ABSTRACT

habilitační práce / habilitation thesis

**Ženy a lokální politika: komunální volby v České republice v letech 1994–2018
z pohledu politické reprezentace žen**

**Women and Local Politics: Women's Political Representation in the Czech Republic's
Local Elections, 1994–2018**

Mgr. Pavel Maškarinec, Ph.D.

The thesis deals with an analysis of the determinants of women's descriptive representation on local councils of all Czech municipalities in the time period from the first municipal election after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1994 to the most recent municipal election of 2018. Our analysis of aggregate data yielded the spatial patterns of women's descriptive representation in each election, as well as changes to those patterns between elections, and reviewed associations between levels of women's political representation on individual local councils and selected characteristics of their municipalities and local populations.

The goals of the thesis have shaped the structure of its text, which is divided into four main sections. The theory section (Chapter 2) presents the factors that may influence the variability of women's descriptive representation in municipal elections. Since women's political representation at local level remains under-researched to date, the theory section builds not only on studies that examined women's participation in local political processes but also ones that looked at other levels of governance (national, regional). The theoretical framework of the work was grounded in the assumption that some variables from three groups of factors influencing women's descriptive representation (socioeconomic, cultural, political-institutional factors) give rise to a political opportunity structure which shapes women's success in their struggle for seats on local councils – and which is shaped by a combination of different levels of office desirability, local political contexts and previous officeholder's experience, i.e. both institutional and contextual factors.

The following methods section (Chapter 3) presented the methods of choice, including the temporal and spatial delimitation of the research field and justification of the choice of independent variables. It provided a more detailed account of the different techniques of exploratory spatial data analysis (ESDA) that help us address issues that arise when examining spatial data: (1) Moran's I statistic that describes the global level of spatial clustering (autocorrelation) of the phenomena analysed; (2) local indicators of spatial association (LISA) that provide a cartographic depiction of areas with different qualities of spatial autocorrelation, both in the univariate version, that helps us identify the spatial clustering of women's political

representation in one election, and in the bivariate version, which allows us to study how women's political representation shifts between municipalities from one election to the following one; (3) spatial regression as a method that can counter the effects of spatial structure in the data set and the contamination of error terms with spatial autocorrelation.

The goal of the following section (Chapter 4) was to analyse the importance of the spatial portion of women's descriptive representation in Czech municipal elections. Local analysis based on LISA revealed that women's descriptive representation is a relatively strongly uniform phenomenon that reproduces to highly similar degrees in the different municipalities, especially between pairs of consecutive elections. However, cartographic analysis was unable to identify clearer patterns of women's political representation in space. The LISA analysis only identified minor levels of spatial clustering at local level, whether of positive or negative levels of women's political representation. At the same time, LISA maps (in their univariate as well as bivariate versions) demonstrated that despite different degrees of spatial autocorrelation of women's descriptive representation, the clustering of women's representation in individual municipalities does not undergo major changes between elections.

Therefore, the central conclusion of Chapter 4 was that the level of women's descriptive representation attained in a municipality in a specific election (namely as far back as in the early 1990s in many municipalities) reproduces as a similar or growing level in the following election, rather than shifting (spreading) to surrounding municipalities in the form of a contagion effect. This conclusion suggests that the level of women's political representation is a highly endogenous phenomenon as its reproduction is affected by hidden processes and actors (amongst which a central role is probably played by the selectorate and, more generally, the nomination process) that, nevertheless, exist within the space identified. At the same time, in terms of relatively compact clusters of municipalities with high levels of women's political representation, that space was primarily concentrated north of Prague and in contiguous areas of the Central Bohemian Region and the borderland between the Ústí nad Labem and Liberec Regions. In contrast, stable clusters of municipalities with low success of women existed in parts of western and southern Bohemia and the Vysočina Region.

Finally, Chapter 5 focused on analysing the determinants of women's descriptive representation on Czech local councils through spatial regression, namely a spatial lag model (SLM). The results yielded by this method were compared with those of the frequently used multiple linear regression method (namely the classic ordinary least squares method, OLS) to assess the potentials and limitations of both approaches. The OLS–SLM comparison confirmed better results for the parameters of the spatial regression models, compared to the OLS models.

However, subject to a single exception, the direction of the effects of the variables did not change, and therefore, we were not obliged to apply a different interpretive framework to the relationships found. Similarly, by mapping the regression residuals and checking for clusters of similar values, we demonstrated that the relationships examined can be deemed relatively stationary across the entire territory of interest. Therefore, since the global relationship is applicable to most of the territory of interest, traditional statistical techniques can still shed light on the determinants of women's political representation in Czech municipalities. At the same time, spatial techniques of data analysis should be expected to grow in importance if a considerable growth of regional disparities occurs in future.

Overall, the analysis of the determinants of women's political representation in Czech municipalities brought some findings that are not entirely in line with evidence from traditional democracies. Level of women's representation in previous electoral term clearly proved to be the strongest determinant of women's representation in Czech municipalities. However, in the case of the gradual change in the effect of women's higher representation on regional assemblies to the expected (positive) direction, the working hypothesis can be formulated (while recognizing the very weak effect of the variable) that the change of the relationship into a positive one is associated with the typology of political careers. Nevertheless, in this regard, the gradual transition of a part of local councillors to the regional level suggests that it is rather the local level (whether stronger experience with women's participation in local politics is exhibited by voters on the demand side or by political entities on the supply side) that influences the level of women's political representation at the higher (regional) level, not vice versa.

However, whereas the positive effects of the former two variables are mostly supported by international evidence as well, the effect of the size variable (local population) on a number of aspects of Czech local politics not only changed but also mostly worked in the negative direction, i.e. contrary to the findings of most foreign studies. The negative effect of municipality size can also explain the negative effect of competitiveness because the latter (measured as the number of candidates per councillor seat) is, logically, higher in more populous municipalities, suggesting that women generally prefer rather non-competitive environments and their willingness to run in the electoral race decreases with growing competitiveness. At the same time, the negative effects of municipality size and competitiveness can be related to office desirability because men's willingness to run in (not only) local elections can be expected to grow in environments where the office at stake is more prestigious and councillors have more decision-making powers – something consistently seen more often in more populous Czech municipalities with their much larger budgets.

Overall, the negative effects of both variables were also demonstrated by the pooled regression model for the 2002–2018 municipal elections. However, a closer inspection revealed that it is not entirely correct to pool several consecutive elections in a single regression model. This is because descriptive analysis showed that the Czech Republic is not quite in conformity with the general finding that there is a negative linear relationship between municipality size and levels of women's descriptive representation. Pooled regression models for different municipality size categories provided a relatively clear indication that the negative relationship between size and women's representation is not universal. At the same time, previous women's representation does not exhibit constant effects across all municipality size groups.

Growing local population had a positive effect on women's success not only in the smallest municipalities (under 150 inhabitants) but also in ones bordering on the category of towns (1001–2000 inhabitants) up to medium-sized cities of 15,001–40,000 inhabitants. It is precisely this varying effect of municipality size on women's representation across the different municipality size categories that might be responsible for the generally weak role of that variable in the regression models' explanatory power. Thus, our findings largely support the fact that the study of women's political representation must take into account the varying degrees of politicisation of Czech local systems and the different effects electoral systems have in municipalities of different sizes.

With regard to the effects of control variables, which are generally weak, we find that women are more successful in less populous municipalities with fewer people working in the primary economic sector, fewer Catholics, higher unemployment, predominantly leftist local electorates, and shorter commutes to their respective regional centres. At the same time, some of these variables may also serve as indicators of (socioeconomically) peripheral areas. More specifically, an area north of Prague that included a vast territory at the borderland of Central, north-western and north-eastern Bohemia c

ombined higher levels of women's success with smaller proportions of college graduates and higher unemployment levels. At the same time, these areas had lower levels of employment in the primary sector. Rather than rural municipalities with low diversity of job opportunities (i.e. where most workers only have access to agricultural jobs), these were municipalities with high proportions of inhabitants who do live in the countryside but work in cities, whether in industrial (secondary sector) or service (tertiary) sector jobs. This is also demonstrated by the fact that women's success in these municipalities decreases with growing distance from the regional centre. However, this area includes municipalities with higher levels of employment

both in the tertiary sector (a ring surrounding the capital city of Prague, except the south and the east, plus western parts of the Ústí nad Labem Region, especially the regional capital and its suburbs) and in the secondary sector (municipalities in the borderland between the Ústí nad Labem and Liberec Regions and, to a lesser extent, in the north of the Central Bohemian Region), i.e. territories with both peripheral municipalities at risk of high unemployment and social exclusion and ones located in or on the outskirts of the Prague metropolitan area. At the same time, these results suggest that the transformation of the job opportunity structure in this territory (the decline of secondary sector jobs), along with growing unemployment and the need to commute for work (whether in the secondary or the tertiary sectors), contribute to the weakening desirability of councillor offices among men, whether due to lack of time (job commute) or the limited resources managed by local councils (due to worse socioeconomic conditions), which makes men more willing to vacate those offices in favour of women.

Finally, it was precisely the separate examination of each municipality size category that revealed that it is likely impossible to find a single common model to explain the determinants of women's representation in all Czech municipalities. This was demonstrated by the pooled regression model for the largest cities (with local populations over 40 thousand), in which previous women's representation in the given municipality was not the strongest variable – instead, women's representation in those largest cities was considerably influenced by both municipality size (negatively) and competitiveness (positively) as well as by most control variables. This was reflected in the fact that the explained variance of the dependent variable was (only in this model of all those presented) strongly influenced by both political opportunity structure and control variables. This finding once again supports the claim by some authors that the study of Czech local politics and various aspects thereof should take into account the divergent functional models of local political systems that are determined precisely by municipality size and by different ways of functioning of electoral systems in municipalities of different sizes.