Table 1). Czech political science was built, from its very beginning, on global developments in the field. In the 1990s, Czech political science became fully integrated into international structures: the Czech Political Science Association joined IPSA and the ECPR.

While the broader evolution of Czech political science has been thoroughly mapped (Holzer & Pšejka 2003 & 2007; Kouba, 2011; Kouba, Císař & Navrátil, 2015; Šanc, 2009), the specific position of local politics research requires a more nuanced reflection that bridges the gap between early transitional studies and modern bibliometric trends.

Although the present study primarily analyses peer-reviewed journal articles published after the establishment of the independent Czech Republic in 1993, the foundations of the field were laid during the immediate post-revolutionary period (1990–1992). Key foundational works emerged in the Czech Sociological Review, most notably the empirical analysis of the first free municipal elections by Heřmanová, Illner, and Vajdová (1992), and Illner's (1992) article, which defined the fundamental sociological questions of emerging local democracy.

The second layer, crucial for the field's international establishment, consisted of two complementary publications that connected the Czech founding figures with Western academia. The first major work was an anthology edited by Dostál, Illner, Kára, and Barlow (1992), which presented, for the first time to an international audience, in detail the transformation of Czechoslovak administration under the title *Changing Territorial Administration in Czechoslovakia*. This was immediately followed by the integration of Czech research into the broader European discourse through the monograph *Local Government in the New Europe* (Bennett, 1993). In this publication, Kára and Blažek published a case study analysing local-level reform after 1989.

For international audiences, the Czech Republic represents a unique case for studying local democracy due to its extreme territorial fragmentation. With over 6,200 self-governing municipalities, among which approximately 54% have fewer than 500 inhabitants, Czechia has the highest concentration of small municipalities in Europe (Hornek & Maškarinec, 2025). This structural anomaly differentiates the Czech case from the European trend toward territorial amalgamation and generates specific research themes that resonate with broader debates on decentralisation and democratic resilience.

Such themes include inter-municipal cooperation as a crucial alternative to forced amalgamation (Soukopová & Vaceková, 2018; Bakoš, Němec, Hrůza & Mix, 2020), alongside the overwhelming dominance of independent candidates who frequently displace established parties (Ryšavý, 2010; Kostelecký, Bernard, Mansfeldová & Mikešová, 2024). low electoral competitiveness in small municipalities (Franzke, Jüptner, Hofman & Čapek 2025; Kouba & Lysek, 2023),

the debate surrounding the absence of direct mayoral elections (Jüptner, 2017), the stability of municipal coalitions (Balík, 2017; Charvátová, 2020), and the limits of local party system nationalisation (Maškarinec, 2015) or local referenda (Bláha, 2023). Furthermore, this fragmented landscape provides insights into the gender dimension of female representation (Bláha, 2017; Čermák & Mikešová, 2018; Maškarinec, 2022 & 2023; Sztwiertnia & Hellová, 2012). More recently, the thematic scope has converged with global challenges, utilising the Czech anomaly to examine decentralised environmental and waste policies (Soukopová, Hřebíček, & Horsák, 2015) or municipal resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic (Jüptner & Klimovský, 2022; Čermák, Mikešová, & Špaček, 2025).

Since the mid-2000s, Czech political science as a whole, including the subfield of local politics, has undergone significant modernisation that mirrors broader trends. A key milestone was the generational shift after 2006, which saw a rapid increase in publications indexed in international databases such as Web of Science and Scopus (Kouba, 2011; Kouba et al., 2015). This internationalisation is characterised by a gradual shift from publishing in Czech-language journals to English-language outlets, driven by changes in national research evaluation systems and a desire for greater global visibility.

Recent studies (Just, 2020; Dvořáková, 2021) have highlighted persistent challenges, including the ‘glass ceiling’ for Central and Eastern European scholars in international gatekeeping roles⁷ and the impact of systemic underfunding. Despite these challenges, the most recent data (Cely & Roberts, 2025) suggests that publishing habits have modernised, with a strong preference for journal articles over traditional monographs. This study aims to map this specific evolution, providing a comprehensive bibliometric and thematic overview of how Czech local politics research has transitioned from a descriptive transitional discipline into a functionally integrated part of international political science.

3. Data and Methods

To fulfil the aim of the article and to map the research of local politics in the Czech Republic, it was first necessary to answer the question: *How should the concept of local politics be defined and delimited in Czech political science?* It is not possible to simply adopt a definition from another context, as Czech local politics has its own specific characteristics, as already mentioned above.

While defining the concept, various organisations were contacted, including IPSA, ECPR, the National Library of the Czech Republic, and the National Technical Library of the Czech Republic. Although these organisations generally provide definitions of political science itself, none of them work with a definition of local politics, let alone Czech local politics. After reviewing the relevant academic literature, the authors concluded that Balík’s definition, as presented in his book,

which is generally regarded as the standard textbook on Czech local politics, best suits the needs of this literature review (Balík, 2009). Balík defined it as follows: municipal politics is everything that contains any of the dimensions of politics - institutional, relational, and substantive - while focusing on municipalities (Balík, 2009, pp. 7-8).

In this article, the *institutional dimension* is understood as comprising all institutions operating within a municipality, i.e., the mayor, municipal council, municipal board, municipal office, and, where applicable, the municipal committee. The *relational dimension* refers to the relationships between institutions and citizens, as well as between the institutions themselves or between citizens. It also includes relationships with higher levels of territorial government and national political institutions. The *substantive dimension* encompasses decision-making processes, public policies, or legislation related to the local level.

All articles that address local politics, at least in some parts, are included. These are articles that may also cover other levels of governance, such as regional or national, but in which the local level plays a significant role. They also include articles primarily focused on disciplines such as economics or law, if they relate to the local level of politics. The study period begins in 1993, the year the independent Czech Republic was established, and ends in 2025, the last complete year before the article was finalised. The authors continue to update the database and will make it available to interested researchers and students.

The literature review itself consists of two parts. The first is a review of Czech peer-reviewed political science and related journals. The second is a review of the two most important scientific databases: Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus.⁸ In addition to these databases, the online archives of individual journals were used. In some cases, particularly for older issues or discontinued journals, the databases and archives of the National Library of the Czech Republic were also used. Only scholarly articles that had undergone a peer-review process were included. Reviews, essays, and opinion pieces were excluded, as were articles published in conference proceedings. Monographs and book chapters were also excluded from the literature review. The main reason for this was that the article seeks to compare what was written at different points in time and what topics were current at the time. While journal articles capture developments dynamically and respond to issues quickly, the preparation of monographs is considerably slower, as books tend to summarise longer-term trends in academic debate with structural permanence.

All issues of the selected Czech journals published between 1993 and the end of 2025 were examined. The journals were selected from among Czech titles indexed in one or more of the following databases: Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO, ERIH PLUS, and CEEOL. The journals were selected based on a brief preliminary search through RIV (Rejstřík informací o výsledcích - Register of Information on Results), focusing on the period since 2008, when the introduction of a new national evaluation methodology significantly altered publication strategies in the Czech Republic. Three criteria were used for inclusion.

The first criterion was that the journal had to focus at least partially on political science or a related discipline, since political scientists also frequently publish in sociology, law or economics journals, as demonstrated by other meta-analyses and literature reviews (see e.g., Kaiser, Tóth & Demeter, 2023; Michalak, 2020). The second criterion was that the journal's articles must undergo a peer-review process. The final criterion was that the journal's publisher had to be based in the Czech Republic.

Slovak journals, in which Czech political scientists also publish relatively frequently, were not included. This is primarily because the authors are much more familiar with Czech journals. However, Czech and Slovak political science are partly interconnected due to their shared history and the fact that many Slovak researchers work at Czech universities and vice versa.

A double verification method was used when reviewing the Czech journals. Both researchers independently examined all the journals and selected articles that matched the definition of Czech local politics. The selection was based on the article title, keywords, and abstract, and, if necessary, by reviewing the full text. Then both selections were compared and the researchers agreed on which articles should be included in the database. This process was very time-consuming, primarily due to the large number of issues for some journals and the fact that, for some older issues, online archives were unavailable. In such cases, it was necessary to visit the National Library of the Czech Republic and examine the journals physically.

After reviewing the Czech journals, a database search was conducted in the Web of Science and Scopus databases. It was performed using keywords applied not only to the keyword fields but also to article titles and abstracts. The same keywords were used in both databases: *communal* OR municipal* OR local* OR rural* OR regional* OR urban* OR mayor**.⁹ These keywords were based on preliminary research drawing on both the earlier database of articles in Czech journals and a short pilot study. In the latter, the Czech public database RIV was used as the reference.

The authors identified the most prominent researchers in Czech local politics and compiled a list of the most frequently used keywords from their articles. These reflected the keywords used for the database searches. In the case of Scopus and WoS, the keywords were always combined with the keyword *Czech** to ensure that the article related to the Czech Republic. Other search parameters included publication date (1993–2025), document type *article*, country/territory *Czech Republic*, and language: *English, Czech, or Slovak*.¹⁰

As mentioned above, and as can be seen from the keywords, the analysis maintained a very broad definition of local politics. This necessitated a secondary screening of the articles retrieved from the databases. This screening was conducted in the same way as the journal review described above, using a double-verification process.

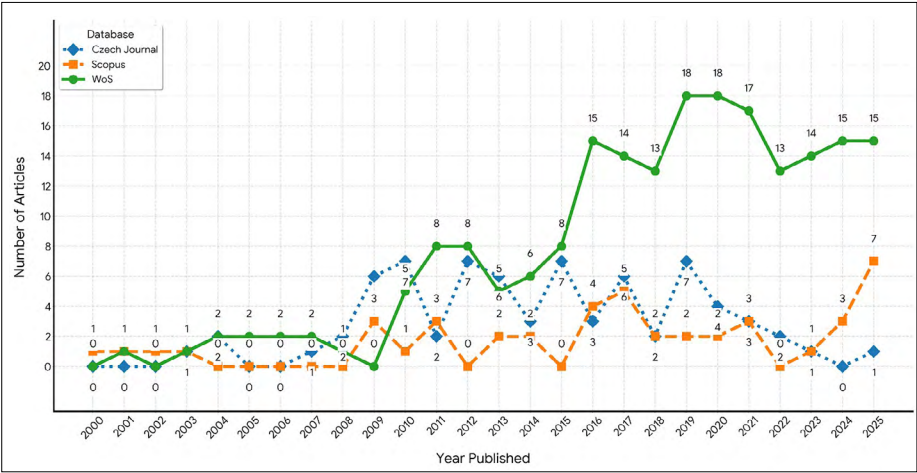
Keywords such as *communal*, *urban*, or *rural* are not commonly used to label articles on local politics. However, the preliminary study showed that, especially at a time when Czech political science was not yet fully established, these keywords were used at some institutions instead of the term *local*. Because the aim was to include as many relevant articles as possible in the database, these terms were included in the search. The standardisation of English terminology, in which the majority of authors began using the same expressions to describe local topics, occurred later. Out of concern that some relevant articles might otherwise be omitted from the database, these keywords were therefore included, even though this also meant a substantial increase in the number of articles that needed to be screened.

The keyword search was followed by duplicate removal and then by abstract screening. During this stage, articles whose abstracts clearly did not qualify as being related to Czech local politics were excluded. In the next stage, full texts were reviewed for those articles whose relevance to Czech local politics was not evident from the abstract. To ensure the greatest possible objectivity, both researchers carried out the process independently and then compared their results.

Whether an article addressed local politics was determined by the researchers' judgment. To minimise the risk of either omitting relevant articles or including irrelevant ones, the double verification method was again applied. Both researchers reviewed all journals and the results from both databases, then compared their findings and discussed any disputed articles. The focus was primarily on the title, keywords, and abstract. When these identifiers failed to confirm whether an article fit the scope of local politics, a full-text review was conducted.

The resulting database after completing all these steps contained 206 articles from WoS and 233 from Scopus. Because many journals are indexed in both WoS and Scopus, there is overlap: 183 articles are included in both databases. For the purposes of further analysis, such articles are counted as WoS articles by default. The same approach applies to articles in Czech journals that are also indexed in WoS or Scopus. In the complete database of all articles, duplicates were removed, but each record retained information on whether it was indexed in either database or originated from a Czech journal. The distribution of articles among WoS, Scopus, and Czech journals is shown in the following graph.

Graph 1:
Number of Articles by Source in the Czech Local Politics Database (2000–2025; n=320)¹¹



Source: The authors' own work based on data from WoS, Scopus, and Czech journals.

A small limitation of this approach is that some articles on Czech local politics are not included in either database and were published in non-Czech journals. These are primarily works published in the already mentioned Slovak journals and, very likely, also older articles from a time when Czech academia paid less attention to the choice of journals for publication. They may also include works published in conference proceedings or as book chapters.

Another limitation is that some keywords may have been omitted from the search. However, this risk is mitigated by the fact that keywords were selected based on the preliminary study, and the search included not only the most frequently used terms but also those that were less common or specific to certain research institutions. Despite the clear theoretical foundation, the articles included in the literature review inevitably reflect, to some extent, the subjective judgment of both researchers. This is a reality faced by every similar study, as explained, for example, by Schubert & Blank (2005, pp. 284–85).

The article also includes an analysis of the keywords used. For this, a new table was created containing only the keywords for each article and the year of publication. All keywords were converted to lowercase and then normalised so that differently formulated expressions were unified into a standard form.¹² A small number of articles, especially older ones, lack keywords.

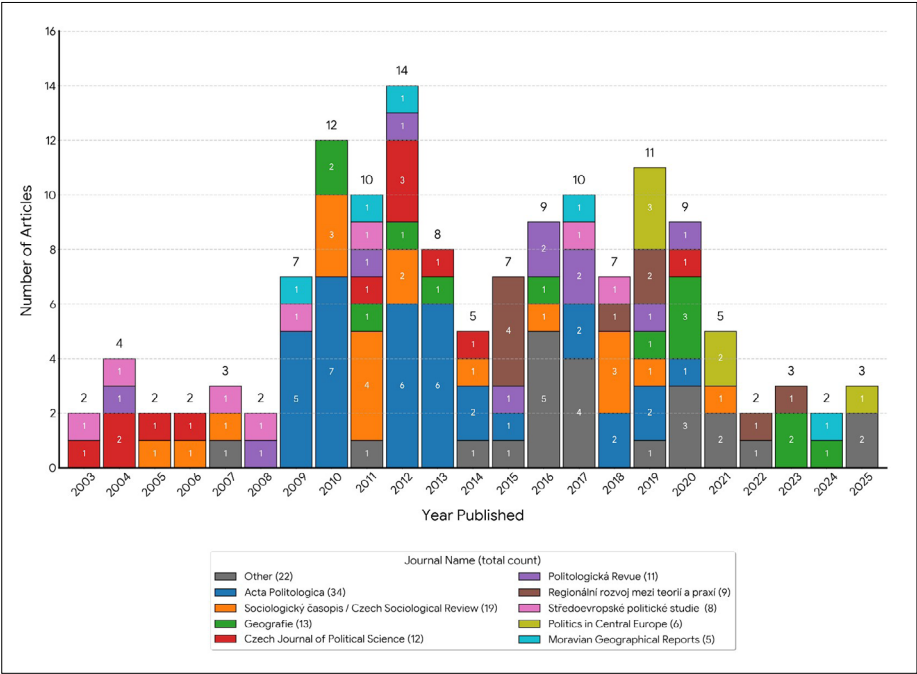
Since the authors of articles on Czech local politics varied widely in their keyword choices, simply listing the keywords would have had limited explanatory value. Therefore, the analysis was conducted at the level of word stems, allowing it to avoid being restricted to the exact wording of multi-word keywords.¹³ For each word stem, the number of occurrences in the article database was counted.

4. Analysis of articles published on Czech local politics

The list of Czech journals is provided in Appendix Table 2. In addition to the journal titles, the table includes their active years,¹⁴ the publishing institution, and the number of issues examined by the authors. In total, 28 Czech journals and 2,153 issues were analysed.

The most important figure is the number of articles devoted to Czech local politics. There were 142 such articles in total. At first glance, it is clear that some journals are more attractive to authors writing on Czech local politics than others. Five journals accounted for 91 of the 142 articles, nearly 65% of the total. This is driven primarily by the Czech Sociological Review, with 21 articles, and especially by Acta Politologica, with 34 articles. The number of articles is strongly influenced by special issues dedicated specifically to local politics or to related topics. This is particularly evident in the case of Acta Politologica, which occasionally publishes such special issues.

Graph 2:
Number of Articles on Czech Local Politics in Czech Journals (2003-2025; n=139)¹⁵



Source: The authors' own work based on data from Czech journals.

The graph shows the number of published articles in the nine Czech journals in which articles on local politics appeared most frequently. Together, these journals account for 120 articles shown in the graph, representing nearly 85% of all articles in the Czech journals. The number of published articles has been rising in the two years after the municipal elections. This pattern is particularly evident after the election years 2010 and 2018, when the number of articles rises slightly before declining again toward the next election year.

In one-third of the analysed journals, no articles on Czech local politics were published. However, the analysis also shows that these journals do publish politically oriented articles, often focusing, for example, on regional politics, which is only one step above the local level. It therefore appears worthwhile to continue monitoring them in the future.

The graph also indicates that a greater number of articles on Czech local politics began appearing in Czech journals starting in 2009. It can be inferred that it took at least 15 years from the establishment of the independent Czech Republic for Czech local political science to become established.

In the last four years, only 10 articles on Czech local politics have been published in Czech journals. Moreover, a downward trend can be observed already after 2019. One partial explanation may be that, given the research evaluation system in the Czech Republic, where it is increasingly important for researchers to publish their articles ideally in WoS or Scopus, it makes little sense to publish in Czech political science journals or related fields. Most of these journals are not indexed in WoS, and many are not even indexed in Scopus.

Furthermore, publishing in English has become the norm, which encourages publication in international journals. It can be assumed that similar patterns of moving away from domestic journals will occur in other subfields of political science as well. In general, Czech researchers have significantly increased the number of publications indexed in WoS, though most appear in low-impact fourth-quartile journals (Eberle, Smekal, Ocelík, & Krpec, 2021, pp. 190–92).

Finally, the discontinuation of certain journals may also partly explain the decline. Of the 28 journals, nearly one-third have ceased to exist. Moreover, the last two new Czech journals included in the database were founded in 2013.¹⁶ This means that over the past decade, no new Czech journal has been established that focuses directly on political science or, at least, on a related discipline.

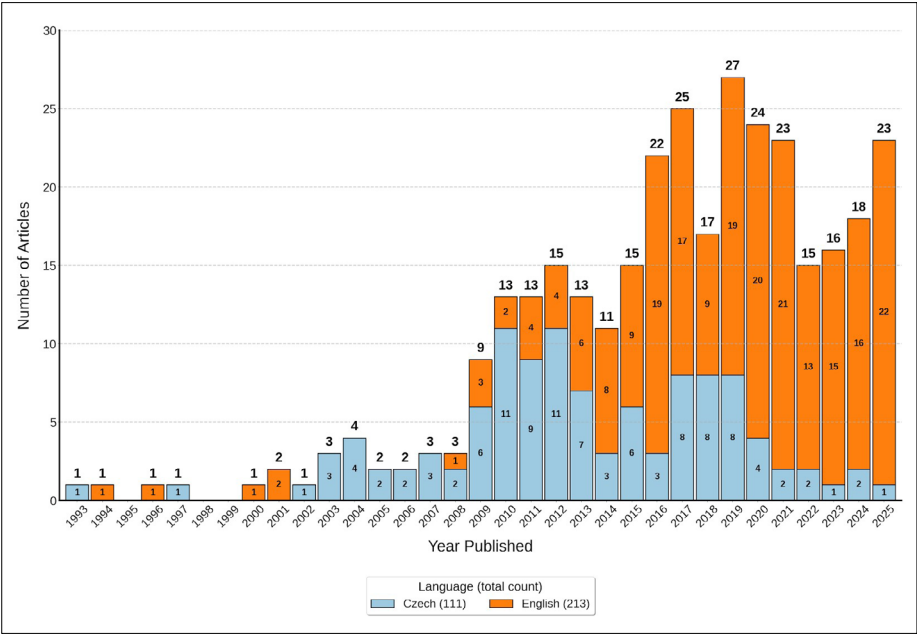
A particularly significant loss for Czech political science was the closure of *Středoevropské politické studie* (Central European Political Studies) and *Politologická revue* (Political Science Review). The former ceased publication in 2018, and during its 20 years of operation, it published 12 articles on local politics in the Czech Republic. *Politologická revue* ended in 2021.

The closure of this journal is especially painful because it was the official journal of the Czech Political Science Association, as summarised in an article by Dvořáková (2021) and in the editorial of the final issue (Charvát, 2021). The

editorial noted that the journal had long strived to develop Czech political science language by publishing texts in Czech. For example, it supported the publication of doctoral students’ work. However, the journal ultimately suffered from the very limited citation rate of Czech-language texts, which also prevented it from being indexed in WoS or Scopus. This is directly connected to the Czech research evaluation system’s focus on performance, defined in this case as publication in indexed databases, which has often been criticised (Eberle, Smekal, Ocelík, & Krpec, 2021; Kratochvíl, 2016).

Looking at the number of articles in the indexed databases over the same period, 206 were indexed in WoS and 231 in Scopus. The final database contains 324 unique articles published over the last 33 years that address Czech local politics. The majority of these are written in English - 213 articles. The other 111 are written in Czech.

Graph 3:
Language Evolution of Research on Czech Local Politics (1993-2025; n=324)



Source: The authors' own work based on data from Czech journals.

Graph 3 shows a clear increase in the number of English-language articles, alongside a decline in the number of Czech-language articles. This shift was expected, given the ongoing internationalisation of Czech academia in general (Eberle, Smekal, Ocelík, & Krpec, 2021, p. 197) and the already mentioned pressure to publish in indexed databases. As Kouba notes in his review of the publication outputs of Czech departments of political science and international relations, the

very selection of journals registered in the WoS database leads to an Americentric bias. This problem is smaller in Scopus, which is more receptive to including European journals and those publishing articles in languages other than English (see e.g., Kouba, 2011).

Czech local political science follows global trends in this respect. The globalisation of academic research often requires publishing in English, as Czech significantly limits the number of readers to scholars from the Czech Republic or Slovakia. Publishing in English also leads to more citations, greater recognition at the international level, and better prospects for career advancement (López-Navarro, Moreno, Quintanilla, & Rey-Rocha, 2015, p. 962). For perspective, as early as 2000, 93% of articles published in France were in English (Sano, 2002, p. 48).

Czech local politics thus increasingly confirms English as the lingua franca of political science (see, e.g., Montgomery, 2009; Wolters, 2015). In addition to the factors mentioned above, grant projects undoubtedly play a role. These often reward publication in both indexed databases, and, as noted, WoS in particular favours English. Moreover, some grant projects involve collaboration with foreign colleagues, in which case publishing results in English as a universal language makes the most sense.

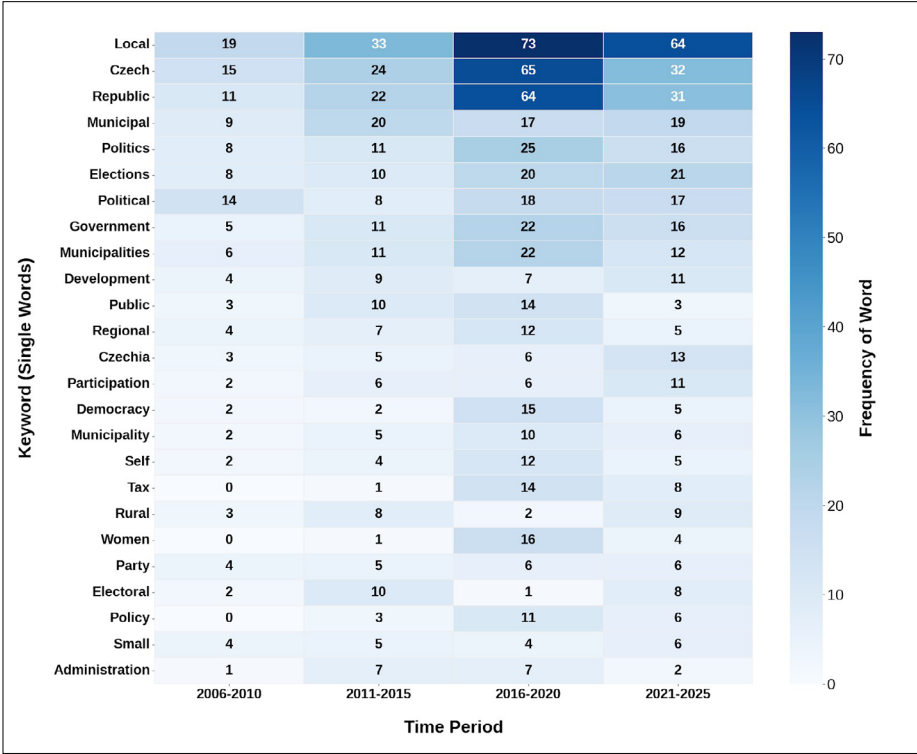
These grants vary widely. While some articles are supported by internal grants operating at individual Czech universities, others are funded through calls from the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic or the Czech Science Foundation, or by other European research funding agencies. In several cases, various foundation grants were also involved. It therefore appears that grant support has to some extent become the norm for publishing in top-tier journals. At the same time, this may also be linked to the fact that some grant calls explicitly require publication in WoS. This, however, also points to the risk that Czech political science may become dependent on allocated grants. This dependency has been particularly evident since 2018, when the proportion of articles in indexed databases supported by grants has ranged between 60% and 80%. Before that, the share of such articles was significantly lower.

Given the robustness of the collected data, it was worthwhile to examine it more in depth. Therefore, a keyword analysis was also conducted. These show that the most frequently used keywords are *local*, *Czech* and *Republic*, which, given the focus of this literature review, was to be expected. Other frequently used keywords include *municipal*, *politics*, *elections*, *government* and their variants.

The term *Czechia* has become significantly more common over the past five years. This is due to the fact that this has become the official name of the Czech Republic internationally. Conversely, the decline in the frequency of most keywords between the last and previous five-year periods indicates a spread across a wider range of keywords. This suggests that researchers' interests are becoming more diversified across a greater number of topics.

The large degree of variation is shown in the number of unique keywords across the 284 articles.

Graph 4:
Heatmap of Core Keywords by Period (2006-2025; n=312)¹⁷



Source: The authors' own work based on data from WoS, Scopus, and Czech journals.

Among the keywords used in the database scanning, *municipal* and *local* appear very frequently, while *regional* and *rural* occur less often. Surprisingly, the keyword *mayor* is relatively rare in the articles, despite an expectation of higher occurrence. This may be related to the fact that, unlike in neighbouring countries, the Czech Republic does not have direct mayoral elections. The term *communal* is practically unused, appearing only five times in the entire database.

All other keywords appear in no more than a few dozen cases. This indicates a large degree of variation, with the total number of keywords being very high. In total, across the 312 articles that included at least some keywords, there were 979 unique keywords. Among other things, this may also point to inconsistent terminology in Czech local politics. That is understandable, given that many authors approach local politics primarily through other disciplines.

Looking at the authors, there are 393 unique names.¹⁸ Of these, 88 authors have at least one solo-authored article¹⁹ on Czech local politics, but only 19 have at least two, and just eight have at least three. The trend is to publish in co-authored teams. If we count both solo and co-authored articles, only 26 have five or more. Interestingly, among these, 6 authors have only one solo article, and another 11 have none.

This shows that only a small group of authors focus on the topic as a primary area of research. Other authors address it only occasionally, with their main

research focus lying elsewhere. This may also reflect cases of researchers who are no longer active, whether due to a career change, a shift in research focus, or, in the case of women, maternity leave.

A shift in research focus is understandable, particularly given that local politics does not yet appear to be a field that can support a large number of scholars over the long term. Research is often dependent on grant funding. If a researcher does not have a grant project, the data shows that they will reduce their publication activity on this topic. Looking at the profiles of the most active authors at their respective universities, they usually list, alongside local politics, other specialisations such as Czech politics in general, multi-level governance, voting behaviour, or political participation.

Table 1:
Authors with Five or More Publications in the Database

Author (nationality)	Total Articles	Single-Authored Articles	Co-Authored Articles	Czech Journals	Scopus	WoS
Maškarinec, Pavel (CZE)	14	8	6	2	0	12
Bernard, Josef (CZE)	13	5	8	1	1	11
Šaradín, Pavel (CZE)	13	6	7	7	1	5
Balík, Stanislav (CZE)	13	5	8	6	3	4
Klimovský, Daniel (SVK)	10	1	9	2	0	8
Ryšavý, Dan (CZE)	10	5	5	2	1	7
Jüptner, Petr (CZE)	10	3	7	5	2	3
Radvan, Michal (CZE)	10	5	5	0	2	8
Mikešová, Renáta (CZE)	9	1	8	0	2	7
Kostecký, Tomáš (CZE)	8	1	7	1	1	6
Soukopová, Jana (CZE)	8	0	8	0	0	8
Plaček, Michal (CZE)	7	1	6	1	0	6
Lysek, Jakub (CZE)	7	3	4	0	0	7
Martinát, Stanislav (CZE)	6	0	6	0	0	6
Kunc, Josef (CZE)	6	0	6	0	0	6
Čermák, Daniel (CZE)	6	0	6	0	1	5
Bakoš, Eduard (CZE)	6	0	6	0	1	5
Krejčí, Tomáš (CZE)	5	0	5	0	0	5
Müller, Karel B. (CZE)	5	2	3	2	1	2
Čopík, Jan (CZE)	5	1	4	3	0	2
Chromý, Pavel (CZE)	5	0	5	0	1	4
Zdražil, Pavel (CZE)	5	0	5	0	2	3
Voda, Petr (CZE)	5	0	5	0	0	5
Soukop, Michal (CZE)	5	0	5	0	2	3
Pernica, Bohuslav (CZE)	5	0	5	0	2	3
Sedmihradská, Lucie (CZE)	5	1	4	1	1	3

Sources: The authors' own work based on data from Web of Science, Scopus, and Czech journals

Looking specifically at the most active authors, we find that the top eight, those with 10 or more articles, are, to varying degrees, considered political scientists specialising in the local level, or for whom it represents a significant part of their scholarly work. It is also noteworthy that these authors are spread across institutions throughout almost the entire Czech Republic and have generally worked at their respective institutions for a long time. Stanislav Balík is based in Brno, Pavel Maškarinec in Ústí nad Labem, and Petr Jüptner and Josef Bernard in Prague. The former at Charles University and the latter at the Academy of Sciences. Only Pavel Šaradín and Dan Ryšavý overlap in Olomouc, but each works in a different department of the university. An interesting exception is Daniel Klimovský, a Slovak who has long worked at Slovak universities and yet ranks among the most prolific authors on Czech local politics. The explanation is straightforward - in the vast majority of articles in this database, he appears as a co-author, typically adding a comparative Slovak dimension to the study.

The even distribution of authors across institutions makes sense. Local politics is not a particularly large field. Among the larger institutions that focus on it, the only one without a representative among the most active authors is the Faculty of Economics and Management at the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague. Local scholars from the Czech University of Life Sciences consistently work on local politics, as reflected in their published books (e.g., Čmejrek, Bubeníček & Čopík, 2010; Čopík, 2014). This reflects the already mentioned limitation of the database, which includes only articles in Czech journals and selected indexed databases. As a result, especially older authors who focused more on monographs or conference proceedings are underrepresented.

The situation with other authors who frequently publish on local politics is more diverse. For example, Michal Radvan, who also has 10 articles in the database, is a professor of financial law. Similarly, among the authors of seven articles in the database are Michal Plaček, who focuses on public and social policy, and Associate Professor of public economics Jana Soukopová. Among the authors of six articles, we find Josef Kunc, an associate professor of regional economics, and Stanislav Martinát, who was a geographer.

A specific example is the publication record of researchers from the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences. This institution is the most represented in the list of most productive authors, who publish almost exclusively as a group. This is reflected in their high number of co-authored articles. Current members of the Department of Local and Regional Studies, Daniel Čermák, Tomáš Kostelecký, and Renáta Mikešová, can be included in this group. Head of the department, Josef Bernard, is an exception, having solo-authored 5 publications himself. At the same time, these are almost exclusively publications indexed in WoS.

This further illustrates that local politics, as an academic discipline, is closely connected to other fields such as political geography, public administration and public policy, sociology, and economics. This conclusion is supported by the

keyword analysis mentioned above and also reflects the scope of the database, where the definition of local politics was deliberately chosen to be as broad as possible.

Only 17 authors have five or more WoS articles, and at least half of them have a primary research focus outside of local politics. Czech local politics, therefore, does not appear to be an ideal topic for publication in prestigious, high-impact journals.

The table also shows that among the most prolific authors focusing on local politics, women are in the minority. Among those with at least five articles in the database, this applies only to Renáta Mikešová and Lucie Sedmihradská, who have one solo-authored article, and Jana Soukopová, who appears exclusively as a co-author.²⁰ Another eight women have at least three articles set within the context of Czech local politics. It should be noted that some female authors may appear twice in the database due to a change of surname after marriage. Authors have tried to take this into consideration and, where identified, for example, through author IDs or personal familiarity, have corrected the information in the database.

5. Conclusions

Since the creation of the independent Czech state in 1993, Czech local politics as a discipline has made significant progress. From the formative period of 1990s, when Czech political science as a whole was still in its formative stages,²¹ and when research on Czech local politics was published mainly in conference proceedings. Through the 2000s, when the number of articles began to increase gradually, to the rapid extension that occurred around 2010. Since then, this growth has continued, with authors publishing around 20–25 articles on Czech local politics each year over the past decade.

Research on Czech local politics continues to face similar challenges as Czech political science as a whole. From weak presence on editorial boards and limited penetration into high quartile journals, as highlighted by Dvořáková (2021) or Eberle, Smekal, Ocelík, & Krpec. (2021), through other structural constraints (Jurajda, Kozubek, München & Škoda, 2017; Just, 2020; Müller, 2020).

Among the most active authors in the field of Czech local politics, men predominate strongly. Only 3 women have more than 5 articles in the database, compared to 23 men. Czech authors, and, in one case, a Slovak author, due to historical ties between the two nations and linguistic similarity, also clearly dominate the field. Authors outside of Czechia and Slovakia are very rare in the database; none have more than two articles.²² In this regard, research on Czech local politics lacks an outside perspective and comparison with other countries. Yet it is precisely international cooperation that could help both in terms of the results achieved and in making Czech local politics more widely recognised internationally, as shown by research (e.g., Jing et al., 2024).²³

Czech local politics is a highly interdisciplinary field, examined from a variety of perspectives. It is not limited to typical political science topics such as analyses of election results or voter turnout (Maškarinec, 2015), coalition governance (e.g., Balík, 2008 & 2017; Charvátová, 2020; Škvrňák, 2024), independent candidates - a phenomenon typical of the Czech local level (e.g., Kostelecký et al., 2024; Zúborová, Zoran & Mlakar 2014), or municipal finance (Masopustová & Jüptner, 2019; Sedmihradská, 2018), but also covers other topics that are closely connected to local politics.

This corresponds to the fact that authors focusing on Czech local politics use a wide range of different keywords. These are not limited to election results, topics related to mayors, municipal finance, or public administration. Authors also address environmental issues, especially municipal waste management (e.g., Radvan, 2016; Soukopová, Hřebíček & Horsák, 2015). They also deal with municipal finance (e.g., Andrlík, Halamová & Formanová, 2021; Janoušková & Sobotovičová, 2019; Kruntorádová, 2013), municipalities' approaches to gambling (e.g., Fiedor et al., 2019; Radvan, 2017), municipal communication (e.g., Hrůzová & Hrůza, 2021; Ryšavý & Dobišová, 2023), inter-municipal cooperation (e.g., Bakoš et al., 2020; Soukopová & Vaceková, 2018), the gender dimension of local governance (Bláha, 2017; Maškarinec & Klimovský, 2017; Maškarinec, Klimovský & Danišová 2018; Maškarinec, 2022 & 2023), or case studies of specific areas, such as municipalities within national parks or military training areas (Klusáček et al., 2020; Musilová, 2016).

There is an inexhaustible number of topics that touch upon local politics in the Czech Republic, and a possible next step for research would be to perform a cluster analysis, as it could effectively capture the trends that have shaped the research. These topics often appear in articles because a given research team secures a grant and subsequently publishes articles funded by that grant. This leads to the publication of several articles on the same topic over a few years, after which the topic is often neglected for a longer period. In the latest research on Czech political science, the authors state that collaboration is common but mostly takes place within the same institution (Celý & Roberts 2025). In local politics, this is clearly evident not only among the research team from the Academy of Sciences but also in practically all workplaces.

The data also supports the argument that Czech political scientists can be divided into two groups. Nationalists, who represent an older cohort oriented toward the domestic environment, and internationalists, representing the younger generation, tend to focus on publishing in English and in WoS (Eberle, Smekal, Ocelík, & Krpec, 2021). At the same time, English-language publications have become significantly more prevalent, while the number of Czech publications has remained minimal in recent years. This means that the older generation either had to adapt or publish less actively.

Finally, it is worthwhile to reflect on the approach taken in this article. It occasionally encountered limitations stemming from the fact that the database

did not include monographs and captured only a subset of articles from the most prestigious databases and Czech journals, a limitation dictated primarily by the enormous amount of time required to compile the database.

The choice to define local politics and the keywords used for the search as broadly as possible proved to be the right one. This ensured a diverse and representative selection of articles, enabling a clearer visualisation of the discipline's development. At the same time, if the database were constructed retrospectively, some of the keywords used in the search would not be included. While *municipal* and *local* appear to be the most important for research, and *mayor* makes sense in the context of municipal governance, others did not occur as frequently.²⁴ In particular, the keyword *communal* proved entirely unnecessary and misleading in the international context, thereby increasing the number of articles that had to be screened. The keywords *rural*, *regional*, and *urban* did appear in some articles, but they also contributed to an inflated number of search results generated in the databases.

The database can undoubtedly be updated in the future, whether with the already mentioned monographs, conference proceedings, book chapters, or articles from other databases such as EBSCO, CEEOL, or ERIH PLUS. Another approach would be to follow the most active authors and their outputs in RIV.²⁵ This would enable a more accurate mapping of the early years of research following the creation of the independent Czech Republic, and focus on the establishment of local politics as a subdiscipline of political science. Furthermore, future research should monitor the transition to Open Access publishing, which is increasingly required by national funding agencies. In addition to these expansions, the authors plan to update the database annually, ensuring it serves as a valuable resource for both researchers and students. The complete database is freely available on Zenodo at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23247401>.

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Appendix

Appendix Table 1: Major Political Science Institutions in Czechia and the Year of Foundation

Name of the Institution	City	Year of foundation
Department of Politics, Faculty of International Relations, Prague University of Economics and Business	Prague	1989
Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University	Brno	1990
International Institute of Political Science, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University	Brno	1990
Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts, Charles University	Prague	1990
Institute of Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University in Prague	Prague	1990
Department of Political Science, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences	Prague	1990
Department of Local and Regional Studies, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences	Prague	1990
Department of Politics and European Studies, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc	Olomouc	1990
Department of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen	Pilsen	2000
Department of International Relations and European Studies of the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University	Brno	2002
Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts, University of Hradec Králové	Hradec Králové	2005
Departments of Political Science and Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem	Ústí nad Labem	2006

Sources: The authors' own work based on Šanc 2009.

Appendix Table 2: Analysed Czech journals

Name of the Journal	Publication period	Articles in the database	Analysed issues	Publishing institution
Acta Politologica	2009-2025	34	46	Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University in Prague
Sociologický časopis - Czech Sociological Review	1993-2025	21	189	Institute of Sociology Czech Academy of Sciences
Geografie (Geography)	1990-2025	13	132	Czech Geographical Society
Politologický časopis - Czech Journal of Political Science	1993-2025	12	106	International Institute of Political Science Masaryk University
Politologická revue (Political Science Review)	1993-2021 (final year)	11	57	Czech Political Science Association
Regionální rozvoj mezi teorií a praxí (Regional Development between Theory and Practice)	2012-2025	9	53	Masaryk Institute of Advanced Studies, Czech Technical University in Prague
Středoevropské politické studie (Central European Political Studies)	1999-2018 (final year)	8	76	International Institute of Political Science Masaryk University
Moravian Geographical Reports	1993-2025	6	106	Czech Academy of Sciences, Institute of Geonics
Politics in Central Europe	2005-2025	6	58	Metropolitan University Prague
Politická ekonomie (Political Economy)	1997-2025	3	189	Prague University of Economics and Business.
Socioekonomické a humanitní studie (Socioeconomic and Humanities Studies)	2011-2025	3	30	Ambis University
Contemporary European Studies	2006-2018 (final year)	3	25	Palackého univerzita Olomouc
Sociální studia (Social Studies)	2004-2025	3	66	Masaryk University in Brno
DANUBE	2013-2025	3	51	PRIGO University College
Scientia et Societas	2005-2024 ²⁶	2	70	NEWTON University
Central European Journal of Politics	2015-2025	2	22	Faculty of Arts, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University
Ekonomická revue (Economic Review)	1998-2025	1	56	Faculty of Economics Technical University of Ostrava
Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice	1996-2025	1	62	University of Pardubice
Acta Faculty Filozofické ZČU v Plzni	2009-2022 (final year)	1	42	Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia

ACC Journal (The Academic Coordination Centre in the Euroregion Nisa)	2009-2025	0	48	Technical University of Liberec
Trendy ekonomiky a managementu (Trends in Economics and Management)	2007-2025	0	42	Faculty of Business and Management Brno University of Technology
ALPPI Annual of Language & Politics and Politics of Identity	2007-2016 (final year)	0	11	Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University in Prague
Současná Evropa (Contemporary Europe)	2009-2019 (final year)	0	23	Prague University of Economics and Business
Czech and Slovak Journal of Humanities	2011-2022 (final year)	0	27	Palacký University Olomouc
Central European Papers	2013-2025	0	24	Silesian University Faculty of Public Policies in Opava
Mezinárodní vztahy - Czech Journal of International Relations	1993-2025	0	130	Institute of International Relations in Prague
Rexter (Journal for the study of radicalism, extremism and terrorism)	2009-2017 (final year)	0	17	Center for Security and Strategic Studies
Agricultural Economics (AGRICECON)	1993-2025	0	395	Czech Academy of Agricultural Sciences

Sources: The authors' own work

Endnotes:

- 1 In 1948, the UNESCO conference *Methods in Political Science* was held in Paris. This international meeting defined political science as a scientific discipline and laid the groundwork for the creation of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) one year later.
- 2 The political science association of Czechoslovakia, and later of the Czech Republic, has been considered a member since 1964.
- 3 The Czech Republic covers 78,871 km² and has a population of 10.9 million (Czech Statistical Office, 2024).
- 4 One quarter of these municipalities have fewer than 200 inhabitants. Moreover, 96% of all Czech municipalities have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants (Czech Statistical Office, 2024).
- 5 Moreover, at the last congress of the Czech Political Science Association, Local Politics formed one of eight panels, which illustrates its importance and also the interest of local political scientists. Other panels included Central European Politics, Policy Analysis, Conflicts and Terrorism, Czech Politics, Public Policies and Contemporary Challenges, Politics in Europe, and Elections and Political Communication.
- 6 Municipalities with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants predominate, for example, in the following countries: Mongolia (over 50%), Germany (54%), Austria (55%), Switzerland (61%), Canada (68%), USA (69%), Spain (72%), Hungary (76%), Slovakia (85%), and France (86%) (OECD, 2021).
- 7 By participating in editorial boards of prestigious journals and book series, and review panels for international grants.
- 8 Publications indexed in these databases count among the criteria used in the evaluation of research in the Czech Republic, for example, when fulfilling the output requirements of grant projects. It is, therefore, a logical step to monitor publications specifically in these two databases. Articles from the Emerging Sources Citation Index are also included in the database as indexed in WoS.
- 9 The asterisk (*) is used so that queries retrieve all inflected and derived forms of a keyword stem (e.g., 'municipal' → 'municipality' or 'municipalities').
- 10 Although Slovak is not officially the second official language of the Czech Republic, it has a privileged status thanks to the countries' shared history. For example, it can be used in government offices without the need for translation.
- 11 For better visualisation, the graph displays data from 2000 onwards, as the preceding period contained only four entries.
- 12 An example is the merging of the keywords 'Czech Republic' and 'the Czech Republic'.
- 13 For example, the compound term 'local elections' was split into 'local' and 'election'.
- 14 In the case of a journal that is still active, the year 2025 is given as its numerical endpoint.
- 15 The graph visualises the period from 2003 onwards, as only three articles were identified in Czech journals between 1993 and 2002 (specifically in the *Czech Sociological Review* in 1993 and 1997, and *Moravian Geographical Reports* in 2001).
- 16 These are the journals *DANUBE* and *Central European Papers*. During the period under review, five articles on Czech local politics were published in them.
- 17 Author-provided keywords were unavailable for several, especially older, publications. Consequently, these entries were excluded from the visualisation, resulting in a slightly smaller sample size compared to the full database.
- 18 The total number of authors is slightly overestimated. In the database, some female researchers who changed their surname after marriage are listed as two different authors.
- 19 An article with no co-author listed.
- 20 It should be noted that although, for example, Jana Soukopová often publishes as part of an authorship team, she is usually listed as the first author of the article.
- 21 As shown, for example, by Holzer and Pšejka (2003 & 2007).
- 22 This figure may be slightly skewed, as the database does not directly indicate the nationality of individual authors. It is deducted solely from their names.
- 23 Indeed, one of the reasons for writing this article was to introduce this topic to foreign scholars.

- 24 As shown in the heatmap of author keywords in local politics articles on page 78.
- 25 As already mentioned in the methodology section, this is a publicly accessible database containing information on outputs achieved in the course of research activities in the Czech Republic since 2008.
- 26 There have been no new articles on the website since 2024, even though the journal has not officially stopped publishing.