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Martina Mysíková

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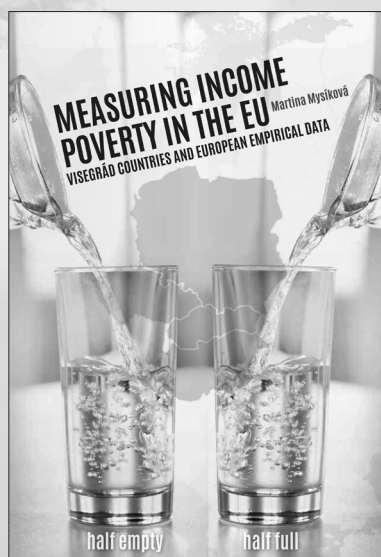
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Thematic Issue

Moving Beyond the Narrative of the Migration 'Crisis'

Guest Editors

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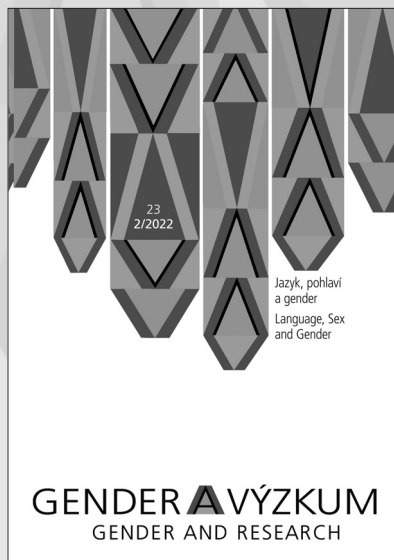
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GENDER A VÝZKUM
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Introduction to the Special Issue: Moving Beyond the Narrative of the Migration 'Crisis'

In her State of the Union address delivered in September of 2020, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen indicated that 'migration is an issue that has been discussed long enough'. She further stated that the migration 'crisis' had caused 'deep divisions' and 'scars [that are] still healing today', calling on member states to 'step up' to the challenges of migration (Ellyat, 2020). We firmly agree with the latter, but we take issue with the idea that anything related to migration has been 'discussed long enough'. The 'deep divisions' and 'scars' caused by what has been dubbed a migration 'crisis' have persisted long beyond the mid-2010s, when the term 'crisis' exploded throughout media worldwide. In fact, we feel that migration remains a crucial issue to discuss among politicians, the public, and scholarly circles alike. To do so productively, however, one may need to step back from the portrayal of migration as a 'crisis' and, rather, explore the underlying processes that contribute to the formation of this portrayal, as well as its real-world implications.

In this special issue, we thus treat the 'crisis' as a socially constructed narrative that has acquired a particular prominence in contemporary debates on migration. In the European context, this narrative has been proliferating, especially since the mid-2010s, when it was used to discursively frame the debates surrounding a rapid increase in immigration flows from the Middle East and North Africa; since then, the situation has been commonly labelled the European migration 'crisis' or the European refugee 'crisis' (Lee & Nerghes, 2018). However, as Bello (2022) reminds us, the crisis narrative is neither new nor unique to the European context. She traces the global proliferation of this narrative to the end of the Cold War and associates it with new trends in nation state responses to migration, particularly its growing securitisation. She argues that a discursive portrayal of human mobility as a threat is integral to the social construction of a 'crisis' that must be 'manage[d] through the activity of both state and non-state actors, who hold a specific cognition of ethnicity and nation that informs a prejudicial narrative of migration' (Bello, 2022, p. 1328). We relate to this argument because we find the emphasis on cognition and prejudice useful in deconstructing the underlying distinctions between 'us' and 'them', which not only help to sustain the narrative of 'crisis' but also represent the key dichotomy in all migration debates.

From the perspective of cultural sociology, which largely informs our approach to migration studies, the distinctions between 'us' and 'them' are not based on any objective, innate characteristics of native-born populations and people crossing borders. Instead, they are socially constructed. They reflect an ongoing process of boundary work that takes place once particular human features,

such as the place of birth, skin colour, religious beliefs, language competences, and even moral values and ways of life, become recognised as important in a given social and political context. This socially ascribed importance transforms them into the basic building blocks of symbolic boundaries, the 'conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space', and thus provide 'tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality' (Lamont & Molnar, 2002, pp. 168–169). Symbolic boundaries are crucial to the formation of group identities (Barth, 1969), as they are simultaneously capable of producing strong feelings of belonging, as well as Othering, depending on which side of the boundary an individual finds themselves on. In this way, symbolic boundaries enable communities of various scopes and scales—from residents of a particular neighbourhood to citizens of a nation state or even people identifying with transnational bodies such as the European Union—to produce shared collective representations of themselves, as well as Others. We argue that, to understand the growing prominence of the narrative of 'crisis' in contemporary migration debates on various levels, we must understand the precise ways in which migration in general and the specific features of people crossing borders in particular are threatening the collective representations of 'us' that various communities have created for themselves over the years.

At the same time, even if we recognise the socially constructed nature of the narrative of 'crisis', such recognition does not make this narrative less real in terms of its consequences. Narratives are prominent carriers of meanings that are capable of awakening our emotions, shaping our imagination, and informing our understandings of what is going on in the world around us (Frye, 1957). Therefore, once migration becomes narratively portrayed as a 'crisis', such a portrayal inevitably impacts the responses to migration on many levels. Indeed, recent studies focus on the implications the discursive portrayal of migration as a 'crisis' have for the proliferation of moral panics across societies (Androvičová, 2016), the rise of political populism and far-right movements (Casaglia & Coletti, 2021), an increase in various forms of racism and xenophobia (Jaskulowski, 2019) and the overall polarisation of societies (Ambrosini et al., 2019). In addition to paying attention to the underlying cultural logic behind the production of narratives concerning the migration 'crisis', we must thus also study their real-world implications, as present in the responses of various actors—whether laypeople, political representatives, or members of civil society—to migration and people crossing borders.

The Czech context

This special issue allows us to explore the implications of the narrative of 'crisis' in the specific context of Czechia, a mid-sized country located in Central Europe, where migration had not figured largely in scholarly, public or political agendas

until the mid-2010s. Due to the history of closed-border regimes during socialism (1948–1989), Czechia, together with other Central European countries, generally saw very low levels of foreign-born residents, as a proportion of their population, in the second half of the twentieth century. Although this trend began to change upon Czechia's entry into the European Union in 2004, which forced the country to open its labour market to the foreign workforce, when the migration 'crisis' unfolded in 2015, foreign state nationals constituted just 5% of the population. Few of the more than one million people who headed to Europe that year had Czechia as a destination, especially because there was little evidence of welcome for those seeking refuge status.

Notwithstanding the lack of any appreciable migration flows, the outpouring of media, political, and public attention to the 'crisis' was phenomenal. In Czechia, a study of online news portals revealed an abundance of qualities such as 'urgency, extraordinariness, overload and insecurity, and attributed these qualities to the figure of an indefinite wave of migrants heading to Europe' (Tkaczyk, 2017). An aptly named piece entitled 'A Refugee Crisis Without Refugees' (Jelínková, 2019) connected media portrayals of this type to policy consequences. The depiction of refugees as a security threat and an administrative burden partially imposed by the European Union served to legitimise anti-refugee policies instituted by the Czech government. Even as the 'crisis' seemed to subside, migration continued to represent a top issue in the 2018 Czech Presidential Election, with the two major candidates presenting themselves as the right person to avert the 'crisis' that they agreed was facing the country in the form of EU refugee quotas and a threat to 'European culture' (Jaworsky, 2021).

The public, in turn, has grown increasingly fearful and wary of people potentially coming to their country from abroad. Indeed, the type of securitisation of migration that is present in the Czech media, whether it is based on a symbolic or real threat, is a crucial predictor of negative attitudes and prejudices towards authorised and unauthorised immigrants and refugees (Murray & Marx, 2013). For example, Tkaczyk (2017, p. 91) cites polls reporting that 'the proportion of Czech respondents who perceived irregular migration as a real and serious security threat doubled from 32% in 2014 to 65% in 2015'. At the height of the mid-2010s 'crisis', almost 90% of Czech respondents perceived refugees as a threat to Europe, while approximately 80% identified refugees as a threat to Czechia specifically (Hanzlová, 2018). Even though Czech public recently turned out to be largely welcoming to Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion—56% Czech respondents reported that the country should accept them (Červenka, 2023)—such sentiments have not abated. As this special issue goes to press, refugees are still seen as a 'major' or 'minor' threat to Czechia by 90% of the population (Spurný, 2023).

Critical engagement with the narrative of the migration 'crisis'

The overarching aim of this special issue is to engage critically with the narrative of the migration 'crisis' and its implications for Czech responses to migration and people crossing borders. We believe this requires an exploration of the dynamics occurring at various spatial and cultural levels, including the local, national, and/or supranational. Furthermore, methodological issues arise when researching the 'crisis' in relation to people crossing borders, such as how to best capture the nuances of the perspectives of the public, the migrants themselves, and other stakeholders. The four articles in the issue take on these considerations in various ways, with each addressing some aspect of the fallout from the emergence of a 'crisis' concerning people who cross borders to live in Czechia.

In 'The legitimacy of European Union migration and asylum policy among the Czech public,' Krotký, Jaworsky, and Kaniok consider the ways in which Czechs perceive and make meaning regarding the supranational policy field and its response to the migration 'crisis', especially in setting refugee quotas to help alleviate pressure on border countries. Using the analytical lens of legitimacy, they unpack the complexities of the relationship between the EU and migration, parsing legitimacy at three levels: input, output, and throughput. What's unique about their study is that they analyse both 'anti-immigrant' and 'pro-immigrant' discourses among the Czech public, in contrast to research that portrays Czechia simply as a xenophobic context. Of course, they acknowledge that some differences of opinion exist, but at the same time, they find that both camps tend to challenge EU legitimacy in the context of the 'crisis', even if for different reasons and along different dimensions. The main implication of their findings is that, even for those who accept the EU as a legitimate actor that absolutely should respond to the migration 'crisis', the EU nevertheless fails to deliver in its handling of migration.

In an analysis also targeted at the policy field, this time at the national level, Kotýnková Krotká draws our attention to migrants themselves and their everyday experiences of the 'crisis'. In her contribution, '"Not knowing When It's Going to Happen and What's Going to Happen": Time Politics in Applying for a Residence Permit in Czech Republic', she reveals the nuances of 'time politics', the practices that govern others through time. Studying the process of applying for a residence permit among non-EU nationals in the city of Brno, she finds that the time politics involved in the application process's lengthy waiting periods significantly affects applicants' lives. The applicants describe the waiting period as a time of being *in between*. In fact, they are situated in a liminal position with a seemingly uncertain ending, as exemplified by the impossibility of moving (temporally, spatially, and socially)–a sentiment Kotýnková Krotká describes as *stuckedness*. This liminality and uncertainty bring the migration 'crisis' to the level of everyday routines. It is as if the applicants are frozen in a bureaucratic morass, unable to travel or offer sufficient credentials for living in Czechia. This policy environment is just one of the consequences of the 'long-term securitisation of migration and the formally restrictive administrative approach, which

was further reinforced during the so-called 2015–2016 migration crisis' (Stojanov et al., 2022, p. 11). Ultimately, the temporal inequality and disadvantages experienced during the application process 'contribute to exclusion from mainstream Czech society and produce structural invisibility'.

Gómez del Tronco's contribution, 'Searching for the "Muslims" in Czech Islamophobia and the Effects of Intergroup Contact in Challenging a "Fear of the Unknown"', brings together and compares the perspectives of Muslims and non-Muslims in Czechia. Although the article does not directly invoke the topic of migration, this topic nevertheless arises when non-Muslim Czechs inevitably associate Muslimness with immigrants who are racialised because of their perceived Arabness, Middle Easternness and non-Whiteness. The non-Muslim participants also invoke the European refugee 'crisis', problems of integration among Muslims in Western Europe, their potential jihadism, and their desire to force their norms upon others. Moreover, these highly contentious ideas are juxtaposed with the fragility of Czechia in the face of migration. In the analysis, Gómez del Tronco carefully differentiates between actual Muslims and Muslims as a meaning-infused and ideologically loaded category. What is also novel about his study is that it moves beyond the tropes often imagined in narratives of the migration/refugee 'crisis' to elaborate mechanisms of intergroup contact that may ultimately contribute to relieving tensions: subgrouping, positive stereotyping, reduced perceived intergroup threat and anxiety, and re-humanisation.

In the final article of the issue, Rapoš Božič, Synek Rétiová and Klvaňová likewise complexify the prevailing depictions of Czechia during the migration 'crisis' as a wholly anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim space. In '"We Have Always Been like This": The Local Embeddedness of Migration Attitudes', they consider the ways in which city context in two Czech locales shapes attitudes among residents towards migration and the presence of people with a migratory background in their city. By adopting a cultural-sociological approach that uses theories of cultural armatures, cultural repertoires, and symbolic boundaries, they reveal the emergence of imagined communities of 'Locals' and 'Others'. However, there are nuances and sub-groups among the 'Others', which are arranged hierarchically based on residents' processes of meaning-making. The authors carefully reconstruct these meanings and find two prevailing cultural repertoires, *local cosmopolitanism* in Teplice and *Czech nativism* in Vyšší Brod. These repertoires, in turn, inform patterns of boundary work regarding residents with a migratory background, as well as their positioning in *local hierarchies of otherness*. The main message of the article contributes to the 'local turn' in migration studies, with an important twist. As Rapoš Božič et al. assert, 'to understand the role of local context in the formation of migration attitudes, it is not sufficient to study only the characteristics of cities; how these characteristics are made meaningful by the people who live in them should also be considered.'

Beyond critical engagement with the narrative of 'crisis' in the Czech context, all four articles also offer valuable methodological contributions. While

the bulk of the research on Czech responses to migration has, thus far, utilised mostly quantitative methods, such as surveys, the four articles in this special issue all adopt a qualitative methodological stance, employing methods such as ethnographic observation, interviewing and in-depth interpretive analysis. We applaud the impetus of the authors, in this special issue, to complement existing research by utilising alternative methodological approaches and, in doing so, bringing novel interpretations and understandings. We believe that it is only through the combination of differing approaches, whether they are theoretical, methodological, or ideological, that we may continue to unravel the complexities the issue of migration brings to contemporary societies.

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Czech state statistical services have published 99 volumes of a professional journal on statistics and the economy: Statistika (since 1964), Statistika a kontrola (1962–1963), Statistický obzor (1931–1961) and Československý statistický věstník (1920–1930).

The Legitimacy of European Union Migration and Asylum Policy among the Czech Public*

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Abstract: In this study, we contribute to scholarly work on European Union (EU) legitimacy with regard to migration and asylum policy. We do so through an in-depth exploration of the relationship between attitudes towards the EU and migration among the Czech public. Even though there is a body of literature focusing on this topic, there is a gap when it comes to understanding its complexities, especially concerning 'pro-immigrant' and 'pro-European' positions. We bring a cultural-sociological perspective on meaning-making processes into conversation with theories on the legitimacy of the EU, an analytical move that helps us reveal the nuances in attitudes towards the EU and migration. Our results unpack the narratives surrounding the EU and migration and highlight the apparent cleavage between the 'pro-immigrant' and 'anti-immigrant' discourses that underpin migration attitudes among the Czech public. We find that notwithstanding some divisiveness, there exists considerable convergence along the three dimensions of legitimacy: input, output and throughput. Indeed, both camps challenge EU legitimacy, but they do so for different reasons and focus on different dimensions. The output aspect of EU legitimacy is the most problematic and criticised within both types of discourse. The input dimension is problematic only within the 'anti-immigrant' discourse, and the throughput dimension of EU legitimacy is rather neglected within both discourses. In empirical terms, these findings imply that, in the eyes of the Czech public, the EU—even for those who accept it as a legitimate actor with regard to asylum and migration policy—fails to deliver satisfactory results.

Keywords: EU attitudes, migration attitudes, legitimacy, cultural sociology, narratives

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Introduction

In 2015, as a consequence of economic and political instability and armed conflict in the Middle East and North Africa, more than one million people arrived in Europe seeking asylum or searching for a better life (Eurostat, 2021). However, the EU was not prepared for such an influx, and more than nine thousand people died while crossing the Mediterranean Sea in 2015 and 2016 (Statista, 2022). Others ended up in camps or detention centres or continued on to other European states (de Vries & Guild, 2019). This phenomenon was commonly framed as a 'crisis'.[1] As one of the most controversial EU responses to this 'crisis', a 'voluntary' and later 'mandatory' relocation scheme ('refugee quota') was aimed at relocating people from Greece, Italy and Hungary to other European countries (Duszczyk et al., 2020). However, the Czech government refused to participate in the 'mandatory' quotas, accepting just 12 refugees under the scheme. In short, the Czech political response to the 'crisis' reflected prevailing media frames and opinion polls, in which the Czech public expressed worries about the threat of migrants coming from the Middle East and North Africa (Hanzlová, 2018).

In this article, we contribute to the scholarly work on EU legitimacy with regard to its migration and asylum policy through an in-depth exploration of the relationship between attitudes towards the EU and migration. We ask: How do members of the Czech public[2] narrate the input, output and throughput legitimacy of the EU in relation to EU migration and asylum policy? We build upon research that shows that negative attitudes towards migration represent a driver of public opposition to the EU (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005; Hobolt, 2016). Harteveld et al. (2017:173) assert that 'the general inflow of refugees into the EU, as well as the media attention for this phenomenon, have increased euroscepticism', or criticism of the EU. However, Czechia has long been among the most Eurosceptic countries in the EU (Hloušek & Kaniok, 2020). This positioning may help explain why there is no systematic relationship between exposure to

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[1] The 'crisis' of people moving across borders over the period from 2015 to 2017 has been interpreted as a crisis of migrants or refugees, occurring in Europe or the Mediterranean; for a discussion of such labelling, see Lee and Nerghes (2018). Some highlight that the locus of the crisis lies elsewhere. For example, Niemann and Zaun (2018) speak about a crisis of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS); its dysfunctionalities were revealed by the tremendous increase in asylum applications in 2015 and 2016. Thus, we have chosen to use 'crisis' alone rather than label actual people or places.
[2] We debated how to characterise the research participants (RPs) in our study, considering 'Czech citizens', 'Czech residents' and 'Czech laypeople', and finally settling on 'Czech public'. At the same time, we recognise and acknowledge the potential vagueness of this term. The criteria for selecting RPs included residence in the country for five years or more and fluent knowledge of the Czech language. The sample includes not only (white) ethnic Czechs but also members of minority groups that fit our selection criteria.

information about the negative consequences of immigration and negative attitudes towards the EU (Ringlerová, 2021). In other words, 'anti-immigrant' and Eurosceptic attitudes may already be sedimented. Moreover, there is a gap when it comes to understanding the failures of 'pro-immigrant' and 'pro-European' positions. In our analysis, we explore the relationship between attitudes towards migration and the EU through qualitative research that allows us to probe the connection in depth.

To address the above gap, we reconstruct the meaning-making processes among members of the Czech public in the context of the migration 'crisis' and the EU's response to it through a qualitative analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews. In particular, we analyse narratives of change (stories of decline or rising) and power (stories of control and helplessness) (Stone, 2012) concerning the EU or Europe as an entity. By bringing a cultural-sociological perspective on meaning-making processes into conversation with theories on the legitimacy of the EU, our study offers a nuanced understanding of the EU and its migration and asylum policy legitimacy among the Czech public. For example, a cultural-sociological analysis allows us to move beyond the brevity of survey answers and examine in depth the meanings that social actors attribute to the EU/Europe and forms of policy legitimacy.

Our results unpack the narratives surrounding the EU and migration and highlight the cleavage between the 'pro-immigrant' and 'anti-immigrant' discourse that underpins attitudes, which is much more complex than might be detected from quantitative studies.[3] In fact, the two types of discourses overlap considerably, and it is only through the careful reconstruction of cultural meanings that we can grasp their complexity. Stories of decline are predominant in both types of discourse, while stories of rising, in which migration is considered beneficial, are very complex and not very salient. Within these stories, migration is narrated as beneficial but only under certain conditions. These findings dovetail with previous research indicating that perceptions of the 'migration crisis' often portray the EU as a 'failure' and a 'security threat' (Ripoll Servent, 2019). In short, neither the 'pro-immigrant' nor the 'anti-immigrant' discourse underlying migration attitudes among members of the Czech public indicates that they are satisfied with the input, output and throughput legitimacy of the EU with regard to migration and asylum policy. In particular, the questioning of the output dimension of EU legitimacy revealed in the 'pro-immigrant' discourse signals a significant aspect of EU migration and asylum policy, in which the EU balances liberal ('refugee quotas') and restrictive measures (enhancing the protection of external borders) regarding migration. This balancing appears rather counterproductive in the perception of the Czech public.

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[3] We categorise the *discourse* as leaning towards 'pro-immigrant' or 'anti-immigrant', not the RPs or their attitudes per se. Moreover, we enclose these two categories in quotation marks throughout to stress their constructedness and malleability.

The following section sets the context for our study, briefly outlining 'anti-immigrant' and Eurosceptic attitudes in Czechia. We then elaborate on the theoretical framework underpinning our analysis and highlight its main contributions. A methodological statement reveals our epistemological grounding in cultural sociology and the data collection and analysis processes. We present the narrative findings of our analysis in a structured manner, relying on ideal-typical divisions of the discourse underlying migration attitudes into 'anti-immigrant', with the dimension of *securitisation*, and 'pro-immigrant', with the dimension of *humanitarian securitisation*. We reveal the distinct storylines (Stone, 2012) present in the discourse of the narratives. To conclude, we discuss the implications of our analysis and chart some directions for future research.

'Anti-immigrant' and Eurosceptic attitudes in Czechia

As implied in the introduction, Czechia ranks among the most Eurosceptic and 'anti-immigrant' countries in the EU. Even though 'anti-immigrant' sentiments were detected well before the migration 'crisis' (Messing & Ságvári, 2019), the overly negative framing in the media fuelled such sentiments (Kovář, 2020; Štětka et al., 2020), together with the positions of Czech political elites, spearheaded by the 'populist' president (Jaworsky, 2021; Naxera & Krčál, 2018), who securitised the issue, especially with regard to Muslim migrants. Wondreys (2021, p. 736) argues that this increase in 'anti-immigrant' rhetoric 'led to the radicalisation of the political mainstream, which was not yet radicalised like in other countries in the region'. The mainstream parties, both on the right and on the left, opposed and securitised the issue (Krotký, 2019), resulting in the transformation of the Czech political system, which had been dominated by socio-economic rather than socio-cultural concerns (Wondreys, 2021).

Whereas 'anti-immigrant' sentiment is a relatively new factor shaping the Czech political party scene, Euroscepticism—either in its soft or hard form (Szcerbiak & Taggart, 2008)—has been influential since Czechia joined the EU. For a long time, there were two pillars. The centre right, represented largely by the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), and its first leader, Václav Klaus (Hloušek & Kaniok, 2014), criticised the EU from a neoliberal position, as creating too many regulations or taking too much power from the Member States. On the left side of the party landscape, the EU was challenged by a more fundamental position, held by the Czech Communists (KSČM), which advocated either Czech withdrawal from the EU, or radical transformation of the EU. After 2013, Czech party-based Euroscepticism became more colourful, as it was enriched by the far-right contribution of the political formations[4] established by Tomio Okamura.

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[4] Before the emergence of the migration 'crisis', immigration was a marginal issue in Czechia. In 2013, only one political party, Tomio Okamura's Dawn of Direct Democracy

The enduring presence of Euroscepticism in the party system has also reverberated throughout the general public. Multiple crises, starting with the Eurozone Crisis around 2009, led to a skyrocketing dissatisfaction with the EU among the Czech public, which reached more than 40 per cent in 2012. Eurosceptic sentiments decreased in the following years, from April 2013 to April 2015, and did not reach pre-crisis levels (Hloušek & Kaniok, 2020). However, the migration 'crisis', beginning in 2015, again fuelled anti-EU sentiment in Czechia. As Wondreys (2021, p. 738) suggests, '(T)he rise in Eurosceptic attitudes among the Czech public is related to the increased salience of the immigration issue'. Vochocová et al. (2021, p. 79) have shown that commenters responding to online news are generally opposed to the EU and how it deals with the migration 'crisis', portraying the EU as the main culprit behind the 'crisis'. Clearly, there is a link between 'anti-immigrant' and Eurosceptic attitudes in Czechia.

Even though there is a body of literature focusing on (primarily negative) attitudes towards migration or the EU, there is a gap when it comes to understanding 'pro-immigrant' and pro-European attitudes in Czechia. Several political and non-governmental actors have advocated for accepting migrants or refugees in recent years (Jaworsky & Krotký, 2021). Additionally, most of the research on public attitudes in Czechia is quantitative, conducted using surveys or experiments (Eurobarometer, 2021; Hanzlová, 2018; Ringlerová, 2021).[5] Thus, our qualitative, meaning-centred study provides a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between attitudes towards the EU and migration.

The legitimacy of EU migration and asylum policy and the cultural sociology of narratives

Although matters concerning asylum, immigration and border controls have undergone the process of *communitarisation*,[6] it hardly led to a change in policy due to the strong voices of the Member States (Trauner & Ripoll Servent, 2016). Moreover, the only common policy areas are 'just' asylum policy (the Common European Asylum System – CEAS) and free movement within the Schengen Area. Despite the expansion of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), responsibility for the management of external borders (Carrera & Den Hertog, 2016), especially with regard to handling labour migration from countries outside

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(Úsvit) party, sought to increase the salience of this issue (Čaněk, 2013). In 2016, Úsvit split and Okamura created its successor, the Freedom and Direct Democracy Party (SPD).

[5] For an important exception, see Scott et al.'s (2019) qualitative study about the meaning of democracy and attitudes toward immigrants among adolescents.

[6] We understand *communitarisation* as the process of transferring decision-making powers from the intergovernmental level to the supranational level, involving the European Parliament.

the EU and the eventual integration of migrants, rests primarily with Member States. The combination of populism and Euroscepticism in Czechia has created an atmosphere in which EU legitimacy regarding migration and asylum policy has been widely questioned, either implicitly or explicitly, and is evident in non-common policy spheres. Such framing leads us to the question of what forms of legitimacy (or legitimacy as a whole) are at stake in the case of EU migration and asylum policy.

Departing from the very broad and still evolving literature on EU legitimacy, three important dimensions can be identified. Traditionally, as Crespy (2013) puts it, there has been a longstanding debate between advocates of 'output' or 'input' legitimacy. On the one hand, some scholars have argued that since the EU cannot be compared to its Member States, its legitimacy should be considered in terms of output, that is, the EU's capacity and ability to solve problems and deliver efficient policies (Majone, 1998; Scharpf, 1999), rather than in terms of a democratic institution. On the other hand, several scholars have suggested that in the case of the EU—a supranational political system—it is more appropriate to apply democratic criteria for input legitimacy, that is, representation and accountability performed vis-à-vis citizens (Beetham & Lord, 1998; Thomassen, 2009). In this context, the well-known debate on the EU's 'democratic deficit' (Follesdal & Hix, 2006; Majone, 1998) enters into the picture, focusing on the performance of the EU's political system and its institutions (Rittberger, 2010). Regarding the link between input and output legitimacy, Lindgren and Persson (2010) find that measures aimed at increasing the input legitimacy of the EU also hold promise for increasing its output legitimacy.

More recently, various authors have argued that the conceptual dialogue among advocates of input and output legitimacy has led nowhere, describing it as a 'dialogue of the deaf' (Crespy, 2013). To overcome this gridlock, they focus on actual interactions between diverse groups, arenas and institutions during the public policymaking process in the EU or, as Schmidt (2004, 2013) puts it, on government 'with the people' or 'throughput' legitimacy. According to Schmidt, throughput legitimacy is judged in terms of the efficacy, accountability and transparency of EU governance processes, along with their inclusion and openness to consultation with the people. The result is a three-tier analytical model in which input, output and throughput dimensions are included; for example, Risse and Kleine (2007) applied this model to analyse the legitimacy of EU primary law revisions.

In this article, we examine the legitimacy of EU migration and asylum policies among the Czech public. We understand input legitimacy as the permission given to the EU to act and react with regard to migration and asylum issues. The EU is granted the authority and responsibility to create binding legislation or decisions. Regarding output legitimacy, these EU actions and their impact vis-à-vis migration and asylum policy are evaluated, assessing their relevance and quality. As far as the throughput dimension (which featured much less often in our data

than other dimensions of legitimacy) is concerned, we understand it as an evaluation of the EU migration and asylum policy process—namely, its transparency, efficacy and accountability, as Schmidt (2004, 2013) suggests.

Migration issues (together with attitudes towards European integration) are among the main factors creating cleavages among political parties, nation states and the public (Hooghe & Marks, 2018). In particular, the input and output dimensions play a significant role—in the eyes of citizens—because each policy embodies both aspects. The Czech case represents a perfect example of EU legitimacy within migration and asylum policies. Eurobarometer (2021) responses collected during the pandemic recovery indicate that immigration is the most important issue facing the EU, according to Czech respondents (42 per cent); the EU average is 25 per cent. Furthermore, just 44 per cent of Czech respondents support a common European policy on migration, while the EU average is 71 per cent. As indicated, Czechs are not in favour (86 per cent) of the refugee relocation scheme, and they are also against (85 per cent) visa liberalisation with Turkey (SANEP, 2016), part of the EU-Turkey deal to reduce irregular arrivals in Greece. Overwhelmingly, Czechs support (81 per cent) the reinforcement of the EU's external borders, with more European border and coast guards; the EU average is 69 per cent (Eurobarometer, 2021). By examining the input, output and throughput legitimacy of EU migration and asylum policy, we shed light on what underpins these quantitative data. To do so, we employ the analytical tools of cultural sociology, looking, in particular, at the narratives deployed in the discourse underlying the attitudes of our RPs.

A cultural-sociological perspective (as outlined in the following section) privileges the meaning-making process of social actors. Through a deep reading of the discursive contours in our RPs' responses, we uncover the ways in which they attribute meaning to their attitudes about the legitimacy of the EU and about migration through telling stories—namely, narratives (Frye, 1957; Smith, 2005).[7] The plots rely on the actions of distinct characters, which transmit the core of the narrative—often a moral message (Hase, 2021). Yet, few social scientific works on 'peoplehood' take the role of narratives seriously; for exceptions, see Hase (2021) and Smith (2015). It is this gap to which we aim to contribute by putting theories on EU legitimacy into conversation with cultural sociology. We believe that the in-depth reconstruction of narratives brings added value to explanations of issues related to 'peoplehood', which underlie public attitudes. As we have elaborated, European integration and migration are among the most controversial issues among the Czech public. This research brings both issues together and analyses the narratives surrounding them, offering a better understanding of Czech 'peoplehood' and public attitudes towards migration and European integration.

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[7] We use the terms 'narrative' and 'story' interchangeably.

Methodology

The data for this article come from a three-year (2020–2022) study entitled 'The thirteenth immigrant? An in-depth exploration of the public perception of migration in the Czech Republic'. A total of 80 semi-structured interviews were conducted; our findings are based on a sub-sample of 44 interviews in which the EU or Europe were discussed (see Table A1 in the online appendix), along with other supranational institutions whose presence was marginal, including the United Nations (mentioned in 3 interviews), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (3 interviews), Visegrád countries (1 interview) or non-governmental organisations (10 interviews). Our interview questions concerned attitudes towards migration, including migration terminology—first associations about people on the move, the visibility of migrants in the country, localised narratives of migration and personal experience with migration; we did not ask directly about attitudes towards the EU. Nevertheless, we found that the topic emerged organically in about 55 per cent of the interviews; accordingly, when it did, we prompted the RPs with additional questions.

The interviews were conducted in 2020 and 2021, throughout five localities: Brno, the second largest city in Czechia and the capital of the South Moravian Region; Kuřim, a large suburb of Brno; Teplice, a spa town on the border of Germany; Vyšší Brod, a town located in the South Bohemian Region on the border of Austria; and a village[8] located in the rural area of the Highlands Region. These localities varied in terms of population size, economic and political power and local histories of cross-border movement. The RPs were recruited through purposeful sampling (Rapley, 2014) and the snowball method, ensuring variety in terms of gender, age and occupational or self-reported social class. We conducted 'comprehensive' interviews (Ferreira, 2014) both face-to-face and online, based on COVID-19 restrictions, which lasted between 60–120 minutes.

After the interviews were transcribed, we engaged in several rounds of open, focused and theoretical coding (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014), utilising ATLAS.ti software. We also undertook deep interpretive readings of the data to reveal the meaning-making processes of the RPs. Our analysis followed the meaning-centred approach of cultural sociology, which understands meanings as constitutive of social action (Alexander & Smith, 2003; Reed, 2011). In particular, the main premises of the Strong Program in cultural sociology (Alexander & Smith, 2003) informed our research design and analysis processes: (1) the relative autonomy of culture, in which culture is an independent variable; (2) the indepth reconstruction of meanings through thick description (Geertz, 1973); and the dedication to causal specificity, 'anchor(ing) causality in proximate actors and

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[8] To ensure the privacy of our RPs, we have decided not to disclose the name of the village. In Vyšší Brod, we also use broader occupational status to ensure the anonymity of the RPs; see Table A1 in the online appendix.

agencies, specifying in detail just how culture interferes with and directs what really happens' (Alexander & Smith, 2003:14). We believe that this reconstruction of meanings helps deepen our understanding of the discourses underpinning migration attitudes and cultivates a more reflexive approach to migration research.

Once the analytical process revealed that the EU was an important topic for our RPs, we focused on our primary research question: How do members of the Czech public narrate the input, output and throughput legitimacy of the EU with regard to EU migration and asylum policy? We highlighted the narratives within migration discourses, following Stone's (2012) typology of storylines ('stories of change' versus 'stories of power'). According to Stone, stories of change are composed of 'stories of decline' and 'stories of rising'. Social actors use stories of decline to demonstrate how things proceed or will get worse, in contrast to stories of rising, which are generally progressive. Stories of power may be subdivided into 'stories of control' and 'stories of helplessness'. In stories of control, social actors highlight preferred solutions, and in stories of helplessness, actors lament how measures are ineffective. The findings are organised based on the relevant codes (see Table A2 in the online appendix).

After we coded the interviews, we interpreted them using the operationalisation of input, output and throughput legitimacy. We found that the codes related to stories of decline and stories of helplessness are generally associated with input legitimacy, and the codes relevant to stories of rising and stories of control play a role in both input and throughput legitimacy. Output legitimacy was, in some ways, narrated throughout all stories. Thus, because our analysis is based on in-depth interpretation, the division of the codes and input, output and throughput legitimacy are not mutually exclusive but only analytically separable; the interpretation of a given particular code often depends on the context of a particular interview.

Analysis

For the purposes of this analysis, we categorised the RPs' responses into 'anti-immigrant' and 'pro-immigrant' discourse.[9] The 'anti-immigrant' discourse compels the *securitisation* of migration and sees migration and migrants as a threat to Czech and European society (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998). Often, this fear is articulated in the form of a cultural threat, as Petr, one of the research participants, explains.

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[9] These two configurations should be viewed as ideal types of discourse. In reality, 'anti' or 'pro' immigrant sentiments fall along a continuum, and a social actor may embody one or both at different times. In the Czech Republic, for example, even seemingly 'pro-immigrant' actors nevertheless express sentiments that might be construed as 'anti-immigrant' (Jaworsky et al., 2023).

> I'm afraid of the cultural, hmmm, disparity in the case of migration, for example, from Islamic countries, because I'm worried about the way they interpret their laws in the laws of the country they live in, … so I'm objectively worried also about how Europe will handle Muslim migration. I think it is clearly a big threat to Europe.

Our three-year research project points to, perhaps surprisingly, the salience of 'pro-immigrant' discourse in Czechia. Thus, we cannot say that the Czech public exclusively has 'anti-immigrant', securitised attitudes towards migration. It is much more complex than that; they may be intertwined at different times, even among the same social actors. For this reason, we define 'pro-immigrant' discourse using the concept of *humanitarian securitisation*. Humanitarian securitisation involves labelling migrants as victims and threats at the same time (see Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017). For example, Matt metaphorically argues that fostering solidarity and helping migrants might be risky for Europe.

> Any lifeguard will tell you that the moment they rescue someone and it puts them in danger, they (lifeguards) are no longer rescuing; they are already victims. And I think that Europe should rescue, should be in solidarity, but should not sacrifice itself.

The two discourses are represented almost evenly among the interviews. Accordingly, in the following two sections, we explore this complexity through the ways in which the input, output and throughput legitimacy of EU migration and asylum policy is perceived in these discourses.

Narrative stories about the EU within 'anti-immigrant' discourse

Following Stone's (2012) typology of storylines, we observe three distinct narrative plots (stories of decline, control and helplessness) related to the EU in the 'anti-immigrant' discourse (see Figure 1). This discourse comments on EU legitimacy in migration and asylum policy by treating it as a complex problem. Even though the plots are separable analytically, they are not developed and articulated separately; they overlap in the RPs' discourse, as indicated by the dotted lines in Figure 1. Stories of decline generally begin in 2015, particularly with the 'welcome culture' perpetuated primarily by the German chancellor Angela Merkel (see Trauner & Turton, 2017). They end in a tragic narrative genre with increasing criminality. Thus, in the stories of decline, migration and migrants are seen as a security threat (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998), which is underscored by integration problems in Western and Northern European countries.

> (W)hat happened at first... with Chancellor Merkel saying, 'We welcome you with open arms, come all of you, we have everything for you,' was not good, I guess,

okay? Because they (migrants) listened to (her) and they all came, and now... Now they're everywhere, right. So... We don't have to, we don't have to go far. We know what the problems are in Sweden, Finland, Norway, with them (migrants) and everything, right? Everywhere, crime and violence have risen several times over the original (rates). (Michal)

Indeed, the narratives about the EU in the 'anti-immigrant' discourse are often related to German politicians who have behaved 'irresponsibly' with regard to the migration 'crisis'. As Vochocová et al. (2021, p. 69) explain, Germany and Angela Merkel 'are the most visible representatives of the European Union, which is perceived as the main culprit of the migration crisis'. For one of the RPs, a story of decline is blended with a story of helplessness in which the leaders of the EU are seen as incompetent, thus questioning the EU's input legitimacy in dealing with the crisis.

(T)he European Union is very weak in its leadership. If Ursula von der Leyen was the minister of defense in Germany and she completely disintegrated the Bundeswehr, and then she was promoted even more (to the presidency of the European Commission), well, like, I don't think we were helped much. Next thing, you know... the Governor-General or the Governor of (momentary pause) Jesus, ECB, the European Central Bank is not an economist. That's so stupid, right? So it's more like... a government of non-experts. (Honza)

In short, the stories of decline and helplessness consist of arguments concerning irresponsibility and incompetence, implying that the EU has flawed or no input legitimacy. We also witness the quite common Eurosceptic argument related to

Figure 1. Narratives about the EU in relation to 'anti-immigrant' discourse
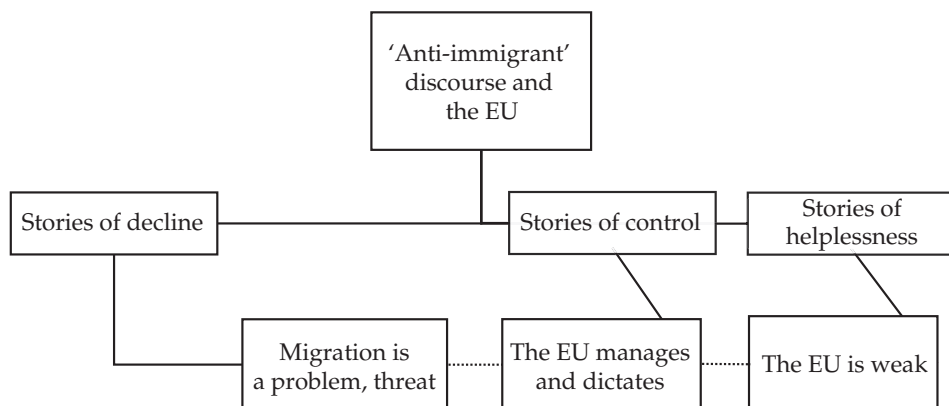
the 'democratic deficit', in which Honza suggests that the EU is led by 'unelected people', again questioning EU input (and, partly, throughput) legitimacy:

> Honza: (A)ll of them who are like, who are the commissioners, they're unelected people, right? Well, they affect everyone's lives, but they do it in a stupid way. Not that migration can negatively affect all of our lives.
> Interviewer: But also the European Union can, by its governance.
> Honza: But also the European Union.

Moreover, in stories of decline and powerlessness, we can observe accusations of clientelism: 'These are politicians who have the benefit of *trafika*; I'd work there (in the European Parliament) for half a million a month' (Milan). Milan more than implies that the position of members of the European Parliament (MEPs) is provided as a benefit (*trafika*) within the national party, namely, being given the job as a reward for good service. The helplessness of the EU is finally highlighted by the EU's bureaucracy and irrational and inefficient transfers between Brussels and Strasbourg, which triggered angry emotions in an interview with Milan:

> They have two offices… (the respondent delivers a blow to the table), and what can they do? Tell me like a normal person when you're in Strasbourg twice a week and you're in Brussels for two days, okay? A lot of people around them, and what are they going to solve? Never anything!

Thus, the EU is perceived as weak, which never solves 'anything'. Thus, its political process—not exclusively associated with migration and asylum policy—is perceived as illegitimate in terms of the throughput dimension. However, some RPs, contrary to their previous claims, develop stories of control in which the EU has the power to 'manage'.

> I wanted to complain about the Union … that it probably doesn't take it (migration) entirely responsibly. … I don't know if this is some kind of plan, of course, like, we're already... in the field of conspiracy theories. But it's just wrong, when people think about it; it just contributes to conspiracy theories. (Honza)

Honza also questions whether the EU is irresponsible on purpose and he self-reflexively argues that it 'contributes to conspiracy theories'. Conspiracy is a specific variation of stories of power; as Stone (2012, p. 167) argues, '(C)onspiracy stories always reveal that harm has been deliberately caused or knowingly tolerated, and so evoke horror and moral condemnation. Their endings always take the form of a call to wrest control from the few who benefit at the expense of the many'.

Stories of control reference one of the most common Eurosceptic arguments, namely, 'We won't let Brussels dictate us', which is also observed in other Viseg-

rád countries (Csehi & Zgut, 2021). This sentiment is the most prevalent with regard to the migration 'crisis' and 'refugee quotas', challenging the EU's output legitimacy: 'No quotas, no quotas. I want to decide for myself how many I want in my state, not quotas' (Halyna). Although the EU has the power to manage, RPs, in their 'anti-immigrant' discourse, do not agree with the EU's proposed solutions. Instead, RPs suggest security measures, not only at the EU's external borders but also within the Schengen Area: 'It is as if those borders are as leaky as a colander ... I don't think the inner borders should ever be lifted' (Honza).

To sum up, stories of decline, helplessness and control detected in the 'anti-immigrant' discourse help us understand the lack of legitimacy in EU migration and asylum policy across all dimensions—input, output and throughput. The 'anti-immigrant' discourse links the consequences of the migration 'crisis' with the irresponsible, incompetent and inefficient behaviour of Western and EU leaders. Moreover, 'unelected' EU leaders and MEPs obtaining seats because of clientelism weaken the EU's legitimacy in managing the 'crisis'. The narrated characters of the EU's leaders elaborate on the risks to the legitimacy of the EU.

Narrative stories about the EU within 'pro-immigrant' discourse

As explained above, the 'pro-immigrant' discourse consists of humanitarian securitisation attitudes. In this section, we elaborate on the ways in which the EU is perceived and narrated within this discourse (see Figure 2). Following Stone's (2012) typology of storylines, we find four storylines, including stories of rising, absent from the 'anti-immigrant' discourse. However, the storylines within the 'pro-immigrant' discourse differ in comparison to the 'anti-immigrant' discourse; stories of control, which dominate the 'anti-immigrant' discourse, are rare within the 'pro-immigrant' discourse. Stories of decline and stories of helplessness predominate, and a few stories of rising are found within the 'pro-immigrant' discourse. The story of decline, in the name of humanitarian securitisation, sees migrants as victims living in poor conditions, which is the fault of the EU (among others).

> They (migrants) certainly didn't imagine that they would end up in a detention camp in Libya, where they might even die or spend the next five years there. It's inconceivable to me that I'd spend five years in a detention camp in Libya. … From a global perspective, this is an unmanageable situation and the consequence is just... bad political negotiations, both within the European Union and others, such as... the global powers that let this happen. (Jirka)

The RPs do not just feel sorry for migrants within this story; they also sympathise with Mediterranean countries that are under pressure from an increasing num-

Figure 2. Narratives about the EU in relation to 'pro-immigrant' discourse
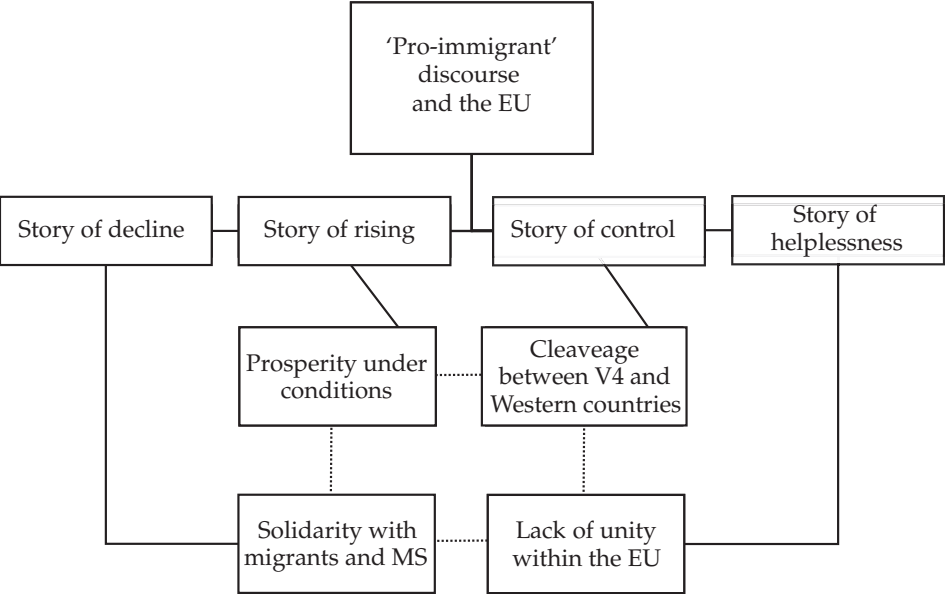
ber of asylum applications. In the following story of decline, David highlights the lack of solidarity with and help for these countries:

> I'm thinking more about those poor Mediterranean states, belonging to the European Union, like Greece and Italy, partly maybe Spain, France, but basically Italy and Greece ... I am ashamed of the displays of non-solidarity from our leaders. I'm so ashamed of that, because I think... there really should be a lot of help from the European Union for those states that are here, (handling) the refugee wave, that they should be helped a lot. The way our current political leaders are doing this is a disgrace. It's a terrible shame … I'm ashamed of it. (David)

The ways in which David speaks about being 'ashamed' of Czech leaders echo the findings of Every (2013), who asserts that advocates for asylum seekers elicit shame as a rhetorical strategy. Similarly, contrary to the prevailing public opinion, Zdeněk agrees with the EU's programme of assigning refugee quotas, narrated as a 'moral obligation' to help Mediterranean countries.

> I have another thing that we have not dealt with here, and that is a degree of solidarity between those recipient states (…). I really think that European countries should

share those refugees, and not abandon this obligation. I consider it a moral obliga-
tion; it is not a legal obligation, but by redeeming it somehow and sending them
(Mediterranean countries) some money, I do not think that is enough. (Zdeněk)

As we can see from all three quotes above, EU input legitimacy is not ques-
tioned at all. The EU is implicitly but strongly characterised as an actor who
should engage with the 'crisis'. Thus, in the 'pro-immigrant' discourse, the EU is
strong in terms of the input dimension. Nevertheless, its performance regarding
throughput and, especially, output aspects is much weaker. The RPs espousing
the 'pro-immigrant' discourse, contrary to those expressing the 'anti-immigrant'
discourse, do not generally offer 'solutions' to the migration 'crisis', except for
Zdeněk, who agrees with refugee quotas. Even though, in the 'pro-immigrant'
discourse, humanitarian securitisation is observed, in which migrants are pre-
sented as victims and threats at the same time, RPs often criticise proposed se-
curity solutions within stories of control, such as building borders and fences or
the EU's deal with Turkey. In this regard, the EU's output legitimacy is contested.

> I criticise it (sending money to Turkey) because it's not like a solution, is it? … They
> try to solve it (the migration 'crisis') by having someone (Turkey) solve it for them.
> … It's definitely not a conceptual solution, as it should be addressed as a migration
> issue… I'm taking on the fact that I'm a critic now and that I may not come up with
> a solution at all, but I'm not here at the moment to come up with a solution. … We
> have the leadership of the Union and the leadership of the state to solve such issues
> as migration. (Edita)

In sum, the EU-Turkey deal and visa liberalisation are not criticised only within
the 'anti-immigrant' discourse, perceived as a fear of the Islamisation of Europe
(SANEP, 2016), but also within the 'pro-immigrant' discourse as an externalisa-
tion of the EU's responsibilities (Çetin, 2020).

The proposed security measures are also mentioned by Miroslav, who re-
flexively explains that they created cleavage within the EU.

> Europe is gaining a slightly different view than the V4 group had, say, before, it did
> not want the *dictates* of forcing migrants, but rather to try to secure the European
> Union's external border. Western societies were more open to migration and tried
> to help because they perceived it as an important social issue. Today, I think that the
> views converge and are more oriented to the V4 perspective. Personally, I think, that
> compromise is somewhere else, and politicians don't talk about it at all. (Miroslav)

Miroslav suggests that security measures are proposed by V4 countries. Such a
perception mirrors academic findings, in which MEPs from Central and Eastern
Europe incline more strongly towards securitisation than MEPs from Western Eu-
rope (Krotký & Kaniok, 2021). However, as Miroslav argues, this compromise, or

rather disagreement, about security measures observed within 'anti-immigrant' and 'pro-immigrant' discourse, is not the main problem. He further explains his views by intertwining stories of control with stories of rising.

Interviewer: So how do you personally perceive the compromise?

Miroslav: I perceive it as the need to prevent the abuse of social systems that many of those migrants … want, let's say, to take advantage of the generosity of social systems, and therefore most of those migrants have gone to those countries where social systems are more generous. (…) And, of course, (we) must have a dialogue with those migrants that if they want to be migrants, whether political or economic; they need to adapt, to adopt the culture they want to go to, to respect it … because the majority simply has a slightly different cultural perception and background, and there is another system that they should at least respect.

Miroslav does not question the acceptance of migrants. Nevertheless, he favours the assimilation of migrants, similar to the Czech adolescents studied by Scott, Šmahelová and Macek (2019). Then, the story of rising, a bright future, would be possible for both sides, not only for migrants but also for Europe as a whole. This story of rising reveals the complexity of 'pro-immigrant' discourse, often questioned by the broader Czech public.

The 'pro-immigrant' discourse is complemented by a story of helplessness; for example, Eva explains why the EU could not handle the migration 'crisis'. She sees a serious problem in the lack of unity and in the unwillingness of EU Member States to tackle the 'crisis', hence challenging the EU's throughput and output legitimacy.

I'm saying, it's really, really hard when every country has a different attitude towards it (migration), and then the Union turns out to be so toothless when it can't say, 'We're going to do it this way, and we're going to try it this way, and there's going to be money.' … I am convinced that this is possible, but that it is that it really comes up against the will of some states… (Eva)

Such claims again echo current academic debates, in which scholars argue, for instance, in the case of the CEAS reform, that any progress in the reform depends upon the willingness of the European Council to act (Trauner & Ripoll Servent, 2016). Migration and asylum policy is seen as a 'core state power', more likely to be become politicised and to generate political conflicts among Member States (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2018). In other words, the 'pro-immigrant' discourse consists mainly of a conciliatory view of the migration 'crisis'. In this discourse, migrants (and Mediterranean states) are narrated as victims, and the EU or its leaders in these narratives are framed as culprits. Accordingly, the EU is helpless because of disagreement among Member States. As in the 'anti-immigrant' discourse, the 'pro-immigrant' discourse reflects the fact that RPs do not agree with the EU measures taken to tackle migration (output legitimacy), but for different reasons.

Conclusion

In this article, we offer a nuanced understanding of the linkage between attitudes towards the EU and attitudes towards migration. Moreover, this article places cultural sociology in conversation with the concept of EU legitimacy, which is primarily studied within the field of political science. Thus, we contribute to the scholarly literature on EU legitimacy by focusing on the role of narratives regarding the EU's migration and asylum policies. In particular, through the cultural sociology of narratives, using Stone's (2012) conceptualisation of storylines, we analyse perceptions of the input, output and throughput legitimacy among the Czech public, questioned in both the 'anti-immigrant' and 'pro-immigrant' discourses underlying attitudes towards migration. Such an interpretive analysis allows for a richer and more in-depth understanding of legitimacy based on qualitative data.

Our analysis has revealed that EU legitimacy is a concern for both camps. Nevertheless, each of them—using or emphasising different narrative stories—focuses on different dimensions of EU legitimacy. Within the 'anti-immigrant' discourse, input legitimacy appears to be a major problem, questioning the very right of the EU to deal with migration and asylum issues. Because the EU is considered an illegitimate actor from the input perspective, the throughput aspect is also contested—often in the context of the broader EU political process and rather implicitly. Not surprisingly, the 'anti-immigrant' discourse further problematises the solutions delivered by the EU (output dimension). In such discourse, critiques often point to the lack of appropriate security measures or express displeasure with 'refugee quotas', which serve as a pull factor for migration (Braun, 2020). In the Czech case, the privileged position of the quota system is logical; indeed, it has been the key agenda for Czech political parties across the party scene (Hrabálek & Đorđević, 2017). In sum, within this discourse, input and throughput legitimacy is questioned; meanwhile, security-oriented output legitimacy is desirable.

Within the 'pro-immigrant' discourse, EU input legitimacy with regard to migration and asylum issues is almost taken for granted. The RPs automatically assume that the EU has the right to act (and should do so). This sentiment reflects the most important difference in comparison to the 'anti-immigrant' discourse. Regarding output legitimacy, the EU is heavily criticised for delivering poor policy solutions. Perhaps, somewhat surprisingly, both discourses converge at this point but for completely different reasons. The strong focus among RPs on problematic output legitimacy confirms the crucial relevance of this kind of legitimacy to the EU (Majone, 1998; Scharpf, 1999). The throughput dimension, governance including EU citizens, is referenced only sporadically and in the broader context of the European integration process in both 'pro-immigrant' and 'anti-immigrant' discourse. This finding calls into question Szewczyk's (2020) conception of European sovereignty and legitimacy based on European citizenship and participation in EU governance. Nevertheless, we believe that this finding might

be related to unsettled input and output legitimacy; both the EU's ability to act and its ability to deliver outcomes are strongly challenged within the two discourses, overshadowing more nuanced problems, such as EU transparency or accountability. Future research could address this question.

To sum up, both 'pro-immigrant' and 'anti-immigrant' discourses question the EU's legitimacy regarding asylum and migration policy, albeit differently, focusing particularly on the input and output dimensions of legitimacy. We explain this 'unity in differences'—to paraphrase the famous EU slogan—by the fact that the majority of stories featured in both discourses correspond with the framing of the migration 'crisis' as a failure and a security threat (Ripoll Servent, 2019). For example, the most prevalent plot is a story of decline. However, this story differs based on the position of the RPs towards migration. In the 'anti-immigrant' discourse, the story of decline relates to security issues in receiving countries, such as Czechia or Europe overall. On the other hand, in the 'pro-immigrant' discourse, the decline is meant in terms of the poor conditions facing migrants in detention camps or in relation to non-solidarity with Mediterranean countries.

The fact that stories of rising within Czech 'pro-immigrant' discourse are interlinked with security concerns and conditions under which a 'bright' future can be achieved raises several questions. Is Czechia an exception in this sense? Are there differences among EU countries and regions? Addressing these questions represents a direction for further research. Studies suggest that in other countries, such as Germany, attitudes are quite diverse, including both positive and negative media portrayals of migration (Griebel & Vollmann, 2019). The inclination to see migration as an opportunity might be related to long-term migration experience. For instance, in the case of Germany, which has had time to adapt and institutionalise a country-of-immigration narrative (Hase, 2021), a so-called 'welcome culture' had already emerged as a political concept before the migration 'crisis' (Trauner & Turton, 2017). Thus, in 2015, the German chancellor Angela Merkel worked with an already established positive discursive strategy. Meanwhile, in the case of Czechia, immigration was not a salient issue before 2015, and there was no established positive discursive view upon which political and other actors could build. In our view, agreeing on a united discursive strategy among diverse political and other actors is one of the most important tasks for successful (and not exclusively) Czech 'pro-immigrant' advocacy.

Finally, within the storylines, we observe that the RPs differentiate the various institutions of the EU. Some RPs talk generally about Europe or the EU; others mention concrete institutions, such as the European Parliament or the European Central Bank. We suggest that RPs choose the level that best corresponds to the particular discourse or criticism they developed during the interview. In addition, a lack of unity is presented with regard to negotiations between states within the European Council. Further, Germany as a reference country is apparent in both discourses, which might lead to the imagination of the EU as a 'German-led' social space. However, the RPs did not differentiate whether a par-

ticular policy aspect went through *communitarisation*. This leads to a paradox in which the EU is criticised for a lack of control at the external borders within 'anti-immigrant' discourse, although it is not exclusively a supranational issue. Thus, another direction for further research might be to focus on how EU legitimacy differs based on these institutions and levels.

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Ranking objective and perceived inequality.
A comparison of the Czech Republic in the European context

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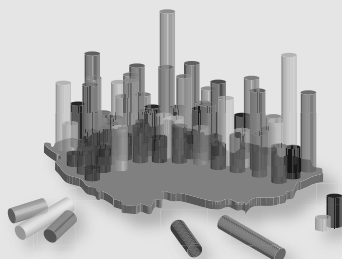
In Czech public and professional discourse there is strong rhetoric about the rooted egalitarianism of Czech society and its extremely low socio-economic inequality. This study thus traces various objective and subjective dimensions of inequality in an attempt to examine the validity of this rhetoric. The study uses various sources of data on the levels and trends in earnings, household income, and living conditions in the Czech Republic and compares them to other European countries. It appears that although the country ranks among societies with a low level of social inequality, Czechs are not particularly 'exceptional' when it comes to objective economic equality, nor are they remarkably egalitarian in their attitudes.

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'Not Knowing When It's Going to Happen and What's Going to Happen': The Time Politics of Applying for a Residence Permit in the Czech Republic*

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Abstract: This study focuses on the time politics involved in applying for a residence permit in the Czech Republic, with a focus on non-European Union (EU) applicants. It examines how governmentality and state superiority are represented and performed within the bureaucratic procedure of the application process. Based on the results, I argue that the application process bureaucracy is tied to time politics – practices that govern others through time. The paper is based on research realised in Brno, the second-largest city in the Czech Republic, and uses qualitative, ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews with immigrants from non-EU countries who applied for a long-term residence permit. The paper examines time politics within this process, highlighting its unpredictability, disrupted temporal linearity and chrononormativity. In this context, the respondents describe the waiting period as a moment of being *in between* – temporally, spatially and socially. Therefore, I argue that the time politics experienced throughout the application process significantly influences the lives of applicants. The interviews revealed that the applicants were caught in a liminal position with an uncertain ending, exemplified by the impossibility of moving (temporally, spatially and socially) – a feeling often described as *stuckedness*. Consequently, this time politics and the temporal inequality and disadvantages experienced during the process contribute to exclusion from mainstream Czech society and produce structural invisibility.

Keywords: time politics, waiting, chrononormativity, bureaucracy, migration

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Introduction

Joel, an individual interviewed for this study, described the process of applying for a residence permit in terms of 'not knowing when it's going to happen and what's going to happen'. He highlights the uncertainty and *stuckedness* of applicants during this process. Immigration is experienced and governed differently in different states (territories) and situations. When examining the use of time as a migration control technology and exploring the time politics of migrant deportability, Cleton (2021, p. 3) pointed out, 'The governance of international migration works through time as much as through spatial control'. Temporality thus plays a crucial role in studying the migration process. This time politics has often been studied in the context of irregular migration, focusing on asylum seekers and refugees, who are typically analysed in connection to waiting, stuckedness and time–space disruptions (e.g. Drangsland, 2019; Gasparini, 1995). In relation to migration and the physicality of movement, acceleration has been identified as particularly significant in terms of government policies regulating migration (Griffiths et al., 2013). However, one's experience of time depends on where one is 'positioned within a larger economy of temporal worth' (Sharma, 2014, pp. 8–9); therefore, acceleration does not work for everybody or in the same way. During migration, the experience of time (and its rhythm) can be diverse: slow/fast, active/inactive, full of changes/without changes over a long period and so on. Some migrants often speak about experiencing a time in which change can happen suddenly and without warning. In contrast to this frantic sense of temporality, other migrants experience time as slow and marked by very little change over long periods (Griffiths et al., 2013). Slowness is a typical form of temporality, especially for specific types of migration (such as asylum seekers or refugees), since the bureaucratic process requires official recognition of requests and includes many appeals, hearings and repetitions. In this context, studies have pointed out the role of waiting, uncertainty and keeping migrants 'in between', or in precarious positions, through temporal techniques such as acceleration or deceleration (e.g. Lilja et al., 2017). Moreover, such time politics in the context of place-making can contribute to exclusionary practices (Tefera & Gamlen, 2021).

This study, however, looks at temporality and migration experiences in the case of 'regular', rather 'high-skilled' migration. Specifically, it examines the application process for a long-term residence permit within the category of 'non-EU migrants' in the Czech Republic. Although the migration process when applying for a long-term residence permit is considered an 'ordinary' administrative procedure, this study shows that the time politics within this process may crucially impact the lives of applicants and their integration options. I highlight the roles of waiting and disrupted life paths as aspects of time politics manifested through bureaucratic procedures. *Time politics* can be understood as a wide range of time practices and strategies that express power and govern others through time.

The study explains how time politics is expressed via bureaucracy and the application process and how migrants experience this time politics in the process of applying for long-term residence permits. These issues are examined using

the case of non-European Union (EU) migrants living in Brno, the second-largest city in the Czech Republic and an important university town with a constantly growing number of residing migrants. Brno, in a strategic document, asserted that 'high-skilled' migrants[1] should be seen as a favourable group to attract and keep within the city (City of Brno, 2020). The goal here is to demonstrate how the Czech state voices its power over these immigrants through bureaucracy, creating a specific time politics that produces waiting and uncertainty.

The research revealed that time politics can be observed in several temporal aspects: disrupted chrononormativity and linearity, prolonged waiting and this waiting's effects on applicants' lives, such as stuckedness, a liminal position and uncertainty. Even after obtaining a long-term residence permit, migrants are expected to 'integrate' successfully, which is often underpinned by a linear conception of time that considers the speed of integration an indicator of success. Therefore, these obstacles may contribute to social exclusion and make it more difficult to settle, with both approaches to time, linear and non-linear, possibly explaining such a situation (Tefera & Gamlen, 2021). My research aimed to examine these exclusionary practices incorporated into time politics within the migration regime and a group of relatively privileged immigrants (in comparison to asylum seekers, for example) in the Czech context.

The research was conducted through in-depth semi-structured research interviews with 10 participants from non-EU countries, complemented by ethnographic observations and one research interview with a lawyer focusing on migration law. The article first discusses the local context and continues with an explanation of the theoretical background, which focuses on temporality and time politics, followed by a methodological section. The analytical section is divided into two parts. First, I examine the time politics of the Department for Asylum and Migration Policy (DAMP), which issues the residence permit documents. I explore the role of waiting in the applicants' lives. Second, I highlight other effects that waiting can produce, such as liminality, as a part of disrupted chrononormativity and norma-/temporality. Waiting in this context can be related to subordination, non-citizenship and state superiority.

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[1] There is growing research on the labels of migrants (e.g. De Coninck, 2020; Janky, 2019). In the Czech Republic, irregular migrants, and specifically refugees from Africa and the Middle East, are perceived negatively among the public (Hanzlová, 2018) and in the media (Kovář, 2020) and are frequently described as 'economic' migrants. On the other hand, both the state and the country's cities support incoming 'high-skilled', 'qualified', 'educated' migrants (City of Brno, 2020), also referred to as expats (Brno Expat Centre, n.d.). This approach and its language create a 'hierarchy of Otherness' (Jaworsky et al., 2023). However, highly skilled migrants may also be classified as irregular, and for this reason, I will avoid reproducing this otherness by using the term 'applicants for a residence permit' whenever it is possible; otherwise I use the broad term 'migrants' and 'non-EU migrants'. I am aware that this terminology is not ideal and creates a division based on citizenship in the EU. Nevertheless, the division is important to the residence permit process and the time politics under study.

Migration in the Czech Republic and Brno

Since the Czech Republic has a post-communist history, its immigration system has changed dramatically since 1989. Foremost among the changes has been the need to tackle the growing number of migrants who come to live in the Czech Republic permanently. When 'comparing the 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium, crossing the border and becoming a resident has become more difficult, but the state has begun to support the integration of immigrants, although only to a limited extent and with a focus on long-term residents' (Klvaňová, 2017, p. 30). In the 1990s, the Department of Asylum and Migration Policy was founded within the Ministry of the Interior to develop migration policy (Jungwirth, 2018). However, the state's attitude toward migration is still evolving. While in 1990, only about 0.3% of the Czech population was foreign-born (Baršová & Barša, 2005), at the end of 2021, 5.8%[2] were migrants (more than half of them non-EU migrants) (MICR, n.d.). The most migrants come from Ukraine, Slovakia and Vietnam (MICR, n.d.).

Migrant residence status is governed by Act no 325/1999 Coll and Act no 326/1999 Coll. According to Czech legislation (see Act no 326/1999 Coll), there are three categories of immigrants. The first includes citizens of the EU, Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Lichtenstein. The second counts 'citizens of third countries'[3] (mostly people coming from outside the EU or the European Economic Area). The remaining migrants living in the country, such as irregular or undocumented immigrants and those seeking asylum or subsidiary protection, fall into the third category.

This study focuses on the second category – immigrants coming from non-EU countries. People included in this category may first receive a short-term residence permit (up to 90 days), a long-term visa (from 90 days to a year), a long-term residence permit, an employee card or an EU Blue Card (granted only to highly skilled employees). Long-term residence permits are provided for residency in the territory for more than 90 days and stays of more than a year (e.g. based on having the employee card, working as a freelancer or reuniting with a family member). Migrants must live in the Czech Republic for five years before applying for a permanent residence permit (Act no 326/1999 Coll). Migrants with long-term residence permits based on a reunion with a family member have almost the same rights as Czech citizens in terms of access to the labour market; for other types of permits, the accessibility is more restricted. Generally, they can register with the Labour Office; however, their social rights are limited, and they

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[2] Due to the war in Ukraine and newly arrived Ukrainians, the percentage of migrants had grown to 10.6% in 2022 (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic [MICR], n.d.).
[3] This classification served as the initial basis for selecting the research participants, along with the categorisation used by DAMP, which differentiates between procedures for EU and non-EU migrants, including a separate process for non-EU migrants applying for residence permit.

cannot acquire unemployment compensation. In this context, this article aims to demonstrate that those migrants applyings for *long-term* residency can be put in a precarious position due to the time politics experienced in the bureaucratic procedure.

Brno is a convenient location for studying this process because it boasts the second largest number of migrants (after Prague) in the Czech Republic, a number that has been steadily increasing.[4] Brno also aims to attract highly skilled migrants to work in academia, technology start-ups and the information technology sector (City of Brno, 2020). Consequently, new difficulties have emerged for the city's social services and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) focusing on immigrants (SocioFactor, 2020). Brno is also convenient for the study because of my knowledge of its area and broader social networks that allowed me better access to the research terrain and research participants.

The most important institution dealing with immigration issues is the Ministry of the Interior (MICR), which manages international migration based on the control of state borders and, in general, contributes to legislative conception and development in this sector. One of its departments is the Department of Asylum and Migration Policy (DAMP), which is responsible for developing policies related to migration and asylum in the Czech Republic, including the state's migration strategy and legislative proposals related to migration. This department has offices in every region and manages the process of issuing visas, residence permits and other documents necessary for individuals to legally enter and stay in the Czech Republic. It also assumes responsibility for granting asylum to refugees and other individuals seeking protection in the Czech Republic and the authority to expel them. It is complemented by the Commission for Decision Making in Matters of Residence of Foreigners, which works as a superior administrative body of DAMP – migrants can submit their complaints about DAMP's inaction, and the commission examines them. At the same time, it is a subordinate administrative body under the Minister of the Interior and an organisational part of the Ministry of the Interior.

This study found that from the applicant's perspective, this institution is often overwhelmed with applications and full of migrants waiting for their residence permits to be processed. The official period for DAMP to process long-term residence permits based on family reunion is 260 days, which can be extended if additional documentation or verification is required (the process is formally stopped pending delivery of the additional documents). For other types of permits, such as those based on employment cards, the period is 60 days. To prolong the residence permit, one must apply no earlier than 120 days before the end of its validity, and the official limit for DAMP to make a decision is 30 days. If these

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[4] Currently, migrants represent 9.8% of the inhabitants in Brno. The number of migrants living in Brno has increased 10% every year since 2015. There were 41,400 migrants (23,800 'non-EU') by the end of 2021 (MICR, n.d.).

deadlines are exceeded, applicants can submit their request to the Commission for Decision Making in Matters of Residence of Foreigners. However, the bureaucracy and administration who oversee the application process are enormous, often unpredictable and not clear enough for the applicants – partially due to the different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of applicants, which create different expectations and attitudes. The overall operation of DAMP is thus integral to the time politics governing the applicants and the state's attitude toward migration policy. However, the city's aim of attracting more 'highly skilled' migrants does not necessarily go hand in hand with the capacity of DAMP to effectively manage all applications.

Time Politics and Migration

Since standardised time is considered one of the most important features of intersubjective reality, time has become a scarce resource (Kellerman, 1989). Yet some groups have more control over time than others (Sharma, 2014), and some populations can be placed 'outside' the dominant time frame (Zerubavel, 1982). In these ways, an Other is created through temporal and spatial distancing, framed here as *chronopolitics*. The Other is seen as someone with a different temporality who must accept the temporality of the society in which they want to participate. Society in this context is 'presented as a cohesive "whole" into which the others have to be integrated' (Van den Berg, 2016, p. 24). Differentiating oneself from others, establishing symbolic and consequently social boundaries between Us and Them, and distinguishing between 'legal' and 'illegal' citizens – these are the fundamental principles of the exclusion and inclusion processes within social groups and national states (for a discussion of symbolic boundaries, see Rétiová et al., 2021). This is how time politics relates to the concept of chronopolitics: the Other is created through temporal and spatial distancing. Thus, chronological time functions as the basis for the control and organisation of social processes.

Approaches to time politics differ considerably depending on the perspectives of particular disciplines, the goals of the politics and even geographical differences within countries; moreover, they are used in diverse situations. For example, time politics has been explored as time–space planning and mobility management in connection with social inequality (Bongfiglioli, 1997; Fernandes, 2011), as a tool for synchronising diverse social and public services (Boulin & Mückengerger, 2005), as a means of improving quality of life and as a source of welfare and freedom (Mückengerger, 2011). Through such an approach, time politics aims to strengthen social cohesion. Time politics within institutional settings and administration is based on the argument that institutions do not build their legitimacy simply by existing but from the requirements of those who utilise them (Mückengerger, 2011). In another context, time politics is also implicated in family, gender and welfare policies (Van den Berg, 2016). In this article, I understand time politics as an institutional technique for governing others through

temporality. Time politics represents another kind of barrier to entering a country. It is implicated in the application process and experienced via bureaucratic procedures representing the state's governmentality and expression of power over its non-citizens (Fassin, 2011). As Anderson states, 'In order to limit people's access to resources and power, they are subject to differential inclusion not only spatially but also temporally through keeping them in a prolonged period of waiting, constantly delaying them, postponing their arrival and future plans' (Anderson, 2010, p. 417).

The Politics of Waiting, Chrononormativity and Norma-/temporality

Waiting is one of the most distinctive features of the application process for a residence permit and has been described as 'inactive activity', 'deviation' or as being 'out of sync with time' (Bendixsen & Eriksen, 2018, p. 92). Bourdieu examined time in relation to habitus and argued that 'time is engendered in the relationship between habitus and the social world, between the disposition to be and to do and the regularities of the natural and social cosmos (or a field)' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 208). Thus, the temporality provided through time politics embodies power relations linked to subjective dispositions. From this perspective, Auyero (2012, p. 2) perceives waiting as 'temporal processes in and through which political subordination is reproduced'.

The Western linear conception of time within capitalism accelerates one's lifespan, reproduction and growth. It is expected that growth will follow certain developmental stages at both the macrolevel of global economic interests (framed through neoliberalism) and the microlevel of individual activities concerning education, family, job, health and overall way of life. This normative perception of temporality concerning certain life stages applies to chrononormativity. The concept of chrononormativity was originally used in queer theory and referred to an idea of *right timing* – for example, the right time for education, finding a life partner and starting a family; each activity refers to a specific life period (Freeman, 2010). From a Foucauldian perspective, chrononormativity is related to the organisation of human bodies in time toward the highest form of productivity – a *chronobiopolitics* (Freeman, 2010). Chrononormativity refers to an organising principle that maintains a specific temporal order in various social practices, such as those found in policymaking institutions, companies and schools (Wanka, 2020).

On the other hand, *norma-/temporality* refers to connections between normality and temporality in everyday practices, such as the right time to get up, the right time to work and the right time to have dinner; it is related to age, gender and life stage (Krekula et al., 2017). All these conceptions are structurally and culturally embedded in diverse practices. Chrononormativity and norma-/temporality represent elements of social structures that use seemingly natural inscriptions of time in human bodies and the world around us.

In this context, waiting represents one of the spaces in which chrononormativity can be disrupted. Consequently, chrononormativity produces marginal spaces as effects of power (Jensen, 2017). Therefore, the application process creates temporal asynchronicity and temporal inequality and enforces uncertainty. In the context of requiring a residence permit, temporal differences serve as a tool for identifying the Other.

Closely related to the element of waiting are the fear of deportation and a possible undesirable future – outcomes in which the uncertainty in the lives of immigrants is painfully apparent. Waiting can be seen as a liminal phase. The concept of liminality was originally a temporal concept of individual transformation and social continuity applied to comprehend rites of passage (Turner, 1967). It refers to an undefined phase connecting two clearly defined social statuses or positions. However, the form of liminality experienced in the application process does not have a certain ending and outcome, which is why the present is not experienced as meaningful. 'The present liminal state seems to continue forever without turning into a future' (Bendixsen & Eriksen, 2018, p. 103). Thus, powerlessness is incorporated into waiting, which represents a loss of control over time. In this context, a long wait 'is to be the subject of an assertion that one's own time (and therefore, one's social worth) is less valuable than the time and worth of the one who imposes the wait' (Schwartz, 1975, p. 856). Therefore, looking at different temporalities in connection with migrants and their post-arrival period is important.

We can observe how multiple time politics produce diverse social rhythms. This further generates points of exclusion and expresses feelings of dissonance. Waiting and experiencing different temporalities exclude some people from the majority and a long-term life course. Therefore, this research aims to reveal these time politics through which immigrants' subjectivities are governed.

Methodology

This study's goal is to learn how time politics is expressed via the bureaucratic and application process and how migrants experience this politics in the process of applying for a residence permit. Qualitative research methods were applied to understand the complexity of the applicant experience in this process and to reveal diverse time politics within the application process.

First, 'pilot' ethnographic observations were conducted, providing the thematic ground for semi-structured interviews as the main research method. Conducting ethnographic observations as a 'pilot study' helped me better understand the situations of immigrants waiting for their residence permit approval. These observations were made during three visits to DAMP, the institution where immigrants apply for a residence permit – and usually revisit repeatedly. The ethnographic observations were accompanied by several informal discussions with people who came from non-EU countries to Brno to study or work at the university. We discussed their experiences with DAMP and the process of ap-

plying for a residence permit. In addition, I followed Facebook groups related to migrants in Brno in which people share their struggles with the department.

This research provided a background for applying the main research method: conducting ten in-depth semi-structured interviews with people going through the application process. When the research interviews with applicants were finished, I conducted another research interview with a lawyer focusing on migration law (and working for NGOs to tackle issues regarding residence permits in Brno) to clarify some aspects of application process. This interview provided valuable perspective on migration and legislative processes and revealed possible barriers faced by migrants applying for residence permits.

The semi-structured interview method allows information to be gathered that is accessible through neither ethnographic observation nor quantitative research methods such as questionnaires. In-depth semi-structured interviews allow researchers to follow and respect participant trajectories in storytelling, enabling participants to express ideas in their own words and apprehend issues that are important and specific. To create an open and trustful environment when conducting the interviews, it was crucial to focus on the interviewees' reasoning rather than on obtaining the answer (Reinharz, 1992). This method permits the study of time and temporality while also allowing participants to describe their subjective experiences, diverse situations and feelings of temporal resonance that may not be anticipated. The combination of ethnographic observation and semi-structured interviews as research methods provides advantages since 'the data from each can be used to illuminate the other' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 102).

The interviews with applicants were conducted between December 2019 and February 2020. The respondents were found by applying purposeful sampling. In the end, three men and seven women were recruited; their names have been changed to preserve anonymity. Three respondents came from Indonesia, two from Russia, two from Syria, one from Moldavia, one from India and one from Mexico.[5] The criteria for selecting respondents included their having recent (or ongoing) experience with applying for a long-term residence permit (in some cases for prolonging their current stay), being of productive age, working rather a highly skilled job and speaking English (if not Czech). The interviewees had rather diverse professions, such as language teacher, lawyer, chef and IT specialist. The ages of the respondents ranged from 20 to 45 years, and all interviews were held in English, since the respondents felt more comfortable in that language than in Czech. Before the interviews, I did not have any information on whether the participants' experiences had been negative or positive.

Seven respondents applied for a long-term residence permit based on their partnership with a Czech citizen or a person with a residence permit in the Czech Republic (through the reunion with a family member track). One had been under

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[5] The study did not require a representative sample based on country of origin, as it was assumed that the procedures for non-EU countries would be consistent across all countries within this category.

subsidiary protection for five years, after which she applied for a long-term residence permit. Another had a long-term residence permit based on his job. The final respondent received a permit based on her student visa in the country. The participants were either going through the process (repeatedly) or had recently done so. One respondent voluntarily communicated with me for several months, reporting events in the application process and sharing issues she considered important. The long-term residence permit is valid for more than a year, but the application process must be repeated to renew the residency when some changes happen (in income, residence address, etc.).

I started the analysis by separating the interview data into four main categories related to temporality: type of residence permit, bureaucratic procedure (i.e. which kinds of documents were needed, in which order and for what purpose), experiences with DAMP (its location, communication with employees and feelings inside the institution) and the everyday life consequences of the process. However, the central theme of the interviews always appeared to be *waiting*. Therefore, I further coded for how waiting was related to the rhythmicity of the institution (DAMP) and the administration process. Within the administration process, waiting was recognised as an institutional time politics wherein time is used as a technique for negotiation and governing Others. I then focused on instances in which waiting was related to planning and expected lifepaths. In this section, I used codes for situations of disruption in one's expected life path (chrononormativity), disruption of the common day/week structure (norma-/temporality), feelings of stuckedness and the impossibility of planning ahead or moving forward with a desired life path (liminality).

The analytical section was organised based on two perspectives observed inductively in the interviews. The first explores time politics and the role of waiting at DAMP as well as encounters with its officers. It shows how the rhythm of the application process and bureaucracy influence the lives of applicants. The second section examines waiting in everyday life, its features (such as liminality and disrupted chrononormativity) and the consequences for applicants. This division helped as an analytical tool to better understand how certain time politics work, how they are applied and, especially, how the applicants experience them. Accordingly, the article examines the interconnections of the bureaucratic system and migration regime of the Czech Republic in practice and its impacts on applicants.

Analysis of Time Politics Within the Application Process

Time and its manipulation are among the key symbolic dimensions of political arrangement that can be analysed as time politics. Many applicants experience repetitive procedures with an uncertain ending; moreover, many of them repeatedly go through the process. Although applicants must adhere to obligations and deadlines for submitting documents, the process can be long and complicated,

and in some cases, institutions do not fulfil their duties and exceed their own deadlines. This presents obstacles to receiving the residence permit.

Waiting is an inherent part of most bureaucratic procedures, including applying for a residence permit. However, not everybody has the same experience of the process, and not everyone waits for the same duration. The analysis identifies the features of time politics within the process and its possible impacts. It exemplifies how a prolonged bureaucratic procedure can affect life chances and the daily and long-term decision-making of applicants.

Time Politics in the Department of Asylum and Migration Policy: Waiting

When I asked the research participants about DAMP, they suddenly became passionate and started to talk emotionally about their experiences with the office, which, unfortunately, were often negative. They said that people often wait hours for service at DAMP and may not even get to the service window after a full day of waiting; the next day, they have to return and wait again. Since the capacity of the staff does not allow all applicants present to be served each day, the situation becomes very frustrating for both sides. This frustration, in turn, causes behaviour that appears impolite to applicants. Joel reported about his experience at the immigration office that there were

> a lot of people. They open the place at 7:00 [a.m.]. We came at like 6:40 a.m., and there was a queue already of like 40 people in front of us.

Below, Stasi describes how the waits in and functioning of the institution have changed in recent years:

> It wasn't like that before, but the last two or three years, it's been hell. I won't say that even before people didn't spend the whole day there, but at least you didn't have to come there at 8:00 a.m. I used to go in the afternoon, in the days when the office hours were until 5:00 [p.m], because I didn't want to wake up so early, and I always got a turn. But now, I have had to go back, go home and come back there the next day. (…) Then the next day when I arrived, I ended up on a different floor, different window, for a different kind of residence, like a half an hour before the end of the office hours. And I had arrived at 8:22 [a.m.].

Waiting for an entire day was not the only issue Stasi described. She further highlighted the difficulties of not knowing when her turn might be. Consequently, the applicants lose control over their time – Stasi does not know how many people are in front of her, so she cannot leave the building and come later. This also shows the unpredictability of the institution's organisation if the applications can be managed at a different office than planned. They cannot do or plan any other activities or structure their days. Thus, the time produced by the institution

clashes with the applicants' social and productive/active time. In this regard, Auyero (2012) used the term 'tempography of domination', referring to how the dominated perceive waiting and temporality. For immigrants and other unprivileged groups, the experience of endless waiting is therefore an encounter with this strategy of domination.

The rhythm of bureaucratic practices and their consequences were further exemplified by Radana, who faced difficulties in getting her residence permit confirmed. She applied for a residence permit based on a 'reunion with a family member', so her application was linked to her husband's previous resident permit application. She had been waiting for the decision for more than a year and still not received an answer. The situation affected not only her but also her family and, especially, her child's future. Here, she describes her application process and DAMP:

> They will tell you that they will call you within three months because your papers will be examined in three months and that they will give you the answer. So, the first three months were over, then the second three months, then four were over. And then I gave birth, and then I had a baby. And this baby is now ten months old, and she does not have anything. (…) Every time I go there [DAMP], they say, 'We don't have an issue with you, all your papers are fine,' or 'all your husband's papers are fine. You are waiting for an answer for your husband, and your husband is waiting for…I don't know why'. So, my husband is waiting for literally no reason, and we are waiting for him.

The length and difficulty of the process are based on the complexity and difficulty of the application itself as well as the institution's capacities and the abilities of its staff. In this case, Radana and her husband's applications were intertwined without apparent denouement, which made the situation irresolvable. This shows how unclear institutional procedures express power over applicants by prolonging waiting and keeping them in an uncertain position with limited life possibilities.

Rini described another example of institutional rhythm and practices below, pointing out the need to 'wait actively':

> Within that three months, we also had to, like, actively ask them, because sometimes if it takes a long time for them to process the application or, maybe, sometimes they forgot or, just, you know, maybe they already have it, but they haven't sent a letter to my house… They say, 'Oh, yes. It is in process'. But then, like, in that time, if you feel you are waiting too long, we have to keep asking them if they are still working on that or not.

This procedure forces applicants to be active, accept the role of patients and 'play the game' of the bureaucratic apparatus. 'The game' involves certain rules that

must be followed to be successful, which in this case means obtaining the residence permit. On the one hand, the role of an applicant is to follow these rules – to be active and patient at the same time and overcome plausible complications during which they may feel powerless and frustrated. This period, as noted by the respondents, can be understood both as hopeful and frustrating. On the other hand, the role of the institution (which represents the state's policy toward immigrants) is to demand that the rules be followed – to express its superiority and domination through several procedural steps and, subsequently, prolonged waiting for the decision. Immigrants are required to patiently comply with changing and often ambiguous bureaucratic requirements. As Auyero (2012) describes in the context of underprivileged people, they know that if they want to acquire the needed 'aid', they have to show that they are worth it by waiting patiently.

Applicants are often aware that they can reduce their waiting time at the institution, as Stasi says. However, they are often in situations that do not allow them to plan that far ahead. Moreover, they reported troubles with the registration system.

> You can also make an appointment ahead of time, but very few people actually do it. Hardly anyone is so responsible as to have everything under control to know at least a month and a half ahead that he will go there. It is not possible to get an appointment sooner usually. (…) Anyway, you feel guilty every time you wait there the whole day in a queue because you couldn't think ahead enough, like, a month before, to get the appointment. Somebody actually does it, but that's not me, definitely. So, I just feel guilty about myself and in front of my boss when I must take the day off because of it. I hate this feeling. But I don't think it's my fault. But I still feel it like that.

Stasi articulating her guilt at having to wait at DAMP to apply or prolong her residence permit exemplifies the tempography of domination. The institution's failure to be more flexible, increase its number of windows to serve more people per day or make any other kind of improvement illustrates the relationship between the state's institutions (and migrant policy) and immigrants. It represents an unwillingness to change the structural aspects that create situations in which applicants experience socio-temporal inequality. The creation of feelings of guilt for their situation can be associated with victim blame, which has already been studied in diverse spheres of social life. Since Western societies are built on liberalism, which upholds the notion of individual rights and responsibilities and, especially, the belief that humans are responsible for their own situation, there is a much smaller focus on structural explanations of aspects that foster this (Wright, 1993).

Another aspect of the bureaucratisation of the immigration process and governmentality is the shifting of responsibility from employees onto the imagined Other. Here, Radana describes her experience dealing with DAMP officers:

> Every time they open my file, they say, 'Yeah, it is a complete file, you have every piece, and everything is here, and they will call you'. The thing is, I don't know who *they* are. It is always *they* will call you, not us…So, we ended up with the words 'we don't know', and now, if you don't know – it is my life you are talking about (…) and I am suffering from that. All my life is on hold for this. (…) It is me who lost a vacation. It is me who lost the stuff. And I am sure that if this employee lost his vacation, he would find someone to talk to, and he would fix that issue because it is not normal for that to be the answer: I don't know – that is not normal. There must be someone who knows. And this person is either not working or either not hearing or just ignoring his work.

The impossibility of finding out who '*they* are', who has responsibility or to whom applicants can complain, recalls what Arendt (1970) described in reference to the depersonification of modern bureaucratic states. She pointed out that 'in a fully developed bureaucracy there is nobody left with whom one can argue, to whom one can present grievances, on whom the pressures of power can be exerted' (Arendt, 1970, p. 81). In other words, government employees are doing their jobs while, at the same time, being alienated from the consequences of their actions. Individuals are processed as administrative subjects of the state. Meanwhile, the potential lack of expertise or insufficient number of employees managing these permits within the bureaucracy process can have a fatal impact on the lives of immigrants and present obstacles to receiving a residence permit. On the one hand, applicants should be patiently waiting for the decision, and on the other hand, they are expected to be flexible, to act quickly while responding to documents received from DAMP. This shows that 'power makes context stick, and bureaucracies are the preeminent technology of power in the contemporary world' (Heyman, 1995, p. 262). Therefore, the everyday practices and interactions of (non)citizens and institutions are the meeting points between the structure of the state apparatus, governmentality and personal experience. This power of the state performed via institutional bureaucracy teaches newcomers to adopt a 'client role' – to learn to be 'patients of the state' (Auyero, 2012).

Being In-Between – Consequences of the Application Process and Waiting

Although the research participants were not applying for citizenship but 'only' for a long-term residence permit, they perceived their fundamental rights and security as similar to those included in Czech citizenship. Thus, after obtaining the residence permit, an immigrant can feel like (and be comprehended as) part of the majority, part of society, like the rest of the Czech citizenry, because they have the same rights and the same access to welfare benefits.

The participants often referenced feelings of 'being abnormal' or 'being unequal'. In this context, being 'normal' in the eyes of the respondents means being able to plan their time, have a job, vacation, have a bank account and do all the

things that the majority can do – in other words, to have life under control. Here, Sandra portrays this situation:

> Once I will have this temporary stay, I will get a business licence, and then I will be able to pay these social payments and so on, to live like a white man here. (…) And I will be finally equal, like an ordinary Czech person, citizen maybe. So, the same system will be applied.

The feeling of not being able to do the same things as most of the society is related to a feeling of being outside of common society and a shared social temporality deviating from chrononormativity. The inability to follow an expected lifepath and the linear timeline of society is incompatible with mainstream society and the dominant economic system. Therefore, applicants waiting for their residence permits feel abnormal because of the disruption to their life path – their exclusion from the economic system and the everyday life activities of average Czech citizens. They deviate from chrononormativity and norma-/temporality and, consequently, do not feel like a part of society. Thus, those who find themselves outside the normative time–space system are seen (and experienced) as deviations or abnormalities.

Waiting and the feeling of 'being left out' of the society can, in certain situations also be a form of a liminal period, which is another aspect of a disrupted life path and disrupted chrononormativity. Maria describes her position as being between leaving her home country and settling in a new one, with an uncertain future ahead of her:

> For me, it is really affecting me. Before I got this residence permit, I was kind of in between. Will I live here or not? I did not know. I mean I could not decide the next move for me. I was just still waiting. But now, after I got this, I know I can live here. Then I choose to live here.

Another example, given by Radana, explored how waiting influenced her everyday experience, planning and, basically, her whole life, as it revolved around her residence permit being postponed. Waiting for approval left her stuck in multiple spheres of her life. As a result, she found herself in a liminal position, which complicates even things most people in the Czech Republic consider common or basic.

> Actually, I am a person who is not able to go to work, to do anything because of this paper. I wanted to get my driving licence, and I couldn't because they require my ID, and I don't have ID. I want to take Eli [her daughter] to school – not school, it's like kindergarten, where you take kids and they request an assistant who speaks English. And I was accepted, but I cannot go because I don't have ID. And now my bank is calling me because they request ID. I told them I've applied but I don't have an answer yet, so I now have my bank waiting for it as well. Everything is wating for

> it…Everything in my life is literally stuck because I am waiting for them to answer, and they are supposed to answer me within this timeframe by law. (…) When I applied for my baby, they told me 'in three weeks', and that was in April [six months before the interview].

Even though Radana can legally stay in the Czech Republic during the process, many facilities do not recognise and accept her status, which potentially decreases her possibility of following the life path of integration. This waiting can be grasped as a liminal phase of living, with an undefined period of waiting and fuzzy temporality. In the liminal period, the identities of people are temporarily vague, and the experience is, consequently, incorporated into a new kind of person. 'Life is on hold. Liminality eats itself backwards and forwards in the subjectively experienced time of la durée, and the present becomes ever more pressing as time passing' (Bendixsen & Eriksen, 2018, p. 103). Thus, the present is felt even more intensely. In other words, migrants are in a liminal position of waiting with an insecure end, which makes the time meaningless. This experience can be very frustrating for applicants, as Joel illustrates:

> I was just waiting for news. This…I could say that the feeling I remember the most is just this uncertainty about when it is going to happen and what is going to happen now. So, this not knowing when it's going to happen and what is going happen was the worst, I guess.

As most of the applicants reported, their time is not future-oriented. They cannot make long-term plans. Or, if they do, they cannot be sure when or whether they will be allowed to fulfil them. Thus, informants are more oriented toward 'now'. Their time might be less structured and their rhythms different that those of the majority. Waiting thus represents losing the possibility to decide how things are going to happen, a phenomenon Bourdieu (2000, p. 237) describes as 'waiting for everything to come from others'.

The applicants agreed that they experienced a strong feeling of being stuck while waiting for the decision – not only temporally but spatially. They needed to be attached to a place of living because they were awaiting police check-ups, documents in the mail or the residence permit itself being delivered. This feeling was associated with the impossibility of making a change or progressing in life. This spatial-temporal stuckedness was described by Nady as follows:

> During the whole process, I needed to stay in the territory. (…) So, just imagine you don't get an answer for a year; you just cannot go anywhere basically. Maybe you can, and they can give you a kind of bridge visa, something like that, but it is problematic; it is complicated. Basically, you just need to be here, to be in the city as well, because the police can check your house at any time, and if they don't find you there, it can be a problem.

These examples further represent the feeling of 'being left out' – of society, spatiality and temporality. In this respect, the migration regime produces a category of structurally invisible people held captive by institutions that do not recognise their legal status and thus render it impossible for them to obtain a legal job, participate in the formal economy or just take part in everyday activities. This structural invisibility is also driven by liminality, which is not only typified by its uncertainty but also by the feeling of 'being stuck' and the impossibility of participating in society. Time politics within this bureaucratic process creates boundaries for immigrants to settle and live a 'normal' life. Moreover, it potentially keeps them excluded from a common shared reality, chrononormativity, norma-/temporality and, consequently, from the majority of society. In this context, time is a key symbolic dimension through which a state's superiority is expressed: waiting, as a temporal deviation, is an expression of time politics and the power of the state expressed via bureaucracy. The technique of governing incomers involves not only spatial politics but also time politics. The specific experience of temporality plays a crucial role.

Concluding discussion

The article has analysed the role of the state apparatus, surveillance and bureaucracy in the migration regime. Specifically, it examined the perspectives of research participants applying for a residence permit in the Czech Republic as non-EU applicants. As a technique for governing migrants through time, time politics was referenced to analyse this application process. The study examined how time politics is particularly important for describing the migration regime and bureaucracy faced when obtaining a residence permit. The study shed light on this process, which may negatively affect the integration of migrants at the local level and has the potential to produce socio-spatial exclusion and inclusion. On the one hand, Brno's strategic development documents aim to attract 'skilled' migrants to the city and keep them there; on the other hand, the city has limited power over this process since residence permit applications are in the hands of the Department of Asylum and Migration Policy (part of the Ministry of Interior, which represents the state's goals). Furthermore, this institutional discrepancy in the aims of migration policy and the processes of immigration and integration impacts spatiotemporal and social exclusion, indicating the importance of studying institutional (time) politics. It also shows that the unusual strength of the modern state, as well as its ability to exclude others and embrace its subjects, lies in the state's infrastructural power.

This study revealed that the waiting caused by bureaucracy becomes a part of time politics whereby the state expresses its superiority and compels non-citizens into a specific position within society. The centrality of time is a key symptom of the inequalities within migration policy. Applicants do not have the same possibility to structure their time and life plans or participate in the pre-

structured temporality of the capitalist work regime. The time of the applicant is full of endless waits for papers and postponements due to institutional decisions, keeping them in uncertainty, disrupting their expected (or desired) lifepaths (as part of chrononormativity) and, consequently, impeding the possibility of finding a job and 'integrating' into society. In other words, they are temporally disadvantaged. For immigrants and the underprivileged, the powerless experience of endless waiting therefore works as an example of a strategy of domination (Auyero, 2012). The position of these applicants in society can then be described as unpredictable, liminal, in between, stuck or structurally invisible. Consequently, time in this phase is experienced as slow and meaningless, as it does not provide any space for personal change, growth or development. It is not a moment of empowerment but an experience marked by powerlessness. On the one hand, during the application process, the state expects the applicant to be patient but also flexible. In another words, as Auyero (2012, p. 14) asserts, 'The state tells its subjects, implicitly or explicitly, with words or actions: "Wait, be patient, and you might benefit from my (reluctant) benevolence"'. On the other hand, the bureaucratic procedure is inflexible in reaction to the diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of applicants, which influence their attitudes and options.

As noted in the interview with a lawyer specialising in migration law and dealing with the applicant process for a residence permit, the current procedures fail to consider the cultural and socioeconomic differences and the experiences of applicants who have been socialised in different institutional and bureaucratic systems. Moreover, the failure in the process is often viewed as an individual responsibility of the applicant rather than a larger, systematic problem. Therefore, the unfamiliarity with the context of the Czech bureaucratic system plays a crucial role in shaping applicants' perceptions of and attitudes towards the process. Although the legal framework for the application process operates at a generalised level, the specific materials required for the procedure vary depending on an individual's situation. Therefore, an intermediate step between the applicant and the official would be appropriate to facilitate a better understanding of the application process and offer the applicant clear explanations of the specific materials required for the unique situation. Intercultural workers employed by the Brno city municipality already fulfil this role; however, their capacity is limited and covers a much wider agenda. This raises the question of whether DAMP itself should not employ people with similar expertise to increase the institutional capacity to administer applications effectively. Inevitably, in the context of the state's migration policy, it would be appropriate to reconsider the importance of the department to enhance its capacity.

This study also opens up another perspective for further research on time politics in which this politics becomes a technique used by people in disadvantageous positions to negotiate their spatio-temporal dispositions. Moreover, it raises the question of the significance of studying different temporalities based on socio-economic and cultural backgrounds when facing new regions and in-

stitutional procedures. This would help identify and propose mechanisms and processes that facilitate better cooperation between these actors.

Although this research highlighted the weak points of the administrative process, the (time) politics of the application process has demonstrated the ability to change when faced with crisis. In relation to the arrival of a high number of Ukrainian refugees to the Czech Republic (300,000 within the first 2 months) (ČTK, 2022), the government established faster periods within which Ukrainian refugees can apply for a job (Chrzová, 2022). This change was made to support their quick integration into society. This demonstrates that migration and integration policy have the potential to implement significant improvements in their functioning.

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Searching for the 'Muslims' in Czech Islamophobia and the Effects of Intergroup Contact in Challenging the 'Fear of the Unknown'*

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Abstract: Since at least 2014, cross-national surveys have measured the most negative attitudes towards 'Muslims' in the EU among Czech respondents. These attitudes have often been attributed to few contact opportunities with actual Muslims in the country and, thus, public overreliance on the highly negative representations of 'Muslims' in public discourse. However, empirical qualitative assessments of the stereotypes which guide many Czechs' anti-Muslim prejudice and the effects of intergroup contact have been neglected. In an epistemological shortcoming, the survey category 'Muslim' has often been treated as one of analysis rather than of practice. Contrarily, I argue that Czech participants' contingent understandings and racialisation of the category need to be reclaimed as the ontological basis of prejudice. In this study, I relied on the results of a larger constructionist thematic analysis of 31 semi-structured interviews with non-Muslim Czechs and, regardless of citizenship or ethnicity, Muslims living in Czechia conducted in 2020 and 2021. The results show that, in line with public discourse dynamics, 'Muslims' in Czechia are commonly understood as immigrants racialised through their perceived Arabness, Middle Easternness and non-Whiteness. Furthermore, perceptions of Western European 'Muslims' as highly conflictual are juxtaposed with the fragility of Czechia in the face of immigration. Against this backdrop, I examine the mechanisms through which intergroup contact enriches participants' social cognitions of 'Muslims' – namely, subgrouping, positive stereotyping, reduced perceived intergroup threat and anxiety, and (re-)humanisation.

Keywords: Islamophobia, social cognition, intergroup contact, stereotypes, public opinion

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The Czech Context

Since 2014 (and until at least 2019) (Kantar, 2019; Linek, 2014), several cross-national surveys have measured the most negative attitudes towards 'Muslims' in the EU among Czech respondents (e.g. Marfouk, 2019; TNS Opinion and Social, 2015). However, little attention has been paid to empirically studying who those 'Muslims' are towards whom negative attitudes are directed. As I argue, survey designs generally aim to measure different respondents' attitudes towards Muslims qua category of analysis – that is, as an ontologically objective social group. Contrarily, in survey respondents' situated processing, 'Muslims' is a category of practice that cognitively invokes a contingent subjective group (see Brubaker, 2002). In other words, such cross-national surveys are better at describing how nationally clustered individuals think and feel about their discrete stereotypes of 'Muslims' rather than actual Muslims.

The above-mentioned surveys coincided with the highly mediatised rise of the so-called Islamic State (and other militarised jihadist groups), several jihadist terrorist attacks targeting civilians in Western Europe and the so-called European refugee crisis of 2014 and later. In Czechia, these events substantially increased the media coverage of 'Muslims', introducing them as social actors in regular political discourse. This newly acquired salience influenced Czech survey respondents' interpretations of who the 'Muslims' mentioned in the questionnaires were. For example, Savelkoul et al. (2022) found that Czech respondents became significantly more restrictive towards the immigration of 'Muslims from other countries' in the wake of the January 2015 Charlie Hebdo shootings, which occurred during the Czech fieldwork period of the 7th Wave of the European Social Survey. While actual Muslims remained mostly the same after the attacks, the stereotypes which this survey item evoked had probably changed (Shoshani & Slone, 2008).

It has been argued that a lack of intergroup contact with ethnically diverse migrants in the east of the EU has led to public overreliance on the negative depictions of 'Muslims' in public discourse (Pickel & Öztürk, 2018). An expression regularly used in Czech public discourse to explain widespread anti-Muslim prejudice in the absence of contact is 'fear of the unknown'. As the Muslim population in Czechia was estimated to stand at 0.2% of the total by 2013 (Topinka, 2015), contact opportunities with Muslims in the country, which, according to the contact hypothesis, could have reduced prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998), remained rather limited in 2014. A 2018 Czech survey found that respondents reporting personally knowing a Muslim person not only had more positive attitudes towards all 'Muslims' but also imagined 'Muslims' coming to Czechia as significantly more educated than did respondents without such contacts (MEDIAN, 2018). As a secondary effect, Czech respondents reporting contact with people of different races and ethnicities also had significantly more open attitudes towards the immigration of 'Muslims' (Pickel & Öztürk, 2018). Nevertheless, the cognitive processes through which intergroup contact with Muslims may foster more positive stereotypes of and attitudes towards 'Muslims' in Czechia remain underexplored.

Czechs' attitudes towards different Muslim-majority national groups vary. Groups associated with mediatised conflicts, such as 'Afghans', 'Palestinians' or 'Iranians',[1] have been evaluated particularly negatively (Červenka, 2011), perhaps because of a perceived intergroup threat (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Contrarily, tourism seems to positively affect the perceptions of other Muslim-majority national groups, due to either tourists' experiences or marketing a destination as attractive and safe. The Czech Statistical Office (2023) identifies Turkey, Egypt and Tunisia as frequent destinations for Czech travellers, with 245,000 people (2.3% of the population) travelling to Egypt in 2017. One survey found significantly warmer attitudes towards 'Turks' and especially 'Egyptians' than towards 'Arabs', 'Syrians' or 'Chechens' (STEM, 2016). These differences suggest that the superordinate category 'Muslim' cognitively invokes its own stereotypes, which differ from those of distinct subgroups.

The representation of 'Muslims' in Czech public discourse over the last two decades has been overwhelmingly negative. Even before 2015, news coverage of this group mostly focused on foreign policy and conflicts, emphasising pathologies such as terrorism or fundamentalism (Burešová & Sedláková, 2016; Vesecký, 2006) and perceived otherness (Křížková, 2006). During the 2000s, much of the Czech mainstream intellectual debate on Islam revolved around whether 'Muslims' should be feared. As in other European countries, the European 'refugee crisis' contributed to securitising Islam in Czechia through journalism (Tkaczyk, 2017) and most political parties' adherence to anti-Muslim/anti-refugee discourse (Zahradník & Rosůlek, 2017). With a broad political consensus over the rejection of the EU's relocation and resettlement schemes for refugees, the Czech public debate paid unprecedented attention to Muslim migration, lasting well into 2019 (Prokop, 2019, pp. 107–108). Meanwhile, blatantly Islamophobic expressions were promoted by high-profile popular culture figures, intellectuals, activists, journalists and high-ranking state officials (see annual European Islamophobia Reports by country at https://islamophobiareport.com).

Moving beyond the information provided by survey labels, in this study, I relied on semi-structured interviews with citizens to better understand the dominant shared patterns of cognition of 'Muslims' in the country and the positive effects of intergroup contact on these mental representations. In this paper, after outlining my theoretical framework and methodology, I address in two separate sections the questions of who 'Muslims' are generally perceived to be in the Czech context and what positive effects intergroup contact with Muslims has on social cognitions of 'Muslims' among non-Muslim Czechs.

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[1] 'Bosniaks' might be an exception, as they are perceived as ethnoculturally proximate, although I could not find supporting survey data.

Measuring Attitudes towards 'Muslims'

The contemporary concept of 'Islamophobia' is used to describe a multidimensional reality, with different disciplines and strands of scholarship favouring their own suitable conceptualisations. Definitions informed by social psychology have often located Islamophobia at the intra-psychological level, thus treating the phenomenon as a set of attitudes, beliefs and/or prejudices (Bleich, 2011; Ernst & Bornstein, 2012). Cross-national public opinion surveys have also generated data on attitudes towards 'Muslims' used to perform comparative analyses of anti-Muslim attitudes (e.g. Doebler, 2014; Marfouk, 2019) or to place Islamophobia in the contexts of different countries. Public opinion surveys on 'Muslims' can feed into narratives that guide policies, research agendas or citizens' social conformity biases. However, survey methodologies and many of their interpretations tend to neglect a validity issue – namely, that for survey respondents, 'Muslims' is a contingent category of practice rather than of analysis.

When using social categories, Brubaker (2002) draws a distinction between categories of analysis (i.e. as used by researchers to refer to a relatively bounded substantial social group) and categories of practice (i.e. as contingently employed in the vernacular to cognitively invoke a group). This epistemological distinction carries three important implications for public opinion research. First, in everyday thought and talk about a large social group like Muslims, research participants process information based on their situated mental representations associated with the category 'Muslims' rather than on an unmediated evaluation of an entitative Muslim group (see Lippmann, 1996). Second, the situation and context influence the extension of hypothetical cases of 'Muslims' included in the category. When a cross-national survey asks, 'How would you feel about having a Muslim as a neighbour?', respondents from diverse contexts need to process matters such as traits (e.g. ethnicity or class), social processes involved in this person becoming their neighbour (e.g. claiming asylum or a long-time citizen of their district moving house) or potential impacts of this arrival on their community. A Jewish settler in the West Bank, a resident of a multi-ethnic district in Marseille and an ethnic Czech living in an ethnically homogenous region may interpret this survey question very differently and hold distinct beliefs about that hypothetical 'Muslim' neighbour. The third implication is that categories foreground one of the actors' possible social identities. Despite the growing identification of and by Muslim immigrants to Europe as 'Muslims' since the 1980s (Bobako, 2015), when offering respondents the category 'Muslim', researchers make their perceptions of Muslimness the most salient differentiating trait (see Brubaker, 2013). Even infusing the 'Muslim' essence into an adjective (e.g. 'Muslim person', as in some translations in Kantar, 2019 -see factsheets by national language in European Union, 2019-) rather than a noun may alter survey results (Graf et al., 2013). For the Czech public, Muslimness is a highly loaded trait. An analysis of open questions from a 2014 Czech survey about the basic characteristics of 'Muslims' and 'Islam' found that 'Muslims were perceived as foreign, violent, in the role of terrifying

"Orientals", religiously inclined, oppressing women, visually different, fundamentalists, irrational, oppressive and suspicious' (Topinka, 2016, p. 239).

Given the growing consensus about the study of European Islamophobia as a form of racism (All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, 2018; Elahi & Khan, 2017), studies of public opinion should consider the varying racialisation dynamics of 'Muslims' across contexts. Superficial markers of the religion (e.g. Islamic names or dress) contribute to the contemporary European racialisation of 'Muslims' as an ethno-religious group (Meer & Modood, 2019). For many Europeans, 'Islam' is perceived not only as a religion but as separate from ideas of 'Europe'. At the same time, most European Muslims are ascribed to ethnicised groups, which can become proxies for 'Muslims' in discrete contexts through historical patterns of residence (e.g. Maghrebis in France or South Asians in Britain) or dominant stereotypes (e.g. 'Muslims' as Arabs). Across countries, the perceived attributes of these ethnicised groups may be attached to shared mental representations of 'Muslims'.

Social Cognition and Intergroup Contact

Our minds subsume information about social categories, such as 'Muslims', under schemata of mental representations which most social psychologists conceptualise as stereotypes – namely, the collection of 'knowledge, beliefs, and expectations we hold about human groups' (Sherman et al., 2013, p. 549). The content of stereotypes guides our affective evaluations (i.e. emotional prejudices) of hypothetical or perceived actual group members (Cuddy et al., 2007), inter alia, by conditioning our intergroup threat perceptions (Riek et al., 2006). Superordinate categories, such as 'Muslims', can cognitively nest subgroups (Richards & Hewstone, 2001) or be combined with other typically overarching categories (e.g. gender or age). For instance, C. Brown et al. (2017) showed that US schoolchildren have already been socialised into holding stereotypes of 'Arab Muslim men' as angry and un-American and of 'Arab Muslim women' as oppressed. Though largely socially learned and motivated, stereotypes are also informed by intergroup contact experiences. However, when face-to-face encounters are scarce, the media's influence on stereotype formation becomes greater (Fujioka, 1999; Ramasubramanian, 2013).

Decades-long research on the contact hypothesis has revealed that intergroup contact contributes to reducing prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew et al., 2011), even when contacts are imagined (Turner et al., 2007) or read/heard about (Zhou et al., 2019).[2] Contact is generally more likely to reduce prejudice towards

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[2] However, negative or stressful contacts with previously stigmatised groups, which are statistically rarer, can reinforce prejudice even more effectively (Graf & Paolini, 2016; Pettigrew et al., 2011, p. 277).

an entire outgroup when the contact person is perceived as a typical representative of that group and their group membership is salient (R. Brown & Hewstone, 2005). Prejudice reduction resulting from contact is mediated by many affective and cognitive processes (Boin et al., 2021) – notably, by reductions in both the anxiety experienced in intergroup interactions and the perceived intergroup threat (Aberson, 2019; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Importantly, contact produces stronger effects on the affective than on the cognitive dimension of prejudice (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Put differently, contact can alter our emotions about an out-group without necessarily affecting the underlying stereotypes.

Stereotype change can also result from contact, albeit less frequently. Stereotypes are more likely to change when the contact person is perceived as a typical group member who exhibits a stereotype-disconfirming behaviour (Wolsko et al., 2003). According to a hierarchical model of stereotype representation, contacts can be cognitively registered into subtypes or subgroups under a superordinate stereotype (Maurer et al., 1996; Richards & Hewstone, 2001). Subtyping occurs when disconfirming members are clustered together into a subtype, which is not easily associated with the superordinate category – that is, they become exceptions to the rule. Contrarily, subgroups aggregate a diversity of confirming and disconfirming members who share certain attributes and, to a larger extent, are seen as representative of the superordinate category (Hinzman & Maddox, 2017). While subtyping is believed to hinder stereotype change, subgroups are believed to modify the superordinate stereotype by heightening the perceived variability within it (Richards & Hewstone, 2001).

Situational factors also influence which type of stereotype respondents retrieve. Depending on their degree of familiarity with an out-group, their search for precision or the cognitive demands of the situation, they are more likely to retrieve stereotypical prototypes (i.e. an averaged abstraction of the out-group) or exemplars (i.e. memories of separate instances of out-group members) when processing social categories (Fiske & Taylor, 2021, pp. 120–130).

Data and Methodology

As part of a larger project, in July–August 2020 and September–October 2021, I conducted semi-structured interviews with non-Muslim Czech citizens (n = 23; indicated by 'n') and, regardless of citizenship or ethnicity, Muslims living in Czechia (n = 8; indicated by 'M') to understand the nature, history and causes of anti-Muslim attitudes in the country. The participants were invited to comment on their perceptions of other Czechs' attitudes and behaviours, express their own positions and recall personal experiences. Despite the exploratory character of this research, scripted and improvised questions were informed by theories and concepts from social psychology and Islamophobia studies, as well as extensive knowledge of the literature on Islamophobia in Czechia. The interviews lasted

45–75 minutes, and most were conducted face to face, with six being conducted via videoconference. Czech was the language used in all but five interviews, in which English was preferred. The conversations were recorded, transcribed and pseudonymised. Most participants were referred to me through my networks, with individual contacts never referring me to more than two participants per cohort. Three Muslim participants responded to invitations posted on Facebook.

A sample design identified five cohorts of non-Muslim participants based on criteria aimed at obtaining a diversity of views (see Table 1 for details). Three cohorts corresponded to cities that varied in size, presence of Muslim immigrants and vote share in the 2017 legislative election for parties whose support correlated with anti-Muslim prejudice (see MEDIAN 2018). These cities were Prague and Ostrava, as well as a small town in Moravia. Two other cohorts were expected to exhibit different effects of contact with Muslims, with participants recruited from the small spa city of Teplice (with a relatively high Muslim presence and tourism from Arab countries) and among non-Muslim Czechs who had travelled to Egypt since 2015 (which added a small Moravian city to this cohort). Four to five participants from each cohort were interviewed, ensuring minimal socio-demographic variation (e.g. in age and employment status). Consequently, there was an overall balance between male (n = 11) and female (n = 12) participants and between those with (n = 11) and without (n = 12) a university degree. Except for a Slovak-born participant who had mostly lived in Czechia, the rest could reasonably be ascribed to Czech, Moravian or (Czech-)Silesian ethnicity. Elected officials, journalists and academics were excluded.

Table 1. Interviews' sample design

- Areas with *different political behaviour*:
    - Large industrial city with higher anti-Muslim vote rates (Ostrava)*
    - Small town with average voting behaviour (Small Moravian Town)*
    - Large multicultural city with lower anti-Muslim vote rates (Prague)*
- Non-Muslim Czechs who are likely to have had (different types and levels of) *contact with Muslims*:
    - Spa town with a high presence of Arab tourist and Muslim, mostly Arab, residents (Teplice)*
    - Czechs who have been on holiday in Egypt since 2015[α]
- *Muslims* who have been living in Czechia since before 2015[α]

Notes: *In each city, sampling followed quotas to ensure a balanced mix by gender, age group (18–25; 26–35; 36–49; 50–69) and education (non-/university studies). At least one interviewee in each city was either retired, unemployed or working part-time. [α]Due to the unknown demographic profile of these two cohorts, quotas were not followed. Nevertheless, I tried to control as much as possible for variation.

For Muslim interviewees, self-identification as Muslim sufficed. Besides one participant who had moved to Czechia in 2016, the rest had been living there since before 2015. The limitations of my sampling methods and patterns of residence meant that Muslim participants from Prague (five out of eight) were predominant. Given the frequently greater salience of Muslimness among women, female participants (n = 5) deliberately outnumbered men (n = 3). Above-average academic attainment among Muslims in Czechia and/or sampling biases resulted in all Muslim participants holding or pursuing a university degree. Two Muslim participants shared attributable Czech ethnicity, whereas the rest had migrated to Czechia, mostly as adults, from different Arab-speaking countries, Turkey or Russia. A pseudonymised list of all participants is provided in Annex 1.

The transcripts were analysed in NVivo 2020 following a constructionist thematic analysis (Terry et al., 2017). Themes are understood here as recurrent 'patterns of meaning' that are 'important in relation to the particular topic and research question being explored' (V. Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). After a first reading, I generated 19 non-exclusive codes mapping theoretically relevant areas (e.g. 'intergroup contact experiences' and 'representations of Czechia') and applied them to the corpus. I broke down some of these codes into subcodes (e.g. 'intergroup contact': in Egypt, Teplice, etc.). I then organised the information within each (sub)code along themes (e.g. 'Muslims can be better than us' and 'receiving attention from male Egyptians'). In the analysis, I often interlinked themes and introduced theoretical concepts. This article is based on a relevant selection from the overall analysis.

How 'Muslims' Are Perceived in the Czech Context

In practice, the context restricts how 'Muslims' are thought and talked about. The participants interpreted my broad questions (e.g. "What do you think Czech society thinks of Muslims nowadays?") through perceived conversation-relevant events, frames or actors as largely shaped by recent public discourse dynamics. As I discuss elsewhere (Gómez del Tronco, in press), the participants regularly returned to the European 'refugee crisis', Western European Muslims' alleged problems of integration, jihadism and Muslims' intolerance and eagerness to 'force' (*tlačit, nutit)* their norms on others. Issues of inequality for women appeared most often among female, particularly older, non-Muslim participants. These topical restrictions influenced the stereotypical traits and Muslim subgroups that were cognitively invoked when processing situated information on 'Muslims'.

Most participants believed that, when thinking about 'Muslims', most Czechs were likely to imagine 'terrorists', 'extremists', 'Arabs' or some type of migrant. Despite the former attribution, non-Muslim participants rarely stated that fear of terrorism was among the main drivers of others' or their own preju-

dice, whereas Muslim participants often mentioned its salience. By 2020–2021, the threat of jihadist terrorism possibly resulting from Muslim immigration (recurrently featuring in 2015–2017 public discourse) may have lost relevance or may have been considered too uncivil for self-presentation or the presentation of other Czechs. According to Adéla (34/n), when Czechs talk about 'Muslims', 90% of the time, they mean 'refugees', or, as Radek (31/n) contended, 'They speak about Muslims heading to Europe because Muslims who stay in the Middle East don't really bother them.' As a result of public debate on migration policy, non-Muslim participants often conflated the highly politicised categories 'migrant' and 'refugee' with 'Muslim'. Despite their complex overlaps, when speaking of 'migrants' or 'refugees', the participants often emphasised issues of socio-economic integration (e.g. employability or antisocial behaviour) or resource competition (e.g. social benefits or jobs) over the cultural clashes most closely associated with 'Muslims'.

Perceptions of Arabness and Middle Easternness frequently informed participants' and, reportedly, other Czechs' racialised stereotypes of 'Muslims'.[3] In spontaneous associations with the word 'Muslim(s)', non-Muslim participants often included stereotypical images of the region (e.g. turbans and desert) or, when mentioning famous people, those were almost exclusively Arab men (e.g. Yasser Arafat and Saddam Hussein). Some acknowledged imagining 'a person who is at home on the Arab Peninsula' (Bernard, 32/n) or 'a group that rather comes from the Middle East' (Šimon, 32/n). The labels 'Arab' and 'Muslim' were often used interchangeably by non-Muslim participants and, reportedly, other Czechs: 'I myself mix up "Muslims" and "Arabs", and many people do the same; for them, they are really synonymous, even when they aren't' (Věra, 25/n). This participant from Prague shared a detailed attribution:

> I believe that Czechs make a terrible mishmash. For them, ['Muslim'] is a mixture of an image of a sly Arab merchant who goes back to those Jewish and anti-Semitic stereotypes of the cunning guy [*vyčuránek*] who cheats and haggles with you. The Arab in this image is civilised yet rather sleazy. Then, this [image] is merged with that of the Islamic State – simply, the barbarians. On top of that, there's the addition of sub-Saharan Africa – also barbarians. That's all mixed up in a strange way. We have no idea that Indian Muslims exist. We don't even know that Indonesian Muslims exist; therefore, we're not interested in them at all. (Adam, 44/n)

Representations often excluded 'Muslims' from a perceived 'European' Whiteness. Several participants relationally racialised 'Czechs' (in the vernacular, predominantly an ethnic category) and 'Europeans' as White, with occasional explicit exclusions of Czech Roma and Southern Europeans from that Whiteness. In contrast to racialisation patterns in many Western European contexts, the per-

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[3] For the role of religion on racialisation, see Gómez del Tronco (in press).

ceived non-Whiteness of 'Muslims' and 'Arabs' was sometimes (albeit inconsistently) demarcated as Blackness.[4] For example, participants from Teplice reported ethnic Czechs' use of the term 'Black' [*černý*] to refer to local Arabs and Roma or hypothetical Muslim refugees. Klára (52/n) worried about the presence of 'plenty of those Blacks [*spousta těch černých*]' in Nordic countries. Besides applying to abstract stereotypes (e.g. perceiving 'Muslim' migration to Europe as a threat to 'White people's culture/race' or imagining 'Muslims' living among 'White people' in Western Europe), non-Whiteness could be attributed to actual Arabs. Reflecting on decades of living in Czechia, the Arab participant Zain (55/M) reported that Czechs regarded him as Black and that 'whoever isn't blonde, whoever isn't Czech is Black; some would even call you [Me: Spaniard] Black'. Likewise, some non-Muslim participants reported standing out as 'Whites' when visiting Arab countries: 'Egyptians are insistent, particularly men towards women, mostly to Whites [*běloškám*]' (Adéla, 34/n).

Except for the interviews in Teplice, conversations with non-Muslim participants more often concerned Muslims residing or migrating from abroad than Czech Muslim communities. Most talk about Muslim-majority countries concerned either positive accounts of countries to which participants had travelled (e.g. Egypt and Tunisia), negative aspects from mediatised places of conflict (e.g. Syria and Iraq) or human rights violations (e.g. Saudi Arabia). Western Europe occupied a special place in the mental geography that informed most participants' talk. Many non-Muslim, particularly older, participants raised concerns about alleged conflicts with Muslims in this region, while Muslim participants most often spoke of 'cosmopolitan' Western cities or about how Germans had grown accustomed to living together with fellow citizens of Turkish descent. Some non-Muslim participants conjured Western segregated ghettos or 'no-go zones', socio-economic alienation, aggressive demands to recognise Muslims' rights, religious-based violence or deviancy (e.g. riots and lootings). These scenarios reportedly drove many Czechs' concerns:

> Since there aren't any Muslims in Czechia, it isn't a totally topical issue. It's more about the question of immigration more generally – about whether Muslims would come and [the motto] 'look at what happens in the West!' I think that's relevant because I feel that, in the West, they can't cope with the situation. They told us that there aren't any no-go zones there, but now they start being almost everywhere: in Sweden, France, Belgium… (Kamil, 39/n)

Versions of this Western 'Muslim' troublemaker remain salient in many Czechs' social cognitions of 'Muslims', regularly as a forewarning against future im-

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[4] The Blackness of 'Arabs'/'Muslims' was denoted by the adjectival noun *černý* rather than the noun *černoch*. The participants' use of *černoch* resembled dominant Anglo-American uses of 'Black', with contemporary Czech dictionaries often associating the term with 'African' descent.

migration. Notwithstanding, many participants attributed to most 'Muslims' a disinterest in relocating to Czechia and a preference for wealthier, 'Western' European countries, mostly Germany: 'We are the last country to which [Muslims] will go because. . . Why would they want to learn Czech?' (Hana, 24/n). Against this backdrop, Czechia was often referred to as a fragile place through intertwined perceptions of (cherished) safety, (incapacitating) smallness and (often frustrating) provincialism. A theme of 'Czechia' as calm and secure appeared frequently, particularly in the Moravian town and city:

> I believe that Czechia is one of the safest countries in the world. There's no high criminality here, and there are few murders. I feel safe. I know I can go onto the streets and walk around the capital, and there's a 95% chance that nothing will happen to me. … Most [Czechs] are aware that Czechia is a safe country, while they're scared when they travel around Europe – to Paris, London, etc. (Štěpán, 20/n)

Relational perceptions of the national space are highly informative for analyses of national public opinion on 'Muslims', as evaluations are made in this context. This fragility of Czechia often magnifies the perceived burden or security threat posed by 'Muslims'. As Kamil (49/n) argued, 'If citizens want to have calm and security, and they consider that Muslims cause uneasiness in France, Germany or Britain… [policymakers] won't want them here'. Shared perceptions of a failed multiculturalist project in relatable (but wealthier) 'Western' Europe fuelled slippery slope arguments against increasing Czech Muslim communities' potential to cause harm:

> I think there are far fewer Muslims here than in the West. Czech society is quite 'radical' and not as open, so I think that thanks to this, there's calm here. That's why more radical Muslims poke their little claws out: 'We want a little bit of this and that, and we want veiled faces' – even if it's against our constitution. They try to push their own issues conspicuously, sneakily. This contrasts with, for example, Germany or other Western countries, where they're more open to those questions, and Muslims there shout more about their rights. (Radek, 31/n)

Beyond the boundaries of 'Muslim' as a religious category, stereotypes shared by many Czechs contain, inter alia, perceived cultural, class, political and/or racial differences. Czech public opinion research on 'Muslims' should consider these contents as the basis and often hypothetical targets of such attitudes. Notwithstanding, no participant should be essentialised by the Islamophobic ideology informing some of their views. Individual accounts of 'Muslims' were complex, nuanced and often contradictory. Many had to think on the spot about issues which they had never considered. Nevertheless, the analysis revealed clear patterns of meaning among the participants and, reportedly, among other Czechs. The limited Muslim presence in Czechia presents Muslims with few opportunities for self-presentation or agenda setting. Czechs who are mostly

exposed to negative representations of this group, often perceived as a distant and even abstract entity, are more susceptible to holding dehumanising stereotypes. As I illustrate in the next section, contact with actual Muslims mostly contributed to giving a better press to those 'Muslims' inhabiting the minds of participants.

Mechanisms through Which Contact Leads to More Nuanced Representations

Memories of contact with actual Muslims generally enriched non-Muslim participants' mental representations of 'Muslims' by generating subgroups and positive stereotypes, reducing perceived intergroup threat and anxiety and (re-)humanising them. The effects of contact were already evident in answers to one of my opening questions: 'Who comes to your mind when you hear the word "Muslim" or "Muslims"?' Participants who later reported personal contact with Muslims often mentioned their acquaintances, friends or loved ones as exemplars. In Teplice, some of the city's Muslim public figures were mentioned. In contrast, in answers to this question by non-Muslims, abstract representations of 'women in headscarves' constituted the most common theme. Experiences self-reportedly reinforcing negative stereotypes of all 'Muslims' were rarer and mostly marked by the superficiality of the contact (e.g. spotting a 'Muslim'-looking person in public space). However, a few older participants extracted negative generalisations from substantial contacts in which they situationally enjoyed higher status than their interlocutors (e.g. as officials of an institution or tourists in poorer countries). However, in isolation, power imbalances, superficiality and participants' age seemed poor predictors of negativity.

Frequently, contact allowed participants to incorporate new subgroups into the larger superordinate category 'Muslim'. Subgrouping was clearest among participants who had spent time in Muslim-majority settings, where 'Muslimness' was salient and diverse behaviours were observable. Even in Afghanistan, a conflict setting, Roman (39/n) and fellow soldiers received extensive training that reportedly allowed them to distinguish 'a Taliban – that is, a Muslim extremist – from a moderate Muslim'. Middle Easternness and stereotypically 'Muslim' religious observance seemed important attributes that favoured subgrouping over subtyping. In a few accounts, Muslims who had been seen enjoying alcohol, behaving as 'Europeans' or being promiscuous were not considered real 'Muslims'.

Subgrouping most often concerned Muslim-majority nationalities and ethnicities, as these constitute almost inescapable boundaries containing evident heterogeneity. For instance, Jozef (40/n), who had been stationed as a soldier in Kosovo and travelled extensively across Western Europe, generalised the sometimes conflicting forms of social organisation, religious observance or dispositions of 'Kosovars', 'Turks' and 'Moroccans'. In Teplice, where the labels 'Arabs' and 'Muslims' are often used interchangeably to refer to local Muslims and tourists, ethnicity could also play a role in subcategorisation:

> I used to work in Šanov, the main area where Muslims stayed. I established great relationships with Syrians. The men were thoughtful of their wives – for example, by holding the door for them. However, I didn't like how those coming from the UAE behaved towards their wives, let alone their service – most of them had Filipino women working for them. Simply put, the Filipino woman was the 'white trash' of their society. [Emiratis] had their whole visits funded by their prince. Although anyone could get along well with visitors coming here with their own funds, that scum [*spodina*] behaved terribly. At some point, it became horrible in the city. Even local Muslims who'd lived here for longer were strongly against this. They didn't like how those specific Muslim visitors made them look in the eyes of the rest. (Beáta, 34/n)

In this excerpt, the participant operated with three 'Muslim' subgroups ('local Muslims', 'Syrians' and 'Emirati male tourists') while embedding herself in several social identities (female, ethnic Czech and resident of Teplice). For Beáta (34/n), the contents of the stereotypes of these subgroups differed, and consequently, so did her evaluations of the subgroups in the context of their behaviours towards women and the city. The stereotype content model (Fiske et al., 2002) classifies stereotypes along the axes of perceived warmth (towards an in-group) and competence. Through this lens, thoughtful 'Syrians' and embarrassed 'local Muslims' shared a high-warmth/high-competence position, while the dehumanised 'Emirati' 'scum' belonged to the low-warmth/low-competence matrix quadrant. Contexts of high diversity, like multicultural Teplice, are particularly conducive to the subgrouping of individuals who, in context, are perceived as 'Muslim' but exhibit manifold behaviours.

Despite non-Muslim Czechs' few contact opportunities, some degree of interaction with three groups of Muslims living in Czechia appeared across cities. Mostly older female participants mentioned knowing a 'foreign Muslim man who married a Czech woman'. These participants often spoke of these men's difficulties (and prejudices faced) in adapting to life in Czechia and, especially, failed relationships, which were often blamed on husbands and reinforced widespread stereotypes of Muslim men as domineering. More positively, participants spoke of 'Muslim doctors at regional hospitals' and 'Muslims who work at kebab shops'. The evaluations of the latter were particularly positive, with a stereotype of moderate-to-high competence (i.e. business savvy) and warmth (i.e. friendly customer service). The salience of Middle Easternness in the kebab shop experience makes kebab sellers a potential 'Muslim' subgroup for many Czechs, with positive experiences reinforcing stereotypes of 'Muslims' as good traders:

> Young Czechs have become really fond of Muslims who own kebab shops. We've become very fond of our local one. … He offers refreshments that are attractive to young people. … When I think of the sale of fast food, it happens in every corner of the country. They consider it their source of livelihood and try to be the favourite spots in their localities so that customers visit their places regularly. Muslims are excellent traders, sellers, businessmen and so on. They know how to sell their products and how to make money – how to connect with clients. (Stěpan, 20/n)

Generally, contacts with customer-/patient-facing Muslim workers were positively evaluated, partly because these interactions follow relatively clear social scripts, which helps reduce intergroup anxiety.

Contact also enabled positive stereotyping of Muslims in comparison with Czechs – notably as kinder, more generous and more tolerant. These stereotypes were often juxtaposed with perceptions of Czechs as provincial and prejudiced against Muslims. Bernard (32/n) contrasted his Muslim cousin's assertion that Muslims welcomed Christians to pray at mosques with his experience of a Christian funeral in Czechia at which some church attendees seemed offended by the presence of his Muslim cousins. Positive stereotyping seemed to be related to the phenomenon of deprovincialisation (Pettigrew, 2011), through which contact fostered not only tolerance of other cultures but also a reappraisal of participants' national culture. During Jozef's (40/n) trips across Europe, Muslims had frequently treated him kindly – for instance, by inviting him to family lunches. A Muslim man once disinterestedly helped him repair his car as a good deed during Ramadan, which he believed that 'nobody in Czechia would have ever done'. Jozef (40/n) essentialised Islam as inherently positive, claiming that 'under the right interpretation of the Koran, everyone should help each other, regardless of their faith'. Similarly, Ondřej (20/n) reflected on Czechs being unsettled by Arab tourists' foreign custom of picnicking in Teplice's public parks. He was convinced that the same number of Czechs drinking beer in those parks would have been far more disturbing. This non-Muslim participant praised a behaviour which she believed most Czechs could not match:

> [In Oman,] there was a lady at the pharmacy's cash register. I needed eye drops because I'd suffered a reaction to the sun… and that lady offered me different types of eye drops. She explained them to me, and she was smiling, pleasant. She asked me where I was from, and she looked for the country on a map. In Czechia, a lady at a pharmacy would probably not speak to a Muslim lady like this. This lady pharmacist [in Oman] was veiled; she wore a burka. I wasn't veiled, but she spoke to me nicely. Now, turn it the other way and imagine that a Muslim lady comes to Czechia and has an aching eye. And the lady pharmacist in Ostrava tells her, for example… What does she tell her?! This is why I really appreciate that she talked to me in this way. It was very pleasant for me. She didn't make any distinction based on skin colour or faith. She simply treated me as a patient. (Milada, 43/n)

A common way of entering meaningful contacts was by travelling to Muslim-majority countries, where interactions were often reportedly positive and beyond the settings regularly discussed in public discourse. Most participants travelling to Muslim-majority countries had visited either a specific country repeatedly or more than one country. Local guides were regularly praised for explaining behaviours (e.g. regarding waste management) and exposing participants to new situations (e.g. as conversation interpreters).

For most of these participants, these trips significantly reduced perceived intergroup threat and anxiety and, consequently, prejudice. For example, instead of interreligious conflict or 'no-go zones', the three most common themes emerging from participants' stays in Egypt were locals being very friendly, female participants attracting too much attention and, consistent with the commercial nature of the trip, feeling perceived as a source of profit. These trips contributed to dispelling participants' own or acquaintances' fears. Despite noting that she always stayed in resorts, Barbora (55/n) claimed that her travel experiences in Egypt and Tunisia had taught her that 'it's possible to live among them – that I have nothing to fear'. Another participant recalled his radical attitudinal shift:

> I was also brainwashed by the media, and even I became afraid of [Muslims]. However I'd never been to Asia. I'd only seen Muslims on TV. Even my parents transmitted this fear to me because of how much they'd been brainwashed by the media. Thus, I feared Muslims even though I'd never seen one in my life. Then, we started going on holidays. My parents went to Egypt, and I joined them. We even went to Turkey after we went to the UAE with a friend. We were really excited about it. We never had any issues in any of those countries. On the contrary, we found smiling faces everywhere. The truth had been somewhere else. Those evil [Muslims] I was afraid of are a tiny minority. (Vítek, 31/n)

A second effect of these trips was the subgrouping of friendly 'Muslim' national groups (within which hostile 'Muslims' were also believed to exist). Notably, positive holiday experiences in Egypt fed into the content of stereotypes of 'Egyptians', as this Egyptian participant acknowledged:

> One of the good things in Czechia is that most people I meet tell me, 'Oh, we were in Egypt, in Hurghada, Marsa Alam…' There was intense tourist activity between the countries … so almost everybody knows Egypt and says, 'Oh, Egypt's nice, it's cool' and so on. … [These travels had an impact on Czechs' attitudes towards Muslims because] it wasn't as scary there as they may have thought. If you'd told them, 'Over there, there's Sharia, and they cut hands off' [they would have been scared]. But when they travelled to Egypt, they saw how people really live and came back thinking that Egyptians are nice people. Or they went to Tunisia and saw nothing of this sort. Being open to Muslim countries influenced Czechs' attitudes. (Youssef, 47/M)

Particularly powerful were accounts of the (re-)humanising power of contact. Bruneau et al. (2018) found significantly higher levels of dehumanisation of 'Muslims' in Czechia than in other European countries (see also Prokop, 2019, p. 101). Muslim participants reported instances in which they felt they had been denied the attribution of human emotions (i.e. infrahumanisation; see Leyens et al., 2007) or traits (i.e. dehumanisation; see Haslam, 2006) by non-Muslim Czechs. They believed that contact was the antidote:

> The more visible [actual Muslims] are, [the more they will be] seen as fellow human beings, with their good deeds and bad deeds, their contradictions as human beings, their ability to do good and bad. It's just another human being. Then, the Czech public will see them as just… 'yeah, they're just like us' – not necessarily that they're really great people and angels. They're not. Muslims are just part of humanity. They're not angels; they're human beings. They can make mistakes and commit crimes – like any other human being – and they can also be very good. (Maleek, 51/M)

Intergroup contact has proven effective in humanising out-groups by establishing common identities through reduced intergroup anxiety and increased empathy (Capozza et al., 2013). Zain (55/M) recalled an intercultural event in Teplice at which some non-Muslim attendees broke into tears after intergroup encounters. He explained to them that besides Muslims' private relationship with Islam, 'we have exactly the same problems and difficulties: our children are in school; we have sick mothers to care for… Our lives are exactly the same.' Likewise, having Muslim schoolmates reportedly allowed non-Muslims to better understand cultural differences and why some comments could be offensive and, generally, to humanise their classmates' social groups. Reflecting on the painful experience of facing a man in court who had sent her death threats online, this Muslim participant concluded:

> In Czechia, Muslims are still so terribly anonymous that nobody feels sorrow about writing something mean about them. I saw this in that man in court. When I stood in front of him and told him what he had done to me and how I had been affected by his comments, he was shocked. Had I not told him in court, he would not have realised. Afterwards, he apologised to me several times. Czechs lack experiences with actual Muslims. If they didn't, whenever they imagined who stands under the label 'Muslim', they would think of a regular person who they encounter several times a week or month. (Yvona, 33/M)

Conclusions

In recent years, surveys have measured highly negative attitudes towards 'Muslims' in Czechia, which have often been attributed to a lack of contact with actual Muslims and the effects of anti-Muslim public discourse. In this article, I have argued that survey respondents interpret the label 'Muslim' as a category of practice (see Brubaker, 2002). Thus, the basis and targets of self-reported attitudes are contingent stereotypes of 'Muslims' rather than actual Muslims. Stereotypes present unique specificities in each (sub)national context, so Dutch survey respondents might operate with qualitatively different stereotypes of 'Muslims' than Czech respondents (Dekker & van der Noll, 2012, p. 115; see M. Braun et al., 2013). To better comprehend widely shared social cognitions of 'Muslims' among Czechs and how intergroup contact affects them, I relied on a construc-

tionist thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with both Muslim and non-Muslim participants conducted in 2020–2021. To my knowledge, no other qualitative empirical analysis of Czech citizens' attitudes towards 'Muslims' has been published to date.

The results confirm some of the limitations of how the category 'Muslim' is processed in its everyday use. The highly mediatised frames of immigrants/refugees coming into 'Europe', Islamism/jihadism and alleged issues of integration of Muslims in Western Europe largely condition social cognitions of 'Muslims' in the country. When discussing 'Muslims', most participants think of sociopolitically relevant Muslims abroad (potentially 'migrants' uninterested in settling in Czechia) rather than Czech Muslim communities. In this regard, perceptions of 'Muslims' causing trouble in Western Europe are of utmost salience and are often juxtaposed with images of 'Czechia' as fragile (small, safe and provincial), which magnify the perceived intergroup threat resulting from immigration. Furthermore, stereotypes of 'Muslims' are racialised through their perceived Arabness and Middle Easternness and their exclusion from the 'European' Whiteness in which 'Czechs' are often embedded. These restrictions probably appear among many Czech survey respondents when they cognitively process questions about 'Muslims'.

Against these constraints, in the second section of this article, I analysed the mechanisms through which intergroup contact experiences enrich social cognitions of 'Muslims' – namely, subgrouping, particularly effective in increasing perceived group variability; positive stereotyping of 'Muslims' in comparison with 'Czechs', which arguably results from deprovincialisation; reduced perceived intergroup threat and anxiety (e.g. when visiting Muslim-majority countries); and (re-)humanisation, particularly desirable for Muslim participants. Except for a few groups (e.g. kebab sellers and Arabs in Teplice), opportunities for stereotype-challenging face-to-face intergroup contact in Czechia are very rare (rendering vicarious contact more effective for interventions). Therefore, stays in Muslim-majority settings, such as Egypt, where 'Muslimness' is salient – as are stereotype-disconfirming behaviours – offer opportunities to challenge stereotypes and prejudice. However, the extent to which these enriched stereotypes influence the processing of 'Muslims' in surveys remains unclear, as questions are generally interpreted within a sociopolitical context.

These results invite researchers to reflect on how survey methodologies are designed and interpreted when analysing attitudes towards 'Muslims' across countries. Turning the focus from actual Muslims to stereotypes can contribute to identifying (and subsequently tackling) the contents of perceived Muslimness fostering prejudice, the subgroups promoting or challenging negative stereotypes of 'Muslims', the ethnicised traits that are most salient when processing the category or, relevant to the Czech context, respondents' distinct beliefs about Muslims living in their countries. Survey methodologies can advance our understanding of anti-'Muslim' prejudice in Czechia – for example, by reducing the

gap between researchers' and respondents' interpretations of the category 'Muslim' through definitions, vignettes or cognitive interviewing methods, such as probing (Behr et al., 2020), or by measuring the affective social distance to Muslim groups other than those negatively mediatised. Importantly, more qualitative studies on attitudes towards and stereotypes of 'Muslims' (vis-à-vis 'refugees' or 'migrants') should be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of a social issue that legitimises daily discrimination and violence against actual Muslims.

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Annex 1. Participants' Basic Data

List of participants – first part

Name	Age	Occupation	City	Gender	Muslim	Was in Egypt	University degree
Adam	44	Unemployed	Prague	M			Y
Adéla	34	Healthcare	Ostrava	F		Y	Y
Agáta	45	Trader	Somewhere in Egypt	F		Y	Y
Aneta	56	Entrepreneur	Teplice	F			Y
Barbora	55	Healthcare	Prague	F		Y	N
Beáta	34	Healthcare	Teplice	F			N
Bernard	32	Architect	Small Moravian town	M			Y
Františka	54	Unemployed (caregiver)	Prague	F			N
Hana	24	Student	Small Moravian town	F			N
Jozef	40	Entrepreneur	Ostrava	M			N
Kamil	49	Photographer	Small Moravian town	M			N
Klára	52	School teacher	Small Moravian town	F			Y
Lucie	68	Retired	Ostrava	F			Y
Maleek	51	Unemployed	Prague	M	Y	N/A	Y
Malika	32	Self-employed	Prague	F	Y	N/A	Y
Maryam	26	Student	Prague	F	Y	N/A	N
Milada	43	Entrepreneur	Ostrava	F			Y
Ondřej	20	Student	Teplice	M			N
Radek	31	Theatre	Ostrava	M			N
Robert	19	Student	Prague	M			N

List of participants – second part

Name	Age	Occupation	City	Gender	Muslim	Was in Egypt	University degree
Roman	39	Police officer	Small Moravian city	M		Y	N
Šimon	32	Unemployed	Prague	M			Y
Štěpán	20	Student	Small Moravian town	M			N
Tereza	35	Public sector	Brno	F	Y	N/A	Y
Věra	25	Market research	Teplice	F			Y
Vítek	31	School teacher	Small Moravian city	M		Y	Y
Youssef	47	IT	Village in Central Bohemia Region	M	Y	N/A	Y
Yvona	33	NGO	Prague	F	Y	N/A	Y
Zain	55	Healthcare	Teplice	M	Y	N/A	Y
Zehra	30	Administrative role	Prague	F	Y	N/A	Y
Žofie	48	Part-time caregiver	Prague	F			N

'We Have Always Been like This': The Local Embeddedness of Migration Attitudes*

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Abstract: This article contributes to the local turn in migration research. It explores how the city context shapes migration attitudes among residents, resulting in the formation of imagined communities of 'Locals' and 'Others'. Relying on qualitative research methods and cultural sociological theories of cultural armatures of the city, cultural repertoires, and symbolic boundaries, we examine the cases of two Czech cities, Teplice and Vyšší Brod. We find that the specific characteristics of the local history, geography, and demography of the cities give rise to distinct cultural repertoires that shape how their residents view migration and the presence of people with a migratory background in their city. We identify two prevailing cultural repertoires, *local cosmopolitanism* in Teplice and *Czech nativism* in Vyšší Brod, which inform both the patterns of boundary work towards residents with a migratory background and their positioning on *local hierarchies of otherness*. We argue that to understand the role of local context in the formation of migration attitudes, it is not sufficient to study only the characteristics of cities; how these characteristics are made meaningful by the people who live in them should also be considered.

Keywords: migration attitudes, local turn, city context, cultural repertoires, symbolic boundaries

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Introduction

> Teplice is a very multicultural city; we have always been like this – before the war, during the war, and, after the revolution, when the borders opened here. [Lukáš, 36, police officer, Teplice]

> I also sometimes say, 'Jeez, it's all Vietnamese here!' Because it really is too much. I don't know who allowed this; it had never been like this. Who allowed such proliferation in [Vyšší] Brod? [Patricie, 78, retiree, Vyšší Brod]

Lukáš and Patricie—two research participants in our qualitative study of public migration attitudes in Czechia—have seemingly contradictory experiences. While Lukáš from Teplice does not hesitate to present the multicultural character of his city as a historical fact by proclaiming: 'We have always been like this', Patricie, in a significantly different emotional register, laments the proliferation of Vietnamese residents in her native Vyšší Brod, and looks for someone to blame. Nevertheless, they both rely on local histories and other geographic and demographic characteristics of their cities when articulating their migration attitudes. Lukáš, Patricie, and the other 28 participants in our study gave us an opportunity to explore the local embeddedness of migration attitudes: How does the local context of cities inform the ways in which research participants view the presence of residents with a migratory background in their locality and articulate their migration attitudes?

To answer this question, we develop an analytical approach that draws inspiration from three distinct streams of research: 1) the scholarship on the local turn in migration research that emphasises the need to move beyond methodological nationalism and explore the municipal contexts of immigrant incorporation and reception (Glick Schiller & Çaglar, 2009; Jaworsky et al., 2012; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017); 2) the nascent scholarship on the local context of migration attitudes that emphasises the need to move beyond individual characteristics in favour of understanding how specific features of the local environment shape migration attitudes (Czaika & Di Lillo, 2018; Markaki & Longhi, 2013; Schlueter & Wagner, 2008); and 3) the cultural sociological scholarship on symbolic boundaries, cultural repertoires, and boundary work that emphasises the constitutive role of meaning-making for social action and offers analytical tools to unpack the processes of categorisation, differentiation, and othering (Jaworsky, 2016; Lamont, 2000; Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Lamont & Thévenot, 2000; Zolberg & Woon, 1999). This combined perspective allows full consideration of the historical, geographic, and demographic characteristics of the cities while retaining sensitivity to the meaning-making of research participants that make those characteristics meaningful through their narratives. We argue that these characteristics come to life only through the meaning-making of the participants, becoming embedded in locally available cultural repertoires and shaping their migration attitudes.

In what follows, we first elaborate on our theoretical starting points and

the migration context of Czechia and our two case study cities, Teplice and Vyšší Brod. We proceed by describing our methodology and the process of analysis. We then introduce our findings in three steps. We first show how the specific features of local history, cultural geography, and local responses to demography give rise to distinct cultural repertoires that prevail in each locality: *local cosmopolitanism* in Teplice and *Czech nativism* in Vyšší Brod. Second, we examine how these two distinct cultural repertoires inform the ways in which research participants draw boundaries in relation to residents with a migratory background, constructing imagined communities of 'Locals' and 'Others'. Finally, we demonstrate how the distinct patterns of boundary work embedded in available cultural repertoires produce locally specific *hierarchies of otherness*, in which different groups are posited in relation to each other as well as to the Locals. We conclude by discussing the wider implications of our research and arguing that local-level analysis can help explain important nuances in migration attitudes often neglected in national or cross-national studies.

Theoretical background

Our main theoretical goal in this paper is to bring together the discussion on the local turn in migration research and the local context of migration attitudes with cultural sociological scholarship on symbolic boundaries, cultural repertoires, and boundary work.

A crucial impetus for the local turn in migration research has been the debate on methodological nationalism, which brings attention to the often-implicit role of nationalist ideology in shaping migration research (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). Inspired by this debate, many scholars have examined other contexts of migration-related processes, including the context of cities (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2009). Although it is beyond the scope of this article to offer a comprehensive review of migration scholarship that draws on the local turn, our approach is inspired by studies emphasising the growing role of local governance for immigrant incorporation (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017), the capacity of cities to generate convivial interactions among different ethnic groups (Wessendorf, 2014) or specific types of multiculturalism (Foner, 2007), and, in particular, the role of the 'cultural armature of cities' in shaping immigrant reception (Jaworsky et al., 2012).

The local turn has gained limited resonance in the scholarship on migration attitudes, the bulk of which has been quantitative, using data from international surveys. This scholarship has traditionally focused on individual-level predictors of attitudes, often compared cross-nationally (De Coninck & Matthijs, 2020; Heath & Richards, 2019). However, several recent studies have highlighted the need to recognise subnational differences and the role of local context in shaping migration attitudes (Czaika & Di Lillo, 2018; Markaki & Longhi, 2013; Schlueter & Wagner, 2008). As Markaki and Longhi (2013, p. 312) argue, '[P]eople are likely

to form their opinions about immigration by drawing on the local/regional environment where they live rather than on the average characteristics of their country, which is often geographically large'.

Studies on local context of migration attitudes have significantly improved our understanding of subnational variations in migration attitudes and have revealed important mechanisms at play in shaping them. However, they also have significant limitations. First, the regions taken as units of analysis are still geographically large. These studies fail to account for possible variations in migration attitudes at the municipal level, which can reflect different approaches to immigrant incorporation (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). Second, the local context is usually defined as a combination of select demographic variables that characterise the native-born population, the population of immigrants, or both. Examples include regional unemployment rates (Rustenbach, 2010), the size of the immigrant population in the region (Schlueter & Wagner, 2008), and the labour market characteristics of immigrants (Markaki & Longhi, 2013). Other historical and cultural factors that can also shape attitudes are typically omitted. Lastly, most studies on migration attitudes assume that the native-born view all immigrants in the same way, regardless of their ethnic or racial background (for exceptions, see Gorodzeisky & Semyonov, 2019; Ramos et al., 2020).

To address these deficiencies, we propose an alternative cultural sociological approach to studying migration attitudes at the local level. First, we draw on theories of symbolic boundaries and boundary work. Together with Lamont and Molnár (2002, pp. 168–169), we understand symbolic boundaries as 'conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space' that provide 'tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality'. Once symbolic boundaries become widely agreed upon, they can be objectified into social boundaries, manifesting themselves as 'unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities' (ibid.). In line with this perspective, we define 'attitudes' as meaning-making processes of categorisation that inform potential or realised social action (Rétiová et al., 2021). The symbolic boundaries that sustain migration attitudes are never static; they are subject to ongoing processes of boundary work that entail shifting, crossing, blurring, maintenance, and solidification (Jaworsky, 2016; Zolberg & Woon, 1999). Moreover, even as attitudes come to life through the meaning-making acts of individuals, they are culturally mediated and embedded in available cultural repertoires, the 'relatively stable schemas of evaluation that are used in varying proportions across national contexts' (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000, p. 8). The varying availability of distinct cultural repertoires across time and space helps explain both international and intranational variances in evaluation (Lamont, 2000; Lamont & Thévenot, 2000). We argue that the cultural repertoires shaping migration attitudes can be analytically parsed at different levels, including transnational, national, and local. In this paper, we focus specifically on the local

municipal level. We reconstruct the prevailing cultural repertoires in Teplice and Vyšší Brod and try to understand how they inform migration attitudes among their residents.

Our analysis of cultural repertoires and the resulting patterns of boundary work is further informed by the concept of the 'cultural armature' of cities, introduced by Jaworsky et al. (2012), through which local-level variation in the reception of immigrants can be meaningfully explained by paying attention to distinct features of cities, including their history and cultural geography, urban self-representation, cultural consequences of demography, and municipal responses to migration. We find that two dimensions of the cultural armature in particular—the local history/cultural geography and the cultural consequences of demography—represent important sources of locally available cultural repertoires. The focus on the cultural armature of cities expands on the observation of Hotchkiss (2010, p. 369) that the notion of a shared national past is crucial for the formation of cultural repertoires; references to national events, historical figures, or foundational documents 'tend to solidify the use of cultural repertoires by grounding them in a nation's history'. We test this proposition at the local level, as local histories and other aspects of the cultural armature also influence how city residents imagine themselves as a community. The concept of cultural armature sensitises the analysis towards the local embeddedness of migration attitudes, helping us to identify available cultural repertoires and specific types of boundary work. In short, we argue that the concepts of symbolic boundaries, cultural repertoires, and cultural armatures help fill the gap in the research on migration attitudes caused by methodological nationalism and the limitations of quantitative approaches in studying the local context.

From the national to the local context of migration attitudes

The Czech context is compelling for the study of migration attitudes due to the paradoxical contrast between a low number of foreign nationals settled in the country and strong anti-migration sentiments, especially in the aftermath of the 2015/16 'migration crisis'. In 2021, foreign nationals residing in Czechia constituted approximately 5.5 percent of the population (CSO, 2021a).[1] Although, in comparison with the rest of the EU, this percentage is still relatively low, the issue of 'migration' remains high on political and public agendas. Recent public opinion polls show that the Czech public is among the most sceptical about immigrants'

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[1] Czech migration statistics only cover foreign state nationals settled in the country temporarily or permanently and not the entire population with a migratory background, including the second generation and naturalised Czech citizens born abroad. The overall proportion of residents with a migratory background within the Czech population is thus likely higher.

contribution to societal development in Europe; according to 2018 data from the European Value Study, almost 60 percent perceived the influence of immigrants on the labour market, crime, and the welfare system negatively (Chromková Manea & Jaworsky, 2022). In 2020, 53 percent of respondents considered the presence of foreigners in the country a 'problem' (Spurný, 2020). However, this percentage dropped to only 24 percent when the respondents were asked about the presence of foreigners in their place of residence, accentuating the need for an in-depth exploration of the perception of immigrants at the local level.

As of December 2021, the largest groups of foreign state nationals living in Czechia were from Ukraine (196,637), Slovakia (114,630), Vietnam (64,808), and the Russian Federation (45,154) (CSO, 2021b). They mainly come to Czechia for work; 2021 data (CSO, 2022a) show that while Slovak nationals are represented across almost all occupational fields and all skill levels, Ukrainian nationals mainly work in manufacturing, construction, and administration. Among Vietnamese nationals, trade licences predominate over employment, and the main areas of economic activity include wholesale and retail trade and accommodation and food facilities, in which they work primarily as service and sales workers. Russian nationals work predominantly in administration, information, and communication, as well as in wholesale and retail trade, in low-skilled and professional occupations.

Public opinion polls indicate that perceptions of different ethnic groups vary significantly, with Arabs being perceived as one of the least 'likeable' groups, surpassed only by Roma. These two groups are considered 'likeable' by only 7 percent and 5 percent of the population, respectively (Tuček, 2020). The negative perception of Arabs and strong Islamophobic sentiments (Čada & Frantová, 2019) are puzzling, given that the number of immigrants from Arabic countries in Czechia is extremely low.[2] According to European Value Study data for 2017, 58 percent of Czech residents would prefer not to have Muslims as their neighbour—the figure doubling in comparison to 2008 (Spálová & Mikuláš, 2022). By contrast, Slovaks are perceived most positively, almost as likeable as Czechs—by 84 percent of the population (ibid.)—and are often not seen as 'foreigners' (Rapoš Božič et al., 2023). Attitudes towards other groups are mixed, with Ukrainians considered likeable by 24 percent, Russians by 25 percent, and Vietnamese by 40 percent of the population (Tuček 2020). A shift has occurred in the perception of Vietnamese, who, according to Spalová and Mikuláš (2020, p. 78), were among the most visible groups of foreign nationals and targets of disrespectful behaviour in the 1990s, gradually becoming more accepted and perceived as hardworking.

These data on migration attitudes at the national level provide an important starting point for an exploration of local specificities in attitude formation. Re-

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[2] As of December 2021, the most represented groups of immigrants from Arabic countries were from Egypt (1,463), Tunisia (1,328), and Syria (1,114) (CSO, 2021b).

search on the spatial distribution of foreign state nationals in Czechia has shown that they mostly concentrate in several cities offering job opportunities, and in the borderlands (Čermák & Janská, 2011), supporting the need for a local turn in research on migration attitudes. In response, our research project ('The thirteenth immigrant'? An in-depth exploration of the public perception of migration in the Czech Republic) studied migration attitudes in five localities in different parts of Czechia.[3] Here, we focus on two localities: Teplice, in the northern part of the country, and Vyšší Brod, in the south. These two localities share several important features that make it analytically compelling to discuss our findings from these localities side by side. Both lie in the peripheral border areas of Czechia, the former Sudetenland, which has rich historical experience with cross-border movements. Both Teplice and Vyšší Brod experienced significant population changes after the post-WWII expulsions of ethnic Germans and the subsequent resettlement by ethnic Czechs and Slovaks from different parts of Czechoslovakia as well as other territories in Central Europe (Glassheim, 2016). Since the liberalisation of the cross-border movement in the 1990s, these localities have received more immigrants than the country's average important destinations for residents hailing from Vietnam (Janská & Bernard, 2015). Out of the 48,766 inhabitants in Teplice, 4,155 (8.5 percent) are foreign state nationals, originating mainly from Ukraine (1,060), Vietnam (564), Russia (478), and Slovakia (222).[4] There is also a substantial presence of Muslims in Teplice, both residents and visitors to the local spa from Arabic countries.[5] The share of foreigners in Vyšší Brod is even higher, at 19 percent, with 489 out of 2,549 inhabitants being foreign state nationals. However, in this case, the vast majority were Vietnamese (350), followed by Ukrainians (17), and Slovaks (14) (CSO, 2021c, 2022b; MVČR, 2022).

Both Teplice and Vyšší Brod are important tourist destinations. Teplice is a well-established spa town for visitors both from Czechia and abroad, and more recently from Arabic countries, Germany, and Russia[6] (Tušicová, 2016). Vyšší Brod

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[3] We studied localities that were diverse in terms of their population size, the number of foreign state nationals residing in the locality, the political preferences of residents, and overall economic and political power.

[4] The data on the citizenship of foreign state nationals come from the 2021 census, which recorded fewer inhabitants of foreign origin than data collected by the Directorate of Foreign Police Service and published by the Ministry of Interior. Moreover, the number does not include foreign state nationals who are not registered in the municipality but live or work there.

[5] The 2011 Census registered 89 Muslims in Teplice. In 2021, 251 foreign state nationals from Arabic countries were registered in the Teplice district, mainly from Syria, Yemen, and Algeria (MVČR, 2021). However, this number does not count naturalised residents of Arabic origin. Moreover, thousands of spa visitors from Arabic countries had come to Teplice every year before the COVID-19 pandemic (Buková, 2018).

[6] According to data provided by the tourist office in Teplice (e-mail communication, Jan 10, 2023), in 2022, the office was visited by more than 22 thousand tourists, and 12 percent

is mostly attractive for domestic tourists engaged in cycling and paddling on the Vltava River and for tourists from neighbouring Austria attracted by cheaper shopping opportunities and services, often provided by residents of Vietnamese origin.[7]

Moreover, both localities have recently experienced tensions concerning the visible presence of people from abroad, whether residents or tourists. In 2015, major controversies were reported by the media about the presence of people from Arabic countries in Teplice, and demonstrations were organised to protest their growing presence (Málek, 2015). The protests were directed mainly against spa visitors, but they affected residents of Arabic origin. The municipality reacted by launching several activities between 2015 and 2017 aiming at mitigating the tensions, namely intercultural mediation, information provision, and events presenting the culture of residents with a migratory background, and tensions calmed[8] (Projekt, 2017). In Vyšší Brod, tensions have arisen in recent years around the growing number of people from Vietnam, which has led the municipality to launch projects supporting peaceful cohabitation among residents of Czech and Vietnamese origin through intercultural work, information provision, and the support of education for Vietnamese children (Mlsová, 2020; Vyšší Brod, 2020). Therefore, despite many similarities, Teplice and Vyšší Brod present two discrete municipal contexts for the exploration of migration attitudes.

Methodology

This qualitative, interpretive study focuses on the meaning-making of social actors, specifically their subjective experiences, descriptions of social situations, and implicit or unconscious aspects of social phenomena (Flick, 2014, p. 6). Between November 2020 and February 2022, we conducted 30 in-depth interviews with residents of Teplice (n = 15) and Vyšší Brod (n = 15). Our aim was to capture migration attitudes among laypeople living in the two localities. Our criteria for selection included: 1) a minimum of five years of residence in the locality, 2) over 18

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were foreign speakers. This number is incomplete, as not all tourists visiting Teplice come to the tourist office, especially spa clients from Arabic countries. In 2013, 54 percent of all 6,000 spa visitors came from abroad, with 24 percent coming from Arabic countries (https://celyoturismu.cz/v-laznich-si-poradi-s-jazykovou-barierou-i-muslimskymi-specifiky/).

[7] According to data provided (e-mail communication, Jan 10, 2023) by the local tourist office, 26,000 people visited the tourist office in 2022 and more than 200,000 tourists started their paddling on the Vltava River from Vyšší Brod; it is estimated that 15 percent of tourists in Vyšší Brod come from abroad.

[8] The projects targeted both cohabitation with residents of a migratory background and spa tourists from Arabic countries. Some residents of Arabic origin living in Teplice worked as mediators of the conflict between tourists and Czech residents (Projekt, 2017).

Table 1. Overview of the demographic characteristics of the research participants

	Teplice				Vyšší Brod		
Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation
F	23	University	Student	F	28	Secondary	Interpreter
F	52	Secondary	Salesperson	M	41	Vocational	Butcher
F	31	University	Administrative assistant	F	19	Primary	High school student
M	33	University	Self-employed	F	55	University	Entrepreneur
F	64	Secondary	Self-employed	M	48	Secondary	Environmental worker
M	32	Vocational	Paramedic	F	56	University	Teacher
M	38	University	Pastor	F	29	University	Educator
F	18	Primary	Student	F	43	Secondary	Municipal officer
M	36	Secondary	Police officer	M	43	Secondary	Retail manager
M	77	Secondary	Retired glassmaker	M	49	Secondary	Police officer
F	71	Secondary	Retired accountant	M	48	Vocational	Stockkeeper
M	62	University	Teacher	M	22	Vocational	Postal carrier
M	44	University	Municipal officer	M	61	Secondary	Retired police officer
M	77	University	Retired teacher	F	78	Vocational	Retired; babysitter
F	57	Secondary	Nurse	F	65	Secondary	Retired accountant

years old, and 3) the ability to give an interview in Czech.[9] We further followed the strategy of maximum variation sampling, which aims to capture common patterns across a variety of perspectives that indicate the shared dimensions of the studied phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Therefore, we ensured the sample's diversity in terms of gender, age, education, occupation, and self-reported social class. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we combined face-to-face and online interviews.

Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the research participants. We combined recruitment through our own wider social circles using the snowball sampling method, recruitment through voluntary associations (e.g. scouts) and public institutions (e.g. schools), and recruitment through social media by posting advertisements in local Facebook groups. We obtained informed consent from each research participant, as mandated by the ethics approval committee at Masaryk University, Approval No. EKV 2019-05.

The interviews lasted 50–120 minutes and followed the principles of 'comprehensive interviewing', designed to obtain rich narrative data through active listening and expressions of empathy towards interviewees (Ferreira, 2014, p. 119). The semi-structured character of the interview allowed us to ask additional questions beyond the prepared script. To explore the link between local context and migration attitudes, the script covered localized narratives of migration. In particular, research participants were asked about who comes to the locality from abroad, how they perceive these people, the estimated percentage of foreign nationals in their locality, how the phenomenon of migration manifests locally, specific topics related to people from abroad in their locality, and how migration affects their everyday life.

We analysed the interviews using qualitative data analysis software (ATLAS.ti) through a combination of initial (open), focused, and theoretical coding (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014), moving back and forth between close readings of the data and engagement with different concepts and theories. Following the logic of abductive reasoning (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012), our coding procedure was from the start inspired by the theories of symbolic boundaries, boundary work, and cultural repertoires. These theories gave rise to two prominent groups of codes: 'grounds for boundary work' and 'cultural repertoires'. We complemented the code list with several inductively developed code groups that captured various characteristics that research participants spontaneously attributed to residents with a migratory background, including ethnicity/country of origin, motivations for migration, and personal features. In the final stage of the analysis, we added codes inspired by the concept of cultural armatures, grounding our analysis more firmly in the local context. Our main analytical goal was to understand how locally embedded cultural repertoires shape the boundary

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[9] We intentionally refrained from making Czech citizenship a criterion for the selection of research participants, since our aim was not to examine how Czech nationals perceive immigrants, but how the Czech public perceives Others living in their locality.

work performed by the research participants and, thus, their migration attitudes. We looked for shared structures of meaning that informed migration attitudes among local residents, independently of differences in their individual characteristics. Our analysis thus highlights the analytical autonomy of culture and its capacity to shape social action in a manner similar to structures of a more material kind, such as education or social class (Alexander & Smith, 2003).

The last methodological point concerns the use of migration terminology and ethnic categorisation. During the interviews with our research participants, we used the descriptive term 'people who moved to Czechia/locality from abroad'. This choice helped us to mitigate the preconception bias connected to the terms 'foreigners', 'migrants', and 'refugees', which all have their own distinct connotations in the Czech context (Rapoš Božič et al., 2023). It also allowed our research participants to come up with their own categorisations, which mostly drew on the assumed ethnicity of the 'groups' they described, a finding that dovetails with Brubaker et al.'s (2004) argument that ethnic differentiation is the dominant form of categorisation of immigrants. Accordingly, the ethnic 'groups' we write about in the analytical sections of this paper represent inductive 'categories of practice' (Brubaker, 2004). Although not all these ethnic groups fit into the category of 'immigrant' by definition (e.g. Roma, naturalised citizens), we consider it important to preserve the inductively constructed categorisations articulated by our research participants. We combine these categorisations with the term 'residents with a migratory background', which we use to encompass those who have moved to the two localities from abroad, specifying their status or country of origin as needed.

Analysis

We present our analytical findings in three sections. The first discusses how the specific features of local history, cultural geography, and demography provide support for the formation of locally available cultural repertoires. In the second section, we argue that *local cosmopolitanism* in Teplice and *Czech nativism* in Vyšší Brod give rise to specific grounds for boundary work, constructing imagined communities of Locals and Others. The last section presents the local *hierarchies of otherness*, our ideal-typical constructions that illustrate the local specificities of migration attitudes embedded in resonating cultural repertoires and grounds for boundary work.

The emergence of local cosmopolitanism and Czech nativism

Despite similar positioning at the periphery of Czechia and the shared experience of a major population change in the second half of the twentieth century, there is enough difference in the cultural armature of Vyšší Brod and Teplice to give rise to distinct cultural repertoires. In Teplice, discussions about migration are often

situated within a wider historical narrative of the city's cosmopolitan past, giving rise to a distinct cultural repertoire of *local cosmopolitanism*.[10] According to the research participants, Teplice owes its cosmopolitan character primarily to the presence of thermal mineral springs that have played a crucial role in the historic development of the city, allowing it to gradually posit itself as a nationally and internationally recognised spa destination (Kocourková & Vilím, 2009). The spa industry experienced a boom in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when Teplice became a popular tourist destination, attracting prominent guests from different countries and earning the nickname 'Little Paris' (Budinská & Zerjatke, 2006). The local spa also played an important role during WWII, when it was repurposed into a hospital for injured German soldiers and refugees fleeing war-affected territories (Kocourková & Vilím, 2009). For the research participants, these aspects of local history and cultural geography speak to the city's openness to ethnic and cultural differences. Moreover, the presence of the spa supports a romantic narrative about local cosmopolitanism that portrays Teplice as a 'city of peace', where people of different origins meet for the purpose of recovery.

> You know, historically, the city was very cosmopolitan, … multicultural. There was a spa where different nations met. Enemies had been lying on their bunks side by side here, those who only a week prior had their weapons pointed at each other. The city of Teplice has always been a city of peace, where weapons were thrown away and people were treated. There has always been a mixture of nationalities here. So, I think this is a bit of our historical legacy that kind of persists.
>
> [Matt, 44, municipal officer, Teplice]

References to the historical legacy of peaceful coexistence among people of different origins and ethnic backgrounds thus help to stabilise the cultural repertoire of local cosmopolitanism. Undoubtedly, a person familiar with the history of Teplice may easily object that such a representation of the city's past is highly selective. They could argue that it omits the traumatic events that significantly altered the demographic composition of the city in the twentieth century—including the deportation of ethnic Jews, the temporary displacement of ethnic Czechs during WWII, and the post-war expulsion of ethnic Germans (Kocourková & Vilím, 2009). However, the selectivity of this representation does not limit its ability to serve as a cultural resource for evaluation, allowing Locals to view ethnic and cultural diversity as a natural part of the city's historical legacy.

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[10] The understanding and use of the concept of cosmopolitanism differs significantly across social sciences and humanities, ranging from normative use in political and moral philosophy to analytical use in sociology. In our use of this concept, we wish to stay close to the meanings attributed to it by our research participants, adopting a broad definition of cosmopolitanism as 'a condition of openness to the world and entailing self and societal transformation in light of the encounter with the Other' (Delanty & Harris, 2018, p. 95).

The cultural repertoire of local cosmopolitanism also finds support in other aspects of the cultural armature of Teplice, including proximity to the German border and the visible presence of residents with a migratory background in the service sector of the city. After the fall of communism in 1989, proximity to Germany started to play an important role in the economic development of Teplice, opening new channels for trade and tourism. It also served as a trigger point for the emigration of various low-skilled and high-skilled professionals, whose positions were often filled by immigrants (cf. Ezzeddine, 2021). The city therefore has a well-established and highly diverse population of residents with a migratory background, with Vietnamese, Arabs, Russians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, and Roma being most visible to our research participants.[11] Some are highly skilled professionals who came to Czechia during socialism as a part of the state-organised programme on economic and social cooperation between Czechoslovakia and other socialist countries, while others came later, attracted mostly by employment opportunities in the local tourism industry or cross-border trade[12] (Kantarová, 2012). As Hana explained, encounters with people of different origins are quite 'normal' in Teplice and add to its cosmopolitan feel.

> Well, we are near the border. A lot of doctors from Teplice crossed that border. […] So, I'm happy when they are replaced by someone qualified, and I don't care if it's a foreigner. I see it very positively. When I go shopping, I know where Vietnamese shops are. And that's also why I perceive their presence. But otherwise, I don't perceive them like … like I would walk down the street and say to myself, 'Hey, that's a foreigner'. Maybe it's due to the fact that I don't know if it's someone who came here to the spa, or someone who came here from Germany. Teplice is quite cosmopolitan and has always been. And we are used to them [foreigners].
>
> [Hana, 52, salesperson, Teplice]

As Hana's statement indicates, the presence of people of different origins in Teplice has been effectively normalised. Although such normalisation does not necessarily imply the absence of symbolic boundaries that delineate ethnic groups—Hana continued to be aware of the ethnic background of the people she met—she found their categorisation into 'foreigners' both challenging and redundant. As

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[11] Although most Roma came to Czechia after WWII from the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia (Sidiropulu Janků, 2013) and later acquired Czech citizenship, they are commonly perceived as 'foreigners' (Rapoš Božič et al., 2023).

[12] According to the information provided by the Labor Office in Teplice (e-mail correspondence, Jan 11, 2023), employed foreign state nationals from Ukraine and Slovakia are skilled workers in construction, machine operators, and low-skilled workers in various sectors: Vietnamese work mainly as service and sales workers, as well as low-skilled workers; Russian are employed as service and sales workers and drivers; and workers from Arabic countries (Morocco, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and Syria) are employed as service and sales workers, specialists in health care, and low-skilled workers in various sectors.

we demonstrate below, in Teplice, the boundaries that delineate the imagined community of Locals are more permeable to people of different origins.

In Vyšší Brod, the cultural armature of the city also gave rise to a distinct cultural repertoire that informed the ways in which the research participants made sense of migration and the presence of residents with a migratory background in their city. It did so, however, differently from Teplice. Integral to the narratives of research participants from Vyšší Brod was a concern about the loss of Czech ethno-cultural dominance in the city, giving rise to the cultural repertoire of *Czech nativism*.[13] This cultural repertoire was stabilised through references to two distinct events in the city's history—the resettlement of the borderlands by ethnic Czechs and Slovaks after 1945 and the steady arrival of immigrants from Vietnam after 1990—both of which have had important implications for the demographic structure of the city. The resettlement of the borderlands was a political project organised by the Czechoslovak government immediately after WWII to repopulate the border areas previously inhabited by ethnic Germans with ethnic Czechs and Slovaks. Besides offering economic incentives to the new settlers, it also appealed to their patriotism, inviting them to help build the borderlands (Glassheim, 2016). In the case of Vyšší Brod, the resettlement led to an almost complete population exchange; the vast majority of the local population before the war were ethnic Germans. As Filip indicated, the resettlement has helped posit Vyšší Brod as a city in which people might have ancestors in different parts of Central and Eastern Europe, but they are all 'officially Czechs'.

> Vyšší Brod is a classic border town settled after the war, which means that a large part of the population has relatives here, and it doesn't matter if they are Romanian Slovaks, Romanian Czechs, Hungarian Slovaks, Czechs, or Slovaks (including the mayor, with most of his family in Slovakia to this day). Yeah, so it's like that, but they're officially Czechs; they all have Czech nationality, yeah.
>
> [Filip, 48, environmental worker, Vyšší Brod]

As with local cosmopolitanism in Teplice, in Vyšší Brod, the formation of the cultural repertoire of Czech nativism is sustained by a selective interpretation of the local history, in this case, a disregard for the legacy of ethnic Germans who had been inhabiting the town before Czechs moved in. Locating the beginning of local history in post-war resettlement, the cultural repertoire of Czech nativism allows research participants to view Vyšší Brod as a 'Czech city' and to articulate their concerns about the growing affluence of residents with a migratory

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[13] Kešić and Duyvendak (2019, p. 462) understand nativism as a specific form of nationalism that, rather than emphasising differences between nations, is 'concerned with the problematization of internal minorities that are seen as threatening' and 'directed towards its internal antagonists'. We believe that this concept effectively captures not only the implicit assumption that the Czech ethnic majority should retain its privileged position in the city but also the antagonism toward residents with Vietnamese origin.

background, particularly from Vietnam. Vietnamese immigration to Vyšší Brod started in the early 1990s and—not unlike in Teplice and other places in the Czech borderlands—was motivated by economic opportunities related to cross-border trade. The attractiveness of Vyšší Brod was further enhanced by its geographical position on a major motorway at the border with Austria and by the opening of a border crossing in Studánky, a small settlement belonging to Vyšší Brod. While the first wave of immigrants from Vietnam focused almost exclusively on stall-based sales at the border, consecutive waves of immigrants started to open their own businesses, and many of them became established entrepreneurs.[14] As Filip further explained, the growing number and affluence of residents of Vietnamese origin in Vyšší Brod gradually became perceived as a threat to the position of the Czech ethnic majority, leading to significant polarisation.

> The Vietnamese community has been settling here for a long time. They have money because they are hardworking, and somehow, they manage to generate capital, so they invest and buy houses. So today, they own one-third of the [main] square, which the Czech majority takes very badly, because they were used to their comfort in the border zone where everything had been set, everything had been lined up. […] So, there are two significant counter poles here.
>
> [Filip, 48, environmental worker, Vyšší Brod]

The presence of residents of Vietnamese origin thus represents a disruption to the established order in the city, and direct competition to the Czech ethnic majority. Integral to the cultural repertoire of Czech nativism are very 'bright' (Alba, 2005) ethnic boundaries that divide the local population into two groups— 'official' Czechs and Vietnamese—the former perceived as Locals while the latter are subjected to othering.

Locals and Others: The local embeddedness of boundary work

The cultural repertoires identified in the previous section are collectively shared cultural resources that enable patterns of boundary work specific to the locality. In other words, the distinction between the imagined communities of Locals and Others is embedded in the locally available cultural repertoires and translates into distinct patterns of boundary work. These distinctions can be made based on different criteria, or *grounds for boundary work,* which can emphasise otherness (boundary maintenance and solidification) or serve as the basis for mitigating differences between Locals and Others (boundary crossing and blurring). Dif-

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[14] According to data provided by the Labor Office in Český Krumlov (e-mail correspondence Jan 11, 2023), the main professions among foreign state nationals in Vyšší Brod include service and sales work (e.g. masseur, manicurist, server, or sales assistant), and the vast majority of their employers are Vietnamese nationals.

ferent grounds for boundary work are not mutually exclusive and often comple-
ment each other. Moreover, certain grounds for boundary work are locally spe-
cific, resonating with more or less intensity in the particular localities.[15]

To illustrate how the two local cultural repertoires inform boundary work,
we first focus on the criterion of 'following the rules', which is prominent in both
localities. Although the distinction between those who follow the rules and those
who do not resonated in both Teplice and Vyšší Brod, the understanding of what
constituted 'the rules' varied in each locality. First, consider the following state-
ment:

> Matt: I think that we [inhabitants of Teplice] can historically work and cooperate
> very well with foreigners. There's a community of Arabic, as well as Ukrainian and
> Slovak doctors in our hospital, so there's such a mix—I'd say a natural mix, already.
> They are like natives, their children grow up here, go to school here…
>
> Interviewer: And would you consider, let's say, those children of Arab migrants who
> are here to be Czechs…?
>
> Matt: Well, I have no reason not to consider them [Czechs], if they were simply born
> in Czechia, and if they respect in some way, I'd say, relatively broad social values,
> laws, and norms—then I have no reason to look at them as someone else. They are
> Teplicians [inhabitants of Teplice], like everyone else.
>
> [Matt, 44, municipality office, Teplice]

In this interview excerpt, Matt first referred to the cohabitation of Czechs, Arabs,
Ukrainians, and Slovaks in Teplice as a historical fact, bringing to the fore the
cultural repertoire of local cosmopolitanism. Consequently, arguing that national
and cultural otherness has been common in Teplice ('a natural mix'), he blurred
the boundary between local Czechs and residents with a migratory background.
He also articulated the preconditions for such boundary blurring—respecting
broad social values, laws, and norms and, in the case of the second generation,
being born in Czechia. In this case, the grounds for boundary work ('following
the rules') refer to values, laws, and norms in a very general sense, not necessarily
linked to ethnic culture.

In the case of Vyšší Brod, the boundaries between Locals and Others were
primarily articulated through the cultural repertoire of Czech nativism. Research
participants in this locality often emphasised the cultural otherness of residents
of Vietnamese origin and considered everyday cohabitation between Czechs and
Vietnamese to be problematic.[16] Even though their boundary work was also based

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[15] The locally specific grounds for boundary work coexist with regional, national, and
transnational grounds for boundary work. Therefore, they can intersect, reinforce each
other, and create contradictions and tensions within processes of meaning-making.

[16] Although Vietnamese businesses are concentrated within certain areas of the city, there
are no ethnically segregated neighbourhoods; Vietnamese residents live and work as
neighbours of the residents of Czech origin.

on following the rules, 'the rules' were in this case understood as cultural practices and everyday routines performed in the private sphere:

> Interview: Could you tell me what exactly you mean by saying that Vietnamese should adapt better?
> Mary: Well, I think they should follow the rules that are given—like the level of noise in flats, waste separation […] They like to gather, but they are noisy, of course. And, for example, they don't adhere to the rule that after 10 pm, they shouldn't be cutting meat or things like that, yeah…
>
> [Mary, 28, interpreter, Vyšší Brod]

Other examples of the violations of local rules mentioned by research participants from Vyšší Brod included the reluctance of the Vietnamese to close their businesses during Czech national holidays or their cooking practices, the smells of which some research participants found unpleasant.

Even though following the rules resonated as grounds for boundary work in both localities, in Teplice, the meaning of rules was articulated in the sense of broader values and norms, whereas in Vyšší Brod, rules referred to the particularistic habits of residents with migratory backgrounds. This difference in meaning echoes the locally available cultural repertoires: whereas rules as broad values and norms were an expression of Teplice's local cosmopolitanism, rules in the sense of cultural practices and everyday routines reflected Vyšší Brod's Czech nativism, which attributed differences in behaviour to ethnic distinctions.

Following the rules often came in tandem with another influential criterion for boundary work: 'contributing to society'. This criterion facilitated the sorting of residents with a migratory background into Locals and Others based on their perceived contribution to the common good. In Teplice, the evaluative logic of this criterion facilitated boundary crossing for a number of residents with a migratory background, locally known for their societal contribution through being doctors, shop owners, workers, and even entrepreneurs, contributing to the development of the city. Such individuals—or even the entire ethnic group they were believed to represent—were often contrasted with the local Roma, whose perceived lack of societal contribution was massively criticised.

> If there is an Arab doctor here who works normally within our system as it should be—as we all do it—going to work, paying taxes, creating value, trying to improve this state somehow—then I don't mind at all. And vice versa—if there is, eh, a Slovak gypsy [chuckles] receiving social benefits, then he is, for me, a person who is completely useless here, who will not bring me anything.
>
> [Lukáš, 36, police officer, Teplice]

In Vyšší Brod, the topic of societal contribution was discussed to a somewhat lesser extent than in Teplice. Research participants occasionally mentioned the

'indispensable contribution' of Ukrainian workers to the local construction industry, opening the channels for boundary crossing. The societal contribution of Vietnamese-origin residents was, however, thematised only rarely, almost exclusively in connection to the COVID-19 pandemic, during which some of them helped supply the city with facial masks. Even though Vietnamese were locally known as successful entrepreneurs and were generally considered 'hardworking', the majority of research participants did not stress their economic activity as a contribution. Instead, they perceived a threat, as best documented through the local controversy over the purchase of properties in the historical centre.

> Of course, they [Vietnamese] have again bought a historic old house, the former hotel Panský dům. The Vietnamese bought it, right? Czechs cannot afford it. Simply, they cannot. And I'm sorry because I don't want to live to see that… […] Because really… I grew up here. I KNOW [emphasis in original] about everything here. And now, it's going in a completely different direction. Quite the opposite. And I'm sorry. As a person who was born here and has roots here, his parents had roots here. I'm so sorry.
>
> [Ivan, 43, retail manager, Vyšší Brod]

As Ivan's statement helps us understand, the underlying assumption was that Czechs were more entitled to purchase historical houses in Vyšší Brod than Vietnamese. The evaluative logic of the cultural repertoire of Czech nativism thus prevented Ivan from seeing these purchases as a potential contribution to the development of the city; instead, they were yet another expression of the competition between Czechs and Vietnamese, bound to irreversibly change the character of the city. Instead of facilitating boundary crossing, this led to the solidification of boundaries and further othering.

Local hierarchies of otherness

Our analysis further identified locally specific *hierarchies of otherness* that reflected the prevailing patterns of boundary work in each locality and their underlying cultural repertoires. In this section, we elucidate the main differences in these hierarchies by reconstructing the patterns of boundary work in relation to the ethnic groups most frequently mentioned in the interviews. Groups located at the bottom of the hierarchy (see Figure 1) are perceived as the ultimate Others, separated from the imagined community of Locals by bright symbolic boundaries. At the top of the hierarchy, the boundaries between distinct groups of residents with a migratory background and Locals (in both localities understood as 'Czechs') are blurred, signalling their greater permeability. The hierarchy of otherness is essentially a continuum within which different ethnic groups are situated according to their perceived ability to comply with local rules or contribute

Figure 1. Scheme of local hierarchies of otherness
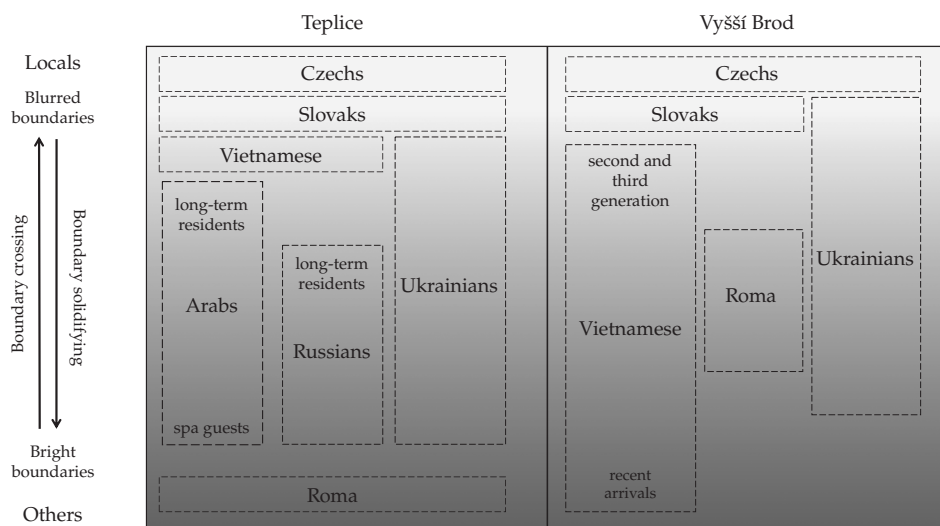
to society and cross the symbolic boundaries of local belonging. The hierarchies must be understood as ideal-typical models; the positioning of the groups within the hierarchy was not fixed but rather situational, and sometimes, the positioning of distinct groups varied throughout a single interview.[17]

Although Slovaks occupy the top tier of the hierarchy in both localities—consistent with the positive perception of Slovaks countrywide (Tuček, 2020)—there is a striking difference between Teplice and Vyšší Brod with respect to who is located at the bottom. In Teplice, most research participants allocated this position to Roma, an ethnic group mentioned with surprising frequency in discussions about migration, even though the vast majority of Czech Roma have lived in Czechia for generations, have Czech citizenship, and are officially recognised as a national minority. Nevertheless, research participants from Teplice would often refer to the post-WWII arrival of Roma from Eastern Slovakia and describe them as a 'problematic' and 'unintegrated' group that 'does not contribute to society' and 'lives off of social benefits', brightening the boundaries and locating

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[17] Figure 1 is based on our interpretative reconstruction of research participants' perceptions of different ethnic groups living in their locality. We paid attention to the wider context in which the ethnic groups were mentioned during the interviews, including the patterns of boundary work performed in relation to these groups, specific features ascribed to them spontaneously, and further classifications (e.g. second and third generation, recent arrivals). Although Figure 1 represents the discourse of research participants, it does not aspire to offer a representative picture of migration attitudes in the two localities.

Roma below those who arrived more recently. For instance, Jozefa emphasised the problematic position of Roma by contrasting them with the Vietnamese, who, in her eyes, had acquired the skills necessary for 'becoming Czechs' and, as opposed to Roma, 'participate[d] in life successfully'.

> I see a difference between the Vietnamese and the [Romani] immigrants who came here from Slovakia and before from Bulgaria, or somewhere thereabouts. Vietnamese in the second generation are already Czechs, and Roma in the fifth or whichever generation still are not. They still have their language; you can't really speak about culture in their case, right; they just wait until they get something for free, right? Vietnamese just stand on their own feet; they study at the universities here, successfully, and they participate in life successfully.
>
> [Jozefa, 64, self-employed, Teplice]

In Vyšší Brod, the position at the bottom of the hierarchy is reserved for residents of Vietnamese origin, especially recent arrivals. This group was perceived as not following the 'rules' of good cohabitation and instead disturbing the public order. The research participants attributed this to their 'cultural difference', 'ineducability', and a lack of 'willingness to adapt', constructing bright boundaries that separate the Vietnamese both from Czechs and from other ethnic groups seen as less problematic. Contrasting his negative experience with the Vietnamese to his positive experience with the Roma, Ivan concluded that he would rather have Roma in Vyšší Brod.

> Personally, I would prefer not to have them [Vietnamese] here. It might be silly, but I would rather have here, I don't know, Roma fellow citizens. I know Roma fellow citizens because I had them at work when I worked as a construction technician. I had some there, and I tell you, [they were] decent people.
>
> [Ivan, 43, retail manager, Vyšší Brod]

By presenting Roma as 'decent people', Ivan opened the possibility for boundary crossing and posited this group above the recently arrived Vietnamese, who, in his opinion, constitute the ultimate Other. Further, whereas in Teplice, the pattern of boundary brightening in relation to Roma was rather consistent, signalling little possibility for Roma to cross the boundaries and move up on the hierarchy of otherness, the position of Vietnamese in Vyšší Brod was not so straightforward. Whereas most research participants brightened the boundaries towards the Vietnamese, some opened opportunities for boundary crossing, pointing out that sometimes Vietnamese are 'just fine', mentioning those who had managed to learn Czech or used to visit the local pub. Many also agreed that compared to the first generation, the second-generation Vietnamese 'behave quite differently', and that their presence was not problematic at all. Thus, the perception of the Vietnamese in Vyšší Brod is best represented on a continuum.

In Teplice, 'successful participation' in the local community also allows for boundary crossing among Arabs and Russians, otherwise perceived as 'closed' and difficult to interact with in daily life.

> Russians are very closed; for example, my parents have them as neighbours, and they did not know that they had moved in. They never greeted each other, and they [the Russians] are very closed. And it is the same with the Arabs: unless they are doctors or someone in a public function, they don't really start a conversation with you.
>
> [Astrid, 31, administrative assistant, Teplice]

The positioning of Russians and Arabs in Teplice was, however, more ambiguous than that of the Vietnamese, whose perceived cultural otherness and keeping to their own ethnic group were not emphasised by the research participants. Instead, their irreplaceable contribution to the local wellbeing and community was often emphasised, for instance, by Zuzana, a young student who proclaimed, 'I think they [Vietnamese] are actually indispensable to us. If there wouldn't be a place to shop at 10 pm, we would have all died here [laughs]'.

In both localities, Ukrainians and other labour migrants from Eastern European countries occupied liminal positions in the hierarchy of otherness. They were mostly mentioned as 'workers' or 'cheap labour' that filled gaps in local labour markets. Their presence did not stir up much sentiment and was accepted, and sometimes even valued, based on their contributions. They were not seen culturally as the Other, but boundaries towards Ukrainians were sometimes solidified on the grounds of disturbing behaviour among male workers, such as drinking in public space or illicit work practices. Further, the research participants mentioned examples of good colleagues and friendly families, considered Locals, not least because of their societal contributions, as Ivan pointed out: 'In our company there are two Ukrainians. One is here for twenty years and the other almost thirty years, and they are adaptable; they are hardworking'.

Ultimately, these hierarchies do not represent static attitudes but rather dynamic processes of meaning-making. Some of the bright boundaries can be blurred over time as individuals with a certain migratory background assume positions in society or develop skills locally recognised as valuable—such as contributing to the general well-being (Arabic doctors in Teplice) or complying with the rules of cohabitation based on ethno-cultural closeness (second and third generations of Vietnamese in Vyšší Brod).

Discussion and conclusion

This paper has shed light on the local embeddedness of migration attitudes. By analysing how research participants in two Czech cities—Teplice and Vyšší Brod—viewed the presence of residents with migratory backgrounds and how

their perceptions were informed by the local context, we identified locally specific patterns of meaning-making. First, utilising the concept of cultural armatures, we mapped collective representations of history, cultural geography, and the demographic composition of the cities. Second, we elaborated on two prevailing cultural repertoires, *local cosmopolitanism* and *Czech nativism*, anchored in cultural armatures. Third, we pointed to specific grounds for boundary work, such as 'following the rules' and 'contributing to society', through which research participants draw symbolic boundaries, constructing imagined communities of Locals and Others. Lastly, we demonstrated how specific grounds for boundary work gave rise to local *hierarchies of otherness,* reflecting the mobility potential of residents with migratory backgrounds on a scale from bright to blurred boundaries.

The focus on the local level of migration attitudes has broader implications and reveals significant paradoxes. For instance, although we analysed two Sudetenland localities that both underwent significant population changes in the twentieth century, only Teplice exhibited a repertoire of local cosmopolitanism, facilitating the formation of greater openness towards ethno-cultural diversity. This difference may be attributed, in part, to the size of the city, as Teplice is much larger in terms of population than Vyšší Brod. As Vlachová (2019) shows, the size of the locality of residence is among the greatest explanatory factors for the importance of Czech ancestry as a part of national identity. Czech ancestry is much more important for residents living in localities with populations under 4,999—such as Vyšší Brod—than for residents of larger localities. This size difference may contribute to explaining why the cultural repertoire of Czech nativism developed in Vyšší Brod in contrast to the larger city of Teplice. Moreover, despite widespread Islamophobia on the national level and sensationalised media coverage of anti-Muslim protests in Teplice, the focus on the local level revealed complex hierarchies that exist in relation to people of Arabic origin. It is important to consider that people differentiate between the anonymous masses of 'migrants' they encounter through the media and the people with migratory backgrounds they meet in their everyday lives (Jaworsky et al., 2023). Lastly, the analysis showed that the cultural repertoire of Czech nativism can strongly resonate in a city populated mostly by ethnic Germans until WWII. Such paradoxes document the dynamic and sometimes contradictory nature of meaning-making processes embedded in selective interpretations of the cultural, historical, geographical, and demographic peculiarities of specific localities.

Beyond bringing attention to local variations in migration attitudes, our paper offers two distinct theoretical contributions. First, it highlights the role of intersubjectively shared meanings in the formation of migration attitudes. In line with the meaning-centred approach of cultural sociology, we argue that migration attitudes cannot be explained only by paying attention to material structures (such as GDP) or individual-level characteristics (such as education level). We must also consider the embeddedness of attitudes in symbolic systems of culture. Our analytical focus on symbolic boundaries and boundary work helps

reveal the extent to which migration attitudes reflect shared criteria of evaluation in determining who and under what conditions represent a valued member of the local community. Second, it advocates the necessity of grasping the local context not in terms of a static set of variables, such as unemployment rates and demographics, but as a dynamic process of meaning-making woven into locally resonating cultural repertoires. By paying attention to cultural repertoires, we are able to show the relative selectivity with which specific historical, geographical, or demographic characteristics enter the meaning-making of local residents and shape their attitudes. While this concept has thus far been used mostly in cross-national comparisons (Lamont, 2000; Lamont & Thévenot, 2000), our analysis demonstrates that it is fully compatible with the local turn in migration research. Ultimately, we argue that to overcome methodological nationalism in the study of migration attitudes, it is important to consider how the local context of cities is made meaningful by social actors and woven into structures of meaning that become available in the form of cultural repertoires.

Inevitably, the analysis presented in this paper has limitations. First, although it brings the meaning-making processes underlying the formation of migration attitudes to the fore, it does not describe the attitudes in the two localities per se. For a more comprehensive overview of the migration attitudes of residents of Teplice and Vyšší Brod, a larger study with a representative sample of research participants is needed. In a similar vein, although we have uncovered a prevailing cultural repertoire in each locality, the comparative perspective of this paper does not allow us to go further into depth to discuss other, less prevalent cultural repertoires. Further research focusing on a single locality might elaborate on how different cultural repertoires coexist and which cultural repertoires resonate among people of different social classes, generations, or political orientations. Second, although the research participants referred primarily to different national and ethnic groups of foreign-born residents, they also made distinctions based on social class, gender, and education. To tackle these complexities, future research would benefit from adopting an intersectional perspective and reflecting on the different characteristics ascribed to immigrants that shape the formation of attitudes. Third, our analysis does not capture the perception of more distant Others, since it is focused on the perception of people with a migratory background living in the two localities. For example, African or Middle Eastern immigrants arriving in Europe on boats were frequently mentioned in interviews from both cities. Predominantly negative attitudes towards these groups show that local cultural repertoires not only complement or coexist with those at the national level but can also be mutually exclusive, as in the case of cosmopolitanism in Teplice. More in-depth research is needed to explore how local and national cultural repertoires shaping attitudes towards people on the move interact, whether contradicting, complementing, or reinforcing each other.

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Petra Guasti and Zdenka Mansfeldová (eds.)

Democracy Under Stress.
Changing Perspectives on Democracy,
Governance and Their Measurement

Petra Guasti and Zdenka Mansfeldová (eds)

Democracy, defined as liberal pluralism, is under stress worldwide. Pluralistic democratic institutions such as: a free press, civil society, and the rule of law all seem to be under attack. Democracies are being hollowed out from within while preserving the fundamental facade of elections.

The strength of this book is in providing a range of perspectives on the study of democracy under stress. The authors, renowned scholars of democratic theory and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, highlight the potential of different approaches – from comparative meta-assessment using indices and survey data, to case studies focused on understanding context and causal processes – for obtaining a better grasp of the loci of the stress.

Together, we offer the reader the opportunity to assess different conceptual frameworks and approaches, to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, and to advance the study of democracy in the future. This volume is also an invitation for scholars to redirect their attention to Central and Eastern Europe, which offers an opportunity to deepen our understanding of democracy.

We see democracy in Central and Eastern Europe under stress but avoid general labels such as the crisis of democracy and deconsolidation. Instead, we argue that to understand the contemporary situation in the CEE region, we need to move beyond assessing institutional frameworks and to include citizens in our understanding and measurement of democracy.

The book is not for sale. Print versions are available on request (contact the Press and Publications Department at the Institute of Sociology: prodej@soc.cas.cz).

The full text can be downloaded at: https://www.soc.cas.cz/publikace/democracy-under-stress-changing-perspectives-democracy-governance-and-their-measurement.

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Tomasz Inglot, Dorottya Szikra and Cristina Raț: *Mothers, Families, or Children? Family Policy in Poland, Hungary, and Romania, 1945–2020*
University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022,
pp. 454

Although historical institutionalists have provided important insights into the 'hybrid' nature of Central and Eastern European welfare states (Cerami, A., & Vanhuysse, P. (eds.). (2009). *Post-Communist Welfare Pathways: Theorizing Social Policy Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe*. Palgrave MacMillan; Inglot, T. (2008). *Welfare States in East-Central Europe 1919–2004*. Cambridge University Press), the 'mixing' of 'continuity' and 'change' remains undertheorised (pp. 4–11). Specifically, a static approach to agency and ideas has significantly hampered dissecting the 'seemingly irreconcilable clash between simultaneous, and not mutually exclusive, continuity and change' (p. 11). Picking up the gauntlet, Inglot, Szikra and Rat deploy a 'longue duree' analysis of family policy, seeking specifically new ways of theorising the co-constitutive relationship between agency, structure and contingency (pp. 8–11). Breaking down the umbrella terms of *family policy* and *critical junctures*, the authors use a comparative analysis of Poland, Hungary and Romania to show how governments' ideational orientations have differential impacts on various policy areas throughout time.

A first crucial point is delineating the scope of the analysis. Specifically, the authors group four major categories of programmes—conventional social insurance cash transfers, family (child) allowances, parental and childcare leaves and benefits, and childcare services (p. 8)—into a *core* cluster, in which ideational layering most likely leads to path dependency, and a *contingent* cluster, which is more frequently subjected to path-departing change during critical junctures (p. 14). On the first level, old benefits, typically pertaining to the

pre-1945 period of welfare state formation, constitute the core cluster (p. 15). Because they embody the 'historical orientation of welfare' and benefit from the support of entrenched political actors, the 'original' policies are likely to coalesce into a path-dependent core of family policies (p. 16). On a more refined level, actors can proactively differentiate between policies, assigning lower priority to those with an ideational mismatch (pp. 14–16). This prioritisation opens up the contingent cluster to a plethora of path-departing options that range from changes in spending levels and eligibility conditions to more substantive reforms (pp. 16–17). While it is not always fully clear why the original policies appeared in the first place and how some of them matter more than do the others, even within the core cluster, the authors adequately highlight that explaining welfare state changes requires disentangling formal institutional creation from broad ideational debates (Kaufmann, F. X. (2012). *European Foundations of the Welfare-State*. Berghahn Books). This opens up space to analyse the highly distinct roles of both *standard* actors, such as parties and interest groups, *and* newer agents, such as the EU and emerging transnational networks.

A second major point of the book relates to timing. On a superficial level, the authors unearth new proof for the existing argument that CEE (Central and East European) family policy development follows, at least in broad strokes, the historical pattern found in Western Europe (pp. 31–33). On a deeper level, the authors propose a different understanding of sequencing. Whereas existing studies argue for three distinct critical junctures, Inglot, Szikra and Rat define a longer period of *modernisation*, in which topoi associated primarily with demographic concerns are debated as social questions, underpinning institutional change. Although with a significant lag given the specificities of communist industrialisation, CEE modernisa-

tion, beginning essentially with the Cold War détente, was linked to increased female participation in wage labour and subsequent disruptions in family life, just as in Western Europe (p. 32). Essentially, modernisation implies complete population coverage and institutional coordination into a coherent welfare net (p. 103). Concretely, if in Hungary and Poland, modernisation started in the 1960s and 1970s, respectively, ending in both cases around the 1980s, in Romania, it started in the 1970s but only ended in the 1990s. This fluid definition of a critical juncture opens up space to better dissect differential change across core and contingent policy areas, each with its own window of opportunity (such as Europeanisation) and an increasing range of potentially disruptive actors.

All three case studies provide rich historical narratives. Here, I zoom in on the four chapters detailing family policy trajectories in Poland and Hungary. Given that Poland and Hungary are topical cases in the literature, focusing on these respective chapters perfectly highlights the added value of Inglot, Szikra and Rat's arguments on timing and policy change. In the case of Poland, the key ideational trope that delineated the emerging core cluster was a mother orientation, with deep roots in the conservative–nationalistic ideals of the interwar (p. 48; further Inglot, 2008 – see above). This consistent ideational backing meant that the strong system of protection for working women from the 1920s to the 1930s could not be fully eroded, despite the fact that during the 1947–1950 communist consolidation and the ensuing de-Stalinisation, concerns over employment and wage management overshadowed 'developmental goals of family-related benefits' (p. 59). By the 1970s to 1980s, this specific mix of political–economic considerations, coupled with the resurgence of Catholic ideals (p. 82), created a highly specific ideational climate linking demographic concerns to mothers' employment protection.

Against this background, the maternity insurance created from the interwar pregnancy insurance, the unpaid childcare leave entitlement and the overwhelmingly urban kindergarten education of the 1960s coalesced into a core cluster with a clear political constituency (pp. 59–60). Steady political support entailed consistent reforms, comprising mostly programme expansion (pp. 59–60). Conversely, while the emerging 1960s family allowances, birth grants and childcare benefits were linked to wages, they were less tightly interwoven with broader issues of employment and, as such, became part of a contingent cluster in which policymakers faced fewer constraints to expand benefits in any way (p. 63).

The contrast between the path dependency of maternity protection and the path departure of family allowance expenditures became even sharper after 1989 (p. 78). While on the surface, family allowances were the second largest welfare expenditure after pensions, on a deeper level, maternity leave benefits appeared much more fiscally stable and less prone to the sweeping retrenchment of the 1990s (p. 76). Because family allowances were characterised more as wage supplements than decidedly pronatalist welfare interventions, they struggled to attract a stable political coalition, which in turn meant that the shock therapy of the 1990s rendered them politically untenable (pp. 77–78). By contrast, the economic slump of the late 1990s to the early 2000s generally rendered family policy a secondary objective (p. 224) but did not entail a full-on retrenchment of maternity benefits (pp. 80–82). With a highly stable electoral constituency already established since the 1980s, maternity insurance was supported by a political coalition that cut across the general retrenchment ethos (pp. 80–82). While Europeanisation significantly expanded the range of potential actors and their conceptual toolkits (pp. 220, 227), the emerging conservative–liberal duality essentially reinforced the core cluster,

at least until the mid-2010s (pp. 226–227). Given the EU's jurisdictional limits, emerging new actors, such as transnational non-government organisations and women's movements, approached the Union as a source of ideas and funding for experiments largely confined to the contingent cluster, in which they typically stood more chances of success (pp. 227–230).

Despite sharing interwar Poland's family orientation (p. 101), Hungary's comparatively earlier welfare state construction (Inglot, 2008) entailed a larger basket of policies that came to constitute the core cluster over a longer period of modernisation (p. 100). Against the background of population decline, a pro-family orientation promoting increased cash transfers (social insurance) and childcare services became the key narrative from 1945 to 1952 (p. 103). The sustained narrative on fertility rates and the adjacent focus on stay-at-home motherhood meant that pronatalism essentially implied a family orientation rather than a Polish-style mother orientation predicated primarily on female employment (p. 116). If, in the first stage of modernisation up to the 1960s, this ideational construction was interweaved with communist consolidation and forced industrialisation, in the 1970s, it underpinned a 'full modernization', in which the explicit focus on the 'traditional family' consolidated the core cluster (p. 111). Concretely, this can be seen in the across-the-board layering (Streeck, W. & Thelen, K. (eds.). (2005). *Beyond Continuity: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies*. Oxford University Press) of an array of benefits from family policy and extensive childcare leave to housing benefits and various services from 1973 to 1984 (p. 98). Conversely, rural nurseries, an inheritance of the urban–rural Bismarckian differentiation of the early 20th century, and the 1980s means-tested benefits and tax credits received far less funding and coordination, becoming a narrow contingent cluster (p. 142).

Both the size of the core cluster and its specific ideational backing meant that the 1989 regime change did not, in fact, constitute a path-departing critical juncture (p. 142), which represents a strong addition to the existing scholarly consensus (Inglot, 2008 – see above). In fact, successive Hungarian governments embraced mothers' temporary withdrawal from the labour force during the early 1990s as a specific form of unemployment mitigation (pp. 124–125). Given this specific historical–economic contingency and the pre-existing ideational and institutional background, even strong players, such as top-level politicians, or large associations, such as the National Association of Large Families, could, even with international backing, only impact policy in the contingent cluster (pp. 135–137). The growing divide in the late 1990s to the early 2000s between the conservative Right and the liberal Left did not fully erode the overarching pro-middle-class ethos but rather revamped it, similar to Poland's case, towards a bias for working families (pp. 257–258). While this ideational reconsideration barely impacted the core policy—as seen in the upgrading of GYES (Child care leave payment originating in the 1970s) and GYED (Child-care leave payment originating in the 1980s) across the Gyurcsany and Orban governments (pp. 266–267)—it had a much larger scope in the child protection programmes of the contingent cluster, which were diverted away from Roma and non-working families. Even after 2010, EU pressures only helped successive Orban governments expand the core cluster under the aegis of protecting the traditional family (Vanhuysse, P. & Perek-Bialas, J. (2021). The Political Demography of Missed Opportunity: Population Policies in a Younger but Faster-Aging East Central Europe, 1990–2040. In A. Goerres & P. Vanhuysse (eds.), *Global Political Demography: The Politics of Population Change* (pp. 373–399). Palgrave Macmillan). Overall, Inglot, Szikra

and Rat offer an in-depth historical account that adds an important layer to existing path-dependence studies; that is, agency can have a differential impact on policy change over time. By adding a layer of sociological enquiry to historical institutionalism, the authors successfully highlight how actors ascribe varying degrees of political salience to benefits within a given welfare area. This hierarchy creates a core cluster that is prone to inertia or gradual change and a contingent cluster that is more susceptible to radical change. However, the causal mechanisms are not always fully clear. Some ideas cut across the core and contingent clusters in an unsystematic way, and the balance of power between actors is sometimes ambiguous. However, the book does send out a strong message that critical junctures require further dissecting to analyse welfare state change.

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Nancy Folbre: *The Rise and Decline of Patriarchal Systems: An Intersectional Political Economy*
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This book aims to explain the origin and development of patriarchal systems by using perspectives and tools from Marxism, feminist theory, institutional economics, game theory and bargaining models. The special focus is the interaction between patriarchy and capitalism, but the book also draws on other collective conflicts and hierarchies along the lines of age or race/ethnicity. In the first half of the book, Folbre introduces the theoretical tools to conceptualise and apply her model of an intersectional political economy. In the second half, she uses such tools to challenge some of the narratives around patriarchal institutions, capitalism, care and the welfare state, and final-

ly points to possible strategies of coordination for a 'feminism of the 99%' (p. 226).

After offering broad insight into her theoretical foundations and the aims of the book in the first chapter, in the second chapter, Folbre zooms in on the definitions of patriarchy and how they can be understood. Folbre argues that explaining patriarchy needs to go beyond biology or a simple theme of male dominance. Rather, she draws on feminist literature to outline three areas of patriarchal political institutions: 'property rights over women and children' (p. 25), 'restrictions on the individual rights of women, children, and sexually non-conforming individuals' (p. 25) and 'rules of remuneration for time, effort, and resources devoted to the care of others, especially dependents' (p. 25). These explanations form the historical context for understanding patriarchal structures and the undervaluation of care work.

The third chapter deals with gender inequality and questions of agency and structure. Marxist approaches argue that gender inequalities in care work benefit capitalists, who aim to keep wages low. Collective interests and pre-capitalist patriarchal structures are largely ignored. The neoclassical argument relies on differences in preferences and on market efficiency. Discrimination is deemed inefficient, leading the free market to drive out those companies that act discriminatorily, for example, in their hiring decisions. Folbre argues that neither approach can deliver a convincing account, as it overlooks the institutional factors influencing bargaining power, earning possibilities in the market and people's ability to enact change. Folbre introduces the concept of collective agency and argues that multiple identities can complicate collective agency.

The fourth chapter traces shortcomings in more classical economic approaches to undervalued or unpriced goods and services. Incomplete property rights regimes over natural capital lead to an under- or un-

priced appropriation of the natural commons, with potentially devastating social and ecological effects. Furthermore, reproduction is defined as the 'production and maintenance of human capabilities' (p. 65). Similar to natural resources, reproduction is often placed outside the market. However, simply extending the market seems not only misguided but also risks exploitation being directed at other vulnerable groups. Finally, social reproduction is understood as the mechanisms that groups use to manifest their position in society. Chapter 5 addresses hierarchies and the concept of exploitation. Folbre describes the latter as an 'unfair division of the gains from coordination' (p. 82), a definition that goes beyond the simple focus on surplus value in capitalist production. The ideas of bargaining power and fallback positions, which are influenced by institutional structures, are key to this definition of exploitation.

The second half of the book starts with a chapter on the workings of patriarchal systems in different periods of human history to understand how collective power along the lines of gender intersects with other social categories. Folbre presents different arguments relating to gender structures in early human groups and points out the gendered elements of violent conflict—women were often taken as spoils of war. These observations lead to her argument that female slavery might have preceded the more institutionalised practices of slavery regardless of gender. The common elements in the historical explanations of gender inequality are the transition to sedentary agriculture and, in general, the emergence of private property. Regimes of high fertility can lead to advanced labour specialisation between men and women, with the latter specialising in care work and work that is more compatible with it. Property rights over land and goods lead to the need to ensure patrilineal connections. Property rights over offspring represent insurance for old age. Using further examples of slavery and feudalism, Folbre illustrates the intersectional elements of exploitation and hierarchies.

In Chapter 7, Folbre focuses on capitalist development and its interactions with gender. Changes in the economic system affect the costs and benefits of reproduction. Declines in fertility, on the other hand, can be argued to have led to a weakening of patriarchal structures. Folbre further shows that there is much disagreement about the concrete value of unpaid work for capitalism. While unpaid care work has been argued to help keep wages down, increasing the labour supply can also weaken the bargaining power of workers. Folbre likewise uses this chapter to elaborate on the ideas of the intersecting structures of collective power and argues that a gender-divided labour market has concrete short-run benefits for male wage earners but could have also prevented the emergence of effective coalitions among the lower and middle classes.

Chapters 8 and 9 take readers closer to the welfare state and the family. In the former, Folbre describes the development of the welfare state and its role in family work and care work. Using the example of the family wage and its eventual decline, Folbre shows how class interests can intersect and conflict with gender. She argues that while the welfare state partly socialises the costs of care through its redistribution machine, there are still substantial externalities in care work. As social investments remain heavily undervalued, we will continue to see under-investments in public goods (for empirical evidence, see Gál R. I., Vanhuysse P., & Vargha L. (2018). Pro-elderly Welfare States within Child-oriented Societies. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(6), 944–958; Vanhuysse P., & Gál R. I. (2021). Intergenerational Resource Transfers as the Cement of Society: The Asymmetric Role of Families and Policies. In M. Daly, B. Pfau-Effinger, N. Gilbert & D. Besharov (eds.), *International Handbook*

of Family Policy: A Life-Course Perspective. Oxford University Press). In Chapter 9, Folbre goes into detail, describing the gender inequalities in care within and outside of marriages, the poverty risks of motherhood, its care penalties and the state of market care work (for empirical evidence, see Gál R. I., Medgyesi M., & Vanhuysse P. (2022). *The Transfer Cost of Parenthood in Europe*. (NTA Working Papers No. 20–1)). In the final chapter, Folbre describes different feminist approaches and highlights the advantages of seeing patriarchal systems through an intersectional lens that helps to understand different interconnected hierarchies and ways to circumvent them. She ends with the argument that only intersectional approaches can form the necessary coalitions with the power to address both growing class differences and the remainder of patriarchal structures.

Folbre's theoretical tools span different approaches to political economy, from Marxism to neoclassical economics, applying insights into class struggle, identity, history, bargaining power and coordination problems. Some of the arguments are traced directly back to Marx, such as the idea of the co-optation of workers by capitalist interests. Folbre looks at collective conflicts in society in terms of gender, race/ethnicity and age to illustrate this point. How much this take on co-optation is an expression of false class consciousness is left unspecified. However, it is this problem of conflicting collective conflicts that is presented as one of the main reasons for the continuingly strong class divide. This argument is attractive, as it seems applicable to different historical examples. The fear of immigrants taking away jobs is a very common narrative of a distributive conflict that appears narrower than it could be. As Folbre stays relatively close to Marx on this issue, the added value is somewhat limited.

Another centrepiece in the book is the focus on care work and undervalued or un-priced goods and services, as well as resources. Building on her previous work, Folbre offers a detailed description of care work and presents different theoretical and historical explanations for previous and current gender divisions of market and non-market labour. She convincingly shows how these systems have benefited capitalist modes of production through the cheap—for capitalists—reproduction of human capabilities, whether in population numbers or in their capabilities and productivity. When human capabilities are regarded as public goods to some extent, then we are guilty of underinvestment, argues Folbre, and there is good reason to believe her. By also adding to the discussion the externalities inherent in the appropriation of natural resources, Folbre strengthens the argument that capitalist accumulation profits heavily from undervalued resources and reproductive work, such as care work. In its simplest form, however, this argument is also not new. As Folbre shows, it goes back to Rosa Luxemburg and her take on the importance of pre-capitalist modes of production for capitalism.

It is these two arguments going back mostly to Marx and Luxemburg that build the two central points in Folbre's intersectional political economy and her understanding of the interaction between patriarchal and capitalist systems. This way, Folbre clearly stands on the shoulders of giants in explaining the political economy of capitalism and interacting systems. It also needs to be remarked that while Folbre builds on an old argument, she adds to it by applying different theoretical ideas, such as institutional constraints and (intersectional) collective conflicts, as well as insights from game theory, among other things, offering an innovative take on the study of capitalism and collective conflict. One caveat in the discussion around care work and externalities is the rather economic–historical approach to the topic. Earlier historical accounts offer different

perspectives on the origins of the gender divide in care, and the economist discussion helps readers understand the implications for overall economic gender inequality. However, they fall short of offering a deeper moral account of the issue of care work and of the rights and duties connected with it, as these remain underdefined.

Having discussed the key arguments and main takeaways from Folbre's book, there is also room for more specific criticism. While the main argument can be traced throughout the book, it is also surrounded by many smaller and often unfinished ideas, and the relevance of each of these to the main story is not always clear. In this sense, the book could have profited from a leaner approach that also leaves room to develop ideas in more detail. One example of this is the development of Western economies after the Second World War. This period was characterised by several trends. First, women joined the formal labour force, mostly in addition to their non-market work. Second, real wages across the economy rose. Third, the bargaining power of workers increased. Finally, the economy saw strong increases in the gross domestic product (GDP). Folbre argues that a non-negligible share of the GDP growth can be attributed to the movement of a large amount of labour power (women) moving into the *official* market. What is missing here, however, is a discussion of how these trends fit together. Both Marxist and neo-classical approaches would, at first sight, likely associate rising labour supply with decreases in bargaining power and not the opposite. The matter is obviously more complicated than that, and one could consider trends of technological change, the expansion of education, Keynesian demand politics and other factors. Without much discussion, however, the relevance of these trends is lost. Another example is Folbre's proposition that the undervaluation of care work would continue even in the context of gender equality. While this ar-

rangement would continue to subsidise capital accumulation, how this scenario fits into the theoretical model that Folbre constructed is vague. If capitalists benefit from non-class cleavages and 'institutional hierarchies that inhibit the development of class solidarity' (p. 158), it is unclear why the disappearance or weakening of a central cleavage should not affect the ability to coordinate collective efforts.

Overall, *The Rise and Decline of Patriarchal Systems* offers a convincing approach to an intersectional political economy that connects different institutional hierarchies and lines of collective conflict. Folbre achieves this by connecting older Marxist ideas with theoretical insights from different streams of economics. While the book remains unfocused at some points, the added value is that it brings to the fore ideas that have been more or less ignored in mainstream economics for the past decades, and it offers a more differentiated perspective on both capitalism and patriarchy. In this capacity, it can be a helpful and educational guide for reformers and scholars alike.

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Minouche Shafik: *What We Owe Each Other: A New Social Contract for a Better Society*
Princeton University Press, 2021, pp. 256

In this book, Minouche Shafik points to the broken fabric of today's society and offers an outline of a renewed social contract to repair it. She argues in favour of three core principles: a guaranteed minimum income for a decent life for everyone, a maximum investment in citizens' productivity and capabilities, and more collective and effective risk-sharing within society. These ideals are developed throughout the chapters, which are organised according to policy

areas: children, education, health, work, and old age. In the second half of the book, the focus shifts from specific topics to the economics and politics of the proposed social contract and its sustainability across generations. What do we owe each other right now, Shafik asks, as well as across time?

The book identifies four main culprits for the state of the current social contract. Evolving gender roles, aging populations, climate change, and technological development have all caused notable changes in both the public and private spheres of society, and their effects are intertwined. Advances in technology together with longevity and globalisation have shaped the labour market and the family unit into something very different from those of the last century. Changes in technology and manufacturing have led to a new type of job market, in which the most educated workers and urban citizens benefit, while other groups are seeing their jobs being taken over by automation or their wages stagnating. In this new work environment, new types of employment have emerged to supplement the conventional arrangements. Shafik suggests that the new social contract would benefit from reimagining careers as climbing trees rather than ladders. In the future, as skills become obsolete at a faster rate while general life expectancy increases, building a single lifelong career will become unattainable and undesirable for more and more people. Society therefore needs to offer them incentives and opportunities to retrain, change jobs, and work more flexibly. People are not simply climbing up and down but also moving sideways, and the order and distance between the steps is not always straightforward.

Since untraditional forms of work often offer less security and may leave workers outside of some traditional safety nets such as insurance and pensions, Shafik argues that public action is needed to make them more sustainable. Everyone needs to be guaranteed a minimum income that is supplemented by support from society when they encounter economic shocks. Importantly, supporting people so that they can form more flexible attachments to the labour market creates new jobs and allows more people to participate in the job market.

Increasing numbers of women are being formally employed worldwide; however, the ratio between young and senior citizens continues to be skewed towards the latter in many advanced economies, and much care work risks being left unmanned and underfinanced. Shafik proposes a solution in the form of public investments to maximise the utilisation of human capital and tax revenue by educating and employing people from the groups that are often overlooked by the labour market – women, the elderly, people of colour, and the children of poor families. While this strategy will clearly produce notable benefits for society, it also calls for the restructuring of the social contract between the state and the family. To maximise the inclusion of human potential, investments in early childhood education, informal care, and a gender-neutral labour market will become necessary. Further, Shafik advocates for the responsibility for unpaid care to be shared collectively and for childcare, in particular, to become part of the "public-service infrastructure". When it comes to taking care of the aging public, the question remains: Who is going to pay? Automation can help ease the public cost by lowering the physical requirements of manual labour and thus allowing people to work longer. Other solutions explored here include importing immigrant workers and incentivising people to save for their retirement.

It is relatively easy to argue that the current generations who are sharing a society need to look after one another, but what about the needs of those yet to be born? Shafik discusses the burdens of cli-

mate change, growing public debt, and future technologies along philosophical and economic lines with respect to how and to what extent society needs to account for the demands of tomorrow. What follows is an interesting discussion on the premise of compensating future generations for resource and natural capital losses, some of which cannot be repaired or substituted.

By creating a balance between a personal narrative and a descriptive mapping of policy areas with examples from all over the world, Shafik offers a coherent and approachable view of what the renovated social contract may look like. While acknowledging that countries differ in their demographic structures, political priorities, and the challenges they face, Shafik turns the discussion into general guidelines accompanied by some specific reflections, including such topical policies as carbon taxes and universal basic income.

One area that is missing the attention it arguably deserves as the largest part of most educational systems is basic education. Apart from criticism of traditional education systems that focus too heavily on rote memorisation instead of creative thinking skills, almost no related policies are discussed in the book. Additionally, some of the questions propounded by Shafik, including those regarding carbon taxes, technology regulation, and the righting of historical wrongs, would benefit from being examined in a global setting while also considering actors like the EU and OECD. Further, this social contract framework could have benefited from the inclusion of the complicated questions surrounding the defence of a state, including both law enforcement and armed forces.

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John Wall: *Give Children the Vote: On Democratizing Democracy*
Bloomsbury Academic, 2021, pp. 256

This well-written and thought-provoking book addresses central questions relating to voting exclusions based on age. Currently, most democracies do not allow children and adolescents below the age of 18 to vote. Wall argues that the democratic ideal requires the removal of age exclusion to vote. Expanding the democratic system to include children may sound anarchical to some. However, when the arguments in favour of the disenfranchisement of children are carefully scrutinised, John Wall elegantly and meticulously demonstrates that there are very few, if any, reasons in favour of disfranchising children.

Wall argues that the case for children's suffrage is about basic democratic justice. Historically, democracies have, from their foundation, only allowed a select few landowners or aristocrats the right to vote. Over time, the right to vote has expanded to include non-landowning men, peasants, minorities and women. However, one group is still systematically disenfranchised based on the number of years lived. Wall argues that the exclusion of children from voting is based on much of the same grounds on which previously disfranchised groups, such as women or minorities, were excluded. He points out that currently, we discriminate and apply a double standard to children, barring them from holding political actors and governments accountable through voting. Children's suffrage is the best way to improve the lives of children and strengthen our democracies.

To analyse these new proposals, Wall suggests that we must view them from a childist perspective, which aims to transform societal structures and norms in response to the various lived experiences of children. As an example of the difference in lived experiences, Wall mentions the

poverty rates between children and adults. He argues that children are systematically poorer on average than adults in advanced Western societies, whereas in the past, the elderly were generally poorer. However, over time, policies have reduced elderly poverty rates. Wall suggests that politicians are less incentivised to fight for children's poverty, as children do not have the political power to influence economic policy.

Wall argues that age and maturity are not good measures for deciding who gets to vote. A better criterion is the desire to vote. Voters only need the competence to be able to cast a ballot, examine different views and make a political choice. These competencies are not gained at a certain age but only when the desire to vote appears. The existence of children's parliaments across the world, as well as children's climate and racial activism, shows that they can be fully capable of participating in discussions about the public sphere and should be given the opportunity to vote.

Currently, children are excluded from the vote based on the assumption that it takes time and experience to gain the knowledge and competencies required to take on the responsibility of participating in the democratic franchise. In the same vein, it takes time and training to develop the skills needed for academic study, marriage, obtaining a driver's licence or employment. Restricting the vote very much builds on this same premise; voting is a right, and it relies on developed abilities, as it might have serious consequences for society and oneself.

Arguments against children voting are numerous, such as children are mentally underdeveloped, they are without political or social competencies, and they need to learn to debate and grasp complex issues. The opposition to children's voting boils down to the idea that they are not mature enough to speak on their own behalf and lack the capacity to be politically engaged with others, as voting needs to be based on some level of political thought and consideration. This view suggests that democracies rely on rational voters who are capable of reflecting on and understanding ideas about justice.

Assuming that children are incompetent to vote is the standard view that bars them from voting. However, is it fair to require a standard of competence for children when competence is not even asked of adults but is merely assumed? There is no law or requirement of political capacity for adults, so why is there a double standard for children? Is competence even the correct basis for deciding who has the right to vote and who does not? It is important to understand that the right to vote is comparable to the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. Voting rights are basic human rights, not special rights that are earned, such as marriage and driving, which should follow age-appropriate limits.

Wall does not directly introduce the idea of the changes in political discourse and language that would take place should children be allowed to vote, but he suggests it. Politicians would be forced to speak about complex issues in terms and languages that children can understand and follow, which would, in his view, stymie attempts at obfuscation or overly complicating issues with the goal of masking the true intended purpose of the matter in question. Furthermore, discussion at the children's level is beneficial to *all*. As Wall points out, adults do not need to be highly informed to vote; they only need to have an *idea* of what they want. A larger proportion of voters will be able to hear a child's version of political issues that they might not otherwise have learned more about by bringing politics to the level of children.

In terms of implementing voting reforms, Wall sees a proxy vote system, in which every person is provided a vote that

can be exercised by a close proxy on their behalf, as the most politically feasible policy (see also van Parijs, P. (1998). The Disfranchisement of the Elderly, and Other Attempts to Secure Intergenerational Justice. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 27(4), 292–333; Vanhuysse, P. (2013). *Intergenerational Justice in Aging Societies: A Cross-National Comparison of 29 OECD Countries*. Bertelsmann Stiftung; Vanhuysse, P. (2014, March). *Intergenerational Justice and Public Policy in Europe. European Social Observatory (OSE) Paper Series*. (Opinion Paper No. 16)).

Children show us that people in a democracy are not just independent but also interdependent. Parents or guardians could exercise the right to vote on behalf of their children, and those with serious mental illnesses or dementia could have close proxies exercise their rights on their behalf. Individuals can claim their votes whenever they have the desire to do so. However, the primary flaw in this proposition is that it deviates from the essential one vote per person. Furthermore, it would lead to those who have more children having more votes. It is simple to imagine an ideal in which parents truly vote in favour of the best benefits of their children, but it is equally simple to imagine this being not always the case. Perhaps a simpler approach than the proxy vote system is to give an accumulation voting mechanism system. If someone misses three parliamentary elections in their first 18 years, they get to exercise this later with those accumulated votes. That said, the most just and fair option is simply to remove any age restrictions on age at voting.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this book, as it was well written and was a joy to read. The arguments are well presented, and Wall carefully scrutinises the main case against enfranchising children. The book serves as a collection of arguments in favour of drastically changing our democratic systems. It is a step forward in the discussion of and debate on children's

suffrage and a quintessential book for anyone interested in furthering democratic thoughts and ideas.

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Daron Acemoglu: *Redesigning AI – Work, Democracy, and Justice in the Age of Automation*
MIT Press, 2021, pp. 192

Over the past decade, we have seen tremendous progress in artificial intelligence (AI). However, the promises of AI – revolutionising medicine, societal benefits, and unprecedented economic growth and prosperity – still fall short, and AI contains many perils. Notably, the serious threats posed by AI include the displacement of human workers, disinformation, surveillance, and greater inequality. In this book, MIT Professor Daron Acemoglu argues that the future of AI is not settled. By leading a forum of fellow researchers, computer scientists, and labour activists, Acemoglu's book provides a deep moral discussion about the perils of AI and the steps that must be taken to ensure that AI can create and bolster democratic freedom and shared prosperity.

In his leading essay 'Redesigning AI', Acemoglu argues that AI developers need to pay attention to its disruptive effects on society. Because AI is not designed to work for people, the future of jobs and democracy are seriously threatened. If AI is not redirected, it will result in social upheaval, as the two backbones of our modern society, namely, shared prosperity and democratic political participation, will be undermined. The first major concern for Acemoglu is

shared prosperity. Jobs play a crucial role in promoting shared prosperity, as they provide people with a stable source of income and economic security and create opportunities for economic mobility. Acemoglu argues that automation is 'the handmaiden of inequality': it magnifies the wage gap between the top and the bottom.

There are three weaknesses in this argument. However, before discussing these, how Acemoglu came to this conclusion should be explained. The post-World War II era was a time of rapid economic growth. Demand for human labour grew, technological developments enhanced workers' productivity, and the power of trade unions contributed to shared prosperity. Much has changed since 'the golden age of postwar capitalism', however. Today, the power of trade unions and their membership has declined in the US, and automation is taking jobs away rather than enhancing workers' productivity. Arguing and blaming automation as *the* reason behind inequality is therefore overly simplistic. First, Acemoglu writes that 1980 marked the beginning of a 'lot more automation and a lot less of everything else'. This begs the question: What happened in 1980 and the years that followed that could have affected the previous shared prosperity and income inequality? The recession in the early 1980s, the election of President Ronald Reagan, Reaganomics, and the weakening of unions' powers are just some examples. In particular, the weakening of union powers and the stagnation of the minimum wage influenced the wage gap. The erosion of the minimum wage is acknowledged by Acemoglu as an important factor in the turnaround. Why then did he omit these economic and social policies from his analysis? A second problem is that Acemoglu does not discuss how the exploitation of immigrants as cheap labour also pressed the wages for lower skilled workers down. Third, Acemoglu appears to assume that meaningful employment is important in

upholding democracy. Yes, employment can create a sense of purpose, but how many people have taken up a job they do not enjoy because they need money to pay their bills and put food on the table? How many people have two or more jobs just to earn a decent income because the real value of the minimum wage has been eroded? What about work–life balance? This assumption, therefore, seems slightly farfetched, as it does not consider the reality of many workers. Furthermore, is reducing income inequalities not more important for upholding democracy than the creation of meaningful jobs, as the former promotes economic growth, social cohesion, health and well-being, education, and political stability?

The second main concern for Acemoglu is how AI affects democracy. This part of the essay is accurate. The role of the state, in particular, comes under scrutiny. Compared to the other key players, government funding in the current direction of AI research 'pales in comparison'. The demand for surveillance technologies that can monitor and manipulate individuals is alarming. AI is already able to collect information about individual behaviours, track communications, and recognise faces and voices, so the effects of these AI-powered technologies may go well beyond manipulation. Individuals will be discouraged from voicing criticism, and participation in civic organisations and political activities will diminish. In addition, once democratic institutions have weakened, it will be difficult to demand change.

The primary question is, therefore, how should AI be redesigned? From Acemoglu's essay and the commentors' forum in the book, it is clear that many factors need to be taken into account. The norms and priorities of AI research must change and be more inclusive and transparent, which is easy to agree with. Furthermore, Acemoglu emphasises government policy, funding, and leadership as approaches to

redesigning AI, as these factors have shown success in redirecting technological change towards socially beneficial areas in the past. This is correct; however, as some of the responses from the forum commentors highlight, these three approaches are too focused on the technicalities of AI research and do not address the current problems. At present, there is a need for stronger labour policy proposals, a rethinking of the connection between employment and economic growth, and a discourse on the issue of wages instead of a focus on the detrimental effects of automation, which are arguments recently put forward by Daniel Susskind, Aaron Benanav, and Erik Brynjolfsson, respectively.

The book's greatest strength is its forum of comments, which provide a well-balanced and nuanced perspective on AI and automation and includes topics such as colonialism, racism, and gender bias in AI, the future of jobs, and surveillance. The various questions discussed in the forum emphasises the importance of redesigning the current trajectory of AI. It is immensely beneficial that he book is written in a way that is easy to understand, as it makes the book accessible to a wide audience. The book is an essential read for anyone interested in understanding the implications of automation and AI for the future of work, society, and democracy. Even though some of Acemoglu's arguments about automation are less persuasive, the book as a whole does manage to put forward a convincing case for how crucial it is to change the current path of AI and automation.

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Nuno Crato: *Improving a Country's Education PISA 2018 Results in 10 Countries*
Springer Nature, 2020, pp. 273

This book begins with a discussion on the influence of the results from PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2018 on different countries. For example, some countries decided to make changes to their respective education systems based on the PISA results. The editor, Nuno Crato, further seeks to understand what makes countries improve their PISA scores. Additionally, he describes the 10 conclusions he arrived at when gathering contributions for this book. This leads to the second part of the book, in which several authors have contributed chapters about different countries, namely, Australia, Chile, England, Finland, Poland, Estonia, Spain, Portugal, the US, and Taiwan, and discuss how PISA has influenced these respective education systems.

These chapters delve into what PISA has shown about the respective countries' vulnerabilities and challenges with respect to the education system. The start of each chapter includes a description of how the education system functions in the particular country and how the curriculum is or is not influenced by the national government. It further provides readers with a sense of the reason PISA has an influence on the country.

Here is a short summary of country findings. In Australia, the central authorities developed the standard framework; however, schools are given the autonomy to decide the curriculum details. Nevertheless, collaboration between the federal government and the territorial governments has increased. The PISA results from 2018 showed how the country may need to allocate resources to those schools that educate a greater proportion of diverse students, as results differ depending on the socioeconomic characteristics of the students.

In Chile, the results from PISA in 2018 showed little improvement compared to previous results as well as performance below expectations. To meet these results, the organisation and strategies of the education system have been changed to target the diverse student populations. Moreover, the PISA results have given Chile the opportunity to explore other learning areas, such as digital competences.

Estonia's high ranking in the PISA 2018 results was a surprise for many. They placed Estonia in the spotlight, as people from across the world were curious about what was being done so successfully in the education system. One of the factors that the author highlights is the strength of preschool education in Estonia and the degree of autonomy that different schools have.

In the chapter about Finland, the authors highlight how the country is a role model in education and generates students with high performance. However, the authors also focus on the substantial decline Finland has experienced in recent PISA waves. They suggest that the increase in the number of low performers in all areas could be the reason for this.

In contrast, Poland has moved from being below the OECD average to being a high-performing country in PISA tests. Polish politicians have increased school autonomy, provided broader access to preschool and higher education, and introduced external examinations, as policymakers have found that PISA is not the only source for determining the areas in which students' skills and competences can be improved.

In the chapter about Spain, the author questions the reliability and accountability of PISA, as the results for PISA 2018 in reading were withdrawn for Spain due to changes in the methodology. This chapter highlights how the Spanish education system does not include any evaluations, so teachers have difficulty in providing essential support for students who perform at a lower level than their classmates.

The US results highlight how essential money is for the country's education system. The most remarkable aspect is how the more resources a student has, the better their access to better programmes and therefore the greater their academic performance.

What is notable about this book is how much power PISA has. Although the OECD has no formal power in its member countries, this book reveals that it has strong informal power. PISA highlights both the weak and strong aspects of different education systems as well as their entire viewpoint on whether or not education is essential. The book shows the complexity of implementing changes in education systems and offers a clear perspective on how and what PISA has influenced as well as the importance placed on education by the policymakers in each country. Hence, it highlights an important facet of education, namely, how many other aspects also influence changes in the education system in a country.

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Bertel Nygaard: *History and the Formation of Marxism*
Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, pp. 251

Marxism must be reexamined critically whenever critiques of capitalism reemerge on an intellectual or political level. The Marx, Engels, and Marxisms series published by Palgrave Macmillan introduce peer-reviewed works present such reexaminations in the form of monographs, edited volumes, critical editions, and translations of previously published books. Several series have addressed Marx and Marxisms from a variety of perspectives, geographical locations, academic disciplines, and subject

matter areas. In so doing, they have debunked many misconceptions about the potential and limitations of Marxist thought. This book is a new addition to the series. Nygaard recasts the connection between Marxism and history. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, Marxists believed that history was a tool for transforming society and shaping the future; however, Nygaard argues that history was integral to the formation of Marxist theory.

This book explores the relationship between Marxism and history by describing the ways in which the French Revolution of 1789 was significant to early Marxists. According to Nygaard, Marxists have a model for understanding the dynamics of social and political transformation during the French Revolution. Additionally, he underlines how crucial the French Revolution was in forming the Marxist understanding of the class struggle and how important figures like Marx, Engels, and Plekhanov were in the development of historical materialism as an analytical framework.

This book contributes to the double historicisation of Marxism by fusing empirical research with broad reflections. It further treats Marxism not as a fixed theory but as a phenomenon of intellectual history studied in particular, concrete contexts and approaches Marxism's intellectual history through its new interpretations of history. According to the author, Marx, Engels, and the early Marxists both legitimised strategic concerns and applied preconceived concepts to history. History was its own field of reflection, not just theory or politics. History, theory, and strategy form a triangular relationship in 'traditional' Marxism. History interacts with the other two but has always had more meaning than theory and tactics. History has tested thought and tactics, not just mediated between them.

Marx, Engels, and the Marxists were able to experiment with broad categories

of analysis and particular social situations through historical interpretation. These works, which frequently resembled historiographical speech actions rather than academic history, enabled numerous linkages between the past, present, and future; between tangible substance and abstract conceptions; and between understanding and altering the world. Beyond this context and Marxism, studying these gatherings and performative acts of history-writing introduces significant issues of structure, agency, and time. This book specifically focuses on Europe because European labour movements dominated Marxist theory throughout these decades. Rather than solely researching the most notable personalities and geographical hubs of Marxist thought, Nygaard presents examples of marginal Marxism in Europe, mostly in Scandinavia, where the pertinent source material was easily accessible to him.

In this book, the author emphasises that Marxists interpret history and utopian impulses differently. The old, intangible utopian socialism projected arbitrary aspirations from the present into the future, whereas the current socialism merely strives to comprehend and follow the major lines of existing developments are. Marxism eliminates fantasy and creative projects by protecting what is and what is not. The 'classic' labour movement is discussed in later analyses of the link between Marxism and utopianism in this chapter. Marxists have been attacked for linking any vision of a better society to historical projections that comprise moral notions with connexions to future designs. This approach made Marxists disavow their own investment in anticipations of what had not yet developed and did not follow immediately from already recognised movements, which restricted their imaginative possibilities.

Marxists were not the only ones who used historical changes to inform their political strategies in the 19th and 20th centu-

ries. It is crucial for politics to keep in mind the past. The 'futurist regime of historicity' is the name given to this method of thought. Marxism offers a very precise and ambitious method for predicting the future.

The book's concluding section focuses on the current applicability of Marxist historiography. According to Nygaard, Marxist historiography can contribute significant new knowledge to current discussions concerning capitalism, imperialism, and globalisation. The argument that a historical understanding of Marxism is required to establish a nuanced and critical perspective of current social and political challenges further emphasises the significance of historicising Marxist philosophy.

In his book, Nygaard urges readers to move beyond the classic conception of Marxism as a collection of predetermined social ideas combined with tactics for the here and now. He offers new insights on the interaction between the past, present, and future as well as the function of states, social classes, socioeconomic determination, and political organisation in history. Nygaard's analysis is meticulous and rigorous; it engages with a variety of theoretical topics and draws from a wide range of sources. His emphasis on the idea of historical formation enables a more nuanced comprehension of the impact of historical contingency and context on Marxist theory. This book is thus an essential read for anyone who is curious about the development of Marxist philosophy, the connection between theory and practice, and the broader implications of Marxist historical perspectives for comprehending current social and political challenges.

This book constitutes a significant resource for students of Marxism, the labour movement, and the French Revolution alike. It demonstrates the multiplicity of intellectual and political traditions that have influenced how Marx and Engels have been viewed in various situations. The book has the potential toopen up new avenues of research and understanding and provide a platform for an honest and critical dialogue about Marx's intellectual legacy. It will also challenge readers to consider Marx's ideas and writings in a broader, global context.

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Contemporary Czech Society

Pat Lyons and Rita Kindlerová

Do Czechs want equality? What do Czechs think about migrants and do Czechs fear foreigners? Are Czechs a nation of grumblers? Are Czechs prejudiced? How do Czechs spend their time? Czexit? Answers to these and dozens of other questions are used in this unique book to paint a broad interdisciplinary portrait of Czech society for an international audience.

A Guide to Communication and Participation in Decision-Making on Siting a Deep Geological Repository: The Case of the Czech Republic

Martin Durdovic

The Czech Republic is currently confronted with the need to select a site for the construction of a deep geological repository for spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste. The processes of siting and building such a facility are comparable in scope and significance to the construction of nuclear power plants in the country in the past, the decisions for which were made by the communist regime. Now, by contrast, the process must respect democratic principles. This guide is the outcome of a qualitative and quantitative empirical research project that sought to examine the social embeddedness of decisions about the location and construction of a deep geological repository in the Czech Republic. The principles and procedures elaborated in these pages are centred oon the idea of organised dialogue among all stakeholders.

A Guide to Communication and Participation in Decision-Making on Siting a Deep Geological Repository

The Case of the Czech Republic

Martin Durdovic
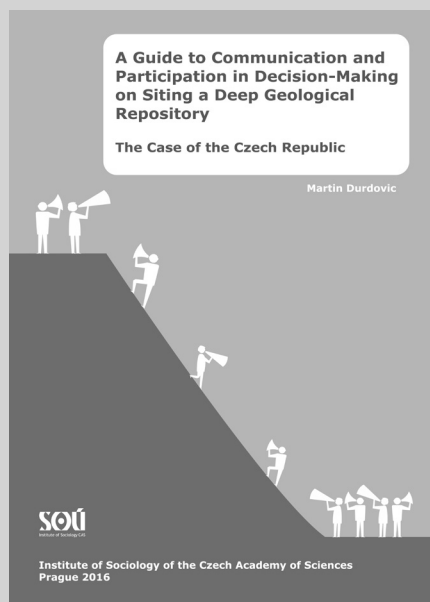
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