

Urbex in the V4 countries: analysis of popularity trends

Kamila TUREČKOVÁ, Radim DOLÁK

Abstract: *Urbex, or urban exploration, is an increasingly prominent term associated with non-conformist leisure activities and an alternative way of exploring specific places. As urbex activities are located in a grey area and authentic urbex is limited by its own rules, it is difficult to quantify it directly in terms of analysing its popularity across countries or regions. This makes it challenging to empirically confirm the general view that urbex is growing in popularity. The aim of this paper is therefore to indirectly assess the interest in urbex in the Visegrad Four countries between January 2014 and July 2024 and to specify it for NUTS3 regions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The methodology combines multiple data sources with the analytical tool Google Trends and the specification and comparison of recalculated numerical information related to the term urbex and urban exploration. The findings confirm the assumption of increasing interest in urbex in the V4 countries, with the highest relative popularity of this type of modern exploration in the Czech Republic.*

Keywords: *urbex, urban exploration, analysis, trend, V4 countries*

Introduction

Urbex, or urban exploration, appears to be a relatively new phenomenon among leisure activities that has enabled the emergence of its own global subculture and a number of local urbex communities (Robinson 2015, Kužma 2015, Kindynis 2017 or Chválová 2021). Urbex is an activity in which people discover and visual document abandoned, unused, often "hidden" or inaccessible objects that were created as part of previous human activity and are now decaying. Since urbex activities are, in most cases, outside the law (they are illegal), its issue has not been scientifically studied because there is a lack of any data. If such studies and articles devoted to urbex exist (Lesné 2022), they are most often oriented towards the fields of sociology, philosophy, history and geography, while from a geographical point of view, they mainly concern the determination of urbex activities in specific locations, and at the same time, if the articles are of an empirical nature, then qualitative research primarily dominates them. Our study is different.

The authors' motivation for creating this article was that they wanted to try to quantify the interest in urbex activities, thus supporting the general idea of the growing popularity of urbex activities in our society. Since there is no study comparing any development of interest in urbex over time or space, we tried to fill this research gap using the example of the V4 countries. Due to the lack of relevant data, from a methodological point of view, it was approached to determine the specific number of people interested in urban exploration by synthesizing multiple sources (see Methods and Data). The pilot research and the analysis carried out concerns four selected countries, namely the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. The aim of this paper is therefore to indirectly determine the interest in urbex in the Visegrad Four countries between January 2014 and July 2024 and to concretise it for the NUTS3 regions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. As part of the data analysis, two research questions were asked regarding confirmation of the growing interest in urbex and determination of the ranking of interest in urbex among the Visegrad Four countries.

<https://doi.org/10.33542/GC2025-1-04>

The article is divided into several logically consecutive chapters. The Introduction is followed by the Research Background chapter, which is, however, due to the research aim, treated in the sense of explaining the fact that there is no research background to the topic presented here. This is followed by a section devoted to Methods and Data, describing the methodology used to work on data determination and analysis. The chapter Results presents a specific description of the data found, both for the Visegrad Four countries and in more detail also for the NUTS3 regions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The conclusion summarizes the most important findings of the analysis, mentions the limitations of the presented research and suggests other directions of work that would further scientifically extend the existing knowledge.

Research background

Urbex is the purposeful exploration or visitation of currently abandoned and disused buildings and sites (Garrett 2012) or other remnants of human activity in both urban populated landscapes and rural areas (this type can be referred to as rurex - rural exploration). It does not only apply to real estate - buildings, i.e. brownfields (e.g. Turečková 2021), but includes a visit to shipwrecks, trains, planes, etc. As brownfields we mean here in particular non-functioning hotels and hostels, shops and restaurants, agricultural cooperatives and farmhouses, factories and warehouses, castles and mansions (more e.g. Turečková 2023a), monasteries, residential houses and villas or schools, cinemas, theatres, sanatoriums and health centres, bath houses and hospitals; less common are vacant building sites, docks, tunnels, sewers and drains, water tanks or chimneys, waterworks, railways, mine buildings or shafts, cellars, hangars, parishes, crematoria, churches or cemeteries, amusement parks, playgrounds or swimming pools, bowling alleys, forgotten gardens and greenhouses, mills, bridge structures, bunkers, barracks, shooting ranges, etc. (cf. Ninjalicious 2005).

The purpose of urbex is primarily to gain an intense experience of one's stay in an unusual place, to have a personal experience, and possibly to record the place visually in the form of a photograph or video. Urbex is about the atmosphere of a given place associated with mysticism, authenticity, nostalgia and mystery (George 2011), post-disaster mood and unconventionality, and a sense of inner excitement about illegal infiltration (Steiner and Reisinger 2006 or Půlpán 2020). And it is the problem of illegality that puts urbex on the edge of the law (Chválová 2021, Gądzik 2022 or Duda et al. 2024), because it very often violates the rights of property owners and potentially endangers the health and property of the urbexer due to the owner's failure to fulfil their obligations. Abandoned buildings and sites are often structurally dilapidated and decaying (have broken structures), may be contaminated due to the accumulation of black dumps or attract homeless people, alcoholics or drug addicts (Turečková 2023b) and even compliance with the rules for urbex (Garrett 2014), the so-called code of ethics for urbex, is not a guarantee of safety. Despite the general illegality of urbex activities, urbex is gradually transforming into an object of development of a specific non-consumer tourism sector (Lennon and Foley 2000, Fraser 2012, Dolińska et al. 2018, Gonzalez 2022).

Commenting on the research background is very difficult in our case because no similar effort to concretise and quantify urbex activities has been published. A search of professional sources also found no publications attempting to compare any manifestation of urbex between regions or countries. Among the reasons why this is the case, is primarily the fact that urbex is often illegal (Gądzik 2022, Duda et al. 2024) and therefore it is very difficult or impossible to identify a large number of people (a representative sample for primary research) who engage in it. Urbexers or pseudourbexers are often individuals or form small closed private groups, they are loosely united within broader communities of urbexers (Ninjalicious 2005), which are

difficult to contact in larger numbers (urbexers often go by aliases and the most common platforms for communicating with each other are non-public social networks).

Scientific research and popular publications generally state that awareness of urbex activities and functional urbex itself is on the rise globally (e.g. Rosa 2013, Diverzant and Havlíková 2015, Robinson 2015), but this claim is based on the perception of the growing number of urbex groups and messages on web portals and social networks, published text articles and the growing interest of the scientific community in this phenomenon.

As far as the nature of expert texts on urbex itself is concerned, they are oriented in a purely descriptive (and qualitative) way and mostly concern the topic of urbex as an increasingly popular type of tourism; furthermore, urbex is confronted with cultural and architectural aspects of a given place, put in the context of local history, or determined from a psychological and sociological point of view. Many publications describe the personal experience of urbexers and analyse their motivation or the specific location that is the subject of the research itself.

Urbex is an activity that combines knowledge and interest in history (Stones 2016), architecture (Craggs et al. 2013), culture, geography (Garrett 2010), travel, sports, technology (Pinder 2005), it is a sociological topic (Prescott 2011) with psychological content (Radford 2020) that has the possibility of being presented within the framework of journalism and art. The possibility of perceiving urbex as a form of cultural tourism, which urbex activities further develop and deepen, is also considered by Dolińska et al. (2018) or Smoleńska (2012). Tourism as such is more often associated with the urbex topic, when urbex activities themselves are the cause of tourism itself and not its consequence (Lennon and Foley 2000, Attix 2002, Gonzalez 2022). The expansion of awareness of urbex is due to its promotion and media coverage on social networks and other media (Rosa 2013). This has not only contributed to the growing interest in urbex as an outdoor and adventurous leisure activity, but also to reflections on the significance of these places in the urbanized space of human settlements and their transience (Edensor 2005, Radford 2020). The research topic itself is the search for psychological reasons why urbex is popular and why interest in it is growing (DeBotton 2002, Robinson 2015). Not only do people have a natural desire to discover the “hidden” (DeBotton 2002), but at the same time urbex activities are associated with the release of adrenaline, i.e. urbex is an adventure (Holden 2005), which ultimately has a positive effect on the human psyche and induces a feeling of happiness.

Methods and Data

The intention to objectively assess public interest in urbex faces a significant data availability problem (see above). Any relevant statistics on urbex are lacking, not only at the regional level but also at the national level. Our stated objective, i.e. to determine the interest in urbex in the Visegrad Four countries and to specify it for the NUTS3 regions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, was therefore achieved by combining two indirect sources (an analysis of this type, as presented in this text, in the context of determining trends in the popularity of urbex activities has not yet been undertaken). For our purposes, we define interest in urbex activities and its popularity as the increasing number of searches for the term “urbex” or “urban exploration” on web portals (determined via Google Trends, see below). We abstracted from our own (national – Czech, Polish, Slovak and Hungarian) and alternative terms of urbex or urban exploration. It should be added that the relevance of the analysis of the popularity of urbex and urban exploration and its conclusions is limited by the chosen methodology, data sources and defined assumptions and must be presented in the context of the procedure described below.

The first source was the analytical tool Google Trends, which allows to determine the interest in the chosen issue by tracking the searches on the website for the chosen term over a long

period. The main advantage of Google Trends is its global nature, providing data and visualisations on how often a particular term is searched for on Google over time and in different geographical areas. This tool allows us to compare the popularity of different search phrases and track their seasonality and changes over a longer period of time.

Another problem with the Google Trends search count is the continuous adjustment of index values, which are retrospectively recalculated according to the new values found for searches in the last period. Therefore, it is important to search for given terms on a single day and for a specific period. The period analysed was chosen to be between 1 January 2014 and 31 August 2024, the index values for the term "urbex" were taken from Google Trends as of 11 September 2024, while the search values for the term "urban exploration" were taken as of the following date, i.e. 12 September 2024. Searches in all categories offered by Google Trends have always been performed. Trend charts, taken entirely from Google Trends, are shown for all four countries and both search terms.

The second source of data was the Obersuggest website, which offers, after login, a limited number of searches for a given term, at no charge, and only for one month for a given country. We did not find any other non-paid source that provided specific counts (there are several paid platforms for analysing search words on the internet, but these are for marketing purposes and are associated with commercial activities that do not match our intent and therefore have not been used). The term urbex and urban exploration was searched on this website during the week of 26 – 30 August 2024 for all four countries, with absolute round counts for the period of June 2024.

The absolute numbers of searches for both terms were matched with the index value from Google Trends in the same month, thus we were able to assign the number of searches to each index number and at the same time determine the value of the maximum number of searches when the index value is equal to 100 points ($I=100$) (tab. 1). Partial conversions of the indexes to a specific numerical value covered the tentative period from 2014 to August 2024, allowing us to determine the total number of searches for both words over 128 consecutive months and thus to obtain the mean and median of the time series, including relative data reflecting the potential-maximum population in all four countries. The mere conversion of some indicator values to the number of inhabitants considerably refines the data analysis, as there are significant differences in the population numbers between the V4 countries. The number of inhabitants was taken from the European Union website and for the implementation of population in the analysis we assume that the number of searches for the words urbex and urban exploration is identical to the number of people searching.

In the case of a more detailed analysis of the determination of the popularity of urbex for the NUTS3 regional level in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the regional analysis determined the regions where urbex was most popular on average (as an average of the index values for one year and a given region). Values for "urban exploration" were not collected due to the more prominent interest in the term "urbex". For a more detailed analysis of the determination of the popularity of urbex for the NUTS3 regional level in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the regional analysis determined (1) the regions where urbex was searched for the most on average, over a one-year period (19 October 2023 – 19 October 2024) and (2) a comparison of searches for the term "urbex" in the five most recent years 2019 – 2023. In the Czech Republic, there are 14 of these regions, while in Slovakia there are 8 (see maps in next chapter).

All index values and their converted values to specific numbers of searches for both words for the period under study and the Visegrad Four countries including NUTS3 regions for the Czech Republic and Slovakia are available to the authors, but since these are long time series, they are not included in the article.

Results

The key to determining the interest in urbex activities was to convert the index value taken from Google Trends into an absolute number so that we could quantify the number of searchers over a longer time series. Table 1 shows these transposed values and own calculations and relativized data.

The first comment is about answering the question of what percentage of the population searched the internet for the words urbex and urban exploration in June 2024. In the Czech Republic and Poland, this was approximately 0.04% of the population, while in Slovakia and Hungary it was 0.0184% and 0.0198% respectively. The findings also show that the term urban exploration is significantly less frequent than urbex. At the same time, we declare that our calculations do not show significant extremes within the group of countries and are in line with our expectations in the context of our own research experience. The above is confirmed by the values in the penultimate column, which represent the number of searches for the maximum index value ($I=100$). In other words, this is the maximum number of searches – people in a given country who have searched for the words urbex and urban exploration on Google in the course of one month. Again, due to population differences across Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary, these figures are converted to population, where, e.g. in Slovakia the maximum number of searches (1887 searches in August 2024, fig. 1) corresponds to 0.0348% of the total Slovak population, while in the Czech Republic 11000 searches correspond to 0.1009% of the Czech population and this maximum was reached in March 2018. It should be noted here that this is not a manifestation of a general interest in urbex activities in the selected countries, but only a singular value for the index threshold value of 100. An analysis of the popularity of urbex and urban exploration in cross-regional comparison is presented in the following section of this paper.

Urbex and urban exploration in V4 countries

The basic statistics providing us with data to analyze the searches for the two chosen words are shown in tab. 2. For better logical orientation, the first two columns were taken from tab. 1 (abstracting from the column with the legend), as the data presented here were necessary for the final calculations. The key value that was necessary to establish is the number of searches in the study period covering 128 months (January 2014-August 2024). With reference to the methodology, this quantity was determined as the sum of the index values from Google Trends for each month multiplied by the value in the first column (absolute number of word searches for the absolute amount of the index ($I=100$)), divided by 100. The calculated values of the total number of searches (column 3) reflect the population number in all four countries and are refined in the context of the population number in the last column. In terms of numerical values, the term urbex is many times more popular in searches than the term urban exploration, which is relatively more frequently used in searches in Slovakia than in the other three countries. In any case, on average the word urbex was searched for 585 times per month in Slovakia, 2162 times per month in the Czech Republic, 5939 times in Poland and 881 times per month in Hungary. For completeness, we also show in the penultimate column the median of the time series, which expresses the number of searches, which is exactly in the middle of the group of all 128 ranked values. As also mentioned above, given the significant differences in population across countries, it is useful to relate these search values to the population number in order to more accurately reflect the interest in urbex or urban exploration. These data are contained in the last column and can be interpreted as follows: the highest interest in searching for urbex on web portals is in the Czech Republic, where on average less than 0.02% of the population has entered it into a search engine, slightly less in Poland with 0.016% of citizens interested, followed by Slovakia with approximately 0.011% and finally Hungary with 0.009%. The average for all V4 countries is 0.015%. The figures for

urban exploration can be commented on analogically. Due to the significantly lower search values for this term (urban exploration) (even adding the two search values for both terms does not change the ranking of the V4 countries) we may be inclined to assign interest in urbex activities to the search term urbex.

Tab. 1. Basic conversions between the number of urbex/urban exploration searches, the value of the trend index and the number of inhabitants

Search word/ Country	Number of word searches in June 2024 (Obersug- gest, 26-30 October 2024)	Number of inhabitants in 2024 (European Union)	Relative conversion of word searches to the number of inhabit- ants in June 2024 (%)	Index value for June 2024 (Google Trends, 11-12 September 2024)	Absolute number of word searches for the absolute amount of the index (I=100)	Percentage (%) of the population expressing maximum in- terest in the searched word (for I=100)
Urbex						
Slovakia	1 000	5 424 687	0.0184	53	1 887	0.0348
Czech Republic	4 400	10 900 555	0.0404	40	11 000	0.1009
Poland	14 800	36 620 970	0.0404	91	16 264	0.0444
Hungary	1 900	9 584 627	0.0198	65	2 923	0.0305
Urban exploration						
Slovakia	110	5 424 687	0.0020	62	177	0.0033
Czech Republic	170	10 900 555	0.0016	38	447	0.0041
Poland	590	36 620 970	0.0016	85	694	0.0019
Hungary	110	9 584 627	0.0011	67	164	0.0017

Source: Google Trends (2024), Obersuggest (2024), European Union (2024), own calculation

Tab. 2. Basic statistics for searching the words urbex and urban exploration in V4 countries

Search word/Country	Absolute number of word searches for the absolute amount of the index (I=100)	Number of inhabitants in 2024 (European Union)	Total number of word searches in 128 months (1/2014 – 8/2024)	Average number of searches for the word in one month	Time series median of the number of word searches	The average share of the population for the number of word searches per month (%)
Urbex						
Slovakia	1 887	5 424 687	74 820	585	623	0.010775
Czech Republic	11 000	10 900 555	276 760	2 162	1980	0.019836
Poland	16 264	36 620 970	760 179	5 939	6343	0.016217
Hungary	2 923	9 584 627	112 799	881	848	0.009194
All V4 countries	-	62 530 839	1 224 557	9 567	-	0.015299
Urban exploration						
Slovakia	177	5424687	7 482	58	64	0.001078
Czech Republic	447	10 900 555	11 542	90	85	0.000827
Poland	694	36 620 970	32 118	251	264	0.000685
Hungary	164	9 584 627	7 428	58	54	0.000605
All V4 countries	-	62530839	58 569	458	-	0.000732

Source: European Union (2024), own calculation

Fig. 1 combines trend graphs taken from Google Trends (fig. 2) for searches for the word urbex with the specific number of searches. This allows us to visually compare V4 countries against each other in urbex searches. For all countries, there is a gradual increase in searches, with the Czech Republic showing interest first (around 2015), followed by Poland (interest started to increase dynamically from winter 2016), and since the end of 2018, urbex has become of permanent interest in Slovakia and from 2020 also in Hungary. The trend of interest is increasing in all countries, with more dynamic changes in Poland and Hungary, while in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the increase in interest is rather constant and permanent. Due to the very high volatility of the sub-data, it was not possible to determine the exact rate of growth in the period under review, nor was the effect of seasonality on searches confirmed, i.e. the number of searches for the word urbex developed independently of specific months of the year.

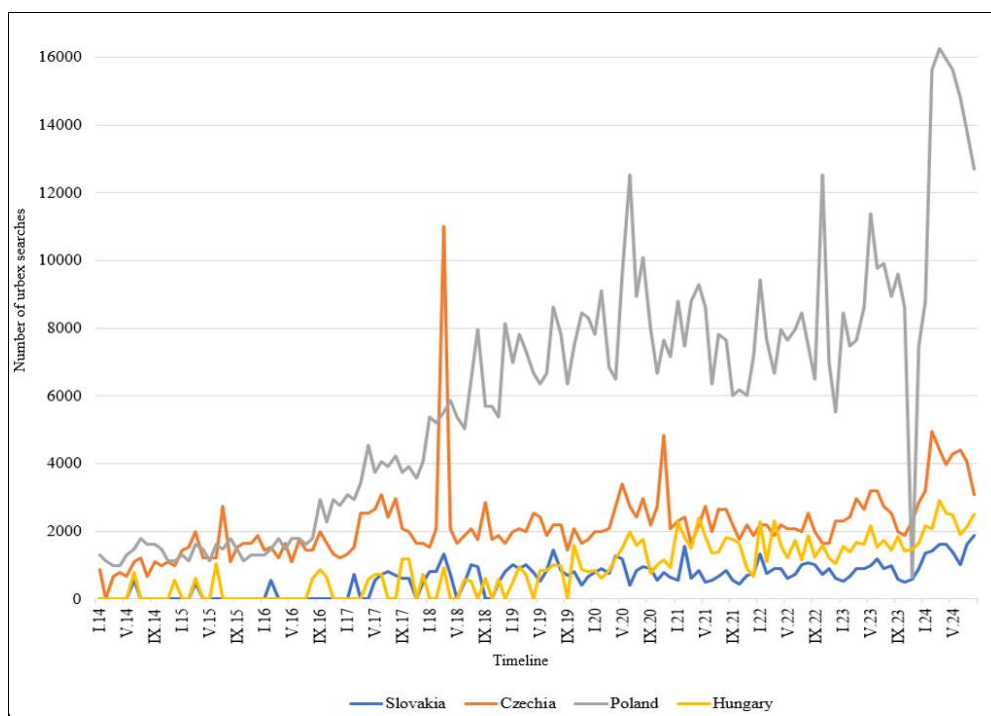
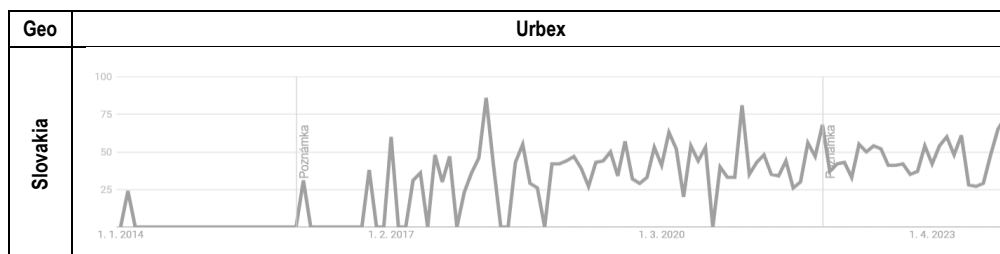


Fig. 1. Transformation of search trends converted to the number of urbex searches in V4 countries (January 2014 – August 2024); Source: own calculation

The data presented in fig. 2 are presented here as input data for our analysis, as generated within Google Trends. For each month, the search value was converted to a numeric value so that it could be further processed (see Methods and Data).



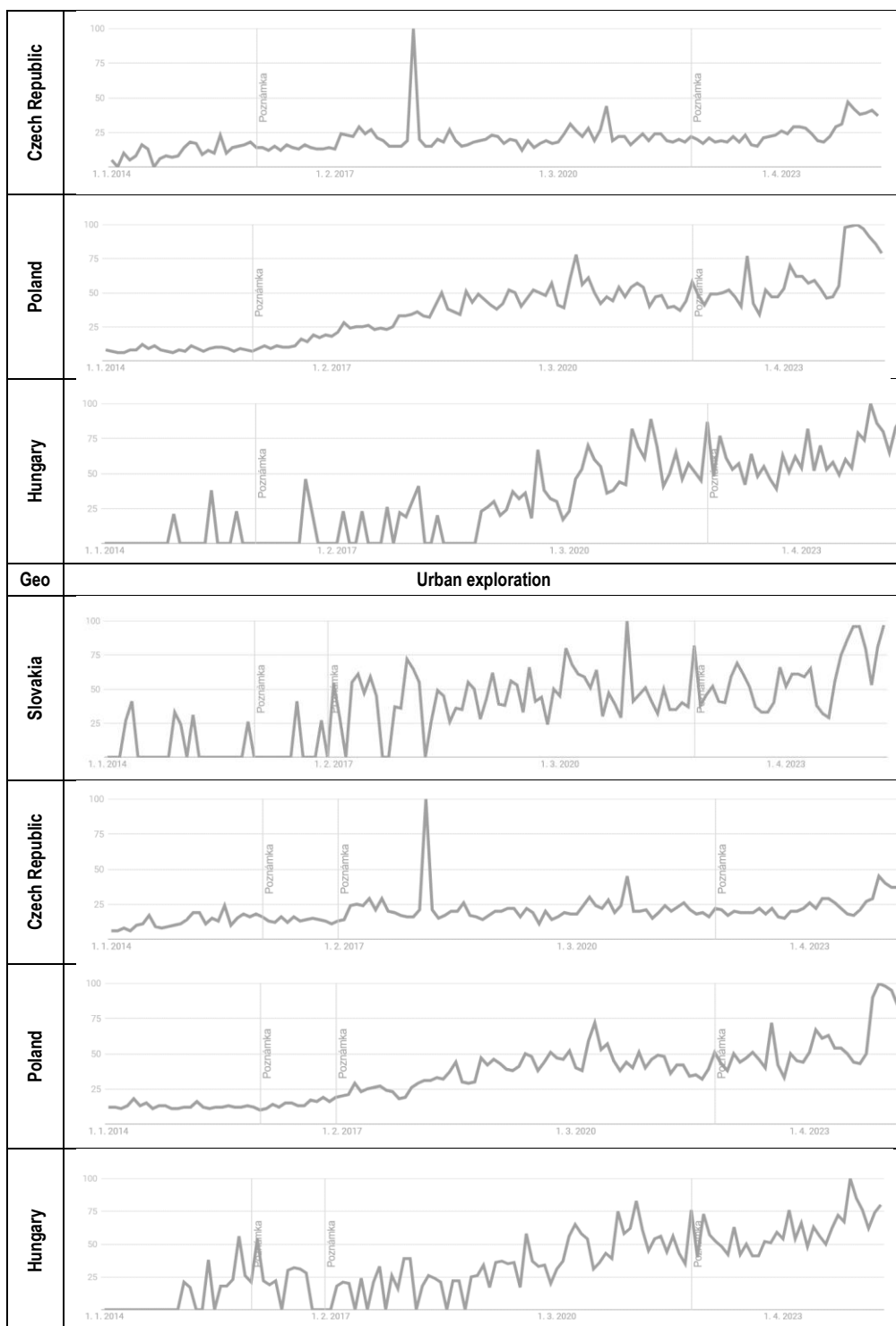


Fig. 2. Search trends for the words urbex and urban exploration in the V4 countries in the period January 2014 – August 2024; Source: Google Trends (2024)

Urbex in NUTS3 regions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

Analysis of Google Trends searches can provide valuable insights into the growing interest in urbex activities, and appropriately present us with trends and subject preferences in the context of the space and time required. Due to the previous finding that the term "urbex" is more widely used in society, the analysis of the phrase "urban exploration" was abandoned and the identification of trends across NUTS3 regions in the Czech and Slovak Republics focused only on the word "urbex".

The following figure (fig. 3) shows the interest in urbex in each of the fourteen regions of the Czech Republic in the form of a map. This is the average of searches (measured by the index) for the term urbex over a one-year period (19 October 2023 – 19 October 2024). The biggest demand for the search of the term urbex comes from the following regions: The Plzen Region, the Central Bohemian Region, the Liberec Region, the Usti Region, the Vysocina Region and the Hradec Kralové Region. Due to general knowledge, the number of searches cannot be linked to either the population or the population density in each region. In other words, it is not true that in regions with a high population, interest in urbex was also high and vice versa (tab. 3, fig. 7, fig. 8). There will probably be other criteria behind the higher interest in urbex activities. Even linking to the www.urbexmapa.cz portal (a paid portal for providing information on sites suitable for urbex) does not explain the value findings, as there are few sites for urbex in the Pilsen Region, while Prague has the most. This distribution of interest in urbex across the regions of the Czech Republic cannot be explained on the basis of secondary information (this is also true for Slovakia and it is questionable whether primary research would be able to do so).

A different kind of information is provided by the following graph (fig. 4), which shows the index values of searches for urbex via Google Trends over the last five years (2019 – 2023). However, complete datasets for all regions of the Czech Republic can already be found as of 2017. Since the complete datasets are available for the individual regions of the Slovak Republic only from 2019 onwards, the period under study is unified. The greatest interest in urbex in the last five years is from the Karlovy Vary, Plzen and Hradec Kralové Regions, while the least interest in urbex was in the Olomouc, Pardubice and South Bohemia Regions, see the average of the annual index data presented by Google Trends. Let us also add that during the five years under review, there was no consistently growing or declining interest in urbex in any of the regions, and therefore it is not possible to clearly identify the trend in the search for urbex in individual regions of the Czech Republic.

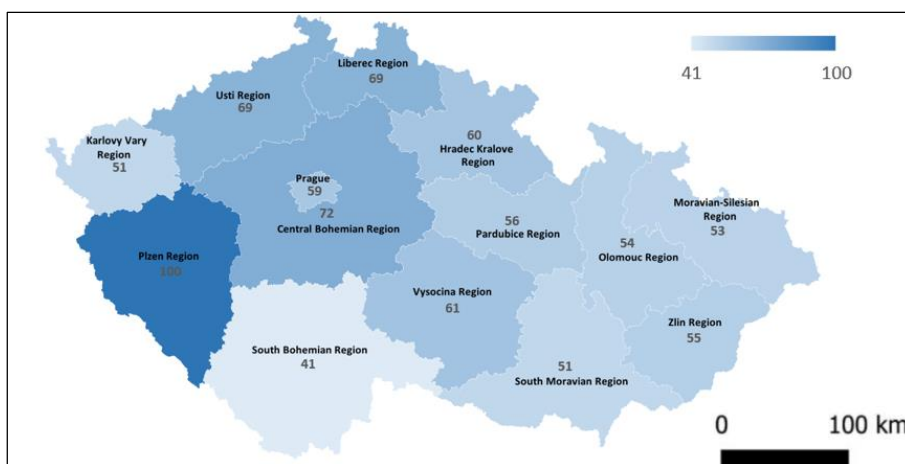


Fig. 3. Google Trends search for term "urbex" measured by the Google Trends index in NUTS3 regions in the Czech Republic for 12 months; Own calculations based on Google Trends (2024)

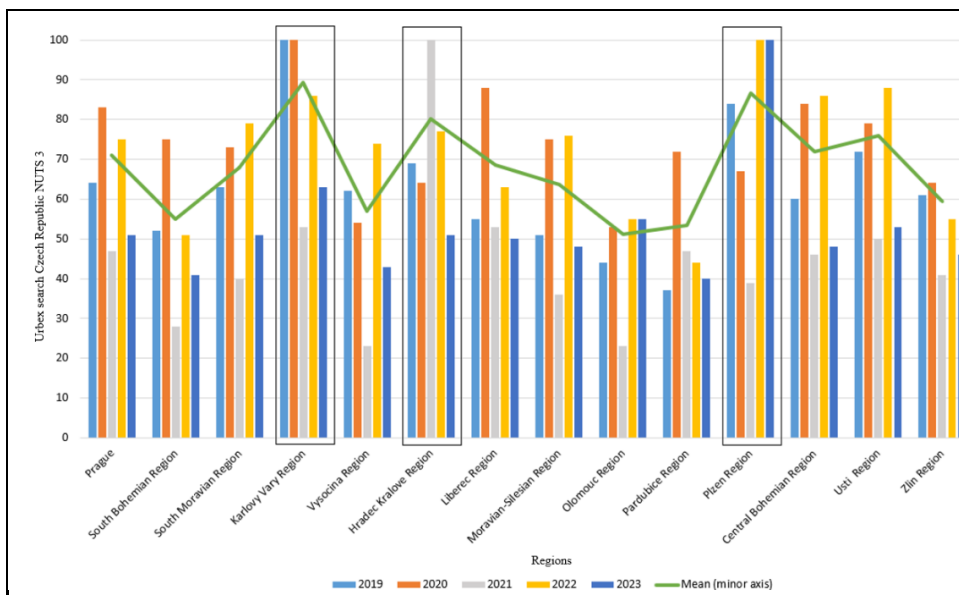


Fig. 4. Urbex search in the Czech Republic NUTS 3 (2019-2023); Source: own calculation

Analogically, we will present the situation in the popularity of urbex according to its searches on web portals in Slovak regions for the same period as in the case of the Czech Republic.

The first visualised output for Slovakia (fig. 5) summarises the average index values for the period 19 October 2023 - 19 October 2024 for NUTS3 regions in Slovakia. The highest popularity of the urbex on web portals during one year was recorded in the Bratislava Region closely followed by the Trnava Region; both regions are among the most densely populated and the capital of the Slovak Republic Bratislava is also located in the former. On the other hand, the least demand for urbex was in the Prešov Region, which is probably the most peripheral of all Slovak regions. These findings have their own logic, which could not be found in the case of the Czech Republic on the basis of the available information and our own knowledge.

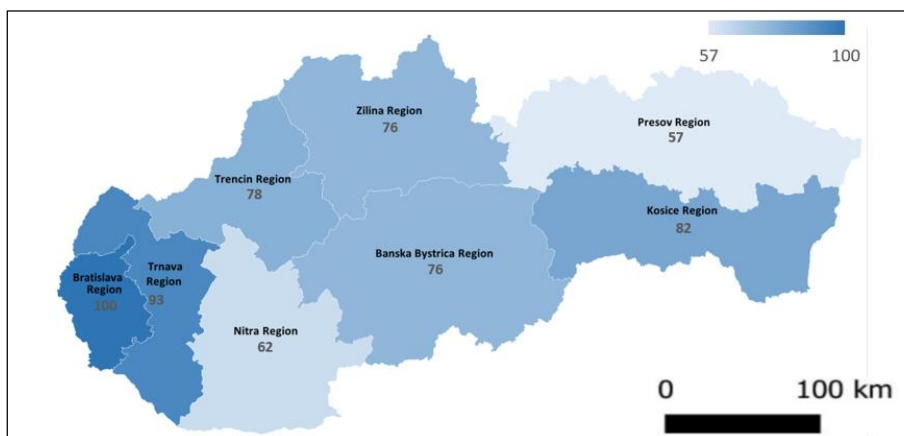


Fig. 5. Google Trends search for term “urbex” measured by the Google Trends index in NUTS3 regions in the Slovak Republic for 12 months; Own calculation based on Google Trends (2024)

The results of the comparison of the annual indices obtained from Google Trends for the individual regions of Slovakia (fig. 6) generally correspond to the results recorded in Figure 4. The dominance of the Bratislava Region is unquestionable; furthermore, urbex enjoys the interest of internet search engines in the Kosice and Trencin Regions. Over the last five years, urbex has been searched for the least in the Presov Region. Even in the case of Slovak regions, no continuous trends in searches for urbex can be described, not even in the case of the Bratislava Region. The difference with the Czech Republic, however, lies in a kind of regional stability of searches, where the index values are less "fragmented" (more compact) between the monitored years in Slovakia than in the Czech Republic.

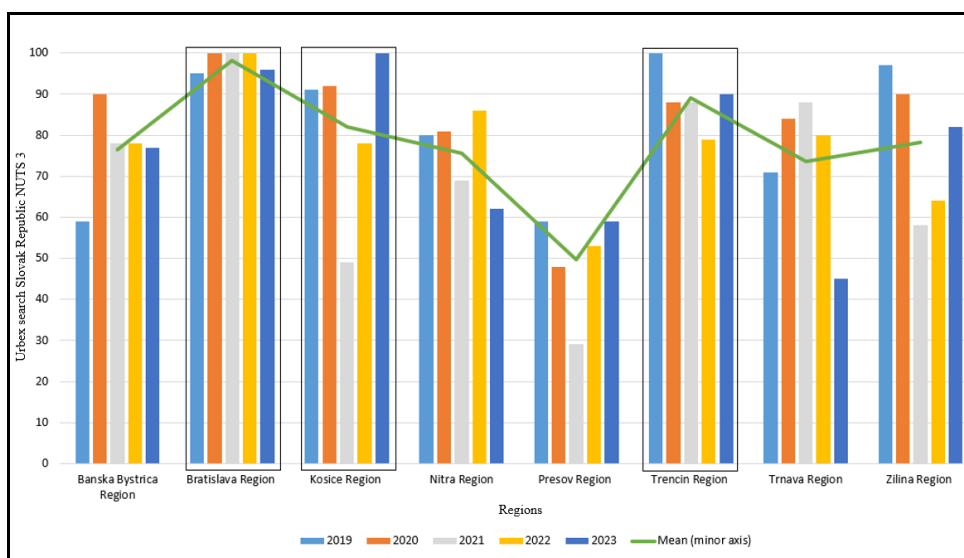


Fig. 6. Urbex search in the Slovak Republic NUTS 3 (2019-2023); Source: own calculation

If we were to reflect the population in individual regions and relativize the data on searches for the term “urbex” in this sense, then the above assumption will be confirmed, that this does not correlate positively with the number of inhabitants in individual regions (see tab. 3 – the three highest values and the three following are marked in gray tones). In addition, data on the population in individual NUTS 3 regions are given as of 31 December 2023 (CSO 2025 and STATdat 2025) and average search index value is calculated for time period 19 October 2023 – 19 October 2024. The relativized data represent a dimensionless number calculated as average search index value divided by population multiplied by one hundred. It is true that the higher the value of these relativized data, the higher the interest in urbex, taking into account the size of the population. For a better illustration, the values of the recalculated data are also shown in fig. 7 and fig. 8 where relative data values (taken over fourth column in tab. 3 rounding to three decimal places) are given and regions are colored according to their size.

If we take into account the size of the local population, then in the Czech Republic the greatest interest in urbex is in the Karlovy Vary Region, Plzen Region and Liberec Region, followed by the Vysocina, Hradec Kralove and Pardubice regions. In Slovakia these are Trnava Region, Trencin Region and Bratislava Region, followed by the Banska Bystrica, Zilina and Kosice regions. An interesting finding is that while in the Czech Republic the regions with the largest populations have “fallen”, in Slovakia the situation is different thanks to the Bratislava region. In any case, it is clear from these data that it is not true that in regions with a larger population there is also a greater interest in searching for urbex on websites (in our case and in context of our methodology).

Tab. 3. Interest in urbex in NUTS 3 regions in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic in the context of population size

Czech Republic	Population	Average search index value	Relativized data
Prague	1 384 732	59	0.004261
Central Bohemian Region	1 455 940	72	0.004945
South Bohemian Region	654 505	41	0.006264
Plzen Region	613 374	100	0.016303
Karlovy Vary Region	295 077	51	0.017284
Usti Region	811 169	69	0.008506
Liberec Region	450 728	69	0.015309
Hradec Kralove Region	556 949	60	0.010773
Pardubice Region	530 560	56	0.010555
Vysocina Region	517 960	61	0.011777
South Moravian Region	1 226 749	51	0.004157
Olomouc Region	632 864	54	0.008533
Zlin Region	580 744	55	0.009471
Moravian.Silesian Region	1 189 204	53	0.004457
Slovak Republic			
Bratislava Region	732 757	100	0.013647
Tmava Region	566 114	93	0.016428
Trencin Region	568 102	78	0.013730
Nitra Region	668 301	62	0.009277
Zilina Region	687 174	76	0.011060
Banska Bystrica Region	614 356	76	0.012371
Presov Region	808 810	57	0.007047
Kosice Region	779 073	82	0.010525

Source: own calculation

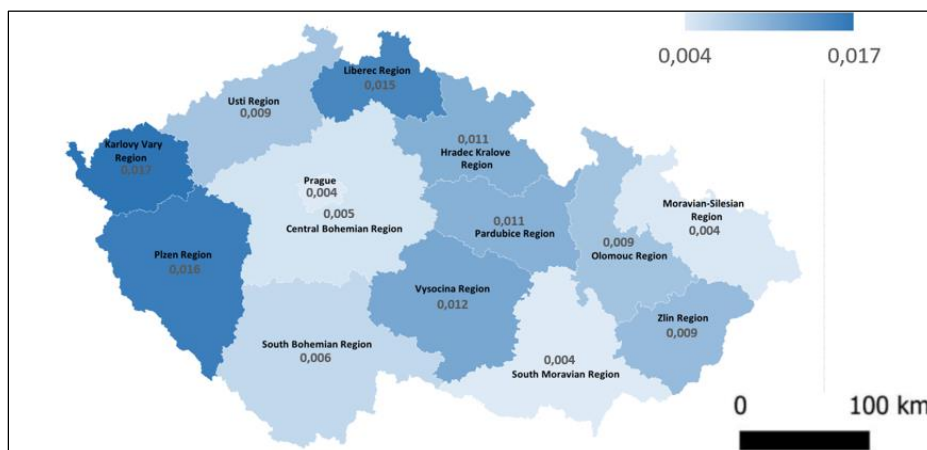


Fig. 7. Google Trends search for “urbex” in NUTS3 regions Czech Republic in context of population; Source: own calculation

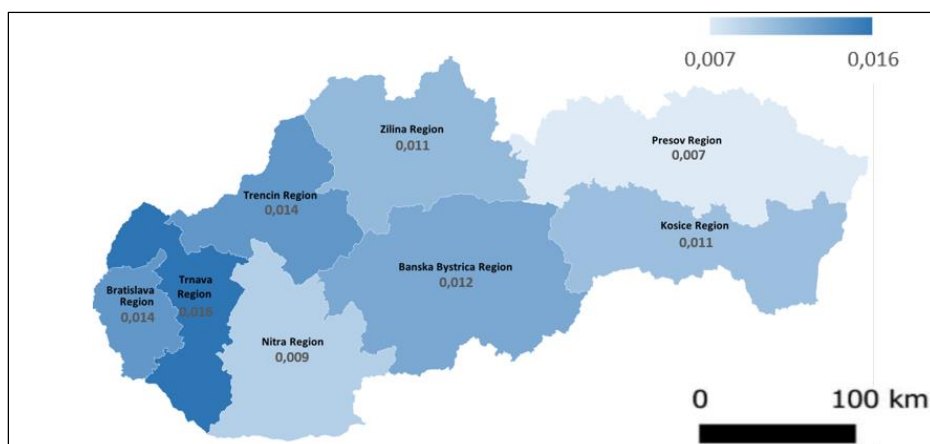


Fig. 8. Google Trends search for "urbex" in NUTS3 regions in the Slovak Republic in context of population; Source: own calculation

Conclusions

The intention of the above text was to pilot and indirectly determine the interest in urbex activities in the Visegrad Four countries and to concretise it for NUTS3 regions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This is primarily a descriptive text, which is complemented by the usual data analysis and ex-post interpretation. The content of the article is completely new, a similar analysis of the trends of searches for the term "urbex" via Google Trends has not been published so far and it is not possible to develop a factual discussion here. On the other hand, the authors are aware of the limitations of the outputs presented here, which reflect the established methodology and the very essence of the interpretation of data taken from Google Trends. In particular, the fact that the index itself is calculated as the frequency of searches over time to the maximum number of searches in a given country. This maximum may be determined in one state based on 200 people and in another on the basis of 5000 people, but the index value will always be equal to 100 ($I=100$), i.e. the index itself loses relevance in interregional comparisons (we only see the trend of "popularity on the website when the word "urbex" is searched"). Therefore, we linked the index value to a specific number of searches obtained from another source (Obersuggest) and refined the results by relativizing them to the population, thus specifying our analysis of the comparison of V4 countries in the search term "urbex".

When summarizing the results of the conducted analysis and the findings from them, the abbreviation and term "urbex" is used much more frequently than the term urban exploration, when reflecting the population in all four countries, it is the Czech Republic where urbex enjoys the most attention in searches on web portals, and at the same time, a growing interest in urbex as such can be identified in all countries. For the NUTS3 regions in the Czech Republic, the interest in urbex is dominated by the Plzeň Region, and in the long term also by the Karlovy Vary and Hradec Králové Regions, Prague is at the average of the Czech Republic. In Slovakia, searches for urbex are most frequent in the regions of Bratislava, Košice, Trenčín and Trnava, while interest in urbex from the perspective of the searcher's location is much more consistent. In the Czech Republic, internet searches for the term 'urbex' are regionally inconsistent and highly variable. Very similar results of interest in urbex were also confirmed by relativized data related to the number of inhabitants in the given regions calculated for the period 19.10.2023 – 19.10.2024. In the Czech Republic, urbex enjoys the greatest interest in the Karlovy Vary, Plzeň and Liberec regions, in the Slovak Republic it is in the Trnava, Trenčín and Bratislava regions. In the comparison of urbex in searches on web portals and the number of inhabitants in the regions, a positive correlation was not confirmed, i.e. it is not true that in regions with a higher number of inhabitants the interest in urbex is higher.

In addition to the above, it is proposed to determine the factors that influence interest in urbex activities in regions, which could explain the observed interregional disparities in the expressed interest in searching for urbex in web search engines. The fact remains that there are no such studies, and this offers room for the next direction of research. It can be objectively assumed that the key factors will include the location of abandoned objects in the region, their availability, number and awareness of them among those interested in research, or the urbex culture itself (behavior and respect for urbex rules, etc.). The number and structure of objects suitable for research are primarily related to historical events, the economic cycle and the sectoral structure of the local economy and population phenomena, such as population aging, low birth rates and the outflow of the young generation elsewhere. Indirectly related to this is the fact that urbex is more often associated with younger people, who more easily combine digital knowledge with searching for objects through various applications and visually process their research for thematic presentations on social networks. Another important factor is the media coverage of urbex activities and their popularization in a given society. The correlation between the media coverage of urbex and the interest in it in a given region also offers scope for research. The last aspect concerning the purely national level is the setting of legislation and the enforceability of the law in relation to various urbex activities. Duda et al. (2025) states that this most often involves a violation of the civil rights of a specific property owner, or at the criminal level, an offense of violation of home freedom. States with benevolent legislative orders may be more attractive to explorers than countries that are strict and consistent in violating the law.

As far as further research is concerned, the authors' intention is to transform the index values using the same methodological procedure into specific numbers of searches, not only for all NUTS3 regions of the V4 countries but also to find out what is the situation in the popularity of urbex across all EU countries. Another line of research could link the extremes in the trend of searches for the term "urbex" found by Google Trends with media coverage of the topic of urbex, i.e. whether the publicly discussed topic has been reflected in internet searches for "urbex" on web portals. We must not neglect primary research, the implementation of which would certainly provide a unique insight into the issue of urban exploration and would reveal the real or potential reasons and consequences of this activity.

Urbex is about experience, primarily internal, but also mediated, and shared. At a time when the principles of sustainability and circular economy are being emphasized, urbex can contribute to the realization that in many cases there is a "hidden" potential in the form of brownfields or other objects, the reuse of which, applying the principles of 3R (reduce-reuse-recycle) (also Turečková 2023b), has a significantly higher societal benefit than, for example, the planning and implementation of completely new urban activities on "green-fields". The growing interest in urbex activities could contribute to this in a desirable way.

References

- ATTIX, S. A. 2002: New Age-Oriented Special Interest Travel: An Exploratory Study. *Tourism Recreation Research* 27(2): 51-58. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2002.11081220>.
- CSO 2025: *Obyvatelstvo*. Praha (Český statistický úřad). [cit. 2025-05-26]. Retrieved from: https://csu.gov.cz/docs/107951/ac456a7c-95fa-4b4b-835c-328131732d6d/ukazatele_kraje_demogr.xlsx?version=1.5.
- CHVÁLOVÁ, B. 2021: Nebezpečný koníček na hraně zákona. Urbex má své vyznavače i v Čechách. *Český Rozhlas České Budějovice*. Retrieved from: <https://budejovice.rozhlas.cz/nebezpecny-konicek-na-hrane-zakona-urbex-ma-sve-vyznavace-i-v-cechach-8474856>.
- CRAGGS, R., GEOGHEGAN, H., NEATE, H. 2013: Architectural Enthusiasm: Visiting Buildings with the Twentieth Century Society. *Environment and Planning D Society and Space*, 31(5), 879-896. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1068/d14512>.

- DE BOTTON, A. 2002: *The Art of Travel*. London (Penguin). 272 p.
- DIVERZANT, HAVLÍKOVÁ, K. 2015: *Urbex.cz: Krása zániku*. Praha (Paseka). 208 p.
- DOLIŇSKA, M., SMOLIŇSKI, P., GRZELAK-KOSTULSKA, E. 2018: Rozważania nad kierunkami rozwoju turystyki kulturowej. *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska*, 73, 237-251. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17951/b.2018.73.237-251>.
- DUDA, D., MÁRTON, M., TUREČKOVÁ, K. 2024: Právní aspekty URBEXu z pohledu vlastníka nemovitosti v kontextu českého práva. *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Iuridica*, 70(1), 199-211. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14712/23366478.2024.13>.
- DUDA, D., TUREČKOVÁ, K., MÁRTON, M. 2025: Rights and obligations of urbexers in the context of the legislation of the Czech Republic. *DANUBE*, 16(1), 49-60. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2478/danb-2025-0004>.
- EDENSOR, T. 2005: The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins: Ordering and Disordering Memory in Excessive Space. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 23(6), 829-49. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1068/d58j>.
- EUROPEAN UNION 2024: *Demography of Europe – 2024 edition*. [cit. 2024-09-11 – 2024-10-19]. Retrieved from: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/demography-2024>.
- FRASER, E. 2012: Urban exploration as adventure tourism: Journeying beyond the everyday. In Andrews H., Roberts L. eds. *Liminal Landscapes: Travel, Experience, and Spaces In-between*. New York (Routledge), 136-151.
- GĄDZIK, Z. 2022: Prawnokarna ocena eksploracji miejskiej (urban exploration). *Studia Prawnicze KUL*, 3, 7-27. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31743/sp.13200>.
- GARRETT, B. L. 2010: Urban explorers: Quests for myth, mystery and meaning. *Geography Compass*, 4(10), 1448-1461. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2010.00389.x>.
- GARRETT, B. L. 2012: *Place Hacking: Tales of Urban Exploration*. London (University of London). 380 p.
- GARRETT, B. L. 2014: Undertaking Recreational Trespass: Urban Exploration and Infiltration. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 39(1), 1-13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12001>.
- GEORGE, J. 2011: Gazing through the sepia lens: Critical considerations of tourism's nostalgic construction of the small town. *Social Alternatives*, 30(2), 30-34.
- GONZALEZ, M. G. 2022: Imaginign experiences through the urbex. A kind of suburban post-industrial prototourism. *PASOS Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 20(2), 359-370. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2022.20.026>.
- GOOGLE TRENDS 2024: *Google Trends search*. [cit. 2024-09-11- 2024-10-19]. Retrieved from: <https://trends.google.com/trends/>.
- HOLDEN, A. 2005: *Tourism Studies and the Social Sciences*. Oxford (Routledge). 240 p.
- KINDYNIS, T. 2017: Urban Exploration: From Subterranea to Spectacle. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 57(4), 982–1001. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azw045>.
- KUŹMA, K. 2015: Urbexersi – eksploratorzy opuszczonego miasta. *Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne*, 15, 223-239.
- LENNON, J., FOLEY, M. 2000: *Dark Tourism – the Attraction of Death and Disaster*. London (Continuum).
- LESNÉ, R. 2022: “Urbex and Urban Space”: A Systematic Literature Review and Bibliometric Analysis. *International Journal of the Sociology of Leisure*, 5(4), 425-443. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41978-022-00120-y>.
- NINJALICIOUS 2005: *Access All Areas: A User's Guide to the Art of Urban Exploration*. Ontario (Infilpress), 242 p.
- OBERSUGGEST 2024: *Obersuggest word search*. [cit. 2024-08-26 – 2024-08-30]. Retrieved from: <https://neilpatel.com/ubersuggest/>.

- PINDER, D. 2005: Arts of urban exploration. *Cultural Geographies*, 12(4), 383-411. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1191/1474474005eu347oa>.
- PRESCOTT, H. 2011: Reclaiming ruins: Childbirth, ruination and urban exploration photography of the ruined maternity ward. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 39(3/4), 113-132. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/ws.2011.0040>.
- PŮLPÁN, M. 2020: Urbex. Adrenalinový koníček na hraně zákona. *Český rozhlas Pardubice*. Retrieved from <https://pardubice.rozhlas.cz/urbex-adrenalinovy-konicek-na-hrane-zakona-8269836>.
- RADFORD, R. 2020: Psychogeography: An (Old) New Method for Viewing the Religious in the Urban and the Sacred. *Fieldwork in Religion*, 14(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1558/firm.40567>.
- ROBINSON, P. 2015: Conceptualizing urban exploration as beyond tourism and as anti-tourism. *An International Journal of Akdeniz University Tourism Faculty*, 3(2), 141-164.
- ROSA, H. 2013: *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*. New York (Columbia University Press), 512 p.
- SMOLEŇSKA, I. E. 2012: Opuszczone miasta jako destinacje w turystyce kulturowej – analiza przykładów. *Turystyka kulturowa*, 12, 7-8.
- SOSR 2025: Počet obyvatel'ov [cit. 2025-05-26]. Retrieved from: <https://statdat.statistics.sk/>.
- STEINER, C., REISINGER, Y. 2006: Understanding existential authenticity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(2), 299–318. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2005.08.002>.
- STONES, S. 2016: The value of heritage: urban exploration and the historic environment. *The historic environment policy & practice*, 7(4), 1-20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17567505.2016.1252490>.
- TUREČKOVÁ, K. 2021: Specific types and categorizations of brownfields: synthesis of individual approaches. *Geographia Technica*, 17(2), 29-39. DOI: https://doi.org/10.21163/GT_2021.162.03.
- TUREČKOVÁ, K. 2023a: The Causes of the Occurrence and Spheres of Restoration of Chateau Brownfields: A Search for Causality on the Example of Properties in the Moravian-Silesian Region, Czech Republic. *Land*, 12(1), 251. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/land12010251>.
- TUREČKOVÁ, K. 2023b: *Brownfieldy jako výzva pro veřejný sektor*. Praha (Professional Publishing).

Acknowledgement: *This paper was supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports within the Institutional Support for long-term Development of a Research Organization Silesian University in Opava in 2025.*

Authors' affiliations

doc. Ing. Kamila Turečková, Ph.D., MBA
 Silesian University in Opava,
 School of Business Administration in Karviná
 Department of Economics and Public Administration
 Univerzitní náměstí 1934/3, 733 40 Karviná
 Czech Republic
tureckova@opf.slu.cz

Ing. Radim Dolák, Ph.D.
 Silesian University in Opava
 School of Business Administration in Karviná
 Department of Informatics and Mathematics
 Univerzitní náměstí 1934/3, 733 40 Karviná
 Czech Republic
dolak@opf.slu.cz