

PRAGUE OCCASIONAL PAPERS
IN ETHNOLOGY

No. 8

**Migration, Diversity and Their
Management**

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Institute of Ethnology
Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, v.v.i.

2011

Reviewer: Mgr. Daniel Luther, CSc.

Key words: sociocultural anthropology, ethnology, migration, diversity

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Publisher: Institute of Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences
of the Czech Republic, v.v.i.
Na Florenci 3
110 00 Praha 1
Czech Republic

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Institutional Research Plan: AV0Z 90580513
Research Grant: FP 6, Centers of Excellence, Sustainable
Development in the Diverse World, CIT3-CT-2005-513438

Editor: Veronika Beranská, Zdeněk Uherek

Print: Blesková tiskárna, Na poříčí 1074/9, Praha 1
1st edition
ISBN: 978-80-87112-46-5

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Migration, Diversity and Their Management: Introductory Word

Zdeněk Uherek

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The monograph presented is comprised of texts that have in common chiefly the research plan of the Institute of Ethnology of the AS CR, v.v.i.¹ and the resolution of the Sustainable Development in a Diverse World project of the 6th FP of the European Commission,² which made it possible to expand the project by several contributions from abroad and finalise the publication. The publication further includes texts that were created also as the outcomes in the implementation of other projects. In such a case, the authors introduce us to them within their works.

The basic idea of the publication arises from the Department of Ethnic Studies of the Institute of Ethnology of the AS CR, v.v.i., which selected the term migration as one of the defining terms of its activity within the mentioned research plan. It is a term that has permeated, like the term diversity, the problems of the field of ethnology and socio-cultural anthropology already since their beginnings. On the one hand, through migrations the pioneers of these fields arrived in foreign regions, met with people of a different way of life and customs there, with human diversity, and attempted to understand this diversity; on the other hand, the members of European and later also non-European nations through these fields published testimonials on themselves for those who had been coming or who formed other communities despite being close by. At the same time, Europeans as well as non-European nations through ethnology and socio-cultural anthropology have always

¹ The research plan of the IE AS CR, v.v.i., Cultural Identity and Cultural Regionalism in the Process of Forming an Ethnic Picture of Europe is registered under shelf mark AV0Z90580513.

² European Commission, FP6, Priority 7 'Citizens and governance in a knowledge-based society' (Contract No. CIT3-CT-2005-513438).

deepened the knowledge of groups they belong to and thus contribute to the social changes taking place inside these groups.

Nevertheless, ethnology and socio-cultural anthropology are not the only fields of the social sciences for which the problem of migrations and diversity is important. The theme pervades the social sciences as a whole, and particularly sociology has contributed significantly to the current form of the migrational theory.

Yet migrations are not the domain of only the social sciences. The questions of migration overlap the sciences of mankind and nature as a whole. At the birth of migrational theory, there stood beside the sociologists also social geographers and demographers, and precisely the influence of migrations on the demographic processes and on the distribution of the human population in space was one of the first questions asked in the framework of the theme of migration. For the social sciences, it is important that migrations are not only their domain but that juncture topic between the sciences of mankind and living natural sciences. The ability to connect the theme of mankind and living nature on the most general level in the migrational issue is one of the important challenges of the present.

In this work, we have endeavoured to present the issue of migration from the perspective of the social sciences, namely from the point of view of a wide spectrum of related questions. We wanted to demonstrate that migrational activities may be of interest not only to sociology, anthropology and ethnology but also for instance to musical scientists who also take migrations into account in their historical-musicological studies.

The first contribution included in this monograph is the text by the Director of the Centre for Research in International Migration and Ethnic Relations, CEIFO, in Stockholm Erik Olsson who in his article *Making the Final Decision* focused primarily on the question of Swedish migration policy and on the problems of repatriation. Despite his contribution having a distinct anchoring in the empirical data predominantly from the environment of the returns from Sweden, it also has theoretical ambitions particularly concerning the reflections on and reassessment of the individual concepts of the migrational theory.

In the monograph presented, this text is a chapter with a superregional significance and as such can fulfil the calling of an introductory chapter.

While the issues of repatriations and reverse migrations have been discussed for a long time, although not in the limelight of worldwide attention, the question of transnationalism has been the subject of a whole range of extensive scientific meetings as well as the topic of global news coverage. If we speak about migrational terminology, then this term dominates the problems of migrations alongside multiculturalism. In our publication, Alexandra Bitušíková returns to this topic. In the introductory section of her text, she concentrated on the term transnationalism itself and on its meanings in connection with migrations. In following part of the work, she presented two case studies, the first of which is related to Slovakia and the second to the milieu of Brussels. Both of these environments are intimately known to her not only as the investigated field but also as a milieu of everyday life. Her familiarity with the terrain adds credibility to her observation and strengthens her argumentation.

The third study, prepared by Zdeněk Uhrek deals with the development of ethnic and national diversity in the Czech Republic in the 20th century and the issue of the Czech relationship to minorities. The text shows that diversification of the national society in the Czech Republic is merely not a question of globalization or developments following the fall of the Berlin Wall, but has a long continuity. While the discourse on diversity is changing, the subject of this discourse is not new. The author claims that, in the Czech Republic, national diversity has long been perceived as a rather negative phenomenon, and the ethnic Czech majority population has tended towards homogenization while also declaring homogeneity, especially to outside observers. Considering the fact that diversity is socially constructed, and so are borders between particular nations and ethnic groups, a phenomenon may occur that the majority disavows of certain groups which describe themselves as its part. The author points to this in the case of the Roma who largely declare Czech nationality in the national census while this declaration is disregarded by the majority.

The texts by Erik Olsson, Alexandra Bitušíková and Zdeněk Uherek work primarily with migrational streams and numerous social groups. Although in all of these texts the attempt to approach the everyday life, possibly individual motivations, is apparent, the individual disappears in their generalisations and overall data. The texts by Jarmila Gabrielová and Michaela Freemanová derive their conclusions from the fates of specifically documentable, living persons. The contributions are connected by the music-historical issue. The article by Jarmila Gabrielová in the given context may serve also as an introduction to the topic of music history and migration and was therefore included as the first of the music-historical texts. She draws our attention to the topic not only of the migration of individuals but at the same time to the topic of changes and transformation of the national awareness and languages used, which may be connected not only with the movement of individuals but also with the changing social situation. The author writes here about German-speaking musicians migrating from the Czech lands and demonstrates how significant this labelling can be in the case of musicians of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Her article shows the path to a whole range of hypotheses on the meanings of migration and their changes in historical time, on the problems with classifying specific persons in greater wholes of migrating categories of the population, on the problematic nature of the connection of language and ethnic or national awareness. Her text concerns also the transformations of the meaning of individual migrational destinations. The significances of the distances and accessibility of individual places change not only with the advancement of technology that facilitates our surmounting of the number of kilometres. In Central and Eastern Europe, the accessibility of individual places also changes with adjustments of state frontiers, political orientations of the individual states and their migration policies. A similar message is evident also from the text by Michaela Freemanová, who recalls the circumstance that Czechs have found good application often beyond the borders of the Czech lands not only for their professional skills but also because the conditions for a worthy life in the Czech lands have fluctuated in the long term and the factors that push capable professionals from this territory have long-term continuity.

The following text of Pavel Bareš and Milada Horáková in this publication again returns to contemporary migration. It is related to an international project whose field enquiries in the Czech Republic was partially ensured by the employees of the Institute of Ethnology of the AS CR, v.v.i. The specificity of this project is that it did not deal with the migration of individuals but with family strategies of integration in the target destinations of migration. In my opinion, it is an important act although it entails a number of methodological difficulties. The popular theses on the individualisation of migration obviously have not led to an individualisation of the approach to migrants. They have rather as individuals become well manipulatable unified units in the global overviews of migrations, which are well workable by means of statistical methods in creating transparent tables and graphs that tell us little about migrations however. The testimonial value of statistics is only partially increased by the frequently applied gender perspective, because men and women do not migrate as two separate groups but jointly, reproducing in the course of migration a whole range of social relations which to their joy or sadness migrate along with them and comprise for them a piece of the beloved or hated home. Their motivation to migration and their migrational behaviour in the target destinations are only partially influenced by the external factors of the new milieu. Part of their lot is brought with them by the immigrants in their own family relations, whether they are aware of it or not.

The following three texts of Šárka Martínková, Ondřej Klípa, Zuzana Korecká and Tereza Pojarová on Vietnamese in Prague, Poles in North and Central Bohemia and Byelorussians in the Czech Republic were created as a part of the research activities of the research project Sustainable Development in the Diverse World. They document that migrations and human diversity have many forms. They are representations of life as a whole, and their knowledge in their commonness as well as detail is an important path to understanding the world in general. Every migrational movement testifies to wide contexts, and the perception of the general bonds in which migrations take place is one of the key areas we are learning about today.

Besides the authorial group and our co-workers who helped edit the book, it is also necessary to thank for its support the Head

Office of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, primarily Vice-President of the AS CR, Prof. PhDr. Jaroslav Pánek, DrSc., who also attended the discussions of the authorial group of this publication in the villa Lanna in Prague.

Making the Final Decision

The Representation of Migration in Swedish Repatriation Practice¹

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There are probably as many suggestions for how to understand migration as there are motives for people migrating. Investigating the dominating ways of representing migration is important, since these discourses reveal something about how a state or culture perceives this phenomenon. More importantly, though, is that these dominating ways constitute the way of dealing with migration in, for instance, institutional practices. For example, it makes a difference whether migration authorities perceive migration as constitutive of social processes in general, or as a temporary phenomenon that occurs between two end-stations. Hence, studies into the way migration is perceived and represented in the practice of national institutions responsible for migration policy are central.

This article singles out some of the important dimensions of the discourse and repatriation practice promoted by the Swedish Migration Board (SMB)² and compares this with empirical findings of how migrants themselves experience and relate to migration and, in particular, return-issues. The article intends to contribute to the understanding of how migration is perceived and represented in modern society by investigating how the Swedish nation state deals with issues like repatriation and which characteristics are associated with migration and migrants. In doing this, a model of migration as an event, discernable from the practices of migration, is juxtaposed with the model of migration as process, discernable from migrants' experiences. Furthermore, the point of departure for the analysis is a transnational approach (cf. Glick Schiller et al 1992; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) that accounts for the global context in which migrants are

embedded. Another way of expressing these research issues is to ask how nation states represent a transnational migration.

The empirical basis for this discussion is an evaluation of SMB repatriation practice conducted with the purpose of understanding how SMB formed its practice in the field of return migration.³ The intention of this evaluation is mainly to understand the central issues and purpose of such a practice, how they are approached in the activities and arrangements of SMB, and finally how well this practice matches the 'needs' of migrants. The study focuses on the discourse guiding SMB practice, its expression among the officials working with repatriation, and the 'experiences' of migration, repatriation and repatriation practice among migrants.

Theoretical Take-Off

Much of mainstream social science has a tendency to conceive of migration in terms of rational responses to external stimuli; push factors cause migration while pull factors enable settlement in a foreign territory (cf. Castles and Miller 1993). Basically, the neo-classical push and pull models of migration are rooted in analyses of migration's causes and motives in rationalistic terms, while the question of whether individuals should remain in an area or not depends on the cost benefit-conditioned decisions of the individuals concerned. This kind of explanation of the reasons for migration has been criticised for shortcomings related to an individualistic and ahistorical tendency, and failure to consider government restrictions on emigration and immigration (Castles and Miller 1993: 20–21). Although this criticism has attracted extensive support, the impact of the push and pull model on the way that migrants and migration are perceived cannot be ignored. The dominating discursive image of migrants as rational beings acting in accordance with economic laws still exists.

In some sense the understanding of migration is also framed by a common-sense and widespread discourse representing the global order of nations in the form of 'sovereign, spatially discontinuous units' (Malkki 1992: 26). As a consequence, humans, among them migrants,

are fixed in space and soil. According to this normative discourse, humans are depicted as though they were rooted in their place of origin in terms of identity, and that the dominating social environment and culture of that place has a strong impact on their future life. In fact, we can speak about a 'naturalized identity between people and place' (ibid.) that discursively frames practices in all parts of society.

At first glance, the discourse's emphasis on roots, in terms of the national order of things, can be understood as contradicting the rationalistic push and pull argument. On the other hand, the discourse seems to portray migration as humans with deep roots in a certain territory having some kind of framing effect on the rational agency image. In combination, a discourse like the one we are facing here convey migration as an act of abnormality and return-migration as one of normality when the cost-benefit calculation is positive. In other words: migrants should return to their original country as soon as circumstances permit. The important thing, according to Malkki (1992), is that migration signals a denatured displacement that could be normalised with the aid of rational choices.

The strength of such a discourse could naturally be questioned and its 'framing power' empirically verified. Nevertheless, it does contain observations of a widespread and institutionalised link between people, nation and territory/place (Chamberlain 1997; Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Malkki 1992, 1994, 1995; Olsson and Grandin 1999; Robinson 1998), which in some way 'roots' the human population in the 'national order of things' (Malkki 1992, 1995). In some sense, the academic discussion about different approaches to migration has counterpart in the so-called real life of modern societies. Bearing in mind that nationality and belonging to a certain country in a world of nations is 'normal' in the modern world, it can here be provided a preliminary conceptualisation of how migration and migrants are represented.

The central question in this article is related to how migrants' (imagined) abilities and desires to return to their country of origin are accounted for in the discourses and practices of the state. This is investigated against the claim that 'both immigration country governments and exile communities may produce discourses about

the ‘moral duty’ to return to the ‘home country’, disregarding both individual circumstances and structural possibilities for return’ (Tollefsen Altamirano 2000: 39). This is central for discursively constructing migrants as ‘decision makers’ in their capacities of being ‘rational human beings’. In other words this kind of discourse deploys an image of migration as an act of human rationality in the same manner as the push and pull-biased perceptions that were once popular in the social sciences.

When discourses are practised they also have the potential to be constitutive and form the objects to which they refer (Foucault 1972). This means that practice might contribute to a sweeping discourse of migration and migrants. Here, my intention is not to discuss the mechanism of practice and what kind of power this is equipped with. When using the concept of (institutional) practice I am simply referring to the actions and arrangements the institutional staff perform (or at least are supposed to) in order to carry out their institutional tasks (in this case, to support repatriation).

A starting point for understanding how institutional practice constructs subjects and order is, in the words of Mary Douglas (1987), to study how ‘institutions think’. Basically, institutions can be defined as a gathering of people trying to solve some sort of identified common problem and relying on some kind of discursive understanding of the nature of the problem. In this case, the problem might be how to arrange a social practice related to people’s will or wish to return to their homelands. Institutional discourses are generally decisive as to how an object should be perceived and described, thereby overriding individual ideas on the same topic. As a rule, the institutional staff’s daily decisions are based on the institutional discourses (Agar 1985) prevalent in the institution’s different procedures, such as meetings, education, training, a common language and terminology, staff schedules, etc. (cf. Olsson 1995, 2000).

In short, in its basic stage the institutional discourse is guided by an idea or model of what the problem is all about and how it should be solved (cf. Geertz 1973). It does not imply a causal model of human behaviour. Instead, the institutional discourse and practice establish

themselves simultaneously as a self-monitoring model. The motive and the reason are sometimes implicit (and perhaps forgotten). It is (even) possible that although the object of the institution changes in nature, the institution maintains its direction though a slight correction of its 'purpose'. What is of interest here is perhaps best related to this possible 'correction'. The postulations made in the national order of things, about people having natural homes, should be contextualised by globalisation and a world that is obviously dependent on personal flows between countries.

Social science has indeed adopted new models on migration informed by globalisation-theory and transnationalism (cf. e.g. Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Castles and Miller 1993; Glick Schiller et al. 1992, 1995; Vertovec and Cohen 1999; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Within the transnational approach, migration is seen more as a process than an occasional and mechanistic act with a characteristic feature of movements, practices or structures that transgress borders. At the individual level, migration is a constitutive movement of the migrant's life-situation that often adopts an open-ended strategy (cf. Urry 2000). This new way of conceptualising migration and migrants' affiliations has certain implications.

According to the transnational perspective, migration has proved to be a global phenomenon of far greater complexity than the assumptions of the bipolar push and pull model could have predicted. For instance, the observation that refugees are dispersed all over the globe for reasons other than economic rationality counters the 'neo-classical' contention that neglects the role of social networks. One dimension of the transnational approach is to include social relations in migration and expand the field of migration studies from a body of theory centred on the individual as a solitary decision-maker to a broader global context. The transnational approach is principally interested in the processes of migration and tries to broaden our understanding of migration as an event by not only focusing on migrants and their movement in space but also including the many other phenomena and structures of social networks, such as community formation, social institutions, cultural practices, state policy and law, economic activities and transactions, and above all how these are transnationally located (e.g. Castles and

Miller 1993; Gustafson 2007). The main task of this article is to study how the nation state's institutional practice is viewed in a transnational approach, and how a transnational approach could alter or challenge the conventional understanding of migration through the inquiry of repatriation practices and return movement.

Swedish Migration-Policy and the Rise of Repatriation

With the exception of the years following WW II, when many thousands of refugees from Germany and the Baltic states were repatriated to their homelands, Swedish migration policy has not been particularly concerned about repatriation (Johansson 2006). However, provision for (non-Swedish) migrants wishing to return to their country of origin to apply for a small grant (1,500 SEK, the equivalent of 150 Euros, per person), a contribution to the costs of tickets and the relocation of goods, has existed for a long time. This grant had humanitarian motives, and reflected expressions, such as those contained in United Nations declarations, of it being a human right for a person to live in his/her country of origin.

In addition, the Swedish Government has, through the Swedish Migration Board (SMB), supported other organisations in repatriation activities. Above all, support was given to a Christian NGO involved in helping Latin American migrants in Sweden (later extending it to other groups to return to their country of origin. With these minor exceptions, SMB had practically no activities of its own within the field of return-migration. This could be logically explained as an outcome of the discourses discussed in the theoretical section, since all migrants were expected to leave on their own as far as they had rational reasons for doing so. Despite this, the Swedish state had little interest in repatriating migrants, partly because they were regarded as contributing to the building of a strong Swedish welfare state.

It would seem that the exclusive immigration-oriented policy of the Swedish state changed as a result of the pressure of refugees as a new migrant category and to intensive criticism during the 1990s. This was also a time when the political map of the world was radically changed

and the globalisation and ‘free movement’ debate expanded and influenced migration policy in line with global trends (e.g. Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet 1988; Johansson 2006). At the same time, a more general shift in discourse, depicting the refugees as ‘problems’, was realised (cf. Johansson 2006). In the early 1990s, official Swedish migration policy turned from dealing exclusively with immigration to migration as a whole, thus incorporating the question of return migration.

The new government policy in this field became visible in actual practice in 1994, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs directed SMB to take action for a repatriation of Bosnians and simultaneously inquire into the possibilities of allowing return migration for Somalis. This was a surprising mission, since the countries from which these groups came were still in war situations. However, the inquiry seems to have been the embryo of a more permanent policy and practice that was manifested in a government bill in 1994 (Prop. 1994/95) singling out Bosnians as the main target group, and in subsequent appropriation directions (*regleringsbrev*).

As we discovered, the hierarchy between the Ministry and SMB is complex when it comes to the mission concerning Somalis and Bosnians, in that SMB was deeply involved in the preparation of the mission. Finally, the terms which came to govern migration policy in the early years of the 21st century, and which profoundly integrate return-issues into migration policy, are formulated in the government bill of 1996/97 (Prop. 1996/97: 25), which reads in part:

Contributions internationally and in Sweden may have the long-term goal that refugees should voluntarily be able to return safely to their country of origin. This view will as a rule characterise the reception of refugees in Sweden from the beginning.

The view that good integration in Swedish society is the best pre-condition for return is still valid.

Those refugees who wish to return but lack resources may have extended support.

Return-migration programs may be adapted to the different situations of the groups.⁴

The reasons for this new mission are fuzzy. The motivation as to why migrants should suddenly be supported to leave Sweden, even though it is frequently said that return should be voluntary, is not clearly formulated. Also, there is no motivation as to why Bosnians and Somalis had already, at the time the bill was passed, been singled out as the two target groups (although other groups were not excluded). It should be remembered, too, that both Somalia and Bosnia were experiencing war or war-like situations with extensive fighting and insecurity. In fact, in 1994 Somalia collapsed as a state due to the intense war between different groups and factions. The Dayton Agreement had not yet been signed, and Bosnia was still under fire. The universal humanistic discourse previously used to legitimise a (modest) return-policy seemed to acquire a slightly different meaning in terms of its voluntary dimension. For example, Bosnians were at the same time obliged to apply for a visa when visiting Sweden, and most Somalis were given temporary protection for a year instead of a resident permit as before (if the refugees qualified for refugee status, that is).

Some of our informants were high-level Swedish Government officials and during interviews we were given an 'emic' explanation as to why Somalis and Bosnians were 'natural' groups to repatriate. According to them, there was an international consensus on returning Bosnia back to normality, and it was underlined that the refugees were needed in this reconstruction. These criteria led to Bosnians being prioritised when the new policy was discussed. The Somalis just happened to provide a comparison, in that repatriation practice was modelled on the former group. Our findings show that this explanation was not chronologically accurate, because the authorities had discussed the return of Somalis at least simultaneously or even months before discussing the return of Bosnians. In both cases there was a clear tendency to ascribe refugees with a natural motive for returning 'home' – doubts were even overtly expressed that Somalis would be able to integrate into 'Swedish society' and the government would simply facilitate the means to do so.

The Swedish Migration Board and Repatriation Practice

Leaving the reasons for this turn in Swedish migration policy aside, we could note that the new government mission in the mid 1990s authorised SMB to develop a practice enabling return for migrants who had a residence permit but were not yet Swedish citizens. Those migrants who became Swedish citizens were disqualified.

In the latter part of the 1990s, SMB established its own operative activities leading to a practice which, in our study, was summarised in five categories: travel (for visiting and recognising purposes); grants allowed for migrant applicants with a serious return purpose; funds for projects intended to support repatriation migration; information and networking; co-operation with other organisations/institutions. Of these five categories of support, the projects became the largest in economic terms. A brief description of these operational categories is provided below. First, however, I describe the SMB mission and the premises guiding the practice.

The government bill of 1996/97 directed SMB to extend the grants given to each migrant or family (up to 10,000 SEK, with a maximum on 40,000 SEK⁵ per family), provide information about a certain country and support particular projects.

After a few years SMB's emerging repatriation practice became a separate practice with its own budget and meetings. Since 1999 SMB repatriation practice has been organised via its regional districts. This reorganisation was a sign that SMB was taking repatriation matters seriously. Officials in the regional districts were also assigned responsibility for these issues. These officials from different part of the country belonged to a common group co-ordinated from SMB headquarters. Several times a year the 'return-officials' met at internal conferences and committees to discuss common repatriation administration problems. On rare occasions the officials would make on-site visits to, for instance, Bosnia or Kosovo. The majority of these officials had other workload responsibilities and only administrated applications for repatriation-oriented projects or gave information

to a group or organisation when time allowed. This meant that the return dimension of migration was often regarded as a separate issue and unrelated to other migration practices, such as refugee reception.

In practice, most of the resources are/were directed towards (but not exclusively) Bosnians and Somalis, mainly in terms of contributions to projects assumed to be beneficial to their plans to return. Individual applications for return-grants were administrated by a SMB head-office department. SMB received most applications during 1997, the first year after the authorisation of the grant, when the number of applications exceeded 1,000, as compared to the year 2000 when SMB received less than 200 applications (158 applications granted). Since then the numbers of applicants have gradually decreased and in 2007 SMB received only 26 applications (19 of which were accepted). It should also be mentioned that after severe criticism (our report included), the naming of target countries was abandoned. Nevertheless, refugees continue to receive special attention and on the SMB website (www.migrationsverket.se) and information-sheets, countries like Afghanistan, Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina are mentioned as examples of countries suitable for repatriation and as target countries for projects.

Repatriation Practice and the Migrant Dilemma

The government bill quoted above frequently refers to the migrants' 'country of origin'. The self-evident fact is repeated, in various ways, that people will sooner or later return to their country of origin and that this is simply a matter of time and circumstances, safe conditions, and the family's situation. This does not mean that SMB officials give voice to an aggressive demand that refugees should 'go home', however. On the contrary, in the texts, as well as in individual utterances, it is underlined that people should return on a voluntary basis and that it is understandable that making the decision to move yet again is sometimes difficult. This is a clear case of what I refer to in the theoretical section as 'institutional thinking', since the institutional discourse lines up a kind of logic based on a certain master-frame which is then supported by different procedures without the individuals really needing to take responsibility for the consequences or ideas.

There is no doubt that the SMB discourse on repatriation has humanistic undertones and implies that migration is often involuntary and circumstantial (even though on rare occasions we heard blunt statements that refugees were cheating in terms of reasons and possibilities). Simultaneously, through officials' statements and official texts (such as the government bill, appropriation directions and internal memos), the discourse represents refugees as deeply attached to one single country, and that under normal circumstances this country would be their country of origin. The discourse implicitly refers to 'normality' in terms of the stability of being in one single place that would benefit migrants if they could achieve it. Let me turn to some examples.

The government bill relating to a new migration policy (Prop. 1996/97: 25) underlines the normality of a stable and integrated life, which implies that people need to be integrated into some kind of national structure: 'The view that a good integration in the Swedish society is the best pre-condition for a return is still valid'. The text frequently refers to the importance of combining the integration achievements of the migration policy with a strategy that seriously considers the return aspect.

In a SMB memo from 1998, the idea of stability as a kind of pre-condition for return was emphasised: '...refugees should get relevant information enabling them to take a profound decision about their future. SMB should provide the means for those people who have decided to return'. In similar phrases it is clearly stated that integration and stability in the host-country are the best pre-conditions for such a decision.

Utterances emphasising the importance of making a serious decision about future life are frequent. By this SMB does not mean that people are supposed to make a decision to stay in Sweden for good while continuing an integrated life. They are above all supposed to seriously consider their return, perhaps visit the old country, and then make a (final) decision about which country they will spend the rest of their life in. This idea is well supported by possibilities for the migrant to be granted a 'visitor-journey' (*besöksresa*), paid for by SMB, in order to inspect conditions in the country of origin.

Official declarations like the government bill of 1996/97, as well as SMB officials, were clear on this point. For example, in one of our seminar discussions with officials, the idea of the necessity of taking a decision was underlined. Even when we tried to question this presupposition by saying that migrants sometimes need an open-ended strategy with which to meet the future, SMB participants were convinced that the practice should by no means contribute to the dilemma about staying or returning. In other words, people should be helped to make a serious decision and neither adults nor children should be encouraged, for instance, to return to Sweden after a failure-period in their homeland.

This latter possibility might explain some of the special dimensions of the practice. One controversial issue was that SMB were not completely open and transparent when informing migrants about the rules and regulations regarding the residence permit in Sweden. Migrants with a residence permit lose it after having registered a move to another country. A common procedure in Swedish migration practice is, however, that those who have been permanently resident in Sweden for more than five years can register for a new residence permit without problem. The same is valid if people decide to return to Sweden within a year after their registered departure. People who returned to their homeland, including those who received the grant or those who participated in repatriation projects (or both), could benefit from this procedure. The 1996/97 bill also emphasised that this humanitarian backdoor had to be kept open.

However, for some time information relating to residence permit possibilities was not included in SMB's standard information on repatriation. This perhaps explains why the Chilean returnees I interviewed seldom knew about this procedure, which of course would have been valuable for those regretting their decision to leave Sweden. Both the government and NGO representatives have criticised SMB information procedures that deny complete information. The motive for this, some officials declared, was that SMB should not give returnees false hopes of receiving a residence permit, since this can never be guaranteed in advance. In personal communications, some officials also confessed that they did not want to give that kind of information as it

might make migrants' decisions more difficult. Though 'technically true', this was of course a bureaucratic rationalisation on behalf of the officials, since the same 'to be sure' strategy implies the impossibility of providing information about most other possibilities requiring a decision (including repatriation grants). After renewed critique from the government, information about this matter was provided (www.migrationsverket.se).

This principle of a clear case for decision also guided officials in their assessments of applications for repatriation projects submitted by various NGOs to SMB. NGO-projects that, according to SMB officials, were expected to contribute to people's welfare and successful return, were usually highly ranked in these assessments. In many cases, however, a project could be supported even if it did not encourage migrants to return but provided migrants with information needed for making their own decisions.

In conclusion, SMB introduced a repatriation practice that proved controversial and even taboo in Swedish migration policy. A new practice that is largely hidden from potential 'customers' (i.e. migrants and other societal institutions) naturally has to 'show results' in order to gain support and acceptance. The low numbers of returnees attracted by SMB repatriation practice, which in fact demanded a 'final choice' about where to live, was interpreted as evidence that migrants were more oriented to integration than to returning (which was notified by SMB officials with some satisfaction). Moreover, the 'failures' – in terms of unsuccessful return, i.e. the re-return of migrants – were discursively legitimised by reference to a final decision about the future: 'at least we helped the migrants to decide'. Such 'excuses' demonstrate how this practice was legitimised. The picture of a happy ending to the migrant dilemma is important and explains why SMB invested considerable effort and prestige in 'successful return' (in the eyes of SMB) or 'closed cases'. This image was accomplished by providing little information about residence permit procedures and why projects were turned down obscures a straightforward decision about where to live.

Documents regulating SMB repatriation practice and professional administration and practice discursively constructed a model of migration as an *event* and the migrant as a stranger who due to unfortunate circumstances is displaced from his original country. The master-frame to this discourse refers to an assumed normality that relies on the stability of a permanent and original home and people's inherent belonging to a country. The importance of taking a decision about the future is dependent on this; migration and the abnormality of the situation must come to an end. However, this pertinence to the original home could very well be altered in stable conditions, such as when a migrant has been successfully integrated in the new country. It is quite obvious that this practice was directed towards a national agenda, namely, defining migration as something related to a bounded space. It implicitly signalled who belonged to Swedish society and who did not, and pointed to people's belonging to their country of origin. This occurred either as a result of the way the practice was legitimised and/or how the problem was formulated in the first place, i.e. regarding refugees as a 'problematic' and displaced category that should be helped to return to their country of origin. The model that emerges here depicts migration as an event leading to a final choice and a re-gained stability.

Migration as Process

As mentioned in the section on theoretical assumptions, it is well known from contemporary literature on migration that migration is seldom or never a simple decision related to push and pull conditions. This pattern was clearly demonstrated in our findings. For instance, the low and decreasing number of applicants for SMB grants was not caused by lack of information. While informants were generally aware of the possibilities, the circumstances were such that it was more favourable not to apply for a grant or participate in a repatriation project. An important reason for this low interest was related to citizenship and residence permit regulations.

First, the regulations disqualify potential applicants with Swedish citizenship. Secondly the risk of losing the residence permit, without

any guarantee of receiving a new one, had a cooling effect on the application activity. Those who accepted the material support provided by SMB regarded themselves at risking getting stuck in one place and unable to return if the situation demanded that. Likewise, official registration also meant losing the residence permit. Being a grant-holder might thus be perceived as risky, especially for families concerned about keeping their various options open. A common way of doing this is to allow one or two family members to apply for citizenship in Sweden while the others maintain their original citizenship.⁶ In our study, another strategy emerged, which was to keep the door open by making use of the Swedish social security system facility that permits people to live and work abroad for a year without losing their residence permit. This way of maximising options is, of course, a way of anticipating problems that might interfere with attempts to settle in the country of origin. However, the informants in our study also expressed other and more 'social' reasons for such strategies.

Many of the interviewed migrants from Bosnia and Chile were eager to return to their country of origin, or at least thought that they might give that a try at some stage. Many also expressed a self-evident dream to be realised, while some were more sceptical and said that they would rather wait and see. However, among these migrants the discourse was to a great extent permeated by the return-issue, and many did try the return option.⁷ Our findings also confirm other observations of Bosnian and Chilean return-migration (Tollefsen Altamirano 2000; Eastmond 2006), namely, that return is in many cases hazardous and that the returnees' chances of succeeding and securing a livelihood largely depend on 'luck' as well as an ability to negotiate one's position in society with the aid of a social network. Particularly in Bosnia, this also involves having the 'right' ethnic or family affiliations. Social tensions are also included in the return equation, and in both Bosnia and Chile these are often regarded with some suspicion (Eastmond 2006; Olsson 1997; cf. Jansen 2008). A particular problem in Bosnia was that many had to face the situation of their estate being occupied by people who had stayed behind or moved in as internal refugees, or even being given the property as a gift by the local authorities. This could naturally lead

to chaotic situations in which the returnees had to make legal claims on their property.

In dealing with these hardships of everyday life, many of our informants in Bosnia were either on their way back to Sweden or to another country, or waiting for such an opportunity. The reality of an open-ended migration pattern referred to in the scholarly literature on migration (Eastmond 2006; Jansen 2008; Stefansson 2006; Tollefsen Alatomirano 2000) has been verified in our empirical findings.⁸ In many cases migrants are seemingly trapped in a circulation ‘between’ Sweden and Bosnia, or between Chile and Sweden. Many of them are able to circulate between the two countries; living in Bosnia while exploring the possibilities of settling there but returning to Sweden for a period of employment and ‘normal’ life. Extensive pendulum-migration was also an obvious feature in the Sweden-Chile case (cf. Olsson 2000, *forthc.*). These migrants live a season or more in Sweden, return to Chile for a year or so, and then return to Sweden again. The purpose of this ‘transhumance’ might be to earn a surplus in Sweden and then spend it on a good life in Chile, or to make good investments in business by utilising such double connections. In these cases a multi-residential strategy is a pre-condition for a good life; the idea being to accomplish such a life by not burning any bridges and securing a passport in both countries.

To some extent, a choice is involved in the return-migration of Bosnians and Chileans. For Somalis in Sweden, however, these opportunities are practically non-existent. The Somali we interviewed found the repatriation-programmes insulting and an act of discrimination: ‘Why is the government so eager to repatriate us to our homeland, instead of helping us to find a decent living in this country?’ This did not prevent some of the intellectuals of the Somali community from applying for and receiving money from these programmes, however.

Many of the Somali informants were disappointed by the reluctance of the Swedish authorities to grant them residence permit and their willingness to engage them in repatriation programmes. Only one of the Somalis we interviewed did foresee an immediate return, although

many planned it. What is striking, however, is that they had all visited Somalia (including Somaliland and Puntland) once or twice after exile. It also appeared that many were planning to visit or move to other countries (the UK and Canada were mentioned) to join relatives or friends.

This tendency among migrants to travel to or communicate with people connected with their social networks, and to 'leave the door open' when deciding to return, illustrates what migration is all about. Permanent or temporary housing in Sweden and in the homeland, the time and money invested as well as the social bonds created and reproduced in both (or several) locations, are all signs of 'multilocal attachments' (Clifford 1994) that migrants embody in their daily life.

This does not mean that people are 'rooted' in many places instead of one, but that these multiple attachments are results of a migratory way of life. When people interact and make different kinds of investments in social spaces related to some sort of migrant community, they also support and maintain the development of migratory infrastructures, such as those central to diasporas (cf. Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997; Vertovec and Cohen 1999). These migrant communities develop a social life and communicative fields that are transnational in nature, i.e. transgress the borders of national states according to their own dynamics (Glick Schiller et al. 1995).

Arrival

This article confirms what many scholars have already identified, namely, that migrants try to cope with their reality by using an open-ended strategy which means that the majority put off making a final decision about leaving or staying. In reality, most migrants reject government practices in order not to lose their residence permit in Sweden and thereby jeopardise future social and economic possibilities. Migrants often become involved in a social life that in reality is transnational, in that it embraces both the country of residence and the country of origin. This article also points out that migrants utilise multiple connections in their livelihood strategies. This confirms

Rouse's (1992) observation that individual choices and preferences can be non-decisive: 'Instead of leaving one community and re-orienting to another, then, many settlers developed transnational involvement that encompasses both' (Rouse 1992: 45). It is now widely understood that when people (for whatever reason) leave their country of residence, they are well informed by other migrants' experiences, helped by contacts/networks of friends and kin, and guided by imagined opportunities in the new country. This is not a one-way act but rather an open-ended process, in which the decision to stay, return or leave for another place might never be resolved.

Considering that migration has proved to be a global phenomenon of far greater complexity than the assumptions of the bipolar push and pull model could have predicted, taking the role of social networks into account is important. The inclusion of social relations in migrants' practices in migration theory also widens the field of migration studies from a body of theory centred on the individual as a solitary decision-maker to a broader global context. For instance, the tendency of emergent migrant communities crossing borders of national states was well documented by researchers prior to the 'global turn' in social theory (cf. Cohen 1969, Watson 1977). Transnational migration has, in some sense, become a livelihood strategy for many refugees and other migrants. They maintain connections between different countries in order to survive, and often feel they belong to another kind of community than that of the national community (cf. Glick Schiller et al. 1992).

The open-ended coping strategies of migrants discussed in this article are not supported by Swedish repatriation policy and practice. The Swedish Migration Board seems to be blind to links, connections and affiliations between people and places other than those within the national territory. In short, the practice has been to try to facilitate 'clean' cases, i.e. that migrants should be encouraged and 'helped' to make a final decision about their future belonging. More abruptly, it means that returning migrants are supposed to travel with a one-way ticket. It also indicates that SMB tried to minimise factors that might obscure these clean cases and thereby avoid uncertainty in dilemmas featuring the lives of these migrants.

A final peculiarity relating to Swedish repatriation practice is the priority given to refugees, and especially refugee groups, fleeing from extremely harsh conditions (like Somalia and Bosnia during the 1990s and later Iraq and Afghanistan). An analysis shows that the discourse expresses a general concern for the different integration problems experienced by these groups. The representation of refugees from certain distant countries as strange beings on Swedish soil could be related to the 'sedentarist metaphysics' accounted for by Malkki (1992). Migrants' – both as a group or as individuals – behaviour is often subject to 'botanical thought' (Malkki 1992: 31), exemplified in the significant 'pathologisation of uprootedness' when representing post-war refugees in Europe as dishonest citizens, that constituted a politico-moral problem in relation to the affairs of national states. The similarities between the different representations accounted for by Malkki and those identified in the evaluation of repatriation practices is related to displacement and loss of contact with their original territory. This obsession with supporting refugees and 'helping them to make decisions about their future' is here interpreted as a sign of a migration discourse that perceives migration from the nation-state's point of view, hence nurtured from a national discourse. Malkki (1992: 31) discusses this in terms of a *sedentarism* that is 'deeply metaphysical and deeply moral, sinking 'peoples' and 'cultures' into 'national soils'. It nourishes the belief that people have and need to have a place of origin and uses the image of *roots* to underline the naturalness of coming *from* somewhere.

This insistence that migrants should make final choices is also further confirmation of Malkki's (1992) observation that the discourse of the 'national order of things' has a strong moral dimension and relies on the idea of authentic belonging: 'to stay with your roots is a moral duty'. From this perspective, 'immigrants' appear as 'spots on the pure colours of the national fabric' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002: 309). A consequence of this isomorphism is, however, that migration is regarded as an anomaly in relation to the 'national order of things' (Malkki 1992, 1995), i.e. the nation state system reifies the norms of all societal formation, all communities and all life patterns (Robinson 1998). This analysis tells us that the 'roots' metaphor needs to be

questioned, as does the popular and heavily politicised concept of ‘integration’.

The attempt to discuss the ignorance of people’s transnational reality in migration policy in terms of sedentarism could, in some sense, be transferred to the scientific world. The word migration might, in both policy and the neo-classical literature on migration (Castles and Miller 1993), connote an event that involves the moving between two destinations. Like the discourse of nation state, much of mainstream social science has a tendency to perceive migration in terms of rational responses to external stimuli; push factors cause migration while pull factors enable settlement in a foreign territory.

Notes

1 The evaluation study was supported by a grant from the Swedish Migration Board and by a research grant from The Swedish Research Council on Social Science and Working Life (FAS). Participating researchers in the evaluation study were Christina Johansson and Zoran Slavnić (Ethnic Studies/REMESO, Linköping University), Sadia Hassanen (Ceifo, Stockholm University) and the author (Linköping University and Stockholm University) (published in Olsson 2001). Christina Johansson conducted the SMB part of the study. The Bosnian part of the study was conducted by Zoran Slavnić. The interviews with the Somalis were conducted by Sadia Hassanen and the author. Olsson have also conducted research on Chileans.

2. The Swedish Migration Board (*Migrationsverket*) received its current name in 2000. The previous name (The Swedish State Board for Immigration) was associated with immigration affairs only (*Statens Invandrarverk*).

3. The field material consists of interviews with almost the entire SMB staff working with repatriation during 2001 and with several key informants, participant observation in several meetings of SMB-organised committees, analyses of documents and texts (e.g. policy directives by the Swedish government – appropriation directions)

as well as notes from meetings and discussions. In addition to this practice-oriented inquiry, we interviewed more than 40 people of Bosnian origin in Sweden and in Bosnia, and more than 20 people of Somali origin living in Sweden. Most of the interviewees became refugees during the respective wars in the 1990s. The majority of these people had plans or realised plans (Bosnians) to return to their country of origin, in many cases selected due to participation in projects financed by SMB. In addition, we were able to apply our experience from previous and on-going research, above all from empirical research regarding migration between Sweden and Chile.

4. All translations of official texts from Swedish to English have been done by the author.

5. The equivalent of 1,000 and 4,000 EUR respectively (2008).

6. Note that the evaluation study was conducted before July 2002, when possibilities to obtain dual citizenship were very limited. After that date dual citizenship was permitted.

7. The exact number of returnees is not available, since many do not officially register their return. According to the official statistics (SCB) the number of emigrants to Bosnia exceeds two thousand (of a total Bosnian population of more than 52,000 in Sweden) and to Chile more than six thousand (of a total of about 27,000). There is significant migration to Sweden from both countries, however.

8. Research by the author; see, e.g. Olsson 1997, 2003, 2007 and forthc.

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Theorising, Researching and Practicing Transnational Migration¹

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Introduction

Transnationalism is a relatively new concept that appeared in social anthropology and other social sciences only at the end of the 20th century and has been since widely discussed and questioned. The common point of all discussions is whether and how does the study of transnational migrations differ from the study of international migrations or the study of diaspora.

Migration and the phenomena related to it have been for a long time an object of interdisciplinary migration studies that cover emigrations, immigrations as well as return migrations (phenomena of return to the country of origin and the category of home, called sometimes anthropology of return; e.g. Rapport and Dawson 1998; Long and Oxfeld 2004). Conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of migration include a broad scale of angles and views (anthropological, historical, sociological, economic, geographical or general) and they focus on all levels of analysis from the micro-level (the perspective of an individual) to the mezzo-level (the perspective of a family, a household or a group), and to the macro-level (the perspective of a state or higher units). Anthropological approach to the study of migration combines all three levels of analysis: personal strategies and decision-making processes at the micro-level; structural relations and social networks at the mezzo-level; and the historic, political and economic context of migrations at the macro-level (Brettel 2003: 7).

Migration has always been an integral part of human history and entailed multiple identities and affiliations. However, in the last

decades at the turn of millennia, new type of migration processes has been observed and identified: transnational migration. It has been often described as a consequence of globalisation, mainly restructuralisation of the global labour market, increased mobility and travel, and new ways of communication. It concerns people and groups for which migrations and movements back and forth are not an involuntary or a forced escape to a permanent exile, but a natural way of life and a modern lifestyle. In contrast to classical models of migration connected with assimilation and integration, transnational migration evokes “simultaneous local and pluralistic identities, simultaneous ethnic and transnational affiliations, and simultaneous collectivistic and individualistic attitudes” (Mirdal and Ryyänen-Karjalainen 2004: 3). The concept of transnational migration challenges the previous well-established theories and conceptualisation of migration, and asks for retheorisation of both the theories and definitions of migration (including adaptation, acculturation, assimilation and integration) and the theories of nation state, collective identities and citizenship.

The first part of the paper aims at introducing theories and opening a debate on the concept of transnationalism and transnational migration in Central European social scientific milieu, mainly because this type of migration has been a new phenomenon in postsocialist countries, but has not been given any particular attention. The second part of the paper brings a short case study insight into the transnational community of the Slovak professionals living and working in Brussels, the EU capital.

The development of the concept and theory of transnationalism

The theoretical concept of transnationalism appeared in social science literature in the last decade of the twentieth century in relation to the new type of migration in the changing global world. The topic of transnationalism, transnational cultures, transnational migrants and actors (transmigrants), transnational communities, transnational social spaces, transnational links and networks, transnational movements or organisations has become the focus of many conferences and publications, but often also a buzzword with a fuzzy meaning. Different

disciplines have different approaches to the study of transnationalism. Nina Glick Schiller points out that it is important to make a distinction among 1) transnational cultural studies that focus on “the growth of global communications, media, consumerism, and public cultures that transcend borders to create a global ecumene”; 2) globalisation studies that call attention to “the recent reconfigurations of space and polity and the growth of global cities; and 3) transnational migration studies that are concerned “with the actual social interactions that migrants maintain and construct across borders” (Glick Schiller 1997: 155, cited by Brettel 2003: 48). In social anthropology, there has been an increased interest in the migrations and flows of cultures and people across national borders in a new global and theoretical context. Some anthropologists talk about the revival of the theory of cultural diffusionism with its key words ‘migration’ and ‘diffusion’ understood as processes of transfer and distribution of cultural phenomena from one society to another (Glick Schiller and Basch 1995: 50). Others are mainly interested in the way how time and space are experienced, how locality is understood in the global world and how identity is formed if groups are “no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous (Appadurai 1991: 191).

Transnationalism is formed through economic, political and sociocultural processes, which create a variety of new social and cultural inter-connections, networks, relations and lifestyles that transcend state and political borders. As Aihwa Ong puts it: “Contemporary transnational flows may have overlapped with the paths of earlier migrants from the same country of departure who had left under involuntary conditions... But a generation later, many of same refugees and their children are engaged in multiple home visits and cross-border exchanges” (Ong 2008: 171). It is important to remember that not all people can enjoy free movement. According to Zygmunt Bauman, there are those free to move and those forced to move. He talks about the “global hierarchy of mobility” which is part of a worldwide and local redistribution of privileges and deprivations (Bauman 1998: 70, cited by Ong 2008: 171). Majority of migrants in the world still belongs to the category of those “forced to move”. These are mainly refugees, asylum-seekers or low-skilled workers often

working in informal economies. However, the ease of travel and communication these days makes mobility, movement and migration more possible and affordable for more and more people all over the world. Migration of highly-skilled workers is on the rise and has become increasingly relevant for the development of the knowledge-based economy and society.

Contemporary migrants can hardly be described as people uprooted from their country and culture. Many of them are capable of adapting successfully to the host society, and at the same time of keeping strong links with the home country. Until recently social scientists viewed migrants as those who for various reasons left the country of origin and had to face a difficult process of adaptation, assimilation and integration into a host society and culture, often without a prospect of seeing their home country again (which was true in case of most political emigrants – for instance emigrants from post-war and post-1968 Czechoslovakia). Theory of transnationalism reevaluates this view. New migrants can think in broader dimensions than “host and home countries”. The place of their present stay may be just a stop on their way to another destination. They operate in transnational social spaces that can be defined as flows of people, goods, ideas, symbols and services across international borders (Strassburger 2005: 49).

Transnationalism blurs the boundaries between ‘us and them’ or ‘here and there’. Transnational actors consider mobility and migration a normal part of modern life. This distinguishes transnational and other migrations. Traditional theoretical approaches studied migration as a phenomenon that is out of a norm, making a distinction between the process of migration and the product of migration (especially the influence of migrants on the host country). In contrast to this view, transnational migration is seen as a normal phenomenon of the contemporary world, and transnational migrants as representatives of the global world. Some authors (such as Glick Schiller 1999 or Brettel 2003) consider transnational migration a challenge to rethink old categories of circulatory, permanent, and return migration.

Transnationalism was first defined and theorised in the book *Nations Unbound* by Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina

Blanc Szanton (1994). Their definition has become probably most cited in social anthropological studies. They define transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement“ (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1994: 7). In another study, Nina Glick Schiller describes transnational migration as “a form of mobility in which migrants and their descendants choose to live their lives across borders, simultaneously becoming incorporated into a nation-state of settlement while maintaining social relations that embed them in other nation-states (Glick Schiller 2005: 29). Migrants involved in this type of migration are called transmigrants. Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton emphasise that transmigrants develop and maintain multiple familiar, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political relationships that span borders (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1994: 7). Transmigrants ‘keep their feet’ in two (or more) societies, they are capable of living a ‘double’ life across borders and they use their multiple identity for the development of cultural, social, political and economic changes in both the host and the home countries. Glick Schiller points out that transmigrants are at the same time citizens who participate in the normative regime, legal and institutional system of two or more states and claim rights and privileges from more than one government. A number of states have officially adopted the concept of dual citizenship or dual nationality that is an important basis for the development of transnationalism and transborder citizenship (Glick Schiller 2005: 27).

Studies dealing with transnationalism follow practices, contacts and influences of transmigrants who live and work outside the country of their origin, their home community and society. New communication technologies and tools, particularly Internet as the main medium and an important symbol of transnationalism as well as an increased number of low-cost airline connections play a significant role in building and keeping regular contacts and information exchange between transmigrants and their home society. These new channels accelerate the development of transnational spaces, networks and activities and question old concepts of home, locality, community, belonging and affiliation that are often tied to the concept of identity. Traditional conceptualisation of home was related to „the stable physical

centre of one's universe – a safe and still place to leave and return to (whether house, village, region or nation) and a principal focus of one's concern and control" (Rapport and Dawson 1998: 6). These days it is easier for migrants to form and keep a mobile concept of home or a concept of a mobile home, which is rooted more in mind of each individual than in a concrete place and space. Home in this understanding does not mean a fixed and closed place firmly rooted in one culture and one identity, but rather a deterritoriated interactive space within multiple identities, localities, cultures, social relations and practices. As a result, family relations and networks expand from the local to the global arena. Modern communication and transportation opportunities have a crucial impact on the intensity of contacts between the host and home societies. They contribute to strengthening of local, regional, national, ethnic, religious and cultural relations and lead also to mobilisation of financial flows through various forms of expat tourism (regular visits of transmigrants and their investments in the country of origin). They promote migration of ideas, experiences, know-how, values, approaches, customs and habits, social behavior, identities, and human, social and cultural capital from one society and culture to another. Transmigrants become key actors of transnational co-operation, transfer of skills and enhancement of links to international networks, and important agents of social, cultural and often also political transformation in the country of origin.

Anthropologists and other social scientists pay more and more attention to the growing community of migrants who belong to the global transnational elite: highly skilled workers, experienced and mobile professionals, intellectuals and activists that migrate from country to country, from project to project, following offers, investments and jobs of transnational corporations, organisations and companies (Ribeiro 1994; Beaverstock 2005; Hannerz 1998). The definition of highly skilled workers or professionals is not generally recognised because this group is very diverse, but it is usually restricted to persons with a tertiary educational qualification or an equivalent occupation and skills acquired by experience, training or natural talent (Salt 1997: 5). The relevance of transnational recruitment and migration of the highly skilled has become more recognised in recent years, and therefore also more studied at both the scientific and policy levels as it is often closely

connected with brain drain or brain gain and has a significant impact on economic development of sending and receiving countries (e.g. OECD report by Salt 1997; or ILO report by Lowell and Findlay 2001).

Representatives of transnational professionals, permanently confronted with the question of identity, time and space, consider themselves world citizens, cosmopolitans, new age nomads or expatriates without roots. They are capable of easily adapting to new conditions and are open to new experience and culture although they become rarely totally committed to it (Hannerz 1998: 104). This group of transmigrants contributes to the development of the deterritorialised vision of the global world or, using Manuel Castells's terminology, to the vision of the Network Society (Castells 2000). According to George Konrad, "we may describe as transnational those intellectuals who are at home in the cultures of other people as well as their own. They keep track of what is happening in various places. They have special ties to those countries where they have lived, they have friends all over the world, they hop across the sea to discuss something with their colleagues; they fly to visit one another as easily as their counterparts two hundred years ago rode over to the next town to exchange ideas" (Konrad 1984: 208–209, cited by Hannerz 1998: 106–107). The basis for the existence of transnational elites is global networks and connections that are produced and reproduced in the work process and also through personal contacts and networks.

The group of transnational highly skilled professionals is much diversified. Its representatives include executives and managers of multinational corporations, businessmen, researchers and academics, students, IT specialists, health experts, diplomats, foreign correspondents, activists of global non-governmental organisations or officers of supranational political and economic associations and agencies such as the European Union, United Nations, World Bank, OECD or NATO. They are often characterised as 'knowledge workers' or 'a creative class' required by knowledge-based economy and society who search the environment that stimulates creativity and offers best conditions for the creation and development of knowledge and technological, economic, social and cultural innovations (as described for instance in publications written by Richard Florida, e.g. Florida

2002; Florida and Tinagli 2004). Their mobility is closely connected with the network of global cities with the high concentration of capital, power, knowledge, skills and information.

Typical example of the global city that hosts a large number of transnational professionals is Brussels, the capital of the European Union. The following part of the paper will introduce the city and a group of transmigrants who are Slovak citizens and work for various European institutions in Brussels. It looks at their work and life style, motivations of their migration, interactions with the home country and transformations of their identity. It compares their characteristics with the general characteristics that are usually given to transmigrants:

- they are citizens who are part of the normative, legal, institutional and political system in two or more states;
- they consciously keep and develop multiple social relations between the country of their origin and the country of settlement, and thus build social networks transcending geographical, cultural and political borders;
- they have multiple identities and identify themselves without problems with the home country and locality, host country, and a larger supranational space (such as Europe or world);
- the concept of home in their understanding has a broader meaning that is not localised in one place and one culture;
- they can easily adapt to a new environment and are open to new culture, but they do not assimilate.

The case study was written on the basis of an analysis of standardized questionnaires and interviews held in 2006 and 2007 in Brussels as well as the study of scientific literature, policy papers and daily press. In addition, a bit of autobiographical transnational experience has been reflected in the study as I was living and working as a professional in a European non-profit association in Brussels during the period of my research. Taking into account that migration has been a new and growing phenomenon in postsocialist Slovakia, introductory paragraphs give a special attention to the broader context for the migration in this country.

Slovakia and migration: A very short introduction

International (or transnational) migration, both immigration and emigration, was almost an unknown and a taboo phenomenon in socialist Slovakia (at that time part of Czechoslovakia). Until 1989 it was legally restricted, controlled and forbidden due to political reasons. Statistical data show that for instance during the 1980s, approximately 163 persons officially moved out of Slovakia every year (usually through the marriage). Statistics, of course, did not mention illegal political emigration. It has been estimated that about 1200–1500 persons emigrated illegally from Slovakia annually in the 1980s (Olexa 2001: 7). The fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 opened opportunities for legal mobility and migration of the citizens. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Slovakia became a receiving country with positive migration balance figures. This was first caused by the return migration of the people who moved in to claim legal restitutions of their properties as well as an intense exchange migration between Slovakia and the Czech Republic (especially after the split of Czechoslovakia in 1992). Since the second half of the 1990s immigration from Eastern Europe, Asia and other continents has been increasing. According to Divinský, when taking into account a growing number of undocumented migrants, we can already speak about Slovakia as an immigration country. Although it is still mainly a transit country, some signs suggest it may soon become a target country (Divinský 2004: 100). After Slovakia joined the European Union (2004) and the Schengen Area (2007), the number of migrants from the 'old' EU member states has also grown as a result of a number of important investment projects in several Slovak regions (Čavojec 2007: 5). Majority of migrants from Western European countries are highly-skilled professionals working mainly in managerial positions, consultancy, academia or other fields of the tertiary sector (Divinský 2004: 103).

Emigration from Slovakia to other countries has been also growing gradually (although not as dramatically as the media predictions in Western European countries indicated before the EU enlargement in 2004). However, statistical data about emigration from Slovakia do not show real numbers because many citizens do not officially deregister before they move to another country (Žirka 2002). For instance,

Divinský quotes the data from *International Migration from Countries with Economies in Transition 1980–1999* that show high numbers of the Slovaks who emigrated to Germany (1995 – 7800 persons; 1996 – 6600; 1997 – 7000; 1998 – 6600; and 1999 – 9100), while official statistical data from Slovakia show different and much lower numbers (1995 – 26 persons; 1996 – 31; 1997 – 120; 1998 – 99; and 1999 – 127; Divinský 2005). Following the data of work agencies helping potential migrants to find work and arrange jobs abroad, it has been estimated that approximately 170,000 to 200,000 Slovaks officially moved and work in the countries of the European Union (SME 13. 6. 2006), mainly in building industry, health care, agriculture, hotels and care services. However, these data do not follow short-term labour migration, and migration of highly-skilled professionals who do not need and use work agencies and who find jobs mainly through professional networks or international recruitments.

Brussels: A (dream) destination for (some) transnational migrants

Migration of Slovak citizens to Belgium and its capital Brussels has specific characteristics. Brussels is an uncrown capital of Europe, the seat of the main European Union (EU) institutions (European Commission, European Parliament and the Council of the EU) and the seat of the NATO Headquarters. Political power concentrated in Brussels attracts hundreds of other governmental and non-governmental institutions, associations and representations. According to the *Bulletin*, a weekly Belgian magazine published in English, there are around 70 intergovernmental associations, more than 300 local and regional representations, 1,750 nonprofit non-governmental organisations, 2,000 international and multinational companies and corporations, and hundreds of lobbying groups and think tanks (Philp 2006: 89). Brussels hosts the highest number of diplomatic representations in the world and one of the highest numbers of foreign correspondents. Professionals from European and non-European countries make 10–15 per cent of the overall Brussels population (Favell 2001: 14). It is obvious that transnational migrants play a significant role in the structure of the workforce in the city.

The number of Slovak citizens in Brussels has been increasing especially since 2004 when Slovakia joined the EU. According to the Ministry of Economy in Belgium, in the first year after the EU enlargement in 2004, the number of immigrants from the new member states grew from 3,442 to 19,780. The number of Slovaks increased from 246 to 1,218 during the year of 2004 (Banks 2006: 30). My own survey based on the correspondence with all relevant institutions has shown that 266 Slovak citizens worked in three central institutions of the EU (119 in the European Commission, 95 in the European Parliament and 52 in the Council) and 7 citizens in NATO to the date of the 30th of June 2006. These numbers only include employees with a long-term contract. In addition to that, dozens of Slovaks work in the EU institutions as temporary agents, national experts and stagiaires that come to Brussels for a period of 3 months to 3–4 years. A number of Slovaks work in independent private or non-profit organisations (e.g. Centre for European Policy, European Civic Foundation or European University Association) as well as in the Slovak representations in Brussels (Permanent Representation of Slovakia to the EU – 86 persons, Permanent Representation of Slovakia to NATO – 55, Slovak Embassy in Belgium – 9, House of Slovak Regions – 9; 30th June 2006). Slovak citizens also work in managerial positions in transnational companies, law firms and corporations. Short-term migration is very popular, too, especially for young people who come to study at Belgian universities or get traineeships in various institutions.

Brussels is on the one hand a dream destination for many professionals that want to make a career in one of the EU institutions; on the other hand it is one of the most criticised cities in Europe due to the fact that it is the centre of political power. Media all over Europe support the negative image of the city. Headlines such as “Brussels has decided”, “Brussels is responsible” or “Brussels dictates” are familiar to every citizen in any EU member state. They carry out a negative symbolism of power and decision-making out of the territory of the member state. Brussels is divided into 19 independent administrative units (communes). The European Quarter (*Le Quartier Européen*) is definitely not the most attractive one, but it is a well-known part of Brussels with majority of buildings that are the workplace of thousands

of *Eurocrats* ('fonctionnaires' in the EU institutions) and *Eurostars* (the name given to young professionals from all over Europe that are at the beginning of their career and come to Brussels as 'stagiaires' in the EU institutions).

Professionals working for any of the EU institutions can be described as transmigrants. They come to Brussels for a certain period of time – some on a temporary contract (*temporary contract agents, national experts a stagiaires*), others on a permanent contract (*officials – fonctionnaires*). Most of them keep regular links, ties and connections with their home country and home place, which is described by many scientists as a central component of the transnational elite life course (Beaverstock 2005; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Vertovec 1999). Many stay in Brussels only during the weekdays and travel “home” for the weekend. For them, Brussels is a work place where they live a busy work and social life during the week, but the weekend is devoted to their “real” home, family and friends. This dual life makes it difficult to build strong identity with the city and sense of belonging. In the transnational community of these Euro-professionals the need to integrate into the Belgian and Brussels society does not even exist. Brussels does not try to integrate or assimilate anyone. It is a truly multicultural European and global city where pan-European cosmopolitanism can flourish. It has an atmosphere of an open diversity in which various cultures meet and develop without any assimilation or integration national pressures that may appear in other European cities, such as Paris or Amsterdam (Favell 2001: 4).

Slovak citizens who work for the European institutions are spread over different workplaces depending on the results of centrally organised EU competitions (*concours*) and the needs of the institutions. Work in any EU institution requires good knowledge of at least two foreign languages and therefore, the vast majority of successful candidates from Slovakia have been young highly-qualified and skilled professionals. According to the survey done by The Bulletin, most of *Eurocrats* from the new EU member states (from the 2004 and 2008 enlargements) are young and single people who speak foreign languages, are highly ambitious, their main objective is to build good career perspectives and to live a good quality life (Banks 2006: 30).

Only a small percentage of them bring their spouses and families as it is much easier for unmarried people to move in search of work. In addition, because Belgium still requires work permits for the EU newcomers (although the restriction does not apply to people who work for the EU institution), it is very difficult to find an adequate job for a partner. Some couples try to keep long-distance relationships, but they rarely work. This tendency was demonstrated also in interviews and a questionnaire survey done among the Slovak professionals working in Brussels. Majority of them are single or left their families in Slovakia.

With the objective to learn more about motivations, life style, identification with the new environment and new culture, and home connections, I sent 45 questionnaires and held 15 interviews with the Slovak citizens working for the EU institutions during the years of 2006 – 2007. The main goal was to see whether some aspects of transnational migration can be applied to the group of citizens from the new EU member state that do not have much experience with life and work in another country and have never been challenged with multiculturalism or diversity of cultures, religions, languages and life styles. The sample of those respondents who were willing to participate in the survey (25) consisted mainly of young and middle-aged people (23–46 year old), women (80 %) and those with the first work experience abroad. They are all citizens of the Slovak Republic and are legally registered as residents in one of the Brussels nineteen communes. This gives them rights and responsibilities in two states (including the right to vote and run in the communal elections in Belgium).

Slovak professionals in Brussels

Motivations: why to move?

A Slovak journalist working in Brussels who has seen many Slovaks come and go, in the interview for the Slovak Spectator said: “People come here for the money. You can get a good job in the EU if you get it. The money is very good – starting with 4,500 Euro in the high-paid jobs” (Ferguson 2004). For the respondents in the survey, money did appear as an important objective, but they mentioned also other crucial

motivations for moving, living and working abroad: gaining experience in an international multicultural environment, doing interesting work, or improving language and communication skills. Living and working within diversity of nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, languages, life-styles and work-styles was considered a very positive aspect of the new experience.

“The main motivation was income; secondly it was the international environment, open society, also the opportunity of language enhancement for the whole family, good school for my daughter and an overall personal enrichment” (man, 35).

“Change, experience and money – those were my main motivations” (woman, 35).

“It was the closest and the most fitting career step in the field I work in, a work challenge, a need for change and an opportunity for both professional and individual growth. It was a need to test my strength, courage and potential in a sense of changing environment and moving abroad, as well as embracing a great work challenge” (woman, 31).

“For me the motivation was to get to know the capital of political Europe, an interest in the EU and a better understanding of the further political and human development of Slovakia...Work in an international environment is fascinating and the working style is different to the Slovak one. The positive aspects are getting to know people of different nationalities, their traditions, customs and ways of living, which enriches my life greatly. If one adopts positive aspects of other nationalities, s/he can embrace a more cultured, professional and self-confident behaviour. The negative side is that we are still only looked upon as a new member state; unfortunately the EU 15 still has a more dominant position” (woman, 23).

“I always wanted to work abroad and in an international organisation...get to know the world, different cultures, travel a lot and also to make money” (woman, 39).

“Diversity of opinions, horizons, languages and history are positive factors. The negative aspect is the limited contact with family, home, friends and activities taking places at home” (woman, 30).

Home, sweet home

All respondents maintain a regular, many even everyday contact with their families, friends and ex-colleagues mostly via the Internet (e-mail, online chat rooms and fora), by phone and Skype. Skype – free Internet phone service – present a crucial step forward in communication, opening the opportunity of everyday contact with home community – both audio and visual (web-cam), without the worry about finances. New technologies and the possibility to be in contact with the home environment at any time helps preventing or partly diminishing the psychological stress caused by parting or isolation, which is in many cases shared by emigrants in the first months or years abroad. All of the respondents visit Slovakia relatively regularly (the interval between every two weeks to three-four months), with the preferred modes of transport by plane or car. Visits from relatives and friends to Brussels range within similar intervals. The reasons for frequent travelling are connected mainly with the category of ‘home’:

“I consider Brussels my second home. Not only do I work here, but I also have friends here and participate in the cultural life, do sport and fulfill my interests. My family, my husband and son live in Slovakia so I travel home by plane every other weekend” (woman, 45).

“Brussels is my second home, but home is home nevertheless. On average, I travel back every two months” (woman, 39).

“For me, Slovakia is my home, although, living abroad has its advantages. It teaches one to have a broader, more open perspective about the world, to breach national biases in which we are stuck, to be more tolerant and to learn not only to tolerate, but to accept diversity. This is a huge personal enrichment. On the other hand, I miss the depth of relationships which I have with people in Slovakia, the fact that I can understand people without speaking a word. I miss my family, friends with whom I share mutual memories and a shared “historical memory”. I miss the nature, the folklore, roaming the landscape and the real four seasons. I keep struggling between these two poles, although thanks to frequent traveling, email, phone or Skype, I no longer feel the trauma of separation. With the age and experience I have, I now think more of where my priorities and my heart lie and where I want to grow old” (woman, 46).

“Whether I will return home? Long-term planning was never my strong side, but Slovakia is my home. I have friends and family there, contentment, harmony and everything else that makes me what and who I am. I also have my own apartment there. I do want to go back, of course I do. I did not leave because I didn’t want to live there. I left because I needed a change. Concerning the vision of my old, wrinkly self, I see myself walking in the square of my town with an ice cream in my hand. Yet, anything can happen. I might settle here and start a family, even though this is hard to imagine. If it happened, I can see myself as a nomad moving with my children back and forth between Slovakia and Belgium” (woman, 31).

The respondents’ answers support the idea of the present conceptualisation of home that exists in a migrant age and is very broad. Home is not only a physical space and territory of safety and one’s control, but also identity, place of belonging, memory and longing, and a social and cultural entity. For the contemporary migrants, it is easier to keep the concept of more homes, a mobile concept of home or home carried around in one’s head.

“In my head, I have it sorted out half and half. Sometimes I call home my city in Slovakia and pretend that I go to Brussels for extended business trips, other times this is my home and I go to Slovakia for holiday. Home is more than just a material place, it is a place where people dear to me live...Regarding travel, the first years I needed to go home every three months to keep in peace and be happier. I return home to re-charge batteries and mend my faith in people. I find the people at home more real, I understand their body-language, communication and I know what they are thinking. I am still learning to understand people here...I now return home 3–4 times a year, but the reasons for my visits are different to those during the first years. I suppose I have assimilated and learned to deal with the multicultural environment...Visits from my relatives help – when a part of Slovakia comes to me, I do not have to go there so often” (woman, 31).

Home is for many symbolised also by material products. Even though the supermarkets in Brussels offer a broad selection of global products, most of the respondents bring food from Slovakia which reminds

them of home, and without which they ‘cannot exist’. This food includes for example ‘bryndza’ (special sheep cheese), cottage cheese, bacon, home-made sausages, sauerkraut, mineral water, beer, wine, soft drinks such as Vinea and Kofola, all kinds of sweets and pastries (e.g. Tatranka or Jesienka), spices such as cumin and marjoram, dry mushrooms and even flour. Although all respondents emphasise that they mostly miss their family, friends or nature, a piece of the tasty homeland can sometimes help to surpass the nostalgia. One of the respondents best grasps this aspect:

“I mostly miss the people and I bring them over whenever I can. From products, this is many things but this is more nostalgic. I like to bring sweets Tatranky and Jesienky – when I have a bad day and have a bite of one of these products, I feel much better and feel as if I was ten again, at home, with my family near by. I also bring some herbs from our garden, sauerkraut made by my mum, dry mushrooms that were picked up by my dad and bryndza from Tesco – all products from which I can cook meals known from my home” (woman, 31).

A survey based on the online discussion in a virtual community of Slovak emigrants (of different categories and from different countries) analysed by Daniel Luther showed that the concept of home is an important part of their identity and is mainly connected with local, family and ethnic identities. He stresses that the concept of two homes is mainly spread in ethnically mixed marriages (Luther 2006: 112). Research among Slovak professionals in Brussels demonstrates that they are familiar and open towards the concept of two homes which is the characteristics frequent among transmigrants.

Identity forming and changing

The question of identity and particularly the multiplicity of identities is closely related to the transnational lifestyle. When asked as to what unit (home town, region, Slovakia, Brussels, Europe, the world) the respondents feel the closest ties, most of them replied that they feel part of all of these units, or Europe. The minority of respondents preferred the home town, region or Slovakia, however, many emphasised Slovakia to have an important role in their identity. This also corresponds with the results of the opinion poll that was carried out by

the Eurobarometer in 25 EU countries in 2005. Compared to the European average, the Slovak citizens strongly identify with the European identity (78 % compared to 63 % as the European average), however they do not surrender their national identity. 84 % of Slovaks are proud to be citizens of their country, compared to 87 % of the European average (SME, 14. 2. 2006). Most of the Slovak citizens working in Brussels asked in the survey considered themselves first as cosmopolitans, Europeans or both. The opinions of the respondents on the question of European identity differ and include both positive and negative statements:

“I think of myself as European. Europeans share the history and cultural heritage. I believe that European identity already exists, which of course does not eliminate the existence of national identity” (woman, 45).

“I feel European. Anywhere in Europe I am able to feel at home. I don’t have language barriers and if they abolished those ridiculous work visas, I can imagine myself settling in any country where I would live and work. As Europeans, we share the same basic life principles: to build a home, find a job, have a family, bring up children... United European identity? I think so, it’s just a matter of time” (woman, 39).

“I think I belong to all units, but I do not believe in a common European identity” (woman, 30).

“I would like to be identified first as a Slovak, only then as a European” (woman, 35).

“European identity is absurd. Yet, if we understand this concept as a sum of the differences of nationalities and an absolute tolerance towards them, then I dream about the day when it comes about. Unfortunately, I don’t think I will be here to see it. My European descent and heritage usually comes into conversation when communicating with people from the USA... They manage to make me feel proud that I am European” (woman, 31).

“I identify with everything in the order: home town, region, Slovakia, Brussels, Europe, the world. I mostly feel European when I am outside the continent. European identity lies in our heterogeneity” (woman, 30).

It seems that all respondents identify with several geographical entities and have several identities which overlap but are not in a mutual conflict. Life in the multicultural environment of Brussels and work in institutions which are founded upon the vision of joint Europe, existing on the basis of solidarity, tolerance and mutual co-operation have a vital influence on identity forming.

Relations, ties and contacts with the home society

One of the main characteristics of transmigrants is their conscious keeping, building and nourishing of multiple contacts and relations between the country and society of origin and the host country and society. Most of Slovak professionals are in a regular, almost daily contact with their home through the Internet, phone, Skype or other new technologies. Many of them, however, do more. They try to influence the development in the home country by their opinions based on their experience, first-hand information or even financial contributions. All of them regularly read daily newspapers through the Internet; a number of them take part in the parliamentary elections in Slovakia; many of them inform their former colleagues and friends in Slovakia about new funding opportunities, projects, traineeships, deadlines, competitions etc., and one of the respondents regularly writes blogs on the 'EU' topic or on living abroad for the Slovak daily newspaper.

"I am really trying hard to be active. I follow activities at home and support them if I can and also 'how much I can' (for instance in supporting petitions and campaigns). Any charity donation I do go to Slovak non-profit organisations" (woman, 31).

"I am active in the Slovak daily life through the Internet, but I also often write articles and I regularly publish blogs in several Slovak newspapers" (man, 30).

"My objective is to send a message to our people what Brussels is about in order to give them a chance to understand the structures and to utilise them instead of criticizing them" (woman, 30).

"I marginally influence my Slovak friends with my opinions, keep old work contacts and informal networking and if someone asks, I deliver first-hand information" (man, 32).

Conclusions

The objective of the study was to introduce some of the present concepts and theories of transnational migration as a new phase of migration processes in the global world and to apply them in research among the Slovak professionals working in the European institutions in Brussels. All participants in the survey come from Slovakia, a country which did not give them an opportunity to move, live and work abroad before 1989 due to political reasons. They were not familiar with multiculturalism, co-operation and co-existence of diverse groups, cultures and languages and had no work experience in another country before coming to Belgium. The analysis of their statements demonstrates that Slovak citizens working in the EU institutions are an integrated part of transnational community of professionals. They show characteristics that are common for most transmigrants: they feel strong ties both with the country of origin and the host country; they keep daily contact with their home society and influence it through various activities; they feel and identify themselves as the Europeans (or cosmopolitans) and the Slovaks; and they make easily friends with the people from different countries and groups. Thanks to their position in transnational community in Brussels they do not feel the need to fully integrate into the Belgian society. It is important to stress that working in a highly multicultural work environment, being actively involved in the process of European integration; belonging to a privileged community of *Eurocrats*, and enjoying social and economic benefits and protection of European institutional bureaucracy may have an impact on identity forming and on positive identification with the transnational community. These conditions make this group of migrants different from other Slovaks working in Belgium who often feel isolated and find integration into the host society much more difficult.² For the Slovak transmigrants, living in Brussels and working for the EU institution is an enriching experience. At the same time, these citizens can be considered an asset for the Slovak society. Through their regular contacts with the homeland they contribute to the transfer and transnational flow of ideas, knowledge, opinions, symbols, values and visions, and thus, have an impact on the development of an open and more tolerant society in Slovakia.

Transnationalism and transnational migration is a new phenomenon in Slovakia, and its study is still an unknown and marginal research field. It brings new understanding of the nation state, borders, home, the local and the global, time and space, and it challenges retheorising of these categories. In the anthropological camp, it has its advocates who mainly come from social anthropology (such as Hannerz 1992; 1996) and its opponents who come from cultural anthropology (such as Geertz 1994; cited by Eriksen 2003). The complexity of transnationalism asks for a common attitude of both social and cultural anthropologists, and for even more multidisciplinary approach towards its study. Given both the global and the local implications of transnationalism in Central and Eastern Europe, the topic should be given a considerably more attention in future research.

Notes

¹ Different versions of the paper written in Slovak language were published in: Bitušíková, A. 2006. 'Transnárodná migrácia z pohľadu sociálnej antropológie'. In: Luther, D. (ed.) *E/Migrácie a Slovensko. (Diverzita ako faktor transformácie identít.)*, 115–136. Bratislava: Ústav etnológie SAV a Banská Bystrica: Ústav vedy a výskumu; and Bitušíková, A. 2007. 'Transnárodná migrácia – nový fenomén globálneho sveta? (Slovenskí občania ako transnárodní migranti v Bruseli)' *Slovenský národopis*, 55: 401–421.

² This is demonstrated on the website www.belgicko.exil.sk in numerous statements of Slovak migrants in Belgium who do not belong to the transnational community of Eurocrats.

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This study was partly supported by the 6th Framework Programme Project – Network of Excellence *Sustainable Development in a Diverse World* (SUS.DIV, CIT3-CT-2005-513438).

Ethnic (national) diversity in the Czech Republic: Invariables and New Developments

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Introduction

This text aims at several objectives:

1st To indicate developmental trajectories of national (ethnic) diversification of society in the Czech Republic.

2nd To record trends in declaration of otherness based on ethnic or national principle occurring on the territory of the Czech Republic.

3rd To draw on the lessons learned to make implications for further exploration of ethnic and national diversification in the form of additional research questions.

All these objectives are directed towards a common goal of understanding some contradictory messages communicated on the level of theory, whose validity for the Czech Republic has not been sufficiently verified. The first concerns the contradiction in the idea of a global society where, on the one hand, we are told of its trends towards internationalization, trans-nationalism, hybridization, and diffusion of cultures (Hannerz 1989, 1996; Bauman 1993; Featherstone 1995; Eriksen 2007) and on the other hand, we relatively often hear of growing national (ethnic) diversity, in particular in countries that were part of the Soviet economic and military bloc before 1989 (Hlinčíková 2009). This contradiction suggests the question whether ethnic (national) diversity in the Czech Republic is also increasing, and how. A related issue, which I deal with subsequently, is what the data

¹ The text has been elaborated within the project Sustainable Development in a Diverse World and the Research Plan of the Institute of Ethnology of the AS CR, v.v.i., AV0Z905805513.

recorded actually represent to actors. I mean, what are the actors' perceptions of diversity and how they themselves construct it. The conclusions should make clear that many of my statements are valid more generally, rather than exclusively for the Czech Republic, which is used here as an example.

Basic methodological assumptions

The study emphasizes the socially constructed aspect of diversity. It is based on the precondition that ethnic groups and their boundaries are artificial human constructs and especially product of power relations, where each group attaches certain characteristics to its members and provides them with certain ways of acting (Barth 1969, Eriksen 1993). Such concept of ethnicity emphasizes the flexibility of ethnicity and its dependence on situation as well as its social conditioning. An individual may take on different ethnicities or nationalities during his or her life, this is, however, not always just a matter of the individual's free will. Often, such declaration is also dependent on his or her social surroundings and on very pragmatic and poorly modifiable circumstances, such as citizenship.

Furthermore, the study assumes that ethnic or national identity forms but a part of human identity, which is understood here as individual identity, or the identity of an individual person. Identity is conceived here as an element of subjective reality (Berger and Luckman 1980). It is the property of individuals who conceive of themselves as persons having a past, a present and a future. Identity is the result of the reflection of a self, entering in contact with its physical and social surroundings. People constantly redefine their physical and social context based on feedback from their surroundings, taking into account where they feel safe and happy and where, conversely, feel discomfort, danger, hostility and unpleasant experiences lurk at them.

Development of national and ethnic diversity in the Czech Republic since the early 20th century

Several trends have occurred in the development of ethnic and national diversity on this territory. On the one hand, we can observe a continuous trend towards homogenization of ethnic composition and the formation of a nation-state. On the other hand, the process of homogenization of the population has been affected by diversification related to international migration. Several steps towards homogenization were taken on the territory of the Czech Republic during the 20th century.

The first significant step towards homogenization in the modern history of the current territory of the Czech Republic followed the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918. The new state of Czechoslovakia was formed by two large national groups, the Czechs and the Slovaks, who represented the majority population, yet coexisted on the Czechoslovak territory with large groups of Germans and Hungarians. Efforts at creation of national uniformity and one constitutional nation resulted in the concept of merging two previously autonomous nations of Czechs and Slovaks in one nation, a nation of Czechoslovaks, consisting of two branches, Czech and Slovak. As part of this concept, the Czech and the Slovak language were not conceptualized as two separate linguistic units, but as two mutually intelligible dialects which could both be used in mutual communication.

The official doctrine of Czechoslovakism, strongly promoted by the first President of independent Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, was enshrined in the Constitution of Czechoslovakia, adopted on 29 February 1920. Its preamble was inspired by the U.S. Constitution. The Constitution of Czechoslovakia, however, speaks not of 'People of the United States', but the "Czechoslovak nation". The preamble says: *"We, the Czechoslovak nation, wanting to strengthen the perfect unity of our nation, to establish fair procedures in the country, to ensure a peaceful development of our Czechoslovak homeland, to contribute to the common good of all citizens of this country and to secure the blessings of liberty for coming generations,*

adopted in our National Assembly, on 29th February 1920, the Constitution for the Czechoslovak Republic, the text of which follows"². It is symptomatic for the diction of the Czechoslovak constitutional law, that in both the Czech and Slovak languages, the meaning of the term "nation" is distinct from the meaning of the term "state citizens". Ethno-cultural nationalism (Gellner 1983), or ethno-cultural national identity (Brubaker 1992, 1996), which is typical for the Central-European area, conceptualizes a member of a nation as a bearer of a shared language, religion or traditional culture. Shared citizenship, to the contrary, does not imply equal national provenance. This means that the preamble does not speak for all citizens of the state, but only for members of certain linguistically and culturally defined groups, for which the literature used the term state-forming nation. As implied in the preamble to the Constitution, the desired characteristics of the state-forming nation include concord and unity, not diversity. The concept of the nation as an ethno-cultural entity was also reflected in the terminology used in the census in 1921, which operated with the term nationality, there defined as tribal affiliation, with language typically considered its most significant marker (Sčítání 1924).

Despite the fact that the Czechoslovak Republic created in 1918 conceptualized relation to the state distinctly for the state-forming nation and for other residents of the state, it declared itself a democracy and adopted minority policies in accordance with its declaration even though the homogenizing pressure on the population was significant. § 4 Chapter 1 of Act 121/1920 Coll., which introduces the Constitutional Charter of Czechoslovakia says, that the citizenship of the Czechoslovak Republic is sole and undifferentiated. No citizen of any other state can be a citizen of the Czechoslovak Republic. At the same time, it provides that "*all citizens of the Republic of Czechoslovakia are fully equal before the law and enjoy the same civil and political rights notwithstanding their race, language or religion.*"³ The Constitutional Act of 1920 prescribed basic democratic freedoms for state citizens and currently, under the same constitution said, that "*Czechoslovak citizens may, within the limits of general laws, freely use*

² Constitution of Czechoslovakia from 29th February 1920.

³ Act 121/1920 Coll. Law of 29th February 1920 which introduces the Constitutional Charter of the Czechoslovak Republic, Chapter 6, §128, paragraph first.

*any language in private contacts and in trade, in matters relating to religion, in the press as well as in any kind of publications or in public gatherings of people."*⁴ The Czechoslovak Republic is therefore constituted by a single nation, but this nation does not force all citizens to homogeneity. However, if they do not decide to be part of the state-forming Czechoslovak nation, they become a minority.

Homogenizing effects of the Czechoslovak state were reflected in a numerical decline of minorities in the period between the census of 1921 and the census of 1930 even though its significance was quite small due to the relatively short existence of the interwar Czechoslovak state. The trend towards homogenization can be noted for instance in a declining share of the two largest minorities in the Czech lands,⁵ Germans and Poles, in the total population. The last census before the collapse of the Austrian monarchy, which took place in 1910, recorded 10,078,637 inhabitants living in the Czech lands, of whom 62.9 % spoke Czech (were of Czech nationality), 34.6 % were of German nationality, and 1.6 % were of Polish nationality. In 1921, in the first census taken in the Czechoslovak state, German nationality accounted for 30.6 % of the population of the Czech lands and in 1930, at the time of the last census in interwar Czechoslovakia, it represented 29.5 %. Polish nationality accounted for 1 % in 1921 and 0,9 % in 1930. This decrease was due to a number of factors that cannot be attributed solely to the homogenizing impact of the new state. The method of counting played its role as well as the preceding outmigration and war. At the same time, individual nations tried to manipulate the census in their favor.⁶

The trend towards homogenization of the Czechoslovak state was terminated by events proceeding WW II when the Slovak part of the Czechoslovak nation started its struggle for national sovereignty while German inhabitants of border areas achieved accession of these territories to the German Reich. In 1938 the Czechoslovak state

⁴ Act 121/1920 Coll. Law of 29th February 1920, which introduces the Constitutional Charter of the Czechoslovak Republic, Chapter 6, §128, paragraph third.

⁵ The Czech lands, or the territory of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia approximately corresponds with the territory that forms the present Czech Republic.

⁶ More about it mentioned the Czech statistician Antonín Boháč (Boháč 1930).

disintegrated for the first time and the events that led to its disintegration showed the concept of Czechoslovakism to be unsustainable and the formation of a homogeneous Czechoslovak nation with its own state of Czechoslovakia as not feasible.

Further homogenization after 1945 went in a different direction. The Czechs and the Slovaks declared themselves as independent nations with sovereignty over their respective territories. This development is also reflected in the new constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic of 1948, which opens with a declaration of the "Czechoslovak people" consisting of two nations, the Czechs and the Slovaks. The Constitution not only designates them as state-forming nations but also mentions their future allies and enemies: "*The Czechs and the Slovaks, two fraternal nations, members of the large family of Slavs, lived together in one country already one thousand years ago and together they adopted from the East, the greatest creation of human knowledge of those times – Christianity. (...) For centuries, the Czech and Slovak peoples fought feudal exploiters and the German Habsburg dynasty for their social and national liberation.*"⁷ The Constitutional Act of 1948 already provides a number of elements leading to a totalitarian communist regime. However, in terms of the concepts of homogeneity and diversity, it reproduces many elements of the Constitution of 1920, with the difference that it does not seek to create a homogenous state-forming nation, but codifies two state-forming nations that together form the people of Czechoslovakia.

After 1945 a significant step in homogenizing "the Czechoslovak people" was the expulsion of Germans from the territory of the Czech Republic to Germany, as a result of which only a fraction of the German population remained, which kept diminishing all through the following period. The following table shows the development of ethnic diversity in the period before 2001.

⁷ Constitutional Act 150/1948 Coll. of 9th May 1948.

Table 1: Population structure by nationality in the years 1921–2001 in the Czech Lands (percentage)

Year of census	Nationality					
	Czech ¹⁾	Slovak	Polish	Hungarian	German	Other (including unregistered)
1921	67.6	0.2	1.0	0.1	30.6	0.6
1930	68.4	0.4	0.9	0.1	29.5	0.7
1950	93.8	2.9	0.8	0.1	1.8	0.6
1961	94.3	2.9	0.7	0.2	1.4	0.6
1970	94.5	3.3	0.7	0.2	0.8	0.5
1980	94.6	3.5	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.5
1991	94.8	3.1	0.6	0.2	0.5	0.9
2001	94.2	1.9	0.5	0.1	0.4	2.8

Source of data: Czech Statistical Office

The above presented data shows:

First, that Czech society has had long experience with national (ethnic) diversity. For the Czech society, diversity does not represent a new phenomenon developing after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Conversely, the Czech society experienced a continuous process of homogenization that lasted until the 1990s and culminated exactly at the turn of the 20th and 21st century when it reached its historically highest degree of homogeneity in terms of ethnic composition.

Second, that the types of diversity changed during the 20th century. It is a realistic hypothesis that the population of the Czech Republic has no experience with the type of diversity that is currently on the rise, that is the presence of foreign communities from Eastern Europe and Asia. Their arrival disrupts long-term processes of homogenization that permeated the whole period of nationalism and the formation of nation states in Central Europe.

Similar processes can be observed in other Central European countries such as Poland and Hungary.

¹⁾ In the years 1991 and 2001 including Moravian and Silesian nationality.

Czech Republic: disintegration of the state-forming nation

While Table 1 indicates a tendency towards homogenization of the citizens of the Czech Republic in terms of ethnic composition and a strengthening of the Czech state-forming nation at the expense of other nations and ethnic groups living in the Czech Republic, it is possible, at the same time, to observe an internal cleavage of this national whole. This trend became particularly apparent in 1991 when the till then declaratively homogenous Czech nation split into Czechs, Moravians and Silesians, groups that are linguistically very close, but use slightly different dialects in colloquial speech and inhabit different regions of the Czech Republic. Moravia is a vast region in the southeastern part of the Czech Republic and Silesia is a region in the northeastern part of the Czech Republic. As a result of efforts of local patriots and politicians, the two historical geographical areas of the Czech Republic potentially became home of two nations, Moravians and Silesians, whose existence was reflected in the Law on Census and Housing Statistics while this type of national patriotism was also reflected in the Constitution of the independent Czech Republic which was an outcome of the division of Czechoslovakia into the Czech and the Slovak Republics that came into effect on 1st January 1993. The Constitution of the Czech Republic, unlike the Constitution of 1918, is clearly built on the civic principle, yet under the pressure of events, opens with the following words: "*We, the citizens of the Czech Republic in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia,*⁸ *at the time of the restoration of an independent Czech state, true to all good traditions of the ancient statehood of the Czech Crown Lands as well as the Czechoslovak statehood...*"

However, not all inhabitants of Moravia and Silesia felt primarily as Moravians and Silesians in the census. The number of people espousing these "new"⁹ nationalities exceeded 50 % only in some districts of Moravia. Of 10,362,313 people living in the Czech Republic in 1991, 13.2 % subscribed to Moravian and 0.4 % to Silesian nationality.

⁸ Constitutional Law No. 1/1993 Coll. as amended by Constitutional Act No. 347/1997 Coll., 300/2000 Coll., 395/2001 Coll. and 515/2002 Coll., Preamble.

⁹ The terms Moravian and Silesian are old historical terms, related to them, the word new means novel from the perspective of context in which they appear and the significance assigned to them.

In spite of such official constitution of two new nations in the Czech Republic in 1991, their status is not quite clear. Even though they are essentially minority peoples, they do not have the status of minorities, but are considered part of the majority population. Declaration of Moravian or Silesian nationality therefore does not change anything in the status of such citizens of the Czech Republic.

In 1991 also Roma or Romani nationality appeared in the census for the first time. The Romani or Roma were considered an ethnic group that was part of Czech, Slovak, or other nationalities until 1991. In 1991 the census recorded 32,903 members of this nationality, i.e. 0.3 % of the population of the Czech Republic. Just like in the case of Moravians and Silesians, this meant disappointment for many, with a number of associated question marks since the estimated number of Roma in the Czech Republic is approximately 250,000 people. Census results indicated that a great number of people declared their nationality based on the civic principle, as Czech, considering their state citizenship, language of communication,¹⁰ education and regional jurisdiction.

Disintegration of Czechoslovakia and its opening to the European space opened up a wide range of issues related to the national composition of the Czech Republic. Intensive communication with descendants of the Sudeten Germans displaced from the Czech Republic after 1945, inflow of foreign capital and other factors that could herald changes in ethnic composition. No significant change occurred, however. On the contrary, respite from interest in nationalist issues brought the diversification of the Czech nation to a halt. Fewer people felt the need to declare as Roma, Moravians, or Silesians. Precisely these newly emerged nationalities weakened the most in the period between the census of 1991 and 2001. The following table shows the difference between the results of the 1991 and 2001 census.

¹⁰ Most of the people considered Roma by majority population cannot speak Roma language.

Table 2: Residents of the Czech Republic by nationality in the year 1991 and 2001

Nationality (ethnicity)	1991		2001				
	Exact number	%	Exact number	%	Share of Wome n ¹⁾	Permanent residents	
						Exact number	% ¹⁾
Czech	8 363 768	81.2	9 249 777	90.4	51.6	1 296	0.0
Moravian	1 362 313	13.2	380 474	3.7	46.5	96	0.0
Silesian	44 446	0.4	10 878	0.1	39.5	1	0.0
Slovak	314 877	3.1	193 190	1.9	51.0	10 967	5.7
Polish	59 383	0.6	51 968	0.5	58.5	3 366	6.5
German	48 556	0.5	39 106	0.4	53.0	1 377	3.5
Roma	32 903	0.3	11 746	0.1	47.7	59	0.5
Hungarian	19 932	0.2	14 672	0.1	47.4	827	5.6
Ukrainian	8 220	0.1	22 112	0.2	55.0	11 876	53.7
Russian	5 062	0.1	12 369	0.1	62.5	6 322	51.1
Rutheianian	1 926	0.0	1 106	0.0	52.2	55	5.0
Bulgarian	3 487	0.0	4 363	0.0	37.9	1 384	31.7
Romanian	1 034	0.0	1 238	0.0	46.1	333	26.9
Greek	3 379	0.0	3 219	0.0	48.1	319	9.9
Vietnamese	421	0.0	17 462	0.2	39.3	11 671	66.8
Other	10 491	0.0	30 575	0.3	37.8	14 209	46.5
Dual	-	-	12 978	0.1	45.4	421	3.2
Unregistered	22 017	0.2	172 827	1.7	47.7	5 075	2.9
Total	10 302 215	100.0	10230060	100	51.3	69 654	0.7

The table shows that a decline of interest in declaring Moravian, Silesian and Roma nationality lead to an increase in the number of people who declared themselves as Czechs. This trend, however, says nothing about changes in lifestyle, culture or political attitudes. It is merely an expression of the fact that when choosing among several options available for selection in the census, inhabitants of the Czech Republic from Moravia and Silesia opted for Czech nationality. Likewise did the Roma, who picked for themselves the more prestigious and less conspicuous of available classifications.

¹⁾ % of the total number of persons of individual nationalities.

On 16th December 1992, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which further individualized issues of ethnicity and nationality, making them much more a matter of subjective choice, was adopted for the newly formed Czech state and incorporated in the Constitution of the Czech Republic. Article 3 of Chapter One says that the fundamental rights and freedoms are "...*guaranteed to all without distinction of sex, race, colour, language, faith and religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, belonging to any nationality or ethnic minority, property, birth or other status*". It goes on to say that: "*Everyone has the right to freely determine their own nationality. Any interference with this decision and all forms of coercion towards de-nationalization are prohibited.*"¹¹ Thus, although the Czech Republic can be regarded as a nation-state, its legal system takes into account for its citizens the civic principle of mutual coexistence and anchoring of the relationship between the citizen and the state law. Despite this, as elsewhere, national minority remains a legal concept as well as a matter of state interest.

Minorities

We can consider members of a minority, as declared by themselves in the census, as defined from an *emic* aspect, which means from the viewpoint of the members of minorities themselves. The definition of a member of a national minority is similar in the *Act on Rights of Members of National Minorities*, which regulates the relation of the state to national minorities in the Czech Republic.¹² The Act states that '*[a] member of a national minority is a citizen of the Czech Republic who claims other than Czech nationality and wishes to be considered a member of a national minority in common with others who claim the same ethnic origin.*'¹³ This definition of member of national minority,

¹¹ Decree of the Presidium of the Czech National Council of 16 December 1992 about the proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms as part of the constitutional order of the Czech Republic. Constitutional Law No. 2/1993 Coll. as amended by Constitutional Act No. 162/1998 Coll. Chapter 1, Article 3, paragraphs 1 and 2.

¹² Act 273/2001 in Coll., On Rights of Members of National Minorities.

¹³ Section 2, paragraph 2 of Act 273/2001 in Coll.

however, is not completely consistent with the definition of a national minority in the same law. Based on the law, a national minority is not, contrary to expectations, a group of citizens of the Czech Republic who declare other than Czech nationality and wish to be considered members of a national minority..., but: '*... a community of citizens living on the territory of the present Czech Republic who usually differ from other citizens by their common ethnic origin, language, culture and traditions; they represent a numerical minority of inhabitants and simultaneously show their will to be considered a national minority for the purpose of common efforts to preserve and develop their own identity, language and culture, and also for the purpose of expressing and protecting the interests of their community which has been formed during history.*'¹⁴ Whereas an attempt at an *emic* viewpoint is apparent from the definition of member of national minority, it is the *etic* point of view that is used in the definition of a minority, with the view applied, being the one of an observer who tries to define the group based on some predetermined 'objective' criteria. Both criteria are commonly applied also in everyday life and intermingled. Consequently, the borderline between one who is a member of a minority and one who is not, is not very sharp, especially where disagreement exists between how individuals socially classify themselves and how their status is assessed by the majority population. It can be clearly seen, precisely here, that the status of member of minority need not be determined once and for all but is, sometimes unsuccessfully, negotiated.

Based on the Act, minorities have a number of rights and freedoms. Their members can freely decide if they want to become part of a national minority, they have a right to form associations of members of the same national minority, a right of participation in dealing with matters concerning national minorities, a right of using a name and surname in the language of their national minority; in cases prescribed by the Act they also have the right of multilingual names and denominations in the area of residence of the minority, they have the right of using the language of their national minority in official documentation and discourse and in a hearing before a court,

¹⁴ Section 2, paragraph 1 of Act 273/2001 in Coll.

the right of using the language of a national minority during elections, the right of education in the minority language, the right to develop the culture of a national minority and the right to spread and receive information in the language of their national minority. Government Council for National Minorities consisting of representatives of the various minorities and officers appointed by the government has been established to deal with issues of national minorities. Among other questions solved in the council, issues of support of social and cultural life of minorities from the state budget figure on the agenda.

It arises from the wording of Act 273/2001 in Coll., On Rights of Members of National Minorities that those who are considered members of minorities according to this norm, are citizens of the Czech Republic. 'Members of national minorities living traditionally and long-term on the territory of the Czech Republic' are directly mentioned in Section 8, which regulates problems of multilingual names and denominations. Above all, these minorities are formed by members of neighbouring nations. This population is mostly autochthonous on the territory of the Czech Republic and is deeply tied to the local environment. Members of these minorities have often received education on the territory of the Czech Republic, know the culture of the majority population well and manage to communicate with it without problems.

As apparent from table 2, the largest such group is formed by the Slovaks. Slovak nationality was declared by 193,190 people, that is 1.9 % of inhabitants, in the 2001 census. The Slovak minority is almost 'invisible' in the Czech environment. This means that its significance for the reception of ethnic (national) diversification on the territory of the Czech Republic is small. Its demographic, professional and educational characteristics are similar to the Czech population, its members live both in rural and urban areas, they can often speak Czech without problems but if they use their native language, it does not cause problems in their communication with the Czech population. The Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic were joined in a common federative state until 31st December 1992, and the Czech population shared with the Slovaks a bilingual media communication, which makes it possible for Czechs to understand the Slovak language almost

completely. Despite the large migration which has continued between the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic up to the present, the proportion of the Slovak minority to the number of inhabitants of the Czech Republic has considerably decreased after the division of the state. While there were 3.1 % of Slovaks living in the Czech Republic in 1991, their number diminished to just 1.9 % of the population in 2001, which was less than in 1950 (Slovenská národnost na území ČR 2007).

One reason for this sharp decline is, among other things, that the Slovak minority has very strong potential for assimilation. It is normal that the children of two Slovak citizens living in the Czech Republic declare themselves as Czechs. Even though the Slovaks often change their declared nationality without problems, they do not change their acquaintances, friends, or place of residence of their parents or grandparents whom they often go to see in Slovakia. A change of declared nationality optically diminishes diversity, but it is only one of many factors which have impact on human identities. In terms of statistics, diversity is disappearing, yet does a person change due to a change in declared nationality or citizenship?

Migration groups and foreigners

Migration groups in the Czech Republic have a specific character. In general, as shown for example by John Salt or Claire Wallace, migration in Central Europe mostly has a character of short-term migrations at short distance, whose primary aim is not resettlement but employment or business (Salt 2001: 1; Wallace 2001; Okólski 2001). This characterization reflects most precisely migration from neighbouring countries, for instance Poland and the Ukraine. Less frequently, it is also apt in relation to migration from further removed countries, especially of Asia.

A certain indicator of the number of short-term migrations in the Czech Republic is the number of border crossings a year. For the year 2003 for instance, which was not otherwise remarkable in terms of migration, a total of 260 million people (arrivals and departures) were processed on the border crossings of the Czech Republic

with a population of 10,201,000. (Zpráva o situaci v oblasti migrace na území České republiky za rok 2003: 106). Persons with other state citizenships than Czech crossed the border of the Czech Republic 189 million times and citizens of the Czech Republic 71 million times.

It is understandable that it is not necessary to pay attention to a large part of these border crossings, such as tourism, shopping trips, visits to acquaintances and relatives. Nevertheless, a part of these stays are connected with the creation of migration groups with long-term or permanent residence on the territory of the Czech Republic.

Whereas minorities appear to be either relatively stable or decreasing, the size and variety of foreign groups on the territory of the Czech Republic has sharply increased since 1989. In 1989, there were 35,298 foreigners legally residing in the former Czechoslovakia, of which 7,899 were long-term residents and 27,325 permanent residents. By 1993, their number grew more than twice, almost exclusively thanks to foreigners with long-term visas who were not permanent residents. In 1993, a total of 77,668 foreigners resided in the country, of which 46,070 were long-term residents and 31,072 permanent residents. At the turn of 2008 and 2009 when the number of foreigners culminated, 438,000 resided in the Czech Republic of whom 173,000 were permanent residents and 265,000 stayed on long-term visas. In 2009, the number of foreigners in the Czech Republic slightly decreased due to the economic crisis. As of 31st May 2010 Alien Police Service Directorate of the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic registered 426,749 foreigners, including 184,724 foreigners with permanent residence and 242,025 foreigners with some type of long-term visas for stays over 90 days.

As of 31st May 2010, citizens of the Ukraine were most often represented among foreigners residing in the Czech Republic (128,636 persons, or 30 %), followed by citizens of Slovakia (71,392 persons, or 17 %). Other large foreign groups included citizens of Vietnam (60,931 persons, or 14 %), Russia (31,037 persons, or 7 %) and Poland

(18,572 persons, or 4 %). Among foreigners with permanent residence, communities of citizens of Vietnam were the most populous.¹⁵ Foreigners currently make up 4 % of the population of the Czech Republic and thus do not affect the homogeneity of the population significantly, in terms of their share in it. In spite of that, they are often articulated as an important source of diversification.

Diversity and its articulation

Increase in total numbers of foreigners in the Czech Republic is not greatly significant in terms of statistics on ethnic diversification of Czech society. It is more important to see how the society diversifies. Foreigners are deployed on the territory of the Czech Republic unevenly. Besides areas near the western border, Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, which receives more attention from the media than any other city, records the biggest concentration of foreign communities. The Czech Republic registers 4 % of foreigners with long-term and permanent residence, and 32 % of these foreigners live in Prague. Foreigners thus make up almost 12 % of the Prague population (Cizinci v České republice 2010). Because Prague receives more coverage in the media than other cities, and Prague affairs significantly influence public opinion, diversification resulting from the influx of groups of foreigners seems to be more prominent than it is statistically, in terms of the share of foreigners in the total population. At the same time, since Prague affairs are more extensively covered by the media than events in other parts of the Czech Republic, Prague's relatively high concentration of foreigners also receives much attention in the media. Foreign presence thus seems to diversify Czech society to a much greater extent than could be expected from relevant statistic data. As shown in the study of Kamila Karhanová and Petr Kaderka, this media coverage mostly contributes to a negative image of foreigners. As the authors say, "*...one of the most active factors determining whether an event is reported in the media is the degree of its negativity*" (Karhanova, Kaderka 2001: 4). They add that the factor of negativity is supported also by the factor of non-ambiguity.

¹⁵ Source of data: Czech Statistical Office.

The more negative is an event, the more unequivocal is its evaluation (Karhanová, Kaderka 2001, Kunczik 1995). The authors claim that the same is true about news concerning foreigners in the Czech Republic, perhaps even more unequivocally than in case of other topics.

The opinion of Karhanová and Kaderka is also confirmed by a study titled *Media Image of Foreigners in the Czech Republic* by Tereza Sasková, in which the author analyses the production of daily newspapers in 2008 and shows that the media focused on problematic or negative issues in 95 % of titles that concerned foreigners (Sasková 2009). Karhanová and Kaderka also note that in the Czech Republic, negative reports are typically accompanied by so called xenophobic subtitles, which means that nationality or ethnicity are mentioned as significant attributes of offenders, even where such information is not relevant (Karhanová, Kaderka 2001; Nekula 1995). While such information is not mentioned in case of other crimes or other events which concern the majority, it is mentioned in relation to (negative) acts of foreigners. The presence and negative consequences of diversity thus gain in importance and may cause negative reaction. Moreover, the revelation of the ethnic background of a criminal or a victim or an otherwise acting foreigner pose as partial explanations of thus reported events. Karhanová and Kaderka point out that the media image of foreigners evokes feelings of being under threat and xenophobic reactions in the majority population.

Media exposure has its rules and even findings about the ways in which media influence public opinion cannot affect these processes significantly. This implies that the image of foreigners in society is more likely to improve in case the media do not report on them rather than vice versa.

Media attention to foreigners in the Czech Republic is not very high at present. The society has partially become used to their presence and to some extent learnt to coexist with them. Journalists still keep informing about them negatively, but recently, they have been using fewer offensive, defamatory and unfair terms in their address (cf. Sasková 2009).

The Roma and the problem of diversification of Czech society

Immigration issues and their media coverage are reflected in public opinion. Yet the Czech society sees a much more pressing problem in the issue of coexistence with the Roma population. The Roma have been considered a minority since 1990. Until then, they were described as an ethnic group and were not able to freely declare their nationality in the census. Instead, it was up to census commissioners to estimate who belonged to the Roma (Romové v České republice 1999). The report on the status of Roma communities in 2008, which was submitted to the Government of the Czech Republic by the Government Council for Affairs of the Roma Minority in 2009, states that the Roma minority suffers from serious attacks of right-wing extremists and from poverty, and about one third of the Roma in the Czech Republic live in a situation of social exclusion (Zpráva o stavu romských komunit 2009).

The Roma have been considered a minority since 1990 yet one whose borders and numbers are extremely difficult to determine. The estimated number of members of this group does not correspond with census results where only 11,746 people declared Roma nationality.¹⁶ While the census, or selfdeclaration of the Roma concerning their membership in the minority reveals an insignificantly small minority of people, demographers estimate about 250,000 persons, i.e. 2,5 % of the population of the Czech Republic. Demographers and statisticians try to explain the difference between the estimated number of the Roma and the number of people who declared Roma nationality in the census by the Roma fear of registering, a low status of Roma nationality, low ethnic consciousness among the Roma, little coherence and fragmentation of the Roma people and other factors (Langhamrová, Fiala 2003).

In any event, an interesting situation occurs, where the majority part of society creates a boundary between itself and another part of society while this other part of society declares no such boundary. One part of society declares diversity while another part does not. At that,

¹⁶ Source of data: Czech Statistic Office.

diversification is declared by the majority part of society - members of the Czech nation - who simultaneously declare their willingness to integrate the Roma and design extensive integration programs targeted at them.¹⁷ The Roma self-declaration as Czechs and the confusion that arises from it for the ethnic Czechs, is an interesting example of a socially constructed issue of diversity. The majority population perceives differences in family ties, economic status or public manners and explains them in terms of ethnicity or nationality, while the other party chooses another form of differentiation. Linguists Jiří Nekvapil and Ivan Leudar show vividly, in their analysis of speech acts of majority members concerning the Roma, that in everyday speech, the Roma are not only subject of hate or offense, but also of fun and ridicule. Debaters amuse themselves with stories of how the Roma solve everyday situations, for instance bringing gas to their households illegally and amateurishly with the help of an inner tube from a bicycle tire (Nekvapil, Leudar 2003). Touching on various topics, debaters show their distance which need not be always hateful, but is clearly present. Nekvapil and Leudar conclude that the category Roma is used inconsistently in the media which they subjected to analysis and that "*...the features that Czech actors attributed to it were negations of what they valued positively about themselves*" (Nekvapil, Leudar 2003: 29).

Who's not jumping is no Czech

The title of this subchapter is a slogan that has been repeatedly chanted at football and hockey games and celebrations of winning sporting matches. It was even used as the name of a television program produced by the Czech public television in 2006 and used as a farewell to the Czech national football team at the time of its departure for the World Championships, as well as for the announcement of the winners of the Golden Ball poll of the Czech Republic for the season 2005–2006.¹⁸ The name and the slogan show, how, in the Czech lands, just like in other countries, vast sections of the population perceive

¹⁷ For more detail see for example the website of the Council of the Government of the Czech Republic for Affairs of the Roma Minority.

¹⁸ Kdo neskáče, není Čech. Length: 57 min. Directed by A. Rezek, Czech Television 2006.

positively a feeling of unity, uniformity and common action. Performances of a small group of athletes allow large categories of people to increase their self-esteem, experience euphoria and feeling of victory as well as to confirm for themselves a social status which they personally feel entitled to, as Eduardo Archetti very aptly described in his publication (Archetti 1999). The Czechs are probably largely a group of people who have collectivist rather than individualistic tendencies (Holý 1996). It means that people whose behaviour defies common models are in some cases respected as social icons, but very rarely tolerated as co-citizens. Naturally, this tendency finds its opponents who point to its bizarre character.¹⁹ This, however, makes it all the more apparent that the tendency towards collectivism is prominent. This tendency is also reflected in the results of opinion and attitude polls, which show that uniformity is understood similarly to harmony, solidarity and smooth coexistence while diversity is associated with potential to conflicts. Staff of the Department of Culture Studies at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy of the Charles University have conducted representative opinion and attitude polls in three small towns in the Czech Republic – Český Krumlov, Velké Meziříčí and Blatná – every two years since 1992, which, until 2008 included a question: *"Is there a group of people whose opinions, attitudes or behaviour differ from the others in your town? If so, please specify."* The question indicated perception of diversity in the population and response to it was in most cases negative. The townspeople did not want to articulate difference in their town. As revealed from the context, this was not because they thought everybody in town was the same. They were telling the researchers simply: Everything is ok in this town. If you are looking for problems, go somewhere else. In case somebody responded positively, they always mentioned a distinct group against whom they had reservations – frequently against Roma population. Such perception of diversity is not exclusively a matter of average citizens, but also intellectuals. It was me who formulated this question. In 2010 someone from the research

¹⁹ Opposition to such sports fan culture was voiced for instance in the student journal Octopus. The slogan "Who's not jumping is no Czech" was also criticized there. Authors of the article used another slogan at the expense of those who boast someone else's victory as their own: *"An eagle's feather at the rim of the hat won't help a goose to fly"* (scr&vac).

team changed it to make it clearer and the following formulation appeared on the form for directed interviews: "Is there a significantly problematic group in your town?"

Perception of diversity in terms of national or ethnic composition has frequently negative connotations in the Czech Republic. It is viewed as inconsistency and disharmony. Diversity is typically construed where the society feels a problem. If diversity is seen as a negative phenomenon, the society tries to remove it. In case of the Roma, it means that results of the census are disputed and much greater numbers of the Roma are conceptualized compared to the numbers that declare Roma ethnicity, while at the same time, programs of Roma integration are engineered. Even the above quoted Report on the Status of the Roma Community speaks of Roma whose ethnicity (nationality) is estimated and not declared in census.

Conclusion

Diversity, as conceived in the social sciences, may acquire a variety of forms in research practice. In the preceding text I have highlighted the problems associated with its social construction. I tried to suggest that, at least in the Czech Republic, it is very cheap and inaccurate to depart from the cliché that issues of diversity are new and an outcome of the situation after 1989. Rather than being new, the situation of national or ethnic diversity is changing its concrete form and a new context for its discussion is being formed. A new working approach to the concept of diversity makes it possible to bring fresh insight also into problems which are associated with this term.

An important theme that follows from the text is that national or ethnic diversity is not created solely as the result of influx of migrants or residence of persons speaking a distinct mother tongue in the country, but it is construed by a certain group of people based on the arising situation. In the case of the Roma, we have suggested that it may even be the majority population that creates distance between themselves and a part of the population despite the fact that this other party declares itself part of the majority population.

This example implies that the methodological device for examining national (ethnic) diversity should be further refined as well as it is necessary to work out approaches that would clearly reflect the emic and etic perspective so as to avoid confusing and misrepresenting the actual situation in nationality issues which, generally, makes it possible to locate "objective" signs of diversity in the population on the basis of statistical data, while only thorough investigation enables us to determine the meanings attributed to it.

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“Musica migrans“: Information on an International Research Project concerning Mobility of Professional Musicians in Modern History of European Music and Its Current Outcomes and Perspectives

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As indicated in the subtitle of the paper, I don't want to present here the results of my own source research, but rather to resume my recent experience from my participation in a musicological project that was initiated by the Institute of Musicology of the University of Leipzig (Germany), supported by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)*. Some of the problems that are pointed out here have possibly been clarified, or at least discussed more intensively, in related disciplines such as historical ethnology and historiography; however, in my field of knowledge, historical musicology, the nationally narrow-minded views of the musical past might have dominated more than elsewhere, and, as a matter of fact, their ideological patterns often persist until today.

The issue of “migration of musicians” as well as that of “migration of musical repertoire” are neither new nor unusual for historical musicology. More or less frequent changes of engagement and place of work have always been rather typical for professional musicians of most categories and social levels – from itinerant minstrels and fiddlers to members of cathedral and imperial bands, opera singers and conductors, instrumental soloists as well as ordinary orchestral players. All musicologists involved in research on musicians' biographies, history of music institutions, or transmission of respective musical repertoires are confronted with this issue and supposed to reflect it in some way. The phenomenon of migration was almost omnipresent

in some periods and some branches of European music production: Let us remember the reception and dissemination of 18th-century Italian opera throughout the whole of Europe, from Lisbon to St. Petersburg.

In some social and historical contexts, this musicological issue takes an obvious and strong political dimension. Considering the Czech history of our discipline, we can mention here the so called “Bohemian (or Czech) music emigration” that had been pointed out – or “invented”, as we could say in today’s postmodern situation – by the musicologist Vladimír Helfert (1883–1945) in 1930s, in the decade of rising threat posed to the Czechoslovak Republic by Nazi-Germany and in the spirit of the self-defending concept presented at that time in the first two volumes of the collective publication *Co daly naše země Evropě a lidstvu* [What have our lands donated to Europe and to humanity].¹

On the other hand, the increasing interest in these problems after the Czechoslovakian “Velvet Revolution” of 1989, has been politically motivated by the struggle for eliminating barriers that had been caused by the iron curtain descending after World War II, as well as by the efforts to strengthen European cultural unity and interaction. In this context, we can mention the extensive international project *Musical Life in Europe, 1600–1900: Circulation, Institutions, Representation* that was carried out in the period of 1998–2001 and supported by the European Science Foundation (ESF).²

The situation of comparable research and documentation projects that had been initiated and established even earlier, prior to 1989 in the then West Germany was – euphemistically speaking – a little special. For several decades, the interest in problems of music migration was motivated in the first place by the efforts to map and to document

¹ Vol. I. *Od slovanských věrozvěstů k národnímu obrození* [From Slavic missionaries to national revival], Praha 1939, ³1998 and Vol. II. *Obrozený národ a jeho země na fóru evropském a světovém* [The nascent nation and its lands on European and world forum], Praha 1940; 2nd enlarged edition 1999; Vol. III. *Svobodný národ na prahu 3. tisíciletí* [A free nation on the threshold of 3rd millennium], ed. Ivan M. Havel and D. Třeštík, Praha 2000.

² See <http://www.esf.org/activities/research-networking-programmes/humanities-sch/completed-rnps-in-humanities/musical-life-in-europe-1600-1900.html>

the former music life of the German population and German speaking communities, in the territories of Central and Eastern Europe they had inhabited for centuries, and then lost or were expelled from them as a result of World War II, namely those of the Baltic (East and West Prussia), Silesia and the Bohemian Lands (“Sudetenland”), but also the territories and enclaves in Slovakia, Galicia, Transylvania and Banat (today divided between Rumania, Hungary and Serbia), and others. These initiatives were covered by the *Institut für deutsche Musik im Osten* (Bergisch Gladbach) and then by the *Institut für deutsche Musik im östlichen Europa (IME, Bonn)*, whose activities were stopped at the end of 2003. At the same time, the still existing *Sudetendeutsches Institut* in Regensburg has concentrated on the documentation and revitalization of the music culture of the former German speaking population in the Bohemian Lands.

A different approach was offered in the 1990s by the current Professor of Historical Musicology at the University of Leipzig, Helmut Loos. It was soon after his arrival at the “newly-formed German states” (prior to that, he had studied and worked in Bonn and Bergisch Gladbach), when he established and developed wide contacts with musicologists from the countries of the former Communist block (including the territory of the former Soviet Union) and constituted a free working group for research in the music history of the Central and East European countries (*Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Musikgeschichte in Mittel- und Osteuropa*). The aim of his efforts had been to break the long time isolation of researchers and students from the former Eastern block and to put their “national” (regional or local) music historical issues and studies into a broader – in this case German speaking – European context. During the existence of the work group, numerous conferences and workshops on the mentioned issues have been organized both at the Universities in Chemnitz (until 2002) and in Leipzig. Furthermore, numerous collected publications have appeared and several team projects have been launched; among them, we can mention explicitly the on-line source edition entitled *Musikerbriefe als Spiegel überregionaler Kulturbeziehungen in Mittel- und Osteuropa*,³

³ Cf.

http://www.unileipzig.de/~musik/web/index.php?main=institut&sub=agOst&content_sub=briefe

as well as the recent symposium *Traditionen städtischer Musikgeschichte in Mittel- und Osteuropa* that was organized within the frame of the 14th International Congress of the German *Gesellschaft für Musikforschung*; the Congress was held at the University of Leipzig from Sept 28 – Oct 3, 2008.⁴

However – as indicated at the beginning of my paper and experienced through my recent cooperation on the project of the same Leipzig provenance⁵ – some old and obsolete ways of thinking still live on and seem to have a tenacious life on both sides of the former “iron curtain”: “Mental maps” that come from the time of a divided Europe after World War II, or reproduce the current state borders and spheres of influence in Europe are often back-projected into the considerations on other (past) historical periods. Deep-rooted stereotypes associated with the concepts of “nation”, “nationality”, or “national feeling” seem to be ineradicable.

So now, I finally come to the above mentioned one-year project of *Musica migrans* that formally expired in October 2008. The major objective of the project was establishing an on-line database of musicians that had been migrating (mostly) through Central and Eastern Europe from Germany to Russia and the Balkans during the “long 19th century” and, possibly, supplementing and completing biographies of those musicians who had been active in diverse remote places during their careers.⁶ The members of the above mentioned international work group were expected – each for his or her country or region – to make a selection of musicians’ names and to provide the respective biographical data for the database.

As a matter of fact, the original idea of project applicants about the primary subject of interest was that it should be German speaking (“deutschsprachig”) musicians: This was expressed without any further

⁴ <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~gfm2008>

⁵ <http://www.musicamigrans.de>

⁶ As a model example, we can mention Alexander Dreyschock (1818–1869), an internationally respected piano virtuoso and composer, who was born in Bohemia, studied in Prague, lived and worked among others in Paris, Göteborg (Sweden), and St. Petersburg, and died in Venice.

specification, yet again – at least from my point of view and my perception of the problem – with an implicit presumption that it should be “ethnic Germans”. In that phase of the project preparation, I stepped into the debate and asked for clarification or explicit definition of the term “deutschsprachig”. I pointed out the situation in “my” Bohemian Lands in the examined period: during the 19th century, almost all professional musicians were or had to be “deutschsprachig”; in other words: they had a good command of German and used German actively and daily – regardless of their primary language milieu or ethnic origin as well as of their (later) declared nationality or participation in a national movement (Czech or German). I also remembered the well known fact that for many distinguished personalities of modern Czech music in later 19th and early 20th centuries, German had been either their first language (Bedřich Smetana, 1824–1884; Zdeněk Fibich, 1850–1900) or the language they had preferred in different life situations and phases of their professional careers (Leoš Janáček, 1854–1928; Josef Bohuslav Foerster, 1859–1951, and others – not to speak of the conditions in the early 19th century and musicians like Václav Jan Tomášek (1774–1850) or František Škroup (1801–1862).

These and other comments of mine might have contributed to the fact that the subtitle and, consequently, the subject-matter of the whole project had been changed in the final version of the project, which, at the end, followed the “life careers of Central- and East European musicians” (“Lebenslinien mittel- und osteuropäischer Musiker”).

I do not want to describe here in detail all the technical problems that appeared during the process of establishing a working database and a “user friendly” on-line access for smooth data entering. As a matter of fact, the establishing of the database by commissioned IT specialists and subsequent solving of all technical problems and deficits, took most of the year allowed for the execution of the project. As a result, there was only limited time left for data entering and storage which negatively affected both their final quantity and quality. In the end, the generated database structure involved family name(s) and surname(s) of the musician in question, date and place of birth and of death, sex, nationality, faith, profession (e.g. composer, conductor, singer, etc.), detailed data on his or her professional career (education,

engagement(s), place(s) of life and work, etc.), and notes on sources and bibliography.

Of the mentioned data fields – I again summarize primarily my own experience here – the data item “nationality” (“Nationalität”) and, to some extent, that of “faith” (“Konfession”) proved questionable: By filling up both of these fields, the differentiation between “primary” nationality and “primary” faith (“primäre Nationalität”, “primäre Konfession”) on the one hand and possible “other” nationalities or faiths (“weitere Nationalität/en”, “weitere Konfession/en”) on the other hand was expected. Again, however, nobody decided on in advance, nor discussed more in detail, the implicit criteria for determining “primary nationality” and “other nationalities” respectively: Should it be the place of birth, family name, (supposed) native language, language(s) mastered through school education and/or through a long-term stay in another (“foreign”) language milieu, or rather those ones that had been adopted by one’s own choice and/or explicitly declared decision? – As to the data item “faith” and possible conversion(s), the authors of the database might have had in mind primarily problems of conversion in the context of professional advancement and social adaptation to the majority milieu: This concerned above all musicians of Jewish origin but also those (non-Jewish) musicians that followed a long-term or permanent career in an alien confessional and cultural milieu, e.g. in Russia.

In the end, I solved almost all problems and dilemmas concerning “nationality” of musicians from the Bohemian lands in that I avoided in most cases the offered alternative “Czech” (“tschechisch”) versus “German” (“deutsch”) and preferred their designation as “Bohemian” (“böhmisch”) or “Austrian” (“österreichisch”) that pointed primarily to the country or state of their birth and/or their professional career. At the same time, I also must admit that I had problems with, and did not use, the similar designation “Moravian” (“mährisch”, “mährische Nationalität”) that might have made sense in several cases. As far as the mentioned data field “faith” is concerned, I unfortunately found out that the relevant data was only rarely involved in available (printed) music dictionaries and encyclopedias. Because of lack of time, I neither could read through all relevant biographical publications nor pursue my own

source research (church registers and other archival documents and others).

But what were the concrete conclusions, findings, and suggestions for further research resulting from my cooperation on the *Musica migrans* project?

First: It appeared that in regard to musicians' migration from and/or into Bohemian lands in the researched historical period, one can find a lot of valuable information and data in existing printed dictionary and encyclopedic publications such as *Československý hudební slovník osob a institucí* [*Czechoslovak Music Dictionary of Persons and Institutions*],⁷ the recent *Česká divadelní encyklopedie* [*Bohemian Theatre Encyclopedia*],⁸ *Österreichisches biographisches Lexikon (ÖBL)*,⁹ as well as the *Lexikon zur Deutschen Musikkultur: Böhmen, Mähren, Sudetenschlesien*,¹⁰ and others. The only thing one has to do is to extract the relevant data carefully and to interpret them correctly.

Second: There are some queries regarding the term “migration” itself. Is it or is it not adequate to speak about migration (of “Central-“ and “Eastern European”) musicians in those cases, when they moved and looked for better job chances within one state – although geographically large and nationally and culturally various – as was the then Habsburg Monarchy? And is it or is it not adequate to use this term in connection with musicians' mobility within the whole “German speaking” territory comprising both the (later) German Empire and Austria-Hungary Dual Monarchy? The examined “life careers of Central- and Eastern European musicians” show us that most of them moved or migrated just within the lastly mentioned territory and, on the contrary, only a small fraction of them crossed over its borders and left for Paris, London, Russia, or overseas. Moreover, very many of these

⁷ Ed. Gracian Černušák, 2 Vols., Praha 1963 and 1965.

⁸ Vol. 2 *Hudební divadlo v českých zemích. Osobnosti 19. století* [*Music Theatre in Bohemian Lands. 19th-Century Personalities*], ed. Jitka Ludvová, Praha 2006; Vol. 1 *Starší divadlo v českých zemích do konce 18. století* [*Earlier Theatre in Bohemian Lands up to the End of 18th Century*], ed. Alena Jakubcová, Praha 2007.

⁹ Wien 1957ff.; on-line version <http://epub.oeaw.ac.at/oebl> since 2003.

¹⁰ Regensburg 2000.

musicians “migrated” within smaller regions only, typically from South Moravia or Slovakia to Vienna.¹¹

Third: It proved true during the work on the project that there existed several different types of/or possibilities for professional musicians’ or singers’ careers, which, among others, involved various forms and various amounts of migration. It would be good, then, to examine these professional patterns separately and to follow the life careers of individual personalities within the respective framework. The typology of 19th-century musicians’ professions could be as follows:

- a) church musicians (organists and regentes chori); town music directors (*Stadtmusikdirektore*)
- b) music teachers in various positions and levels
- c) military musicians and regimental band leaders
- d) opera singers (male and female); opera conductors
- e) instrumental soloists and virtuosos – male and female
- f) wandering folk musicians (members of fiddler bands, female minstrel harpists, street ballad singers, etc.)

Considering a–b) Church musicians, town music directors and music teachers – it was quite common that one person was entrusted with all these tasks – were often engaged in one and the same place for long periods of time. They typically seemed to look for their positions not far from their birthplaces and/or towns of their professional education.

¹¹ As generally known, the travelling distance between Brünn / Brno (Moravia) and Vienna is about 120 km and that between Pressburg / Bratislava (Slovakia) and Vienna slightly over 60 km. Compared to that, there is every indication that the geographical (850 km) and, above all, cultural distance between the free Northern Germany harbour city of Hamburg and the Habsburg residence city of Vienna was much deeper in the 19th century. Regardless of these obvious facts, the above mentioned old stereotypes in interpreting local (Central European) music history still remain: On the one hand, we can, until almost now, read about 19th-century Bohemian, Moravian, or Slovakian musicians who “migrated” or even “emigrated” to a foreign country and a foreign city, i.e. to Vienna. On the other hand, nobody has dared so far to identify the composer Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) – who had been born in Hamburg and decided to settle down in Vienna at the age of about 30 – as a “migrant” or “immigrant”.

Otherwise, they left for some time or forever to more remote localities. At any rate, they did not travel – or “migrate” – too much nor too often.

Considering c) On the other hand, military musicians and/or regimental band leaders faced the fact that they and their regiments were displaced from one domicile to another. Consequently, they had to change their headquarters and to “migrate” quite often. It was then normal that a musician coming from Bohemia moved through what was then Hungary (i.e. Slovakia, Croatia, Transylvania, and Banat), or through Galicia and Bukovina and travelled from Prague, Pilsen/Plzeň, or Hradec Králové to Kaschau/Košice, Zagreb, Klausenburg/Cluj, Temesvar, Cracow or Mukachevo respectively. In any case, of course, he migrated within the boundaries of one state.

Considering d) Opera singers as well as opera conductors normally changed short-term engagements frequently, or travelled with wandering theatre troupes. In other words, they “migrated” a lot and intensively, mostly in a broad geographical space and by crossing over the state, provincial, and administrative borders.

Considering e) Instrumental virtuosos used to be almost all the time “on the road” during their active careers and gave concerts not only in the whole of Europe but also overseas.

Considering f) The last mentioned category of musicians has not been involved in the *Musica migrans* project. It belongs more likely to the sphere of interest of music ethnology than to that of historical musicology.

Fourth: By examining life careers of professional musicians of Bohemian or Moravian origin who found their livelihood far away from their native country, we are frequently confronted with situations in which they – sometimes even repeatedly – sought for a position at home, such as at Prague Conservatoire or in the Provisional and later on, the National Theatre in Prague. However, they were turned down for various reasons and therefore opted for a foreign engagement that was offered to them at the same time. This concerns not only individual personalities like the composer and conductor Eduard Nápravník

([Dmitri] Eduard Frantsevich Napravnik, 1839 Býšť near Hradec Králové – 1916 St. Petersburg) or the opera star Klementina Kalašová (Clementine Kalasch or Calasch, 1850 Horní Bečkovice near Roudnice nad Labem – 1889 Salvador [Bahia], Brazil) but also members of whole musicians' families, such as those of Stolz,¹² Neruda,¹³ Ondříček,¹⁴ or Hřímaly.¹⁵ By following “migration paths” and

¹² At least five from the nine brothers and sisters Stolz pursued an international artistic career: Terezie Stolzová (Teresa Stolz, La Teresa etc., 1834 Kostelec nad Labem – 1902 Milan, international opera star and life companion of Giuseppe Verdi), Antonín [Anton] Stolz (1818 Kostelec nad Labem – 1878 *ibid.*, oboist, regimental band leader in Bohemia, music teacher in Russia), Václav [Wenzel] Stolz (1828 Kostelec nad Labem – 1908 Svojetice, oboist and clarinetist, in 1850s – 1880s theatre director in Trieste), Františka Stolzová (Franziska Stolz, 1826 Kostelec nad Labem – ? Firenze, opera singer and vocal teacher), Ludmila Stolzová (Ludmilla Ricci-Stolz, 1826 Kostelec nad Labem – about 1910 Milan, twin-sister of Franziska Stolz, opera singer).

¹³ Five of the ten children of Josef Neruda (1907–1875) who was a military musician, music teacher and organist in Olomouc, Brno and Vienna became professional musicians and pursued international careers: Wilhelmine [Wilma] Neruda (later on Wilma Norman-Neruda, Lady Hallé, 1839 Brno – 1911 Berlin, violin virtuoso, resided in Stockholm, London, Asolo [Italy], and Berlin), Franz Neruda (1843 Brno – 1915 Copenhagen, violoncellist, composer, and conductor, professor of music in Copenhagen and in St. Petersburg), Amalie Wickenhauser (born Neruda, 1834 Brno – 1890 *ibid.*, pianist, gave concerts in Sweden, Denmark, and London together with her brothers and sisters; back in Brno, she became among others, a piano teacher and friend of Leoš Janáček), Marie Arlberg (born Neruda, 1840 Brno – about 1922 Stockholm, violinist), Viktor Neruda (1835–1852, violoncellist).

¹⁴ Following members of the big Ondříček family, the following members should be mentioned here: František Ondříček (1857 Prague – 1922 Milan, international violin virtuoso and violin teacher, first performer of Antonín Dvořák's Violin Concerto op. 53, since 1888 resident of Vienna), Emanuel Ondříček (1880 Pilsen – 1958 Boston, US, brother of František Ondříček, violin virtuoso and violin teacher), Karel Ondříček (1863 Prague – 1943 Boston, US, brother of previous, violin virtuoso and violin teacher), Stanislav Ondříček (1885 Prague – 1953 *ibid.*, brother of previous, violinist and violin teacher, from 1908–1920 in Russia), Augusta Vášková (born Ondříčková, 1879 Prague – 1952 New York, sister of previous, violinist, singer and music teacher), Marie Leitnerová (born Ondříčková, sister of previous, 1977 Prague – 1957 *ibid.*, pianist and music teacher, 1906–1950 in New York), Ella Stillerová-Ondříčková (1886 Prague – 1922 Milan, violinist, pupil and second wife of František Ondříček).

¹⁵ The ancestors of the musicians' family Hřímaly (Grzymała) came from today's Poland and settled in Bohemia at the end of 18th century. The following members of the family became professional musicians and deserve mention here: Vojtěch Hřímaly sr. (Adalbert Hřímaly, 1805 Blatná near Písek – 1880 Moscow, organist and

the fortunes of these people, one cannot leave out of consideration both the phenomenon of family cohesion and solidarity and long-lasting patriotic feelings, as well as the influences of turbulent and catastrophic historical events that occurred in the first half of the 20th century.

composer, 1835–1875 in Pilsen, thereafter in the family of his son Jan / Ivan in Moscow), Vojtěch Hřimalý jr. (Adalbert Hrimaly, 1842 Pilsen – 1908 Vienna, violinist and composer, engaged among others in Rotterdam, Gothenburg, Chernivtsi and Lviv / Lemberg), Jan Hřimalý (Ivan Voitsekhovich Grzhimali, brother of previous, 1844 Pilsen –1915 Moscow, violinist and violin teacher, 1862–1868 concertmaster in Amsterdam, since 1869 professor of Moscow Imperial Conservatory), Bohuslav Hřimalý (Hrimaly, brother of previous, 1848 Pilsen – 1894 Helsinki, violist and conductor), Jaromír Hřimalý (Hrimaly, brother of previous, 1845 Pilsen – 1905 Helsinki, violoncellist), Marie Staňková (born Hřimalá, sister of previous, 1839 Pilsen – 1921 Salzburg, opera singer and pianist), Anna Hřimalá (Hrimala, sister of previous, 1841 Pilsen – 1897 Salzburg, singer and pianist), Otakar Hřimalý (Hrimaly, 1883 Chernivtsi – 1945 Prague, son of Adalbert Hrimaly jr., composer and music teacher, studied in Vienna, worked in Moscow and in Chernivtsi, since 1940 in Prague).

‘[This land] seems rather to belong to some other globe than that on which we live’.¹ Musicians from the Bohemian Lands in 18th century England.

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In the 18th century musicians were leaving the Bohemian Lands either to solve their economic or religious problems, or to shake off the burden of serfdom. The music bands of the nobility consisted mainly of serfs; neither Prague nor Brno were Imperial residential towns and therefore did not offer appointments at the Emperor’s Court. Musicians mainly tried to get to Vienna; other possibilities were offered by German courts – Catholic (Dresden, Munich) or Protestant, which gave asylum to non-Catholics (Berlin, Herrenhut – from there, the Moravian Brethren missionaries took numerous works by Bohemian composers to America).²

Serfdom was a problem, in many cases solvable only by running away. The case of the later Europe-famous horn-player Jan Václav Stich-Punto is well known, a serf of the Counts Thun, who had him followed (he changed his name several times due to this).

Less known is the fact that the composer Jan Křtitel Vaňhal was able to buy his freedom only after he had established himself in Vienna as a pianist and music teacher. Vaňhal was born in Nechanice, East Bohemia, at Count Schaffgotsch’s estate; around 1761, the Countess Schaffgotsch sent him to Vienna for further musical education. Vaňhal used his freedom to the full extent. In the last decades of the 18th century, his compositions were published all over Europe, and around 1800 also in the USA; his symphonies and string quartets prepared

¹ Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz, *A Picture of England. Containing a description of the Laws, Customs and manners of England*, London 1789, p. 1.

² I owe the information on the American music collections of Bohemian Brethren to the American scholar Jane Ellsworth, from Washington.

the field for the appreciation of works by Joseph Haydn in London.³ It should be noted that while our music historians treat most of Bohemian composers living outside their native country as “Kleinmeisters” (i.e. musicians without an important standing), the English music historiography cast a totally different light on them – it saw them as artists who were abroad not only admired by the concert public, but in many cases also considerably contributing to the spread of new music forms and the modernisation of instrument building. In this way, not only Jan Křtitel Vaňhal (who never visited Britain) created his place in English music history, but also František Xaver Richter, who, according to period writers on music, introduced the symphony to the English public during his stay in Britain at the break of the 1750s and 1760s,⁴ while another Bohemian musician, Antonín Kammel, was among the first to do the same for the string quartet.⁵ The composer and pianist Jan Ladislav Dusík, who, according to some sources, worked in London in 1790 as a Kapellmeister of one of the opera houses, contributed considerably to the development of the making of pianos provided with the so-called English action - he co-worked with the important piano maker John Broadwood.⁶

Musicians were coming from Europe to England to look not only for a better financial situation, but also for a more dignified social standing. In a country, which to the period travellers “seemed rather to belong to some other globe than that on which they lived” the artists who managed to enter the higher social circles, quickly raised the interest and support of their public, and had the feeling that their employers treated them as equals. From this point of view, Britain was one of the most democratic states of Europe (even here, musicians in their dedications of their compositions, called themselves the humble servants of their supporters).

³ Cf. Simon McVeigh: *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn*, Cambridge 1993.

⁴ Cf. William Jackson: *Observations on the Present State of Music in London*, 1791).

⁵ Cf. Simon McVeigh: *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn*, Cambridge 1993; Susan Wollenberg and Simon McVeigh (ed.): *Concert Life in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Aldershot 2004.

⁶ Cf. the Broadwood family papers, Surrey History Center, Woking.

Living in the British Isles had also its shortcomings. The premature death of František Kočvara, versatile instrumentalist, music plagiarist and author of the bizarre composition *The Battle of Prague*, which in the 19th century still belonged to the popular drawing-room repertoire in Europe as well as the USA (and found its way also into American literature – Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, first published in 1884, and his short stories), was ascribed by the period music encyclopaedias to the English sense for practical jokes;⁷ in fact, Kočvara's death in 1791 was caused by his deviant sexual inclinations.⁸ The fact that in 1791, the opera *Semiramide*, by the very successful Bohemian musician Vojtěch Jírovec/Adalbert Gyrowetz, except for its overture, turned into cinders together with the theatre in which it was to be given premiere, looks also like a practical joke; nearly two hundred years later it transpired that the arson of the theatre was organised by the same noblemen (among them the Duke of Bedford), who commiserated with the composer: the theatre, which was not doing well, became a burden for them.⁹ It seems that such frauds were quite common in British high society: in the 1770s, Antonín Kammel lost nearly all his money, which he had earned in England, due to the speculations of the banker Alexander Fordyce and Sir William Young, Governor of the islands Dominica and Tobago, who was selling land in the colonies.

⁷ Cf. Ernst Ludwig Gerber, *Historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler*, 1790, 1792, 2nd edition 1810–1814.

⁸ Cf. *Modern Propensities, or An Essay on the Art of Strangling*, London c. 1792; Michaela Freemanová: *Korespondence Antonína Kammela a další dokumenty k životu a dílu českých hudebníků 18. století, působících v Anglii, jako problém badatelský i etický* [Correspondence of Antonín Kammel and other documents concerning the life and works of the 18th century Bohemian musicians living in England as a research and ethical problem]. In: *Kritické edice hudebních památek III*, Olomouc 1999, 129–134.

⁹ Cf. Alfred Einstein (ed.) *Lebensläufe deutscher Musiker von ihnen selbst erzählt*, Bd. 3, *Adalbert Gyrowetz*, Leipzig 1914–1915. In: Czech: František Bartoš (ed. and transl.) *Vlastní životopis Vojtěcha Jírovce*, Prague 1940; Curtis Price: *Opera and Arson in Late Eighteenth-Century London*. In: *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 42, 1989, 55–107.

A characteristically British problem faced by all Catholic foreigners who wanted to settle permanently in England and find a good position was that their denomination excluded them from Court service. England was strictly Protestant; Catholics were able to enter the service of the monarch only under exceptional circumstances. The Moravian-born composer and instrumentalist, Gottfried Finger, became a court musician of the last English Catholic King, James II, in 1687; after the King had to leave England in 1688, there was no place for Finger at the court of James II's sister Mary and her husband, William of Orange, the new Protestant rulers. Finger stayed in England as an independent musician up to 1701, when he returned to the continent, where he found work at several German courts. Antonín Kammel lived nearly twenty years in England after his arrival in 1765, primarily not as a musician, but as an agent of Count Vincent Waldstein, to care for sale of the Count's wood to be used for making ship's masts for the British Admiralty. The transaction never took place, and also failing to take place was other trading, suggested by Kammel to the Count – even if the composer Johann Christian Bach, who had direct access to the Royal Court took part in them. Kammel also appeared at the Court; as a Catholic, however, he was not able to secure for himself any position there (mistaken information on his Court engagement nevertheless appears even in modern music encyclopaedias). He was one of the most successful London musicians; even so he expressed the wish to return to Bohemia several times in his correspondence with Count Waldstein. His religious allegiance was reflected also in his thoughts on the validity of his own marriage, which was registered in London in 1768; he expected that after returning home he would have to marry once again, following the Catholic rite. Kammel died in London in 1784. The place of his burial remains unknown; up to 1791, Catholics were buried in secret, most often at night. His funeral might have been organised by the Freemasons (he was admitted to the London Pilgrim's Lodge in 1780). He might also have died on the Continent; it seems, however, most probable that in Britain, which he considered the land of freedom, financial security, generosity and kindness, he fell victim to religious intolerance.¹⁰

¹⁰ Cf. Michaela Freemanová-Eva Mikanová: *'My honorable Lord and Father...'* *London music life through Bohemian eyes*, Early Music, London, 2003, 210–231.

The Immigrant Family in the Integration Process

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1. Introduction

The main objective of the research project was to identify if and to what extent the family can represent a successful strategy for facilitating immigrants' integration as well as for absorbing and mitigating the hardest and most painful effects brought by the migration experience.

After an exploratory made with facilitators of integration, the goal pursued was to get a deeper understanding of migrant family's integration processes. As a result, between 10 and 20 interviews with migrant families were conducted by each partner in its own country. The intent was not to be representative but rather to look at the diversity and variety of migrant families. The method used to conduct interviews was quite original in consisting of "multiple-voices narrations" in which the family plays the core role. The aim to conduct 'mini-focus group' (with all family members that are supposed to be reunified during the time of the interviews) was twofold: firstly to gain knowledge of the history of the family within the migration process, and secondly to observe each member's role within the family as well as the interaction between generations and genders. Through the realization of 228 in-depth interviews conducted with 77 migrant families in the five partner countries, a trans-national qualitative database was created.

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A cross-national comparative analysis was achieved in order to assess different integration trajectories of individual immigrants and immigrant families accordingly. The data collected is of a qualitative nature and is particularly huge and extremely varied in nature, composed of a collection of 77 family's interviews carried out in five European countries. Our attempt with the building of a general framework of analysis was to make it possible for every European partner to achieve a 'cross-national comparative analysis'.

Methodology

The aim of the project was to conduct an innovative qualitative study on migrant family integration processes in Europe. To achieve this goal, a multi-dimensional and cross-national comparative research framework was developed. An original data collection method as well as a common framework of analysis was designed for the project.

The objective in terms of data was to collect reliable comparative information in every country with the purpose to be cross-nationally compared. Traditionally, we saw that when more than one national research team is involved in a cross-national qualitative comparative analysis the juxtaposition approach tends to be preferred.

To form our sample which consists in 77 migrant families spread over the five European member states, three main conditions had to be (if possible) respected by every partner:

- 1) Family migrants had to be third-country nationals.
- 2) The object of study being the "migrant family unit", we decided that at least two members of the household should be present during the time of the interview. Two generations of migrants should also be taking part in the interviewing process.
- 3) Our objective was to study the integration processes of new migrant families in different European countries. Therefore, the time spent by immigrant families in the host country should not exceeded 15 years.

Every partner was in charge of identifying the migrant families and interviewing them. These interviews had to be recorded and further transcribed by the interviewer. To make access to the data to every partner, an English translation of the transcription would have been the most suitable solution. But due to financial and time constraints, a compromise had to be found. The solution found was to ask every partner for a 3 – 4 page report in English of all family life stories they collected on basis of the transcription. This allows us to somehow surmount language boundaries and made it possible for every partner to capture the essence of every family interviewed.

The trans-national meetings were also the occasion for each country partner to present the family reports. This lay the foundation for the development of a common understanding of the data set. To get a global picture of the sample and to ease access for every partner to this huge multinational empirical data, an Excel sheet table was created in order to synthesise and summarize the data. This way of presenting data allowed partners to identify rather rapidly common similarities and differences between the different migrant families as much inside as across countries. This database consisted of 26 variables, all collectively debated during trans-national meetings and based on the 77 family's interviews:

<p><u>26 variables:</u> Country of origin, Host country, How long in host country (years), Nr of family members, Age of children (here and there), Family creation (before or after), Starter of immigration (Man/Women/Both/Children), Strongest actor in the family (M/W/B), Status of the household at the arrival (Asylum seeker, family reunification, student, undocumented, worker, refugee, tourism), Residence at the time of interview (permanent, temporary, illegal, citizens, refugee), Level of education of the family at the arrival and at the moment of the interview, Status on labour market, Change in professional status, Narrative of discrimination, Cultural orientation, Language, Housing, Relations in family (vertical), Relations in family (horizontal), Family network, Ethnic community, Local Community, Transnational network, Assessment on gender issue, Expectations, Evaluation: cost and benefits of migration, Migration better with or without family, Role of family in integration.</p>

Finally we grouped the twenty-six categories into six groups which we divided by topics and partners:

- Intergenerational relations (Finland);
- Networks social capital (Belgium);
- Changing status (Italy);
- Internal relations (Czech Republic);
- Discrimination (Czech Republic);
- Expectations, costs and benefits of the migration (Germany).

The purpose was that every partner would develop a hypothesis on their topic according to the literature related to it and test it on the material. All immigrant families were not supposed to be studied by every partner but only the ones that seem to be relevant in relation to its topic. After having picked out a number of families related to the topic from the Excel sheet table, national team were encouraged to carefully read the summaries of the family interview transcript attached to it.

Benefits and pitfalls of applied method

From a general point of view, the benefits of cross-national comparisons studies often cited is the opportunity it gives to researchers to better understand other cultures and its institutions. It also gives the opportunity to deepen its scientific knowledge about its own society in comparison with others in questioning its own assumptions and perceptions. Beyond the resultive findings, cross-national comparison analysis gathers several national researches with different scientific backgrounds in terms of research. It therefore allows the scientific community to adopt a reflexive view on the way research is nationally conducted and to adopt a reflexive view on their own cultural research practises.

In regard to the project approach, a cross-national comparative analysis was possible alongside the analytical process and not only at the end of it. This is a quite innovative way of doing European comparative qualitative analysis, and as we will see, one that produced quite interesting findings. The cross-national feature of the research was pursued not only at the stage of the data collection process but also, and

this is not often the case, at the comparative analytical stage. As a result, while cross-national comparative analysis is often handled by one research partner, selected approach equally involves every research team in the analytical stage.

There are many obstacles that may arise with the issue of data translation. Clearly languages barriers tend to complicate this process of getting comparable qualitative data and make it available, accessible and available for analysis for every research team. To insure access to the data collected in the five countries an important reduction process of information took place, from the interview transcripts to the summaries, but also within the translation process. Through the translation process there is clearly a risk for migrant's voices but also for the researcher's ones to be transformed, denatured and misinterpreted. Clearly, linguistic boundaries complicate cross-national comparisons. A constant debate among partners during trans-national meetings allowed the crucial discussion as to how some concepts may be translated and how best insure that important misunderstanding about the research directions were minimized or even when possible avoided.

Last but not least, selected approach seems to underrate the role of national integration policies in the understanding of migrant family's integration processes. Despite the fact that there is a trend in the scientific literature to consider that the study of the impact of national context on immigrant's integration has become meaningless (see Joppke 2007), authors such as Jacobs & Rea (2007) strongly argue against this view. According to them, it is not yet the end of a national integration model. Recent developments on integration courses and citizenship trajectories in several country of the European Union clearly confirmed that a national model of integration cannot be used as "crude" classifications as it used to be the case in the past. While there is a convergence in integration policies of EU Member States towards the incorporation of newcomers, it does not mean that policies towards ethnic minority groups and immigrants, racial discrimination, racism, etc. have thoroughly aligned. Thus families are submitted to specific and national policies, per instance in Finland, policies and administration are more active towards immigrants than in Italy.

Description of our sample

The 77 interviewed families and their individual members who constitute our sample are very heterogeneous. Families from nearly all continents migrated into different European host societies, in which family members of different age, sex and social background experienced their family and individual migration paths differently.

In Germany, at all 21 family interviews were conducted. Some families were from the same country of origin with: 4 from Turkey, 2 from Portugal, 2 from Kazakhstan, 2 from Ukraine and finally 2 from Kirghizstan. The 9 other countries comprised only one family: Cape Verde, Ukraine/Afghanistan, Brazil, Croatia/Bosnia, Uzbekistan, Russia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Armenia.

In Italy, 20 family interviews were conducted. In this sample, we find 2 families from Bangladesh, 2 from Ecuador, 2 from Morocco, 3 from Philippines, 2 from Rumania and 2 from Senegal. The six countries of origin which consist of one migrant family are: Albania, China, India, Iran, Perù and Ukraine.

In Finland, 10 families took part in the research: 2 from Russia, 2 from Iran/Kurdistan, 2 from Kosovo, 2 from Somalia, 2 from Kenya and 1 from Irak/Kurdistan.

In Czech Republic, 13 families were met: 4 from Belarus, 4 from Ukraine, 2 from Vietnam, 1 from Mongolia, 1 from Russia and 1 from Carpat-Ukraine.

In Belgium, 13 family interviews were conducted with families coming from: Rumania, Azerbaijan, Poland, Algeria, Filipinos, Iran, Columbia, Uzbekistan, the Democratic republic of Congo, Turkey, Bolivia, Morocco and Ivory Coast (mix couple) and Angola.

2. Main findings

2.1 Mitigate the painful effects of the migration experience

Some costs of the migration experience are objective, others emotional. We have identified in the narrative interviews the most relevant objective and emotional costs experienced by migrants families in the five countries. From objective costs, we mean some difficulties experienced like: insufficient access to resources, downward of social or professional status, economic marginalisation, discrimination, racism, illegal residence. The emotional costs are more subjectively experienced and they can be for instance: loneliness, denial of recognition, difficulties in dealing with the new culture of the host country, the new values and norms, re-negotiations of identity. Sometimes, these two categories overlap, for example in cases of separation of the family, this causes actual economic and personal hardships in everyday life, as much as it often weighs heavily on the psyche of family members.

Both “objective costs” and “emotional costs” are experienced differently and with different intensity in the various families and their members. Many families develop coping strategies to deal with the “objective costs” of the migration process in order to compensate for the losses and hardships experienced, while other families fail to develop these strategies. In what way families and family members negotiate and deal with the life situations they face, what sort of coping and problem-solving strategies they develop, depends on a variety of internal and external factors.

2.1.2 Separation of the family

A large number of families experienced a separation of the core family in the course of the migration process. Temporary separation or long-term separation of the core family from family members in the country of origin affected occurred throughout the sample, transcending categories of nationality, residence status, circumstances of migration and time of arrival in the host country. First and foremost,

the separation of parents and children was for many a highly demanding and emotionally draining experience.

This separation of parents and children was always a decision made by the parents for pragmatic reasons. In some cases, one parent, often the father, but this applied also to many single mothers – preceded the rest of the core family in the migration process aiming to find orientation and build a financial basis for the rest of the family that was to follow. Some or all of the children stayed behind in the country of origin, while the migration vanguard(s) struggled to create the conditions for their migration. While this separation was the result of a pragmatic decision of the parents, it was often made in situations of relative despair and a lack of other options. In many cases, it turned out to last much longer than the parents had originally planned, often another several years. The emotional costs of this separation are impossible to measure. In some cases the relationship between parents and children remained permanently corrupted.

Many of the families interviewed suffered from the separation from their extended family, i.e. grandparents, siblings, uncles or aunts. The loss of the extended family meant not only emotional hardships for the parents but also caused very real problems in terms of not being able to rely on the help of relatives in childcare matters. The children then grew up without knowing their grandparents, cousins and uncles. The separation from the extended family is especially tough on political refugees who cannot return to their country of origin to visit. For some of these, the moment of migration was the last time they ever saw their relatives.

Even though migration had brought economic stability or a more tranquil life for the majority of the interviewed families, homesickness and feelings of being a stranger, combined with problems in arranging life in practice in the new environment, were sources of stress for many. When migrating to a new country, an immigrant family often feels deep loneliness (Marjeta 2001). The contrast with the previous social life with wide networks of family and relatives, friends and neighbours, is remarkable. Losing the active social networks is hard and creating new contacts is not necessarily simple, especially for

the parents who may at least in the beginning of the stay in the receiving country lack environments for socializing. Consequently, if having moved from a country to another together as a unit, the family had gained much weight as the primary social context and a source of support, trust and familiarity.

2.1.3 Living without security of residence

Migration was considered a way to escape from situations of economic deprivation or from the experience of persecution and discrimination. However migration itself put migrant families in situations of insecurity of a different kind. The initial feeling of extreme loss of security is aligned to external conditions experienced upon arrival. As such, it applies to different groups of migrants even if they have not entered in the country by the same gate. This is the case for those who did not arrive in chain migration processes, like the asylum seekers. They don't even know if they have, at the beginning, security of residence if they could obtain a permanent permit to stay. In the first weeks and months after their arrival, some migrants experienced states of extreme powerlessness and helplessness, in particularly those migrants who arrived with human traffickers.

Some families suffered greatly from the feeling of lack of control over their lives: some families seeking asylum experienced great arbitrary from public authorities while families with illegal residence suffered from extreme arbitrary from landlords or employers, who often exploited their "illegal" status charging exorbitant rents, refusing work contracts for legalisation, paying exploitative wages or in other ways subjecting migrants to random and exploitation.

The parents in particular carry the major burden of psychological hardship. Being the family caretakers, their parental role demands them to provide stability and security to their children. Without long-term stay permit or security to be allowed to reside legally in the country, they cannot provide their children with the basic security of a socially and emotionally stable environment. Long-term lack of residential security was experienced as lack of dignity, was detrimental to

the parents' psychological health and in some cases caused health permanent problems, i.e. depression, anxiety and other psychosomatic diseases.

The vast majority of asylum seekers report their first years in the new country as being very traumatic, not being able to leave the state, see their relatives and uncertain about the future. For a few families, involvement in their respective communities and ethnic associations provided a comfort both for sharing their experience with others in similar situations and for participating in communal celebrations which helped them forget the insecurity of their everyday life. At the same time, when achieving security to stay in the country and some form of employment, even if only after several years, many families managed to gain security in the new country. This particularly applies to families who were subjected to political persecution in their home country.

2.1.4 Bad living conditions

Roughly half of the families who arrived as asylum seekers and the majority of those who started as without a legal stay permit report having suffered from bad living conditions. Asylum seekers from Germany and the Czech Republic reported having lived in state accommodation without adequate provisions for families, sharing space with single men and experiencing in some cases unacceptable hygiene conditions.

Several families were living in extreme living conditions at the time of the interviews. Due to landlords charging high rents, many families were sharing one room between parent and children, others were cohabitating with other non-relatives. This lack of privacy, either to individual members of the family or the family as a whole is psychologically demanding to individuals and heightens tensions and conflicts between family members.

2.1.5 Discrimination

Discrimination is unfortunately one of the common experiences of migrants. This has different types of focus, intensity, duration and form depending on the individual's ethnicity, age, gender, social status, social roles and level of acculturation. In the case of a family, the family status and the status of their country of origin has an influence. Families choose different strategies in coping with discrimination against their family members. Certain differences in the nature and level of discrimination against immigrants exist between the new and old member states of the European Union. These differences are caused not only by the different migration histories and traditions of each individual country but also result from the effect of targeted anti-discrimination policies.

Economic migrants from "third countries national" are exposed to discrimination more than European citizens, particularly if they are working illicitly. Nevertheless, not even EU citizens avoid discrimination in their working environment if they are working illegally. In this case, they are at the mercy of those who are taking advantage of them and it is only with difficulty that they are able to make use of legal means to eliminate discriminatory behaviour.

In particular, discrimination occurs at the start of immigrants' residency in a new country. The narratives of families confirm that linguistic integration is an effective barrier against discrimination. Successful cultural integration changes individuals and the family as well as the manner in which they evaluate migration's experiences. The first generation of immigrants often perceives the discrimination experience as an unpleasant but necessary part of the new reality.

Families choose various strategies to cope with discrimination. At one end of the spectrum, there is intensive acculturation and an effort to improve the socio-economic status of the family, while at the other end there is an escapist response, which seeks refuge in further emigration or re-emigration. For the most part, the respondents themselves don't identify their behaviour as an anti-discrimination strategy. Discrimination is not automatically a barrier to integration. Despite

the fact that many respondents have encountered discrimination (which may even be strong and practised on a long-term basis), they have paradoxically integrated well. One of the causes for this may be a reduction in sensitivity to discrimination thanks to successful economic integration as well as the feeling of security that the new host country gives to immigrants. Consequently, respondents only consider returning to their country of origin because of discrimination in completely exceptional cases.

The direction, intensity and level of discrimination are usually linked to the cultural proximity or distance between immigrant communities and the social majority. Families whose members encountered persecution in their homeland usually had fewer problems with discrimination in their host country. Discrimination in the country of origin and the host country are not comparable in terms of their level and intensity. Some immigrants become resistant to discrimination over time. Conversely, others become oversensitive to it. Immigrants deal with discrimination via legal proceedings only in exceptional cases. They are more likely to prefer seeking the assistance of non-governmental organisations, which often proves an effective means for suppressing or resolving discrimination.

Some family narratives depicted how they had not personally experienced discrimination, but almost all of them had encountered prejudices and the disparagement of their abilities. Some of the migrants interviewed personally knew the victim of a racial attack and it affected them just as strongly as they themselves had been exposed to a racial assault. The indifference of a segment of the public, the police and administrative workers, to expressions of racism affected them worst of all.

2.2 The experience of decline of social status

One of the key elements, when talking about migration, is the matter of employment. Before talking about the change of status, two preliminary questions need to be clarified on this regard. The first point concerns the overall value of work. Since migrants often leave their

countries of origin due to an economic need, it is implicitly assumed that work is only a means to earning more money and thus improving the economic situation of the immigrant and her/his family.

The findings of our research indicate that this belief is only partially true. Work is not only a matter of money. Work is also related to the social identity of the migrant or to the usefulness of the migrant.

2.2.1 Uselessness

As some of the family cases from Finland, Belgium and Germany demonstrate, being hosted by a country that supplies the asylum seekers according to state allowances and for a certain amount of time, proves to be experienced by migrants neither with relief nor as a great luck. On the contrary, although they are grateful to the host state, immigrants feel as if an equal relationship was neglected to them. They feel “useless” and forced to “sit at home”, with no other possibilities to interact with their host society as but on a hierarchical base, one that continuously reminds them “who is who” and what is the role they are expected to perform in society – not an active role at all.

Besides its functional role as a fundamental economic source, work has some relevance also in guaranteeing socialization as well as in raising self-esteem. Particularly for newcomers, work can thus entail multiple meanings at a time: it helps to acquire language skills, helps to establish contacts with new people and the new society and makes the individual feel “useful” even beyond the awareness of “being used”. Work entails social visibility and increases self-esteem. In the case of migrants, work can certainly be regarded as one of the major integration factors. The cases of families that have improved their economic situation since living in Finland only by relying on state benefits, but feel nonetheless depressed and “useless” since they are virtually unemployed, provide an excellent example in this sense.

2.2.2 Unemployment

Being without a job was experienced as a severe hardship by the families. Not supporting their family financially but living off state benefits deeply unsettled the parent's identity. Having always worked to support their family, the parents had problems justifying their inactivity in front of themselves and in front of their children. The feelings the unemployed parent(s) experienced verged on shame, uselessness and seeing their parental role as providers for their children being corrupted. Unemployed fathers suffered from losing their identity as the solid ones providing for the family. Some mothers in turn managed to compensate their unemployment by performing extended household activities.

To ease the hardships caused by unemployment, families developed different coping strategies. Besides an increased involvement in household chores, several parents got involved in community issues – e.g. representing the migrant community, regarding political or social matters. It worked to compensate a lack of adequate employment, fill their time usefully and creatively, re-built a meaningful social identity and increase their social status devalued by unemployment. In a similar way; other interviewees who had held reputable positions and/or had been politically active in their home country and were now working in positions below their qualifications had finally here taken up political activities in their resident country. For others, religious belief helped them accept their situation.

2.2.3 Professional decline

In around 70 % of interviewed families, the first generation of migration (usually being the parents) suffered a medium to great loss in professional status upon migration. While many of them held high-school or vocational qualifications before migration, particularly within the asylum seekers, many later worked in low to unskilled jobs in the service sector, went through periods of unemployment or only managed to re-gain a few hours per week paid jobs resembling their previously regular occupations after many years.

However, the number of families who suffered on a long-term basis from working in professions where they could not use their former professional qualifications and knowledge was relatively small. The majority of migrants had been aware prior to migration that they would not be able to maintain their professional status after migration and that their university qualifications may not be accepted. They had accepted the fact that migration would entail giving up their previous professional position.

Considering that the great majority managed to adjust relatively well to working in different and mostly lower professional positions to that compared to their home country, not working at all was even much harder to bear. But most frequently, the downward change in professional status is not related to the wage but to type of work. As migrants are used on the labour market for the 3D Jobs (dirty, demanding, dangerous), the downward change is more a matter of social identity, for the migrant himself and his family, rather than a plain question of type of profession. Work covers two distinct but closely-linked dimensions. The economic dimension gives access to improved living conditions, such as affording a proper house and consumer goods. The symbolic dimension gives an identity for the migrant himself and for his family, in the host country and in the country of origin. Sometimes, these two dimensions overlap.

Although it is commonly acknowledged that the main reason that pushes most migrants out of their countries lies on an economic factor, the question about the social status remains often neglected. Nevertheless, this question has some impact on the emotional level of immigrant individuals as well as on family units. Furthermore, it should be considered that migration processes are mostly made up of individuals who have been acknowledged within their social entourage as being “the best ones” - the most skilful and resourceful individuals, healthy enough to undertake such a hard and demanding path as migration is. Amongst the new flows of migrants who arrive in Europe now, many of them have one or more university degrees already and were probably destined to a “promising career” in their home country. These migrants are members of the middle class or upper class in their country of origin. They have a high level of education but a low

level of economic resources. When they decide to migrate, they are overwhelmed by hopes and expectations. Therefore, to talk about the downward mobility of migrants means to refer to people who very often have high educational and professional qualifications as well as expectations. Some of them have improved their economic status but not their social status. The process for migrants without professional qualification is different. They usually improved their professional status, and therefore the economic dimension as well as their social status.

2.3 The social status decline and perception of the migration experience

In many cases, this downward mobility creates a sense of failure at an emotional level. These feelings inevitably come to affect the overall migration experience. When the professional mobility concerns the head of the family, this is susceptible to seriously affect the integration paths of the whole family unit. Under such circumstances many families evaluate negatively their whole migration experience and not only the employment dimension. However, the interviews carried out demonstrate that not all families perceive the downward mobility generates a negative view on the family's migration history. Some of the families interviewed displayed a positive overall perception of their migration experience, despite having experienced a negative change in professional status.

By focusing on the families where we found the combination between a downward professional mobility and a positive self-evaluation of their own migration history, we have tried to answer the following question: What are the coping strategies devised in order to overcome the emotional difficulties related to the downgrading of social status? Interestingly enough, the analysis realised through the lenses of the change of status, opened an additional perspective on gender. It suggested the existence of a strong relation between women and positive migration evaluation, despite negative circumstances (namely, loss of professional status).

2.3.1 Three different types of social decline experiences

The immigrant families used different types of strategies in order to deal with the difficulties related to the downward change of social status experiences. We can describe three of them.

a) The ethnic and/or religious community as a source of emotional support that helps mitigate the emotional costs deriving from the loss of status by providing the opportunity to perform a relevant social role within the community. Two functions can thus be played by the community in this regard: a) provide emotional/spiritual support (e.g., strengthening religious faith); b) replace the lost professional status by a newly acquired social status within the community.

Families that rely on the community emphasize the importance of integrating in the ethnic community rather than make the step towards getting acquainted with their host society. But we need to bear in mind that in a subjective perspective their self-evaluation of their migration experience is positive. The integration patterns are in this case defined by the community. This is the case for the Filipino community, as seen in our research over the different countries: for these migrants, religious and ethnic communities overlap. They seek to solve any problem within the community. But we have to bear in mind again that the social ties in the Filipino community are also very strong. Although such an attitude may appear as the attempt to isolate from mainstream society rather than interact with it, it should be noticed that many of the services provided by the Filipino communities serve as mediators, thus helping bridge Filipino migrants to institutions and services of the host country.

b) The future of children as an agent of sacrifice of the own professional status.

Men and women migrants who have university degrees accepted work below their skills, for instance working as cleaning staff. Their perceptions of humiliations and working conditions of this kind job are higher than for unskilled migrants. Generally they accepted this work and the professional downward as a transitory step on the path of integration. They expected a social mobility for themselves and not for

the next generation. But things change when professional downgrading starts to be perceived as a permanent condition.

The 'future of children' leads parents to accept to sacrifice their own professional status. Many parents state they have been able to overcome the humiliations caused by having to face a downward change of status for the sake of their children – namely, for the future of their children. Yet at times, the present of their children is enough to give them relief and can represent a source of energy that helps them overcome the humiliation and personal losses.

c) Overcoming the sacrifice: making migration one's own fulfilment. Many migrant families arrive to a new country with the idea only to stay for a short time, but then somehow prolong their stay indefinitely. However, while many families in such circumstances appear to passively accept the change in plans with a spirit of sacrifice and much suffering, some families manage to turn their migration history into a challenging experience that certainly calls for sacrifice, but one that can also and above all create an invaluable richness. The keystone of such a transformation seems to be twofold: on the one hand, the family members' precise will not to view themselves as passive actors or "victims"; on the other hand, the migration experience as one viewed as an added value ("travelling" and "opening horizons"), motivated by a great curiosity towards the host society and its culture.

In this strategy, some features of a passive attitude are overturned by a strong activism which appears to compensate a downward professional mobility. Some undocumented women succeed to transform the invisibility of the status of residence into a highly visible and active role in the ethnic community and host country. This kind of migrant careers show how the hardships of migration can raise the self-esteem and the self-emancipation despite the decline of the social status by the mobilisation of a social status in the community and institutional networks.

2.3.2 The central role of women

Research findings suggest that very frequently women seem to overtake a key-role within the family in turning downward professional mobility into a positive migration evaluation. In our sample, 41 families are characterized by a positive gender attitude. These families are characterized by some type of equalitarian/innovative gender relations and roles within the family, those concerning for instance the household, the education of children, and the decision-making processes. These data suggest that in the families that have experienced downward professional mobility (20 out of 41) and positive evaluations of the migration experience, women, more often than men, manage better and more positively to cope with a downgrading change of status.

We should notice that all of these women come from a highly qualified context, either on social terms or at the educational level. This certainly contributes to support women when facing a life in a new context. However, our interviews suggest that migration does entail a strong process of self-emancipation for many women, not limited to the “privileged” ones as mentioned above. In going back to the families originally identified for this gender analysis, some key-factors may be identified. These key factors can be regarded as crucial in determining the women’s active role in coping positively with downward professional mobility: self-empowerment; women’s multiple roles; and challenged gender roles.

Self-empowerment

Many of these families experienced a separation within their families; either the father or the mother, or even one of the children, starts migration as the first “pioneer” of the family. In the period of separation, women, often with the presence of their children, are necessarily forced to assume the sole responsibility of the wellbeing of their “dismantled family”, and this fact inherently includes a strong process of self-empowerment. This process of self-empowerment can be interpreted as an internal resource – an outstanding strength or “power” – that also is a crucial instrument in coping with the new life

in the host country. The benefits of such a process of self-empowerment seem to be helpful also in coping positively with the loss of professional status.

Women's multiple roles

Another fundamental aspect supporting our hypotheses is related to the role of women as mothers. If we get back to the strategy by which parents sacrifice their own professional status in the name of their children's future, this strategy seems to be mostly adopted by families characterized by a positive gender attitude. Thus, within the logics of sacrificing their own professional career for the professional future of children, women overtake a significant key role. Women seemingly are the driving force feeding this attitude within their families. Following the statement according to which "The term family is an elegant metaphor to say women", our research confirmed that women often perform a key-role within their households, considering they deal with multiple tasks and responsibilities at a time. In all of our family cases, women perform multiple-roles: as mothers, as wives or ex-wives, and as workers in the host society. Such multiplicity of roles is experienced by many of the women interviewed as an additional source of "power", compared to men, which they can rely on while facing all hardships of migration, including the downgrade in the professional status. However, in most cases, there seems to be a sort of ranking that gives greater importance to the role of 'mother', way prior to the professional role. Therefore, the loss of professional status comes to be perceived as of less importance than the task of the mother to integrate her children into the host society in order to ensure a promising future. This attitude in doing everything possible for the wellbeing and successful future of the children is reflected in several narrations of the mothers from the families interviewed.

Challenged gender roles

Finally, the last aspect concerning the gender perspective concerns the relation between genders within the family. In fact, the findings of our research indicate that migration powerfully challenges the gender roles. Many migrant families felt their traditions, roles and lifestyles being

challenged. Changes in gender roles, changes in the perception and meaning of family: Men have learned to cook, to look after the children, to have contact with the institutions of the host country. Sometimes, the changes in the gender roles lead to the break-up of the family. In one narrative-interview, a woman found out that her husband was unable to cope with the new life in their host society, and in particular with the loss of his professional status. The family atmosphere was so explosive and that she finally understood that separating from her husband was a necessity in order to protect the psychological wellbeing of her son and herself. The strong need to achieve a “psychological freedom” was perceived by her as such an urgent priority in her life, that her downward professional mobility was finally accepted for the sake of such freedom.

2.4 Intergenerational relation: re-negotiating individual and family roles

In several families, parents and children regretted that in their new country of residence “family” as such did not weigh as heavily as in their home country. In a couple of cases the parents regretted that the core family was considered only parents and children, while even grandparents were not really considered part of the family. Other interviewees felt sad that in their new residence country, work obligations were primary in everyday life and thus not much room and time was left for family life and communal activities. A large number of families emphasised the importance of multi-generation co-habiting.

Reciprocity appeared to be a key aspect in intergenerational relations in the interviewed families; the young people and their parents supporting and helping each other according to their special social, economic and information resources. However, different levels of acculturation between different family members, in the host country, potentially caused tensions and challenged roles in the family and intergenerational relations. Children are often quicker in adapting socially and culturally to the new environment, especially in cases when parents experience difficulties in integrating into the job market and social networks.

In several families of the sample the parents feared losing the intensity of intergenerational relationships.

In several families the parents felt that their children were growing up in a very liberal environment, where family values and respect towards the elderly did not have as much emphasis as in their original culture. Some parents feared losing control over their children and that their offspring would become alienated from their culture and family background. However, most families managed to solve these potential intergenerational conflicts. Negotiating family values, roles, cultural attitudes and freedom was a burden that needed to be carried by the family. Often, it takes a lot of energy from all family members to reach a state of balance. At the same time, most children quite willingly accepted that with respect to their parents' cultural background, their parents would not accept as many things, that they had to negotiate more than native youths and would not seek every possible freedom to be granted by their parents.

2.4.1 The dissonant acculturation

Even though in a majority of the families the supportive role of parents was clearly pronounced, there were elements brought by the immigration experience that had rearranged the positions of the parents and the children and young people in certain important respects. Children and adolescents generally find it easier than their parents to learn to master the skills required in the new environment. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) call the process in which the children's learning of the new language and culture progresses at a faster pace than their parents' dissonant acculturation. Dissonant acculturation may lead to role reversal between parents and their children, especially if the parents lack the means for coping independently in different social settings. It may thus undercut parental authority and create a gap between generations. The vast majority of the young interviewees had taken helping their parents as a natural task and responsibility. In almost every family, the children had at least previously assisted their parents with the language in situations that required wider vocabulary, such as in the field of health care and the dealings with social services. They

also explained the workings of the new society, typically the educational system among others, to their parents.

While dissonant acculturation and role reversal do not automatically lead to problems between generations, it is obvious that increased responsibilities, for example translating the parents' various formal social occasions, lets the children and young people in on issues that normally would not be their responsibility. Dissonant acculturation and the young generation's increased responsibilities, and consequently also power, were experienced in various ways in different families. For some, it seemed to be a natural result of the new situation. Sometimes the children's quick adaptation of the new language was even a source of pride for the parents, as they considered it helpful to be able to handle situations in family sphere and not be dependent on outside help (for example, on translators). Yet for others the altered positions of generations were not unproblematic but created stress and ambivalent feelings for both the children and young people and their parents.

In many families, the children play the role of mediator between the parents and the institutions of the host country. The children regarded these situations as unavoidable and considered their involvement as a matter of course, sometimes as an opportunity to express their gratitude and "in return" for the sacrifice made by their parents. This gratitude was not limited only when children living together with their parents but was maintained into adulthood.

2.4.2 Challenged parental authority

Due to differences in cultures of ways of bringing up the children, habits in receiving societies emphasising more liberal parenting style than has been customary in the immigrants' countries of origin, immigrant parents often find themselves in a situation where parenting cannot be based on the previous rules. Children observing their peers and finding out their greater freedom raises claims for equal position, and the parents' attempts to hold on to their principles in bringing up the children may result in conflicts. Many parents in the interviewed families were making complaints on how their children were not

listening to their parents anymore and how the authority of parents had diminished after the migration. Many parents had thus adopted a more supple style when setting limits for their children than was customary in their countries of origin, differences still remained.

Sometimes, a tightening of families ties took place in order to overcome the risk of losing the parental authority. In some families, successful processes of negotiation resulted in great closeness among family members and mutual respect. The parents accepted and understood their children's position living in two separate cultures and the family could benefit from it, for example when the children could help their parents with language difficulties. The children in turn showed understanding for their parents' cultural background and the hardships experienced in the migration process. The migration experience could thus be understood as "enriching", where individuals were able to choose the best of two cultural worlds.

The more liberal tradition in bringing up children was often seen to be connected with less close relationships inside families and less tightly-knit family structures in the receiving country. Besides the greater amount of freedom given to children, another phenomenon that puzzled the parents was the habit of children moving out from their childhood homes at around the age of 20, to live alone (in those European countries where it was a habit). This was widely found extremely hard to understand, even threatening, for many of the interviewed parents interpreted it as children abandoning their parents (and vice versa).

2.4.3 High hopes for future: schooling and family

In many families, the parents valued the prospects their children had in education and professional terms quite highly. When asked about their family future, many parents stressed that their future was really focussed on their children. While they themselves had given up many of their professional options upon migration, they were happy to "sacrifice" – sometimes explicitly using this term – this for their children.

Almost with no exception, the interviewed parents saw education as the key to successful life in the receiving society and thus often considered their children's schoolwork a matter of great importance. Educational possibilities were also frequently named as being among reasons to migrate or to settle down permanently in the receiving country. Given their importance, school and educational plans of the children and young people and negotiations concerning these were frequently discussed as topics in the interviews. They also proved to sometimes have a bit of a history in topics worth negotiations and disagreements between the generations.

Parents of cohesive immigrant families, often emphasising the tradition of strong familial ties and parental authority, are well equipped to support their young members in maintaining a constructive engagement in education. For the children and young people, their parents' sharp focus on educational success means having parents who are keen to support them with their schoolwork and educational careers. It is thus not surprising that in the vast majority of the families examined here, the young generation had, after finishing the compulsory education, sought their ways to various forms for further education and quite often up to higher education. But we also need to bear in mind that in our sample of families, many parents have already a high level of education, this likely to set a standard to be followed.

2.5 Family network and social capital

We have found paths of migration that can be explained by a classical theory of migration, the 'pull-push model', and others by using the concept of social capital.² By using the concept of 'transnational links' which characterised contemporary international migration, we have explored the relations that take place between those that migrated and those who stayed behind.

² According to Massey's definition (1990) it is "sets of interpersonal ties that link together migrants, former migrants and non-migrants, in origin and destination areas through the bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community origin".

2.5.1 The role of social network in the integration process

The migrants who always stayed regularly (or for quite a long time) since their entrance in the territory (i.e. asylum seekers, refugees, students, family members that entered due to the family right reunification...) have more chance to experience an integration trajectory supported by host society institutions. On the contrary, migrants that entered illegally into the territory, but also those that became quickly undocumented before getting regularised, have more chance to experience an integration trajectory mainly based on family and kinship network. These different kinds of network and social capital can be mobilised in a variety of ways by migrant families in terms of employment, education, accommodation, information... As a matter of fact, there is an important link between path of integration and gate of immigration. Depending on the status of their stay and the type of network in which they are involved in, either formal (institutions) or informal (ethnic and family networks), family members will have different structural opportunities to socio-economically integrate into the society. This finally may result in including them differently into the host society.

The women migrants tend to develop a 'bridging gendered social capital' which helps them integrate and participate into the receiving society more actively than their counterparts. Gradually, as Hagan (1998) points out social networks in which women are involved in assume different forms and functions that differentially affect settlement outcomes (particularly opportunities to become legal) but also economic and social outcomes. The gendered social relations of neighbourhood, work, and voluntary associations interact to produce these different kinds of outcomes.

2.5.2 Family networks and the issue of 'transnationalism'

The study of 'transnationalism' has become more and more common since the beginning of the nineties. As Guarnizo and Smith (1998) noticed, 'transnationalism' as an object of study has been very quickly "assimilated", indeed appropriated and consumed by anthropologists,

sociologists, political scientists, geographers and other scholars running the risks to become an 'empty conceptual vessel'. This growing and very diverse literature on 'transnationalism' has led many authors to exaggerate the attention given to this 'new' phenomenon. To consider 'transnationalism' as the norm, the most probable organisation mode in which the majority of migrants ended up, has proved to be overstated. Consequently, as Portes writes it (2001: 182), this trend to analyse excessively everything through 'trans-nationalism lenses' has undermined the study of the reasons why most of the time it did not develop. In regard to our 77 migrant families, this critic is quite relevant. 'Transnationalism', as defined above, has not become a widespread mode of organisation among migrant families. Many family migrants were not involved in such types of relations, or if so, only on an occasional basis. When 'transnationalism' was identified, it was most of time limited to the family household. This part of the paper focuses specifically on those 'transnational links' established among few migrant families spread in different geographical spaces.

In fact, three types of 'family transnational household' were identified in our sample: the first one refers to a 'voluntary transnational household' with the nuclear family separated into two different territories, between the host country and the country of origin. Very often, one or the two parents live in the receiving society with their children in the country of origin and their grandparents and/or relatives taking care of them; the second type refers to a 'forced transnational household' with the nuclear family also spread into two different territories, yet not now resulting from a rational choice. Migrant families can be 'strained' to experience a family transnational configuration, very often perceived as temporary, transitory. And finally, the third one refers to a 'nuclear family and an extended transnational household' with the presence of the nuclear migrant family in the receiving society and grandparents and other relatives in the country of origin or/and in another country. A special study of the transformations that such a configuration may have on the family life is tackled when looking at gender, inter-generational relations and intra-generational relations.

While the literature on immigrant ‘transnationalism’ insisted that the contemporary experience represented a decisive break with the past (Waldinger, Fitzgerald, 2004: 1187), several stories of migrant families give another picture. This does not mean that there is nothing new about ‘transnationalism’ but reminds us that these ‘caring reciprocal relationships’ among migrant families already existed in the past, now sharing the novel features of today’s transnationalism.

Conclusions

Decisions to migrate have to be understood through the household context. More than just the nuclear families, the extended families came to play a more important role. On one hand, women come to play a major role in the household as pioneer of the migration process or as the main protagonist of the migration process. On the other hand, women come to play a major role in the evaluation of the experience of migration. In fact, women’s criteria to evaluate positively or negatively the migration experience are not only limited to factors such as wages or accommodation. In fact, women are often making a positive evaluation of their experience, even when they have experienced a social decline. This is because they also take into consideration other aspects such as: access to education for their children, the human right’s regime, freedom of speech...

The family unit plays a major role in the migrant integration process. This role is primarily a psychological one. The family unit offers an emotional stability to family members in a context where difficulties can be quite important. Beside that, the family unit can also provide material and/or financial help to individuals.

The family unit is at the crossroad of different kinds of networks: institutional networks (in the host country) and informal networks (in the host country as well as in the country of origin) which focus on the integration of new migrants. However the representations of migrant families often suffer a bad image. For instance, migrant families are often considered as not paying enough attention to the education of their children or to spaces which keep its members apart from the host

society. The content of our interviews gives quite another version. As shown, migrant family units can limit the negative effects of discrimination practises, of feelings of loneliness and human misbehaviour the new migrants can possibly suffer from. The family unit can also be the space where the “acculturation” process starts; where host values and norms are diffused, debated and experienced by all family members. This, of course, can lead to some strong tensions, sometimes even to conflicts. But it is also a space of compromise and negotiations. The family unit can be perceived as the place where norms and values of the host society are diffused and experienced. The integration of new migrants in a receiving society does not only occur outside the family but also and significantly inside it.

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The Vietnamese Ethnic Group, Its Sociability and Social Networks in the Prague Milieu

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Introduction

The phenomenon of the Vietnamese community is certainly not merely a Czech speciality; Vietnamese itself has a special expression for labelling the Vietnamese living abroad, namely *Viet Kieu* (Viets residing abroad). The number of Vietnamese living abroad is estimated globally at more than three million. This approximation is derived primarily from the statistics of the countries where their number is the highest: USA (1,250,000), France (300,000), Australia (250,000), Canada (200,000), Russia (120,000), Germany (100,000), the Czech Republic (42,000), Great Britain (40,000), Poland (30,000) etc.; the Vietnamese themselves speak about the *Viet Kieu* being in almost ninety countries around the world (Komers 2007).

The reasons for the high number of Vietnamese immigrants in the Czech Republic are connected with the foreign policy and cooperation of socialist Czechoslovakia with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV). Czechoslovakia established diplomatic relations with the then ***Democratic Republic of Vietnam*** in 1950, and the two countries based their mutual relations for nearly forty years on economic assistance and cultural cooperation in the spirit of Socialist Internationalism. From the end of the 1950s, a part of the Czechoslovak aid to its Vietnamese comrades was the training of Vietnamese experts in Czechoslovak schools, and later also factories. The highest number of Vietnamese citizens in Socialist Czechoslovakia was reached in the first half of the 1980s, when their number exceeded 35,000, of whom two-thirds were labourers.

Through pre-departure training in Vietnam, but also thanks to mutual passing of information, each wave of the Vietnamese was more informed about the way of life in the Czechoslovak Republic than the one before it. For the whole time of their stay here, they maintained intensive written contacts with their family and acquaintances in Vietnam, but they had very frequent contacts also with their relatives and friends who had just like them come to Czechoslovakia to work or study. If they did not associate with their Vietnamese acquaintances in their free time, they spent it looking for and purchasing goods which could improve their economic situation once they returned home. Alongside the high mobility all over the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSSR) and the purchase of enormous amounts of goods, another characteristic feature of the Vietnamese ethnic group on the territory of the then CSSR became its illegal trading in scarce commodities and attractive goods (digital watches, Walkmans, jeans, down jackets etc.), which they sold to the majority population.

The primary aim of acquiring qualified Vietnamese through training then perished, and both of the parties concerned began to take advantage of the circumstances to their own benefit. The Czechoslovak side increasingly engaged Vietnamese employees in unattractive fields, in assembly-line production or in auxiliary work which was avoided Czech labourers (whereby they became an essential labour force over time for some fields); on the Vietnamese side, on the other hand, the possibility of migration for money arose, because the dominant motivation for working journeys to the CSSR became, rather than the effort to increase their qualifications, the vision of earnings. The official statistics on the number of Vietnamese labourers in Czechoslovakia were never published; nevertheless, it is estimated that 70,000–120,000 Vietnamese worked in Czechoslovak factories in the 1980s (Nožina 2003).

After 1989, state-organised, regulated and temporary migration of Vietnamese citizens for the purpose of increasing their qualifications transformed into spontaneous, standard economic migration motivated by an improvement of their living standards. After the creation of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic, the government of the time suspended almost all political and economic contacts with Socialist Vietnam and

Vietnamese workers were sent home en masse, but the pressure for their return to Vietnam was inconsistent.¹ In 1990–1992, reforms of the Czech political system were being implemented, the process of economic transformation began, migration mechanisms (responsible institutions/organs, laws, specific programmes etc.) were created, and a number of Vietnamese took advantage of the possibility to do business. Because of the experience from relatively successful trading in commodities in the 1980s, they essentially continued to supply them.

During the totalitarian regime, the Vietnamese were spread all over the territory of Czechoslovakia; from the 1990s, they either complemented the existing local communities or created new ones. At the beginning, the Vietnamese traders rented stalls in markets (this form of sales was the least expensive and moreover common in Vietnam); they focused also on customers from neighbouring states, with extensive markets consequently forming at the borders. In large cities like Prague or Cheb, partnerships of Vietnamese businessmen subsequently rented the spacious buildings of former factories or barracks, where wholesale concentrated.

Vietnamese students and workers who refused to return home after their contracts expired, created a functional base for new waves of Vietnamese migrants, as a result of which the Czech Republic became the target of their relatives and acquaintances, or also former Vietnamese students or workers who decided to return and also try their hand at business. These were joined by Vietnamese from the countries of former Eastern Europe, chiefly from Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, with not insignificant waves of Vietnamese immigrants coming from Germany.² The majority of Vietnamese immigrants nevertheless

¹ On the basis of existing contracts, Vietnamese were being sent to the Czech Republic until 1992 (Nožina 2003).

² The first wave of emigrants followed after 1993, when the former Vietnamese workers bound by contract with the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) obtained financial compensation for breach of contract provided that they left the country. Instead of returning to Vietnam, however, they moved to the CR. The second wave of the Vietnamese from Germany came to the CR after 1995, when the German and Vietnamese governments after lengthy negotiations agreed on the repatriation of Vietnamese citizens to the SRV, which frightened a number of German Vietnamese. German Vietnamese work mainly in the border areas (Cheb, Potůčky), but some of

comprised immigrants directly from Vietnam, from where also illegal migrants have begun to filter into the Czech Republic (Brouček 2003).

The newly arrived and inexperienced concentrated around persons with experience of the Czech situation, gradually forming groups of Vietnamese who held together: they were connected by family relations, the interest of a single market etc. The Vietnamese ethnicity in the CR as a whole increasingly proceeded in the direction of internal structuralisation and autonomous stratification, with the basic connective element of the community and its functioning in the CR being the *market*. Despite the Vietnamese in the CR forming a rather less concentrated ethnic group at the district level, at the local level, inside individual places of residence with a higher number of compatriots, they form in the environment of large markets separated communities, which within the Vietnamese ethnic group provide self-sufficient services: mediation, interpretation and consultation services, its own magazines, restaurants etc.

Most migrants from Vietnam come to the CR with the expectation of making money and returning to Vietnam. However, the dream of becoming rich fast often evaporates rapidly and they remain here simply because their business is just doing well or not doing well, in which case they try to get it running again, because returning to Vietnam without money is unthinkable for them. The longer they then stay here, the more background they need: they are joined by their wives or start a partnership in the Czech Republic, have children. The generation of the offspring of Vietnamese immigrants in the Czech Republic, which continues to grow in number, is nevertheless slowly becoming a separate chapter: because of school attendance and the parents' being busy, it identifies far more with Czech culture, has problems with communication in Vietnamese itself, which significantly increases the distance between it and the community of their parents.

The Vietnamese in the Czech Republic form societies on the bases of business and work relations; they are linked by kinship, friendship,

them have relocated also to Prague. A great number of them to this day speak better German than Czech (Centre for Migration Studies, Prague 2007).

compatriot or interest ties; they are integrated into wider and interconnected social networks. The fact that Vietnamese relatives and acquaintances used to come to the Czech Republic and travel to visit each other across the entire republic undoubtedly contributed to the interconnectedness of the community to a considerable degree. Their bonds extend beyond the local community, but reach not only to their country of origin. Former classmates or colleagues usually remain in contact; those who are joined by Czechoslovak experience often still know about each other *wherever* in the world they are now. The traditional values of Vietnamese society, whether it is the tradition of the extended family or social order based on Confucianism, contribute to the cohesion of the community as well.

The following study deals with the social ties of the Vietnamese community in Prague, which has the highest concentration of Vietnamese on the territory of the Czech Republic.³ The highest number of Vietnamese citizens residing in the Czech Republic was in the capital even under the former regime, chiefly because of its character as an industrial centre and high concentration of factories with a demand for foreign labourers. Currently, Prague is an attractive target destination for foreigners in general, in particular because of long-term, relatively abundant and diverse work opportunities and the possibility of earnings, as well as the anonymous environment, where even an illegally working foreigner *can go more unnoticed*. Simultaneously, it offers immigrants a space for creating their own support networks and institutions (ethnic, economic, kinship), which in turn attract further members of the same provenance to the given area (Uherek 2003). In Prague, Vietnamese immigrants have in this respect

³ The data of the Czech Statistical Office list the total number of Vietnamese citizens on the territory of the CR as 41,568 persons as of 31st January 2007; the statistics include those who have gained permanent residence (30,791 persons) or long-term residence (10,777 persons) permits. Furthermore, Vietnamese are among asylum-seekers, those who have been granted asylum, around two thousand Vietnamese obtained citizenship of the CR, and an unclear number of Vietnamese also remain illegally on Czech territory. Official statistics are nevertheless made even more imprecise because of the fact that not all the Vietnamese with residence permits in the CR are physically present here. According to the testimony of the informants, a number of them live mainly in Poland, where it is supposedly more difficult to obtain permanent residence than in the CR.

already created their own living space – a Vietnamese enclave in the middle of the majority society. Prague is a transit point not only of migrants but also goods from Asia, with wholesale markets around which the life of the Vietnamese community as such essentially revolves, hence one of the main reasons that the trip of the migrant to the CR frequently ends precisely in Prague.

The text and its individual themes are complemented by the experience of six informants, who are already sufficiently settled in Prague and speak Czech. Nos. 1–3 are representatives of the generation which has experience with residence in the CR before 1989, whereas Nos. 4–6 are representatives of the young generation who came to Bohemia in their childhood as part of the reunification of the family. The observations from the *Hard Life of a Tradesman* then speak for the most visible part of all the Vietnamese immigrants as retailers in the Czech Republic.

Initial Contacts

With the overwhelming majority of Vietnamese migrants, the driving force to leave for the Czech Republic has been expected earnings and financial provision of themselves and their families, with the difference being, however, that until 1995 we could more or less encounter individuals on the territory of the CR, whereas as of 1995 family circles already began to emerge. On the one hand, Czech authorities simplified the processing of invitations for relatives in that year; on the other, many Vietnamese businessmen had already managed to earn sufficient funds to be able to cover the costs of transferring their relatives. Another motive for coming was thus the reunification of the family and provision of quality education for their children.

In the first half of the 1990s, many migrants were able to take advantage of the loopholes in the Czech immigration laws of the time; the most common method of obtaining a residence permit was to establish private firms and trading companies, which is how a number of Vietnamese workers avoided return to Vietnam. New migrants came to the Czech Republic mostly on a tourist visa, after which they with the help of *earlier settlers* had a statement of permanent address in

the Czech Republic issued, thanks to which they were given a work permit and on its basis subsequently also a permanent residence permit (Czech authorities then missed the fact that even several dozen Vietnamese businessmen were officially headquartered at a single address). Another successful method, still used today, has been business partnership: the owners of Vietnamese companies in the Czech Republic have the names of their new partners registered in the commercial register, and new immigrants then come to the CR on the basis of participation in these companies – an entire range of Asian companies in the CR thus pursue practically no activity but have dozens of partners; they actually serve not only as a front for organising illegal migration but also wider activities (Nožina 2003).

Doing business in the areas of legal as well as illegal migration soon became a successful business. In Vietnam, a number of *companies* have appeared which specialise directly in mediating visas and transport to the CR. The services of these mediating companies have recently been used primarily by poor and unqualified Vietnamese from rural areas, who allow themselves to be beguiled by the vision of great earnings abroad. Some of them learn about the possibility to work in the CR from the advertisements of Vietnamese mediating companies in the press, others from acquaintances, while still others begin to consider departure for the CR for earnings after they see a compatriot who comes from Bohemia to Vietnam for a visit (whether for work or to see family) and lives well beyond his/her means. Czech Vietnamese themselves admit that by having money they somewhat *lord it* over the Vietnamese at home. Few of them will admit that to be able to come at all they had to work from sunrise to sunset perhaps for years. This *foppery* became a kind of norm for the behaviour of returnees and simultaneously seems to be a substantial part of the internal life of a Vietnamese in the Czech Republic (Brouček 2003). Thanks to the Vietnamese who create the illusion of easy earnings in the CR as well as the *recruiters* from Vietnamese mediating companies, there continues to be interest in work (doing business) in the Czech Republic. The Vietnamese themselves explain this fact by their mentality – in principle, they want to do whatever another Vietnamese who is evidently doing well does.

No. 5 on his visit to Vietnam: 'When I finally manage to get to Vietnam, I want to enjoy my stay there. When the other Vietnamese see me, they immediately want to come to the Czech Republic too. Although I tell them that life in the CR is not simple, that it takes a long time for business to get started and that even after that work and worries don't lessen, they only see a different Vietnamese, how much money he has, how he is dressed, that he has lighter skin, and nothing else. No one can dispel their illusion of an easy life in the CR.'

The price for mediating a visa and travel to the CR is gigantic in Vietnamese terms: currently, it ranges between 7,000 and 8,000 USD on average. The costs drop if the emigrant's transfer is facilitated by friends and relatives who already live in the CR. If this is not the case, expenses rise significantly, especially when an illegal smuggling network is used (Nožina 2003).⁴ This exorbitant amount usually needs to be put together by the extended family (going abroad is not as a rule the decision of an individual but of the whole family, who understand it as a repayable investment), the person in question often sells his/her home, lots or other chattels, and still becomes indebted to acquaintances.

The transport almost always requires the participation of a third person (persons), who arranges the connection between Vietnam and the Czech Republic; in Vietnam's case, there are two ways: either by air, ensured by persons from Vietnam, or overland through Russia, Hungary and Slovakia, during which local people smugglers are involved. It is mostly transport implemented in the so-called informal way, through a wider circle of relatives, acquaintances or other persons (Burčíková 2006). The migrant does not choose the means of transport (or he can try, but that is all), he/she only pays the requested amount and is essentially left at the middleman's mercy.

⁴ Both Burčíková and Nožina write in their treatises about the possibility of coming to the CR *on debt*, whereby the immigrant falls into *semiservitude* here. This possibility is, however, denied by the Vietnamese informants. If the person in question does not pay the full amount, he/she does not have a chance of getting to the CR, because in Vietnam the interest in work in the CR is still great. Neither the middlemen in Vietnam nor the employers in the CR thus have any reason to loan money for the trip here to an unknown person.

A certain Mr H. (single, 25 years of age) arrived in the Czech Republic via Russia and paid 6,500 USD for the journey, which lasted 6 months. He is from Nam Dinh, where he had a family company and where his brother and father continued to work after his departure to the Czech Republic. Mr H. worked as a repairman and installer of air conditioning and cooling systems, through which he earned about 1 million VND each month, equivalent to approximately 70 USD (in Vietnam, this amount could provide for a four-member family for an entire month). He decided to leave for the CR when he saw his neighbour's son, who does business in the CR and comes to visit his parents in Vietnam every year. After making his decision, Mr H. found a 'mediator' and negotiated that his family would not pay the whole amount of 6,500 USD until his arrival in the CR. Mr H. was, however, unpleasantly surprised by the journey. He flew into Moscow with about thirty Vietnamese, without any documents, and they all had to wait until their 'leader' had negotiated their release from the airport with the customs officials. It turned out that they were willing to let them go for only a pack of cigarettes or a can of beer. When they did not find any money, they conducted brutal personal inspections on them. Then they had to cross a forest in the dark and cold Ukrainian night without warm clothes (they only had summer clothing from Vietnam) until they reached an automobile in whose boot they were to be carried across the border. Thereafter, they were all locked in some room without basic hygienic facilities. For them to be able to enter 'dreamt of' Bohemia, the car first had to pass through Ukraine and Slovakia. After their arrival, however, they did not know how to obtain the documents necessary for doing business, i.e. a residence permit, trade licence etc., so they had no other choice than to start to work for Vietnamese production companies. Supposedly, if Mr H. had known of the distressful journey full of horrible personal experiences, he would have stayed at home (Trung Ta Minh 2002: 21).

The case of Mr H. illustrates the not so uncommon manner of transfer of Vietnamese migrants at the time when obtaining a visa to the Czech Republic was very difficult for a Vietnamese citizen, as a result of which migrants arrived without documents, or with counterfeits. As a consequence of the *changes* regarding visa policies at the Czech embassy in Hanoi in the preceding years, however, the number of

illegal migrants decreased: the price for a transfer usually includes a business visa to the CR, a preliminary registration at the Trade Office and an airplane ticket. The services of the visa mediators are used not only by Vietnamese longing for a trip to the CR to better themselves. Many times they are used also by those who want to come to the CR only for the purpose of family reunification, because to pay a mediator, who has experience and contacts, is easier, and it is chiefly more certain that the person will actually get a visa. The Czech consulate in Hanoi is literally besieged by visa-seekers on a daily basis, and not everyone obtains a visa, despite having all of his/her documents in order.⁵

Upon arrival in Prague, however, the paid service – in Vietnamese *dich vu* [zit' vu] – ends. A newly arrived without support in the CR, i.e. a relative or at least an acquaintance, who would provide for him/her at the beginnings of his/her stay – in terms of legalisation of residence, obtaining a trade licence as well as finding work – is usually left to his own fate after arrival. The majority of the common Vietnamese holders of a trade licence who newly arrive in the CR are then, because of their inexperience, dependent on a certain number of providers of highly profitable services within their own community. They are usually sent by the first compatriot they meet (mostly already at the airport) to a wholesale market where they can find these services. Concerning looking for work and accommodation, they have no other choice than to ask around the Vietnamese markets.

External pressure on immigrants, which limits their chances, often generates solidarity ties, which are a source of the supportive social networks and help overcome a number of obstacles linked with the specific situation of newcomers. It makes doing business easier for immigrants from Vietnam (and thus also motivates them) chiefly by

⁵ According to Vietnamese in the CR as well as in Vietnam, the Czech Embassy in Hanoi has become literally notorious for its elaborate system of an entire range of bribes for the application for a visa to be accepted at all, not to mention sending it to Prague. Considering the financially, time and mentally demanding process of obtaining visas on one's own, it is no wonder that many prefer to go directly to a mediator (information from the field 2007).

ensuring monetary loans for the initial investments or commercial loans and contacts to employees (i.e. a cheap labour force). In spite of the Vietnamese generally propagating mutual solidarity and willingness to help a compatriot in need, new and inexperienced Vietnamese have begun to be pejoratively called *ga* – the literal translation of which is ‘poultry’. That the solidarity of compatriots has its limits is proved also by usury, conducted precisely in connection with the newly arrived immigrants (Nožina 2003).

No. 4 has his own ideas about the services of the mentioned middlemen: ‘They are con men. Those who come here from Vietnam have sold their house and lot. In Prague, they are then taken charge of by Vietnamese authorities, who lie to them, because they also offer them what they do not need, for example various insurance contracts, so that it’s all even more expensive. The offices don’t help them, but shave them to the bone, they simply take advantage of their inexperience.’

However, the cases where the migrants have hardly any realistic idea about work in the CR and rely on the help of the local community are on the increase. A member of the executive board of the Union of Vietnamese in the CR says that he daily receives requests for assistance in his office from around ten Vietnamese who have come to the CR with valid documents, obtained a trade licence but do not have a job, accommodation, not to mention the knowledge of a single word of Czech. They almost always end up as employees of one of the wealthier compatriots: as salespeople at a stall, labourers in Asian manufacturing plants, young Vietnamese girls as domestic help but unfortunately also as prostitutes within their own community and so on. Because they do not know a word of Czech and their knowledge of life in the CR is not much better, they remain completely dependent on their employers. The working hours in manufacturing plants, for example, sometimes reach thirteen hours, working conditions are often severe, the wages low. Nevertheless, whatever limitation is not considered by the employee as an injustice. He/She feels that he/she is a debtor for the mediation of work and accommodation (Burčíková 2006). In the given circumstances, the most important for him/her are the earnings, which will allow him/her to repay the debt for the trip

here and become independent. This is, however, achieved by only a few. On the contrary, it is more common that newly arrived immigrants live in stressful conditions, as a result of which they become drug or gambling addicts (information from the field 2007).

The social network described here crosses borders; it is a long-distance network, whose form is determined by the need for the mediation of work and subsequent earnings in the target country. Its chief part forms thanks to the complicated access to the target country. It is largely a mediation network, a network of services, which are expensive and often shoddy but still sought-after, because in the end they mediate transfer to the target country the fastest. After arrival, they oftentimes end with a chain of work opportunities, which the transferred persons could not have accepted in their country of origin. The character of the network makes it then possible to filter the information about the position and employment of the persons who will use the network for transfer.

The Hierarchy of the Community

Vietnamese in the Czech Republic have created for themselves a special ethnic label *xu*.⁶ *Earlier settlers*, i.e. persons with experience of life in the Czech Republic before 1989, are often called *xu moc* [su mok] today – *moc* here literally ‘old’. In a number of cases, it is precisely these persons who obtain significant positions in the personality ladder of the Vietnamese community – especially if they have utilised their potential for the organisation of the operation of the large Vietnamese markets or manufacturing plants, the importation of Asian goods etc.; it is particularly true for individual local

⁶ They used it to refer to themselves already at the time of their abundant migration within the intergovernmental agreements; it happened after they noticed the expression *Vietnamců*: as they perceived this genitive plural ending as an independent word and ‘c’ is heard by the Vietnamese as ‘s’, the word ‘su’ – written as ‘xu’ was formed (Vasiljev 2006). A particularity is simultaneously the use of the word *xu* even in set expressions like with *che Viet Nam* (Vietnamese tea) – it has become common to use the expression *che xu* in Bohemia.

communities in significant centres (starting with Prague), chiefly those with wholesale markets.

This *organiser* is a respected and influential person, providing certain elements of patriarchal protection, resulting in obligations for the members of the community who are economically dependent on it. According to S. Brouček, the economic positions of the Vietnamese businessmen within the stratification of the local societies can consequently be perceived also as a political rank (Brouček 2003). Similarly, M. Nožina states that various disputes in the community, arbitrages between traders etc. are resolved through influential and powerful persons, who are rewarded by gratitude expressed by money or a reciprocal service; these ties of mutual solidarity and obligations of gratitude are considered by Nožina as one of the cementing elements in Vietnamese communities (Nožina 2003).

Those who have arrived recently and work for already established compatriots comprise the lowest level of the Vietnamese social hierarchy. They are ordinary salespersons in markets, cooks or waiters in Asian restaurants, employees in (il)legal manufacturing plants, workmen in construction etc. Independent traders and businessmen who have mostly lived in the CR for a longer period (i.e. more than five years) form a kind of the middle class within the Vietnamese community. It is characteristic that having gained a more or less independent status they become a base for further immigrants from Vietnam – particularly members of their families. In the CR, tendencies can be noticed to form commercial and interest groupings consisting of members not only of the same clan origin but also territorial origin – e.g. natives from the same province (Nožina 2003).

If the hierarchy in the Vietnamese community in the CR is discussed by experts on the given problem, they simultaneously describe the impermeability of individual layers. It should be mentioned, however, that the position of the individual is not dependent only on his education, experience and social position in the CR but also on the social position that he/she held in the country of origin.

The Concentration of Vietnamese in Prague

As of 30th June 2006, the Czech Statistical Office recorded a total of 5,267 Vietnamese citizens, of whom 3,430 with permanent and 1,832 with long-term residence; the number provided by the Union of Vietnamese in the CR still somewhat higher, namely about 7,000 Vietnamese citizens abiding on the territory of the capital. The distribution of Vietnamese in Prague is not even; what is often decisive is, besides the offer of flats and the cost of rent, the proximity to large markets.⁷ The greatest density of Vietnamese settlement is thus recorded in Prague 4, whose territory is connected with the operation of vibrant Vietnamese wholesale markets, namely already from the early 1990s; basically, even under the former regime, Vietnamese citizens concentrated mainly in the lodging house of the Hotel Košík in Prague 4 – Chodov. It seems that the ethnic networks play an important role in the spatial distribution of immigrants.

The higher number of Vietnamese in certain administrative districts of Prague 4 (Chodov, Libuš) is mentioned also by demographer O. Valenta in his diploma thesis. According to him, Vietnamese residents evidently spatially concentrate in the south to southeast edge of Prague, further in the belt of the cadastral areas in the east of Prague from the cadastral area Dolní Měcholupy through Černý Most all the way to the cadastral area Satalice. According to the last Population and Housing Census, the Vietnamese reached the highest percentage of the total number of inhabitants in the cadastral area Lahovice (3.1 %), Libuš and Malá Chuchle (both 2.9 %). Besides dominant national heterogeneity, O. Valenta indicates also the percentage of flats of the 4th category (i.e. without central heating or basic utilities) as determinants of the spatial distribution of Vietnamese immigrants in Prague – using the stepwise method (Valenta 2006).

The results of various surveys demonstrate that a large part of the immigrants sublet or live with their acquaintances (Kocourek 2005). Reliable data concerning the housing of Vietnamese in the CR

⁷ Also the results of the questionnaire survey by O. Valenta showed that easy accessibility to the Vietnamese wholesale complex Sapa is considered to be one of the assets of the environment in which the Vietnamese respondents live (Valenta 2006).

unfortunately do not exist, but it may be assumed that the greatest part of the Vietnamese live in rented flats, particularly in prefabricated houses in housing estates, where rent is usually lowest. They often live with several other compatriots in subtenancy, with whom they split the flat's rent. It is not unusual in Vietnam – especially in large cities – that a larger number of persons live together even in a one-room flat. In Vietnam, the cost of property is among the highest in the world; in addition, Vietnamese essentially *do not live* in their flats: most of their life takes place *on the streets*, thus in public spaces. Nevertheless, mainly pragmatic reasons lead to this choice in Bohemia: an immigrant who has come to the Czech Republic to make money understandably tries to lower all expenses which cut into his/her earnings, thus he/she also attempts to reduce the costs for accommodation to a minimum.

No. 5 remembers the time when more than ten people lived in their 3+1 (two-bedroom) flat. The lodgers were not only relatives but also Vietnamese renters, whom his parents lodged out of acquaintance. To create at least the semblance of some kind of privacy, they divided the rooms with wardrobes. He was greatly amused by the remembrance of the arrival of his cousin, who just like the rest in Vietnam imagined that in the CR they lived like in paradise. Instead, he came into a prefabricated house which was packed.

Flats are often sought by immigrants who do not know Czech well through Vietnamese realty offices or individuals who specialise in finding suitable flats for compatriots; the usual fee is one month's rent. Starting with the time when Czech law allowed foreigners with permanent residence in the CR to purchase flats, however, many began to buy flats into their personal ownership. They discovered that it is far more advantageous than paying rent; the flat rental fees are very high in Prague, much higher than in other Czech towns. Related or acquainted families oftentimes try to live in close proximity, so that even several Vietnamese families sometimes agree on buying flats in the same building. If they do not find themselves in such financial situations that they could afford to buy a flat, more Vietnamese families agree to the purchase of only one flat. We could generally say that the way of living as well as level of its comfort are relative to the time the immigrant has lived in Bohemia. Wealthy Vietnamese businessmen do

not forego large houses (and expensive automobiles) as signs of their success, although an unpretentious and inconspicuous style is more typical even for them at first sight.

No. 1 purchased a flat in a block of flats into personal ownership immediately after he learnt about the possibility of buying a flat in this building. He mediated the purchase of a flat in the same building also for the families of two of his acquaintances. He himself spoke of a bargain, and the only thing he considered at that time as disadvantageous was its distance from the Vietnamese wholesale centre, to which he commuted to work every day.

Livelihood Activities

The character of the livelihood activity essentially influences the rhythm of life and lifestyle of the Vietnamese immigrant. According to the available statistics, most of the Vietnamese in the Czech Republic are in the economically active age of between 20 and 50 years. The great majority of economically active Vietnamese do business on the basis of a trade licence, although they often do not do business themselves but are employees of another Vietnamese businessman. Only to a minimal degree do Vietnamese work for Czech or foreign employers. On the other hand, they more and more work within their immigrant economy, which itself creates a number of work positions.

The most widespread livelihood activity of Vietnamese tradesmen continues to be the purchase of consumer goods and their subsequent sale to the majority population, with the only difference being that the era of Vietnamese markets and stalls is being supplanted by shops, which we can now find in every Prague quarter, including the centre.⁸ This is i.a. the result of the increasing substantiality of Vietnamese

⁸ According to the Vietnamese themselves, the best conditions for Vietnamese stall keepers' doing business were provided in 1990–1995 – this period also provided quick earnings. Currently, the competition is already enormous; moreover, the offer of cheap goods in various hypermarkets etc. has resulted in a decline in the interest in goods from markets.

businessmen and the restrictive measures of the Czech authorities against stall sales; the shift of sales to shops (like with the purchase of a flat) can be understood as a manifestation of long-term adaptation to the Czech environment, many times also as a greater orientation on one's own interests in the CR and lesser on the original plan of return to Vietnam. It can be said that by leaving the markets, the Vietnamese traders began a certain type of integration into Czech society. As a result of the growing competition on the market of cheap products to shops with the normal selection of goods sold by Vietnamese salespersons (i.e. cheap clothes and shoes, small electronic goods, tobacco and spirits), such traditional shops have been joined by an increasing number of outlets with foodstuffs, shops with fruits and vegetables, Vietnamese bistros etc.; Vietnamese outlets with foodstuffs are often open late in the evening, through which they gain the Czech customer.

When No. 4's uncle came to the CR, how he would make a living was already given according to No. 4: 'Because everyone had already been doing business. Without any knowledge of the language, he had no other alternative. Even today it is the simplest way for a Vietnamese to go to a Vietnamese wholesaler, where he borrows goods and either sells them and then pays for them or returns them.'

The assortment of goods with which Vietnamese tradesmen most often trade is mainly connected with low acquisition costs. Moreover, the lack of capital prevents many businessmen from doing business independently, without being dependent on the community's trade networks. Most of the goods come from Vietnamese wholesale markets, which offer the additional possibility of *borrowing* goods, in other words their provision on credit. Only non-Asian foodstuffs, fruits and vegetables etc. come from relevant Czech wholesalers; some Vietnamese traders have also learnt to follow the discounts in various hypermarkets, where they then go shop if it seems more advantageous to them. As far as the personal average income of the normal holder of a trade licence is concerned, it ranges around 25–35,000 CZK and more a month according to diverse estimates. A large part of the earnings from doing business is spent on the flat rental fee, services of

Vietnamese consulting and mediation companies and for education for children (Kocourek 2006).

The Hard Life of a Tradesman

The working hours of an average Vietnamese retailer are not very enviable. A trader spends the whole day in his/her shop, from Monday to Friday or Saturday noon. The remainder of the week is devoted to accounting and the purchasing and unwrapping of other goods. He/She therefore works also weekends and essentially has only evenings free. He/She does not go to the cinema, to the theatre, to Czech pubs; he/she does not know what a weekend is, let alone a holiday.

Alongside small retailers, we also encounter rich traders and large Vietnamese companies with international scope of activities in the Czech Republic. A handful of Vietnamese businessmen have managed to take hold also in large *non-Vietnamese* shopping and entertainment complexes: for example the Sportisimo chain of shops with sports goods, the Art Home chain of shops with housing accessories, and Panda and Li Vu Asian fastfood restaurants belong to Vietnamese owners.

No. 3 noted on this that the Vietnamese also own a number of hotels in Prague; however, since they supposedly do not present themselves as the owners in public, this fact is known to few people. No. 3, however, does not think that the Vietnamese would be 'born businessmen'. Most are allegedly afraid of larger investments; they are inconsistent, chaotic and mainly 'don't know how to do it'. They trade on the international level, but only within their own ethnic group, or with other Asians. He cites as reasons fears of a lack of knowledge of the European market and its rules, and also that: 'Only a few Vietnamese desire to be original – they trade in what they see with another Vietnamese.'

In spite of most Vietnamese businessmen making a living irrespective of their original profession or education, even diverse Vietnamese specialists or artists (various craftsmen, computer experts, professional

photographers, singers, architects, journalists etc.) increasingly find work in their field, namely because of the rising demands on the living standard inside the community. A part of the business activities of the Vietnamese is thus oriented on covering the demand of their own immigrant group. Some immigrants achieve independence, but a number of Vietnamese businessmen intensively participate in the community structures.

The most reliable income in business in the Vietnamese community has become providing mediation services; especially the Vietnamese who have lived in the Czech Republic since the time of Socialist Czechoslovakia have managed to succeed in this area. When Vietnamese started to come to the Czech Republic for business but with a lack of knowledge of Czech and of the economic, legal and social system of the host country, many Vietnamese residents discovered that they can earn their living much easier through their knowledge of the Czech language and environment. Such a mediation service has thus gradually developed in the community that is without parallel in the Czech context.

Although No. 3 criticises the chaotic business characteristic for the Vietnamese, he on the other hand speaks highly of their persistence – he often mentions two facts: 1/ the Vietnamese are able to make money on everything and 2/ whoever has contacts and can take advantage of them is most successful.

The Mediation Service (*dich vu*)

The mediation of translation, legal, economic, consultation and further services is offered by a number of Vietnamese companies as well as individuals who take advantage of their knowledge of Czech and orientation in Czech society and its economic and legal systems. For a certain fee (and not a small one), they offer their services in diverse areas: the greatest demand is naturally in processing the necessary documents and official matters related to the residence of a foreigner in the CR and his/her doing business here, but also finding a flat, procuring driver's licence, organising an appointment at a doctor's or

attending a parent-teacher conference at school, in short anything according to the customer's wishes.

The network of middlemen is extensive, with a large number of people taking advantage of it. It is often a multilevel organisation, which also increases the final price for the execution of a given matter. For example for extending a long-term business visa, it is currently necessary to present along with the passport a document confirming the purpose of the stay, a proof of sufficient funds for the stay and accommodation, an extract from the Criminal Register, a trade licence, letters from the Financial Office (tax office) and the Offices of Social and Health Insurance stating that the foreigner has no outstanding bills related to these authorities; the amount which the immigrant pays the middleman for this transaction then exceeds several times the amount which the immigrant would have spent taking care of it in person at the offices (the official administrative fee at the Foreign Police Department, which issues the permit, is 1,000 CZK, the price in *dich vu* runs around 10,000 CZK). The price list of companies is usually similar; nevertheless, prices can sometimes vary depending on the estimation of the customer's experience – inexperience raises the price (information from the field 2007).

No. 3, who works in this area, also says that a number of Vietnamese are, to put it kindly, lax about documentation of whatever type, so that they often do not remember that they should extend their residence in time. 'They have simply got used to dich vu taking care of everything for them.' Then they have no other choice than to pay an additional person who will get them a statement from a doctor that at the time when the person concerned should have requested the extension, they could not do so for health reasons (e.g. necessary hospitalisation).

The network of *dich vu* consists of not only Vietnamese but also of people from among the majority, who agree to collaborate for a bribe. The Vietnamese do not hide the fact that the relevant people who deal with *dich vu* at the professional level have *their contacts* wherever it is necessary – in various Czech institutions and offices. This is usually organised bribery, in which the specific immigrant in the role of customer becomes involved in already established relations between

the mediator and a corrupt official, policeman etc. The Vietnamese express distrust of Czech offices and police (they resolve incurred problems themselves), but at the same time they manage to take advantage of both bodies skilfully (Nožina 2003).

On the one hand, the consultation services have a positive influence, because without them an immigrant would probably not be able to live and work normally in a foreign country. On the other hand, they contribute to the closeness of the Vietnamese community, because the interaction of the Vietnamese community with Czech institutions is substantially reduced due to the Vietnamese mediators. The mediation services are utilised by Vietnamese immigrants even after many years spent in the CR. The traders essentially manage with the basic vocabulary indispensable for contact with a customer. Some do not learn Czech at all, especially if they work in the Vietnamese wholesalers, where they rarely come into contact with a Czech. A lack of knowledge of Czech, a lack of time to learn it, as well as a lack of motivation to such a step, form a vicious circle, from which only very few immigrants manage and even have the interest to escape, especially when many do not have a clear vision of the future. Although the services of *dich vu* are not among the cheapest, it is still simpler for the immigrants to use them. It has become common to arrange everyday matters with the assistance of a Vietnamese interpreter – when an immigrant begins to have a toothache and needs to go to see a dentist, it is enough to call the relevant person, who books an appointment in the surgery and furthermore interprets the problems to the doctor.

Also Nos. 5 and 6 have started to earn extra money in this area alongside study at university. No. 6 began by accompanying compatriots to doctors, mainly because he studies medicine: 'I get customers by being cheaper. But I cannot be too much cheaper,' he says, 'The normal price is 500 CZK, so I take 400.'

Among Vietnamese immigrants, information concerning the selection of this or that company or individual mediator is then transferred quite simply: they mostly use the services of the one recommended to the respective person by an acquaintance, neighbour or colleague (or the mediation company which is used by others in the area). The centres

for gaining whatever kind of contacts are thus usually large Vietnamese markets and wholesalers, which in the case of the Vietnamese community form an utterly specific environment.

The Milieu of a Wholesale Centre

It can be said that the enormous Vietnamese wholesalers and wholesale warehouses are an independent Asian world par excellence, with their own rules not only in trading; here we can speak about the traditional features of an ethnic economy, i.e. oral contracts, the interconnection of mutual debts, including family and other hierarchical relations (Kocourek 2006). Their spaces further offer all necessary services in one place and simultaneously form a centre for passing on information as well as informal contacts, so that immigrants can obtain everything they need, and in addition can feel at home (like in Vietnam) in them. That is why these places are sought out and visited also by Vietnamese who neither work nor shop in them. They are the real centre of the community – the centre of business, administration, culture and media. Currently, two such places exist in Prague: a smaller Chinese-Vietnamese⁹ HKH market in Prague 10 – Malešice and a purely Vietnamese Sapa complex in Prague 4 – Libuš, which is considered as the centre of Vietnamese from the whole of the Czech Republic.

Tradesman of the Wholesale Centre

If immigrants work in such places, then they basically do not need to go anywhere else than here and home. Some have lived in Prague for more than ten years but have never been in the centre of Prague, like on Wenceslas Square.

The T.T.T.M. Sapa¹⁰ complex belongs to a Vietnamese joint-stock company, thus an association of Vietnamese stockholders, who besides

⁹ The Chinese and Vietnamese communities in Bohemia do not generally demonstrate any tendency to meet. It only happens if it is essential for their business activities (Nožina 2003).

¹⁰ *T.T.T.M.* in free translation means wholesale centre, *Sapa* is the name of a mountainous area in North Vietnam.

their other business activities collect fees for the sales or headquarters places for individual traders or companies here.¹¹ For a long time, Sapa was an Asian wholesaler into which Czechs were allowed only with a trade licence or another business licence and to buy goods in bulk. It is currently not like that anymore, with even price tags appearing next to the goods in some shops. They still forbid the entry of cars which do not have a permit; for Czechs, however, that means a *Customer Card*, which is willingly issued by the Sapa administration to the interested party for a fee of 200 CZK. Moreover, they only check on Saturday; during the week, entrance to the area is free.

Goods from Asia (mostly from China, Vietnam, Thailand and others) which arrive in the Czech Republic almost always end up here. According to an informant employed in a transport company, even such goods go through Prague that are destined for Poland or Hungary, which are, supposedly because of the lower standard of living of their populace, more interested in cheap goods from Asia than Czechs are.

No. 3 described the business chain and the journey of goods from Asia to Prague in the following manner: basically, these are implemented with the participation of three parties: the trader, who orders the goods; the supplier, who provides the goods; with the most important and at the same time most lucrative position being taken by the transport company. While the goods are travelling in containers

¹¹ Along with favourable external conditions, the wealthiest part of the Vietnamese had their share in the building of the Vietnamese wholesale centres in Prague, sometimes with the assistance of a member of the majority population. The first wholesale centre appeared around the former lodging house of foreign workers at Hotel Košík in Prague 4 – Chodov. Because of its gradual expansion and growing independence, it began to be significantly inconvenient for the local authorities, which closed it in 1996. Another, no less expansive, market Petis was built in Prague 4 – Modřany, from which as a result of the absence of a permit the centre moved to the former meatpacking plant in Prague 4 – Libuš. In 1996, however, its areas burnt down and a competing distribution warehouse sprawled out in Prague 4 – Kunratice, where a two-thirds illegal wholesale market Bokave appeared in 1998, not long thereafter nicknamed *Little Hanoi* by the police. Not even *Little Hanoi* finally withstood the pressure of the Municipal Office of Prague 4. In the meantime, the Vietnamese joint-stock company Sapia had bought the complex of the meatpacking plant in Libuš, named it Sapa, and since it is now a mainly private Vietnamese property, the police can enter only with a court-ordered permit.

through Hamburg to the Czech border, the manifest is written by the supplier on the transport company and sent to it by DHL. For the containers to pass the border without problems, the transport company uses its contacts at the Czech Customs Office; also at the customs house itself, it has an overview of the work schedules of the cooperating persons and makes arrangements accordingly. In the end, the trader obtains the goods but not the manifest, so he does not pay customs duties and taxes. The manifest is written by the transport company on a registered but fictitious company which folds before it should have paid the relevant customs duties and tax fees. For the establishment of such a company, the transport company uses the documents of so-called 'dead souls': these documents are sold by Vietnamese who no longer need valid documents here, because they are either emigrating further (e.g. to Germany) or are returning to Vietnam. According to No. 3, such 'above-standard' transport services are utilised even by some large Czech companies.

For an idea of what assortment of goods the shops here offer: clothes, underwear, clothing accessories, shoes, drug-store items and cosmetics, household goods, toys, glass, costume jewellery, furniture, flat accessories, music and film carriers, electrical appliances, mobile phones, PC technology, military equipment and accessories, amusement pyrotechnics, flowers, or complete equipment for shops (shelves, cash registers, mannequins, clothes hangers, price markers etc.). Also available here are a Czech-Vietnamese dictionary and phrasebook, issued by one of the Vietnamese companies for businessmen here, as well as further useful handbooks for doing business in the CR. At the same time, immigrants can purchase diverse goods from Vietnam – alongside Asian foodstuffs for example Vietnamese pop music or books and magazines; besides, there are omnipresent racks with Vietnamese press issued in Prague (even the Vietnamese weekly from Cheb is available).

As can be seen, a beginning Vietnamese trader can furnish his shop from floor to ceiling in Vietnamese wholesalers, including goods to be sold, provided that he/she remains faithful to the usual assortment of goods sold by Vietnamese traders.

Vietnamese traders not only from Prague but basically from the entire Czech Republic travel to buy from the wholesalers in Prague. During his research among the Vietnamese in various Czech localities, S. Brouček encountered a way of selling goods from Prague which he called *shuttling* (in Czech *pendlerství* from German *Pendler*, literally 'commuter'). He characterises it in the following way: a married couple, a family or a small Vietnamese community are firmly grounded for example in Hostivař and in a Transit shuttle and probe where they can sell the goods advantageously. These *shuttlers* also function something like unordered suppliers of goods round the countryside: they purchase goods at wholesale prices in Prague and then sell them outside of Prague to other stallholders, or they sell them themselves to customers (Brouček 2003: 87).

In the Sapa complex we can find, alongside shops and warehouses, the services of diverse mediation companies and consultancies, interpreters and translators, law, travel and real estate offices, Vietnamese insurance agents (in the areas of VZP health insurance /Public Health Insurance, the monopolistic insurer for foreigners in the CR/ and motor vehicle insurance), a branch office of Western Union, photographic and graphic studios, Vietnamese doctors, wedding agencies or hairdresser's, naturally a number of restaurants, bistros and cafés, but also casinos, gambling dens with slot machines, Fortuna and Tip Sport betting shops, with internet rooms (for chatting, online gaming or telephoning via internet) being available as well. Sapa operates a language centre, nursery school and extracurricular tuition. In the offer of the courses of the language centre, Czech is of course not lacking, along with English as well Vietnamese for the children of Vietnamese parents who speak Czech much better than they do Vietnamese. Within the extracurricular courses, the Vietnamese children are tutored in subjects in Czech or attend preparatory courses for entrance exams at grammar schools and universities. All the courses are taught by Vietnamese, for the most part without a Czech licence.¹² After all, services without a licence are

¹² An exception is e.g. *GD ŠKOLA*, whose principal has a degree from a Czech higher institute of education and a certificate to provide extracurricular lessons. There is great interest in the community to enrol children in this school; the school has several forms and usually teaches from 3PM on working days and from 11AM at weekends.

offered also by Vietnamese doctors; their services are used mainly by immigrants who do not have Czech health insurance,¹³ or because of feeling shy in front of a Czech doctor.¹⁴

The idea of the local restaurants being like the Czech ones filled with customers even in the late evening hours on working days is however mistaken: after working hours, the great majority of Vietnamese go home, especially if their family is waiting there. The local entertainment establishments and restaurants are visited mainly during the day by traders and employees who in these areas work, shop, have a business meeting etc. – they come here to relax; also those who do not have anyone at home to cook for them eat here (while listening to Vietnamese pop music or watching Vietnamese television; in the evenings, the staff turn on also Czech news). The closing time of the restaurants is usually after ten o'clock in the evening only if a celebration or larger meeting has been ordered in advance. Also the local casinos and other such establishments are visited by Vietnamese mainly during the day.

Sapa is busiest at the weekend, i.e. when traders come to purchase goods. Whereas two thousand people on average pass through the complex on a working day, their number can reach up to six thousand at the weekend and particularly on Saturday afternoon. At this time, the lot of Sapa really quite resembles busy streets for example in Hanoi; in front of individual shops or between them, even mobile fastfood places with various Asian specialities appear at that time and the complex literally begins to *live in Vietnamese style*. The greeting *ahoj* [ahoy]¹⁵,

It teaches the Czech language as well as the other subjects depending on which school the pupil or students enrolls in. Currently five Czech teachers also teach here.

¹³ In terms of health insurance, the situation in the Vietnamese community is to a certain extent specific: the immigrants either have and use health insurance, or they do not have it, in which case, however, they often borrow the insurance card for a fee from one of their insured compatriots (Burčiková 2006). Also the recently uncovered affair with counterfeit insurance cards from VZP is evidence of the *resourcefulness* of the Vietnamese in this respect.

¹⁴ For example during gynaecological or skin ailments; otherwise Vietnamese immigrants have greater confidence in Czech medicine.

¹⁵ Czech for 'hello' (translator's note).

with which Vietnamese greet each other here, may thus seem surprising.

No. 1 labelled the greeting 'ahoj' as 'the greeting at work', No. 2 said: 'to greet using "ahoj" is simpler, Vietnamese all over the Czech Republic greet one another that way.'

In the Sapa complex, almost all the businessmen and employees know each other, but the greeting *ahoj* is likely to have emerged for practical reasons. It is much more complicated to greet adequately in Vietnamese, because it depends on age, sex and social position. According to the Vietnamese scholar J. Kocourek, the fact that the members of the Vietnamese community here are on the one hand competitors and on the other hand led by tradition to maintain the social hierarchy and mutual close relations can provoke conflicts between the traditional and new social roles (Kocourek 2006); *ahoj* can thus be considered as a certain compromise.

In Sapa, however, one can find not only Vietnamese traders; in the afternoons and mainly at the weekends, the number of children and the young increases. They are here because of their parents, who work here, but also because of children groups, which have formed here as a result of it. Many of them also attend the mentioned tuition or nursery school. A large part of the Vietnamese children spend weekends and holidays in the market, when students of higher forms often help their parents at work, or make extra money for instance through administrative work in the local Vietnamese companies. It could be said that the presence of Vietnamese in the milieu of the market during holidays to a certain extent represents the age composition of the Vietnamese community.

The attitude of No. 5 reveals to what degree the areas offering the possibility to meet compatriots are attractive also for the Vietnamese with a Czech education if they have not lost contact with the Vietnamese community. Although No. 5 complains that since he started working here during his studies, he has spent his time chiefly here, and also his Czech from secondary school got 'dusty' because of it. The question of why he then did not meet his friends elsewhere after work,

however, was answered by him: 'And where?' No. 6, who has parents working in Sapa and helps them here at weekends, is then certain that he was 'saved' from 'inhabiting Sapa' by the fact that his secondary school was too far away from here. 'That is why I started to play floorball and go for beer with my Czech classmates rather than playing football or practising kung-fu with the Vietnamese from Sapa. That is also why I chose medicine in the end; otherwise, I would have most likely studied economics like the other Vietnamese – my peers.'

The Sapa complex serves as headquarters for not only business entities but also compatriot societies which support the Vietnamese community in the CR and for smaller *interest societies*. The wives of rich businessmen founded a women's society *Phu Nu* here, within which they organise aerobics classes, various tea parties or trips for themselves. *Vietflirt* – the largest forum of young Vietnamese in the Czech Republic – has its office here; an amateur children's dance group and the very popular kung-fu club *Hong Kho Dao* have formed here. One of the local restaurants can be understood as the meeting place of Vietnamese tennis and badminton players (which is reflected in the appearance of the interior, decorated with photographs and cups from tournaments). Annually, the local traders and employees compete in football to form a strong team from the winners for the all-republic matches with the Vietnamese from the other towns (markets). On important Vietnamese holidays or occasions, diverse community congresses and festivities are usually organised in the complex.

Although a trader does not come to buy goods at the Vietnamese wholesalers for his outlet, he still 'has to' come here. He has lived in Bohemia for years already but only knows the names of goods and to count in Czech. Here is the world he understands.

Compatriot Solidarity and Leisure Time Activities

According to Vietnamese researcher Le Xuan Khoa, the primary feeling of identity as an integral component of a wider, collective ego of the family or social unit is characteristic for Asians. They then feel the need to form community organisations as possible alternative

sources of personal security (Nožina 2003: 195). The Vietnamist I. Vasiljev also shows that for various reasons in the course of the development of Vietnamese society diverse associations based on the mutual assistance of the members of the society emerged; abroad, societies of compatriots were established, for whom spiritual as well as material support compensated for the feeling of being uprooted from their own territory (Vasiljev 1999).

Vietnamese immigrants establish compatriot societies for the support and maintenance of Vietnamese culture in the community as well as in an attempt to act on behalf of the community, e.g. in terms of communication with the majority population. Considering that Vietnam is a Socialist state, they are politically engaged and fall under the supervision of the Embassy of the *Socialist Republic of Vietnam*. Most Vietnamese express great loyalty to their country even abroad, so it is no wonder that the *Embassy of the SRV* often plays a decisive role in the Vietnamese community and essentially occupies the highest place in the notional administrative pyramid of the Vietnamese community in the CR. Whereas the Vietnamese associations – be they of a not-for-profit or commercial character – play roles of a kind of higher instance sponsoring community activities at the local level, the Vietnamese embassy influences and coordinates politically the activity of the Vietnamese associations.¹⁶ The not-for-profit associations clearly subordinate to the Vietnamese embassy include the Union of Vietnamese, the Union of Vietnamese Businessmen and the Union of Vietnamese Students and Youth in the CR; however, even the leadership of Sapa is loyal to the Vietnamese embassy.

¹⁶ I can provide an example from when I was in the function of the producer of a documentary on former Vietnamese students of Czechoslovak higher education institutions to get a sponsor's gift from the local Vietnamese businessmen: a member of the executive board of the Union of Vietnamese in the CR favourably inclined towards the documentary told me right at the beginning that it was first necessary to win the embassy's favour, only its positive reaction could influence business entities; at the same time, however, a negative reaction by the ambassador would have meant the conclusive end of any attempts to obtain anything from the Vietnamese businessmen. The mentioned hierarchy can play a positive role in some cases, negative in others. I had the good luck to gain the embassy on my side, and mentioning this fact opened doors for me in every meeting with Vietnamese businessmen.

There are of course Vietnamese who try to distance themselves from the local political representation of the SRV. In Prague, for example, several Vietnamese intellectuals founded the original Society of Beer; by this name, they showed the Vietnamese representation that for them the main point of their meetings (there are about fifteen members, but approximately half of them meet regularly) was drinking beer, not an *anti-state activity*. The influence and intervention of the Vietnamese consulate are resisted also by Vietflirt – at least in that it attempts to remain apolitical under all circumstances (after all, its main sponsors include even the trading centre Sapa). In short, the preponderance of Vietnamese attempt to remain on good terms with the Vietnamese embassy, because they are afraid of possible problems with visiting Vietnam.

No. 2 and also Nos. 4, 5 and 6 are more or less sceptical of any kind of compatriot organisation subordinate to the Vietnamese embassy. According to them, mainly those Vietnamese who 'want to be left alone by the embassy' become their members. It is not necessary to wonder at the opinion of No. 2 when he requested asylum in the CR for political reasons after 1989. On the other hand, the remaining informants are representatives of the young generation, moreover with Czech education; therefore, not even with them is their negative stance towards the rigid opinion of the Communist embassy of the SRV surprising. No. 4 then did not even know that some Union of Vietnamese existed.

Nevertheless, the Union of Vietnamese in the CR can be considered as the most significant compatriot society of Vietnamese in the Czech Republic, which in addition attempts to maintain also contacts with compatriots abroad at the official level (e.g. the *Meeting of Vietnamese Youth and Students Living Abroad* took place in Prague in summer 2007). It was established as a not-for-profit civic association in 1999; according to the founders, it was for the association of citizens of Vietnamese nationality here and building relations of mutual support among them in civil life as well as business activities in the Czech Republic. Besides in Prague, its representation can be found today also in Cheb, Pilsen, Karlovy Vary, Ostrava, Brno, Teplice, Most, Tachov, Chomutov, Hradec Králové, Mladá Boleslav, České Budějovice,

Strážné, Železná Ruda and some other places with more significant concentrations of Vietnamese citizens. The Union of Vietnamese joins chiefly the local Vietnamese elite – i.e. successful businessmen; its executive board thus comprises the most agile and mainly long-term settled representatives of the Vietnamese community in the Czech Republic.

Its regular activities include the organisation of humanitarian collections to help stricken compatriots in the CR as well as former compatriots after natural disasters in Vietnam; in this area, by the way, also a certain form of direct participation of Vietnamese towards the majority society appeared, as which a voluntary collection to help fellow Czech citizens after the floods can certainly be considered. Such collections take place practically both during meetings of the Union and in the form of direct collection among Vietnamese traders and companies; e.g. in Sapa a delegation with an urn goes among the businessmen headquartered here and collects money for instance during the annual floods in Central Vietnam or other calamities – be they in Vietnam or in the Czech Republic.

'... for example at a death in the family (the funeral is in the CR, but the family wants to repatriate the remains to Vietnam), or in the case of bad luck in business (for example when the market in Potůčky burnt down), we initiate assistance for our members.' (the words of the chairman of the Cheb branch of the Union of Vietnamese in the CR; in: Trung Ta Minh 2002: 19).

A traditional activity of the Union of Vietnamese has already become also the organising of various cultural events and celebrations on national holidays. Abundant participation (several hundred participants) has been recorded especially by the annual celebrations of the Lunar New Year (*Tet Nguyen Dan*). The fact that its joint celebration in the community here is considered by the chairmanship of the Union as pivotal is proved by the approach of one of the main organisers, who sacrifices his presence at New Year's in Vietnam. For a non-negligible financial contribution (around 700 CZK), those present, along with listening to the necessary New Year's speeches, toast with champagne, refresh themselves with traditional Vietnamese New Year's appetisers

and watch a several-hour cultural programme, at which the same vaudevillian singers and musicians appear every time, the children's dance group from Sapa dances etc. As compared to other cities, Prague is usually characterised by its significantly more official atmosphere of such celebrations, given mainly by the presence of the ambassador. Every year, in addition to the New Year's celebrations, the Union of Vietnamese also organises the celebration of the Mid-Autumn Festival (*Tet trung thu*) – a holiday of children, for whom numerous entertaining attractions are prepared on that day and the programme includes also the congratulatory handing over of certificates of merit for excellent study results to the star pupils. For this holiday, the Union of Vietnamese collects financial contributions from its members and other Vietnamese businessmen.

No. 1 is a member of the Union of Vietnamese and proudly participates with his family in almost every activity organised by the Union in Prague. On the other hand, No. 2 never takes part in such activities as a matter of principle. He himself says that such events are attended only by rich Vietnamese businessmen and those who want to be seen in that society. He himself supposedly does not fall and does not want to fall under either of those categories and prefers to participate in more personal cultural events; as an example, he mentioned a lecture by a Czech vintner involving a wine tasting, where he had been invited by a Vietnamese acquaintance of his who had organised the event in Sapa.

In cooperation with the Czech-Vietnamese Society, the Union of Vietnamese also organises an annual statewide football tournament of Vietnamese in the CR and even an international tournament of Vietnamese in tennis *Golden Racquet – Prague Open*, which is organised in the CR as the only country of the European Union. The 7th Annual *Golden Racquet* 2006 was attended by as many as 150 Vietnamese competitors in the ages of 15–50, namely from tennis clubs from the Czech Republic (i.e. from Prague, Brno, Ostrava, Cheb, Nový Jičín and Veselí nad Lužnicí), Slovakia, Germany, Austria, Poland and Hungary. Football, on the other hand, is the most popular sport of all in Vietnam, it is thus no wonder that almost all the centres with a significant concentration of Vietnamese citizens always put their teams together: hence the Vietnamese teams from Prague 4 (Sapa) and Prague

10 (HKH) compete, further from Cheb, Potůčky, Domažlice, Pilsen, Brno, Znojmo, Ostrava or Tachov, and supporting spectators are never lacking. The celebratory conclusions of both sport tournaments traditionally take place in the Sapa complex, usually in the largest local restaurant Dong Do.

An average retailer can hardly afford to leave his business for no good reason and go to see football or tennis. Also the celebration of New Year, which according to the lunar calendar falls into the period of January/February and in Vietnam is celebrated for several days, is devoted maximally a day by the retailer: after all, trade cannot wait.

The information on the occurrence of all events in the community is provided by the Vietnamese press, which is a significant element in obtaining information concerning happenings in the Vietnamese community, but also in integration into the Czech environment, because for the Vietnamese it is the most common source of information on the Czech Republic. The issuance of magazines in Vietnamese is another piece of clear evidence that the local community of Vietnamese is cementing more and more internally and forming its own self-sufficient world. These printed materials help strengthen its members' awareness of being Vietnamese while making it clear that the Vietnamese here are aware of their difference and distance from their former compatriots in their homeland. Therefore, they provide information on events in Vietnam but also on events in the Czech Republic, and in that naturally mainly on events in the Vietnamese community itself. According to various surveys, the Vietnamese press is becoming the most common information channel by means of which the Vietnamese obtain information on life conditions in the Czech Republic (Komers 2007; Kocourek 2006).¹⁷

¹⁷ Currently, (besides the official monthly of the Vietnamese embassy *Que Huong – Home* with the number of copies always being 1,000) two *independent* information weeklies *Tuan Tin Moi* (News of the Week) and *Van Xuan* (Ten Thousand Springs) with several thousand copies are issued, whose distribution has been spread by their publishers also to the neighbouring countries (Germany, Poland), and their websites were also transferred to the EU domain. Another weekly *The Gioi Tre* (Youth World) can be understood as a kind of offshoot of the magazine *Tuan Tin Moi* thanks to the same people (the *Vietmedia* society) being involved in them, but in its way *The Gioi Tre* is simultaneously the first weekly in the Vietnamese community to focus with its

Alongside the Vietnamese press, Vietnamese in the CR can be in contact with the country and culture of their origin also thanks to the satellite transmission of Vietnamese television. The Vietnamese broadcast has a special channel VTV4, which is intended for reports of Vietnamese living abroad (*Viet Kieu*). A cameraman of the mentioned television channel is also present at every more significant community event in the CR.

The answer of No. 4 to the question whether he sometimes watches Vietnamese programmes: 'Are you crazy?! Sometimes I have to when my parents are watching, but if it were up to me, I would change to the Simpsons; it is impossible to watch that national propaganda of theirs.'

Whereas the Vietnamese press and television serve as the information sources of the first generation of Vietnamese, the most widespread way of gaining information and mainly mutual communication of the young generation of Vietnamese have become the internet and chat. What is interesting at this point is the chatroom *Vietnam* on the website of www.seznam.cz in the section *Lidé* (People), where young Vietnamese are registered, but mutual communication takes place in Czech.¹⁸

No. 4 is one of those who actively visit the mentioned chatroom. 'When I came to the CR, there were not so many children's collectives of Vietnamese yet as there are now; moreover, our family lived quite isolated. So I got my first Vietnamese friends in the second year of grammar school; at that time, I went to Vietnam for the first time after my arrival in the CR and found out that it doesn't have to be so bad to have Vietnamese friends. But those that I subsequently found in the CR via the internet were not actually "real Vietnamese" either – they were also Vietnamese who had lived in the CR already for a long time and

entertaining character and slightly tabloid orientation on a certain selected group of readers (with its orientation on the young, it approaches magazines of the type of *Bravo* etc.). Another weekly is the paper *An Ninh The Gioi* (World Security) and magazine for the young *Thanh Nien* (Young People); their editorial boards are also headquartered in Sapa, but these are branches of the main editorial offices, which are in Vietnam. All the magazines are sold for a uniform price of 30 CZK.

¹⁸ A propos, the magazine *Tuan Tin Moi* wrote about this chatroom that it is shameful when Vietnamese in it use Czech to communicate among themselves.

spoke only Czech, so I guess I rather fell out of the frying pan into the fire.'

However, the unrivalled highest visitation rate was recorded by the website www.vietflirt.eu intended for Vietnamese teenagers and administered in Vietnamese. This web appeared in 2004 under the domain *vietflirt.net*, it has functioned as *vietflirt.eu* since 2006 and, according to the web statistics, after Czech Vietnamese, it is most frequently visited by Vietnamese directly from Vietnam, further from the USA and countries of the European Union (from Germany, Poland etc.). The creators of the website and active members of the Vietflirt society (there are approximately two thousand passive members) comprise a ten-member group of young Vietnamese, mostly studying at various Prague higher education institutions. As much as Vietflirt can appear as a project of young men who primarily want to meet the gentle sex, the fact that their web is exclusively in Vietnamese serves also for the preservation of Vietnamese among young Vietnamese living outside of Vietnam.

Besides administering its web, Vietflirt organises diverse entertainment and cultural activities (although disco and breakdance may seem uncultured to the older generation) for Vietnamese teenagers – according to the organisers so that the young would not just sit at computer games. For bigger events in the form of discos, they rent dance clubs in Prague (HanyBany in Vyšehrad has become the favourite) and collect an entrance fee (of 200 CZK). Particularly because of these events, Vietflirt has become a bit of a thorn in the eye of the Vietnamese embassy, because all of the compatriot activities used to take place under its auspices before and it thus had them sufficiently under control.

According to one of its founders, the idea to found Vietflirt, whose web would serve for the acquainting of young Vietnamese, actually arose from some kind of self-indulgence. Originally, they formed a group *Cho Dop* (which loosely translated means 'dogs that bite') according to the Prague quarter Chodov – the place of residence of one of them (they got this label from a group of young Vietnamese guys from the quarter Řepy, with whom they used to go to play football). Besides the

football pitch, the *Chodovci* group met chiefly in Sapa – in the restaurant, in the casino, at billiards or at kung-fu – until they became tired of only mutual meetings, moreover in the monotonous environment of Sapa. The filming of a film in which they featured – an hour-long parody entitled *Lovestory*, whose aim was supposedly to show the *problematic life of young Vietnamese guys in Prague* – is a real gem.¹⁹

Whereas No. 1 devotes his scant free time after work to his family, No. 5 as a single young man wants to have a good time: according to him, his peer in Vietnam would likely after work start his motorcycle and just go into the streets, to chatter with his friends etc. The lifestyle of Vietnamese in the CR is, however, extremely different from the normal life that they would lead in Vietnam. No. 5 verbatim said about that: 'Lots of Vietnamese in Bohemia simply do not have anything to do in the evenings and are bored... In Vietnam, when Vietnamese come home from work, they eat dinner, and then constantly meet each other. But here not everyone finishes work at the same time; moreover, the only place to meet in is Sapa...'

The issue of leisure time and ways of spending it is quite specific in the Vietnamese community. It is different in the second generation of Vietnamese, because if they have attended Czech schools, they usually have friends among their Czech peers and mostly spend also their leisure time like them. Immigrants, who have however come to Bohemia to make money, devote themselves to a great extent to work and earning money and thus do not have much leisure time left. Not even if the businessman as we might say *has made enough* does it mean that he would in some way markedly slacken work and have leisure time on his hands. He has a greater chance to have it but has only

¹⁹ Two-thirds of the film were shot in Sapa, part in the Holešovice market and part in the flats of the actors. The main actors in the film were of course the web administrators and their friends. It was filmed with an amateur cameraman, but it was quite successful in the Vietnamese community – more than five hundred people came to the premiere, which Vietflirt organised in the restaurant Dong Do in Sapa. The film can be downloaded from the Vietflirt website, although only in Vietnamese at the moment; it did not obtain Czech subtitles until spring 2007 in cooperation with the civil society *Klub Hanoi*.

a vague idea of how to use it, which makes him spend free evenings either at home in front of the television or in the casino.

No. 2 in this context told about a Vietnamese family in Prague which was very wealthy but which because of the gambling of the head of the family had to sell the house in the end and begin essentially from scratch. No. 1 has a problem with gambling directly in his own family, because his brother bets a lot rather than investing or saving his earnings as No. 1 constantly attempts to convince him to do. According to No. 3, there are cases of so addicted gamblers who do not have a problem with begging for money for games in the community.

The Vietnamese in the Czech Republic have become quite infamous for visits to casinos and gambling dens, and not only the Vietnamese ones. The quite widespread fact that the Vietnamese work hard to make a lot of money but subsequently put it into activities which have very little in common with business is labelled by the Vietnamese themselves again as *typical Vietnamese conduct* (also Brouček 2003). It, however, seems that the problem of gamblerism and gambling of Vietnamese immigrants in the Czech Republic has a deeper cause than mere *playfulness and ostensible unruliness* typical for the Vietnamese. It can be *escape* from life and work with which the immigrant in the CR is not satisfied or really just the simple fact that he/she has nothing to do after work.

Vietnamese culture is labelled as a *contact* culture, a culture of *interpersonal relations in society*, which means that in terms of cultural traditions, Vietnamese society focuses on understanding the individual, on personal contact and empathy (Kocourek 2005). Most Vietnamese therefore mention the lack of mutual communication and the loss of the varied social life which they led in Vietnam as a big problem. Since immigrants do not have too much time to visit each other en masse like in Vietnam because of being busy with work, some at least treat themselves to participation in some social and cultural events organised by Vietnamese associations for their compatriots. Although tickets to such events usually cost as much as several hundred Czech crowns, their participation is always plentiful. The Vietnamese themselves

consider it as a *natural internal integration of the Vietnamese community* (also Brouček 2003).

Especially the young, who are not engaged in work like their parents are, thus welcome any occasion for mutual meetings. The teams travel together with the fans in special buses, which depart from the large markets of various towns to the football tournament of the Vietnamese in the CR, organised by the Union of Vietnamese usually at the football pitch in Čelákovice. Vietnamese from the whole republic also gather for concerts of Vietnamese pop stars from abroad, taking usually place in Prague and in Cheb. The popular events now also include the *disco parties* of Vietflirt, because they are attended by an average of five hundred dance-hungry Vietnamese teenagers.

About a Vietflirt disco with No. 5: 'It is usually a republic-wide meeting, with young Vietnamese gathering from the whole of the Czech Republic...' In response to the question if they are all supporters of the vietflirt.eu website: 'Many are, but some learn about the event in Vietnamese magazines or find out about it from friends. It is a unique opportunity to become acquainted with the Vietnamese peers from various Czech towns, which is why participation is so abundant.'

The Story of Informant No. 5

No. 5 arrived in Bohemia at ten years of age with his father following his mother, who had originally worked here as a foreign labourer and began to do business in the 1990s. Their departure had been sudden: only a few days before the actual flight, the father told his son without emotion to say goodbye to his friends, that they were going to join his mother. No. 5 fought tooth and nail against the departure to the CR; he would have rather stayed at home with his older sister, who was finishing secondary school in Hanoi. Nevertheless, it was of little avail to him. His bitterness and sadness at leaving in the end resulted in his not saying goodbye to anyone out of spite.

The arrival of No. 5 was planned for the summer holidays so that he would have the chance to find his bearings in the Czech Republic before he started going to school. Although he had completed only the

second form of elementary school in Vietnam, his mother enrolled him in the fifth form in the CR – following the example of her acquaintance who had a son of the same age, who attended the fifth form here. During the school holidays, he was being taught Czech by one Vietnamese but did not learn much from this. When he first went to class, he understood only a single question of the teacher, namely if he had a Czech name (that would be easier for her to pronounce). The only Czech name that No. 5 knew at that time was Milan (because it had been given to one of his uncles during his work stay in Czechoslovakia). His unskilful pronunciation in the end meant that the name Mila, i.e. Miloslav, has followed him ever since. Today this name literally winds him up and he has Czechs address him using his Vietnamese surname, which is easier to pronounce.

At home he could not enjoy his parents much. His mother was apparently always 'rather business-oriented', she never prepared home-cooked meals, or was much worried about the household. No. 5 then did not wish for anything else than to live with his sisters, who would cook for him. How disappointed he must have been when his sisters came from Vietnam but again he could only dream of some cooking (the sisters were used to eating out from Vietnam, and so they also only cooked instant dishes). When No. 5 did not attend school and had no one to look after him, he would go with his parents to the market. He remembers how they would go in all weathers by an old Škoda, which did not have fog lights, and he wonders how they could have survived all the trips. He also remembers that he spent most of his time in a box from goods, where he put his snack and toys and in which he essentially resided both during the trip in the car and at the stall of his parents in the market, trying to sleep through it.

When he started at secondary school, his study results no longer convinced his mother and she began to wheedle him to work instead of school; as an example she used the son of another acquaintance of hers, who was not doing well in his study and thus started to help his parents in their shop. Despite her offering to procure a shop for him, No. 5 could not imagine his future behind a shop counter, and when he told his mother that, it was the end of his pocket money. From then on, he had to earn money for his studies himself. Thanks to his knowledge

of Czech, which he acquired after about a year of attendance at elementary school, it was however not a problem for him to find work in the services of his compatriots. He began by tutoring young Vietnamese Czech and other subjects; whereas he used to get 200 CZK a week from his mother, now he was earning 200 CZK an hour.

From the time he came to Bohemia, he nevertheless led a more or less lonely life and his only excitement for relaxation was going to the discothèque once a week. At that time, he would, like many other foreigners, go to the renowned club Music Park in downtown Prague, where Vietnamese liked it mainly because among the other foreigners they had the impression that they were not sticking out so much. No. 5 always had his money separated for a taxi there and back (or at least back), entrance fee and two cokes. His more or less solitary period ended with an accidental meeting with another Vietnamese of the same age.

He started to spend all his time with his new Vietnamese friend, namely 'playing truant'. They often would just sit downtown on Wenceslas Square, 'chitchatting and watching people'; whenever they had money, they visited an internet café, where they chatted, played online games, or went to billiards. When it was raining outside and they had empty wallets, they would stay home with home karaoke, or 'just blabbed over tea'. Because No. 5 had more money thanks to his side job, he basically supported his friend for a long time. Before No. 5 came with the idea of a joint business, they began a business seeking flats for compatriots. Allegedly, if they had not fallen out concerning business because of various issues, he is convinced that today they would have been 'out of the woods'.

Although No. 5 enrolled at university, he continued to work in compatriot services, thanks to which he also began to travel to Vietnam; nevertheless, today he feels more like a foreigner there, and he does not even want to meet with his relatives there, because they supposedly would only want money from him. Since No. 5 became financially independent of his parents, he has begun to live 'in his own way'. He only occasionally participates in family gatherings; not even for Tet (New Year's) is he usually home, which is very rare with

Vietnamese. His parents were apparently worried at first that he was doing something bad, but when they discovered that it was not so, they got used to it. His sisters are both married to Vietnamese today and already have their own families. In the end, also No. 5's parents moved out to follow one of them, who does business with her husband in West Bohemia, and his aunt and uncle with their children moved into the flat with No. 5. As No. 5's mother gradually invited to the CR a number of her relatives, who established families after settling down, No. 5's family in the Czech Republic currently counts a respectable one hundred members; the individual nuclear families live and do business in various towns in the CR.

The Privacy of Family and Friends

Most Vietnamese immigrants first come to the CR on their own. Not until after fulfilling certain adaptation and economic goals (legalisation of stay, business contacts) are they gradually followed by their closest relatives; in most cases, the *pioneer* is usually a man, but it is not a rule. Oftentimes, the family remains divided, with the parents working in the CR and the children being raised by their grandparents or other relatives in Vietnam, to whom the parents send money. The Czech Republic naturally becomes a destination of also people who are single and without children, who do not form relations until after arrival.

The Story of Informant No. 1

No. 1 was born in Hanoi; he arrived in the CSR in 1985 and was employed at the Čakovice meat-packing plant. In the 1990s, he established a company along with a Czech and a Vietnamese colleague. Their joint business, however, did not last long, because over time the partners 'conspired' against No. 1 and ransacked the company account. No. 1 thus had to begin in business again from scratch, but he never felt hatred even towards his compatriot, because the cause of his behaviour was in his opinion ignorance and hence a lack of awareness that he was doing something bad. Since he thrived in business, he was soon joined by his wife and young daughter from Vietnam; his son was born already in Prague. His parents and a brother stayed in Hanoi, and No. 1 would send money to them.

When his brother saw that No. 1 was doing well, he also wanted to come to the CR. No. 1 therefore procured an invitation for him, sent him an air ticket, after his arrival found him accommodation, a sales point, attended to all the necessary paperwork, even provided capital for the beginning. His brother, however, started to take this 'assistance' for granted and up to now has done very little for mastering the local language and making himself independent. He essentially even lacks motivation for it. He thus still sells in the market together with his wife, who he met here, and No. 1 apparently has only worries with the two of them.

The fact that No. 1 was doing well in business is proved by the fact that he bought a flat, enrolled his children in private six- or eight-year grammar schools, and the family brought the grandmother (his mother-in-law) from Vietnam to Prague for some time. In 2002, No. 1 could also afford to leave with his whole family to Vietnam during the summer holidays for the first time since his departure. At that time, however, a crisis occurred in No. 1's marriage, after which the couple parted ways. The children continued to live in the flat with their mother, whereas No. 1. moved out into a rented flat; nevertheless, to this day he comes to see his children and check that they are studying almost daily.

After some time, an acquaintance introduced him to a Vietnamese woman who did business on her own in Prague, and No. 1 not long thereafter moved in with his new partner, who had three sons from her first marriage, the youngest of whom she had brought with her to Prague while leaving the older ones with their relatives in Vietnam, where they studied. However, a tragic event occurred in No. 1's new family when the eldest son of the partner died suddenly and No. 1's partner herself fell seriously ill, which brought even the partner's middle son to the CR. Originally, No. 1 arranged study at university for him; since the son did not understand a word of Czech, however, he soon had to abandon the studies. Now he attends a language centre and he also stands in for his mother in her shop.

In the hard times, No. 1 was apparently given the most help by his friends. Although No. 1 lives with his new partner out of wedlock (he

himself says for practical reasons), he accepted her sons 'with his heart' as his own and he also introduces them as 'his sons'. Concerning the question of whether after more than twenty years of residence in Prague No. 1 considers settling in the CR for good, he could not answer. What he regards as the most important is that all the children (including his partner's sons) complete their studies, which considering the youngest will still take quite a number of years. He deems thinking and planning so far in advance as futile.

The story of No. 1 documents the transnationality of the social ties, which is characteristic for this community. Illness, death or other family events may not find response with the local society, but they do find response with people with whom social ties have been established across continents. There is an effective network from the Czech Republic to Vietnam, along which information is passed and individuals travel not only to improve their life status but also when the family needs help.

If we speak about the Vietnamese family, it is necessary to bear in mind that Vietnamese believe in the tradition of the extended family and put emphasis on solidarity even between distant relatives; one of the fundamental pillars of the functioning of the Vietnamese family is the solidarity of families related on the basis of membership in a specific lineage (a woman does not lose the family lineage name even when entering into a marriage).²⁰ Although the Vietnamese family in the new environment of the host country is exposed to pressures which gradually transform its principles and functioning, the institution of the family is the main stabilising factor for migrants even after emigrating from Vietnam to the CR. The members of the family provide the immigrant with emotional and material bases. The kinship network helps the newly arrived adapt to the new environment. The remnants of the traditional family order often also have the result that related families in the Czech Republic unite, which makes it easier for them to

²⁰ Membership in a lineage is inherited from both the father and the mother, in that order, and every Vietnamese born thus becomes in fact a part of two families: the father's side forms his/her *internal* relatives and the mother's the *external*; as soon as a person marries, he/she also becomes a part of two family lines: his/her own and that of the husband or wife).

accumulate the means for business or otherwise help each other. Family solidarity is also manifested in the fact that the part of the family present here contributes financially to family members living in Vietnam.

The contribution to family members in Vietnam is generally some kind of unwritten rule for Vietnamese emigrants. Most Vietnamese find their fulfilment with respect to home, family and relatives in earning money. On the one hand, they make money to help their relatives; on the other, the fact that they have money and can provide it to their relatives means a certain prestige. Abandoning this custom, as well as with it even the tradition of the extended family in general, and orienting only on the members present in the CR usually happens with immigrants only after many years spent in the CR, often when the immigrant becomes certain that he/she will never return to live in Vietnam. Another reason may, however, be that the immigrants get tired of supporting their relatives in Vietnam, who only comfortably await their hard-earned money.

Whereas No. 1 at this point sends money only to his parents, the mother of No. 5, despite living in the CR for almost 20 years like him, has never stopped sending money to her relatives in Vietnam. No. 5 has tried to prevent her from doing this already countless times: he has tried to persuade her that she herself does not have money to spare and that she works too much for her age. He also keeps reminding her that their relatives in Vietnam are not as bad off as they continually write. The mother has always objected though that she will support the family as long as she is able to and no matter what.

The overwhelming majority of the Vietnamese maintain contacts with their family in Vietnam by means of telephone conversations, or the internet (when they often utilise webcams and chatvoice). They are chiefly interested in how their nearest and dearest are doing, and what is new with them. Even visits to Vietnam serve to maintain contacts, but these are much less frequent, especially because of their financial and time demands arising from the great distance between the two countries. For this reason, many immigrants have not been to Vietnam since their arrival in the CR. For understandable reasons, visits from Vietnam to Bohemia are even more complicated, because a role here is

additionally played by corruption when arranging the intercontinental transfer of persons. In this respect, the problems connected with family life then mainly include the difficulties of leaving older parents in Vietnam as well as the related inability to take care of these members of the family if they need something in any other way than by sending them money.

No. 2 feels that his son misses his grandmothers, who, however, cannot just come because of the problem with obtaining the visa. He also mentions the distance problem of South and North Vietnam – when his parents from the South want a visa, they have to go to Hanoi in the North. ‘It would be enough if they could come at least every other year, but even that is only a dream,’ he says. No. 2 therefore sets up the webcam in such a way that the grandmothers can see his son playing.

Many children of immigrants born in the CR have consequently never seen Vietnam (their parents often underestimate the first visit of their children in Vietnam – they do not realise that they are taking their children to what is for them a completely foreign environment and culture); others have already become so accustomed to the Czech environment that they have stopped expressing an interest in Vietnam, including their relatives there. Even though Vietnamese parents are usually exceedingly proud of their children’s flawless Czech, they often regret this fact, because the Vietnamese generally cherish a great affection for their country.

The fact that a visit to Vietnam is not exactly a cheap affair, especially if the immigrant wants to fly with his wife and children, is evidenced by the calculations of No. 1. This is how he calculated the amount necessary for a four-member family to travel to Vietnam: he multiplied an air ticket in the amount of 35,000 CZK by four, to which he added an amount spent for gifts for family on average, and the final cipher was around 170,000 CZK. It is no wonder that he could so far only afford once to fly with the whole family. Nevertheless, when I remarked that he could fly with a cheaper air carrier, where he could save as much as 10,000 CZK per ticket, No. 1 strictly rejected this possibility. He argued that if he flew in on a cheaper carrier, the family in Vietnam

would think that he is not doing well in Bohemia. He thus calls his parents at least once a week.

To be in contact with one's family is a natural need for Vietnamese; immigrants are therefore usually happy when they have someone from their family in the Czech Republic. However, not always do the invited relatives make them happy. First of all, there are the problems of adapting them to the different pace of work and lifestyle in the CR. Even though many immigrants anticipate these problems, most succumb to the appeals of their relatives for an invitation to the Czech Republic in order to maintain good family relations.

Although No. 1 knew of his brother's distorted ideas of an easy life in the Czech Republic, that only with difficulty would he accept self-denial and being at work all day long like No. 1, he basically did not even consider refusing his appeal to come to the CR. Because as he says himself: 'Family have to help each other'. Similarly, No. 5's mother invested significant financial expenses and efforts to accommodate her relatives concerning their coming to the Czech Republic. Some relatives, however, drew the conclusion years later that their departure to the Czech Republic was the worst thing to happen to them in life and now rebuke her for it.

It is fitting to mention here that not all Vietnamese are satisfied in Czech conditions concerning work and earnings. On the contrary, some discover that they would be much better off in Vietnam today. However, they are ashamed to admit their failure to their relatives and friends there and thus fight tooth and nail to survive in the CR. The only point of their stay here continues to be the hope that their children will finish school here and lead a better life than they themselves have.

No. 2 also always planned in the short term and did not have the feeling that he would like to stay in the CR. Only the birth of his son and the question of his education meant 'adjusting myself to living here a long time'. No. 2 for this reason laughed at his friends who had come to the CR years ago to make money and always said that five years maximum and they would return to Vietnam. He knew that it would not work out for them: 'They kept postponing the departure, then they had

a child and already understand today that to return to Vietnam would be insane.’ No. 2 also had an acquaintance who tried to return with his family to Vietnam years later but after six months returned to the Czech Republic. Not only did the locals consider them to be ‘Westerners’; they themselves had problems adjusting back to the lifestyle to which they had already become disaccustomed.

For the Vietnamese, family means a life priority not only in the present situation but also with respect to the obligations to one’s ancestors, to the duty to take care of old parents and secure the children’s future. Prayers to the ancestors remain a daily peculiar event even with Vietnamese immigrants in the CR. The Vietnamese pray to the ancestors for the welfare of the whole family and success in business on every first and fifteenth day of the month (at the new and full moons), during which they burn incense sticks and place diverse oblations (fruit, flowers, spirits etc.) at the altar of the ancestors, which is not lacking in any Vietnamese household. The most significant family jubilees are the anniversaries of the death anniversaries of parents or grandparents (*ngay gio*).

No. 4 on the tradition of respect for the ancestors: ‘It is the basis – the altar and so on, the family buys fruit and puts it on the altar, and I as the oldest son have to maintain traditions, or it would tarnish my reputation’. His parents did not guide him more into Vietnamese traditions, there was no time.

Nevertheless, the primary goal of making money, for which most of the parents have come to the Czech Republic, is significantly reflected in the life of the nuclear family. Because of the parents’ being busy, the family sees each other all together at home more or less only in the evening, possibly on Sunday. During the week, the parents place their children in preschools, school-aged children in the after-school clubs; older siblings often take care of the younger. Sometimes, the children come to the parents at work, many attend interest groups, but they often prefer to play computer games, after all like their Czech peers currently.

No. 4 cannot even remember now when he and his parents sat down at the table together and talked. 'My mother comes home from work in the evening tired and sits down to watch some Vietnamese entertainment show on television; my father works long into the night.'

Although the majority of immigrants attempt to maintain eating together as a family at least in the evening and do not forget important family rituals concerning prayers for the ancestors etc., the expected provisional nature of their stay here allows them steps towards behaviour beyond the standard of traditional Vietnamese society. This can for example be observed in that unmarried partners begin to live together with all of the features of family life, although they could hardly allow such cohabitation in Vietnam. What would be considered as still less acceptable is the fact that new partner ties in the Czech Republic are established by immigrants who left their original family in Vietnam. This phenomenon was noticed by S. Brouček during his research, who labelled it *synchronous couple cohabitation*. Nevertheless, he came to the conclusion that not even in these extreme cases do the Vietnamese call into question the importance of family and marriage. On the contrary, most of them declare respect for the family, which arises not only from traditions and the earlier norms of Confucianism but also from the practical advantages brought by life in a family as against facing the daily problems from the position of an immigrant as an individual (Brouček 2003).

There are also cases when a new marriage is formally confirmed without the termination of the original marriage bond in Vietnam; it, however, occurs only in the case of a truly profitable economic or life advantage (such a method is most often adopted by Vietnamese in the CR in marriage to a Czech citizen). Vietnamese society still accepts divorce only grudgingly, not to mention the remainder of the family living in Vietnam immediately affected by this matter. Divorce proceedings are an unnecessary strain for an immigrant in the Czech Republic, although it comes even to them.

No. 4 on his two wives – one Czech and one Vietnamese: 'One of them is only on paper, it has nothing to do with a family: there are advertisements saying that a woman will marry a foreigner for

a certain amount – it used to be the only way to obtain permanent residence.’ He thinks that interethnic marriage for love rather does not work. ‘The demands of Czech women are different of those of Vietnamese men, who expect a warm dinner, but a Czech woman may then want to go shopping...’ He answered the question of whether a Vietnamese man could fall in love with a Vietnamese woman and start another family with her affirmatively, but he added that it only happened exceptionally. ‘Because Vietnamese keep an eye on and gossip about each other terribly. If they found out about it in Vietnam, he would be made a fool of. Only if the relationship were already on the rocks, then maybe, but otherwise they are rather lovers, they do not start families.’

Besides the family of the Vietnamese, their friends and acquaintances gained during their life under diverse circumstances are engaged in their informal contacts. Vietnamese do not resist making new contacts; on the contrary, as has already been stated in previous chapters, social life is very important for them. All contacts are simultaneously understood by Vietnamese as a promise of possible future help in a difficult situation. In crisis situations, Vietnamese rely on family, followed by friends, who moreover in many cases for immigrants substitute for the family, which is in Vietnam.

No. 2 came to the CSSR an unusually numerous group of students from Vietnam. In the year-long language preparation before entry to the relevant university, they then formed two classes of thirty students each and after their studies supposedly almost all of them stayed in the Czech Republic. They organised a meeting a year ago, where about forty of them came together (one even flew in from America), they rented rooms in the halls of residence where they had lived back then and then ‘were drinking for two days’. No. 2 answered the question of where Vietnamese who do not know anyone in the CR get friends saying: ‘That is simple, they run into each other and as compatriots in a foreign land they always have something to say.’ To the question of what the most common topic of informal conversation when Vietnamese meet currently is, he answered immediately without hesitation: ‘Children and school, the great part of Vietnamese has it in common and it is an inexhaustible topic.’ No. 2 has Vietnamese acquaintances

all over the republic, not all of whom are from his student group from the past. Although he works in a professional foreign company outside of his community, he has many acquaintances also among Vietnamese retailers. In the 1990s, when Vietnamese markets began to emerge, he was still studying within international agreements and even some of his classmates would apparently sell there in the summer to make some extra money: 'We are a very interconnected community, already at that time we knew each other, no matter if studying or non-studying.'

Friends and acquaintances thus represent an important group for immigrants. In their native country, Vietnamese are used to visiting each other among relatives, friends and acquaintances daily after work (without its being necessary to announce a visit in advance), whereas in the conditions and rhythm of life in which they live here, this is essentially impossible, and they again compensate for the need for more frequent contacts at least by telephone. Occasional friendly and family gatherings take place mainly on traditional Vietnamese holidays, or possibly other events worth inviting multiple guests.

Guests are usually invited to the host's home, exceptionally – because of the small living space – the host organises a meeting in a Vietnamese restaurant; particularly wedding celebrations require large areas (it is customary to invite hundreds of guests to the wedding in Vietnam). Besides the anniversary of the death of relatives, weddings and birthdays, it is Lunar New Year and Children's Day that are the most celebrated; some Vietnamese families even celebrate Christmas because of the children.

Although No. 4's parents did not 'burden' themselves too much with Vietnamese traditions, they let him experience the atmosphere of Christmas or Easter, because as a small boy he had envied Czech children. 'Everyone around me celebrated, so my parents also bought me a Christmas tree, I got presents, sweets in stockings etc. But later I did not see anything exceptional in it anymore, it became a common thing, the only sign of Christmas became the variety shows on television, which I hated.' According to his young daughter, No. 1 also let his children have Christmas carp and a tree; at least until he got tired of cleaning up the needles.

Vietnamese are generally quite fond of celebrating together, no matter what it is. Plenty of food and alcohol are not lacking, but what the society particularly could not dispense with was singing and karaoke.²¹ At especially merry gatherings, the exhilarated then often call their friends in Vietnam. They do not worry about the time difference. Not every Vietnamese immigrant, however, is reconciled with his social life and circle of friends in the host country; sometimes, they consider them even as unfortunate. Especially women, who besides work also have to take care of the household and children, easily get into social isolation.

No. 4's mother has not found any friends who would make her happy among the local Vietnamese. She cannot, however, meet with anyone else but Vietnamese, because she does not speak any language other than Vietnamese. Only new acquaintances in the end partially pulled her from her feelings of loneliness: although a believing Buddhist, she was addressed by a fluent Vietnamese-speaking follower of the Jehovah's Witnesses, one of those who according to No. 4 constantly go round the Vietnamese markets to attract new sheep to their ranks there. Whereas her husband tolerates her 'new acquaintances' unless it disturbs the established running of the family, No. 4 literally suffers from them, because he has the same negative stance towards the Jehovahists like the majority of Czechs.

The Story of No. 4

No. 4 speaks of his family as 'strange' and 'closed', because of which he is not according to him a true representative of a 'typical Vietnamese family in the CR'. He explains it by the fact that his parents are educated and hence have also certain intellectual needs, unlike the majority of Vietnamese in the Czech Republic, who are in his opinion uneducated and interested only in 'business and money'. Therefore, his parents consider the acquaintances which they have formed in the

²¹ *Karaoke* is a type of entertainment during which an amateur singer, a music consumer, sings his/her favourite hits with the original professional recording on which the singing of the singer who sang the hit has been muted. The amateur singer sings into the microphone and his/her voice comes from the musical equipment together with the professional musical accompaniment instead of the voice of the singer who sang on the recording. Karaoke is popular in all of Southeast Asia. The Japanese introduced this entertainment in the 1980s.

community as rather superficial. Although his parents regularly take also the Vietnamese magazines issued in Prague, they only speak of them as tabloids.

The migration of No. 4's family to the Czech Republic was actually begun by his father: first he completed his studies at the Faculty of Civil Engineering in former Czechoslovakia, then he returned to Vietnam, from whence his government sent him back after a while as a foreman of the Vietnamese workmen in ČKD.²² At the beginning of the 1990s, he had the opportunity to invite his wife and son; he had no idea that he would be fired from ČKD two months later. He had to provide for his family, he did not have the money to return to Vietnam and he could not find a job in his field as a foreigner. Thus in the end at the advice of his friends who sold in the market, he decided to do the same (his wife – a teacher, who did not speak a word of Czech, had no other alternative than to help him). With his experience and knowledge of the Czech environment, his father was helping many acquaintances with organising the documents for residence and business, but it was across the grain for him to take money for it like other entrepreneurial Vietnamese did at that time.

No. 4 followed him to the CR when he was six years old. Like with No. 5, also No. 4's mother announced the decision to follow his father one day before – No. 4 said verbatim: 'I could barely recover, she suddenly packed and we were at the airport.' Unlike No. 5, however, No. 4 was not bothered by leaving Vietnam – as a small child, he was looking forward to his father, of whom he already had only foggy memories from when his father had come from Czechoslovakia on a short holiday. In addition, based on his mother's stories, he had formed a truly romantic idea of the Czech Republic: before his eyes, he saw a snowy landscape with conifers, where elves lived. Understandably, he was disappointed after his arrival in the CR. His biggest shock at the beginning was from the empty streets, then travelling with his parents to the market at the weekends, when they had no one to watch him, to sell goods in whatever weather.

²² Czech-Moravian Kolben-Daněk, one of the largest engineering concerns in former Czechoslovakia and now the Czech Republic (translator's note).

During the week, his family lived and sold in Prague, at weekends they travelled to the market in Pardubice. When shops in the markets began to slow down, No. 4's parents bought a shop. When also the shop stopped paying, the father again began trying to get a job in his field, which eventually worked out for him thanks to one of his acquaintances, who had established a construction company. The wife also basically got closer to her profession because of demand in the Vietnamese community: she started to teach Vietnamese to young Vietnamese born in the CR.

No. 4 learnt Czech in preschool; he claims he does not even know how. Nevertheless, when he attended the seventh form of elementary school, his parents realised that their son only made friends with Czechs and was forgetting Vietnamese; they thus started to attempt to integrate him in the community. They would take him to their acquaintances with children and tell him to make friends with them, which he however hated, and in the end his parents gave it up. The best years for No. 4 were the years spent at grammar school; he was especially captivated by extracurricular activities, like when he and his classmates 'went out boozing'. In the family circle, the family speaks Vietnamese; however, No. 4 speaks exclusively Czech with his younger brother, who was already born in Prague and also attended preschool here.

No. 4 has had the chance to see Vietnam only once since his arrival in the CR – at secondary school during the school holidays, when he accompanied his mother on a visit to her relatives. For No. 4, this trip meant a 'turning point in life': he was surprised by the spontaneity of life there and for the first time since his departure he began to be interested in Vietnamese culture. No. 4 however answered the question of whether he could imagine leaving for Vietnam and living there negatively. Czech mentality is supposedly far closer for him, because, as he says, Czechs are 'more sincere, more honest, put their cards on the table and do not gossip'. Even now, when he meets a Vietnamese who has not lived in the CR for long and does not have Czech friends, he does not have anything to talk with him about: 'You cannot speak to him about meaningful things, he does not have a general overview and knowledge, so communication with him does not fulfil me in any way.'

Whereas No. 4's father has also decided not to return to Vietnam again, his mother's wish is not to stay in the Czech Republic; unlike her husband, she maintains very intensive relations with her family and friends in Vietnam and is not being kept in the CR by anything other than her sons who attend school here.

Relations with the Majority

The Vietnamese community is often characterised as closed, self-sufficient, without a manifest need for integration into the life of the majority population. The Vietnamese community as such really demonstrates tendencies towards *ghettoisation*. Contact with members of their own society is favoured; also problems that arise are resolved inside the community. It is no wonder when the overwhelming majority of migrants choose to leave Vietnam for the Czech Republic, because they expect to improve their economic situation – they do not desire knowledge or a change in their cultural environment, from which it follows that they have no motivation to learn Czech or become acquainted with Czech culture unless they are forced to do so by circumstances.

Other than communication with Czech customers, a minimal tendency to contacts with the majority populace can thus be generally observed in the case of first-generation Vietnamese immigrants. The most significant factor contributing to this is unequivocally the language barrier, hand in hand with cultural dissimilarity. The great majority of immigrants have even already come to terms with the fact that they will simply not learn Czech, or they do not believe that they could still learn it. With the exception of children, who do not speak Vietnamese well, the Vietnamese are not forced by anything to learn Czech: whatever they cannot manage themselves is handled by *dich vu*. However, if Vietnamese speak Czech, they do not avoid contacts with the majority population. This also applies to entrusting children into the care of Czech families. This practice is welcomed by Vietnamese, because when they are at work, the children are taken care of and moreover they learn Czech in this way. The institution of the so-called *Czech aunts*, who take Vietnamese children into their care for a certain period of

time, has spread mainly in West Bohemia; in Prague, this practice is not common.

At this point, No. 2 mentioned the difference between contacts of Vietnamese and Czechs in Prague and in small towns or in the rural areas. Whereas in small towns, it is not a problem for a Vietnamese to find a Czech woman to watch over the children and simultaneously become a part of the family, it is a problem in large cities. He himself would like someone reliable at home for the child to learn Czech, but he is afraid of bringing home someone dangerous. In smaller towns, whose denizens know each other better, the situation is thus in his opinion far simpler. 'In small towns, it is normal that when you need help for example with moving, you go to the pub and always find help there. Actually, the main thing is to have contacts – when people meet on a daily basis, they become closer, otherwise not. Since the Vietnamese in small towns do not have their own restaurants and so many compatriots around them, they go for a beer to the local pubs, talk to customers in the shop, etc., as a result of which they are on friendly terms even with Czechs.' 'If Vietnamese seem to be reserved,' he continues, 'it is mainly because of the language barrier. If I compare us with Koreans and Chinese, we are not reserved at all. If a Vietnamese speaks at least a little Czech and finds someone who is willing to listen to him, he is very happy. Vietnamese like to talk, invite people to dinner and so on, it is normal for them.'

The fact that Vietnamese live among the majority population and do not form their own quarters is also evident. Although they appear at first sight to be closed with respect to them, the Vietnamese themselves counter it; on the contrary, they have the feeling that it is rather the Czechs who are reserved, especially in Prague, which as a large city forms an anonymous environment.

When No. 4's family moved to a flat in a Prague housing estate, the parents knocked at the door of each of the neighbours on the floor, greeted them and gave them a small gift – a bottle of alcohol and small presents. All of the neighbours purportedly thanked the parents, but then the parents did not meet them for let us say two years. No. 4 explains that by the anonymity of the environment in a prefabricated

house, different schedules (especially working hours) of Vietnamese and Czechs, including that: 'Czechs are concerned rather about themselves than about their surroundings; except for the pensioners, who snoop'.

Another aspect inconsistent with the reservedness of the Vietnamese community is the fact that Vietnamese parents send their children to Czech schools, often in the soonest possible term after their arrival in the Czech Republic, thus with no knowledge of Czech. Already for a number of years, the elementary school in Meteorologická St in Libuš, located in close vicinity to the Sapa trade centre, has had by far the highest number of Vietnamese pupils in Prague. According to the school director, however, even the newcomers fit into the children's collective relatively soon and are able to participate in the instruction without problems after a year. Because of their study results, they often subsequently shift to a six- or eight-year grammar school.

From the perspective of the Czech public, the Vietnamese community in the Czech Republic began to define itself alongside trading more or less with the same assortment of goods in the first-generation immigrants just as markedly by the school success in the second generation of their children, with both being the result of the interconnectedness of the Vietnamese community: every newly-arrived Vietnamese without experience of Czech reality automatically carries on the *established business activity of his/her compatriots*; at the same time, the traditional relation of the Vietnamese to education is strongly projected on the desire for their children to complete tertiary education; nonetheless, an *established prerequisite* for that has become study at a grammar school, followed by a higher education institution of an economic or technical focus, whether the child has the study prerequisites for that or not.

No. 6 on the selection of a school for the children in Vietnamese families: 'The parents tell the children: when he has grammar school education, you have to have it too. Even if the child doesn't have the brain cells for grammar school, he/she must enrol there. The community of the Vietnamese is such a rumour mill that everyone immediately discusses it – who got in and who did not. And if he/she

didn't get in, his/her parents take it as an embarrassment. The community pressurises the parents, the parents the children; it's a vicious cycle.'

In Vietnamese society, education is a significant value, instilled in it by Confucianism. Great pressure is exerted on the children concerning learning, but not only in the CR, where the parents consider it as the only path to their success in majority society. Also in Vietnam does the school system place a gigantic pressure on children,²³ as it is focused more on mathematical knowledge than on orientation in the social sciences, however, Vietnamese parents hardly recommend that their children study for example at a faculty of philosophy and arts. The children are frequently forced to study at weekends and during the school holidays, and the parents pay various tuitions for them. Vietnamese parents in the CR are willing to invest a large amount of money in the education of their children; they often place their children in a private school (they are convinced that a private school for a financial contribution provides their children with adequately better education) and choose a school with expanded language training. They expect that whereas now they devote their presence to work, which brings material security to the children and the whole family, the children will practise a specialised profession in adulthood on the basis of the knowledge that they have gained and will take care of their parents in their old age.

No. 2 is simultaneously of the opinion that the only thing he learnt at school in Vietnam was mathematics. Apparently, the government adjusted history in the textbooks as it suited it, and when he remembers geography – the only thing he knew about the CSR when he left for it was the name of the capital: 'for example I had no idea that Baťa shoes, which could be found everywhere in Vietnam then, were from Czechoslovakia'. When he then arrived in Czechoslovakia, he had to learn everything from scratch, moreover in a foreign language. To the question of what helped him overcome all the troubles, he answered

²³ In Vietnam, school-aged children are kept occupied with study almost the whole day. Whereas their parents wish for their children to *make their way up*, their teachers conduct afternoon tuition to increase their pay.

immediately and unequivocally: 'Discipline. It was unheard of not to succeed. And when you are at it already, you just go...'

However, the fact that the children of Vietnamese immigrants are taught according to Czech curriculum logically leads to the absence of knowledge of Vietnam, its history and culture, hand in hand with the loss of the Vietnamese language. Already for that reason, some children of Vietnamese parents, especially those born in the CR, do not even want to speak Vietnamese and communicate mainly in Czech even with their siblings. Moreover, they often have an unofficial first name, which they are given at school, chose themselves or are given by their parents. This happens chiefly because Czechs cannot pronounce the Vietnamese one correctly.²⁴

No. 4 represents that part of the Czech Vietnamese who are already so 'Czechified' that he feels almost alien among his compatriots. Vietnamese rebuke him for not speaking Vietnamese well and do not consider him as a 'real Vietnamese'. Concerning this issue, No. 2 is of the opinion that it depends primarily on the parents and their approach; he himself forced his brother-in-law to make his family speak Vietnamese, so that his nephews now speak both Czech and Vietnamese perfectly. 'But if the parents do not have the will to enforce Vietnamese and allow the children to speak as they wish, the children will speak Czech because they use Czech all day and are then lazy to speak differently when Czech is closer to them.' No. 2 also thinks that many parents do not even realise that it is bad: 'They mostly can't speak Czech and are afraid their children will end up like them, so they support Czech with them in every possible way.'

²⁴ Vietnamese accept Czech names without problems, in fact without encroaching on traditions, because a person could change his/her personal name during his/her life even in traditional Vietnam (Vasiljev 2006). They choose their name according to their similarity with their actual Vietnamese name, sometimes from the calendar according to their day of birth. With those immigrants who came to the CR in childhood and study at university today, however, we can observe a return to their Vietnamese name, whose phonetics they only adapt to the ability of Czechs to pronounce it (they basically distort their name; e.g. Luu becomes shortened to Lu); they then refer to their Czech names as *remnants from elementary school*.

The exceptional intensity of the Vietnamese in supporting the Czech language with their children is further evidence that the closeness of the community with respect to the Czech society is ostensible, with the main cause of this impression being the language barrier in the first-generation Vietnamese migrants coming for economic reasons. Otherwise, language knowledge is understood by Vietnamese as a big advantage; e.g. in comparison with the Chinese community, whose strategy of solidarity is generally based rather on their refusing to learn the language of the host country and founding Chinese quarters and schools,²⁵ Vietnamese form a very open society. Also when we look back in history, we find that Vietnamese society did not close itself to foreign cultural elements: on the contrary, it accepted them and consequently adapted them to its own benefit (Huu Ngoc 1995; Vasiljev 1999).

An effort to promote and represent officially the Vietnamese community in public in an attempt to improve the reputation of the local Vietnamese has been exerted mainly on the part of the Union of Vietnamese in the CR, as has already been mentioned in the chapter dedicated to compatriot societies: in this respect, it has recently begun to cooperate with journalistic organisations, non-governmental associations as well as municipal authorities.²⁶ On its own initiative, it therefore invites to its cultural events along with persons who have

²⁵ *The Chinese International School* of Prague was accredited in August 1995: it provides a full-time possibility of education for Chinese children in Chinese according to the curriculum valid at elementary schools in the PRC and Czech is taught along with English as a foreign language three hours a week (Obuchová 2003: 403).

²⁶ It is fitting to mention here e.g. the *Days of Vietnamese Culture* in Slaný near Prague, which became a truly spectacular event of its type. In the autumn of 2006, the city of Slaný in cooperation with the Union of Vietnamese in the CR, the Czech-Vietnamese Society and under the auspices of the ambassador to the SRV prepared a truly varied offer of cultural and educational programmes: in Slaný, Vietnamese living in the CR performed dance and song, an exhibition of Czech books in Vietnamese translation was organised, along with a geographic and cultural competition for the children of schools in Slaný, a lecture and discussion and the showing of films on the natural beauties of Vietnam, an exhibition of the pictures by Vu Quoc Chinh, a Vietnamese painter living in the CR in the long term, and the photographs from Vietnam by various photographers, with not even a tasting of the Vietnamese gastronomic specialities from the Dong Do restaurant from Sapa lacking.

something to do with Vietnam (Vietnamese scholars, representatives of the Czech-Vietnamese Society and Club Hanoi, or possibly some businessmen) also representatives of the offices of the municipal authorities of Prague 4 (where Sapa is located) or the directors of schools which Vietnamese pupils attend in large numbers; the door during such events is open likewise for Czech journalists, although the Vietnamese do not harbour much trust or sympathy towards them for obvious reasons.²⁷

Conclusion

Vietnamese immigrants make use of ethnic ties and networks in the course of migration, in adaptation to the environment of the host country as well as during integration to the Czech urban area, during which they tend to form ethnically distinct trade and communication centres. Thanks to them and to an exceptionally developed system of diverse mediation services, which has formed in the community for the needs of necessary communication with the *outside world*, the first-generation Vietnamese immigrants can exist in the Czech Republic even without deeper integration into the majority society. For most of them, only integration into the economic system is necessary, because if their stay in the Czech Republic did not bring an economic effect, their presence in this country would lose any sense for them. Integration into the economic system, however, can also be mediated by the Vietnamese community to such an extent that the immigrant does not come into direct contact with members of the majority population. Nonetheless, the children of Vietnamese immigrants are integrated into the educational system and immigrants also take advantage of the Czech health care system.

²⁷ The fact that the celebrations are organised while taking into account the presence of persons who do not speak Vietnamese is evidenced also by the sign placed above the bar in the building where the Vietnamese welcomed the Year of the Pig in 2007; the Czech inscription slightly amused every Czech guest especially in the context that Vietnam is a Socialist state, because it read: *'Food and champagne for free, water and beer for money'*.

Other Czech institutions than schooling and health care are taken advantage of by only a negligible part of the Vietnamese. To solve their problems, whether they be connected with business or family matters, Vietnamese make use of the advice and assistance of their relatives and acquaintances or the services of mediation companies. The majority of problems and conflicts are thus resolved inside the community, without the intervention of Czech offices and institutions. Intercultural and language barriers, related to the interconnectedness of the community and makeshift life, along with being unprepared for these problems result in the newly arrived individual's not being able to select strategies of conduct which would allow him to adapt and settle into the environment here without the help of his/her compatriots. The role of such organisations on the one hand forms an informational and price monopoly, it is often politically influenced by the Vietnamese embassy; on the other hand it is a necessary condition for newly arrived immigrants to be able to settle in and make a living on the territory of the CR (Kocourek 2005).

The interconnectedness of the community is given by the fact that the great majority of tradesmen buy and sell the same assortment, which they moreover go to purchase at one or two wholesalers. The Vietnamese themselves admit that it is mainly their mentality – *Vietnameseness* – that is to blame, as a result of which the Vietnamese do not aim for originality but *inherently* do what they see with another compatriot. The way of life of each immigrant is essentially defined not only by the character of the livelihood activity but also the locality in which he/she lives. To put it simply: a Vietnamese who opens a *convenience store* in Vinohrady lives differently within the community than a Vietnamese who sells at Sapa. While the Vietnamese trader from Vinohrady is forced to communicate in Czech, the shop assistant in Sapa is not. Whereas the Vietnamese trader from Vinohrady usually manages to cope with common situations presented by life in a foreign country without the help of another Vietnamese, the salesperson in Sapa, who has no reason to learn Czech, remains dependent on his compatriots who know Czech.

The private life of an immigrant (his comfort, social contacts as well as possibilities of spending his leisure time) stem from the type of

livelihood activity as well as from the length of the stay in the host country and the formed financial and family bases. Based on the research and the spontaneous answers of the Vietnamese, it can be deduced that immigrants with families have a much greater tendency to stay in the CR. Nevertheless, the standard answer to the question of the future of life in the Czech Republic for the first generation of Vietnamese immigrants has become: *'I don't know what'll happen. The children are studying here now and then we'll see.'* Although the number of immigrants with permanent residence in the CR is rising, they strive for the permit mainly for practical reasons, not always from the conviction that they want to live in the CR. Seldom do Vietnamese manage to create plans or alternative programmes concerning the future. They do not seek a solution until a specific situation arises.

The opening of the business environment of the markets, more effective foreknowledge on the CR through the Vietnamese press, the willingness of Vietnamese organisations to cooperate with some majority institutions and numerous increasing second generation that attends Czech schools – it all nevertheless implies the awakening interest of the community in its integration in the majority society. Vietnamese businessmen in Prague have also begun to consider founding a real Vietnamese centre of trade, services and culture, like those functioning in the Vietnamese communities for example in France or the USA; after all, it is impossible not to notice the constant building, improvement and modifications of the area of Sapa. Besides that, the Union of Vietnamese in the CR has been seeking an area to create a Vietnamese cultural centre in the centre of Prague (this institution already existed here during the era of Socialist Czechoslovakia).

Naturally, young Vietnamese studying at Czech schools will hardly continue in the business of their parents. The parents as well as their children are aware of the fact that the status of a Vietnamese trader has low prestige in Czech society and want to extricate themselves from it. Even though some Vietnamese students offer their skills within the immigrant community now, it does not mean that their goal is to make a living in that way also in the future. Many of those who underwent at least partial school attendance in Vietnam consider returning to

Vietnam, where according to them a better future awaits them than in Czech society, in which they have to compete in the labour market with their Czech classmates. Considering the Vietnamese children born in the CR, who can barely make themselves understood in Vietnamese, it can only be awaited to what extent they will influence the Vietnamese community. Many experts, including more prudent Vietnamese, however, speak in this context of future intergenerational and intercultural conflicts, including the expected problems of these young Vietnamese with identity.

Epilogue

(A Quick Comparison of Vietnamese Communities in Euro-American Society)

The first large wave of emigrants left Vietnam in 1975–1976, when the victory of the Communists ended the war in Indochina and many political refugees left for the West. In the second wave in 1979–1982, these were economic migrants, who were escaping from the poverty of post-war Vietnam. The third wave of emigration from Vietnam, involving again mainly economic emigrants, began in 1989 and continues to this day. In the second and third waves, most Vietnamese came with minimal language and professional training as well as financial bases. The Western world was not ready for them and instead of a dreamt-of paradise, a hostile environment and inferior work awaited the refugees; the Vietnamese communities began to close into themselves and live their own lives (Nožina 2003).

A certain level of isolation of the Asian communities is thus no strange phenomenon. The differences between the communities of the Vietnamese in the individual states of the European Union are, however, often given by the political orientation of the host countries at the time of the beginning of the Vietnamese emigration. To put it simply, mainly refugees from South Vietnam after the establishment of the Communist regime in the country travelled to the West, whereas Vietnamese within the agreements between the countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA/Comecon) headed for

the East. The Vietnamese community in the Czech Republic thus shares most features with the community of the Vietnamese in Poland or in the Eastern part of Germany (the former GDR). In addition, the case of the Vietnamese community in Germany is more specific because of the former division of the state into two republics (one oriented towards the East, the other towards the West), as a result of which the lives of the Vietnamese communities there differ even after reunification of the state, to be more precise to this day: the aim of the West German government through the offer of language and training courses including the social provision for Vietnamese refugees pursued their gradual integration, and today the Vietnamese there are among the groups of foreigners who are integrated into majority society in nearly all areas, whereas in the GDR they considered the Vietnamese as a merely temporary work force, just like in the former Czechoslovakia. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and as a result of the mass layoffs from East Germany companies, a number of Vietnamese workers there began to earn a livelihood through doing business; however, because of their little knowledge of German they remain to this day rather closed with respect to the majority population (Weiss, Dennis 2005). Like in the CR, also in the East German and Polish Vietnamese communities, this resulted in the development of an ethnic business in the area of mediation services, whose complete provision concentrated into large Vietnamese markets in metropolitan areas, where they play the roles of the centres of trade and services as well as cultural and social contacts.

In the Western states, the highest number of Vietnamese live in France and the USA. In the case of France, the Vietnamese concentrate mainly in large cities (Paris, Marseilles, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Lyon), where they have also created several compatriot organisations, publishing houses and bookshops, a number of Buddhist centres and pagodas, including centres for teaching Vietnamese to the young Vietnamese. Geographical concentration in important urban centres is specific also for the Vietnamese community in the USA, especially in the Western states of the USA like California and Texas (those with the number of over 40,000 Vietnamese include Orange County, San Jose, Los Angeles, Houston and Washington, DC); this geographic concentration on the one hand consolidates the community, on the other hand it helps maintain the Vietnamese language and culture in the younger

generation. Another thing noteworthy about the Vietnamese community in the USA is the boom of cultural, especially musical production, which addresses the Vietnamese abroad as well (even Czech Vietnamese have had the possibility to participate in several concerts of music groups of the American *Viet Kieu*, namely in Prague and in Cheb). In the case of France, the good integration of the local Vietnamese – particularly with the older generations – was certainly aided by the Vietnamese orientation on French culture from the period of colonialism. Alongside professions in which they do not compete with native French (e.g. Asian restaurants), they excel in many specialised professions (over 40,000 of the French *Viet Kieu* have tertiary education, which is percentage-wise perhaps the most of all the foreign Vietnamese communities in the world). Also the Vietnamese in the United States of America – chiefly in the second generation of immigrants – find their application in specialised fields like information science, medicine, biology, or even aerospace research.²⁸

Despite the different character of the Vietnamese communities in the world, a strong tie to their native land can however be observed with almost every *Viet Kieu* of the first generation; in practically every country, compatriot societies are formed, which attempt to maintain Vietnamese culture among their compatriots in a foreign country. Although 70 % of all Vietnamese residing outside the territory of the SRV have accepted the citizenship of the state to which they emigrated, the overwhelming majority of them also retained the citizenship of their native country.²⁹ Only in some states, including also the Czech Republic, whose law excludes the possibility of dual citizenship do the Vietnamese give up their Vietnamese citizenship. In the case of the CR, however, immigrants for this reason much more often content themselves with a permanent residence permit. On the other hand in the second generation of Vietnamese immigrants, a far greater general tendency to integration into the majority society can be observed thanks

²⁸ Taken from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overseas_Vietnamese.

²⁹ A significant change in the relations of the SRV and the emigrants came in 1987, when the country opened and the exiles could return; in the same year, also the first version of the act on foreign investments was adopted, which began economic growth, continuing to this day. It is interesting that after this *détente* roughly 150,000 Vietnamese living abroad returned to live in their native land.

to their having graduated from the schools there. Like young Vietnamese find their application in specialised fields in France or the USA, a similar development can be anticipated with the second generation also in the Czech Republic.

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The Social Networks of Female Polish Workers in the CR and the Factors Influencing their Formation

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Introduction

This chapter deals with the **factors influencing the formation of the social networks of the female Polish workers** who were invited to Czechoslovakia as labour force and later married Czech men and settled here. They form a specific segment of the Polish nationality group in the CR while also being the main group of the entire Polish labour force which emigrated to the Czech lands between the end of the 1940s and the end of the 1980s.

Upon their arrival in Czechoslovakia, the female Polish workers were very poorly acquainted with the Czech milieu (culture, customs etc.). Likewise, their Czech colleagues from the factories (unlike the populace of Těšín /Cieszyn/ Silesia) **knew little of Poland and Polish society**. The regions of their main meetings – North Bohemia and Prague – had never been places where the two nationalities would come into long-term contact, because **no Czech-Polish social networks had been formed here before**. On the one hand, they were not so burdened by various specific historical stereotypes connected with a region of intensive contacts like in Těšín Silesia; on the other hand, mutual contacts were complicated by ignorance of ‘national mentalities’ and their cultural-historical conditionalities.

Both groups, female Polish workers and their Czech co-workers in industrial factories, were **encumbered by stereotypes in the first contacts**, in connection with which strategies were created influencing

the formation of social networks as an important step for overall integration into Czech society.

The aim of this treatise is to show the **ways in which the relevant factors manifested themselves in the formation of the networks and which networks this group formed in a diachronic perspective**. The factors described are the types of behaviour of the female Polish workers in the Czech milieu and especially the problematic interactions with the Czech surroundings often with a culturally conditioned context.

In the preparatory phases and during the research, it became apparent that, like in the case of many other immigrant communities, the **factors preventing the formation of social networks** could have in other contexts (timeframe, phase of network formation etc.) and on other levels of the social networks **also strengthened their formation**. The factors predominantly had different effects on the network level oriented 'inside' the group (the network of the compatriot community, imaginary network of Polish fellow citizens, the remnants of the networks of the original Polish family etc.). According to the main research hypothesis, these factors came into play often in their **stereotyped interpretation** and as such then existed and acted independently of their original source (specific interaction etc.): these source interactions with whose consequences the studied group then struggled, could have been caused by the Polish women who (the overwhelming majority) returned to Poland after their contracts expired, or could have been disinformation and mistaken interpretations of individual interactions, or entirely irrational stances on the basis of stereotypical structures created in advance.

The research monitors the situation of female Polish workers already from the 1960s, when they began to come to our territory in greater numbers, with the field research focusing on a reconstruction of the 1970s to the present. What is interesting is that this group avoided scientific attention on the part of Czech historians, sociologists and ethnologists. With a few exceptions, it was not studied systematically. The research also deals with the situation of Poles extracted from their native environment and complex social structure of their nationality

in the milieu of a large town, which is something unique in the context of the population of the Polish nationality in the CR. Moreover, it is atypically focused on a group defined by gender, age and profession. It can therefore complement research on the Polish national minority by this dimension.¹

Preliminary Database²

The research was preceded by an analysis of the information available on the labour migration of Poles to the Czech lands in the period studied. On the topic of female Polish workers in North Bohemia, published outcomes from the research of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore Studies of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague from 1984 are available along with the results of the probes conducted in the 1970s and 1980s by the same institute (Kristen 1989, 1986). The topic was also covered by the Silesian Institute in Opava, whose employees examined the company archive of n. p. (national enterprise) Texlen Trutnov until 1970 with a focus on the issue of female Polish workers (Jirásek 1989).³ For the purposes of this research, a meta-analysis of these studies was conducted and the research on Poles in Prague conducted by the author of this text was also used (Klípa 2005: 52–74).

For the preliminary database, also archival sources were utilised, and among them mainly the collections of the National Archives

¹ The Polish national minority has been devoted a number of monographs, e.g. Kadłubiec, K. D. 1997, and periodicals, e.g. *Slezský sborník*, often coming from research centres in Těšín Silesia, monitoring the issues of Poles in Czechoslovakia and in the CR in the long term (for example the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ostrava, the Faculty of Philosophy and Science of Silesian University in Opava or the Silesian Institute of the Academy of Sciences in Opava).

² The analysis of the preliminary database and field research were carried out partially also within the research project '*Schleichwege: Inoffizielle Begegnungen und Kontakte sozialistischer Staatsbürger 1956–1989*' at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena and University of Warsaw.

³ A selection from the further publications treating the group of Polish workers in the CSSR: Jirásek, Z. 1994; Konečný, Č. 1968; Faltus, J.; Průcha, V. 1992; Průcha, V. 1992; Kalous, J. 2006.

(Presidency of the Central Committee /CC/ of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; Presidency of the Governments of the Czech Socialist and Czechoslovak Socialist Republics, and here especially the discussed materials coming from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with the information from the Embassy of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in Warsaw) and Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw (particularly the foreign section of the CC of the Polish United Workers' Party) also being examined closely. In the study of the archival collections, focus was predominantly on Czechoslovak-Polish negotiations on the number of workers, forms of cooperation in the areas of guest labour force and the problems arising from this at the international level, at the level of individual factories and work collectives. International treaties and other legal norms which emerged from these discussions determined in a fundamental way the existence of the studied group in the Czech lands.

What was especially important was the study of the so-called *Akce Sever* (Operation North) from the Archives of the Security Services (originally from the collection of the Federal MI, 10th Administration of the SNB – National Security Corps/). This operation of state security at the beginning of the 1980s involved i.a. monitoring Polish citizens working in Czechoslovak factories. The state security agents oriented on the responses of the activities of the independent unions of 'Solidarity' in Poland but recorded valuable information on the atmosphere in the Polish collectives, on the relation of the Czech surroundings to their Polish colleagues, on the emerging problems in cooperation between the Czech and Polish workers, etc.

Most of the sources from the preliminary database are oriented on female Polish workers generally and do not distinguish which of them have married in the Czech lands and remained after the wedding. The archival sources are able to capture only the early phases of the formation of social networks, not the further development of the anchoring of the female Polish workers in the Czech milieu. On the basis of this information in contrast with the field research, the basic aims and hypothesis of the research were then created.

Field Research Methods

Considering the lack of information on the studied group on the territory of the Czech lands and simultaneously the retrospectively focused topic of the research (the formation of social networks), it was necessary to select such a research method through which would provide information for the period from the arrival of the female Poles on our territory to the present. Especially the method of oral history was therefore used in combination with elements of sociological qualitative research. As a result, this yielded a personal perspective of historical events (along with the meanings and causes of these meanings given to them by the narrator) on the one hand and to a certain degree made it possible to compare individual cases and standardise the analysis for the purpose of greater generalisation on the other.

Although the topic of the research, namely the formation of social networks, required a comparability of the data from individual studied cases, it was not possible merely to use typically the oral history method of 'biographical narration',⁴ examining primarily 'individual histories'. Therefore, the semi-standardised interview was used, and from the qualitative research methods it was categorisation in the analysis and the methods of research sample selection, as they are applied when using the 'grounded theory' (Strauss, Corbinová 1999).⁵ When preparing the field research, another method applied was that arising from the 'grounded theory' called 'problem-centred interview' (hereinafter only PCI), as it is presented by Andreas Witzel (Witzel 2000; Witzel, Kühn 2000). For this research (a combination of the semi-standardised interview with oral history), it seemed the most suitable. In my opinion, this way of combining the historical and sociological foci also approximates the approach of Trevor Lummis (Lummis 1983: 109–120) to oral history, especially in the question of the comparison of results and their generalisation. Some interviews also resembled 'narrative interviews' (Rosenthal, Fisher-Rosenthal

⁴ Cf. e.g. Vaněk, M. 2004; Kvale, S. 1996.

⁵ Translated by S. Ježek from Strauss, A. L.; Corbin, J. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.

2003: 456–467) with both of its parts: the narrative as well as the questioning and episodic interview (repeating one life episode from various points of view with the attempt to attain the formed ideological structures – subjective theory on a given problem).

The sample was selected using the so-called purpose method (Disman 2000: 112–113), because there was neither the necessary detailed information on the observed group, thus preventing a conscious imitation of the known characteristics of the entire studied populace, nor the list of the given populace, which would provide all the members of the population with the same chance of inclusion into the sample.⁶ Only the subject of study was known, namely that contacts occur between the Polish women living in the Czech Republic and that a part of them changes from a guest labour force to permanent denizens of the Czech lands. What was further known were their numbers, factories where they had worked, places where they lived or where they met. The respondents were thus selected with a purpose in mind.⁷

The first respondents and also the sources of further contacts were members of the main organisation of the Polish minority in Prague – Klub Polski (Polish Club), whom I addressed in person at meetings of the organisation and from whom I continued using the snowball method and selected a sample fitting the set criteria of the observed group. The selection of the sample continued until the so-called theoretical saturation, i.e. the moment when the research did not uncover any further significant facts in the context of the research aims and when the already discovered phenomena predominantly repeated. During the research, the data acquired were continuously analysed and interpreted. For theoretical saturation to be reached, the sample was based on the obtained information adapted to the information provided

⁶ A partial list of people meeting the criteria of the observed group in the town Lysá nad Labem was, however, provided by the organisation of the Polish minority in Prague 'Klub Polski' with contact data.

⁷ This type of selection is a relevant method if its procedure is defined, thus preventing it from being considered as a probability selection. The possible generalisation of the results of such a sample depends on the knowledge of the population, i.e. on how much the purposefully selected sample differs from the real group which was to be observed.

by the respondents. Preferences in selecting another person depended on an estimation of what information he/she might provide and on his/her spatial location, e.g. small vs. large town, time of arrival in Bohemia (in which decade under what legal-political circumstances) etc. (Disman 2000: 300–301).

The research was further conducted also by the method of constant comparison and implementation of ongoing data analyses. On its basis, the techniques of data collection were continuously modified, i.e. the questions in the interviews and the narrative prompts were adapted. As has been stated above, the interviews as the basic data collection technique were conducted partially in a standardised way and partially through creating questions based on the previous answers. An aid for the standardised part of the interview was a questionnaire, which served the interviewer as a support for asking questions. As has further been stated, the standardised part of the interview was combined with the oral history narration of the respondents, to which the interviewees themselves spontaneously switched during the interviews.

An important decision was the way of recording the interviews. Roughly until the middle of the research, all the interviews were transcribed on a PC from a digital recording, because it had been necessary to record the maximum amount of data until the subject of research was formulated in the course of the continuing analyses. In the next phase of the research, which was already oriented on specific topics, some of the interviews were in their course transcribed in the form of notes and the digital audio recording remained saved in the computer for possible checks but was not fully transcribed. From the notes and using the digital recording, the interviews were reconstructed in their basic form, with only their important parts being transcribed.

The interviews were conducted in Czech or Polish, mainly depending on the language (and thus situation) in which first contact with the respondent was established, or at the request of the respondent. In the transcriptions, the interviews conducted in Polish have been translated into Czech.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

To attain the aims of this research, it was necessary to analyse and interpret the collected data. It was first needed to divide them by means of the interviews into sequences, assign them to terms – conceptualise – and create connections between these terms to achieve a theoretical representation of reality (Strauss, Corbinová 1999: 14).

For the data analysis, at least the essentials of the ‘grounded theory’ method described by Strauss and Corbin were used, where the basis of the data analysis is coding, thus the process of data analysis, examination, comparison, conceptualisation and categorisation. When it seemed during the mutual comparison of the terms that they were related to a similar phenomenon, they were grouped in higher order – under the more abstract term category. The analysis, examination and creation of categories during the research continuously alternated with the accumulation of further data (Strauss, Corbinová 1999: 42–44).

At the end of such a process, thus at the end of the entire research, it was possible to trace the relations between the main categories which had crystallised from the analysis until then. At the same time, the idea of what information was provided by the categories was beginning to achieve its final form.⁸ The work focused on making sure that the collected conceptualised data provided as much information as possible on the types of networks created (their levels) and the factors which influenced them.

In the course of this analysis, the other cases were constantly compared, with their basic characteristics (age, education, time of arrival in the CSSR etc.) being taken into account. What was particularly inspiring was the principle of maximum and minimum contrast used in the PCI method. This method of searching for common problems and relations generated basic categories in the context of various interviews and returned the analysis to the individual phases of coding.

⁸ The authors of the book on the grounded theory pertinently continue with the sentence: ‘After all, people have been asking you for months what you are actually studying and what you have discovered.’ (Strauss, Corbinová 1999: 87).

What is interesting is a comparison with the methods of oral history, which in its 'orthodox' form warns against the overuse of quantifying outcomes (Allen 1984: 1–12). Nevertheless, even oral history works with an analysis method close to the qualitative methods of sociological research, which cannot manage without the use of quantifying procedures in the analysis.

Of the methods used by oral history for data evaluation, linguistic analyses are also very suggestive. These were, however, not applied with respect to the character of the research, because the point was not a complex analysis of the narrator's personality, which is often needed in revealing 'personal histories', but a focus on the specific sociological topic.

Of course, the aim was not to verify historical facts either, although the respondents' testimony could have been used as a guideline for the refinement of the facts. Historical data, which were usually known from written sources, in the narrators' version primarily suggested how the narrators see the data today and how they have been influenced by the historical events.

The Methodological Problem of the Generalisation of Research Results

Research using qualitative methods does not usually endeavour to generalise its results to the entire population studied. Some types of qualitative research refuse any kind of generalisation other than the representative nature of the 'terms', hence rather hermeneutic, postpositivist interpretation. Also this work deals with research of social phenomena and processes rather than research of the population as such. It attempts to specify the situation and conditions in which the given phenomena were found rather than to make a generalisation on the population of the female immigrants. In the words of the Czech anthropologists Grygar, Černík and Čaněk: 'What is offered by the data acquired through qualitative research is a representation of the problem: a deep insight into the given issue from the perspective of its actors.' (Grygar, Černík, Čaněk 2006: 6). A theoretical generalisation

can then be applied to specific situations if similar conditions and agents were found elsewhere, not to groups. Considering the relatively small size of the given group and its relative homogeneity in terms of its social characteristics, it can be expected that the closest situations comparable to those studied here occur precisely again in the given group of female Polish workers.⁹ The assumed low variability in the social characteristics of the female workers studied and in the conditions influencing the studied processes opens the possibility of partial generalisation across this population. The level of generalisation is however not specified and is left to each reader to judge according to his/her knowledge of the given issue. Nevertheless, the analysis besides the entirely specific phenomena characteristic only for the observed population concerns also the more general social processes of the formation of social networks and their intervention factors, with which the level of generalisation across populations and within the group itself appears to be much higher.

Theoretical Contextualisation of the Social Networks

For this work, the theories of social networks dealing with communities of migrants and their strategies of forming social networks are fundamental. It builds on the already classic knowledge of William Isaac Thomas and Florian Znaniecki in the work *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. For William Isaac Thomas as well as the entire Chicago School of Sociology as a whole, the elaboration of the concept of *disorganisation* is characteristic, which expresses that ‘through migration, migrating individuals often lose primary social ties, which they must reconstruct or substitute in the new environment with other social ties’ (Uherek 2004: 46–47). This is also the case with the female Polish workers in Czechoslovakia. Their family ties were wide, especially in the Polish rural areas, from which many of them came. In the Czech milieu, the rural social structure was replaced most frequently with social networks based on Polish national basis, but

⁹ This seems to be even more distinctly applicable to the situation in Lysá nad Labem, where the apparently quite homogeneous group of the studied population is likely to have several dozen members, so an interview with four persons can assume higher generalisation with respect to this segment of the observed population.

the nationality key was not the essential criterion. A greater role was played here by the shared experience, transfer of information and collegial ties. Despite that, at least from the outside, it became profiled as a nationality key and emerging relations on a national basis augmented various intensifying factors.

The networks formed by the female Polish workers can be classified as open or closed. In the first, 'open' system, the networks are characterised by the fact that they do not place an individual in an unequivocally closed community. The individual is a member of several networks, which connect him/her with various environments. The borders of for example kinship, professional, neighbour networks, networks of leisure-time activities etc. do not overlap (e.g. my neighbour is neither my colleague nor my relative). In order to become part of a system, it is enough to overcome only one boundary (e.g. move house). In the 'closed' system, the networks of the individual activities overlap (the case of especially ethnically homogeneous, traditional, rural communities). In order to become part of it, it is necessary to overcome all of the boundaries at the same point, i.e. become part of all of the networks at once.¹⁰

Since the Polish women moved from the second system into the first, the creation of social networks was easier for them. Nevertheless, the process of transformations in the creation of social networks and participation in them paradoxically significantly supported also the creation of networks on the mentioned level of a 'compatriot community'. Since the acculturation of the Polish women took place in a closed system, their socialisation in Czech culture and the milieu of towns or cities entailed the need for the renewal of the elements of this system. Networks based on a 'compatriot community' formed of persons with the same experience proved to be the best possible variant. These networks in combination with the maintenance of contacts with Polish relatives then managed to replace the functions of a closed system to a certain degree. This was exceptionally achieved also by the Czech side of the relatives (significantly e.g. if they came

¹⁰ The concept of open and closed systems arises from the conception of Sandra Wallman. Cf. e.g. Wallman, S.; Buchanan, I. H.; Dhooge, Y.; Gershuny, J. I.; Kosmin, B. A.; Wann, M. 1982.

from Moravia as a generally more traditional region more like a closed system).

The formation of substitute networks on the level of a 'compatriot community' has its own explanatory platform in so-called network theory. According to Tatjana Šišková, this theory 'emphasises the importance of interpersonal relations in the migration process, when compatriots already settled in the target country lower the price and risk of a stay for further relatives coming and on the other hand increase the expected gains and thus also the likelihood of moving' (Šišková 2001: 74). However, in the case of the female Polish workers, we are not dealing with a simple transfer of networks already formed in Poland to Czechoslovakia. Attention has been drawn to the distortion that may occur especially when persons in a given network came at the same time and sometimes even from the same area. What is concerned besides the actual transfer of the social networks, i.e. 'actual update and performance of social relations formed already in the country of origin before the migration itself, or in its course (in which we include also the period when our immigrants were only deciding to migrate and seeking such information and procuring such social capital that would make this migration possible for them), are relations with compatriots, which were established in the target country as updates (in reality however formation) of specific social capital conditioned by the country of origin. This holds true especially about situations when immigrants seek contacts with compatriots, because these share similar experience, can help them orient in the new environment, are not separated by any language barrier, and can facilitate their gaining social and professional mobility' (Grygar, Černík, Čaněk 2006: 26).

Along with the process of forming new networks, this text focuses also on their stability. In other words, it examines how durable the networks are depending on their purpose. The questions of when, how and why the networks activate from the potential stage and become 'active systems' are asked (Fichter 1957). Another focus of attention is how homogeneous and spatially delimited the given networks are and where individual social stages overlap, i.e. how and where the network is defined, to wit where the identity boundary lies between the individual sets of 'us' and 'them'. It is also important what the quality of

the relations with a given place and other people who do not belong in the network is, which is connected with the attitude of the Polish women towards the Czech milieu as a whole, towards Polish citizenship etc. Also the above-mentioned differences between the individual network systems (open vs. closed) come into play.

Prejudice and Stereotypes in the Context of the Female Polish Workers in the CR

In this research, stereotypes are worked with rather instrumentally, not with the aim of a general analysis of this phenomenon, which offers still greater potential especially in the area of cognitive psychology.¹¹ More general analyses from an historical perspective moreover are often liable to great distortion and to the repetition of opinions that are hard to confirm, frequently reflecting the author's own stereotypes. On the other hand, Slovak researcher Eva Krekovičová mentions the problems suggested by the German historian Hans Hennig Hahn when researching historical stereotypes. One of them is the inability to extricate oneself from descriptivism (Krekovičová 2001: 18), which is why this research intends neither to expand the list of prejudices and stereotypes nor to develop constructions of generalising theories. Nevertheless, it attempts i.a. to indicate the influence of stereotyped interpretations by the majority population concerning the behaviour (whether real or imaginary) of Polish women and its influence on the development of their social networks.

I do not, however, wish to suggest that there is a simple mechanism of direct causality between the interpretations of the given events and the emergence of the stereotype. This research foremost confirmed how rigid stereotypical structures are. Stereotypes usually do not react directly to given events by emerging or disappearing but absorb them into an already existing structure. An interpretation of an event hence results rather in a certain definition shift, intensification, negative polarisation etc. The change of a stereotype frequently happens in such a way that the emphases on its individual parts are altered without

¹¹ See e.g. Kanovský, M. 2001, pp. 9–15.

changes in their quantity (Cała 1996: 199–200). To put it shortly, changing circumstances can have an impact on the judgements on certain ‘objective’ properties (Berting, Villain-Gandosi 1995: 22–25). At the same time, also the people with their stereotypes do not react to every event (they ignore some), do not assess one situation identically under all circumstances (sometimes negatively, other times positively) and react even to those events that in fact have never happened as well. Precisely such situations can be observed during the interpretation of the behaviour of the female Polish workers by their Czech environment.

The research confirmed that stereotypes are strongly tied to identity. The stereotypes of the Pole (but also the Polish stereotypes of the Czech) are as a rule here the opposite of the actual autostereotypes. The stereotypisation of Poles (or Czechs) by their opposites could thus have conformed to the ways of reconstructing national as well as personal identity – in the sense of ‘self-understanding’ (Brubaker, Cooper 2000: 1–47). It frequently depended on the communication situations and communication partners, because the need for delimiting the self derived from them. The outcomes of research projects oriented on the most general questions of Czech xenophobia illustrate that 30 % of Czechs would be bothered by having a Pole as a neighbour (Gabal 1999: 78).¹² The most common associations with the term ‘Pole’ concerned the economic area and way of making a living: trader, hustler, black marketeer, smuggler, half-witted peasant. In the area of culture, Czechs related the following characteristics to Poles: religious preoccupation, patriot, proud person. In the area of character traits: sincerity, hospitality, verbosity, untidiness, coarseness (Szczyпка-Rusz 1998: 35).¹³ All this is summarised tersely in one sentence by Czech

¹² The cited chapter of the publication (pp. 70–95) presents the outcomes of the research of a sample formed using the quota selection. The research was conducted by the Institute of International Relations in Prague. The results are a generalisation of the answers of 1,433 respondents (aged eighteen and above). The research was carried out by the STEM agency in September 1996 and is representative in terms of sex, age, region, size of the residence of the respondent and the educational structure. The research was implemented using the questionnaire method, an interview of the interviewer with the respondent.

¹³ The subject of the analysis are the answers of the students of the second year of general secondary schools in Poland and in the CR as well as *gymnasia* with Polish as

Polish scholar Jan Linka. He says that ‘Czechs know Poles as thieves, hustlers, drunkards, romantics, anti-Semites, nationalists and (understood at the same level) Catholics who moreover have a ridiculous lisp’ (Linka 1998: 8).

At first sight, the dualism of the positive and negative stereotypes is apparent here. In the positive stereotypes, the Pole acts, according to Jasna Hloušková, as a romantic tilting at windmills alone in the world, a knight fighting in the name of honour and God, the daredevil dashing on a horse with a drawn sabre. This portrait has recently been expanded by the steadfast dissident and activist of ‘Solidarity’ waging war with Communist totalitarianism. The character is not perfect – it bears the stigma of nationalism: it is often marked by self-praise, which in its blind actions commonly prevails over common sense – but is essentially positive. The second, negative picture of the Pole as seen by Czechs is the merchant, thief or ‘forger’ (Hloušková 1995: 47–48).

Hence, it can be said that the attitude of the Czechs towards the Poles has been strongly influenced by the economic situation of the majority of Poles with whom the Czechs have come into contact (the rich inspire sympathy; the poor then scorn or enmity), secondly by the cultural proximity, although its two main agents, religion and historical memory, easily fall prey to political fluctuations (Cała 1996: 201–202).

Characteristics of the Studied Group of the Female Polish Workers in the Context of the Population of Polish Nationality in the CR

The needs of Czechoslovak economy for most of the existence of the CSSR surpassed the possibilities of the domestic labour force. Therefore, foreign labourers in the order of even tens of thousands arrived from diverse (predominantly socialist) countries on Czech territory (only very marginally on Slovak territory), with Polish labourers being dominant among them in number until the 1980s. A role in this was played especially by the small geographic distance,

the language of instruction in the CR. A total of 223 people underwent the research, of whom 76 were Polish students, 75 Czech students and 72 from Polish schools, living and learning in the CR. Implemented in 1996.

cultural and linguistic proximity and relatively high offer of available labour force in Poland. The trend of employing Polish workers began immediately after the war and was stopped in the 1950s thanks to the ideological crisis and international tension in the Soviet Bloc. The intake of the Polish labour force (mainly unqualified young women) was renewed in the 1960s and was not slowed until the end of the 1970s. It was re-initiated at the beginning of the 1980s in connection with the political-economic crisis in Poland.

The high level of industrialisation of the North Bohemian border areas, especially in comparison with the destroyed and backward economy on the neighbouring Polish territory, and the displacement of the German population evoked a significant demand for labour force in the factories there (especially in the textile and glass-making industries) in the post-war years. It was partially satisfied precisely by the female Polish workers, recruited mainly on the basis of intergovernmental agreements between Poland and Czechoslovakia. **Women dominated for the entire period of the recruitment of foreign labour force from Poland**, which was given (despite the Czech demand for predominantly male labour) by the structure of the Polish offer.

Polish labourers could be found all over the Czech territory, but considering the distribution of industry in Czechoslovakia they dominated in the **North Bohemian borderlands** (North Bohemian, East Bohemian and North Moravian Regions). In the North Moravian Region, particularly men found work in the mines and steelworks; in the other regions, women prevailed. Other than the North Bohemian and North Moravian borderlands, the Polish labour force found jobs also in **Prague**.

The border areas were preferred by the Polish side also because of the possibility of daily or weekly commuting.

Although all the listed localities are close to the Polish border and it could be anticipated that they would attract the Polish labour force from the immediate proximity of the border, from the territory of adjacent Polish Silesia, it was only partially true. Female Polish workers were recruited from various parts of Poland and also those who resided in

Silesia were not originally from there. Some of them arrived in proximity to the Czech border all the way from regions joined to the Soviet Union (so-called *kresy*) within the large post-war resettlement programme of the ‘population exchanges’ with the USSR (the Poles to Poland, the Ukrainians and Belarusians to the USSR). In the 1970s, the share of female workers in the CSSR directly from the south-eastern and eastern countryside of the People’s Republic of Poland (PRP) grew.

Besides the mentioned female workers, also a group of men arrived in the CSSR on the same type of intergovernmental agreements as the female Polish labourers particularly in the mines and steelworks and as forest labourers but also as ‘privileged’ labourers sent by Polish factories on the basis of international trade agreements. The acceptance of Polish labourers on the basis of international trade agreements was very expensive for the Czech side (Polish factories were paid in foreign currency based on market prices), but it provided by far the most desired labour force – qualified construction workers (workers contracted in this way built sugar refineries, power plants, pre-fabricated housing estates etc.). These labourers did not settle in the CSSR, but they indirectly influenced the situation of the female Polish labourers. Both the Czech milieu and the female Polish workers knew of them, and the opinions on them affected the female Polish labourers.

The number of Polish women meeting the criteria of the observed group on our territory cannot be precisely determined. At the end of 2006, almost 19,000 Polish citizens lived in the republic, including almost 8,000 women with permanent residence. This number has been practically constant since the dissolution of the CSSR (and the end of the Polish guest labour force here). Among them, only 7 % list the reason for residence as employment, the remainder (7,385) then predominantly family reunion and ‘settlement’, thus the reasons of residence of the observed group. We can presume that the great majority of them arrived in the CR precisely in the way described above.¹⁴ For example, Jirásek in his research records that only between

¹⁴ The number of Polish women significantly rose in 1970–1980 especially in Prague and North and East Bohemia, where most of them were employed. In the East Bohemian Region, where female Polish labourers were abundantly employed already

1962–1969 there were 500 weddings of Czechs with Polish textile (sic!) labourers (Jirásek 1989: 185). Between 1972 and 1978, when the number of female Polish works in the CSSR culminated, around 5,000 mixed marriages were concluded with them.¹⁵ However, some of the marriages ended in divorce, after which the Poles apparently returned to their homeland. On the other hand, a certain (although small) part of the former Polish workers settled in Czechoslovakia obtained citizenship of the Czech Republic, as a result of which they have not been registered in the statistics of Polish citizens living here. If we add the assumed mixed marriages for the as-yet unmentioned periods (especially the 1980s), we can consider five to eight thousand members of the observed group of female Polish labourers still living on Czech territory with certainty.

In terms of the migration theories, it can be said that the female Polish labourers were subject to the classic effect of the *push* and *pull* factors. The main motivational *push* factor was the lack of work opportunities in Poland and the *pull* factor lay in the offer of work in Czechoslovakia. Since both the demand for labour force in Czechoslovakia and the lack of work opportunities in Poland were constant, a favourable situation for long-term migration developed here. Nevertheless, the Polish and Czechoslovak states refused to admit this fact, because it was to be a guest labour force, which would after fulfilling the contract (e.g. of 2–3 years) return to Poland. The migration of Polish women through marriage to a Czech partner was therefore frowned upon by the Polish representatives, who attempted everything possible administratively to hinder it, e.g. through the attempt to concentrate Polish women into

in the 1960s, their number doubled already in that decade. A later growth was no longer so distinctive. Additionally, the mentioned growths were recorded predominantly for a cohort of the same age, which again indicated the group of female Polish workers coming to the CSSR at a similar age. See *The Life of Foreigners in the CR* (2006), Czech Statistical Office, available at: [http://www.czso.cz/csu/2006edicniplan.nsf/t/65005123F5/\\$File/11180634.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/csu/2006edicniplan.nsf/t/65005123F5/$File/11180634.pdf)

[31 January 2009]; Siwek, T. 1997, pp. 48–51.

¹⁵ Notatka w sprawie zatrudnienia polskich pracowników w CSRS [Notation on the Matter of the Employment of Polish Workers in the CSSR], Archiwum Akt Nowych [The Central Archives of Modern Records], KC PZPR, 837/12, Ambasada PRL w Pradze, 1979, p. 5.

larger and more closed collectives.¹⁶ It is remarkable that not even the Polish women themselves **perceived their arrival as long-term or permanent migration**. As proved by the interview analysis results, they did not originally plan on settling in the CSSR.

Whereas the traditional Polish national minority in the Těšín District comprises officially the second largest national minority in the CR (after the Slovak minority) and the only autochthonous minority with compact settlement, as aliens the Poles are in terms of number only in fourth place (after the Ukrainians, Slovaks and Vietnamese) and live scattered throughout the territory of the republic. Yet, still in 1994, they comprised the largest foreign population in the CR. The highest number of Polish citizens can be found (like in the case of the Polish national minority) in the Moravian-Silesian Region, because the industry there provides suitable work opportunities.¹⁷

The Polish women from the observed group fall partially into the category of **national minority** as defined in the legislation of the Czech state (Act on the Rights of Members of National Minorities No. 273/2001 Coll.) **and the category of aliens with long-term or permanent residence**, the latter of which is excluded from the collective of the Polish national minority (and other minorities) by the clearly stipulated condition of Czech citizenship, which most of them despite having long-term residence on Czech territory did not accept. On the other hand, they meet in a number of cases further criteria which serve for the definition or de facto 'recognition' of national minorities. Especially the Polish women settled in Prague, in Lysá nad Labem and in Brno approximate the category of national minority in many regards. Chiefly the Polish community in Prague

¹⁶ The most important limitation was the principle in force from 1972, according to which one workplace had to have at least 50 Polish workers, which was to limit primarily mixed marriages. See Report on the Results of the Deliberations up to now on the Employment of Foreign Workers in the CSSR, National Archives of the CR, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the CSSR, No. I/1-888/72-6840, 1972, File No. 201/91/14, Materials for the Session of the Presidency of the Government of the CSSR, p. 5.

¹⁷ See The Life of Foreigners in the CR (2006), Czech Statistical Office, available at: [http://www.czso.cz/csu/2006edicniplan.nsf/t/65005123F5/\\$File/11180634.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/csu/2006edicniplan.nsf/t/65005123F5/$File/11180634.pdf) [31. 1. 2009]; Siwek, T. 1997, pp. 48–51.

(1486 citizens claiming Polish nationality), in which female Polish workers also participate, directly builds on the community living in the metropolis for generations through the Polish Club organisation (now also with activities in Lysá nad Labem by means of the former workers in the company Kovona). Moreover, the Polish community in Prague declares explicitly also through its activities the desire to be considered as a national minority, e.g. through the establishment of organisational structures which are national in their nature. Although the observed group of Polish women forms a dominant part of the Prague community, the organisations in which they are active have been established thanks to the educated émigrés from Poland and immigrants of Polish nationality from the Těšín District. The minority community in Prague, although comprised in the overwhelming majority of Polish citizens, is thus respected by the state as an autochthonous minority and traditionally, for example, sends its representative to the Council of the Government for National Minorities, as the supreme advisory, consultative and initiative body of the Czech government in the affairs of national minorities.

Minority activities can be recorded also in Brno, where the club 'Polonus' has been formed, which like the Polish Club in Prague has a mixed membership from various groups of the Polish population, including the observed group of female labourers. It is, however, necessary to differentiate the situation in South Moravia, where, considering the geographic distance and low concentration of industry and tourist and economic centres then, contact with Poles appeared sporadically. Not even negative economic stereotypes had the chance to be created here. On the other hand, we can find among the population here frequently represented traits close to the Polish national culture – traditionalism, Catholicism, hospitality, openness and peasant anti-Communism. Consequently, the relations with Poles and their influence on the formation of social networks are likely to have a different character here, for the opposite reason than in Silesia (the concentration of the Polish minority). It was also for this reason that the **focus was only on areas of Bohemia**. The interviews were conducted in Prague, Česká Lípa and Lysá nad Labem.

If we consider the female Polish workers from the perspective of the entire population of Polish nationality in the CR regardless of its citizenship (in total almost 52,000 persons), we see that the observed group has fundamentally influenced the characteristics of the Polish population in the Czech Republic. In particular, it has affected the age-gender structure by the significant prevalence of middle-aged women in the given population (women comprise an overall share of 3/5 in it). It has also caused a drop in the average attained education of the given populace because of their originally unqualified labour occupations (Siwek 1997: 51, 62). These characteristics also distinguish the Polish population of the Czech Republic from the population of the CR as a whole. The observed groups have also significantly influenced the structure of mixed Czech-Polish marriages with an almost double predominance of a Polish wife in a couple (more than 12,000 Polish women in mixed couples) over a Polish husband in a couple (Siwek 1997: 56).

A clear boundary between the traditional Polish minority in the Těšín District and the rest of the Polish population has been established by the distribution of Polish citizens on the territory of the CR, where Polish citizens predominate in Bohemia and in Moravia, whereas Czech citizens with Polish nationality in Silesia (Siwek 1997: 51).

The observed group of female Polish workers also undergoes different processes of **assimilation** than the traditional national minority in the Těšín District. Whereas assimilation in the Těšín District proceeds continually, it has a rather 'leaping' character in the group studied. Commonly, the women of the group observed have significantly suppressed the external features of Polish culture (primarily they often stopped speaking Polish and openly practicing Catholic religiosity), but at the same time they frequently have strongly maintained their national awareness by adherence to Polish citizenship, thus resisting the assimilation pressure of the milieu in which they find themselves. On the other hand, their children assimilate rapidly. According to the estimates of the Czech Statistical Office on the basis of the census of 1991, a total of 92 % of children of mixed marriages of a Polish woman and a Czech man in the CR claim Czech nationality in adulthood (Siwek 1997: 57). This is apparently even more intensive in the case of

the studied group, because here the Polish children did not grow up in a compact Polish settlement, hence in constant contact with peers that would have strengthened their shared identity. The Polish women settled in the interior moreover missed the possibility of visiting their homeland frequently (unlike the Poles in North Bohemia and in Silesia), which led to a number of dissimilar phenomena in the integration into the Czech milieu. The Polish women of the observed group of the female workers thus usually select a pragmatic, liberal approach to the nationality of the children, since they have weak means to influence it and do not hold the 'minority' approach in 'defence of the national identity' cultivated for generations, typical for the Těšín District. On the other hand, the manifestations of assimilation have a more varied character in the Těšín District. Whereas in the Těšín District there are groups of the population that consciously cultivate a Polish national identity, interest in Polish nationality is completely lost on the rest of the territory of the Czech Republic, followed by full integration into Czech society. Nevertheless, the research confirmed several exceptions and a strong Polish national awareness of the children (acquired especially in puberty or even later), including the acceptance of Polish citizenship (often children in one family have different citizenship and choose different nationality) and acquisition of a solid knowledge of Polish, usually in families with a more highly educated mother than was usual for female workers then. However, an unequivocal causal relation between these manifestations has not been discovered.

The Levels of Social Networks and the Factors Influencing their Formation

The social networks formed by the female Polish workers of the studied group in the Czech Republic were divided into four levels. These levels reflect primarily the depth and intensity of the social contacts. It arose from an analysis of the literature and archival sources that during the formation of the social networks specific 'contact situations' often appeared hindering the process. Some of these 'problematic interactions' have a clearly pejorative tinge. Many of them were also mentioned by the respondents from the group observed in

the interviews. Through interview analysis, they were therefore further expanded and subsequently categorised as: **gender and social roles, economic behaviour, language, diet, political situation and religiosity (including the traditions and customs related to it)**. These categories played their role in the various intensities of the relations according to the type of social network.

The social networks can operatively be divided into four levels; the criteria are not only intensity and 'intimacy' (proximity to the agent and the frequency of the contacts between the individual members). Especially on the first and partially on the second levels, these are not even social networks *sensu stricto* but rather contacts without firm ties. However, as they cannot be clearly divided from the other levels, they will be discussed as networks.

Network Level One

The first level comprises only vague and temporary networks, e.g. **at work** after marrying a Czech husband, or with **distant neighbours** (co-inhabitants of a given municipality). The people in social networks of this level were usually equipped for contact with the Polish women with several basic ethnic stereotypes of Poles already before the arrival of the Polish women, or were entirely lacking an 'ethnic' definition of Poles and reflected generally xenophobic stances. If some opinions on the female Polish labourers reached these people, they were usually integrated into already existing stereotypes, with their possibility of being modified on the basis of political events or other factors.

It is an indisputable fact that Poland was industrially further behind at the time of the arrival of the Polish women and not even its agriculture was in the best shape. In contrast, Czechoslovakia (along with the GDR) exhibited the best economic results in the Eastern European Soviet Bloc. The Polish women were therefore seen from this perspective. The negative view of the Polish women as an economic migration was intensified by the opinion that it was precisely economic motives that were the main cause of their arrival. Certain signals supporting this idea appeared already in the 1960s. Zdeněk Jirásek writes on the agreement of Polish women to accept worse and more

dangerous work but better paid (or paid extra money) in return (Jirásek 1989: 180). Other than these phenomena, on whose intensity the information is however lacking, also the fact that many of the Polish women really came from very poor areas and social conditions could have supported their perception as *'poor immigrants'*. In addition, the Polish women during the research confirmed that they had a certain awareness of Bohemia as the 'more advanced West', although it was apparently not the main motive for their arrival. Thanks to its long tradition of machinery industry, Czechoslovakia had a good reputation especially in the agricultural and industrial milieus, from which the Polish workers came. For example, the respondent from Česká Lípa described how her father in the village had been very proud of his threshing machine, namely for the country of its production – 'Czechoslovakia'.

If the above-mentioned information was spread among people who later formed social networks of this level, they could build upon the historical stereotype of the deplorable Polish economy (*polska gospodarka*) and Polish poverty, coming most likely from the end of the 19th century, because many poor Galician workers were coming to Czech industrial (predominantly coal and steel-work) regions at that time.

Networks formed on vague, superficial contacts were susceptible, because of the limited actual knowledge of the situation of the female Polish workers, to the influence of the **political-social views** of Poland. The records from the Operation North imply that the Czech milieu from the northern border areas perceived Poland very negatively as an economic catastrophe, for which moreover the CSSR had to pay. The meaning of Solidarity was perceived in a distorted fashion by the North Bohemians thanks to the propaganda. For that reason, the beginning of the 1980s could have amplified an economically conditioned contempt for the Polish women especially in the North Bohemian areas.

The research, however, showed that in many cases the perception of the economic motives of the actual arrival of the Polish women in the CSSR was entirely marginal. Especially at the beginning of the 1970s, when the Polish economy was growing significantly, the motive for

arrival could have been rather the better situation in the supply and wider assortment of goods in shops. One respondent, who came in the 1980s, also mentioned the attempt to avoid the unending Polish lines in front of shops. However, the motive to stand up on their own feet and escape the described prospect of life in the Polish countryside (including employment and the economic-social situation) was much more obvious. It can generally be said that the Czech image of the Pole, including these female Polish labourers, overuses the economic elements.

In a later period of the democratic milieu of the Czech Republic, tendencies to project on the observed group the relation to foreigners generally are then manifested which are often linked with the responsibility for the increase in criminality or suspicion of their taking good work positions at all. A fundamental role in this is played by **language**. In the phase when the Polish women had already functioned in society as the wives of Czechs and their language competence had been gradually rising, the predominant role was played by accent. The function of accent as ‘a means of distinguishing between ‘Czech’ and ‘foreigner’ is fittingly shown by the Czech study of immigrants by J. Grygar, J. Černík and M. Čaněk. According to the authors of this study, the person in question can because of the accent become considered a ‘foreigner’, thus a person who is structurally and socially unequal to a citizen of the CR. Language thus actually reflects the structure of society. The immigrant is identified by his/her not being able to understand, not being able to write well in Czech or in Latin script and primarily by his/her having an accent. Once an immigrant is identified in this way, he/she may be ignored by the native speaker as communication partner, may be paid a lower wage from the employer than a Czech employee, may be forced to pay higher rent or may be completely refused the possibility to rent housing, even if he/she were ‘white’ and looked like ‘a Czech’ (Grygar, Černík, Čaněk 2006: 35–36). The respondent from Prague describes her experience: *‘But when I was married, it already became a problem to make myself understood, run errands... and I had very bad experience with the authorities, especially with the Foreign Police, already at the very beginning! There they considered us as... a rag might have been better for them than us... terrible approach, appalling humiliation...’* More than

the negative experience with a foreign accent, about which the respondents logically did not want to speak much (they rather hinted at it) or did not have it, the respondents themselves evaluated how they had minimised this degrading accent. To prove how perfectly she had mastered her accent, one respondent mentioned that it was evaluated by those around her as 'Moravian'. The same statements came from also other Polish women in a similar situation to that of the group studied. They spoke for example of an 'Ostrava' accent. By using these statements, they were trying to prove that they had managed to circumvent a factor complicating the formation of the networks at this lowest level by being classified as 'one of us' (Ostravar, Moravian etc.).

Network Level Two

There is a very fine line between the first and second levels. The level is formed by the contacts of the female Polish labourers with persons who had the opportunity of a wider scale of interactions with Poles or obtained information specifically on the group of female Polish workers in Czech factories. They could (but not necessarily) at the same time build on the common stereotypes of Poles, which often arose from very simple prejudices created without an attempt to understand the wider context, which could appear in the pantheon of national stereotypes as needed practically arbitrarily in connection with any ethnicity, because this second level of networks is an ideal environment for the acceleration of stereotypes by means of 'half-hearted' contact, when the Polish women were neither close enough nor too far. These networks could be formed by **closer colleagues at work, parishioners, providers of the services** which the Polish women utilised (shop assistants, hair dressers...), **neighbours** and mainly **relatives on the husband's side**. In comparison with Prague and other large towns, networks of the second level were more common in smaller towns to the detriment of first-level networks.

Since the female workers often came from the very religious and socially-rigid rural environment in Poland, the sudden loss of social control along with the easier accessibility of entertainment establishments and restaurants evoked a tendency among many girls to

spend a lot of time at **parties along with the drinking of alcohol**. Mainly in the 1960s, when the girls were recruited negligently and chaotically, also a number of persons with rather serious offences against morality seems to have come to the CSSR. It cannot be claimed with certainty, however, whether the use of the opportunities for entertainment in restaurants, bars and at dances was more intense among the Polish workers than among the surrounding Czech population. Nevertheless, according to Kristen, this phenomenon was noticed by Czech society. It was particularly considered as a factor interfering with or preventing the building of partner relationships with Czech men (Kristen 1986: 193–194). This research has, however, confirmed that this behaviour on the other hand helped establish many acquaintances even though it was not the prevalent model for finding a partner.

Especially during the first two large immigration waves, in the 1960s and 1970s, the young Polish women arrived in an entirely different social milieu, moreover without the protection of men from their community. In addition, the Polish women were very inexperienced and lacked specific ideas of life in the CSSR. Their acting contained a clear element of audacity and adventure. The respondents themselves realise and admit it now. Certainly also a part of Czech society noticed that the Polish women found themselves in a world that was new for them. Their presence aroused the interest of Czech men of a similar age group from the factories and neighbourhood, which is described by the respondent from Prague for example in this way: *'As soon as we arrived here, the men – mostly men worked there – thought that easy women had arrived and that they'd be able to do anything to them and some let them, others not, it depends on the individual's character, but they certainly tried that behaviour... when one went to the toilet, one would hear 'Hey, girls'... later it stopped, then they already became used to it and saw, got to know us, so it was not so bad any more, but the beginning...'* Naturally, partner relationships were thus formed, which were however perceived by Czech society as the endeavour of exclusively the female Polish workers. In connection with the economic motive, a part of the Czech public saw the establishment of relationships as the main reason for the arrival of the Polish women in the CSSR that they had come to marry. Also considering the 'lax'

behaviour described above, the Czech surroundings then intensively noticed the problems which appeared in the partner relationships with Czech men. Vladimír Kristen recorded complaints (Kristen 1989: 193) – mainly on the basis of experience with the first wave of the 1960s – about partner promiscuousness, a high divorce rate of already concluded marriages and an attempt to force the man into marriage by the woman's pregnancy, which was to be assessed as a component of the 'tactics' of latching on in Bohemia by means of marriage before the expiration of the employment contract.

The attempt to exploit an advantageous catch in the 'West' is indirectly confirmed also by the respondent from Prague, who remembers many girls 'chatting up' Western tourists in Prague bars. In smaller towns, however, they could most likely satisfy this need only with partners of Czech citizenship.

One of the noteworthy aspects which intensified this **gender-social** factor was the supposed number of marriages to Roma. Vladimír Kristen records it as an objective fact and considers it himself as a manifestation of the attempts to latch on in the CSSR (Kristen 1989: 191). It appeared especially in the 1960s, when the Polish women had not yet established enough trust, and at the end of the 1970s, when they were en masse withdrawn from work at the request of Poland. The reasons that Polish women would marry Roma men could be multiple, e.g. the very fact of a great concentration of Roma in the places where the Polish women lived and worked. In any case, the strongly negative approach to Roma and their marriages to Polish women prevailed both among the Czechs around and among the Polish women who did not conclude such a marriage.

Because of the negative stereotypes which accompanied the presence of the Polish women, Czech parents did not approve of their sons' contacts with potential Polish partners. The attempt of Czech parents to prevent the marriage of their sons with a Polish worker could have been enhanced also by the vulgar rumours of Polish women as a source of contagion etc., recorded in the given areas (Kristen 1986: 195). It naturally cannot be argued that these rumours and this attitude towards Polish potential daughters-in-law would always be applied by

the parents. To a significant extent, it also depended on the number of previous stereotypes and the intensity of personal contacts, i.e. the transition to the third level of networks.

The conviction of members of the majority society of the attempt of Polish women to marry in the CSSR at any cost was manifested in the interpretations of not only the negative but also positive characteristics of female Polish workers. A former colleague of the Polish women in an interview interpreted the good conduct and cleanliness of the Polish women in their factory again as an attempt at marriage (which was to distinguish them from the others), although prior to that she mentioned the general opinion on their poor hygiene and other stereotypes.

The observation of excessive care for the appearance and model behaviour, however, does not have to be erroneous, seeing that Polish women even in other cases acceded to the 'game' of stereotypes and attempted to define themselves with respect to the stereotypes. They were subject to projected stereotype (they think that people around them consider them to be...). Here it is necessary to distinguish between individual incoming waves, graded roughly by decades. In Lysá nad Labem for example, Polish women in the 1980s encountered opinions of the type: *'The Polish women have arrived, there will be divorces again'*, most likely coming from the stereotyped experience with Polish women from the last decade (in the 1960s, the Polish women had not yet been in Lysá). The Polish women from the later wave therefore emphatically distanced themselves from their colleagues in the 1970s and pointed to the different causes and circumstances of their arrival. As an overall more qualified and older group, they in their words *'no longer came for fun* (which often resulted in a quick marriage), *but for work'* (oftentimes rather for diversely oriented economic activity). The Polish women coming in the 1980s either did not abandon the plan to return to Poland or married only after mature deliberation. Each generation thus had to come to terms with the stereotyped opinions of the Czechs around them on the previous generation, while often adopting this view of their older colleagues.

The reputation of the Polish women was further worsened by high **absence and fluctuation** at the workplaces. Whereas the absences frequently followed the already-mentioned consumption of alcohol, the fluctuations were to a certain extent caused by poor or entirely lacking selection of employees on the Polish side and their overall unconvincing motivation to work in the CSSR. Girls with insufficient abilities and improper behaviour were then sacked from the factories.¹⁸ Girls from rural areas, especially from poor and large families, with a strong economic motivation had a rather greater chance of latching on in the CSSR in the long term. Moreover, the fluctuations were often related to the results of political discussions or much wider economic-social factors. For example in 1973, an infection of hoof-and-mouth disease peaked in Poland, which led to a temporary closure of the state borders with Poland. The female Polish workers feared that they would not be able to travel for visits home, so many of them finished their work in Bohemia before the end of the contract. According to information from the Polish side, many Polish workers returned early because of the unpreparedness of the housing by the factories and the sudden cancelation of requirements for workers on the part of the Czech factories, but evidently the strongest factor was the developing Polish industry, infrastructure and mainly the overall improvement of the economic situation and the growth of nominal wages in Poland. As recorded by Vladimír Kristen, only one in six female workers remained in the CSSR longer than the normal employment contract, i.e. 2–3 years (Kristen 1986: 188). The studied network level could then have

¹⁸ In the 1960s, the fluctuation was enormous. In 1971, the ‘normal’ fluctuation of Polish workers was stated to be 30 % (Report on the Proposal of the New Treaty Regulation of the Czechoslovak-Polish Cooperation in the Area of Work Force and on the Resolution of Some Current Issues in this Cooperation/, 1971, box 201/91/16/134, Materials for the Session of the Presidency of the Government of the CSSR, National Archives of the CR, p. 9.). In the 1970s, the fluctuation rose even higher and at the end of the decade dropped again because of the orientation of Poland on employing only commuting labourers in border areas, who were a more stable human resource than boarding workers in the interior. The absence and fluctuation once again increased extremely in the 1980s, when many Polish women had escaped from the Polish economic crisis only for a short time without greater work motivation, which further decreased through the activity of the independent unions of Solidarity (see e.g. the records of the StB /State Security/ from the police Operation North at the beginning of the 1980s).

been influenced by the common statements of the type *'Poles go on strike, because they are lazy'* etc. This situation, however, sharply contrasts with the fact that Polish women comprised the essential labour core especially in some factories of the textile and glass-making industries for decades.

Further stereotyping on the level of social contacts included in second-level focused on the minor, often illegal trade, which is, as a number of Czechs have surmised, typical for Poles. In general, many Poles in the CSSR in the 1960s–1980s were engaged in **peddling and smuggling** goods across the border in both directions. The female Polish workers were involved in these illegal activities already from the beginning of this form of cooperation in the area of guest labour force, which was particularly noticed in the regions of their greater presence, hence on the described level of social networks. Purchasing above the set limits¹⁹ and the fear of the Czechs around them of the buying up of scarce goods arising from that also had a backlash. This concerned e.g. children's items (perambulators, clothing) or some alcoholic products or foodstuffs. These **economic phenomena**, transferred to the stereotype level of *'laziness, marketeering, parasitism'* therefore again made the formation of networks on the described level unpleasant.

The wider and often higher-quality selection in Czech shops motivated young female Polish workers to purchase fashionable goods, particularly textiles and costume jewellery. The Polish women themselves admitted in the surveys that these purchases were often to the detriment of more necessary items (food) and could attract attention. A significant impression is likely to have been made by a group of Polish women arriving in greater number in the 1960s from the industrial milieu of Silesia, which often had higher education (secondary school-leaving examination) and came from 'large-town culture', which contrasted not only with the previous rural Poles but also with the local Czech milieu. Although these women were more adaptable to work in the factories and to everyday life, they aroused distrust with their too modern and foreign fashion style (*'Polish style'*

¹⁹ In the 1960s, the limit was 400 CZK a month (imported goods and their values were recorded during border checks). In 1970, the limit was raised to 700 CZK.

or *'Polačka'*) and sometimes also a stronger (or more self-aware) religious and national attitude. The gender-social differences intervened in the stereotypical perception of the Polish women here again.

Network Level Three

The third level of social contacts comprised particularly the **Czech friends and partners of the Polish women**. This level is consequently marked by strong, close ties, which are however realised only between a very limited number of people. The intensity of the meeting, the density and number of these networks were obviously affected also by the character of the observed individuals (e.g. gregariousness) and the interplay of various circumstances (e.g. a good collective in the factory). In this group, it is possible to include also individuals from the generally most important social networks, especially the **nuclear families and kin, key colleagues at work, the nearest neighbours and close parishioners**, which to a certain degree overlap with the definition of 'friends and partners'. The prejudices of the first two levels were blunted here by personal experience with both the diversity within the stereotyped group and the discovery of frequently false mechanisms of the origin of individual stereotypes concerning the Polish women on the basis of disinformation and misinterpretation. Stereotypes in these networks appeared rather in neutral preconceptions connected with distrust, uncertainty and curiosity. Any residue of 'Polishness' had practically disappeared from them. At the same time, however, it cannot be said that this group has entirely got rid of the stereotypes of the first two levels, especially in situations of communication with people at those levels. The factors hindering the networking at the lower levels, e.g. language problems, however, already have also the opposite effect here (e.g. language misunderstanding as an opportunity to become acquainted or as a socially attractive 'anecdote').

The network at this level was fundamentally accelerated by **marriage** to a Czech partner. For many of the respondents, the relationship with their partner before and after the wedding was the first intensive contact with a member of Czech society. Some respondents actually had not formed stronger ties with any Czech until the marriage.

The establishment of the marriage then not only necessitated more intensive networking but also made it possible. The marriage was often the moment of entry into the second-level network – the springboard to the building of other networks. If any stereotyped positions still appeared at this third level, they were accompanied by the attempt to ‘reclaim’ the given person or wider group from which she came. The specific Polish woman or her group were then classified as a ‘good apple in a bad bunch’. For example, the husband of one of the respondents was trying to prove the better quality of the collective where his wife worked by the rural origin of the workers unlike the collectives of ‘*city girls, who never knew how to work*’ (it was the situation at the beginning of the 1970s).

For some women, however, the moment of inclusion in the third-level network came with the **birth of a child**. This demonstrates the tension in which, for example, the networks of the wider Czech family and the networks of partnership with a Czech man were for a long time. At the same time, the selection of wives often focused on women who were easier to assimilate culturally, thus without preformed firm life strategies and models. According to Kristen, a more sought-after group than the ‘Silesian’ one was the one from the eastern and south-eastern Polish rural areas because of its greater adaptability to Czech aesthetic and other social norms (Kristen 1986: 193). These socially more adaptable women could for example by their more traditional and more popular form of entertainment evoke with Czech men even pleasant ‘cultural residues’.

Paradoxically, the entry of the Polish women into Czech society was sometimes facilitated by the fact that in comparison with other female workers they proved to be the better variant. In Lysá nad Labem, for instance, the Polish women had a comparative advantage with respect to the presence of Cuban women there from the end of the 1970s, who were in a similar role of a guest labour force. According to the respondents from Lysá, the Cuban women (then working at the nearby fruit factory Fruta) had an even worse reputation in partner relationships and supposedly had a number of abortions performed. Polish women were thus the ‘safer’ variant.

Nevertheless, a partner relationship does not necessarily have to mean deeper understanding and the overcoming of stereotypes. Besides the factors hindering the formation of strong emotional ties on the part of the Czech partners, complications on the part of the Polish women were even more intense. The cause was especially the cultural aspects like **language, religiosity** (here more generally in the form of the sense of transcendental dimensions and sanctity) and various nuances of **social life and political context**.

It has arisen from the survey that the Polish women had not attempted to learn Czech until they met (or married) their Czech partner, unless they had a special language interest. If so, it was only a formality required by the management of the factory, because they could get by with the knowledge of a few phrases and words at work. Moreover, some of the supervisors used a mixture of Polish and Czech to facilitate communication. One of the other reasons for the lack of interest in studying Czech was the overall weak motivation due to the idea of their early return to their homeland. This perspective changed after the wedding, and so did the demands caused by the expansion of themes of communication with the partner and integration into the third-level network. **Language** then often became an unpleasant complication. This time is described e.g. by the respondent from Prague: *'Since I had not used Czech at all in two years, here and there in a shop sometimes, my mother-in-law took me to work with her, which improved my Czech, and a year later I already went to work as an accountant.(...) He was the head of the accounting office, an economist... and I was worried he would not take me, that I did not know the language, that I was a Pole... He was a really nice person and I am actually very thankful to him for his having helped me a lot, really... he was quite normal, he would say that the problem with the language..., that we would manage it all.'* The Polish women who have mastered the language well are thus justly proud of this knowledge and gladly flaunt it.

As had already been indicated, a large and perhaps even fundamental disincentive to the establishment of deeper contacts between the female Polish workers and members of the majority population was the relation of Czechs to sanctity and transcendence. Although we encounter Polish **religiosity** in most cases rather as a barrier in

the socialisation into the predominantly atheistic and culturally very secularised milieu of Czech society, it was overcome very quickly in its external manifestations by the women's accommodating to the Czech milieu – not going to church (which has however been recently renewed again in the case of a few parishes with a Polish priest), without sacrificing personal religiosity. Furthermore, Vladimír Kristen adds that, notwithstanding that, the Polish women who had settled here required religious education for their children. On the other hand, greater problems were caused rather by the 'by-products' of Czech secularisation (in the areas of family traditions, celebrating holidays etc.). Several respondents listed working on Sunday as a shocking experience: *'He would go around in stretched jogging pants and did something in the garden while in our family we would only go in Sunday clothes to church and on visits.'* They further mentioned cool relations with relatives, not celebrating family and religious holidays, not upholding traditions, not honouring the dead etc. The respondent from Prague describes the contrast with the family of her husband, who she divorced, in this way: *'At home [in Poland], family was family, it was so... I feel it even now: nobody says anything... they all live for themselves... holidays come and I call everyone, I write... they never contact me, no one congratulates. It might be just that family, but perhaps most of the Polish women are in the same situation.'*

The Polish women were similarly repelled by the **political culture**, which they began to perceive again rather after longer residence and having expanded the sphere of their activity after marriage to a Czech partner. The respondent from Prague stated how surprised she was by the queues in front of the Polish Institute for 'common Polish newspapers'. The degree of political submission was perceived even more clearly: the respondent from Lysá nad Labem remembers how she was shocked by Soviet flags (*'where am I?', 'am I in Russia?'*). According to her, it would have been entirely unheard of in Poland. The respondent from Česká Lípa was similarly shocked by the pro-Russian 'banners' and 'stars'; in her opinion, this would certainly not pass in Poland. Also for other reasons they therefore identically assert to this day that they did not like it in Bohemia and only stayed here because of their husbands. Some of them then even attempted to leave for Poland with their husbands. However, the question is whether they

really already then had this negative stance towards the Czech environment – presented as original from the early period of their residence on our territory – or it was formed on the basis of the socialisation later.

The previous paragraphs mentioned an entire range of factors that the Polish women labelled as negative and which are likely to have hindered the formation of deeper, emotionally grounded social networks. At the same time, however, it should be noted that the same aspects in other contexts can support the formation of networks with deep interpersonal contacts. A good example is again the **language difference**. Czech and Polish are related West Slavic languages (27 % of the words in both languages are the same to this day), so Poles and Czechs are able to make themselves understood without greater difficulties in issues of everyday life, but Czechs are irritated by the overabundance of soft consonants in Polish. It reminds them of the language of small children, who do not yet manage to speak well. Besides, Polish vocabulary contains phrases that would be considered as old-fashioned or ‘rustic’ in Czech. Many Czechs therefore mock Polish, because they consider it to be an archaic, primitive and an infantile deformation of Czech (Měšťan 1995: 39). Apart from the fact that a similar opinion (paradoxically for similar reasons) exists also among Poles concerning Czech, language ridicule does not always have to be perceived negatively. It is precisely on this level of networks that some ‘jeers’ have become good entertainment and that language ‘blunders’ provided the opportunity for becoming acquainted and transformed into a stockpile of welcomed social quips, so that they could even facilitate the development of contacts and the formation of social networks. On the one hand, the Czech respondent from Prague thus complains about the repellent-sounding Polish names (she lists e.g. a former colleague *Grażyna Gaduła*); on the other hand, however, Polish names gave the impetus to the creation of various stories told by the respondents. She describes especially piquantly how a Czech boy became acquainted with a Polish girl called *Kunegunda* (Kunhuta), in Poland shortened to a pet name *Kunda* (in Czech an obscene word, ‘cunt’).

Another – reverse – way of forming social networks thanks to the language differences was language isolation, which motivated the Polish women to becoming attached to the persons who best understood them in terms of language. This was the case particularly in the early periods, and most of these communication needs were understandably satisfied in the circle of the Polish women themselves. From the Czech side, they would be e.g. the direct supervisors – foremen – or colleagues at the factories. In one case, the respondent was employed first in Aš, where the closest milieu of her colleagues comprised a group of Czech German women, who spoke German among themselves, so she did not understand them. After she managed to escape this desperate isolation, she became strongly attached to the first ‘Czech’ colleague that took care of her. Through her, she then integrated further into the work process and Czech collective. The tie to this colleague was not interrupted until a temporary return to Poland and then back to Bohemia but to another area. However, it was so strong that the respondent concerned went to look for this friend of hers in person after more than thirty years (unsuccessfully).

A suitable communicator and means for developing closer ties was also **food**. Like in language, a big role was played by ‘funny blunders’. The respondent from Česká Lípa e.g. mentions how she was frying pickled sausages (literally ‘drowned men’ in Czech) for her husband’s dinner not long after the wedding (while complaining about their ‘disgusting name’). Other respondents purchased mustard (Cz. *hořčice* = Pl. *musztarda* or *gorczyca*) instead of marmalade (Cz. *marmeláda* = Pl. *marmolada*) etc. A large role in this was played by ‘over-the-counter’ shops that were not self-service, where the Polish women had to buy goods from a distance while confusing the names similar in the two languages.

Yet food strengthened the personal contacts even at the lowest levels when for example the female porter from the lodging house at the factory in Liberec regularly went to the Polish women to taste and learn their dishes. In return, she became their confidante and helper in many practical areas (she was a former secondary-school teacher in retirement).

In conclusion to the subchapter on the third level of the networks, we can say that the Polish women are highly motivated to maintain their position in these networks, because they arrived in areas where the stereotype of Polish women as 'easy women' already existed (see the second level of the networks), and they had to come to terms with that. The power of this stereotype, which is still in effect today, has been confirmed by interviews with the Polish women as well as with Czech men from their contemporary or past social milieu. In marriage as well as in other deep social contacts, they therefore tried to succeed under the pressure of especially the husband's family and were willing to sacrifice many things from their customs and life positions until then for it. If the marriage did not succeed, they usually emphasise (besides the common married couple's disagreements) fatal cultural differences, which despite all efforts and all the suffering and abnegation were impossible to overcome. If the marriage succeeded, in several cases the Polish women with a certain satisfaction pointed to the unfounded worries of the husband's family and the divorces of purely Czech couples of the same generation in the area and/or precisely among those distrusting relatives.

The research hence shows with what difficulty the Polish women have been coping with the negative stereotypes to this day. One of the causes might have actually been the mistaken interpretation of certain behaviour of the Polish women as attempts to get married. In agreement with this stereotype, also Vladimír Kristen mentions a general attempt of the female Polish workers to marry in Bohemia. Yet, according to this survey, the motive of marriage played a rather marginal role for residence in Bohemia in comparison with escape from a conservative milieu, entertainment and consumer freedom. According to Kristen, Polish women here endeavoured to marry also because the stereotype of immoral young Polish ladies in Czechoslovakia had spread back to Poland itself. Women who returned from the CSSR to their native village were thus highly suspicious. Furthermore, a return without a 'favourable Czech catch' was considered as incompetence (Kristen 1986: 194). Although the Polish women did not confirm it, this observation is not lacking in logic, but apparently only with a limited group of female workers from a poorer milieu. Moreover, it could have been, because of the time interval and the often presented (and in

the course of time probably growing) negative opinions on Bohemia, suppressed and drowned out by new memories and reinterpretations.

In the contemporary descriptions of their becoming acquainted with their partners, thus the creation of the third-level networks, the dominant role is played by pure chance. The respondent from Česká Lípa mentioned that until her becoming acquainted with her future husband she never went anywhere among Czechs. She stuck to her colleagues and the organised activities prepared for them. She did not come into the society of her Czech peers until through a sudden chain of accidents (*'She became the companion of a female colleague who by chance had been invited to a meeting with a Czech colleague, who brought another colleague with him...'*) and immediately became acquainted. The respondent from Prague evaluates the original motives for the arrival of the Polish women and consequently their turning point in marriage in her case in this way: *'As far as I know, I'd say that the main motive was adventure..., to go somewhere, get to know something, maybe even stay. (...) [Staying here was] an accident and a big mistake in my life ... I didn't plan it at all. I had a contract for only two years and did not even extend it, so then everything happened quickly, the wedding was arranged hastily, but I had not planned this at all.'*

Network Level Four

Whereas on the first three levels social networks were formed between Polish women and the Czech (although not only – also German, Slovak, Roma etc.) people around, on the fourth level contacts were developed **among the Polish women themselves**, with an essentially different role being played by the influencing factors, which accelerated the formation of the networks here and became a necessary binding agent. However, even here they often appeared in their stereotyped forms, through which they adapted the discourse formed by Czech milieu.

As a reaction to being rejected by Czech society and their rejecting this society and Czech culture, the Polish women created a 'conceptual' network of **Polish citizens**. In so doing, they reacted to the new specific

situation and simultaneously to the loss or inaccessibility of social ties which they had had in Poland. They substituted the neighbour and partially even family relations by compatriot relations. Also the maintenance of the **kinship and friendship networks in Poland**, which were supported by the new situation of the female Polish workers, was closely tied to the new compatriot networks.

The pressure to assimilate on the part of the Czech milieu and the endeavour to manage the role of Czech wife without problems, which was required from the Polish women, collided with the need to maintain Polish identity, or identify²⁰ with the native Polish milieu. The level and character of this need can be documented and measured only with difficulty, but the need was expressed by all of the respondents, and, considering the strong nationalism in Polish society, its frequent occurrence can be presumed. The language in domestic and public communication as well as further elements of Polish culture (religious manifestations, customs and traditions) then often fell victim to the tension between the need for identification with Poland and the assimilation pressure. The greater was the emphasis placed on a form of some kind of individual confirmation of this identification, which was found in the maintenance of **Polish citizenship**. Unlike the Polish national minority in the Těšín District, the observed group of Polish women did not enter the frame of a strongly regionally anchored and collectively cultivated national identity, further reinforced by defensive expressions protecting Polish national identity from the Czech assimilation pressure. A Polish passport was therefore an important 'warrant' of their Polishness, because (as the respondent from Česká Lípa mentions with sadness): *'No one looks at nationality today'*. Even if the Polish women do not have or did not have real contact with the Polish nation and Polish homeland, they maintain the potentiality of its immediate renewal alive through this mental network. The respondent from Prague directly expressed her desire to return decades later to Poland. The other respondents did not exclude (refuse without thinking) the thought of it either, by which they expressed the original idea of the 'temporariness' of their residence, although because of their

²⁰ Cf. Brubaker, Cooper 2000.

family (mainly their children) they consider their return only academically.

Furthermore, citizenship assumed new meanings in the course of the complications connected with it. The extension of long-term residence was always unpleasant. Some of the respondents mentioned also further limitations related to careers restricted to Czech citizens (*'the post-office clerk, switchboard operator, telephonist, public-administration clerk...'*). (To provide an objective view, it should be said that advantages were also mentioned: *'it was easier to travel with it'*.) The difficulties led to even stronger adherence to citizenship, which acquired the form of 'victimhood'. Surrender of the passport was then classified as 'treason of the nation', which manifested itself in most cases with a very negative assessment of the Polish women who had succumbed and changed their citizenship. In light of such a strong tie, the newly instituted dual citizenship did not take root in the studied group.

The conceptual network of Polish citizens was expressed also in other ways, like watching Polish satellite TV (which was very popular), and was closely related to other networks on this level.

In the network of **compatriots** in conformity with the concept of *disorganisation* of William Isaac Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, the interrupted primary social ties were reconstructed, but they in agreement with this concept were not renewed in their original form. The compatriot network substituted for the loss of e.g. the strong networks of the wider family. Polish 'nationality', let alone its cultivation, was not the determining factor in and of itself. It was often satisfied already with the idea that the given person was a part of a wider network of Polish citizens. The essential roles for the formation of compatriot relations were played by common experience (of a Pole and specifically of a female Polish worker in Bohemia) and the common need to establish these joint social networks. A role was played, besides the 'psychological' aspects in connection with the theory of networks, also by a practical function of compatriots already settled in the place, who by their help reduced the 'transit costs' of those arriving later. For example in Lysá nad Labem, the Polish women

who settled there in the 1970s played such a role to a certain extent for those coming in the 1980s. At the moment of the weakening of both the main motivations, these networks are usually cancelled unless some of the persons from them are simultaneously for example in networks of personal friendship (the third level). Like with marriage, also the compatriot networks with their practical effects seem to have served as 'initiating' for the building of further networks, after which these original ones could disappear. The respondent from Česká Lípa described how she did not like interpersonal relations after her arrival in Bohemia: *'I was used to unselfish mutual help from Poland. Here for example my husband was given a ride by a friend, offered him money for it, and the friend took it. That could not happen in Poland. When I want to do something for you, I do it for free out of principle.'* They then identically referred to the 'close-fistedness' of Czechs (*'they only want money', 'they all look out for themselves, everyone looks to see what the others have on their plates, nobody wants to share...'*). Other times, they pointed out the cold and unfeeling relations in their families: *'In Poland, married couples are always together, they go to entertainments together, but here a man goes with the blokes to the pub and leaves the wife at home with the child.'* A partial role in these networks was played also by the attempt to strengthen the disrupted identification with Poland and with the values considered as Polish culture. For example, the accentuation of Czech 'close-fistedness' and materialism could have been precisely a defensive reaction to the actual Polish autostereotype, to whose nature 'materialistic' elements are rather alien. In the defence of their own identification and 'self-understanding' (closely connected with stereotypes), the defensive and integrative roles of the stereotype thus functioned precisely in the encountering and mutual manifestation of these hetero- and auto-stereotypes. As a result, the Polish women left out the economic motives, if there were any at all, in their justification of their residence in the CSSR (*'we were doing even worse than the Czechs, no benefits from work in Bohemia arose for us, we did not even struggle for them...'*).

With their arrival in Bohemia, the Polish workers began to **disrupt the existing Polish networks**. In Poland, an important role – apparently more than in the Czech milieu – is played by the social network of

the extended family. Long-term dominance by foreign powers as well as the Communist regime had historically rooted the mental separation of the 'public space', administrated by the state, and the private space, tended by the family in Poland. It was a situation similar to that in Czechoslovakia with the difference that Poland had experienced the great majority of the last two centuries under foreign dominion (a great majority of Poles consider also the period of the Polish People's Republic as foreign dominance), accompanied by the destruction of the public social sphere and an emphasis on the private sphere. The second factor causing an increase in the role of the family and relatives is the strong Catholic tradition in Poland. For these reasons, family in Poland served also economic (it was not possible to rely on the corrupt and non-functioning state), edifying, opinion-forming (rather bigoted social norms) and sanctuary (a refuge from the outer world) functions. Sociological surveys in Poland show that the family with functions expanded in this way is considered along with the nation as the highest social value. It thus creates a society functioning in the mental sphere on two extreme levels – family (with the relatives and closest friends) and the nation. The space between them is empty, which increases emotional burden and great psychological tie to family and national values (Rokicki 1997: 22–28). The compatriot networks of Polish women in Bohemia could intergrow into other levels and fill in the gap between the national and family spheres, just like other types of networks could include persons of Polish nationality without its having any other meaning. The cause of such ties was surprisingly the proximity (neighbourhood) or acquaintances from work. One of the respondents, for example, meets with a group of Polish women with higher education, which segregated them (along with the respondent) from the others to a certain extent and triggered different experience, because they had to adjust to the 'labourer' culture not only at work but also in their marriage. The motives of shared experience and a common 'fate' are usually closely connected with the establishment of compatriot networks.

The subsidiary reasons for the formation of compatriot networks include the **opportunity to speak in their mother tongue, food and religious life**. On the role of food, it can be added that the Polish women have encountered problems due to a lack of the necessary

ingredients for their meals, an ignorance of Czech meals and a number of unpleasant flavours in Czech cuisine (e.g. they hate Czech bread with cumin, sweet-and-sour pickled gherkins...). During their meetings, acquiring 'esoteric' elements, this different 'catering appurtenance' was then sometimes manifested by the cooking of Polish meals. The declaration *'today I'm cooking a Polish meal'* could portend precisely the arrival of the Polish colleagues and meant a somewhat exceptional event in some families (respected by the other members of the family, albeit perhaps not always popular).

The already-described repugnance of the Polish women to Czech secularisation and desacralisation of life and everyday culture evoked with them rather a defensive approach and the closure of this sphere into the compatriot community and original networks with Poland. In the post-revolutionary period, on the other hand, outer religious activity was revived in some places of the Czech Republic, which is therefore included in this level of the networks, because it took place in many documented cases (recently in Lysá nad Labem), specifically with the assistance of Polish (missionary) priests, after whose departure it disappeared again. The network of **Polish religiosity** thus remains in latent form and transform into 'an active network' (Fichter) if it is provoked by someone or something.

In conclusion, it is necessary to mention the relics of the **original Polish networks** acting on this level. The majority of the respondents maintain intensive contacts with their original family, which after decades of separation can mean e.g. one or two personal visits a year and otherwise more frequent communication e.g. by telephone. The Polish women in the Czech Republic have placed extraordinary significance on these contacts and with particular pleasure travel to Poland to celebrate religious and family events. This is documented also by the concept of 'home'. The respondent from Prague mentioned: *'For me, "home" is in Poland, maybe because home for me there was objectified by our family house in the village in which we lived. I hate large towns but have a flat in Prague. I still bear the image of that house in the village in my head.'* Also other Polish women – perhaps even for similar reasons of the loss of their original (moreover idealised) cultural milieu – mentioned that they prefer life in smaller

towns. The respondent from Lysá nad Labem says that she always looks forward to a return from Prague, where she works, to *'purge herself and escape the noise and hustle'*.

Conclusion

An analysis on the basis of a comparison of the data from the preliminary database and the field research shows the ways in which both researched categories – the social networks and the factors influencing their formation – intersect. On certain levels, the factors hinder the formation of the networks while on other levels they support it. These factors are ethnically unspecified xenophobic prejudices, stereotypes concerning Poles and stereotypes absorbing specific experience and interpretations of contacts with Polish women from the observed group (with strong gender-social and economic aspects). Other factors appear as reactions to individual empirical knowledge (e.g. the difference in food and the political situation). Other factors could have had a stereotypical basis, but at the same time a significant role in them was played by one's own experience (the difference in language and the level of religiosity).

The analysed categories of the social networks were presented on four levels, which however overlap to a certain extent, like the specific networks included in them, and cannot be completely separated. The division therefore needs to be considered as a working concept. Similarly, also the characteristics of the roles of the individual factors in the given networks could be placed in more categories at the same time.

If the knowledge discussed above in connection with the principles of the formation of social networks is summarised, primarily an attempt to span the social boundary of 'us'/'them' can be seen on the first level. Considering the low intensity of the personal contacts in these networks, the perception of the studied group as 'foreigners' along with the application of the common stereotypes concerning Poles are the main disincentives to the formation of deeper contacts at this level. When the mutual contacts increased, the overcoming of this line then

seems to have significantly eased the strengthening of the networks and their shift to the third level. The example of the second level of the networks then shows best how the local Czech communities coped with the ethnic-social diversity caused by the arrival of the Polish women. In the course of the first three levels described, it is possible to perceive the various degrees of the explicit connection of stereotypes with 'Polish themes', which is usually proportional to the intensity of the personal contacts (stereotypes mostly referring to Poland and Poles on the second level). On the third level, the conflict of the basic life positions connected with 'self-understanding' is evident in some cases. On the part of the Polish women (albeit at the beginning perhaps without stereotypical interpretations), these conflicts over time profile into stereotypical form and could drown out the original opinions and positions from their arrival in the CSSR through the mechanics of superposition and suppression from memory. The third level, specifically overcoming the boundaries by marriage or the birth of a child, is also a fundamental moment for the dynamics of the further networks.

On the fourth level, mostly the reverse effect of the factors influencing the social networks takes place, with the role of these factors being possible to perceive as hindering on the part of Czech society but also as conscious resistance to deeper integration on the part of the Polish women. Another motive of the formation of social networks on the fourth level is primarily the loss of the primary social networks as a consequence of having abandoned the native land. In terms of the systems of social networks, it would be possible to say that the networks of the 'closed' system find their surrogates in the 'open' system of Czech towns. The village community, in which the neighbours, friends, relatives, colleagues etc. form overlapping networks, is substituted here by the intensity and emotional connection to a network of 'compatriots' with the same experience of 'culture shock' and the same need to replace the networks from the area of their original residence.

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Contemporary Belarusian Migration in the CR – Social Networks, Adaptation and Integration Strategies

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Introduction

Migrations from the countries of the former Soviet Union have been a topical phenomenon in Czech society for the last twenty years. In spite of many times being culturally, linguistically and ethnically very differentiated, immigrants coming from the successor states of the European parts of the Soviet Union are frequently perceived in the eyes of the Czech public as being one group within which Russians and Ukrainians might be distinguished between, whereas this differentiation is usually deduced from a few outward signs and occupational positions. Also immigrants from Belarus oftentimes come under these two collective labels. Despite being immigrants from an independent state, their identity in the general consciousness of the majority society often blends with the other Russian-speaking foreigners. The Belarusian migration to the Czech Republic is not, as it is in the case of the Russian and Ukrainian immigrants, especially significant in terms of number; what is specific is chiefly in the composition of migrants, among whom recognised refugees markedly dominate unlike the other two mentioned groups. The following study is focused on the Belarusian foreigner group in the Czech Republic as whole, during which emphasis is placed on the differences and similarities of the life strategies of the individual migration subgroups – recognised refugees, working migrants, students and persons migrating for the purpose of uniting families.

Considering the fact that all of the respondents addressed – Belarusians living in the Czech Republic, to the question of motivation for

the selection of the target country often referred to the historical roots of Belarusian migration to the Czech lands and the similarity in the national characters arising from the similar historical-cultural development of both countries, the introductory part of the text is devoted to a brief overview of the historical development of Belarusian migration. Nevertheless, the central theme of the study remains the contemporary Belarusian migration to the Czech Republic and its development since the 1990s both from the perspective of statistical data and from the perspective of the individual life strategies of the migrants.

The History of Belarusian Migration to the Czech Lands

In connection with the history of Belarusian migration to the Czech lands, the name of one of the most famous Belarusians is usually mentioned, a very reputable personality of Belarusian education and culture to this day, Francysk (Georgy) Skaryna. In 1517, the graduate of the university in Cracow (*Kraków*) and doctor of the University of Padua came to Prague, where in the course of two years he printed the Bible which he had translated into Old Byelorussian and supplied with his own commentaries. The reference to his personality has a special meaning for the present Belarusian political emigration, because Skaryna has become a symbol of the modern Belarusian revival and the fight against totalitarianism (Pešková 2006). Also the cultural and educational society of Belarusians living in the Czech Republic, which was founded in 1997, bears his name. In addition, the interwar emigration from Belarus claimed Skaryna. In the first half of the 1930s, for instance, the magazine *Jiskry Skaryny* (Sparks of Skaryna) was issued in Prague (Sahanovič, Šybieka 2006).

Skaryna, who left his homeland primarily for education, had his companions as well as predecessors, hence students from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania¹ attending universities in Central and Western

¹ The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a conglomerate of very diverse lands and estates. The core of the state comprised historical Lithuania and part of Belarus. It was further granted a principality and annexes, i.e. areas incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a historically formed whole (Sahanovič, Šybieka 2006).

Europe. At Charles University in Prague, there was a college founded for them already at the end of the 14th century (later named the College of Queen Hedvika or also the Lithuanian College). The most intensive contacts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuanian and the Czech lands, which allowed the free movement of students, soldiers and in today's terminology political actors from the ranks of the aristocracy, was connected chiefly with the period when the Jagellonians sat on the throne of Bohemia and with the events that preceded it.

From the end of the 16th century to the beginning of the 20th century, the contacts between the territory of today's Belarus and the Czech lands were minimal. Historian Michal Plavec explains this fact by the historical-political development of both countries, which lost their independence and became parts of large empires (Plavec 2006). Migrational flows heading from Belarus to Bohemia were possible to record already in the 20th century in the interwar period. At that time, Prague became the headquarters of the government in exile of the Belarusian People's Republic²; it was here that the Belarusian Archive Abroad was established, and the first Presidents of the Council of the Belarusian People's Republic Piotra Krecheuski and Vasil Zacharka were buried at Olšanský Cemetery in Prague. Just like the memorial plaque and monument to Skaryna, also this sacred place has a special meaning for a number of political émigrés from Belarus. The exile character and also a certain level of support on the part of the Czech state and its representatives connect them with the interwar emigration.³ The similarity of the current Belarusian migration with

² In Czech specialist literature, it is possible to find the name Běloruská lidová republika (Belarusian People's Republic) as well as Běloruská národní republika (Belarusian National Republic), in the original Belaruskaja Narodnaja Respublika (Беларуская Народная Рэспубліка). In this text, we will use the first of the names mentioned, because the Belarusian (and Russian) term 'narodnaja' translate as 'people's', not 'national'.

³ The Czech Republic officially criticises the policy of contemporary Belarus and supports the Belarusian opposition. It provides students excluded from Belarusian schools the opportunity to study at Czech higher educational institutes. On the grounds of the Parliament, a 'For a Free Belarus' committee was created; the Senators also organise various conferences and round table discussions. Also the Czech not-for-profit sector is developing the activity, for example the society People in Need (Člověk v tísní) has a functioning Belarusian Centre.

the interwar period also lies in the presence of a considerable number of Belarusian students at Czech higher educational institutes.

The interwar Belarusian political emigration was caused by a number of events taking place out at the end of and after World War I. In 1917, it was the November revolution (Great October Socialist Revolution) in St Petersburg and the seizure of power over tsarist Russia, to which Belarusian territory belonged, by the Bolsheviks. In January 1919, the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic was established, which subsequently became one of the founding states of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The members of the Belarusian intelligentsia engaged in the national movement endeavouring to form an independent Belarus declared the Belarusian People's Republic (BPR) on 25 March 1918, but that occurred on land controlled by the Germans. With the withdrawing German Army, the Council of the BPR then went to Vilnius (then a part of Poland), from which it transferred later as the government in exile to Kaunas in Lithuania and in 1923 to Prague. Thus, Czechoslovakia became the centre of the Belarusian political emigration, connected with the structures of the BPR (Řezník 2003).

Along with the Belarusians, also Russians and Ukrainians but even members of other nationalities came to Czechoslovakia in the 1920s within the large migrational waves from Russia (and subsequently from the Soviet Union). In comparison with the Russians and Ukrainians, the Belarusians represented in terms of number a much less distinct group. Daniela Kolenovská mentions that in 1924, when the influx of émigrés culminated, there was not quite one percent of Belarusians among the refugees who numbered between 23,000 and 25,000; it was approximately 150 people (Kolenovská 2007). The predominant part of them resided in Czechoslovakia on the basis of the declaration of the so-called Russian Relief Action, within which Czechoslovakia was to offer young people the opportunity of a secondary or university education and scientists and artists the possibility of further development of their current work. The Action was planned for a period of five years, thus to the end of 1927, because the original consideration expected that the situation in Russia would return to normal within five years at the latest and everyone would be able to

return again. The development in the Soviet Union was shaped entirely differently than was generally expected and for many émigrés the way back was completely closed (Kopřivová 2001).

Most Belarusians in Czechoslovakia (roughly one hundred people) were engaged in the national movement. Like with the Russians and Ukrainians, it was a politically heterogeneous group, which included Christian Democrats, Esers⁴ as well as socialists (Kolenovská 2007). As 'non-Communists', the representatives of the BPR gained the support of the Czechoslovak government. On the basis of an association act, the leadership of the BPR could function here under the name Belarusian Council, but was not allowed to conduct political activities. These activities of the Belarusian exiles were tolerated by the Czechoslovak authorities, but they did not achieve *de facto* recognition of the BPR on the part of Czechoslovakia (Sahanovič, Šybieka 2006, Kolenovská 2007).⁵ Prague was the centre of the Belarusian democratic exiles until the second half of the 1930s. In 1934, Czechoslovakia recognised the Soviet Union, and hence also the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, which caused a limitation of the political activities of the representatives of the BPR (Sahanovič, Šybieka 2006).

An important component of the Belarusian interwar migration comprised students who came to Czechoslovakia to study from Poland (western Belarus was under Polish administration at that time), Lithuania as well as the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic on the basis of the Russian Relief Action but also at their own expense. In 1921, Belarusians obtained twenty scholarships; a year later, they took forty nine. Belarusian students could also take advantage of educational institutes for Ukrainians and Russians (Kolenovská 2007). Students attended higher educational institutes and secondary schools in Prague, Brno, Bratislava, Poděbrady and Příbram. On average, seven Belarusian students attended the Ukrainian Economic Academy

⁴ The Socialist-Revolutionary Party (the PSR, the SRs, or Esers; Партия социалистов-революционеров (ПСР), эсеры).

⁵ However, it is possible to encounter information in some sources that Czechoslovakia was one of the few European states that officially recognised the BPR (cf. material prepared by People in Need for the project One World at School */Jeden svět na školách/*).

in Poděbrady in every school year between 1922 and 1927 (Jamkova 2005). Belarusian names can be found in the matriculation lists of the Czech Technical University or the Faculties of Philosophy and Arts, Natural Sciences and Medicine of Charles University. Many personalities of Belarusian politics and culture who were later important studied here, for instance the poets Mikola Ilyashevich and Uladzimir Zhyłka, philosopher Tamash Hryb, linguist Jan Stankevich, President of the Council of the BPR in Exile Aleksandr Orsa and many others (Datii 2006). From the archival materials, it is possible to get the number of studying Belarusians for individual academic years and individual educational institutes; these data are available also thanks to the organisational aim to support Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian students⁶. The total number for our observed period is not available however.

The compatriot life of the Belarusians in Czechoslovakia contained besides a political also a cultural area. In 1925, the Belarusian cultural society Francysk Skaryna was created. Its publishing house published Krecheuski's almanac *Zamieznaja Bielarus* (Foreign Belarus) and began to issue the magazine *Iskry Skaryny* (Sparks of Skaryna) from 1931. In Prague, a student magazine called simply *Belaruski student* (Kolenovská 2007) also came out. In 1927, the Union of Belarusian Students Organisations (acronym of the name in Belarusian: ABSA) began its activity, which was headquartered in Prague but had branches also in Germany, France, Italy and Lithuania. In the end, the leadership of the ABSA relocated to the last named state in the middle of the 1930s (Sahanovič, Šybieka 2006).

The departure of the students from work in the Belarusian part of Poland in combination with the results of the global economic crisis led to a breakdown of the Belarusian movement in Czechoslovakia. The German occupation of the land and loyal engagement of the Belarusian Committee helping at the side of the occupation bodies then impeached the credit of the Belarusian national movement in Czechoslovakia⁷.

⁶ For instance, in academic year 1924–1925 a total of one hundred and ten Belarusian students attended Charles University alone (Kolenovská 2007).

⁷ Some of the representatives of the Belarusian emigration saw an alliance with the Greater German Reich as a way to independence. During WWII, the Belarusian

The end of this stage of Czech-Belarusian relations was marked by the surrender of the Belarusian émigrés to the Soviet NKVD⁸ after World War II (Kolenovská 2007). Most of these deported Belarusians found themselves in Soviet gulags or were sentenced to long imprisonments. At the end of 1945, the Czechoslovak government handed over to the Soviets the Belarusian Archive Abroad, whose fragments are today components of the Russian and Belarusian archival collections (Surmač 1995).

In the 1950s and 1960s, when a partial liberalisation and destalinisation of society took place in the Soviet Union, also members of the Belarusian interwar political migration, of whom a number had Czechoslovak citizenship, were released from the gulags. Some of them managed to regain Czechoslovak citizenship and the Soviet as well as Czechoslovak authorities allowed them to return to Czechoslovakia (Datii 2006).

The Czech Republic has recorded a recent Belarusian migrational wave in the last fifteen years. Since the middle of the 1990s, Belarusians have been arriving here, but they do not already form such a specifically defined group as it was with the interwar migration. There are also political refugees and students among them, but the greater part represent migrants for economic reasons, who work as employees or run a business in the Czech Republic. Especially thanks to the activity of the political refugees who have acquired asylum, several compatriot organisations function here focused on the popularisation of Belarus and Belarusian independence in Czech society and also focused on the support of the cultural life of the Belarusian community. In 1995, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty was transferred from Munich to Prague and the employees of its Belarusian Service founded the Belarusian culturally educational society Skaryna a year later. The society set up cooperation with the People in Need society, during which a Belarusian information centre opened, thanks to which the interwar tradition of providing education to students from Belarus was built upon. Czech

national movement broke up; a part collaborated with the Germans whereas another part was in the resistance (Sahanovič, Šybieka 2006).

⁸ NKVD (Russian: НКВД, Народный Комиссариат Внутренних Дел *Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del*) or People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs.

higher educational institutes offer Belarusians interested in studying either short-term courses or bachelor's or master's programmes. Since 2002, the Union of Belarusians Abroad has been active in the Czech Republic. The activities of the Union are aimed mainly at the political problem, because it is an association of political refugees. Some Belarusians admit that rivalry and splits have been happening inside the community of political immigrants and other publically engaged people in recent years (Datii 2006; Šmídová 2008). Most Belarusian migrants however do not actively participate in compatriot life; they first have to come to terms with the problems and worries of their own life – the life of a foreigner in the Czech Republic.

Contemporary Migration from Belarus in Numbers – an Analysis of the Statistical Data

Citizens of Belarus represent the thirteenth most numerous foreigner groups in the Czech Republic. As of 31 August 2008, 3918 of them lived on the territory of the Czech Republic on the basis of permanent or long-term residence permits, which is not quite one percent of the overall number of foreigners, which was 420,436 on that date (Alien and Border Police Service Directorate of Police of the CR).

Table 1. Citizens of Belarus with residence permits on the territory of the CR as of 31 December 2007

	Permanent Residence	Long-Term Residence Permit	Total
Men	725	884	1609
Women	1212	928	2140
Total	1937	1812	3749

Source: Alien and Border Police Service Directorate of Police of the CR

Table 2. Citizens of Belarus with residence permits on the territory of the CR as of 31 August 2008

	Permanent Residence	Long-Term Residence Permit	Total
Men	806	907	1713
Women	1303	902	2205
Total	2109	1809	3918

Source: Alien and Border Police Service Directorate of Police of the CR

Since the 1990s, the number of foreigners residing long-term and permanently in the Czech Republic has constantly risen; this is also true in the case of the immigrants from Belarus. The tables presented above prove the growth of the overall number of citizens of Belarus living on the territory of the Czech Republic. Their number increased in the first eight months of 2008 by 169 people. The tables further show data to which greater attention must be paid, namely a slight drop in the number of the citizens of Belarus with a long-term residence permit (3 persons) and a significant increase in the number of the citizens of Belarus with a permanent residence permit (172 people). The rise in the number of persons with permanent residence means that still more immigrants in the Czech Republic stay for longer periods of time and continuously (only in that way do they fulfil the legal conditions for the granting of a permanent residence permit). From this development, it can be judged that also the Belarusian foreigner group in the Czech Republic is stabilising and its members have an interest in living and working, doing business or studying here permanently (see Table 3.).

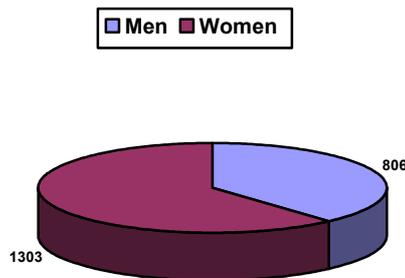
Table 3. Citizens of Belarus with a residence permit on the territory of the CR in 1994–2007

	Permanent Residence	Long-Term Residence Permit	Total
1994	59	95	154
1995	164	236	400
1996	152	977	1129
1997	323	3094	3417
1998	390	3454	3844
1999	417	3526	3943
2000	499	2134	2633
2001	587	1949	2536
2002	662	2066	2728
2003	740	1915	2655
2004	885	2027	2912
2005	951	2069	3020
2006	1521	1690	3211
2007	1937	1812	3749

Source: Alien and Border Police Service Directorate of Police of the CR

Another interesting piece of information which is quite apparent from Tables 1 and 2 is the prevailing number of women among the citizens of Belarus living in the Czech Republic. As of 31 August 2008, women comprised more than 56 % of the total number of immigrants from Belarus with permanent or long-term residence. Among the citizens of Belarus with a permanent residence permit, women represented more than 61 % as of the above-mentioned date (see Graph 1).

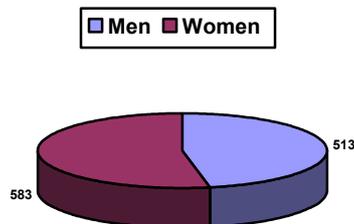
Graph 1. Citizens of Belarus with permanent residence on the territory of the Czech Republic according to sex as of 31 August 2008



Source: Alien and Border Police Service Directorate of Police of the CR

In the capital, Prague, however, the number of men and women from Belarus were considerably more even, namely in the case of people with permanent as well as long-term residence. As of 31 December 2006, 168 women and 154 men with Belarusian nationality who had permanent residence permits and 415 women and 359 men with long-term residence permits were registered in Prague.

Graph 2. Citizens of Belarus with permanent and long-term residence permits in Prague according to sex as of 31 December 2006



Source: Alien and Border Police Service Directorate of Police of the CR

Of all of the registered nationalities, a greater share of women in the overall number of immigrants is shown by besides Belarus also Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Russia. In the category of permanent residence, the number of women predominates over men also in the case of Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Latvia, Uzbekistan, Slovakia and Poland. The situation with the immigrants from the successor states of the former Yugoslavia is completely different. Here, the men significantly predominate over the women, namely both among persons with permanent and with long-term residence. The same holds true for nationals of the countries of Western Europe and North America.

Table 4. Percentage share of women among the nationals of Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus with a residence permit on the territory of the CR as of 31 August 2008

	Mongolia	Kazakhstan	Russia	Belarus
Women in Total	57.1 %	54.1 %	53.2 %	56.3 %
Women with Permanent Residence Permits	66.8 %	56.7 %	54.9 %	61.8 %
Women with Long-Term Residence Permits	55.2 %	50.4 %	51.8 %	49.9 %

Source: Alien and Border Police Service Directorate of Police of the CR

Although the permanent residence of a foreign woman is often connected with the reason of uniting a family, a considerable number of women are no longer merely passive actors of migration following their husbands, fathers or brothers. They arrive independently, chiefly for economic reasons, but their motivations are also an aspiration to increase their social status in their country of origin, an opportunity for financial independence or a means of attaining their own emancipation.

Citizens of Belarus in the Czech Republic are the fourth most numerous groups of foreigners coming from the successor states of the former Soviet Union, after the nationals of Ukraine, Russia and Moldavia. That is what the statistics show, but for the majority of Czech society these immigrants represent a certain monolithic group, which is often

labelled as Russian language. Czechs ‘distinguish’ between Ukrainians and Russians, albeit their view is often influenced by stereotypes, but Belarusians (predominantly Russian speaking) blend with one or the other nationality for them.

So far this chapter has been devoted to the citizens of Belarus living on the territory of the Czech Republic on the basis of a permanent residence or long-term residence permit, thus those who have the status of foreigners with residence permits. The number of Belarusian immigrants residing here illegally is not possible to determine precisely; there is not even a qualified estimate available.

Some of those arriving from Belarus have already obtained Czech citizenship. In 2006, it was a total of 27 persons, 9 of whom were recognised refugees (CSO 2008). Recognised refugees and asylum-seekers⁹ are a specific group within the migration from Belarus, for that reason the conclusion of the chapter will be focused on an analysis of the statistical data dealing precisely with them.

As of 31 December 2007, a total of 297 Belarusian nationals had valid asylum in the Czech Republic. They comprise 9 % of the total number of 3276 persons with the status of recognised refugees as of that date. The number of persons with the status of recognised refugees can not be simply tallied for individual years and thus acquire a total number of Belarusian recognised refugees, because asylum can be revoked, can expire, a recognised refugee can surrender it or can be granted citizenship. As has already been shown, 297 citizens of Belarus had valid asylum in 2007; in the same year 2 persons had their asylum revoked, 6 persons surrender it, one asylum was cancelled because of death and 40 were cancelled for the reason that they were granted citizenship. The overall number of participants in the process from Belarus was 154 persons at the beginning of 2007 and 99 at the end of that year. There were 130 new applications submitted, 32 persons were

⁹ Currently the term used is ‘applicant for international protection’.

granted asylum and 80 applicants were not granted asylum (DAMP 2008).

The first of three citizens of Belarus was granted asylum in the Czech Republic in 1991; the number of asylums granted to Belarusian nationals from the second half of the 1990s increased. The highest number of them was granted in 2006. The number of asylums granted for individual years is not the same as the number of applicants for asylum in the same period. The Department for Asylum and Migration Policy of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (hereinafter only as DAMP) should decide on an application for asylum within 90 days of its submission, but the time limit can be extended. Obviously unjustified applications for asylum, where for example it is determined that it serves purely for the legalisation of residence on the territory of the Czech Republic, when the only reasons given by the applicant are economic, or he or she comes from a country that is considered safe, are decided on in an accelerated process (the decision should be issued within 30 days). Nevertheless, many applicants wait for the issuance of the decision even several years. Asylum can also be obtained consequently by some family members of the recognised refugee; in exceptional cases (chiefly when there is a serious health problem) asylum can be granted for humanitarian reasons.

The greatest number of applications for granting asylum was submitted by Belarusian nationals in 2001 and 2002. After the accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union, a drop in the number of applications for asylum occurred. Since the moment of accession to the European Union, the Czech Republic has been bound by the so-called Dublin Regulation, which prescribes the criteria and mechanisms for determining the member state responsible for the assessment of the application for asylum submitted by a national of a third country in one of the member states (the essence of the regulation is that the application for asylum be deliberated only in the state through which the asylum seeker first entered the EU).

Table 5. The number of citizens of Belarus granted asylum and the number of applicants for asylum coming from Belarus in the CR, 1991– 2007

	Number Granted Asylum	Number of Applicants for Asylum
1991	3	5
1992	2	-
1993	-	7
1994	-	1
1995	-	-
1996	-	6
1997	5	18
1998	7	20
1999	11	44
2000	24	193
2001	25	438
2002	26	312
2003	20	282
2004	29	226
2005	47	216
2006	66	174
2007	32	130

Source: Department for Asylum and Migration Policy of the MI CR

There is much more detailed information available on recognised refugees and applicants for asylum than on foreigners with a residence visa. The majority of applicants for asylum live in reception or accommodation centres; only a small part of them reside outside of these establishments. Recognised refugees are housed in integration asylum centres, where they wait for so-called integration flats or until they find their own housing. Asylum-seekers from Belarus, who submitted a request in 2007, were given lodging in the reception centre Vyšní Lhoty and further in the accommodation centres in Havířov, Kostelec nad Orlicí, Stráž pod Ralskem and Zastávka u Brna. They were 114 adults and 16 children younger than eighteen years of age. Among the adults, there were 79 men and 35 women (DAMP 2008).

In 2005, employees of the Institute of Ethnology of the AS CR drafted a research report, *The Integration of Recognised Refugees and the Effectiveness of the State Integration Programme (Integrace azylantů a efektivita státního integračního programu)*, which focused on the problem of housing, employment and study of the Czech language with recognised refugees participating in the state integration programme (hereinafter only SIP)¹⁰. The database provided by DAMP, which contained the basic data on the recognised refugees and the questionnaire examination conducted by the team from the Institute of Ethnology, provided a comprehensive set of information on the recognised refugees from Belarus included in the SIP. More than 85 % of Belarusian recognised refugees were involved in the programme in 2005. A total of 159 Belarusian nationals were registered in the DAMP database, of that number 125 of them lived in integration flats or in so-called private rooms and 34 in integration asylum centres. There were 89 men and 70 women, whose average age fluctuated around thirty two years of age (it was slightly less with the women than with the men). The demographic composition of the recognised refugees living in integration flats and private rooms is shown in the following table.

*Table 6. Recognised refugees from Belarus living in integration flats and alone by sex
2005*

	Men	Women	Total
Adults	56	37	93
Children under 18	15	17	32
Total	71	54	125

Source: Department for Asylum and Migration Policy of the MI CR

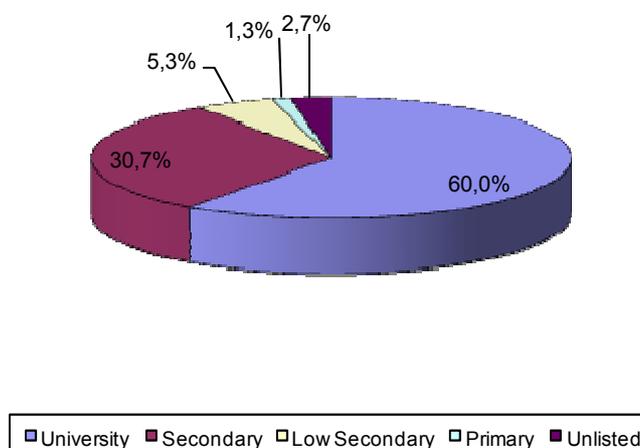
Among the Belarusian recognised refugees, there were families with children as well as individuals represented. Families with children comprised more than 65 % of the total number of recognised refugees; there were 4 five-member families, 9 four-member families and

¹⁰ The State Integration Programme (SIP) (Chapter IX, Sections 68–70 of Act No. 325/1999 Coll.) is aimed at helping recognised refugees when providing for their integration into society. In this way the attempt of the state to help recognised refugees in the areas of ensuring permanent accommodation and study of the Czech language is codified.

16 three-member families. Individuals represented not quite a third of the overall number, more than 85 % of them were men with an average age of thirty years. Women, listed in the database among the individuals, were markedly older than the men of this subgroup of Belarusian recognised refugees. The remaining part was composed of two-member households; they were married or partner couples, siblings or pairs of parent-child (in the age of up to eighteen as well as over eighteen). Unlike the Belarusians who live in the Czech Republic on the basis of permanent and long-term residence, men predominate over women among the recognised refugees and applicants for asylum. The difference in the number of men and women in the group of Belarusian recognised refugees is not so great to influence the share of men and women in total numbers. Moreover, it is relative frequent that the men who are waiting for asylum to be granted or have attained asylum are followed by their wives and children who apply for a residence permit on the basis of family reunification on the territory of the Czech Republic.

Within the implementation of the study, *The Integration of Recognised Refugees and the Effectiveness of the State Integration Programme*, interviews were conducted with 75 Belarusian recognised refugees over eighteen years of age. In comparison with recognised refugees of other nationalities, this group exhibited some specific characteristics. One of them was a high level of education attained. University education was declared by 60 % of the recognised refugees from Belarus addressed, 30.7 % stated that they had a secondary-school leaving examination, 5.3 % had lower secondary education and 1.3 % had primary education (see Graph 3). The education system in the countries of the former Soviet Union differs from the Czech one, therefore the number of university-educated people from these states is sometimes doubted; however, in the case of the Belarusian recognised refugees, this number does not have to be markedly exaggerated because they are frequently political émigrés – dissidents who furthermore also in the Czech Republic work in fields requiring university education (physicians, IT specialists, university and secondary-school teachers, translators, journalists and businessmen).

*Graph 3. Recognised refugees from Belarus according to the highest level of education attained
2005*



Source: Uherek et al. 2005. *The Integration of Recognised Refugees and the Effectiveness of the State Integration Programme*

Belarusians in the CR – Spatial Distribution

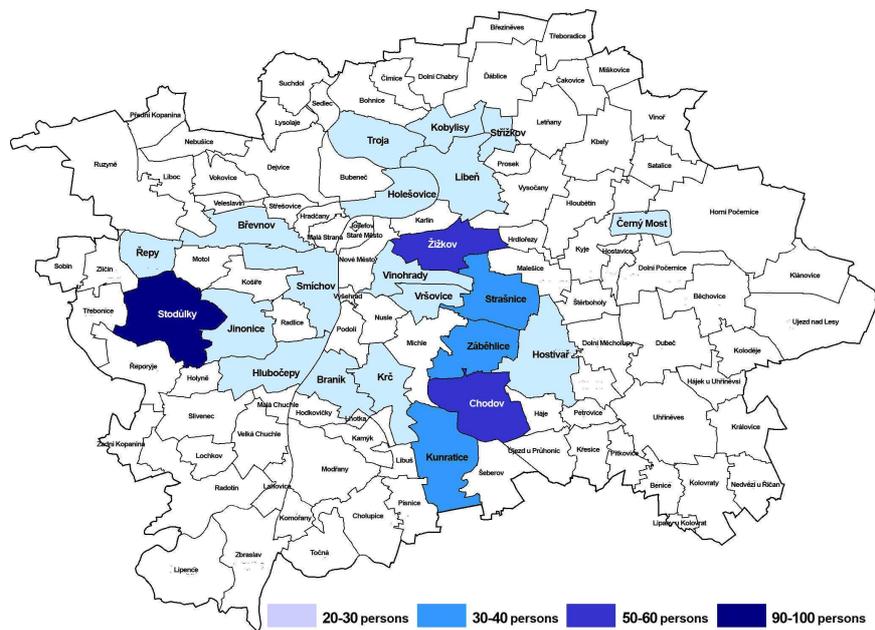
In the distribution of foreign immigrants in the Czech Republic, the trend of concentration in urban domiciles is generally asserting itself, consequently more in cities with a population of more than 100,000 (Uherek 2003), which is a phenomenon characteristic for predominantly economic migrations. The same tendency can be recorded also with Belarusian immigration. Although this includes in itself a significant component of migrants for asylum, whose motives for resettlement do not always have to tend primarily towards economic activities, their spatial distribution reflects a clear preference for the urban milieu.

Among the centres with a high concentration of foreigners, Prague generally dominates with 129,002¹¹ registered persons of foreign nationality followed by Brno, Karlovy Vary, Mladá Boleslav and Ostrava. Also the group of Belarusians copied a similar distribution. The highest number of Belarusian citizens is concentrated again in Prague – the 1373 Belarusians living here represent 1 % of the total number of foreigners in Prague and more than one third of the total number of Belarusian citizens with a residence permit on the territory of the CR.

Prague is attractive for immigrants from Belarus for several reasons at once. Partially, it offers greater possibilities for work in comparison with the other centres, namely both for the qualified and unqualified labour force; moreover, its lively realty market guarantees new arrivals a resolution of the flat situation without a longer time delay. A significant factor that increases the attractiveness of Prague for Belarusian immigrants is also the concentration of educational institutions, predominantly university, the cultural facilities overall, the historical connection with the migrations of the Belarusian intelligentsia in the 16th century, and no less also the presence of compatriots and not-for-profit organisations dealing with foreigners. The compatriot organisations, around which they organise their lives in the new country, represent an important element especially for the political émigrés. In Prague, this role has been performed especially since the second half of the 1990s by the Belarusian Service of Radio Free Europe, which became a means of contact both with Czech society and with the other compatriots for the applicants for asylum.

¹¹ The data as of 31 December 2007 includes only reported foreigners with permanent or long-term residence in Prague.

Prague – the distribution of persons with Belarusian citizenship and a residence permit in the CR. Status as of 31 December 2007



As is apparent from the picture, the distribution of Belarusians in Prague is not entirely equal; with town quarters, it is possible to identify areas with higher concentrations. However, considering the absolute number of Belarusians in Prague, this fact cannot explain the possibilities of ethnic enclaves emerging. The explanation seems more likely that the flat capacity in some quarters on the one hand and the price of accommodation on the other and hence the prestige of individual localities are projected on the way of settlement and the preferences for individual town quarters. Although Prague is only beginning to differentiate on the socioeconomic side in terms of space, until recently it was not possible with a few exceptions to determine unequivocally traditionally prestigious and on the contrary slum areas or quarters; currently the difference between inner Prague and accommodation in the housing estates is starting to be quite evident already in the prices of commercial rents.

The most Belarusian citizens are registered in Stodůlky, Chodov, Žižkov, Kunratice, Záběhllice, Strašnice and Hlubočepy. In the case of the first two most settled localities, it is with the highest probability flats in panel-house blocks of flats within the housing estate wholes of Southwest City (Jihozápadní Město) built during the course of the 1980s and the somewhat older South City (Jižní Město). When dealing with the other more densely populated quarters, it is not possible to state reliably what type of housing it is. Nevertheless, in the case of Žižkov, Strašnice and Záběhllice, it will probably be older municipal blocks of flats and, in the case of Kunratice and Hlubočepy, it will be flats in brick blocks of flats or detached family houses.

Table 7. Spatial distribution of the citizens of Belarus – districts with a concentration greater than 50 persons as of 31 December 2007

Prague	1373
Brno-City	141
Kladno	105
Ostrava	101
Pilsen-City	93
České Budějovice	90
Uherské Hradiště	81
Jihlava	72
Prague-West	72
Teplice	68
Karlovy Vary	63
Ústí nad Labem	61
Pardubice	58
Brno-Country	53
Nymburk	50

Source: Alien and Border Police Service Directorate of Police of the CR

As has already been mentioned, the spatial distribution of Belarusians in the Czech Republic does not exhibit any special divergence in comparison with the distribution of the other foreigner groups. The highest number of persons with Belarusian citizenship, just like it was in the case of the other foreigner communities, is manifested in Prague and the Central Bohemian Region. Nonetheless, in comparison with

the overall distribution of foreigners, the Moravia-Silesian Region is not settled to such an extent in terms of density and on the contrary South Moravian Region along with the Pilsen, South Bohemian and *Ústí nad Labem* Regions exhibit similarly high concentrations – around 6–7 % of the total number of Belarusians with a residence permit in the CR. The distribution within the districts gives us more precise idea. Besides Prague, the greatest concentration is in the large regional and industrial cities like Brno, Kladno, Ostrava, Pilsen, České Budějovice, in the case of Kladno the proximity to the capital most likely plays a role, then further in the border towns of Teplice and Ústí nad Labem. Although the data available on the the spatial distribution of foreigner groups in the CR captures precisely districts as the smallest units, more precise data on residence in urban or rural centres are collected only within the population census, thus the latest are from 2001, it can be stated already on the basis of concentration which is exhibited in Prague and Brno that in the case of Belarusians in the Czech Republic it is rather an urban community.

Belarusians in the Czech Labour Market

The citizens of Belarus with long-term residence, just like the other foreigners from so-called third countries, can work legally on the territory of the Czech Republic only if they have a work permit and a residence permit for the purpose of employment. According to the Act on Employment,¹² foreigners with a permanent residence permit, recognised refugees or persons with complementary protection status do not have to request a work permit; the same hold true also for family members, who obtained a long-term residence permit for the purpose of family reunification, if it is for a family to live together with a recognised refugee or a foreigner with a permanent residence permit. A work permit is also not requested in the case of a foreigner who in the Czech Republic performs systematic educational or scientific activity as a pedagogical employee or an academic employee of a higher educational institution or a scientific, research or development employee in a public research institute or other research organisation

¹² Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on Employment, Section 98.

according to a special legal regulation. Foreigners in the Czech Republic can also work on the basis of a trade license authorisation obtained. Acquiring a trade license authorisation is in most cases administratively easier for foreigners from a third country than acquiring a work permit, and furthermore they do not have to request it again every year like it is with a work permit.

As of 31 December 2007, 1568 nationals of Belarus worked legally in the Czech Republic; this number includes persons with long-term or permanent residence as well as recognised refugees and persons with complementary protection status. Employees and entrepreneurs represented around forty percent of the total number of Belarusian citizens with a residence permit. There were 359 Belarusians working on the basis of a trade license authorisation, which means 22.9 % of all of the Belarusian nationals employed in the observed years on the territory of the Czech Republic. The remaining part, i.e. 1209 persons, hence worked in the Czech labour market in the position of employees (see Table 8). Considering that entrepreneurs did not comprise even a quarter of the total employment of the citizens of Belarus, it is not possible to speak of utilising the strategy of obtaining trade license authorisation as an easier way for the legalisation of residence and work. A high share of entrepreneurs is exhibited primarily by the Vietnamese foreigner group. In the middle of 2006, the share of entrepreneurs in the overall employment of Vietnamese nationals was 99 %, with citizens of Ukraine it was 33 % and with citizens of the Russian Federation 38 % (Horáková 2006).

Table 8. The employment of citizens of Belarus with residence permits on the territory of the CR as of 31 December 2007

Valid work permit	Persons not needing a work permit according to Section 98 of Act No. 435 on Employment	Trade License Authorisation	Total Employment	Total number of persons with a residence permit
852	357	359	1568	3749

Source: RILSA (Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs)

Table 9 and 10 show in which occupations (according to the Classification of Occupations /KZAM/¹³) citizens of Belarus most frequently work in the Czech labour market.

Table 9. Citizens of Belarus with a residence permit on the territory of the CR according to the KZAM classification of occupations as of 31 December 2007

KZAM Classes	Total	Valid Work Permit	Persons not needing a work permit according to Section 98 of Act No. 435 on Employment
9-Auxiliary and unqualified employees	280	247	33
7- Craftsmen and qualified producers, processors, repairmen	264	175	89
8-Plant and machine operators (assemblers)	221	141	80
2-Scientific and professional intellectual employees	155	113	42
3-Technical, health-care, pedagogical employees and employees in related fields	111	70	41
4-Lower administrative employees (officials)	60	39	21
1-Legislators, directors and managers	50	33	17
5-Operational employees in services and shops	45	15	30
6- Qualified labourers in agriculture, forestry and in related fields	23	19	4
0-Members of the armed forces	0	0	0
Total	1290	852	357

Source: RILSA

¹³ KZAM – code list used for the classification of occupations. It was created for the purpose of international comparability of statistical indicators. The subject of the classification is occupation, i.e. specific activity which the employee performs and which is the source of his/her main income. KZAM has 10 main classes; occupations are subdivided in the individual classes on the basis of similarities of the work performed and the qualification necessary.

Table 10. Women with Belarusian citizenship with a residence permit on the territory of the CR according to the KZAM classification of occupations as of 31 December 2007

KZAM Classes	Total	Valid Work Permit	Persons not needing a work permit according to Section 98 of Act No. 435 on Employment
7-Craftsmen and qualified producers, processors, repairmen	153	101	52
9-Auxiliary and unqualified employees	124	97	27
8- Plant and machine operators (assemblers)	111	44	67
2-Scientific and professional intellectual employees	71	46	25
3-Technical, health-care, pedagogical employees and employees in related fields	64	34	30
4- Lower administrative employees (officials)	34	22	12
5-Operational employees in services and shops	31	10	21
1-Legislators, directors and managers	15	9	6
6-Qualified labourers in agriculture, forestry and in related fields	11	8	3
0-Members of the armed forces	0	0	0
Total	614	371	243

Source: RILSA

In overall numbers, the highest number of Belarusian citizens was employed in work positions not requiring higher qualifications of 31 December 2007. They worked as auxiliary and unqualified labourers (Class 9) or as craftsmen and qualified producers, processors, repairmen (Class 7, which includes a wide range of occupations: construction workers, metalworkers, machine-building workers, mechanics, plant and machine repairers, labourers in the production of textiles, clothes, shoes, food and food products, etc.) and further as plant and machine operators, assemblers and drivers (Class 8). More than a fifth, i.e. 22 %, of the total number of employed Belarusian

nationals were scientific and professional intellectual employees (Class 2) and technical, health care, pedagogical employees and employees in related fields (Class 3), thus persons with high qualifications and a high level of education. Citizens of Belarus also work in the Czech Republic as directors and managers of various organisation, societies, companies, etc. (Class 1).

With Belarusian nationals with a long-term residence permit, who worked on the basis of a work permit in the Czech Republic in the observed period, the classes 9, 7 and 8 described above were in the first three places. Persons working in these occupations comprised 66 % of the total number of Belarusians with a work permit (see Table 9, third column). After this group of occupations commonly connected with work migration from the countries of the former Soviet Union, there follow occupations belonging to the already defined classes 2 and 3. This fact can be taken as a certain proof that qualified migrants, who are able to work in their field even outside their country of origin, come to the Czech Republic also from Eastern Europe. The order of occupational classes according to KZAM with citizens of Belarus who do not have to have a work permit (where also recognised refugees and persons with complementary protection fall) exhibits some differences. The employees performing auxiliary and unqualified work which falls under class 9 is only 9.2 % of their total number thus took fifth place in the order. With the previous group of Belarusian citizens, the share of persons working as unqualified and auxiliary labourers reached almost 30 %. Occupations in the 7th and 8th classes were in the first and second place, persons performing these jobs comprised altogether 47.3 %; occupation of the 2nd and 3rd class followed with these occupations being performed by 23.2 % of people from the total number of Belarusian nationals, who worked without the need to apply for a work permit in the observed period (see Table 9, fourth column).

The problem of women with Belarusian nationality finding work in the Czech labour market also deserves a more detailed analysis. The ratio of men and women among Belarusian employees working in the Czech Republic was very even in the period studied; the share of women in the overall total was 50.8 %. Women markedly predominated among the employees, with whom a work permit is not required, where they

composed 68.1 %, which can be explained by the higher number of women with permanent residence within the Belarusian foreigner group (see the section, Contemporary Migration from Belarus in Numbers – an Analysis of the Statistical Data). A slight prevalence of women over men among the employees with Belarusian citizenship has been recorded in the statistics for more than five years already. Jan Černík estimates that the greater share of women was caused by the interest of Russian businessmen to employ them in their companies. He mentions the example of Belarusian chambermaids working in the hotels with owners from the Russian Federation (Černík 2004). We also recorded similar cases, where the businessman from countries of the former Soviet Union employed Belarusians in shops with artistic objects and in galleries in the centre of Prague. Women with Belarusian citizenship as of 31 December 2007 most often work in occupations included in classes 7, 9 and 8, which in the overall number of working Belarusian women came to 63.2 %. More than 20 % of the total number of employed women were women active in the Czech Republic as scientific and professional intellectual employees (Class 2) and technicians, health care providers, pedagogical workers and employees in related fields (Class 3). Around 10 % of Belarusian women worked in various types of services (Classes 4 and 5, because the 4th class besides lower administrative officials also includes clerks in services and shops, for instance employees of travel agencies, receptionists or employees of exchange offices) (see Table 10, second column).

The citizens of Belarus are most frequently employed in the manufacturing industry, 36 % of the total number of legally employed Belarusians worked in this field in the observed period. Activity in the areas of reality and rent and business activities followed; the group of activities thus named includes for example the area of computer technology and various kinds of business. We presume that Belarusians are employed chiefly in the last two named subgroups; these employees are 17.4 %. After them, persons working in construction followed, which comprised 15.1 %. Persons working in a shop comprised 12.2 % and people active in the area of public, social and person services whose number came to 4.2 % of the total number of Belarusian nationals. In the industries like transport and communications, agriculture and fisheries, accommodation and catering, health and

social care and in the area of education, the number of Belarusian employees was less than 50 persons (but more than 10 persons); altogether these employees comprised 14.1 %. The remaining 1 % was Belarusians employed in the area of financial mediation, public administration, the mining of mineral raw materials and domestic activities.¹⁴

In connection with the employment of citizens of Belarus, it is necessary to mention the participants in the pilot project *Selection of Qualified Foreign Workers* (in Czech: *Aktivní výběr kvalifikovaných zahraničních pracovníků*). As of 31 December 2007, 116 Belarusian nationals, of whom 71 were men and 45 women, had participated in this project. There were 92 of them with university education, 3 people had attended a college of higher professional education, 16 had school-leaving examinations and 5 people had reached secondary professional education without a school-leaving examination (Horáková 2008).

Doing business in Belarus is not simple; the private sector there has developed significantly less than in the Czech Republic so far. The possibilities for one's own initiatives and decision making are limited, and the scope for business is also significantly smaller. Bribes are a big problem. In the Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International, Belarus occupied 151st place of the total number of 180 studied countries.¹⁵ It states that as much as 50 % of all business activities in Belarus fall into the illicit sphere of the grey economy. There is no law governing doing business in Belarus; all of the connected legislative regulations are implemented by presidential decrees. Also the conditions for drawing a loan are very harsh. The bureaucratic burden is constantly increasing (Buchta 2008). A number of Belarusians therefore take advantage of the possibility of doing

¹⁴ The data presented here are related to k 31 December 2007; they were provided by RILSA. The names of the branches used in the text come from the Statistical Branch Classification of Economic Activities (Czech acronym: OKEČ). The subject of the branch classification of economic activities is all of the work activities performed by economic subjects. Since 1 January 2008, OKEČ has been replaced by the Classification of Economic Activities (CZ-NACE), some sections in the newly used classification differ.

¹⁵ http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2008, the 180th position in this is considered as the most corrupt.

business abroad. As of 31 December 2007, 359 citizens of Belarus had trade license authorisation in the Czech Republic. As of that date, 488 trade license authorisations had been issued; the proportion of trade license authorisations issued to the holders of trade license authorisation represents a value of 1.4 %. The number of Belarusian nationals with trade license authorisation fluctuated between 352 and 394 persons from 2002 until 2007 (Horáková 2008).

Belarusians in Bohemia – the Results of the Qualitative Research

The following chapter sets its goal to analyse qualitatively the life strategies of Belarusians living in the CR and thus to complement the information obtained from secondary sources. The data, which have become the base for this part, come from the ethnographic research of selected representatives of this foreigner group in Prague and Kladno, hence localities manifesting the first and third greatest concentrations of immigrants from Belarus within the CR. For a more precise idea of the life of the Belarusian community in Bohemia, we have conducted questionnaire examination and in-depth interviews among Belarusians living in Prague and Kladno during the second half of 2008. The questionnaire dealing with lifestyle, social networks and satisfaction with life in a new country was answered by 30 respondents and provided the base for the in-depth interviews 10 informants.

The respondents were selected with the assistance of contacts provided by several informants, members of the Belarusian community in Bohemia, whom we addressed for this purpose. Just like Belarusian immigration as a whole, also our analysed group, albeit in a different proportion, was composed in terms of the character of migrations of the subgroup of recognised refugees¹⁶, work migrants and students, to a lesser extent than migrants for family reasons (who have a residence permit for the purpose of family reunification). Nevertheless, it is necessary on this point to draw attention to the fact that it is not always possible to place a precise border between these ‘types’, because many

¹⁶ We included people with the status of recognised refugee, persons with complementary protection as well as applicants for asylum and complementary protection in this group.

recognised refugees also leave their country of origin for better working conditions and dissatisfaction with the political situation in the country contributes to the departure of many working foreigners. In the same way, students seek the possibility of realising their educational ambitions at foreign higher educational institutions partially because domestic education favours only certain opinion groups and disadvantages others. However, from a legislative perspective, it is a separate category of foreigners and also in reality their life strategies proceed along different lines.

Table 11. The category of migrants according to the main motives of migration

Main Motivation for Migration	Total	Of Whom Women
Political reasons, application for asylum or complementary protection	10	5
Work	11	6
Study	6	2
Living with family	3	3

From this perspective, the group of migrants for asylum is thus one third, slightly surpassed by the 37 % work migrants, students are one fifth and persons migrating for family reasons one tenth of the people included in the research sample we studied. Within these four working groups, several of the mentioned reasons for departure from the country of origin can be found. Migrants for asylum entirely agree on so-called political reasons, under which they include primarily prosecution for expressing opinions criticising the current political-social conditions of Belarus. More specifically it is persecution at work and threats regarding their family members. Work migrants leave Belarus for better wage conditions, a more accommodating situation for businessmen, for envisaged faster career growth and the opportunity to

improve in their field, which is an alternative listed by qualified employees. Students are brought to the CR partially by the desire to be educated at a foreign higher educational institution, where they expect higher quality education and greater selection in the fields offered, and partially also by the fact that they had been excluded from their domestic universities for political reasons and they wanted to complete their studies. Czech universities, specifically Charles and Masaryk Universities, offer Belarusian students prosecuted for their political or civil activities the opportunity to complete their studies at their faculties. The last group, not very numerous in our sample, lists living with their family as the reason for their migration, or that the individual decided to migrate to follow a member of their family, although their grounds for migration are different. In the case of the respondents from our observed group, it was women, who followed their husbands, migrants for asylum; nevertheless the political conditions in the country alone did not motivate them to migrate, or at least not fundamentally.

Even the current residence status in the target country can partially be related to the reason for migration, even though this cannot be entirely discerned. Of the respondents we observed that were classified above as migrants for asylum, half reside in the CR on the basis of the status of a recognised refugee, 20 % of them are only in the position of applicants for asylum or complementary protection and the remaining 30 % have permanent residence. Work migration is already by its essence intended to be long-term or permanent residence, assuming that it is a legal residence. Of our sample, almost two thirds reside here on the basis of a permanent residence permit; the rest is then equally divided between persons with Czech citizenship and persons residing in the CR illegally. Most of the students we studied reside in the CR on student visas, then a lesser part on the basis of a residence permit. Moreover, it is typical for this group, just like for the greater part of the people included in work migration, that the character of their residence is intermittent. The move between the CR and Belarus at intervals set by the agreed work and organisation of the academic year. In contrast, the migrants for asylum live in the CR continuously.

The length of the stay in the CR with the respondents addressed was nearly uniformly distributed between 1995 and 2008 with the arrivals

in 2006 and 1999 exceeding the other years by 10 %, or by 7 %. In the first case, they are migrants for asylum and then in the case of 1999 a mixture of work and family reasons (they are people with residence permits for the purpose of employment and for the purpose of family unification). As far as the place of residence is concerned, more than three quarters of the respondents currently live in Prague and the rest in Kladno, 43 % of them then have lived in the place of their current residence since their arrival in the CR. The most numerous representation is in the subgroup of migrants for asylum. As our results prove, this group exhibits the least frequency of moving around the republic.

In terms of the migrational motivation, we were further interested in the circumstance that led to the selection of precisely the CR as the target country. Also in this regard, it is possible to speak partially about the relation to the reasons for migration, because the students chiefly chose the CR as a result of study being offered and made possible for them by universities here, in a smaller percentage of cases they then list as a reason a higher quality education system in combination with the linguistic similarity and the wider offer of study fields in comparison with domestic higher educational institutions. Work migrants select the CR mainly because of better pay conditions, another strong motivational factor are the overall more accommodating conditions for doing business and the inspiration of the experience of people close to them. Migrants for work thus follow their acquaintances, compatriots, who had found work in the Czech labour market already before. The greater part of the migrants for asylum and several of the work migrants also mention the language and cultural similarities of the target country with the country of origin, a positive relation to the CR based on previous visits as a tourist or mediated experiences. A considerable factor is also the amount of compatriots living here, thus the awareness of people to whom it is possible to turn immediately after arrival. Another reason for the selection of the CR can be also its proximity to Belarus in the geographical sense; the journey to the country of origin is relatively short¹⁷.

¹⁷ The journey by train takes roughly one day.

The work sphere is certainly a significant dimension for every person of productive age; this dimension is all the more important for migrants as it represents a prerequisite for staying in the new country for a longer time and to a certain extent we can perceive it as an indicator of the level of integration into society in the target country. Considering the economic position of the respondents included in our study, several basic categories can be identified: persons in the position of employee, self-employed persons, persons working illegally, studying, unemployed and pensioners. The absolute majority – 60 % of the persons from our studied sample, albeit in whatever form, work, 20 % are students, 17 % unemployed and 3 %, which is one case, a pensioner. Then the most numerous subgroup within the group of working people are employees, followed by private businessmen. Approximately 20 % of the working people function without a work contract. The subgroup of employees, where salaried employment for a determined period dominates, is comprised of men and women in a proportion of 3:5 and, in terms of fields, it is most often construction (predominantly labourers, to a lesser degree director's positions), information technology, services and labour professions in industry. Self-employed persons do business in the areas of culture, fine arts, tourism, information technology and textile production, nevertheless none of the fields can be labelled as dominant considering the sample size. The majority of the people from the subgroup of illegally working are active in the area of the sales of goods, moreover two of the cases work illicitly during their studies, but it is not possible here to determine unequivocally which activity is primary. The group of students is in the most part represented by men, they are students at state higher educational institutions. Within the unemployed persons included in our study, it is further possible to distinguish between unemployed listed in the registers of the labour office (LO) and unemployed without registration. In the case of the people registered at the LO, the period since they had lost their jobs was on average around one year, but two thirds of these people already worked in the CR.

The process of seeking work from the position of a foreigner often takes place within the social networks, which include friends, acquaintances, relatives and former or current colleagues. This experience was confirmed also by the majority of respondents

questioned by us. In obtaining primarily the first job in the CR, they were in the most part assisted by acquaintances, compatriots and relatives. A certain part found work through the help of advertisements in periodicals and on the internet, and only sporadic cases through the aid of the labour office. It is further characteristic for employment in a foreign land that it is often a career collapse. The Belarusian foreigner community is usually generally characterised as educationally above average, furthermore the language barrier in the Czech milieu is not so strong, which to a certain extent could eliminate the necessity to accept low-grade work. There is also in our sample a relatively high number of university-educated, comprising one third of the respondents; the others have secondary education completed with a school-leaving examination, only one case listed education at a training college without a school-leaving examination. Considering their qualification, 44 % of the respondents said that their current work in the CR did not correspond to their education and that from the perspective of the employment position it was a collapse. Half of these persons were specifically university-educated people. Those, who did not become worse professionally in the new country, are then active in the areas of information technology a construction.

Another important prerequisite for life in a new place is housing. In this respect, foreigners arriving in the CR have various possibilities depending primarily on their financial resources. The type of housing that foreigners in the CR select arises to a considerable degree from their goals for the stay. Work migrants arriving without their families in the CR for the purpose of making money quickly with an imagined return to the source country will only seldom endeavour for quality rental or their own housing, and on the contrary the idea of a five-member family in the small room of a lodging house is unthinkable from a long-term perspective. Certainly greater possibilities in this regard are offered by big cities, where the offer of rental housing is adequate – in Prague, there is even a reality agency focused on Russian-speaking clientele. Nevertheless, the situation can be complicated by the fact that in the case of the interested parties it is a foreigner – Czech flat landlords, the owners of the property, many times give preference to Czechs or foreigners from the West and if they discover that it is a Russian-speaking person, they sometimes give other

interested parties precedence. This approach originated mainly from the fears that they are Ukrainian labourers and the flat will become a flophouse for other unannounced people, experience partially comes into play here and partially certainly stereotypical views. On the other hand, it seems to be easier to obtain housing at a lodging house, for whose owners foreigners from the East are the target group, but the price does not correspond to the quality of the services provided. Another alternative, affecting only migrants for asylum, is the possibility to request the allocation of an integration flat. They can then be fulfilled by the Ministry of the Interior only if the applicant has the status of a recognised refugee in the country, but even behind the fulfilment of this prerequisite is that the offer of integration flats is always lower than the demand for them, and it is thus not always the rule that recognised refugee automatically obtains an integration flat. Furthermore, a disadvantage of this system is that the applicant cannot choose the locality of their housing very much, on the other hand, there is a significant financial savings here in comparison with common commercial rent.

In the case of the Belarusians included in our sample, we identified the above-mentioned types of accommodation, hence housing through letting and subletting, at a lodging house, in integration flats¹⁸, and further housing at student halls of residence and in their own properties. Most frequently housing is through letting or subletting; almost one half of the respondents resolve their flat situation in this way. Between these two relations (letting and subletting), the share is almost equal, housing in subletting has a slight preponderance with 57 %¹⁹. Considering the overall numerous representation of the category of students, it is not surprising that the second position was taken by persons, who live at student halls of residence. Another subgroup, which represents 13 % of the total sample, are the occupants of integration flats, and the same share is exhibited by the occupants of

¹⁸ We distinguish between rent (meant as commercial rent) and an integration flat, in spite of its use being also on the basis of a rental agreement, because, in the case of an integration flat, it is housing that is fully or partially subsidised by the state.

¹⁹ Moreover, here it is not possible to say with certainty that the respondent really lists the type of relation he/she has with the property owner, because many people incorrectly distinguish between letting and subletting.

properties which they themselves own, which their relatives own or for which they are paying off a mortgage. The remaining category, i.e. lodging house and pension, is represented only minimally. In terms of satisfaction with the current housing, a sixty-percent majority is not satisfied, in which all of the occupants of lodging houses or pensions are dissatisfied, more than three quarters of those subletting, half of those letting flats and half of the occupants of integration flats. The most frequently mentioned reason for dissatisfaction is the lack of space; the respondents would like larger accommodation, but a lack of financial means does not allow most of them to realise this wish. The fact that the property does not belong to them also does not suit them. Further, the cost of the existing housing and poor state of the living space were listed by them as reasons for dissatisfaction only in the third position.

Just like it was in the search for work, acquaintances, compatriots and relatives manifest themselves as important mediation actors also in the case of looking for a place to live in the case of both Belarusians and foreigners generally. Almost half of the respondents addressed listed precisely this way of obtaining their current housing. Others then acquired their housing through advertisements on the internet, in the case of integration flats through the DAMP of the MI of the CR, and in the case of the student halls of residence through the individual schools. Nevertheless, the majority have such experience that, partially considering the already mentioned problems with obtaining a rental from the position of a foreigner, the method of searching for housing through acquaintances had proved itself more. They either recommend to these new interested people another landlord or, as it was in three of the cases we included, they gave up for the new person areas where they had lived alone up until then.

The ways of housing do not differ only in terms of the size or type of living space and the type of ownership relation to the property. An important element are also the people with whom the household is shared and the relation to these people. Within our sample, the least people – 10 % live alone without another person in the household, they are mainly males. A third of the people share a household with other persons, roommates, where the relation to the roommate varies from

friends all the way to strangers. Both students sharing a room at hall of residence, representing a third of this category, and persons living in co-tenancy through letting or subletting are included in this category. In this case, they are often working women of 28–39 years of age, they usually share the flat with female friends. However, considering the persons with whom our respondents share a household, living with family members is listed most frequently, i.e. one half, usually with a (second) partner and children. As is apparent from these data, living in families is represented in our sample by precisely one half of the respondents, if we separate out the group of students in the remaining half, family living then predominates. It is further necessary to mention on the family living of the respondents that half of these, who have their nuclear families in the CR, further have parents, siblings and other relatives in Belarus. Then of the persons who live alone or in co-tenancy 80 % have their own family, meant as parents and siblings, hence not the nuclear family, likewise in Belarus. Only a tenth of the respondents do not have anyone whom they could label as family members, relatives.

Family members and friends or acquaintances are a significant integration element for an immigrant, as has been proved by research projects already before in this area²⁰. The presence of family and primarily the feeling of responsibility for its members appear as a strong motivational factor in the process of familiarising themselves with the new environment. Individual family members at the same time through their individual relations, which they establish in the new society, mediate contacts for the entire family, if they do not lead to an encasement of the family and closing of itself to the surrounding society. These facts are proved also by our research. The majority of the Belarusians included in our sample living in the CR with their nuclear family establish further contacts with their colleagues, compatriots, etc., hence their social capital is not limited only to their close relatives. Nevertheless in situations, when the respondents resolve their private affairs or stand before an important decision, it is more often the family to whom they turn with a request for advice or

²⁰ The international project INTERFACE, the results are available at http://www.vupsv.cz/Fulltext/ul_929.pdf

assistance. With migrants, who arrive in the target country individually, because they have not yet established their own nuclear family, thus this advisory function is naturally held by acquaintances, companions, and roommates; they turn to family members, who in their case live abroad, more in acute cases, for instance if financial straits arise. On the other hand, the questioned respondents entrust the resolution of let's say official, formal affairs, affecting the life of the foreigner in the target country, whether already living with family or not, in the majority of cases rather to the professionals specified for that – employees of the offices, social workers, lawyers. In terms of friends, 80 % of the respondents addressed state that friends and acquaintances live in the place of their residence, thus in the same city, moreover, they confirm also strong ties to their compatriots. In all of the cases, the respondents' close circle of friends comprised compatriots, in two thirds of the cases there are also Czech among the respondent's friends and in more than one third other foreigners too, mostly Russian-speaking. The intensity of the contact with compatriots varies from everyday contact when the respondents work with Belarusians in the same collective, or when their workplaces are in the immediate vicinity, through regular meetings within religious or friendly visits through to occasional unplanned meetings. More than one third of the questioned added on the topic of compatriot life that they actively seek contact with the other people of Belarusian provenience. Compatriots represent an important mediator with Czech society and a kind of hold primarily in the first phases in the target country and inclusion in social structures, nevertheless as was proved by our findings, not even after several years of residence when the early problems with finding work, housing and the first contacts drop off, compatriots remain a significant component of the social networks of an individual.

The Social Network and Social Capital of Belarusian Migrants

Migration is a dynamic process and therefore it is necessary to regard migrants as active subjects, who utilise various strategies and circulate among several social spaces. In the majority of cases, arrival in the target country does not mean a complete severance of the contacts with the country of origin. Migrants are often a source of information and

knowledge for their family, friends and acquaintances in their native country. At the same time, they are a source of income for their relatives. Their social, cultural as well as economic capital increases the possibility for further migrations. Migrants create a social sphere, which connects the country of origin and the country in which they newly settle (Glick-Schiller 1992).

In the group of Belarusians addressed by us, persons already correspond to Portes' characteristics of the transnational migrant can be identified, thus an individual living two lives, speaking two languages and having a home in two countries (Portes 1999). They are respondents residing in the Czech Republic on the basis of long-term or permanent residence permits, who arrived for work or study. These respondents state that their residence on the territory of the Czech Republic is intermittent that they travel for some time back to Belarus. The length of their stay in their country of origin and the intervals between the individual visits of home are very individual. It depends of course on the financial and time possibilities but also on the level of mooring in the target country. It arises from the testimony of a number of respondents that over time they established strong ties in the new environment, whereas the ties in the country of origin weakened. We repeatedly recorded the claim that in the time after their arrival they had the idea of home connected unequivocally with Belarus, with a specific place in Belarus and mainly with family and the closest relatives, who remained in Belarus. After some time, however, they discovered that they are not able to say where they feel at home. They identically claimed that it is still not yet in the Czech Republic, but it is not longer in Belarus either. One of the female respondents stated that when she went to Belarus before, she would say that she was going 'home' and today she already says that she is going 'on holiday'.

Recognised refugees, applicants for asylum or for complementary protection cannot travel to their country of origin. Their contacts with family and friends are usually realised chiefly by means of telephone, email or letters. The interview with the respondents from the circle of political refugees confirmed for us the hypothesis of the existence of a social network influencing the migration for asylum from Belarus to the Czech Republic. An important role is played here by ties to

the circle of people connected with the Belarusian Service of Radio Free Europe. This social network established on the common fate of a dissident forced to leave home represented important social capital for them, which more or less eased their first days and months in the target country. A considerable part of the respondents, of whatever residence status, stated that they utilised the networks created on the basis of a common provenience especially when seeking housing and employment. However, these ties lost importance over time for a number of respondents. Some respondents also participate (or participated) in social networks created within the migration from post-Soviet countries. Connection in these social ties gained for the respondents of their family members for example a greater possibility of acquiring work or at least temporary work on a contract or even illicitly.

The respondents in the interviews stated that in the first months (or even years) they were more embedded among compatriots and Russian-speaking foreigners. They gradually however began to create networks also outside the compatriot or foreigner community. Some even began to perceive this embedding as a barrier to their integration in Czech society. They most often mentioned the fact that if they were constantly among compatriots or foreigners, they did not have the opportunity to learn the Czech language well. They perceive an insufficient ability to communicate in Czech primarily as a significant obstacle when seeking employment, which would correspond to their education and experience. According to their experience, a good knowledge of the Czech language also helps during dealings at the authorities but also in everyday life. One of the female respondents espouses the opinion that mostly Czechs appreciate when a foreigner speaks Czech and that then they act more accommodatingly towards them.

The level of participation in social ties with members of the majority is very individual. Each of the respondents is a component of more networks, daily joining various social spheres and performing different social roles. The respondents have more frequent and closer contacts with Czechs in the work sphere. It is precisely this sphere according to many authors that is a space for building new social relations (e.g. Szaló 2002). Several respondents found also friendly ties at work.

The contacts between them and their colleagues then reached over also into their leisure time and onto the private level. Especially the female respondents emphasised the sphere of 'neighbourhood' and the social network connected with parenthood. Belarusian women taking care of the children and household did not remain in isolation, on the contrary they established informal contacts and ties with Czech women and gained social capital in the form of an increased level of Czech and the possibility of insight into the functioning of the family life of the majority population. The testimony of the respondents indicates that those, who live with their family in the Czech Republic, have more social relations with members of the majority society namely primarily in the place of their residence. The existence of strong ties (family) in their case assists in the creation of weak ties in the local society and thus positively influences the process of integration.

The knowledge acquired from the questionnaire examination and chiefly from the interview with the respondents indicates that for newly arrived migrants the social networks based on a common origin are more important than for the long-term settled. For them, on the contrary, remaining only in these networks and the lack of social relations outside of them can mean a barrier in integration, i.e. if he endeavours for it (cf. Hagan 1998).

Conclusion

Although it usually blends with the migrants from the Russian Federation and Ukraine in the eyes of the Czech public, and in comparison with these two groups is in terms of numbers less significant, the Belarusian foreigner group has its specific migrational history and development in relation to the Czech Republic as a target country. Within the migration heading from the territory of Belarus to Bohemian the arrival of F. Skaryna is considered to be a significant milestone from a historical perspective, because through his activity in Prague at the beginning of the 16th century he inspired further scholars and students to come and became a symbol of the fight against totalitarian regimes primarily for political migrants of the 20th century,

with whom also the majority of contemporary migrants for asylum from Belarus identify.

Currently, Belarusian immigrants represent the thirteenth largest foreigner group in the Czech Republic, the nit holds the fourth position within the migrants from post-Soviet republics. It can generally be said that it is a foreigner group preferring long-term settlement in target countries, which is proved by the increasing trend in the number of permanent residence permits assigned. In terms of spatial distribution, it is an entirely urban group with the greatest concentration in Prague. They find work most often in employee positions not requiring higher qualifications. The proportion of entrepreneurs in the total number of Belarusians employed in the CR, which does not even reach one quarter, does not indicate the strategy of acquiring authorisation for running a business as an easier way to legalise residence, as is the case for instance with the Ukrainian or Russian foreigner community. With regard to post-Soviet immigrations, the Belarusian migrants maintain a certain singularity also in terms of the motivation for migration. Whereas in the case of immigrants from Ukraine, Russia or Moldavia the so-called economic reasons clearly dominate, behind which are hidden not only a vision of higher financial income but also the possibility of career advancement or an increase in social status in the country of origin, a considerable share in the group of Belarusian immigration is taken also by migrants for asylum, who leave their country of origin chiefly for political reasons. In the society-wide framework, it is generally a very well integrated foreigner group, usually not even distinguished from the majority population.

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