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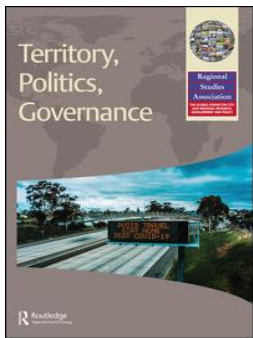
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Nativist with(out) a cause: a geographical analysis of the populist radical right in the 2017 and 2021 Czech parliamentary elections

Jonáš Suchánek ^a and Jiří Hasman ^a

ABSTRACT

Although there has been a considerable amount of new research examining the recent upsurge of populist radical right parties, Central and Eastern European countries remain understudied, and the importance of geographical context and spatial scales are often overlooked in the field of political science. This leads to limited understanding of contemporary nativist manifestations across diverse European environments. Our study partially fills these gaps by analysing the main Czech populist radical right party, Freedom and Direct Democracy. To further elaborate upon various contextual effects, spatial processes and spatial non-stationarity of data, we compare the results of four statistical methods (OLS, LISA, GWR, MGWR). Accordingly, we demonstrate the limitations of global models and the added value of employing multiscale and geographically weighted models. Although various relationships between analysed variables that drive nativist manifestations across Czech regions are identified and discussed, we conclude that the most vital factor regarding populist radical right voting in Czechia is education followed by religiosity.

KEYWORDS

electoral geography; far right; geographically weighted regression; multiscale; nativism; populism

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2015 and 2016 the political climate in Europe experienced a shift as the topic of immigration became dominant throughout political and media discourse. Populist radical right parties (PRRPs) across Europe, such as Fidesz in Hungary, Lega Nord in Italy and the Sweden Democrats, started to capitalize on strong anti-immigrant rhetoric, reached their electoral peak and grew their membership considerably (Rydgren, 2018). Immigration also played a key role during the Brexit referendum (Carreras et al., 2019; Hobolt, 2016) and the 2016 US presidential election (Waldinger, 2018; Winders, 2016). The so-called refugee crisis essentially started a new wave of studies focusing on the effects of immigration on various topics, including elections in different countries and regions of Europe. Numerous studies focused on attitudes towards immigrants and immigration before the immigration wave occurred (e.g., Harmon, 2018; Lubbers &

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This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

Coenders, 2017; Mayda, 2006; Meuleman et al., 2009), and a growing number of studies analyse the impact of the refugee wave on elections (e.g., Dinas et al., 2019; Vasilakis, 2017).

However, most research is focused on Western European countries that have been exposed to immigration from culturally distant regions for a longer period of time (see also Dustmann et al., 2019; Halla et al., 2017; Otto & Steinhardt, 2014; Steinmayr, 2016) and PRRPs in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) remain understudied (for notable exceptions, see Bustikova, 2018, 2020; Santana et al., 2020), notwithstanding that the upswing of the radical right in CEE has been considerable. Lizotte (2019) calls for the need to study populism contextually as current geographical work on right-wing populism is rather scant, episodic and focused predominantly on highly visible manifestations of contemporary populist movements (e.g., Brexit and Donald Trump's victory in 2016), thus omitting the majority of populist upsurge events. Accordingly, this study partially fills this gap by presenting a profound insight into the geography of a recently successful PRRP in the CEE region. Specifically, we focus on the main PRRP in Czechia – Freedom and Direct Democracy – Tomio Okamura (SPD), which was founded in 2015. The primary goal is to explore the effect of spatial context on the relationship between selected socio-economic, demographic and geographical attributes and support for SPD, and whether these findings are in line with previous research mainly focused on Western Europe.

Spatial voting patterns play a considerable role in the increasingly territorialized populist discourse (Agnew & Shin, 2017), thus, to better understand contemporary PRRPs, the spatial context of these movements needs to be extensively analysed. However, Teney (2012) describes a common limitation of both national and cross-national empirical literature that mostly explores only the global effects of given variables, thus neglecting the possible benefit of spatially weighting the studied units. To tackle this issue, we first employ a multilinear regression analysis at a very detailed level of municipalities combined with spatial autocorrelation methods for investigating possible spatial clustering of regression residuals. Second, we enhance the global model by using geographically weighted regression (GWR). Third, we decided also to use a recent and promising multiscale geographically weighted regression (MGWR) analysis (Fotheringham et al., 2017). Unlike GWR, MGWR effectively allows different processes to manifest at different scales (i.e., local, regional, global) by generating unique bandwidths for each covariate by relaxing the assumption that all spatial processes operate at the same spatial scale (Cupido et al., 2021; Fotheringham & Sachdeva, 2022). Scales are one of the most important topics in geographical information science yet measuring how different processes operate over spatial scales remains rather overlooked (Fotheringham et al., 2017). Accordingly, GWRs allow us to demonstrate that the effects of space are continuous and, most importantly, to investigate potential regional variations in the effects of explanatory variables.

In Czechia, this could prove crucial for additional, comprehensive research in certain areas, for it essentially challenges the nationalization thesis concluded by many studies of the Czech electorate (cf. Bernard et al., 2014; Lyons & Linek, 2010). For instance, Havlík and Voda (2016) analysed the relevance of social cleavages in Czechia for the protest populist parties during the 2010 and 2013 parliamentary elections. They claim that electoral support for established parties is explainable in a framework of social cleavages and that the 'electoral support for new protest/populist parties is practically independent of the socio-demographic characteristics of the areas under study' (p. 138). This poses a crucial premise for our study, as the Czech SPD party was a new populist (and nativist) party that participated in its first parliamentary elections in 2017 and to our knowledge, has not yet been studied in such detail. Moreover, the 2021 parliamentary elections are analysed here as well to provide for thorough analyses and comparisons after a four-year period.

From the conceptual perspective, the labelling of contemporary parties in Europe that strongly oppose immigration is rather inconsistent (Arzheimer, 2016). According to Mudde (2012), core ideological features of radical right parties consist of nativism, populism and authoritarianism, whilst nativism, specifically, is what differentiates SPD from other Czech populist or

Eurosceptic parties (Rooduijn et al., 2019). With regards to the relatively fragmented literature nexus examining anti-immigrant parties, we argue that *nativism* offers an unambiguous fit (not replacement) in analysing electoral support for contemporary political parties that seek to protect a given *nation* from various perceived threats allegedly posed by *non-natives* (see also Betz, 2017; Guia, 2016; Kešić & Duyvendak, 2019).

2. CONTEMPORARY NATIVIST MANIFESTATIONS IN CZECHIA

Before the theoretical and conceptual discussion, we briefly present some Czech immigration history and the nativist political background. In the second half of the 20th century, Czechoslovakia was not only essentially ethnically homogenized (especially after the post-Second World War expulsion of almost 3 million Czechoslovak citizens of German ethnicity living along the German borders), but also virtually locked, with negligible immigration until the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. Czechia then gradually became a transit and eventually an immigration country, particularly after joining the European Union (EU) in 2004 (Drbohlav, 2011), attracting migrants mostly from other CEE countries along with a substantial minority from Vietnam. The immigrant populations are largely concentrated in Prague's metropolitan areas and to a lesser extent in North-West Bohemia, while most of Moravia (the eastern third of the country) has a fairly low number of immigrants. Yet, despite nearly three decades of increasing levels of immigrants, immigration was scarcely mentioned in political and public discourse. It was only after the refugee wave of 2015 that the topic of immigration became important to Czech politics and media (Tkaczyk, 2017). For instance, the last time a PRRP was present in the Czech parliament was in 1996 when the so-called Republicans (SPR-RSČ) managed to sway 8% of voters. SPR-RSČ was the most prominent Czech PRRP of the 1990s and could generally be described as populist, nationalist, Eurosceptic and particularly xenophobic towards the Roma people (e.g., Kopecky & Mudde, 1999; Kreidl & Vlachová, 1999). However, it is important to note that electoral patterns of SPR-RSČ and SPD significantly differ, as SPR-RSČ was mostly successful only in North-West Bohemia whilst SPD managed to sway voters primarily in Moravia (Maškarinec, 2019a). Such radical rhetoric of SPR-RSČ towards the Roma people and other (not necessarily immigrant) groups is not unusual in CEE countries (see Slovak National Party, and later Jobbik in Hungary) and other Czech PRRPs (all of them electorally unsuccessful) also focused mainly on the Roma people in their nativist attitudes in the 2000s (Mudde, 2007). It took nearly two decades for another PRRP party to be elected to the parliament in 2013, yet the successful (6.9%) and strongly populist Dawn of Direct Democracy (led by Tomio Okamura) used neither strong anti-immigration/anti-Muslim stances nor particularly Eurosceptic views in their pre-electoral rhetoric (Havlík & Voda, 2021). Hence, it would arguably be inappropriate to analyse Dawn's 2013 election results along SPD's latter outcomes to rigorously evaluate nativist manifestations in Czechia across time and space. For thorough analyses of Dawn's electoral results, see Havlík and Voda (2016) and Maškarinec (2017, 2019b).

Following the wake of the 2015 refugee wave, the 'elite defying' Okamura left Dawn of Direct Democracy after an internal party coup and established a more radical and heavily nativist party, Freedom and Direct Democracy – or SPD (*Svoboda a přímá demokracie*). In the 2017 national parliamentary elections, SPD became the first PRRP in the Czech Republic's history to score a double-digit outcome (10.64%) and managed to maintain their vote share (9.56%) in 2021 as well (Figure 1). Okamura regularly promotes himself as the *vox populi* and promises to follow a carefully constructed image of the general will of the 'common and morally pure' Czech people. Perhaps paradoxically (for a nativist), Okamura was born in Tokyo to a Japanese father and a Czech mother. Publicly Okamura denies allegations of being xenophobic by saying that he himself has been racially discriminated against and has faced prejudice his whole life (Okamura, 2017). Yet, as the refugee wave emerged, Okamura promptly generalized Muslims as being

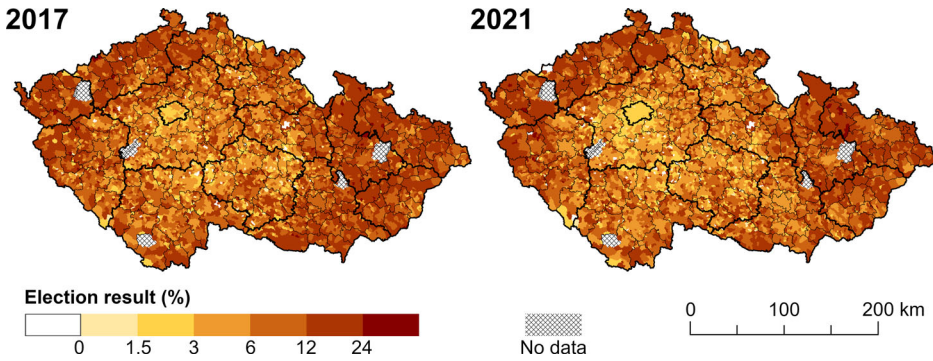


Figure 1. Electoral support for SPD, 2017 and 2021.

homogenous and dangerous: ‘[That] migrant committed a murder because he is Muslim and his faith commands him to murder non-believers’ (Okamura, 2016; translated). Several SPD members are also known to have made astounding comments. For example, SPD’s ex-secretary Jaroslav Staník was denied access to the parliament by a legal court for racist and genocide-praising remarks on the soil of the Czech parliament. Similarly, Miloslav Rozner, a later elected SPD member of the parliament, was given a suspended sentence for publicly denying the existence of a Czech-situated Nazi concentration camp, mostly for Roma people.

By frequently stressing security-related, cultural and socio-economic issues, SPD’s discourse started to exploit radical nationalist elements by lumping both immigrants and refugees, especially Muslims, into one dehumanized category of nation-threatening aliens (Strapáčová & Hloušek, 2018). The SPD party also extensively exerts other nativist-related characteristics: economic isolationism, anti-EU tendencies based on an imagined national sovereignty (see Menon & Wager, 2020), and, as the name of the party suggests, populism. One of Okamura’s proclaimed goals is to broadly implement direct democratic mechanisms into Czech governance (i.e., referendums at various levels and scales or the possibility to recall politicians). Additionally, and in relation to anti-immigration tendencies, a type of welfare chauvinism plays a substantial role in SPD’s official manifestos, which promise broad state social benefits to those ‘who deserve it’. Specifically, SPD claims to provide hard-working people with social benefits on the one hand, but to strictly limit the benefits for ‘unassimilable’ people on the other (Okamura, 2020). The idea of a strong welfare state (for natives only, see Betz, 2019) is common among nativist movements as they push forward the native/non-native axis in defiance of the traditional left–right spectrum (Guia, 2016).

3. CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT PARTIES

As indicated in the introduction, the critical question of our research is *where* PRRPs prevail and why. Accordingly, we turn our attention to facets of electoral geography that explore spatial patterns of voting behaviour and geographical aspects of elections’ organization, processes, and outcomes (Agnew, 1987; Pattie & Johnston, 2000; recently, see, e.g., Bloise et al., 2021).

To fully understand the potential effects of spatial contextual attributes on voting patterns, it is necessary to recognize that ‘there is an unevenness in the spatial distribution of investment, skills, input sources and markets’ (Agnew, 1996, p. 132). These spatial relationships have a major effect on the characteristics of certain regions, be it the specific division of labour, social structures or local politics (Wirth et al., 2016). Nevertheless, most academic work on nativism usually only theorizes about specific intra-regional distinctions, hence rightly identifying the main electoral tendencies of nativist voters and what affects them, but inherently overlooking

the vital spatiotemporal patterns involved (cf. Betz, 2017; Guia, 2016). Rather than assume that voters are altogether determined by their local environment, we consider that they are influenced by the knowledge and resources most readily available to them (Tam Cho et al., 2006, p. 158). Besides, political parties are not passive participants in the electoral arena. Instead, they actively produce and, via their discourse and rhetoric, diffuse messages and raise topics that correspond to their political strategy (Green et al., 2016). The relationship between the sense of threat and voting for anti-immigrant parties is thus bidirectional, mutually reinforcing, and not easy to disentangle (van Leeuwen & Vega, 2021). Parties politicize space, (Shin, 2001) and via this politicization, they strive to ensure a stable support base. In this regard, Czech parties are no exception as their support is often spatially clustered and dependent on place-specific attributes which parties can further politicize (Lysek et al., 2020).

3.1. The contextual effects of group threat and intergroup contact theories

After the so-called ‘refugee crisis’, the topic of migration has undergone a process of politicization and securitization in contemporary political debate (Aydemir, 2022). Since the issue of immigrants’ acceptance can be, and often is, framed territorially, initial spatial differences draw even more attention to PRR and similar parties as their rhetoric usually radiates territorially based narratives (Agnew & Shin, 2017; Dijkstra et al., 2020). In addition, the presence of immigrants in analysed territories presents the most prevalent contextual factor contributing to an increased level of PRRP support (Iglesias-Pascual et al., 2021).

The attitudinal response of natives to increasing immigration in their localities is commonly theorized using one of two conflicting theories: group threat and intergroup contact. The group threat theory might be defined as an ‘anticipation of negative consequences’ (Stephan & Renfro, 2002, p. 197; see also Quillian, 1995; Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010) originating from both the real and perceived presence of immigrants, and it represents a frequently employed hypothesis regarding the regional differences of natives’ anti-immigrant attitudes (Teney, 2012). Contextual variations of the group threat hypothesis in relation to votes for anti-immigrant parties and policies are generally confirmed in several Western European countries (Barone et al., 2016; Dustmann et al., 2019; Halla et al., 2017; Otto & Steinhardt, 2014).

In contrast to the group threat hypothesis, intergroup contact theory holds that ingroups’ attitudes towards different outgroups, including immigrants, improve with direct interpersonal contact between individuals in their immediate environment and due to effects stemming from the wider social contexts characterized by a high occurrence of positive contacts (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Hypothetically, the larger the number of immigrants in a region, the more opportunities for intergroup contacts, which can lead to a reduction of perceived threats and, ultimately, to more positive attitudes (Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010). In summary, and as Green et al. (2016) put it, both threat and intergroup contact effects on radical right voting can, to some degree, be expected.

3.2. Importance of socio-economic and demographic factors

Residential areas with specific socio-economic and demographic attributes often attract people with similar characteristics, attitudes, and lifestyle preferences, which cause certain people to sort into their desired context (van Leeuwen & Vega, 2021). In contrast, some people might feel left behind and/or locked in their (less desirable) context; a situation that can occur both in rural and urban areas (van Leeuwen & Vega, 2021). For instance, there is a clear division of Czech peripheral areas that are characterized by high unemployment, low education levels, a high occurrence of distrains, and an ageing population (Lysek et al., 2020).

Along the same lines, the socio-economic and demographic attributes of PRRP voters are usually relatively stable at both individual and contextual levels, typically including a deprived economic situation, lower education levels, profession of a strong national identity, and fears

associated with social and cultural changes (e.g., Lubbers & Coenders, 2017; Santana et al., 2020). Generally, potential contextual predictors of SPD support were selected based on thorough studies of PRRPs (Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2018) and of attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (O'Rourke & Sinnott, 2006); rather recent studies analysing support for anti-immigrant parties and shares of immigrants in geographical units, mostly focused on Western Europe (Barone et al., 2016; Steinmayr, 2016); and literature on the Czech electoral geography (Bernard et al., 2014; Lysek et al., 2020; Spurná, 2008a).

Education and unemployment are perhaps the most frequently operationalized indicators in the above-mentioned literature and along with previous research we expect higher education levels and lower unemployment in localities to reduce overall support for SPD (see also Teney, 2012). The percentage of judicially ordered distrains of indebted citizens and the share of employers serve as proxies for socio-economically struggling and prospering regions (see Lysek et al., 2020; and Bernard et al., 2014, respectively). The effect of municipality population sizes (or urbanization) has proven to be relevant not only in studies concerned with places that 'lag behind' (Gordon, 2018; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018; Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2021) but also in studies of the impact of migration on voting (Barone et al., 2016; Dustmann et al., 2019). Religiosity is not usually found to be inherently related with either high or low anti-immigration tendencies but rather dependent on the specific context (Arzheimer & Carter, 2009; Dennison & Dražanová, 2018). Generally the values of religious people tend to lean towards conservative ideals, with a positive relation between Christian religiosity and voting for conservative Christian Democrats identified repeatedly (Bernard et al., 2014; Voda & Pink, 2015). As previously stated, the populist radical right SPD is characterized by its strong anti-immigrant stances, therefore the share of immigrants in municipalities is also a variable in this research (see also Otto & Steinhardt, 2014; Teney, 2012). As with the share of religiosity, we anticipate an existing relationship between SPD outcomes and immigration (see also Iglesias-Pascual et al., 2021), yet we are reserved in predicting a specific hypothesized outcome as the relation between immigration and PRR support can vary significantly based on analysed context or used scales (van Wijk et al., 2020).

4. DATA AND METHODS

In the 2017 and 2021 Czech parliamentary elections, 200 deputies were elected for a four-year term to the Czech Chamber of Deputies (lower house of parliament). To limit extensive generalization, the level of municipalities (6347 polygon units with a mean of 797 votes cast) was used representing the most detailed level available on which explanatory variables are obtainable. Despite the vast fragmentation and possible low R^2 values, employing the extensive level of municipalities proves useful in aggregate data analyses studying social phenomena in Czechia (Spurná, 2008b). Accordingly, this study sheds light on geographical relationships and differences in electoral support for SPD, examines in what ways places with a prevailing nativist inclination are specific and points to subsequent research possibilities. Indeed, we cannot comprehensively scrutinize causal relationships between our studied variables because we are analysing aggregate data, and this presents the risk of ecological fallacy (Sayer, 2000). Nevertheless there are no suitable individual-level data available of such magnitude to compensate for this shortcoming.

4.1. Data

The available censuses were for the years 2011 and 2021 and accordingly we tested the 2021 electoral outcomes along the 2021 census. For the 2017 electoral result, we averaged 2011 and 2021 censuses to compensate for the lack of precise 2017 data. The predictor of education is measured as the share of tertiary educated individuals. Religiosity represents all people that declared themselves to be religious; Roman Catholics (and other smaller Christian Churches) represent

virtually all religious people in Czechia, although the number of religious people is overall notably low. Data for immigration (measured as the share of all people with foreign citizenship with long-term residence in Czechia as defined by the Ministry of Interior) and municipality population sizes (logarithmically transformed due to its highly skewed distribution) are representative for the closest month possible to when the elections took place. The share of unemployment is taken as a 36-month average before elections to control for possible short-term fluctuations. The most precise share of distrains to date is from the year 2019 and is employed in both models. The share of employers ultimately had to be removed from both models due to multicollinearity issues. Lastly, the dependent variable, SPD's share of all valid votes in a given municipality, was obtained from the volby.cz portal. See [Table 1](#) for a comprehensive overview of analysed variables and additional information regarding their characteristics.

4.2. Methods

To analyse general relationships, we first employ standard ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis. However, deriving notable outcomes from such 'global' models is limited as the resulting coefficients stem from the average outcome of all localities combined. This approach inherently leaves out the factor of physical proximity between spatial units as a possibly valuable element in the regression analysis. Geographical units are not a priori disconnected from one another as the effect of space is continuous (Fotheringham et al., 2002). The effect of a specific local context can cause spatial non-stationarity, for instance when variables demonstrate polarized effects on electoral support in various locations in systematic clusters (Spurná, 2008a). To measure whether such a situation occurs within our data, we apply spatial autocorrelation methods on standardized OLS regression residuals ([Figure 2](#)).

Using spatial autocorrelation, the weighting matrix of 9381.38 metres was calculated using the Euclidean (fixed) distance method. Comparable spatial weight values (10 km) fit the size of Czech municipalities appropriately (Spurná, 2008b). If high or low values tend to systematically cluster in different localities (indicated by Moran's I), then the spatial autocorrelation is significantly positive, and the existence of spatial non-stationarity must be considered. The following local indicators spatial analysis (LISA) can then detect possible spatial dependence and the existence of clusters in space (Shin & Agnew, 2002).

Given the condition of significant residual clustering, sole global model employment is generally inadequate as it does not detect a spatial non-stationarity. Such a situation can be challenged by using GWR. The location-specific GWR model adds geographical proximity as an additional variable to the regression analysis. Thus, by using geographical coordinates of each

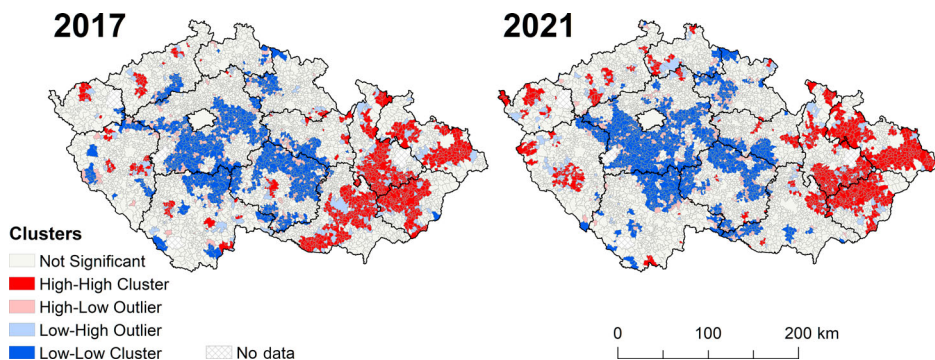


Figure 2. LISA patterns of global model regression residuals clustering, 2017 and 2021.

Note: Readers of the print article can view the figure in colour online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2022.2150287>.

Table 1. Dependent and independent variables.

	2017			2021			Source
	Unweighted mean	Standard deviation	Year	Unweighted mean	Standard deviation	Year	
SPD vote	11.21%	4.57%	2017	10.60%	4.49%	2021	CZSO (2017; 2021b)
Tertiary education	9.99%	4.14%	2011/21	12.32%	5.40%	2021	CZSO (2011; 2021a)
Unemployment	5.09%	2.38%	2014–17	2.91%	1.53%	2018–21	MoLSA (2021)
Distrains	6.81%	5.16%	2019	6.81%	5.16%	2019	Map of distrains (2019)
Religiosity	38.95%	19.54%	2011/21	34.82%	18.53%	2021	CZSO (2011; 2021a)
Municipality size ^a	2.69	0.53	2017	2.70	0.53	2021	CZSO (2011; 2021a)
Immigrants	2.15%	2.89%	2018	2.40%	2.96%	2021	Mol (2021)

Note: ^aLogarithmically transformed.

CZSO, Czech Statistical Office; MoLSA, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; MD, Map of Distrains; Mol, Ministry of the Interior.

unit, GWR provides spatially weighted coefficients based on proximity, where the mutual influence of each unit gradually decays with their distance (Brunsdon et al., 1996; Fotheringham et al., 2002). This approach allows us to indicate where spatial non-stationarity takes place and how the GWR coefficients differ from their global values in such locations. Moreover, to see whether different scales influence the outcomes in any significant way, we also employ a new, promising MGWR analysis. Compared with the classic GWR framework, MGWR is considerably improved by allowing different covariate-specific bandwidths to be optimized for each variable (Fotheringham et al., 2017). Thus, MGWR, unlike the single-bandwidth based GWR, potentially allows us to identify whether different processes operate at global, regional, or local scales (Li & Fotheringham, 2020; Yu et al., 2020).

For both the GWR and MGWR analyses we employed a conventional Gaussian model and the adaptive bi-square kernel type weighting. To make the resulting coefficients comparable, variables were first *z*-standardized. Only coefficients that surpassed the adjusted *t*-value threshold on the 95% level are projected into maps.

5. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In this section we first inspect the global model, spatial autocorrelation, and LISA analysis results. Then we explain the added value of the spatially enhanced GWR and MGWR models. Lastly, we examine our outcomes in more detail concerning the Czech socio-demographic, economic and electoral context.

5.1. Global model results

The global analysis leads to relatively straightforward results. Already in 2017, and as theoretically anticipated, tertiary education plays the most important role by overall lowering the SPD support. This is followed by the share of unemployment that showed a positive effect on the SPD vote. The share of distrains and municipality population sizes also generally increase support for SPD, although these effects are weaker in comparison. However, the remaining variables (religion and immigration) seem to have virtually no effect. The second model (2021) provides for fairly similar outcomes, but with two clear shifts; the impact of education becomes even more dominant and the share of distrains substitutes the role of unemployment as the strongest positive predictor for SPD voting. Moreover, all the remaining variables' coefficients decrease, yet the adjusted R^2 value increases considerably (from 0.082 to 0.138). This leads us to assume that SPD's support is either excessively affected by education and distrains/unemployment and/or that other analysed variables are place-dependent, thus likely 'disguised' in global models.

The spatial autocorrelation analysis on the standardized residuals (at the municipality level) confirms a spatial non-stationarity of data; albeit Moran's *I* (0.176 in 2017 and 0.193 in 2021) is not particularly high given the nature of the Czech settlement structure and number of units analysed. Further utilization of the LISA analysis enabled us to project residual clustering. Figure 2 indicates clustering of municipalities with higher electoral support for SPD than expected by the global model in the eastern part of the country, Moravia and Silesia, whereas many locations in Bohemia (especially around Prague) reported conflicting outcomes. Interestingly, the most extensive positive cluster in Eastern Moravia represents a region from where Okamura was elected to the senate in 2012, pointing to a possible sustained candidate effect (see also Maškarinec, 2019b). These trends are generally valid for both years with the 2021 outcomes also reporting several clusters of high support in Western Bohemia along with losing some territories in Southern Moravia. Further employment of the geographically weighted models is then required to closely inspect these deviations and shed light on the possible relationships between variables in our data due to their spatial non-stationarity and confirmed effect of geographical context on voting.

5.2. GWR models results

A substantial improvement of R^2 values and Akaike's information criterion with sample size correction (AICc) diagnostics (Table 2) proves that GWR provides a considerable enrichment to our analysis. The resulting regression coefficients vary locally and can therefore be mapped for a more illustrative display of GWR outcomes (Figures 3 and 4). Although we cannot precisely compare global beta coefficients with the mean values for geographically weighted coefficients, there are some clear patterns shared across both elections to a certain level – education remains the pivotal variable in our models and its effect increasingly strengthens in the later elections; the effects of unemployment and distrains slightly fade off; strikingly, a remarkable impact of religiosity is revealed; the remaining variables (municipality population sizes and immigrant shares) continue to be rather irrelevant in the GWR model as well.

Religiosity is an attribute that we did not expect to have a great influence on SPD voting due to the secularized nature of most Czech voters. Several scholars (e.g., Bernard et al., 2014; Voda & Pink, 2015) have previously identified significant effects of religiosity in regions exhibiting religion-based affinity towards the Christian Democrats. Yet, our global model initially pointed to no effect at all, although SPD was very popular in many Christian Democrat strongholds in South Moravia. A closer look at the GWR map reveals that significant parts of Moravia and Silesia reported strong negative coefficients. Arguably, the cultural nature of nativism is not built upon identification with Christianity (despite SPD's repeating rhetoric about defending the 'Christian culture' in Europe) but rather on different socio-cultural based values due to the vast prevalence of non-religiosity in Czechia (cf. Kešić & Duyvendak, 2019). Moreover, some clusters of negative coefficients also appeared in West Bohemia – a region with generally low religiosity and low support for the Christian Democrats (Šimon, 2015) but high support for SPD – which is compelling yet difficult to interpret.

In both elections, the effect of tertiary education remains strong and manifest in similar places, although the 2021 results report way more values that are statistically significant (thus revealed in the map), hence confirming the gradually increasing key role of education. The share of distrains also confirms its impact in somewhat similar locations in North-

Table 2. Coefficients of global OLS and GWR models relationship between the SPD outcomes and independent variables.

Analysis	2017		2021	
	OLS	GWR	OLS	GWR
Adjusted R^2	0.082	0.261	0.138	0.332
AICc	17,479	16,397	17,076	15,742
Adjusted critical t -value (95%)	–	3.235	–	3.221
Bandwidth ^a	–	401	–	422
Coefficients	Beta estimate	Mean	Beta estimate	Mean
Tertiary education	–0.171	–0.187	–0.252	–0.250
Unemployment	0.112	0.041	0.081	0.039
Distrains	0.093	0.081	0.147	0.108
Religiosity	–0.008	–0.251	–0.013	0.245
Immigrants	–0.015	0.103	–0.055	0.026
Municipality size	0.088	–0.040	0.067	–0.059

Note: ^aBandwidth outlines the range of units over which data are borrowed.

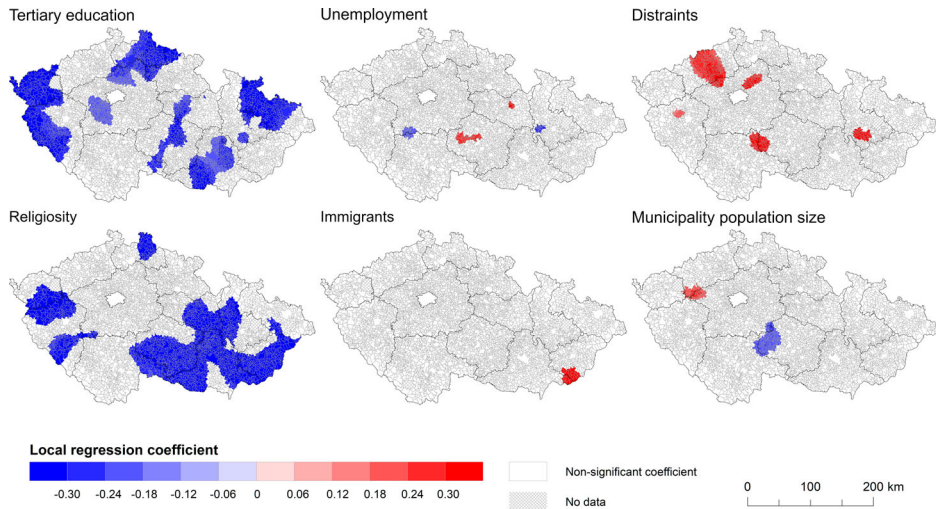


Figure 3. GWR coefficients based on the relationship between SPD voting and independent variables, 2017.

Note: Readers of the print article can view the figure in colour online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2022.2150287>.

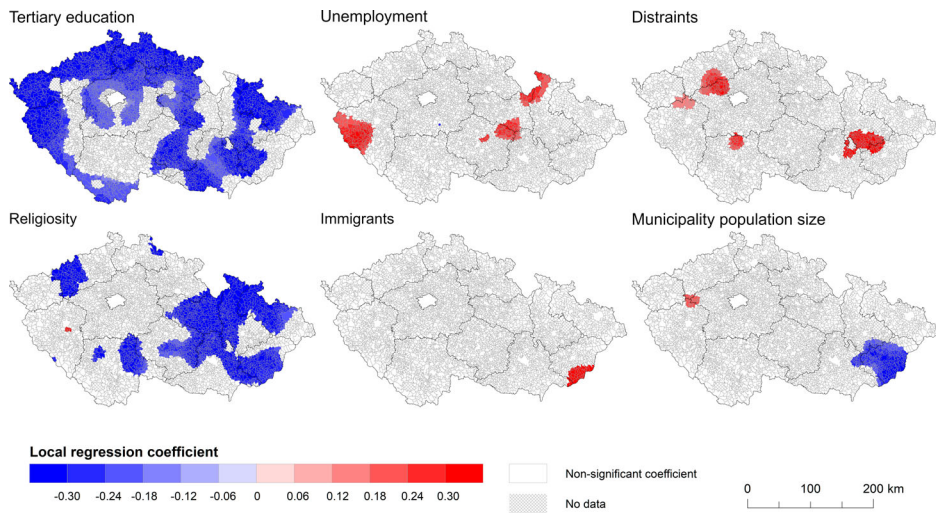


Figure 4. GWR coefficients based on the relationship between SPD voting and independent variables, 2021.

Note: Readers of the print article can view the figure in colour online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2022.2150287>.

West Bohemia and Moravia. Regarding the remaining variables, once geographically weighted, their coefficients result in mostly insignificant and/or unclear outcomes at both levels. This leads us to believe that these attributes are either indeed mostly irrelevant in predicting electoral support for SPD (as likewise suggested by the OLS analysis) or are used at an improper geographical scale/level. To verify either assumption, further employment of the MGWR analysis is required.

5.3. MGWR models results

Simply put, the MGWR method takes geographical weighting a step further, leading to additional R^2 and AICc improvements over the previous model. Each independent variable has its own bandwidth assigned first, even more accurately rendering the outcoming coefficients (Figures 5 and 6). Covariate-specific bandwidths are indicative of the spatial scale over which

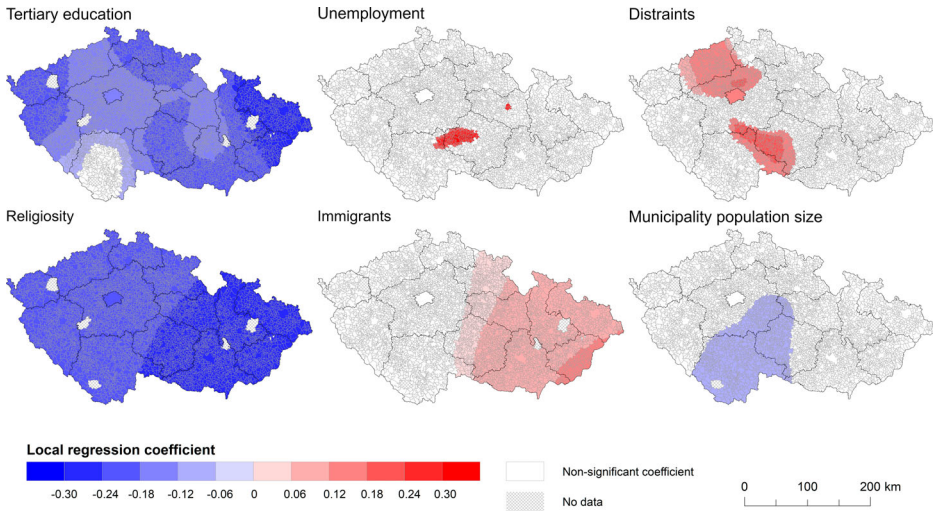


Figure 5. MGWR coefficients based on the relationship between SPD voting and independent variables, 2017.

Note: Readers of the print article can view the figure in colour online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2022.2150287>.

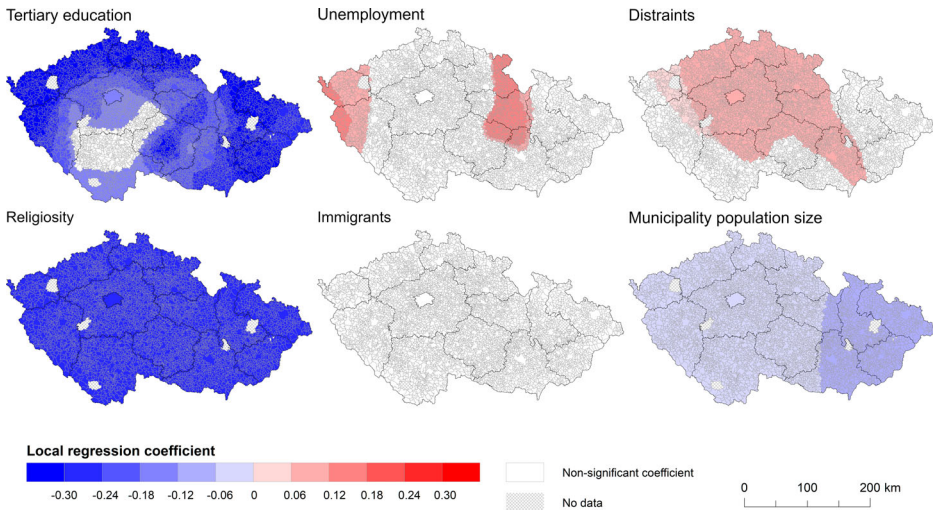


Figure 6. MGWR coefficients based on the relationship between SPD voting and independent variables, 2021.

Note: Readers of the print article can view the figure in colour online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2022.2150287>.

Table 3. Coefficients of MGWR models relationship between the SPD outcomes and independent variables.

	Coefficient (mean)	Bandwidth^a	Adjusted critical t-value (95%)	Monte Carlo^a
Year			2017	
Adjusted R^2			0.268	
AICc			16,275	
Tertiary education	-0.180	1616	2.738	0.004
Unemployment	0.055	376	3.231	0.062
Distraints	0.087	911	2.960	0.186
Religiosity	-0.235	4222	2.241	0.050
Immigrants	0.058	4558	2.329	0.005
Municipality size	-0.045	2440	2.651	0.110
Year			2021	
Adjusted R^2			0.339	
AICc			15,583	
Tertiary education	-0.243	632	3.074	< 0.001
Unemployment	0.046	1274	2.865	0.243
Distraints	0.076	2889	2.574	0.550
Religiosity	-0.251	6346	2.032	0.937
Immigrants	0.011	6340	2.093	0.351
Municipality size	-0.051	5729	2.257	0.346

Note: ^aRepresents p-values for the Monte Carlo test for spatial variability.

processes vary, where smaller bandwidths reveal more local processes (Fotheringham & Sachdeva, 2022). Accordingly, the greater the bandwidth, the less local-specific the process (see Table 3 for bandwidths of each covariate).

The effect of tertiary education and religiosity remained dominant as they generated a uniform, almost nationwide, strong regression direction. Interestingly, a clear divide between Bohemia and Moravia can be observed in 2017 regarding religiosity coefficients, while the effect of religiosity is spatially uniform in 2021 (see also the Monte Carlo test results). The impact of distrait share in 2017 emerged mostly in outer and inner peripheries, regions prone to long-term structural economic downturns (Bernard & Šimon, 2017). In 2021, the distrait share increased its effect geographically, especially across territories that are not overly prone to vote for SPD. This implies that if there was a higher support for SPD recorded in these localities, it was mostly generated in areas with a higher share of distraints. Rather unexpectedly, the immigrant share exhibited extensive clustering in virtually all of Moravia in 2017. Although the resulting coefficients are not overly strong, the immigrant share also passed the MC test, suggesting that this particular clustering is not attributable to random sampling variation. This leads us to an assumption that actual immigration did indeed play at least a minor role in shaping the electoral outcomes of SPD in 2017. This effect, however, completely vanished in the latter elections as the immigrant share in 2021 displayed no significant results of any kind.

Strikingly, not even the MGWR models can establish a comprehensible effect of unemployment despite initial global model outcomes. The resulting coefficients manifest rather locally in various ‘islands’ of significance virtually unexplainable due to the explorative nature of our analysis. Lastly, the effect of municipality population size was found to be largely significant, although not too strong, in southern parts of the country in 2017 and over the whole country in latter elections due to the bandwidth value inherently rendering a global effect utilization. This points to an overall assessment that the SPD support stemmed from smaller, particularly more peripheral, municipalities where the coefficients are higher. In summary, tertiary education seems to be the most intelligible and strongest predictor of the SPD electoral support when compared with other factors.

6. DISCUSSION

We build this chapter mainly upon the MGWR results (Figures 5 and 6). Compared with the global and GWR models, MGWR proves to be the most accurate (at least in terms of R^2 and AICc) and somewhat more forgiving regarding significance issues. Several coherent relationships between the SPD vote and independent variables were identified. The share of tertiary education (see Iglesias-Pascual et al., 2021; van Wijk et al., 2020) and, to some extent, distrains (see also Pileček, 2021) are fairly clear and generally in line with previous research. Next, the substantial role of religiosity was rather surprising given the fact that religiosity was not initially anticipated as being salient in relation to SPD voting. This could be partially explained by religiosity commonly being dependent on partisan affinity (Bernard et al., 2014; Voda & Pink, 2015), and SPD is still rather a new political subject emphasizing primarily immigration restrictions, a topic quite novel to Czech voters. This brings us to the previously discussed intergroup contact and group threat concepts. Out of six models in total, only the 2017 MGWR model indicated considerable clustering of positive coefficients, suggesting the group threat concept possibly plays a role in the eastern half of the country. Scholars analysing the relationship between actual immigration and support for anti-immigrant parties have previously confirmed (e.g., Halla et al., 2017; Otto & Steinhardt, 2014; Vasilakis, 2017) and equally rejected (e.g., Bahna & Zagraban, 2020; Steinmayr, 2016; Teney, 2012) variations of the group threat hypothesis. Such ambivalence of prior research and inconsistent results in our models make us hesitant to convincingly confirm or reject any variation of either the group threat or intergroup contact theory, especially given the 2021 MGWR results, where the potential group threat effect fades off entirely. Potentially, the apparent difference between 2017 and 2021 MGWR models could be resulting from immigration not being a key topic for political parties in 2021 when compared with 2017. Needless to say, the ambiguity of the immigrant share results might also be partially caused by the overall small number of immigrants (particularly outside of Prague’s metropolitan area) entering the analysis in comparison with Western European countries (Přidalová & Hasman, 2018).

Outcomes stemming from the share of unemployment are perhaps the trickiest to interpret. Although the global models initially showed solid signs of a positive effect of unemployment on SPD voting, once we geographically weight our model and project significant coefficients on a map, the effect is virtually non-existent or very unclear. Notably, given a situation where we would only use global models, we would likely attribute PRR support predominantly to socio-economic variables (education, unemployment, distrains), hence overestimating the impact of unemployment and simultaneously ignoring the potential role of immigration (in 2017), municipality population sizes, and especially religiosity; with some of this also being applicable to the regular GWR models. This is what showcases the role of geography – using facets of space both horizontally (geographical weighting) and vertically (bandwidths) leading to more caution in evaluating results.

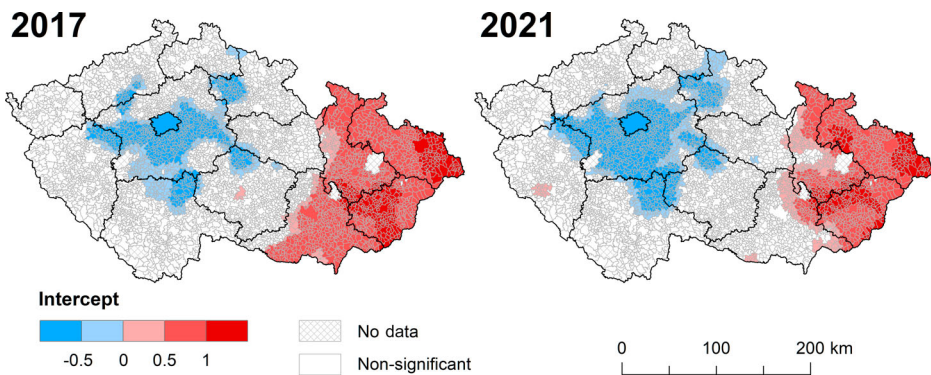


Figure 7. Significant local parameter estimates from the intercept of the MGWR model, 2017 and 2021.

Note: Readers of the print article can view the figure in colour online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2022.2150287>.

Moving back to the bigger picture, the LISA analysis of global coefficient residuals (Figure 2) showed relatively strong spatial non-stationarity of data with substantial parts of Czechia reporting either higher or lower electoral support unexplainable by the model: with most of Bohemia (except for some western parts) largely exhibiting negative clusters of SPD support whereas Moravia and Silesia manifested heavy positive clustering. This trend is also firmly supported by significant local parameter estimates from the intercept of the MGWR model (Figure 7) (see also Cupido et al., 2021). This map illustrates spatial clustering of SPD support that are present if all the explanatory variables in the model are rendered constant. Accordingly, we have identified that support for SPD is significantly higher in the eastern part of the country, whereas there is lower support for the SPD in areas around Prague and substantial parts of central Bohemia and some neighbouring regions. Notably, SPD loses sizeable regions of high support in Southern Moravia by 2021 and on the contrary, areas of low support, mostly in Central Bohemia, considerably strengthen and extend spatially. Such spatial clustering, besides the standard imperfections of the regression model itself, might be caused by various factors: local context specifics (e.g., the candidate and campaign effect, previous voting patterns and historical–geographical aspects, or micro-scale differences within one unit of analysis; see Otto & Steinhardt, 2014; Pileček, 2021; and Shin & Agnew, 2002, respectively) and by factors elusive to such large-scale analyses due to the lack of usable data (e.g., the immediate social environment of voters and their anecdotal experience, the influence of social media etc., see Puschmann et al., 2020; Steinmayr, 2016 respectively). This trend could potentially be explored more in further study.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This study contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, by comprehensively analysing the electoral outcomes of the Czech SPD we generally advance the knowledge on PRRPs in CEE, which is understudied when compared with the current nexus of research conducted in Western Europe (Mudde, 2017; Santana et al., 2020). Second, we have confirmed a substantial role of spatial context and different bandwidths utilization (see also Fotheringham et al., 2017; Cupido et al., 2021); although specific patterns between various methods sometimes proved to be challenging to assess. In this case study, this generally points to global models potentially either underestimating/overestimating covariates generating SPD support across different regions or neglecting some of them overall.

Our findings indicate that in the 2017 and 2021 parliamentary elections, SPD support was significantly lower in municipalities with high levels of tertiary education and religiosity virtually across the whole country. Additionally, SPD tends to be generally more popular in smaller municipalities within more peripheral areas and its support was also partially driven by the share of distrains. The role of unemployment proved to be rather unclear as its positive effect manifested only in the global model. However, numerous studies have previously found unemployment to be unrelated to PRR support (or anti-immigrant sentiment) (Bustikova, 2014; Daigle et al., 2019; Vasilakis, 2017). With regards to the share of immigration, although this was theoretically anticipated (cf. Barone et al., 2016; Harmon, 2018; Iglesias-Pascual et al., 2021), as discussed in previous chapter, we find it difficult to assess a clear effect of immigration on SPD outcomes apart from the MGWR 2017 model. Therefore, we incline overall to an assumption that SPD support was driven mainly by sociodemographic attributes (predominantly by education) rather than by active nativist-based competition between natives and immigrants. This being said, the perceived (imagined) variation of a group threat might be highly influential among SPD voters. It is necessary to note, however, that all of these extensive analyses are more exploratory than explanatory, as we cannot rigorously examine causal relationships between identified associations since we are limited by using aggregate data and accordingly, we must stay clear of heavy inductive reasonings (i.e., facing ecological fallacy issues, see Spurná, 2008a). Models stemming from exploratory data analyses are more suited to suggest hypotheses or to examine the presence of outliers (i.e., pointing to areas of possible research interest) than to confirm them rigorously (Fotheringham et al., 2000). Clearly, the complexity of anyone's electoral behaviour goes beyond spatiotemporal patterns and in order to validate and understand our findings, further research is required. Such subsequent research could employ additional quantitative and/or qualitative methods and focus on rigorously chosen localities based upon previous outcomes in order (1) to establish credible evidence to verify prior findings and (2) to further explore latent mechanisms and causal associations behind recognized spatial patterns.

With respect to the specific Czech context, previous studies characterized the Czech party system as largely nationalized (Kouba, 2007), one-dimensional along the economic cleavage (Bértoa, 2014), and of having 'populist rotation' voting patterns (Havlík & Voda, 2016). Our outcomes show that while some of these previously identified aspects remain relevant, there are clear challenges in evaluating electoral data by using global models. We have demonstrated that SPD has established itself as a relatively stable and electorally successful PRRP, whose electoral support is clearly dependent on certain socio-demographic characteristics of the areas under study and its specific electoral patterns do not show convincing evidence of 'populist rotation' despite SPD's previous connection to Dawn. Nonetheless, we have likewise generally confirmed considerable nationalization (see also Lyons & Linek, 2010) of most variables (education, religiosity, municipality population sizes and to some extent distrains), and whilst their effect is not precisely nationwide and different variables operate at different spatial scales, they are uniform in regression direction.

In summary, we argue that analysing spatial data through global scale modelling is insufficient in explaining the role of contextual factors in voting behaviour (see also Lepič, 2017; Teney, 2012). Global models might provide for satisfactory results, but they do not take the proximity and scales/levels of analysed units into account, consequently ignoring plausible shortcomings such as spatial non-stationarity of data or the modifiable areal unit problem (Fotheringham & Sachdeva, 2022; Wong, 2009). To tackle these limitations and identify at what scales different processes operate, we employed the new and promising MGWR analysis which provides covariate-specific optimized bandwidths along the standard spatial weighting of units (Fotheringham et al., 2017). The added value of (multiscale) geographically weighted methods are clear and perhaps more focus should be placed upon rigorous context utilizations. If we wish to understand the driving forces behind contemporary populist nativist movements in the CEE region and beyond,

more comparative and extensive analyses need to be conducted alongside intensive research. Accordingly, this paper demonstrates advantages and challenges of various exploratory data analyses, but most importantly the added value and opportunities for the study of nativist manifestations across space and time from the perspective of electoral geography.

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