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# **ANALYSIS OF LEGISLATIVE COALITIONS IN THE CITY ASSEMBLIES OF REGIONAL CAPITALS AFTER THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS OF 2018 IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC<sup>1</sup>**

**Jan Hájek\***

## **ABSTRACT**

The main purpose of this work was to analyse coalition practices in the city assemblies of regional capitals in the Czech Republic following the last municipal elections in 2018. The presented research aimed to analyse and described in detail the inner dynamics of the formation of party alliances at the local level, in this case represented by thirteen regional capitals and their city assemblies. General research found that there is a discrepancy between the theoretical assumptions of the theory of political coalitions and the coalition practice applied in the environment of the city assemblies of regional. The introduction of this article is followed by a part describing the methods of research, continues with theoretical part which focuses on the genesis of the theory of coalition and its outputs in the form of coalition typologies. Then we get to the analytical part that dealing with the application the theory of political coalitions to second order elections (local elections in the Czech Republic). The final part of the article contains a summary of coalition practice in the regional capitals in the Czech Republic and conclusion of this survey. The research proved that “deviant” coalitions must be regarded as a relevant alternative of minimal winning coalitions (primarily surplus majority coalitions are a frequent coalition type in city assemblies of regional capitals after the municipal elections 2018). It seems the political coalitions and alliances of local dimension are formed by specific factors, which distinguish coalitions practice in city assemblies of regional capitals from coalitions in the Chamber of Deputies.

**Key words:** coalition, local election, regional capital, city assembly, city council

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## Introduction

The study of executive coalitions has been a standard field of research of political science in the Czech Republic for several decades. Much like abroad, most of the research concentrates on the analysis of parliamentary coalitions aiming to build a legislative majority in the Chamber of Deputies and form a government lead by a prime minister.

In response to this rather conventional focus of previous research, the presented case study aims to analyse coalitions on the lowest level of the political system, in the Czech Republic represented by municipal assemblies. Unlike existing studies, which investigate the topic of communal coalitions in the Czech Republic in great detail,<sup>2</sup> this work narrows its focus upon a sample comprising the thirteen city assemblies of the regional capitals,<sup>3</sup> aiming to describe coalition practice in the political centres of individual Czech regions in the years 2002–2022.<sup>4</sup> The research has two objectives. Firstly, we aim to create a practical overview of coalitions formed in Czech regional capitals, including their composition over a longer time horizon, highlighting long-term development trends of alliance strategies on city assemblies. Secondly, we would like to establish the possible specific features occurring in the formation of local coalitions in the researched cities by comparing them with a similar sample of data from the regional/national level.

The analysis focuses only on large urban agglomerations, whose one shared characteristic is their status as regional capitals, and deliberately ignores medium-sized and small settlements. Despite large size differences between individual samples, caused mainly by including Prague in the research, we chose not to weight the populations of individual regional capitals, and all subjects are treated as equal to preserve the potential diversity of results.

The research is based on the theory of political coalitions whose final form represents a synthesis of the American approach—reflecting especially a mechanistic perspective, focused predominantly on gaining a majority of mandates in a representative body and using this majority to maximize the

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<sup>2</sup> We must mention especially the works of Prof. Stanislav Balík, Dr. Petr Jüptner and Dr. Lenka Strnadová (see the References).

<sup>3</sup> There are fourteen self-governing regions in the Czech Republic, but due to the specific role of Prague, which acts both as a separate region represented by the Prague City Hall, and as the capital of the region of Central Bohemia with its Regional Office, the study sample includes only thirteen regional capitals. In our research, therefore, Prague represents two regions.

<sup>4</sup> Data presented in the tables below refer to the term in office 2018–2022, as of August, 30th, 2020.

number of available executive seats (Riker 1962) and the European point of view—reflecting particularly the ideological background and program proximity of emerging coalitions (Axelrod 1970). Emerging from this theoretical framework comes the research question and its two complementary hypotheses, H1 and H2.

H1: Under the influence of the American tradition of political science, the theory of political coalitions generally predicts a higher frequency of minimal winning coalitions (MWC) compared to alliance alternatives formed by a surplus majority coalition (SMC) or minority number of mandates (minority cabinet, MC). The incidence of these “deviant” coalition alternatives is theoretically explained through the lens of the European tradition.

The basic theoretical premise of the theory of political coalitions assigns a higher relevance to the rational choices of political actors during the formation of political coalitions to maximize the number of executive posts they occupy (Řířhová 2006: 120). On the other hand, ideological distance and other related aspects (focus on one’s political program) are viewed as less relevant. When applying the theory of coalitions to the region of continental Europe and second-order elections for which the theory was not designed, one might doubt the universal applicability of its individual predictions. The author’s personal opinion is that in case of city assemblies governing regional capitals, preferred coalition alternatives will lean towards the “deviant” solutions represented by SMC.

H2: Regardless of the predominance of MWCs and other coalition alternatives, formation of party alliances in the city assemblies of regional capitals is affected by different forces (smaller influence of ideological polarization, specific legislation governing quorum and decision-making in city and municipal assemblies) than similar processes at the highest political level.

The dimensions of second-order elections push the ideological polarization of parties to one side. Besides other things, this is caused by the absence of major topics that could potentially divide subjects at lower levels of the political system, such as foreign policy (Strnadová 2006: 50). Regarding the vertical distribution of power, the Czech political system is characterized by a strong centralization of decision-making power in favour of the political centre, complemented by a long-term reluctance to reinforce the principles of subsidiarity and grant lower political units (regional, city and municipal assemblies) more freedom of action. This makes it more difficult for political parties to find their distinctive values, while simultaneously increasing the probability of the formation of heterogenous coalitions compared to the national level (even coalitions that

nationally would be unthinkable).<sup>5</sup>

For the purpose of this work, it would be redundant to describe individual coalition typologies in detail. We must, however, make a brief mention of **Balík** and his dozens of years' worth of work, particularly the proposed coalition typology first published in his thesis (Balík 2004) and later elaborated in his following texts. While being inspiring and valuable, the presented work reflects upon it only briefly. Our research uses **Balík's** concept when summarizing the basic categorization of coalitions and connected terminology, distinguishing between "category" and "type" of a coalition (Balík 2008). While "category" focuses on the size of a coalition (the least number of members and seats), establishing a specific "type" is based on ideology (i. e. program proximity) of the coalition partners.

This work concentrates mainly on the analysis of election coalitions based on their size as quantified per the number of representative seats. We distinguish between three categories of coalition: minimal winning coalition, surplus coalition and minority coalition.<sup>6</sup> When establishing a specific type of coalition based on ideological distance/proximity of its members, the work diverts from prof. Balík's concept. "Deviant" coalition categories are not included and/or subcategorized. Program distance/proximity is not a point of interest, with the sole criterium being the size of a coalition, depending on the number of mandates and their proportion compared to the opposition. For MWCs, we choose a different approach. This group is subcategorized based on the type of a coalition, defining its mechanical, but particularly ideological form (see Subsection 3.1. below).<sup>7</sup>

To conclude this section, we must make a brief mention of the issue of establishing ideological bonds between political parties on the hypothetical left-right axis, and proceed by marking individual subjects on it. This in itself represents a difficult task, particularly in the conditions of local politics, characterized by a somewhat blurred value profiling of individual political subjects (Eibl, Havlík, Kyloušek, Pink 2009: 128-132). For this reason, the aspect of ideological distance/proximity must be approached very carefully, bearing in mind the lower validity of findings based on this approach for regional capitals. On the

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<sup>5</sup> See the "Bohumín Resolution". Detailed reference in Just 2012: 394.

<sup>6</sup> When assigning a specific category to a coalition, only the proportion of mandates held by it but not the actual number of seats compared to the opposition is relevant. A coalition can be either a minority or a majority one. This approach leads to some paradoxes, where "one-party" councils are also categorized as coalitions.

<sup>7</sup> A figure depicting the proposed coalition typology is included in Section 3. pages 7-10.

other hand, we realize that no coalition analysis should a priori ignore the ideological aspect of research. That is why we introduce an additional parameter of “shared governance” to find out what subjects frequently took seats in city councils of regional capitals alongside each other. This will help us gain a better understanding of prevailing patterns of alliance and willingness of parties to enter a coalition with specific subjects. In local politics, this can be a better approach to determine proximity of coalition actors. The following subsections (3.1, 3.2, 3.3) attempt to describe in detail the defined coalition categories, concentrating on the frequency of their incidence in city assemblies of regional capitals.

## **1. Methods of data analysis**

The analytical methods chosen for this work, including data collection and analysis, will draw mainly upon qualitative methods, complemented by quantitative research. A qualitative perspective is considered more suitable for our comprehensive research of political coalition formation in regional capitals and the specifics thereof. To establish relations between key variables as precisely as possible, findings gained using a quantitative analysis of municipal election results and built coalitions will be used. This will help us acquire better understanding of coalition practice in city assemblies of regional capitals.

The work is based on the principles of diachronic comparative analysis, focusing on the development of chosen parameters (mechanical form of coalitions, affinity of political parties) in time (five municipal election cycles) within a single political system/subsystem (city assemblies of regional capitals), while also using the principles of synchronic comparative analysis, comparing individual phenomena<sup>8</sup> at a single moment in time across the space dimension.

The presented work is an interpretative case study, applying the theory of political coalitions to a specific case to highlight selected phenomena and reveal deeper development tendencies characteristic for the process of formation of city assemblies in regional capitals.

## **2. The theory of political coalitions and typology of coalition governments**

The predictive theory of political coalitions has a relatively long history, dating

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<sup>8</sup> Broken up and non-standard coalitions are not included among the researched phenomena (the number of non-standard coalitions in the given period of time is only briefly mentioned in the final chapter of the work to compare it with the situation in regional assemblies).

back to the fifties. Systematic research of the essence of coalition processes first began in the United States. Following the empirical critical reaction of European researchers to the American concept, another methodological approach was gradually developed, now generally known as the European tradition. Together with the American one, they build the principal theoretical pillars of all systematic research of coalition practice and theory.

Basic principles of the American approach<sup>9</sup> are grounded in the work of the political scientist **William H. Riker** published in 1962 under the title *The Theory of Political Coalitions*. The author applies the game and rational choice theory to the dimension of formation of political coalitions. In Riker's interpretation, political parties are viewed as unitary actors (players) acting primarily upon the concept of rationality. Negotiation on the formation of a coalition government is called strategic competition (game) and its sole aim is to maximize one's share of the executive power (Riker 1962).

Every hypothetical or existing coalition is assessed based on two principal criteria: (a) its effectivity, i.e., its ability to ensure majority in a legislative body (lower chamber of the parliament) for its members and (b) the size of one's gain within the coalition, typically expressed by the number of minister seats (Říchová 2006: 120). If we include these parameters in the calculations of individual actors searching for an optimal coalition partner, coalitions which cost their members the least are viewed as the most rational alternative. Political parties follow the minimax strategy, aiming to win the smallest possible yet sufficient majority in the legislative body, while simultaneously gaining the largest possible representation in the coalition government. **Riker** therefore defines MWC as the most rational alternative, while other coalition alternatives (minority government or surplus coalition) are regarded as deviant (Strnadová 2006: 29).

The European tradition puts a primary emphasis on empirical research. It rejects mathematical theorizing and concentrates on a wide range of aspects, such as political culture, historical tradition and general historical context (Říchová 2006: 121). The approach emphasizes comparative research of the formation, functioning and termination of coalition governments (Cabada 2006: 12).

Collected data on the functioning of specific coalition formations is subsequently generalized and applied to various models of coalition partnership put forward by the European and American tradition. Rejecting the purely

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<sup>9</sup> The American approach is often referred to as "office seeking", highlighting the competition for offices.

mechanical point of view typical for the American concept and taking into account much broader parameters helped open a relevant discussion on the rationality of other coalition alternatives (minority governments and surplus coalitions).

According to the American tradition, the main motive behind the formation of political coalitions is to increase one's chances to gain government seats, while the European tradition assigns great importance to the program (ideological) point of view. The primary goal of political parties is not to strengthen their executive positions but to enforce their political program.<sup>10</sup> Regarding their program and ideological position, it is not only rational for political parties to consider various forms of coalition, but also acceptable to wilfully refuse to participate in a coalition and choose to remain in the opposition, which can in certain circumstances be seen as a more favourable way of enforcing one's political program. The European concept does not necessarily view enforcing one's political program in favour of losing a minister's office or another executive position as a failure because the specific actor may be rewarded with indirect gains other than government seats.

The main contradiction between the both approaches, i. e. whether the motives of coalition actors are influenced more by the competition for seats or the effort to enforce one's political program, has been abandoned in favour of the generally accepted fact that the motivations are inseparable and interconnected.

**I. Budge** a **H. Keman** (1993: 27) created a concept connecting both of the two traditions, offering four possible alternatives parties can take when facing the issue coalition building:

- 1) *a seat in the government is valuable in itself*
- 2) *a seat in the government is viewed as a means of enforcing one's program*
- 3) *one's program is viewed as a means to gain a seat in the government*
- 4) *one's program is an objective in itself*

Based on their comprehensive empirical research, the abovementioned authors promote the idea that coalition behaviour of political parties is shaped by the conviction that gaining an executive post is a means to enforce one's program (Budge-Keman 1993: 31). In other words, political parties try to succeed in an election with their program to be able to participate in the post-election negotiations, aiming to form a government. During these negotiations, they

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<sup>10</sup> The European tradition is often referred to as "policy seeking", highlighting the emphasis on the program aspect.



attempt to gain the optimal executive seats to enforce their program in the easiest possible way.

## 2.1 Minimal winning coalition (MWC)

A minimal winning coalition represents the oldest, most thoroughly researched and discussed coalition alternative. MWC is seen as a theoretical ideal model of organizing coalition relations. It is a coalition of at least two members<sup>11</sup> able to gain parliament majority without any of the them being surplus. In other words, all votes for the coalition parties are necessary for it to have majority in the parliament, and losing a member equals losing legislative majority (Budge-Laver 1992: 2).

The concept of MWC is based on the rational choice theory and the American tradition of coalition studies. The primary goal of political parties as rational actors is to govern (take executive seats) under the most favourable conditions possible. In this way, political parties strive to maximize the number of minister seats they gain by distributing them between the least possible number of coalition partners. That is why they try to build coalitions that will guarantee them parliament majority, while simultaneously having the least possible surplus to avoid decreasing individual members' share of executive posts. In the context of the rational choice and minimax theory, sharing a limited number of executive seats with somebody whose votes are not necessary to gain legislative majority does not seem logical (Lijphart 1984: 47-48; Riker 1962: 32-46). In theory, a minimal winning coalition is considered a general norm, while all other categories are perceived as deviant.

More criteria were elaborated gradually, specifying and expanding the original theory of MWC. These criteria include the 1. size, 2. number of coalition members 3. program (ideological aspect) and 4. combination of 2 and 3 (number of members + ideological aspect) (Říchová 2006: 131).

The first criterium was established by **W. Riker** himself. The size criterium puts even more emphasis on the aspect of maximizing one's power while minimizing costs. From this point of view, a coalition with the least number of

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<sup>11</sup> The rule of at least two members is excluded in this work, the only criterium defining the MWC category being majority on the city assembly without a member surplus. With this adjustment, the specific single-member alternative of MWC called a "minimal winning cabinet" also falls within this category. This situation occurred only in one case, namely in Prague after the election of 2008 when the political group Civic Democratic party (*Občanská demokratická strana*, ODS) gained enough votes to have majority and built a single-member council.

legislative seats necessary (*MSC - minimum size coalition*) is viewed as optimal. In other words, **Riker's** size criterium applies the "50 percent plus one" approach (Riker 1962).

The number criterium is focused on the number of coalition members (*MSUB – coalition with the smallest number of parties*). **M. Leiserson** (1968: 770-787) describes MWCs as more cohesive if formed by the least possible number of parties. It is also likely that the smaller the number of coalition partners, the easier it will be to avoid mutual antagonism because there are fewer friction areas ("bargaining proposition"). A coalition like this will find it easier to reach compromises and keep its stability.

Unlike the previous two criteria, the question of program distance/proximity requires taking into account the ideological aspect and brings the MWC typology closer to the European tradition. Coalitions formed by members with the most similar ideological backgrounds (*MRC-minimal range coalition*) are regarded as the most advantageous (Laver-Schofield 1992: 110-111). It is assumed that political parties with similar goals (and ideology) will form a more viable coalition. Ideologically remote subjects, on the other hand, will find it difficult to find common ground, potentially resulting in instability of the coalition.

**R. Axelrod** (1970) combines the criteria of ideological proximity and number of coalition members. Coalition partnership of parties which are the closest to each other on the left-right axis is deemed to be the most effective. The hypothetical coalition (*MCWC – minimal connected winning coalitions*) does not have party between its two members on the left-right ideological axis (Budge-Laver 1993: 501). We must mention that these coalitions do not necessarily have to take the form of MWC (*MSC* or *MSUB*) because a party (parties) can join in not to gain legislative majority, but to increase cohesion of the emerging coalition (Říchová 2006: 133). This model does not deny the mechanical aspects of forming and sustaining a coalition but puts more emphasis on ideological and program proximity as the best way to ensure coalition cohesion and effectiveness. It is important to realize that a MWC can meet all of the four criteria. This would be a coalition of two members who are very close neighbours on the ideological axis with a majority of seats just above the quorum.

## **2.2 Surplus majority coalition (SMC)**

Surplus coalitions are viewed as one of the "deviant" categories of coalition arrangements. It is a coalition with at least one member surplus. The surplus member is a political subject whose vote gains are not necessary to achieve

legislative majority. The rational choice theory views such arrangement as a breach of the minimax strategy. The coalition is burdened by its surplus member who does not hold any benefit but only increases costs (key executive seats, always more or less limited, are divided between more partners, decreasing the gains of all members). Moreover, negotiation becomes difficult as one needs to take into account and meet a larger number of diverse interests (Říchová 2006: 133).

There are many reasons why large coalitions are built: a) emphasis on program and relationships between political parties, b) effort to ensure legislative majority and strengthen the government's stability in circumstances which threaten party or MP discipline, c) specific motivations, such as effort to build constitutional majority or a "national unity government" and others (Just 2012).

### 2.3 Minority cabinet (MC)

Minority cabinet represents another "deviant" category of executive coalitions. As opposed to MWC and SMC, MC is characterized by an absence of a legislative majority in the parliament. Such platform can take the form of a coalition or single-party government. **K. Strom** described a few suitable conditions for forming a minority cabinet; political crisis and instability, political culture and heritage, party system fractionalization (Strom 1983: 10-21). There are various ways to form a minority government, the most frequent ones being the following:

- 1) The election fails to produce a majority winning party.
- 2) The party system is blocked, e. g. due to presence of anti-system parties.
- 3) There are also specific situations when a minority government is allowed to rule (e. g. if there is a need to draw up a new constitution).
- 4) The ruling, originally majority coalition breaks up and becomes a minority one.
- 5) The governing party has just a few seats less that necessary to build majority.(Říchová 2006: 135)

#### Coalition typology scheme

Category	Type			
<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Number of Mandates</i>	<i>Number of Members</i>	<i>Affinity of Programs</i>	<i>Ideological Connection</i>
SMC	X	X	X	X
MC	X	X	X	X

MWC	MSC	MSUB	MRC	MCWC
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Source: The concept is author's own, inspired by other works (Axelrod 1970 - Balík 2006 - Leiserson 1968 - Riker 1962)

## 2.4 Applying the theory of political coalitions to second-order elections<sup>12</sup>

Czech municipal elections are categorized as local elections, meaning that at least on the theoretical level, they should meet the characteristics of second-order elections, showing certain specific attributes that distinguish them from first-order elections. For this reason, we find it necessary to reinterpret the theory of political coalitions (focused primarily on FOE) to meet the requirements of our analysis, concentrating on less significant elections.

Primarily, we can identify different behaviour of political parties on the national and regional/local level. **Jüptner** believes that on this level, political parties as unitary actors are weaker and their inner structure resembles a sum of individuals, taking into account local interests, rather than the national party line (Jüptner 2004: 81). For this reason, we can observe the process of “de-ideologization” in lower-level governments, which opens the way to the formation of coalitions which would be deemed impossible on the national level. The regional and local levels are also not as affected by some of the limitations of coalitions typical for party collaboration on the national level, such as foreign politics (participation in international organizations, economic diplomacy and others).

The competitive nature of the political system is also changed, as **Strnadová** points out: *“The level of competitiveness of the political system, affecting also relations within a coalition, depends on the level where the subject is active. The higher in the hierarchy of state administration, the stronger the competitiveness between coalition members. On the other hand, the lower in the hierarchy, the likelier that they will cooperate.”* (Strnadová 2006: 47)

<sup>12</sup> Second-order elections (SOE) represent a special category of elections, with their primary common characteristic being the dimension of lesser significance. Depending on the form of government regime and political system, all elections for other than the most important executive offices and elections with only a limited impact on the most important policies are included in this category. This can potentially bear serious consequences, taking the form of different election results (caused by lower participation rates and a different voter mindset, among other factors) and coalition practice compared to first order election (FOE). In case of the Czech Republic, all elections except for the election to the Chamber of Deputies are categorized as second-order elections. More on the topic of second-order elections: see Karlheinz Reif – Hermann Schmitt (1980) and other works by K. Reif in the Reference section. In Czech political science literature, for example Doc. Pavel Šaradín occupied himself extensively with the topic of second-degree elections.

If we attempt to point out differences between coalition formation on the national and regional/municipal level, we may observe the following characteristics (Strnadová 2006: 50):

- 1) The lower the hierarchical level where a coalition is formed, the less competitive the atmosphere between its members and the higher their tendency to disregard ideological, historical and traditional rivalry between their parties. Party unity is weakened in favour of wider possibilities of collaboration.
- 2) The inclination to form ideologically tight minimal winning coalitions is stronger on the national level than on the lower ones.
- 3) Office-seeking and policy-seeking can be observed on all levels but the logic behind them is different. The national level is characterized by forming political coalitions to enforce one's political goals (policy-seeking). In executive coalitions, on the other hand, we typically encounter both office-seeking and program proximity. On the lower levels, coalitions work as legislative alliances. Policy-seeking is, however, not the only goal and parties also seek opportunity to gain other advantages in the form of "indirect profit".
- 4) The tendency to form large coalitions is stronger on the self-government level. To maximize one's gains, it is not necessary to hold the largest number of offices possible.

It is impossible to identify the difference between the rationality affecting different government levels.

Generally, we might say that "the greater the distance of individual hierarchy levels from the state, the more varied the principles affecting coalition behaviour. This is caused by their less distinct particularization and smaller scope." (Strnadová 2006: 50)

Before moving on, we have to point out one of the cardinal factors that has a potential to strongly determine the final form of political coalitions on city assemblies. It is the specific legislation governing decision-making of municipal assemblies that increases the quorum. This puts more pressure on the parties to form a coalition with a sufficient number of seats than on the parliamentary level. The law reads: "To reach a valid decision or vote by a municipal assembly, more than a half of its members have to approve it (unless set otherwise by another

law/regulation.”<sup>13</sup>

### **3. Formation of city assemblies in regional capitals after the municipal election of 2018 in the Czech Republic**

This section aims to explain the formation of city assemblies in regional capitals of the Czech Republic. Emphasis is put on the formation of the “ideal” type of coalition (MWC), complying with the basic rule of fifty percent plus one seat. Based on the American approach to research of the theory of political coalitions, we will first identify all hypothetical alternatives of MWC based on the election results, using a mathematical (mechanical) model. Subsequently, we will include the European tradition in our analysis to eliminate coalitions we deem highly improbable due to significant program differences. After eliminating all ideologically “impossible” coalitions, we compare the remaining hypothetical coalitions with real coalition partnerships emerging from the election to city assemblies to highlight potential discrepancies between theoretical presumptions and coalition practice.

#### **3.1 The capital city of Prague**

After the last election of 2018, we were confronted with a completely new post-election situation in the Czech capital, characterized by very specific features which do not stand comparison with any of the regional capitals. Five political subjects made their way into the city assembly (the coalition of 2014-2018 had seven members) with only very slight differences in the received numbers of votes, hardly significant in the context of vote total. None of the parties exceeded 20% of votes but none of them also received less than 15%. This naturally leads to balanced mandate gains. The strongest Civil Democratic Party (ODS) had only two more seats than the weakest political club ANO 2011. The remaining three subjects, Piráti (Czech Pirate Party), PRAHA SOBĚ and Spojené síly pro Prahu had the same number of representatives. In spite of their strong representation in the assembly throughout the past decades, neither the Czech Social Democratic Party (*Česká strana sociálně demokratická*, ČSSD) nor the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy*, KSČM) met the quorum. In general, the post-election situation could be characterized as “extreme levelling” of party positions (see Table 1).

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<sup>13</sup> The Act on Municipalities 128/2000 Sb. Chapter IV, § 87

**Table 1:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the Prague City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
ODS	17,86	14
Piráti	17,07	13
PRAHA SOBĚ	16,56	13
Spojené síly pro Prahu	16,28	13
ANO 2011	15,36	12
<b>Total</b>	X	65

Source: Czech Statistical Office

The number of parties in the city assembly and their equal position has a significant impact on the number of potential alternatives of MWC. Proportional mandate gains of individual political subjects offer a total of ten MWC alternatives. From the ideological point of view, the coalition of ODS, PRAHA SOBĚ and Spojené síly pro Prahu, with a total of forty seats, seems as the optimal alternative. Other options, however, also seem feasible in this context.

The actual coalition was formed by the Czech Pirate Party, Spojené síly pro Prahu and PRAHA SOBĚ. In spite of the abovementioned ideological proximity of all subjects, some of the actors manifested a comparably lower coalition potential due to political/personal reasons. This applies especially to ANO 2011 as the remaining partners distanced themselves from this political movement long before the election. Cooperation with the election winner ODS was also viewed as problematic by some subjects, leading to the formation of the specified coalition (see Table 2).

**Table 2:** Coalition formed after the election to the Prague City Assembly of 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
Piráti+PS+Spojené síly pro Prahu	39	33	6	MRC, MCWC

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

Given the almost equal shares of seats of all coalition partners, the primary question was who will become the new mayor and how will the seats be divided. In the past, the Prague City Council usually had eleven members, which eventually brought an interesting resolution to the situation. Based on the coalition agreement, the Pirate Party won the mayor's seat along with two council

seats. The remaining eight seats were equally divided between the other coalition actors PRAHA SOBĚ and Spojené síly pro Prahu (see Table 3). The Pirate Party also has only three seats on the council, which is compensated by their candidate **Zdeněk Hřib** entering the mayor's office.

**Table 3:** Prague City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
Piráti	33,33	27,27	3
PRAHA SOBĚ	33,33	36,36	4
Spojené síly pro Prahu	33,33	36,36	4
<b>Total</b>	100	100	11

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

The ruling coalition meets the theoretical presumptions of the theory of political coalitions by forming of a minimal majority government to establish dominance in the given representative body. We can also observe the influence of the program/personal aspect on the final form of the coalition. The distribution of seats on the council is based on logical reasoning. A higher representation of Spojené síly pro Prahu and PRAHA SOBĚ is justified by the third coalition partner winning the mayor's seat.

### 3.2 České Budějovice

Based on the election results of 2018, a total of seven political subjects gained representation in the České Budějovice City Assembly. It is remarkable that although this number of parties and their shares of seats on the assembly equal the situation in the previous election period, the overall election result and party portfolio underwent significant changes since 2014. Like in the previous election, the winner was ANO 2011 with 12 mandates, followed by the local movement Občané pro Budějovice with nine mandates, and a coalition of ODS and sdružení neustraníků with eight mandates. ČSSD lost its representation on the city assembly, while the Czech Pirate Party newly entered it. The winner's election results did not suffice to establish dominance but we can clearly distinguish between the "successful" and the "losing" parties (see Table 4).



**Table 4:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the České Budějovice City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
ANO 2011	21,2	12
HOPB	16,44	9
Sdružení ODS a nez. Kan.	14,19	8
Česká pirátská strana	12,18	6
KSČM	6,98	4
STAN a Čisté Budějovice	6,46	3
Lidovci a TOP 09	5,49	3
<b>Total</b>	X	45

Source: Czech Statistical Office

Seven actors entered the assembly. Their mandate gains range from high to low, making as many as eighteen combinations of MWC possible. There are several three- to five-member alternatives with varying voting majorities from just above the quorum to overrepresented coalition. A total of twelve of the eighteen possibilities cannot be formed without the inclusion of ANO 2011 and all subjects can be a part of some of the MWC alternatives. From the perspective of the theory of political coalitions, three coalitions with a number of representatives just above the quorum, i.e., 23 seats, are possible. In two cases, these would take the form of a collaboration of ANO and ODS, complemented either by a coalition of STAN and the local political subject Čisté Budějovice or a coalition of the Christian and Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL) and the liberal-conservative TOP 09. The third alternative, excluding the election's winner, could have the form of a coalition of Občané pro Budějovice, ODS a nezávislí kandidáti and the Pirate Party.

**Table 5:** Coalition formed after the election to the České Budějovice City Assembly in 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
ANO+HOPB+STAN a čisté Budějovice+Lidovci a TOP 09	27	23	4	SMC

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

The actual coalition does not meet any of the suggested alternatives of MWC. It is a surplus coalition centred around the two strongest parties, complemented by two smaller subjects to ensure a clear majority with votes to spare (Table 6).

**Table 6:** České Budějovice City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
ANO 2011	44,44	45,45	5
HOPB	33,33	36,36	4
Společně pro Budějovice	11,11	9,09	1
STAN a čisté Budějovice	11,11	9,09	1
<b>Total</b>	100	100	11

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

As described above, the current coalition is a surplus one and does not meet the basic criteria of MWC. Based on the examples of other regional capitals that will be discussed further, we can see that in spite of being “deviant”, this model is anything but rare.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.3 Plzeň

After the last two municipal elections, seven political subjects were represented in the Plzeň City Assembly, which is the same number as in the last election period. Two strongest positions also remained the same. The winner was the movement ANO 2011, with the second ODS falling only a several hundredths of votes short. Both parties also gained the same number of representatives (thirteen). All other subjects received significantly less votes. The third Pirate Party has seven mandates, the remaining parties even less. TOP 09 and KDU-ČSL both hold four mandates, left-wing parties ČSSD and KSČM only three. The position of ČSSD corresponds with the generally unfavourable results, the only comfort being the fact that they met the quorum, unlike some other parties. ANO 2011 and ODS, on the other hand, may consider their result a success because they gained both more votes and mandates than in the last election period. The Pirates with seven mandates also found themselves in a favourable position after the election.

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<sup>14</sup> Described in more detail in the following section.

**Table 7:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the Plzeň City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
ANO 2011	22,19	13
ODS	22,11	13
Česká pirátská strana	11,69	7
TOP 09	6,82	4
KDU-ČSL	6,55	4
ČSSD	6,55	3
KSČM	5,63	3
<b>Total</b>	X	47

Source: Czech Statistical Office

The current distribution of power in the Plzeň City Assembly does not offer any alternatives without either ANO 2011 or ODS. At the same time, all subjects can become members of a potential MWC. There are a total of eleven alternatives. Aside from a two-member coalition of ANO 2011 and ODS which would optimally fit the theoretical model of MWC given the number of coalition partners (MSUB), number of representatives (MSC) and relative ideological proximity, there are four three-member and six four-member options.

**Table 8:** Coalition formed after the election to the Plzeň City Assembly of 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
ANO+ODS+TOP 09+ČSSD	33	24	9	SMC

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

The actual coalition is not inspired by any of the hypothetical MWCs. The chosen solution is a four-member, highly overrepresented SMC with considerable ideological distance between its individual members (see Table 8).

**Table 9:** Plzeň City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
ANO 2011	39,39	44,44	4
ODS	39,39	33,33	3

TOP 09	12,12	11,11	1
ČSSD	9,09	11,11	1
<b>Total</b>	100	100	9

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

The distribution of seats on the city council does not show a fundamental disproportion between the share of power of individual members and gained council seats. The only distinctive deviation is the relatively low number of seats occupied by ODS, which can, however, be explained by the necessity to resolve the question of who will become the mayor, complicated by the fact that the winning ODS and ANO saw almost identical vote gains. Finally, **Martin Baxa** from ODS entered the mayor's office and ANO 2011 gained four seats on the council (see Table 9).

### 3.4 Karlovy Vary

The results of the last municipal election in Karlovy Vary indicates an ongoing reconstruction of the party system, affecting all levels of the Czech political system to a various degree. A significant phenomenon within the process, which probably started already at the time of the parliamentary election of 2010, is a relative weakening of the traditional, well-known parliamentary parties and advent of new political actors. These development tendencies affect primarily the highly exposed dimension of first-order elections but with a slight delay, the same effect can be observed also on other levels. In Karlovy Vary, this transformation was not only very distinct but also permanent. Surprising was not so much the victory of one of the symbols of said shifts, the ANO 2011 movement with twelve seats, but especially the significant weakening of four well-established subjects. ČSSD did not meet the quorum (which became a frequent occurrence in the election of 2018, much to the party's dismay) and neither did KDU-ČSL. ODS with three and KSČM with two mandates ended second to last and last, respectively. The remaining seats in the assembly belong to local organizations (Karlovaráci, KOA) and new parliamentary subjects (the Czech Pirate Party).

**Table 10:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the Karlovy Vary City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
ANO 2011	23,85	12

Karlovaráci	15,62	8
KOA	11,36	5
Česká pirátská strana	9,97	5
ODS	7,75	3
KSČM	5,06	2
<b>Total</b>	X	35

Source: Czech Statistical Office

Election results in Karlovy Vary allow nine alternatives of MWC and none of them can be realized without the winner of the election, ANO 2011, or the movement Karlováci. A collaboration of the abovementioned subjects represents the only two-member alternative of MWC. There are also six options of three-member coalition and two options of four-member coalition. To fulfil the presumptions of the theory of political coalitions, the two-member coalition with the optimal number of both member parties (MSUB) and representatives (MSC) would have to be selected. Viewed from the ideological aspect, the conclusion is the same, both when concentrating on value divergence (MRC) and ideological proximity (MCWC)

**Table 11:** Coalition formed after the election to the Karlovy Vary City Assembly of 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
ANO+Karlovaráci+ODS	23	18	5	SMC

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

Similar to other researched city assemblies, the political subjects in Karlovy Vary gave preference to a three-member, relatively ideologically cohesive surplus coalition.

**Table 12:** Karlovy Vary City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
ANO 2011	52,17	55,56	5
Karlovaráci	34,78	33,33	3
ODS	13,04	11,11	1
<b>Total</b>	100	100	9

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech

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Seat division on the city council corresponds with the position of individual coalition partners. ANO 2011, holding overall majority, occupied an equivalent majority of seats on the council, including the mayor's seat for Andrea Pfeffer-Ferklová. In accordance with the respective vote gains, the movement Karlovaráci holds two seats and ODS one seat on the council (see Table 12).

### 3.5 Ústí nad Labem

On a closer look at the election results in Ústí nad Labem, we can see some development parallels between this capital of Northern Bohemia and Karlovy Vary. The municipal election of 2018 did not end well for any of the traditional political parties in either of the regions. In Ústí nad Labem, a group of new and local political organizations dominated the election. Out of four traditional parties (ODS, KSČM, ČSSD, KDU-ČSL), the two latter ones failed to meet the quorum. ODS and KSČM achieved a only slightly better result and together hold seven seats out of thirty-seven. Like in Karlovy Vary, ANO 2011 also won the election in Ústí nad Labem, gaining nine mandates, followed by local movements PRO! Ústí with eight mandates and Ústecké fórum občanů with five mandates. There are also eight representatives of SPD and local subjects Vaše Ústí and PRO zdraví a sport in the city assembly.

**Table 13:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the Ústí nad Labem City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
ANO 2011	21,22	9
PRO! Ústí	16,97	8
Ústecké fórum občanů	11,77	5
ODS	8,47	4
Vaše Ústí	7,34	3
KSČM	6,78	3
SPD	6,77	3
PRO zdraví a sport	5,56	2
<b>Total</b>	X	37

Source: Czech Statistical Office

Eight subjects with relatively balanced vote gains offer a wide range of MWCs. There are precisely twenty-two combinations, dominated by three- and

four-member alternatives. There is also one possibility to build a six-member MWC. Based on the described theoretical presumptions, three-member alternatives seem as the most advantageous form of MWC. These are impossible without ANO 2011 and PRO! Ústí, seconded by any of the remaining parties, ideally the subject PRO zdraví a sport that would ensure just enough votes to reach the quorum.

**Table 14:** Coalition formed after the election to the Ústí nad Labem City Assembly of 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
ANO 2011+UFO+ODS+PRO zdraví a sport	20	19	1	MWC, MSC, MRC

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

Eventually, a four-member MWC was formed (see Table 15). The main determinant of coalition negotiations was the lasting antipathy between ANO 2011 and PRO! Ústí, stemming from the previous election period. A collaboration of PRO! Ústí and UFO, which would be possible without ANO 2011, seemed improbable due to similar reasons. UFO could theoretically form a MWC while ignoring both ANO 2011 and PRO! Ústí but all of the remaining parties would have to join together. In other words, without a collaboration of ANO 2011 and PRO! Ústí no other three-member MWC would be feasible and the sustainable four-member option could lean only on ANO 2011 and UFO, which was eventually happened. This decision follows up on the parties' previous collaboration in the Ústí nad Labem City Assembly, with ODS and PRO zdraví a sport completing the coalition.

**Table 15:** Ústí nad Labem City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
ANO 2011	45	44,44	4
Ústecké fórum občanů	25	22,22	2
ODS	20	22,22	2
PRO zdraví a sport	10	11,11	1

<b>Total</b>	100	100	9
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Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

The division of seats in the Ústí nad Labem City Assembly does not deviate from the expected development and fully reflects the power shared by individual coalition partners. The winner's representation in the assembly does not fall below their actual vote gain, not to "make up" for the occupation of the mayor's office by their candidate (**Petr Nevědický** from ANO 2011) or consolidate the coalition by evening out differences in seat numbers as we have seen in other cities.

### 3.6 Liberec

In Liberec, the municipal election of 2018 brought remarkable results and new realities. As opposed to previous election results, only five parties<sup>15</sup> gained representation on the city assembly and the winner acquired an unprecedented majority of votes. Starostové pro Liberecký kraj (SLK) gained more than one third of all valid votes, accounting for as many as sixteen seats in the city assembly. The second ANO 2011 saw a slightly better result than in the previous election, gaining five seats less than SLK (eleven in total). ANO 2011 was followed by Změna pro Liberec with a proportionally lesser representation of six mandates. The second to last ODS gained four mandates and the last Liberec otevřený lidem two mandates.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 16:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the Liberec City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
Starostové pro Liberecký kraj	32,10	16
ANO 2011	21,36	11
Změna pro Liberec	13,26	6

<sup>15</sup> After the election of 2014, the Liberec City Assembly was formed by seven parties and the same scenario was observed in 2010 and 2006. The first municipal election saw a collaboration of as many as eight subjects in the city assembly.

<sup>16</sup> The phenomenon of weakening of well-adjusted parliamentary parties after the election of 2010 affected also the Liberec City Assembly and especially the traditional left represented by ČSSD and KSČM. Neither of them reached the quorum.



ODS	8,38	4
Liberec Otevřený lidem	5,27	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>39</b>

Source: Czech Statistical Office

With five parties on the council and a high domination of the first two (SLK and ANO hold almost 70% of seats), there are very little potential alternatives of MWC, in this case four. No MWC can be built without either SLK or ANO 2011, and in three cases out of four, SLK needs to participate to build a MWC. According to the theory of political coalition, a two-member coalition of SLK and ODS would be considered optimal. This alternative is a MSC, MSUB, MRC and MCWC at once.

**Table 17:** Coalition formed after the election to the Liberec City Assembly of 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
SLK+ANO 2011 + ODS	31	20	11	SMC

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

The actual coalition confirms the trends observed in most regional capitals after the last municipal elections, leading to the domination of “deviant” forms of coalition. Also in this case we encounter a widely preferred SMC, in Liberec highly overrepresented.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 18:** Liberec City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
Starostové pro Liberecký kraj	51,61	45,45	5
ANO 2011	35,48	36,36	4
ODS	12,90	18,18	2
<b>Total</b>	100	100	11

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

<sup>17</sup> The opposition holds only eight out of thirty-nine seats on the assembly.

In spite of having an absolute majority of coalition mandates, SLK failed to gain an equal dominance on the city council. The party holds the mayor's seat and a majority of council seats but their position is undervalued in favour of their smallest coalition partner, ODS. The main cause of this development lies in the concept of city management promoted by SLK. Despite their dominant position, SLK preferred a consensual approach to governing, reflected for example in their generosity regarding the distribution of offices on the council and other executive bodies (even to the opposition). This strategy represents the main force shaping the selected coalition.

### 3.7 Hradec Králové

As opposed to other regional capitals, results of the 2018 municipal election in Hradec Králové did not bring a significant change of the political course. In this region, the most conspicuous phenomenon is the weakening of the traditional left.<sup>18</sup> ANO 2011 became a clear winner of the election with eleven mandates, strengthening its position against the organization Hradecký demokratický klub who won the previous election and newly had to settle for seven mandates. The third and fourth positions are occupied by ODS and the Pirate Party, both with five mandates. Three other parties complete the assembly, each with three representative seats: Změna pro Hradec, Koalice pro Hradec and KSČM.

**Table 19:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the Hradec Králové City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
ANO 2011	23,82	11
HDM	15,66	7
ODS	10,26	5
Česká pirátská strana	10,20	5
Změna pro Hradec a zelení	6,84	3
Koalice pro Hradec	6,77	3
KSČM	6,14	3
<b>Total</b>	X	37

Source: Czech Statistical Office

<sup>18</sup> KSČM reached the quorum in spite of losing many votes, as the weakest party of all. ČSSD experienced a major failure and lost representation in the assembly.

Given the relatively high number of parties with balanced mandate gains, nineteen alternatives of MWC are possible. ANO 2011 has a strong position and only six MWC options are feasible without it. The parties could choose from three up to five-member alternatives but a potential MWC would be possible even without the collaboration of the two strongest subjects. Viewed through the lens of the theory of political coalitions, a three-member collaboration of ANO 2011, ODS and Koalice pro Hradec would be viewed as optimal, with enough mandates to reach the quorum, taking the form of either a MSC or a MRC.

**Table 20:** Coalition formed after the election to the Hradec Králové City Assembly of 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
ANO 2011+ODS+Změna Hradec a Zelení	19	19	0	MWC, MSC

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

The actual coalition in the Hradec Králové City Assembly deviates from the prevailing practice of other regional capitals. By reflecting the mechanical aspect (MSC), the preferred arrangement widely corresponds with the theory of political coalitions, but less so regarding the ideological dimension.

**Table 21:** Hradec Králové City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
ANO 2011	57,89	45,45	5
ODS	26,32	36,36	4
Změna pro Hradec a Zelení	15,79	18,18	2
<b>Total</b>	100	100	11

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

Seat distribution on the council and political affiliation of the mayor reveal a remarkable disbalance between the actual power of the coalition partners and their position within the coalition, respectively on the council. Despite a strong dominance of coalition mandates held by ANO 2011, the movement failed to win

a corresponding number of seats on the council or the mayor's seat, which it surrendered to ODS that also occupied one office of deputy to the mayor. The position of the smallest coalition partner is also overrepresented (two councillors and one deputy). ANO 2011 has two deputies. The reason for this is the winner's strong effort to avoid the opposition role and persuade the wavering ODS to collaborate with them, knowing that the party was also negotiating with the leaving mayor **Zdeněk Fink** from Hradecký demokratický klub. To be a member of the coalition, ANO 2011 had to surrender the mayor's and deputy's office to ODS, ensuring the latter party's strong position on the council.

### 3.8 Pardubice

In Pardubice, ANO 2011 retained its position of winner of the election. The movement did even better than four years ago, attaining thirteen mandates, which is more than a third of all assembly seats. The second ODS saw an even better improvement, despite winning six mandates less than ANO 2011 (seven in total). The third Pirate Party saw an average result of five mandates, followed by local initiatives Pardubáci společně (four mandates), Koalice pro Pardubice and Sdružení pro Pardubice (both three mandates). ČSSD and KSČM did reach the quorum, but with only two mandates each, which is the lowest result of all parties.

**Table 22:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the Pardubice City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
ANO 2011	26,65	13
ODS	14,59	7
Česká pirátská strana	11,22	5
Pardubáci společně	8,96	4
Koalice pro Padrubice	7,18	3
Sdružení pro Pardubice	6,15	3
ČSSD a nestraníci pro Pardubice	5,84	2
KSČM	5,15	2
<b>Total</b>	X	39

Source: Czech Statistical Office

The post-election situation with eight parties in the assembly with relatively balanced distribution of mandates between the second and eighth position offers a wide range of MWCs. The twenty-one alternatives include two- to six-member

coalitions, most of which are three- to five-member ones. None of the alternative MWCs can be formed without either ANO 2011 or ODS (there are thirteen possibilities with ANO 2011 and nine with ODS). The abovementioned two-member coalition of ANO 2011 and ODS would meet all attributes of MWC, both numerically (MSC, MSUB) and ideologically (MRC, MCWC).

**Table 23:** Coalition formed after the election to the Pardubice City Assembly of 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
ANO ANO+ODS+KPP+SPP+ČSSD	28	20	8	SMC

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

At the first sight, the five-member SMC seems rather strange and illogical. This arrangement can, however, be explained by personal and program divergence. Despite the clear victory of ANO 2011, the movement faced an uneasy position. The three other subjects with highest vote gains (ODS, the Pirate Party and Pardubáci) joined forces against them already during the election campaign and expressed their unwillingness to cooperate with them. Hypothetically, ANO 2011 could try to form a MWC or SMC with the remaining parties.

However, this scenario faced many problems. The potential MWC of ANO 2011, KPP, SPP and ČSSD, reaching the coalition quorum with fifty percent plus one mandate, would face extensive pressure on its integrity and ability to enforce the coalition program. At the same time, several smaller parties would gain a disproportionate share of political and bargaining power. An alternative including KSČM in the coalition would, in turn, meet with unwillingness of the coalition partners. The crisis was finally resolved by ODS agreeing to enter a coalition with ANO 2011, despite a strong displeasure of their leader **Karel Haas**.

**Table 24:** Pardubice City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
ANO 2011	46,43	27,27	3
ODS	25	27,27	3
KPP	10,71	18,18	2
SPP	10,71	18,18	2

ČSSD	7,14	9,09	1
<b>Total</b>	100	100	11

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

The problematic situation of ANO 2011 was strongly reflected in the composition on the city council.<sup>19</sup> The mayor's office was occupied by their candidate but the movement's overall position is weakened in favour of other coalition partners (see Table 24).

### 3.9 Jihlava

Results of the municipal election in Jihlava were in line with the overall development in Czech regional capitals. The victorious ANO 2011 gained ten mandates. Local subjects emerged from the election stronger than before. Forum Jihlava came second with seven mandates and the new initiative Žijeme Jihlavou fourth with four mandates. The third position was occupied by ODS with six mandates. The traditional left weakened, much like in other regional capitals. The representation of KSČM shrunk by half and the party ended up with three representative seats, while ČSSD and the last SPD have two seats each. KDU-ČSL with three seats maintained its position in the assembly.

**Table 25:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the Jihlava City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
ANO 2011	22,61	10
Fórum Jihlava	18	7
ODS	15,17	6
Žijeme Jihlavou!	10,08	4
KSČM	8,45	3
KDU-ČSL	8,08	3
ČSSD	6,77	2
SDP	6,46	2
<b>Total</b>	X	37

Source: Czech Statistical Office

<sup>19</sup> Karel Haas, leader of ODS in the Pardubice Region, expressed his disapproval by stepping down and remaining an ordinary assembly representative and party member.

A group of eight parties with balanced mandates can form as many as twenty-six combinations of MWC. The lowest number of members necessary to build a MWC is three, the highest six. Four-member possibilities dominate. Without the two strongest parties, only the six-member alternative is possible. Two three-member alternatives of the twenty-six appear to be optimal; both have nineteen seats and are formed by ANO 2011, Fórum Jihlava and ČSSD, respectively ANO 2011, ODS and KDU-ČSL.

**Table 26:** Coalition formed after the election to the Jihlava City Assembly of 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
Fórum Jihlava+ODS+Žijeme Jihlavou!+KDU-ČSL	20	19	1	MWC, MSC, MRC

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

The resulting coalition is a four-member MWC. It meets the requirement of minimal number of coalition representatives and relative program proximity. Its final form is strongly determined by the coldness or sometimes even animosity of other political subjects towards ANO 2011. It was, however, impossible to form other than a four-member coalition without the winner of the election.

**Table 27:** Jihlava City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
Fórum Jihlava	35	33,33	3
ODS	30	33,33	3
Žijeme Jihlavou!	20	22,22	2
KDU-ČSL	15	11,11	1
<b>Total</b>	100	100	9

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

The distribution of seats on the council corresponds with the relative power of individual coalition partners without any deviation. **Karolína Koubová**, leader of Fórum Jihlava, the strongest political subject on the council, entered the mayor's seat.

### 3.10 Brno

The municipal election in Brno was dominated by two parties, gaining almost 60% of mandates combined. The winner ANO 2011 occupied eighteen seats in the assembly, which is five more than in the previous election period. The second ODS supported by the initiative Svobodní saw a gain of fourteen mandates, which is almost three times as much as in 2014. The remaining four parties received significantly less votes. Losing one mandate, KDU-ČSL just about kept their position and ended up with eight representative seats. The Pirate Party with six mandates represents a newcomer to the Brno City Council. ČSSD saw a major failure and occupies only five seats, with its representation shrinking by more than a half. SPD with four mandates gained the second to smallest proportion of votes. KSČM which occupied four seats in the previous election period did not reach the quorum.

**Table 28:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the Brno City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
ANO 2011	23,02	18
ODS s podporou Svobodných	18,55	14
KDU-ČSL	10,25	8
Česká pirátská strana	8,73	6
ČSSD	6,28	5
SPD	5,07	4
<b>Total</b>	X	55

Source: Czech Statistical Office

Six parties gained representation on the Brno City Assembly, with the first two of them establishing a strong majority. This situation makes possible only eight alternatives of MWC. Hypothetically, the parties could form one two-member, six three-member and one four-member MWC. None of the options is feasible without ANO 2011 or ODS. As a MSUB and a potentially cohesive MRC, the two-member coalition of ANO 2011 and ODS is regarded as a optimal.

**Table 29:** Coalition formed after the election to the Brno City Assembly of 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
ODS+Piráti+KDU-ČSL+ČSSD	33	28	5	SMC

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office



Of all city coalitions produced by the municipal election of 2018, the one in Brno sparked great media interest and even some controversy. Especially ANO 2011 was unsatisfied with how ODS handled the negotiations, calling their actions incorrect and claiming the party rejected the already arranged coalition with ANO 2011 without informing them and gave them no choice but to be in opposition. In its aftermath, the situation affected also other municipalities and towns, leading ANO 2011 to approach ODS as a potential coalition partner in a more reserved manner. The selected coalition confirms the prevailing trend of SMCs in Czech regional capitals. It is obvious that in Brno, the main actor in the process of coalition formation was ODS, who decided to side-line the “original” coalition alternative in favour of a four-member surplus one, regardless of its phase of negotiation.

**Table 30:** Brno City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
ODS	42,42	36,36	4
KDU-ČSL	24,24	27,27	3
Česká pirátská strana	18,18	27,27	3
ČSSD	15,15	9,09	1
<b>Total</b>	100	100	11

Source: Author’s own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

Distribution of seats on the council mirrors the complexity of the situation. ODS was forced to take some compromises in favour of KDU-ČSL and the Pirate Party to gain the mayor’s office. This was also to the disadvantage of ČSSD, who returned to the council after eight years in opposition.

### 3.11 Olomouc

In Olomouc, the municipal election of 2018 resulted in the formation of one of the most fragmented city assemblies of all regional capitals. Nine political subjects reached the quorum, three of them with vote gains only slightly more above the necessary five percent of valid votes. ANO 2011 retained its dominance by gaining 14 representative seats. The initiative ProOlomouc and coalition Piráti (the Pirate Party) a starostové follow with a significant margin, gaining six representatives each. Other subjects with slightly lesser vote gains are ODS (five

mandates), KDU-ČSL (four mandates), spOLečně (three mandates) and a coalition of SPD and SPO (three mandates). The last positions are occupied by traditional left parties KSČM and ČSSD, both with two seats.

**Table 31:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the Olomouc City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
ANO 2011	26,66	14
ProOlomouc	12,1	6
Piráti a starostové	11,94	6
ODS	10,91	5
KDU-ČSL	7,4	4
spOLečně	5,93	3
SPD a SPO	5,57	3
KSČM	5,29	2
ČSSD	5	2
<b>Total</b>	X	45

Source: Czech Statistical Office

Despite the possibility of combining nine subjects in a potential MWC, there were relatively little suitable options (compared to election results in other regional capitals). This is caused above all by the dominance of ANO 2011, which is on ten of the fourteen hypothetical MWCs. There are mostly three-member, but also four-member coalition alternatives. Theoretically, two of the three-member alternatives with a number of representatives just above the quorum are viewed as optimal. These can be formed either by ANO 2011, ODS and KDU-ČSL or ANO 2011, ProOlomouc and spOLečně.

**Table 32:** Coalition formed after the election to the Olomouc City Assembly of 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
ANO 2011+ODS+KDU-ČSL+spOLečně	26	23	3	SMC

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

The formed coalition is a SMC, contrary to the presumptions of the theory of

political coalitions. It is in fact an expanded form of the described “ideal” MWC of three members including the movement spOLečně. The main aim of the surplus scheme is to strengthen the decisive majority of the ruling coalition in the city assembly.

**Table 33:** Olomouc City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
ANO 2011	53.85	45.45	5
ODS	19.23	27.27	3
KDU-ČSL	15.38	18.18	2
spOLečně	11.54	9.09	1
<b>Total</b>	100	100	11

Source: Author’s own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

Seat division on the city council does not correspond with the position of individual coalition partners. A scenario identified also in other regional capitals was used in Olomouc. The winner accepts a weaker position on the council to ensure a strong and stable coalition. **Miroslav Žbánek**, the candidate for ANO 2011, entered the mayor’s office.

### 3.12 Zlín

The Zlín City Assembly underwent some significant changes after the last municipal election. The number of represented political subjects increased from five to eight. Neither of the traditional left parties (ČSSD and KSČM) reached the quorum, while many new actors including the Pirate Party, SPD and Rozhýbejme Zlín saw a success. ODS gained representation after failing to reach the limit five percent of valid votes in the last election period. The successful coalition of KDU-ČSL and Zlín 21 formed before the previous municipal election did not renew their collaboration but succeeded again after running separately. Another significant change regards the distribution of representative mandates among the individual parties, which became much more balanced.<sup>20</sup> The winner ANO 2011 has the same number of representatives (nine) as the second STAN. The third Zlín 21

<sup>20</sup> In the municipal election of 2014 STAN (Starostové) won almost 44% of all mandates, the second ANO 2011 only 19.5%. After the last election of 2018, both subjects are represented equally (21.95% of mandates).

gained seven seats in the assembly. Mandate gains of other parties have slightly decreasing tendency (see Table 34).

**Table 34:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the Zlín City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
ANO 2011	18,81	9
STAN	18,57	9
Zlín 21	15,05	7
KDU-ČSL	10,23	5
Rozhýbat Zlín	6,96	3
ODS	6,83	3
Česká pirátská strana	6,27	3
SPD	5,59	2
<b>Total</b>	X	41

Source: Czech Statistical Office

The high number of parties in the assembly with relatively balanced mandates offers twenty alternatives of MWC including three- to five-member coalitions. In context of the theory of political coalitions, there are relatively many “optimal” coalition alternatives. Without listing them out, it suffices to note that they are all three-member MWCs just above the quorum, centred around ANO 2011, STAN or, alternatively, both of these subjects.

**Table 35:** Coalition formed after the election to the Zlín City Assembly of 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
ANO 2011+STAN+KDU-ČSL+ODS+Česká pirátská strana	29	21	8	SMC

Source: Author’s own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

Post-election negotiations in Zlín were among the most difficult in the Czech Republic. It was proposed that the coalition would be centred around ANO 2011 and STAN. Based on an oral agreement, a MWC of ANO 2011, STAN and Rozhýbej Zlín with 21 representatives was to be formed. This plan was not realized when **Petr Michálek** from STAN refused to support it. This meant the

coalition would be a minority one. After lengthy negotiations, the parties decided to build a five-member SMC. The main reason for this development which disregards other feasible MWC alternatives can be traced to the reluctance of smaller parties to enter a underrepresented alliance alongside ANO 2011 and STAN and the desire to reduce their dominance by including surplus partners in a coalition representing a wider political spectrum.

**Table 36:** Zlín City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
ANO 2011	31,03	36,36	4
STAN	31,03	36,36	4
KDU-ČSL	17,24	9,09	1
ODS	10,34	9,09	1
Česká pirátská strana	10,34	9,09	1
<b>Total</b>	100	100	11

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

ANO 2011 and STAN were nevertheless able to take a majority of seats on the council and the mayor's office (**Jiří Korec** from ANO 2011). The smaller parties accepted a compromise, gaining representation on the council by means of a surplus coalition that also reflects the dominant position of the two parties forming its centre.

### 3.13 Ostrava

The municipal election in Ostrava was dominated by ANO 2011. The movement gained six more mandates compared to the previous election and with twenty-one representatives, it occupies almost 40% of the assembly. The second position belongs to the well-established local movement Ostravak, which saw the worst result since its founding (seven mandates). ODS and KSČM have six mandates each. The Pirate Party, first time in the assembly, won five mandates. SPD, another newcomer to the assembly, gained four mandates, KDU-ČSL-nezávislí and ČSSD both three mandates. Like in other regional capitals, the traditional left weakened significantly. ČSSD lost nine mandates and fell from the second most represented party in the assembly to the last (regarding the number

of seats). KSČM saw only a slightly more favourable result, leading it to a loss of four seats. On the other side of the political spectrum, ODS celebrated a moderate success, winning another two seats and moving from the last position to the third.

**Table 37:** Overview of received votes and mandates in the Ostrava City Assembly after the election of 2018

Parties	Valid votes %	Number of mandates
ANO 2011	32,71	21
Ostravak	11,49	7
ODS	9,73	6
KSČM	8,95	6
Česká pirátská strana	8,95	5
SPD	6,76	4
KDU-ČSL a nezávislí	5,82	3
ČSSD	5,52	3
<b>Total</b>	X	55

Source: Czech Statistical Office

Given the election results, there are seventeen possible alternatives of MWC. It is not surprising that ANO 2011 is a member of as many as fifteen of them. The alternatives begin at two members, followed by fourteen three-member, one five-member and one six-member coalitions. The two-member coalition of ANO 2011 and Ostravak meets the requirement of the theory of political coalitions in several aspects at once, both from the numerical (MSC, MSUB) and ideological (MRC) point of view.

**Table 38:** Coalition formed after the election to the Ostrava City Assembly of 2018

Coalition	Mandates	Quorum	Overhang mandates	Type
ANO 2011+Ostravak+ODS+KDU- ČSL a nezávislí	37	28	9	SMC

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

As we have seen in many city assemblies, the final coalition alternative does not respect the presented theoretical presumptions. The coalition has a high surplus of mandates. This was motivated primarily by the attempt of ANO 2011, and especially their local leader **Tomáš Macura** who was beginning his second term as the mayor, to keep the existing form of the coalition and follow up on previous collaboration. The coalition was renewed as planned, retaining all members.

**Table 39:** Ostava City Council after the election of 2018

Coalition parties	Proportion of mandates %	Proportion of council seats %	Number of council seats
ANO 2011	56,76	54,55	6
Ostravak	18,92	18,18	2
ODS	16,22	18,18	2
KDU-ČSL nezávislí <sup>a</sup>	8,11	9,09	1
<b>Total</b>	100	100	11

Source: Author's own calculations based on data obtained from the Czech Statistical Office

The seats were distributed as expected, taking into consideration the power of individual coalition partners. Besides the mayor's office, ANO 2011 holds a majority of on the city council. The remaining seats are distributed proportionally.

#### **4. Summary of coalition practice in the city assemblies of regional capitals**

This chapter represents the empirical/analytical core of the research. It aims to offer a comprehensive overview of the chosen aspects and specific impacts of coalition arrangements in individual regional capitals of the Czech Republic, which will help us acquire an idea of the nature of city assembly coalition practice in its complexity.

The key research question of this work is the representational share of individual coalition categories in coalition partnerships in city assemblies. The research hypothesis H1 is contrary to the theory of political coalitions and presumes a dominance of "deviant" coalition alternatives due to the influence of the SOE dimension and differing legislation on the decision-making of city assemblies compared to the parliamentary level.

**Table 40:** Frequency of individual coalition categories in city assemblies of regional capitals

<b>Electoral Cycles/Categories</b>	<b>MWC</b>	<b>SMC</b>	<b>MC</b>	<b>Total number of coalitions</b>
2002-2006	2 / 13,33 %	13 / 86,67 %	0	15 / 100 %
2006-2010	6 / 37,5 %	10 / 62,5 %	0	16 / 100 %
2010-2014	7 / 43,75 %	7 / 43,75 %	2 / 12,5 %	16 / 100 %
2014-2018	12 / 63,16 %	6 / 37,5 %	1 / 6,25 %	19 / 100 %
2018-2022	4 / 30,77 %	9 / 69,23 %	0	13 / 100 %
<b>Total number of categories</b>	<b>31 / 39,24 %</b>	<b>45 / 56,96 %</b>	<b>3 / 3,80 %</b>	<b>79 / 100 %</b>

Source: Author's own calculations

Table 40 shows a clear dominance of “deviant” coalitions, especially surplus ones, which make up 60% of all coalitions in the research period. The category of “ideal” coalitions, represented by MWC, occurs in approximately 40% of cases. The proportion of minority coalitions is only 5%. Of the five election periods, MWCs prevailed only once, namely during 2014–2018, when they accounted for 63.16% of all coalitions.<sup>21</sup>

The following section describes the composition of the analysed political alliances. As specified in Section 1, theoretical sources state that second-order elections, including municipal elections, are governed by different logical principles of alliance than first-order elections.<sup>22</sup> This difference could potentially lead to the formation of more ideologically heterogeneous or downright improbable coalitions compared to the parliamentary level. The analysis includes five contemporary political parties, of which only the movement ANO 2011 did not run in all past elections to city assemblies of regional capitals. The rest of the sample is formed by four “traditional” parties: ČSSD, KDU-ČSL, KSČM and ODS.

<sup>21</sup> At the regional level the situation was exactly the opposite. As opposed to city assemblies, the MWC category prevailed in four out of five regional assemblies. Similarly, no SMC and only a few MCs have ever been formed in the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic. MWCs strongly dominate.

<sup>22</sup> See Subsection 3.4, describing the issue of applying the theory of political coalitions in the context of second-order elections.



**Table 41:** Number of assembly representatives of selected parties in regional councils (absolute / %)

City council	2002-2006	2006-2010	2010-2014	2014-2018	2018-2022	Total number of council seats
ČSSD	39 / 23,93	38 / 21,84	47 / 27,81	40 / 20,41	3 / 2,26	167 / 20
ODS	66 / 40,49	101 / 58,05	43 / 25,44	11 / 5,61	26 / 19,55	247 / 29,58
KSČM	2 / 1,23	0	0	0	0	2 / 0,24
KDU-ČSL	25 / 15,34	12 / 6,90	11 / 6,51	24 / 12,24	15 / 11,28	87 / 10,42
ANO	X	X	X	68 / 34,69	44 / 33,08	112 / 13,41
<b>Total number of council seats</b>	<b>132/80,98</b> %(163/100 %)	<b>151/86,78</b> %(174/100 %)	<b>101/59,76</b> %(169/100 %)	<b>143/72,96</b> %(196/100 %)	<b>88/66,17</b> %(133/100 %)	<b>615/73,65</b> %(835/100 %)

Source: Author's own calculations

The shifting numbers of elected representatives of individual political parties shows the changing face of the Czech party system. We can observe a clear, albeit relatively delayed (compared to the parliamentary level) decline of the previously dominant political duo ČSSD and ODS. Despite temporarily losing representation in the parliamentary term 2010–2013, KDU-ČSL established itself firmly at the local level, and this entrenchment might otherwise seem unremarkable, were it not for the fact that our analysis focuses on regional capitals outside the party's traditional voter bases. KSČM, on the other hand, carried their parliamentary opposition status also over to the local level, more often than not remaining outside elected city councils. The success of ANO 2011 in the elections of 2014 and 2018, leading to their high representation on city councils, is clear evidence of the described transformational shifts in Czech politics, which are also impacting the municipal level.

Interesting data can be found in Table 42, showing the frequency of the participation of selected political parties on regional capitals councils. Combined with the data presented in the previous table, it provides a valuable picture of the coalition successes of individual political actors.

The most successful party was ODS, with 53 cases of participation in municipal coalitions. In spite of its modest vote tally, KDU-ČSL also saw considerable coalition successes and was represented on more (47) coalition platforms than ČSSD (45). Very high values can be observed in the case of ANO 2011. The movement participated in 25 coalitions, but did so in only in two election

periods. Specifically, it was a member of 78.13% of city councils of a total of 32 coalitions formed between the years 2014–2020. KSČM only participated in a formal coalition in one case during the research period (in Ostrava, after the first municipal election in the Czech Republic). It is remarkable that the other parties forming this coalition were ČSSD, KDU-ČSL and SNK-ED, situated at the very opposite end of the political spectrum to the far left KSČM.

**Table 42:** Frequency of participation of selected political parties in the councils of regional capitals

Regional cities	2002-2006	2006-2010	2010-2014	2014-2018	2018-2022	Participation
ČSSD	11 / 73,33 %	10 / 62,5 %	10 / 62,5 %	11 / 57,89 %	3 / 23,08 %	45 / 56,96 %
ODS	13 / 86,67 %	15 / 93,75 %	9 / 56,25 %	5 / 26,32 %	11 / 84,62 %	53 / 67,09 %
KSČM	1 / 6,67 %	0	0	0	0	1 / 1,27 %
KDU-ČSL	12 / 80 %	8 / 50 %	5 / 31,25 %	14 / 73,68 %	8 / 61,54 %	47 / 59,49 %
ANO	X	X	X	15 / 78,95 %	10 / 76,92 %	25 / 31,65 %
<b>Total number of city councils</b>	15 / 100 %	16 / 100 %	16 / 100 %	19 / 100 %	13 / 100 %	79 / 100 %

Source: Author's own calculations

Table 43 shows the frequency of collaboration of individual pairs of political parties, thus revealing the impact of party affinity on the formation of city councils in regional capitals.

**Table 43:** Frequency of collaboration of pairs of selected political parties in the years 2002–2020

Assemblies of regional capital	
Combination	Incidence
ODS+ČSSD	31 / 24,80 %
ODS+KDU-ČSL	29 / 23,20 %
ČSSD+KDU-ČSL	28 / 22,40 %
ANO+KDU-ČSL	15 / 12 %
ANO+ODS	11 / 8,80 %
ANO+ČSSD	9 / 7,20 %
ČSSD+KSČM	1 / 0,80 %
KSČM+KDU-ČSL	1 / 0,80 %
KSČM+ODS	0

KSČM+ANO	0
<b>Total number of incidence</b>	<b>125 / 100 %</b>

Source: Author's own calculations

Data in the table confirms that in political coalitions, the significance of the ideological and value foundations of individual parties is somewhat relative. On the one hand, ČSSD and ODS can be viewed as ideological anti-poles of the Czech party system. On the other hand, it was collaboration between these two parties that we saw most frequently in coalitions ruling regional capitals. KDU-ČSL affirmed its strong position and successful coalition work in regional capitals, fully using its position in the political centre and frequently collaborating with many subjects across the political spectrum. Similarly, ANO 2011 managed to successfully establish coalition partnerships with both left- and right-wing parties, in spite of strong antipathies (especially of centre-right parties) against the movement's leader Andrej Babiš. KSČM's weak coalition position within the relevant party spectrum is mirrored by its frequent absence in the selected coalition alternatives.

**Table 44:** Incidence of coalition categories in individual regional capitals between 2002–2020

Regional capital/class of coalition	MWC	SMC	MC	Proportion of MWC to deviant coalitions %
Praha	7	1	1	<b>78/22</b>
České Budějovice	1	5	0	17/83
Plzeň	1	4	0	20/80
Karlovy Vary	3	5	0	37,5/62,5
Ústí nad Labem	3	2	1	50/50
Liberec	2	3	1	33/67
Hradec Králové	1	5	0	17/83
Pardubice	0	6	0	0/100
Jihlava	3	3	0	50/50
Brno	4	1	0	<b>80/20</b>
Olomouc	2	3	0	40/60
Zlín	1	4	0	20/80
Ostrava	3	3	0	50/50

Source: Author's own calculations

## Conclusion

The research conclusions are strongly determined by the author's approach to the analysed subject-matter, which for purposes of research and easier interpretation has been viewed as a coherent entity, in this case formed by the thirteen city assemblies of regional capitals. A more detailed and necessarily more extensive analysis of either the existing or an expanded research sample<sup>23</sup> would be beyond the scope of this work, not to mention the disruption that its logical composition and focus would potentially suffer.

The validity of the hypothesis H1, which represents a radical negation of one of the "theorems" of the theory of political coalitions that presumes the dominance of MWCs over other, "deviant" coalition alternatives, was clearly confirmed by the research (see Section 3, Table 1). In the context of municipal assemblies, MWC must be regarded as a widely discounted coalition alternative.

To validate the second hypothesis H2, the party affiliation of individual coalition partners participating in all municipal coalitions in regional capitals in 2002–2020 had to be analysed. After a comprehensive clarification of the reasons for, and effects of, disregarding the principle of ideological polarization of political parties in second-order elections<sup>24</sup>, i.e. the very foundation of the second hypothesis, we can say that the hypothesis was not fully verified.

Interesting insights can be gained by comparing municipal election results with data acquired by analysing regional elections, which are also second-order elections. Although not entirely symmetrical, this comparison is sufficient for illustrative purposes. Regional assemblies overall appear more stable: in five election cycles there were only two non-standard coalitions in the thirteen regions, and these only occurred in the final cycle 2016–2020.<sup>25</sup> Conversely, in the municipal assemblies of regional capitals this phenomenon was more frequent, and, except for the current cycle beginning in 2018, non-standard coalitions were formed during all other election periods.<sup>26</sup>

Analysing the prevailing coalition categories, it is evident that at the regional level, there is a relatively high incidence of different MWC alternatives and

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<sup>23</sup> An extended analysis of towns and municipalities according to their weighted populations would also be possible.

<sup>24</sup> See Subsection 3.4 for more details.

<sup>25</sup> A total of 67 coalitions were formed in the thirteen regional assemblies in 2000–2020 and 79 in the city assemblies of regional capitals between 2002 and 2020.

<sup>26</sup> The city assemblies of regional capitals saw a total of fourteen non-standard coalitions in 2002–2022.

“deviant” coalitions represent a clear minority.<sup>27</sup>

We can observe some considerable differences in the party composition of regional coalitions. The most frequent coalition combination is KDU-ČSL plus ODS (31.82%), followed in a distant second place by ČSSD plus ODS (21.59%). We can see that the order reverses that found in municipal assemblies, and the difference between both alternatives is higher. Parties in other positions, namely ANO 2011 and KSČM, were affected by significant changes. Thanks to their frequent collaboration with ČSSD, especially in 2008–2016 (15.91%, the third most frequent coalition partnership overall), KSČM went from a marginal coalition alternative to a much more relevant subject to consider. ANO 2011, on the other hand, was selected as a member of regional coalitions much less often than in municipal assemblies.<sup>28</sup>

If we concentrate on research results confirming the dominance of “deviant” coalition categories over MWCs, a question poses itself as to whether we can attribute this discrepancy between theory and practice only to parties’ tendency to abandon a pragmatic–rationalist approach (preferring MWCs over SMCs or MCs) when forming municipal coalitions or other factors. We have to take into account other intervening forces possibly affecting the motivations of coalition actors. An important determinant influencing coalition formation at the municipal level is the abovementioned difference in the legislation governing the decision-making process of municipal assemblies, which requires a higher quorum than e.g., in the Chamber of Deputies. The high proportion of surplus coalitions in the city assemblies of regional capitals indicates that this voting procedure has quite a powerful effect on the mechanics of party alliances and city councils.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, a higher quorum can also potentially affect the specific ideological form of municipal coalitions. In a situation where political subjects have to rely on a more qualified majority to ensure government stability and strength, they will be forced into more or less compromised partnerships with greater numbers of coalition members and a broader program spectrum than in the Chamber of Deputies.

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<sup>27</sup> In the years 2000–2022, 67 coalitions were formed in regional assemblies, 43 of which were MWCs (64.18), 18 SMCs (26.87%) and 6 other minority alternatives (8.96%).

<sup>28</sup> In municipal assemblies, ANO 2011 was included in 35 coalition alternatives of a 125 (28%). In regional assemblies, it did even worse, realizing 13 combinations out of 88 (14.77%).

<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the question remains as to why we do not observe a similar development, i.e. the dominance of SMCs, in regional assemblies, whose voting procedures are subject to the same legislation.

This tension can also be identified in coalition building in regional capitals, but it is not as significant. Despite these determinative forces, coalition practice in the city assemblies of regional capitals copies some the alliance patterns observed in the Chamber of Deputies. This primarily involves the frequent partnership of the parliamentary subjects KDU-ČSL plus ODS, and KDU-ČSL plus ČSSD. The position of KSČM in regional capitals also emulates its low coalition potential at the parliamentary level, making it difficult for the party to directly participate in municipal coalitions in regional capitals.

The research also revealed situations in the process of the formation of city councils that are inconsistent with the described parliamentary patterns and defy the theoretical left-right value axis. In addition to some very specific and rare cases<sup>30</sup>, we identified coalitions with a frequent incidence that contradict the national logic of coalition practice. These especially involve cases of coalition partnership between ČSSD and ODS. Their recurring collaboration can be viewed as the most conspicuous breach of the value principle of coalition formation in regional capitals.

This breach of traditional ideological constraints is logically justified. Especially during the first election periods, when both parties dominated the Czech party system, it was very difficult to build a majority coalition without the joint gains of these program rivals, more so considering the higher quorum. We can say that the coalition practice characterized by a dominance of surplus coalitions and deviations from the ideal of ideological proximity, a practice mentioned on many occasions above, is strongly reinforced by the setting of the formal rules. At the same time, coalition actors also exhibited this behaviour thanks to a disruption of the natural integrity of the ideological scheme that applies at the parliamentary level. Anyone deciding to research the municipal level of politics and city assemblies, viewed through the lens of coalition processes and the formation of city councils, should consider these aspects and consequences. Not only is it important to be aware of the difficulty in applying the theory of political coalitions, with all its limitations, to the specific conditions of second-order elections, but also to take into account the specific setting of these conditions at the level of election under review.

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<sup>30</sup> An interesting example of stepping beyond the traditional left-right principle is the described coalition - including ČSSD, KDU-ČSL and KSČM—built in Ostrava after the municipal election of 2002.

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