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

IVANA RAPOŠ BOŽIČ, ALICA SYNEK RÉTIOVÁ, and RADKA KLVAŇOVÁ**
Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno

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

** Direct all correspondence to: Ivana Rapoš Božič, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Joštova 10, Brno, 60200, Czechia, ivana.rapos.bozic@fss.muni.cz.

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

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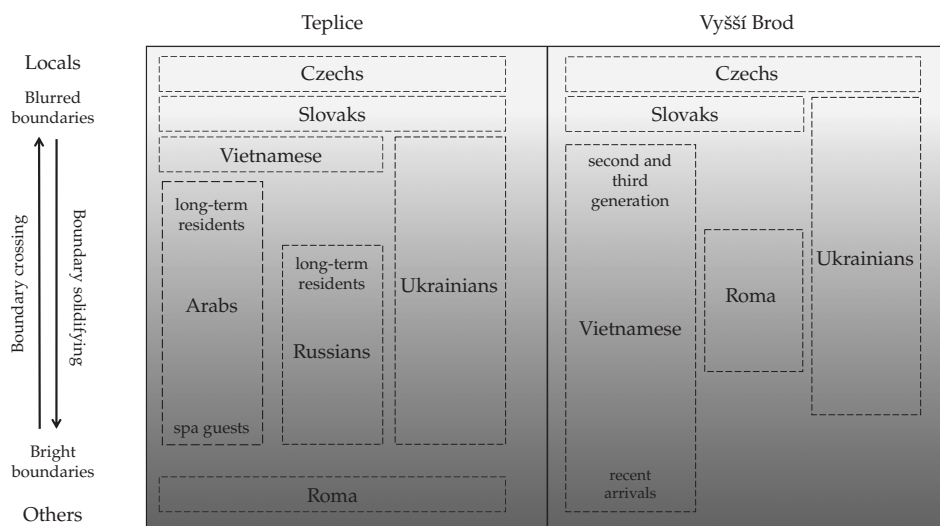
to society and cross the symbolic boundaries of local belonging. The hierarchies must be understood as ideal-typical models; the positioning of the groups within the hierarchy was not fixed but rather situational, and sometimes, the positioning of distinct groups varied throughout a single interview.[17]

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.

Ivana Rapoš Božič *received her PhD from the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University in Brno, where she currently works as a researcher and lecturer. Her research focuses on migration, civil society, and civically engaged art. Her recent work has been published by Migration Studies, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies and Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology.*

Alica Synek Rétiová *received her PhD from the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University in Brno, where she works as an assistant professor. Her research focuses on the civil sphere and public perception of migration and LGBTQ rights. Her recent work has been published in Visual Studies and European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology.*

Radka Klvaňová *received her PhD from the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University in Brno. She works as an assistant professor at the Department of Law and Social Sciences at Mendel University and an external lecturer at Masaryk University. Her research focuses on cultural sociological exploration of migration, immigrant reception and the politics of belonging. Her recent work has been published in Identities: Global Studies of Culture and Power, Migration Studies, Population, Space and Place.*

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