

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

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**RUSSIAN SPEAKING STUDENTS (FROM RUSSIA
AND KAZAKHSTAN) IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC.
EDUCATIONAL MIGRATION AND THE ROLE OF THE
FAMILY IN IT**

Rusky mluvící studenti (z Ruska a Kazachstánu)
v České republice: migrace za vzděláním a role rodiny

Doctoral thesis

Supervisor: Docent PhDr. Zdeněk Pinc

Prague 2016

Declaration

Hereby I declare that I have written this doctoral thesis by myself, using solely the references and data cited and presented in the thesis. I declare that I have not been awarded other degree or diploma for this thesis or its substantial part. I give approval to make this thesis accessible by Charles University libraries and the electronic Thesis Repository of Charles University, to be utilized for study purposes in accordance with the copyrights.

Prague, 19 December 2016

Liudmila Kopecká

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Anotace

Disertační práce „Rusky mluvící studenti (z Ruska a Kazachstánu) v České republice: migrace za vzděláním a role rodiny“ zkoumá život rusky mluvících studentů přicházejících do České republiky za vysokoškolským vzděláním. V disertační práci je snaha zodpovědět následující otázky: Jak bylo přijato rozhodnutí o stěhování se do České republiky? Jakou roli hrála rodina v procesu rozhodování a v následujících plánech a záměrech v České republice? Jaké migrační strategie mají rusky mluvící studenti v České republice? Jak se tyto strategie mění v čase? Existuje spojitost mezi životní dráhou studentů a migračním procesem? Tato práce je antropologickým, multi-terenním výzkumem, kde hlavní metodou je zúčastněné pozorování. Studie se zúčastnilo 55 účastníků výzkumu (41 z Ruska a 14 z Kazachstánu) a s každým byly provedeny jak formální, tak i neformální rozhovory. Transnacionalismus a teorie migračních systémů byly použity jako teoretické koncepty pro lepší porozumění procesu studentské migrace.

Annotation

The PhD thesis “Russian Speaking Students (from Russia and Kazakhstan) in the Czech Republic: Educational Migration and the Role of the Family in it”, examines the life of Russian speaking students, who come to the Czech Republic to obtain a university degree. It tries to answer several research questions. How is the decision taken to come to the Czech Republic? What kind of role does family play in the decision-making process and in further intentions/plans in the Czech Republic? What are the migration strategies of Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic? How do these strategies change over time? What connections exist between the life cycle of the student and the migration process? This is an anthropological, multisite field research, with participant observation being the core research method. As of 2015, 55 student research participants participated in the research (41 from Russia and 14 from Kazakhstan), with whom formal and informal interviews were made. Transnationalism and migration system theory have been used as theoretical concepts so as to better understand the student migration process.

Klíčová slova

“astronautové” rodiny, Česká republika, migrace za vzděláním, mezinárodní migrace, “padákové” děti, Republika Kazachstán, Ruská federace, rusky mluvící studenti, “satelitní” děti, migrace studentů, transnacionální rodiny, transnacionalismus, mladí migranti

Key words

“astronaut” families, Czech Republic, educational migration, international migration, “parachute” kids, Republic of Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Russian speaking students, “satellite” kids, student migration, transnational families, transnationalism, young migrants

Content

Introduction	8
1 Theoretical and empirical frame of the research	10
1.1 Global research context, literature overview and research questions	11
1.2 Attention to student migration in literature	12
1.3 Methodology	14
1.4 Analytical strategy.....	17
1.5 Reflections on the position of the researcher	19
1.6 Ethical issues	26
2 Overview of the interdisciplinary approach to migration theories.....	30
2.1 Theories on the causes of migration.....	38
2.2 Impacts of migration on societies.....	44
3 Ethnography. Empirical part.....	50
3.1 Historical background	50
3.1.1 Migratory movements from the 20th century to the present.....	50
3.1.2 Migrants from Russia and Kazakhstan in the Czech Republic.	54
3.1.3 The Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic: historical, cultural and economic connections.	57
3.2 Trip planning.	61
3.3 The imagined Europe	69
3.4 Disillusion vs. excitement. From the process of applying for a visa and a long- stay for study purposes until the end of the first year in the Czech Republic.	74
3.5 Work, moral obligations and balancing in the legal sphere	98
3.6 University life.....	105
3.7 Celebrations in the life of students.	110
3.8 Housing culture	120
3.9 Assessment of the position.	129
3.9.1 Where does prejudice come from? Collective memory and historical events	137

4	Family influence, gender and life course of students	146
	Conclusions.....	158
	References	166
	List of graphs, pictures and tables	183
	List of abbreviations	186
	Appendix 1	187
	Life paths of some chosen research participants remaining in the Czech Republic.....	187
	Appendix 2	189
	Life paths of some chosen research participants who left the Czech Republic.....	189

Introduction

The focus of this dissertation work is on educational migration from an anthropological perspective. It examines the life of Russian speaking students from Russia and Kazakhstan, who come to the Czech Republic in order to obtain a university degree.

This dissertation will seek to investigate to what extent the migration process of students is influenced by their families and what connections exist between the life cycle of the student and migration. An effort has been put forth to answer the following research questions: How are decisions to come to the Czech Republic taken? What kind of role does family play in the decision-making process and further intentions/plans in the Czech Republic? What are the migration strategies of Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic? How do these strategies change over time? What connections exist between the life cycle of the student and the migration process?

It will argue that even though international students are considered temporary migrants with a clear purpose of stay, their migration process is more complex than can be seen at first sight. Moreover, there can be different migration strategies behind the decision to come to the Czech Republic, an area which appears to be under researched and underestimated. Even though the topic of international student migration seems quite popular in foreign literature, in the Czech Republic the number of academic studies about it is still quite limited. However, this topic is very important as the number of international students (particularly from Russia and Kazakhstan) and applications for student-visas to the Czech Republic is increasing.

By understanding the life of Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic, their migration process and migration strategies, this study hopes to contribute to migration studies as well as social and cultural anthropology. The results of it can be used for migration management, educational management and for policy making.

As this dissertation is an ethnographical work, where the life of student migrants is explored from an anthropological perspective, participant observation is the core method of this research. The multi-sited field research was conducted from 2008 to 2014 in Russia (Yekaterinburg and Ural region), in Kazakhstan (Astana), and principally in Prague, Czech Republic. Participant observation took place in Czech language schools for foreigners, universities in Prague, dormitories, civil society organizations engaged with migrants, as well as other organizations established by Russian speaking students. An important part of

this work is self-reflection and an analysis of the research position within field, as I myself took a one-year Czech language course in Prague, together with Russian speaking students from Russia and Kazakhstan, and has lived in a dormitory where students usually live for the duration of the course. As of 2015, 55 student research participants participated in the research (41 from Russia and 14 from Kazakhstan).

Students are part of transnational families, and transnationalism as a theoretical concept is essential in understanding their lives, the migration process and migration strategies. Moreover, the author uses the migration system theory to understand the migration of students at macro-, micro- and meso-levels.

The first part of the dissertation work is devoted to the theoretical and empirical frame of the research. In chapter 1.1. the global research context is described. The literature review about student migration can be found in chapter 1.2. Chapter 1.3. discusses the chosen methodology, chapter 1.4 sets out the analytical strategy of this research. Chapter 1.5 reflects on the position of the researcher and chapter 1.6 deals with the ethical issues of the research.

The second part of the dissertation work describes different interdisciplinary approaches to migration theories, with greater attention paid to the theories used in this study.

The third part is empirical. It starts with a chapter about the historical background of the research, where migratory movements between the Czech Republic and Russia and the Czech Republic and Kazakhstan from the XX century to the present are described. Special attention has been given to the historical, cultural and economic connections between those countries.

Chapter 3.2 presents portraits of the research participants and describes their process of decision making about migration. Chapter 3.3 is devoted to the role of the imagination of Europe. Then the process of applying for a visa and a long-stay permit for study purposes is described together with the students first impressions about their new life abroad in chapter 3.4. Chapters 3.5, 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8 explore the daily life of students in the Czech Republic: their work, study, free time and housing culture. Chapter 3.9. and 3.9.1. introduces the way students assess their position in the Czech Republic and the roots of discrimination, which they face in their daily life sometimes.

The last chapter is devoted to the influence of family and the role of gender and the life cycles of Russian speaking students. Chapter 4.1. discusses the results and draws conclusions.

1 Theoretical and empirical frame of the research

Studying abroad has become a worldwide trend, with more and more people migrating to obtain a foreign diploma. As claimed by Dr. Johanna Waters (2013) in her lecture “International Education: The Transformative Effect of Student Migration”: “it’s possible to observe the existence of close and growing relationship between international migration and concerns over ‘education’”. Education is one of the major drivers of migration, and the global concurrency and internalization of higher education has led to a rise in the number of international student migrants throughout the world.

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, at least 4,1 million students went to study abroad in 2013, up from 2 million in 2000. International students come from all over the world and play a significant role in receiving countries, as they do in sending.

The top receiving countries for student migrants are the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia; however, the popularity of other countries as destinations for studying abroad is also rising, and geographical patterns of educational migration is changing. The Czech Republic wasn't a “traditional” country for international educational migration, but over the last 15 years the number of international students has intensified. According to data from the Czech Statistical Office, 41 179 foreign students were studying during the 2015/2016 academic year in Czech universities. When comparing this data with the number of foreign students in the 2003/2004 academic year (13 136 people), it becomes obvious that the number of international students has tripled.

In the 2015/2016 academic year there were 5 672 students from Russia and 1 485 from Kazakhstan, as stated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Ten years back, only 432 Russian-born students and 77 Kazakh students were studying in the Czech Republic.

Moreover, education is the most common reason for coming to the Czech Republic. According to the Report on the situation in the field of migration (2015) of the Czech Ministry of the Interior, 49.8 % of all applications for long-term visas were submitted on the basis of education and 15.9 % for other educational activities. In addition, 35.7 % of all applications for long-term residence permits were submitted for reasons of study. Russian and Kazakh citizens are among the top applicants for long-term visas and long-term residence permits on the basis of education.

The greatest pull factor for educational migration to the Czech Republic is the possibility of studying for free¹ when the foreigner knows the Czech language. This fact also determines the way most students come to the Czech Republic. Students usually come to the Czech Republic through a Czech language preparation course; during a full- or half-year they are supposed to learn the language in order to pass the admission exam in Czech. A Czech language course, which is intended to prepare students for studying in Czech at public universities, costs between 3 000 - 4 000 euros (it is sometimes more expensive for students from Kazakhstan) or more per academic year. Students have to pay the whole sum for the language course in advance while they are in Kazakhstan or in Russia, and on that basis they may apply for a student-visa to the Czech Republic.

Students coming to obtain a university degree stay for more than 12 months, and are therefore considered international migrants in statistics and by experts - they are part of the international migration flows. I therefore use migration theories when framing this work to understand this social and cultural phenomenon. Furthermore, students from Russia and Kazakhstan usually come to the Czech Republic alone, leaving their parents and family members in the country of origin. However, during their stay in the Czech Republic they maintain connections with their families regardless of the existence of national borders. They became part of transnational families, and transnationalism as a theoretical concept is essential in understanding a student's life, migration process and migration strategies.

1.1 Global research context, literature overview and research questions

In today's interconnected world, knowledge of only one language is not often considered enough for the highly competitive international labour market. In order to get a "good" work position together with a professional qualification, the daily use of foreign languages is sometimes essential. Likewise, people are encouraged to have particular interpersonal skills, such as flexibility, mobility, intercultural communication, the ability to understand global connections, etc., so as to be successful and build a career. International education is seen as a good way of obtaining all these skills and experience. As claimed by

¹ According to law 111/1998 Sb. concerning universities, foreigners can study at public schools under the same conditions as citizens of the Czech Republic. A public school or faculty can establish the Czech language exam as the condition of acceptance into a study program.

Dr. Goodman, the President of the International Institute of Education (2013): “the careers of students will be global ones, in which they will need to function effectively in multi-national teams. They will need to understand the cultural differences and historical experiences that divide us, as well as the common values and humanity that unite us.”

In some cases, a foreign diploma is seen as a passport to status (Waters, 2013). Holding a diploma from a foreign university and, later on, being an international specialist carry great prestige, while working in a multinational company is often seen as a “dream job”. These so called “highly-skilled” migrants are considered the “good ones”, being part of the global mobile elite and intelligentsia.

Moreover, international students are considered to be those who bring money to the receiving country since, apart from their daily basic expenses, they usually have to pay higher tuition fees than local students. According to the International Institute of Education (2015), international students contributed approximately \$30.5 billion to the U.S. economy in the 2014/2015 academic year alone.

Universities, language schools, and other educational institutions work to entice international students from all around the world and promote their services and educational programmes. Having a high percentage of international students at a university is also a matter of prestige in some cases. Universities in non-Anglophone destinations make an effort to establish more and more courses and programmes in the English language so that they can compete on the global education market with such key destinations as the USA, Great Britain and Australia.

In addition, immigration laws are usually more favourable in regards to students, as their stay is considered temporary. A student-visa is usually easier to get than, for example, a working-visa, as every country tries to regulate their labour market.

1.2 Attention to student migration in literature

Student migration has been addressed and described by many academics, politicians, as well as by both governmental and non-governmental organizations. But according to Marla L. Jaksch (2013, p. 120): “the most dominant model in study abroad circles is grounded in neo/liberal discourses concerning types of things students will ‘get’ out of their experiences studying abroad, including, acquiring competitive skills and accumulating cultural capital, and the ability to add a great line highlighting their global travel on their resume for jobs or graduate school. Some program material problematically

suggests that students will become ‘global citizens’ through their travels with little attention to how this process takes place and what is meant by this term exactly.”

In the Czech Republic, the student migration topic hasn’t received large amounts of attention from scholars, even though it’s quite a relevant topic given the increasing number of international students and applications for student-visas. The literature in the Czech language, which deals with the topic of student migration still seems negligible. Most of the studies related to educational migration in the Czech Republic usually deal with the process of adaptation to the host country and the new educational system. Other common studies aim to determine the student’s intention to return or to stay, or concentrate on the “brain drain-brain gain” aspect. What is more, foreign students are usually incorporated into bigger studies on migrants in general or on different ethnic minorities.

Exceptions are bachelor and master theses on this topic, which are usually written by student migrants themselves. For example, at Charles University in Prague, various academic works on this topic have been defended. Illia Meliashkevish (2009) focused on the material culture of students from Belorussia, Kateřina Bláhová (2009) and Assemgul Jexembayeva (2010) devoted their attention to questions of adaptation concerning Kazakh university students in the Czech Republic. Alena Maříková (2010) and Alua Imangazieva (2010) analysed the identity construction of Kazakh students in Prague. Suleymanova Lily (2013), in her research, focused on rich Russian students in the Czech Republic.

There are also surveys that concentrate solely on university students, such as those performed by Nováková, “Foreigners at the Universities in the Czech Republic: Example of Masaryk University” (2005), and Papoušková, “Migration for Study: Foreigners at the University” (2007).

However, as far as the author is aware, there hasn’t been any longterm field research conducted in the Czech Republic which would explore the life of migrant students in a holistic way. But it must be admitted, this topic has received greater attention from anthropologists in foreign literature. For example: Valentin, (2012); Olwig and Sorensen, (2002); Darcy, (2011); and Baas (2010) have all conducted ethnographical researches and contributed to this topic. Furthermore, it’s also possible to find contributions on this topic from social geographers such as Skeldon (2011; 1996), King (2011; 2003), Waters (2005), Koser and Salt (1997) and psychologists Tsong and Liu (2009), etc.

Different international organizations also pay quite a bit of attention to international students. For example, organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD systematically collect data on international students; it was possible to find information on the “stay rates”

of international students in the latest OECD reports - the estimated rate is around one in five students on average.

In this study, an attempt is made to bring an anthropological perspective to the educational migration topic and to explore the life of young Russian speaking migrants who came to the Czech Republic from Russia and Kazakhstan for educational purposes.

An effort has been put forth to answer the following research questions: How are decisions to come to the Czech Republic taken? What kind of role does family play in the decision-making process and in further intentions/plans in the Czech Republic? What are the migration strategies of Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic? How do these strategies change over time? What connections exist between the life cycle of the student and migration? This study is a bid to answer these questions, as well as explore the way of life of Russian speaking students from Russia and Kazakhstan in the Czech Republic. In the next chapter, a detailed description will be presented of the methodology which was used to answer the aforementioned research questions.

1.3 Methodology

My dissertation is an ethnographical work, where I explore the life of student migrants from an anthropological perspective and use participant observation as the core method of research. This qualitative method has its roots in traditional ethnographic research, whose objective is to help researchers learn the perspectives held by study populations (Mack, 2005). As Karen O'Reilly claims, ethnography is not only methodology, but also a theory or set of ideas. Ethnographic research is iterative-inductive rather than deductive, and it draws on the family of methods for a deeper understanding of context about the daily lives (and cultures) and experiences of humans (2005, p. 2-3). She also adds that ethnographic research suggests we learn about people's lives (or an aspect of their lives) from their own perspective and from within the context of their own lived experience; observing and participating in an research participant's life, and asking questions that relate to the daily lived experience as we have seen and experienced it (O'Reilly, 2005, p.84). On the other hand, social and cultural anthropologists have to remain inevitably "outsiders" so as to be able to analyse the knowledge which they gained as "insiders".

In order to acquire an "emic perspective" on the lives of students from Russia and Kazakhstan in the Czech Republic, I conducted field research from 2008 to 2014 - a multi-

sited ethnography in different fields. As George Marcus (1995, p.106) claimed, the researcher is supposed to follow the people he/she studies, especially in migration research. I also have followed my research participants and made several journeys to Russia (Yekaterinburg and Ural region), as well as Kazakhstan (Astana). However, the main field for participant observation was the Czech Republic, and particularly Prague. The participant observation took place in Czech language schools for foreigners, universities in Prague, dormitories, civil society organizations working with migrants, as well as other organizations established by Russian speaking students. I myself took a one-year Czech language course in Prague, together with Russian speaking students from Russia and Kazakhstan, and have lived in a dormitory where students usually live for the duration of the course. During the field research, I participated in different events organized by the Russian speaking migrant community in Prague. Since 2010, I have worked (voluntary and paid) on different NGO projects related to migration and migrants in the Czech Republic, helping me gain more information for my research and allowing me to conduct more interviews with student migrants. Additionally, I have tried to capture the life of student migrants through documentary work. I produced a radio documentary with two research participants from Russia, broadcast on Czech National Radio, and filmed a short documentary with one of my research participants.

Moreover, I observed online Russian speaking communities on the internet, which are very popular amongst students and which proved to be extremely important in understanding the life of Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic.

Russian speaking youngsters from Russia and Kazakhstan, coming on student-visas and residing in the Czech Republic, are the main research participants of the research. The average age of the students was between 16 and 30 years-old at the time of being interviewed. As previously mentioned, students usually come to the Czech Republic through a Czech language preparation course, during which students are supposed to learn the language and then gain acceptance to the universities. They pay 4 000 euros and up for the Czech language course. While most of the research participants refer to themselves as middle or up-middle class, it's important to mention that the economic status of each one is very diverse. Some families had to sell real estate in order to send their children abroad to study, while others had to take out a loan. But there were also cases when students were saving money on their own for a long period of time, sometimes over a few years, saving their salaries every month. There were also students from rather "rich" families, whose

parents bought a flat for them in Prague so they could have a comfortable environment for their studies.

Research participants from the Russian Federation came to the Czech Republic from such cities as Yekaterinburg, Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Nizhny Tagil, Kamchatka, Novorossiysk, Chelyabinsk, and more. Amongst the research participants from Kazakhstan are people mostly from Astana, but also from Almata, Karagandam, and Semey. Some of the research participants are from multi-ethnic families, born in Russia even though they hold Kazakh citizenship and vice-versa. When the words Russian and Kazakh are used in the research, it refers to Russian and Kazakh citizens rather than ethnicity. The common thread which connects all the research participants is their Russian mother tongue and their self-identification with the Russian speaking community of students in the Czech Republic. The reason Russian speaking research participants from these particular countries were chosen is that students from the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan in particular populated the language school where I started my field research.

Most of the research participants are female, which can be explained by the fact that there is more migrant women from Russia and Kazakhstan in the Czech Republic than men, and that my own gender particularly influences access to research participants and the field.

As of 2015, 55 student research participants participated in the research (41 from Russia and 14 from Kazakhstan). Different kinds of interviews were conducted: formal and informal. The selection of students for in-depth interviews was done within the context of my social network, with those who were willing to participate in the research through the snow-ball technique. The interviews were conducted, in social settings: universities, dormitories, migrant organizations and homes, serving as contextual frames for observing contemporary migrant life in Prague. All interviews were conducted in the Russian language and the names of the research participants have been changed.

The research participants often cited the significant role their parents played in their decision to come to the Czech Republic, therefore, I spoke additionally with the parents of the students. However, these interviews mostly serve as reference and context so as to understand the social environment of my research participants.

Informal interviews were also conducted with university professors, management staff at agencies that offer migration support to the Czech Republic, and NGO representatives, in order to gain an understanding of the whole process of educational migration.

Additionally, secondary resources and other forms of data were collected, including visual and audio resources, newspaper cuttings, statistics, historical documents, reports from local NGOs and other relevant literature.

1.4 Analytical strategy

It's a known fact that there are different analytical strategies concerning qualitative data, but as my academic interest is rooted in social and cultural anthropology, I used ethnographic analysis for the interpretation of data and understanding of the lives and culture of Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic. As mentioned previously, the ethnographic research is iterative-inductive, and in social and cultural anthropology the data analysis and data collection stages are never separated but interconnected, influencing each other. The researcher analyses data continuously during the field research stage and returns to the field with new questions and new understanding of the situations. The analysis of ethnographic data, as claimed by Kerry J. Daly (2007, p.224), "seeks to provide detailed description and interpretation of the way individuals or groups conduct themselves within the context of culture". Starting to organize and analyse data during the field research, the researcher is able to understand the topic more deeply, and to test his or her hypothesis, or foreshadowed problems, inductively.

Very often "ethnographic analysis comes closest to grounded theory, but ethnographic analysis is not always as prescriptive as the grounded theory approach" (O'Reilly 2005, p. 178), nevertheless, it's also possible to talk about some stages, phases, or steps in ethnographic analysis.

According to Robson (Robson, 2004, cit. according to Hendl, 2008, p. 239), there are three main activities in the framework of analysis as it concerns ethnographic data: first of all, *thinking* and writing down notes about thoughts; a second important activity is the *creation of categories* and, if possible, the typology of phenomenon; and the last activity he mentioned was *progressive directing/orientation*. As the analysis and collection of data are continuing, the researcher specifies the research questions and the process of analysis step-by-step becoming more oriented with specific/chosen aspects of observed culture. The researcher progressively switches from a descriptive process to one of interpretation.

Social and cultural anthropologists make an attempt to produce a thick description of observed culture. In this sense, the descriptive process and the process of interpretation

are interlinked as the thick description gives not only simple descriptions of things but their meanings as well. As Kerry J. Daly (2007, p. 224) claimed, the term thick description places the emphasis on providing detailed accounts of the cultural experiences; it involves detailed accounts of when, where, and how events occur in a situation. In other words, it consists of broad sweeping explanations of time, space, people and events, or a “Ground tour” of the cultural story, which the researcher Spradley (1979) refers to. However, it also aims to discover the layers of cultural and social meanings and to interpret them.

As Kerry J. Daly (2007, p. 225) stated, “these descriptive accounts involve the interpretation of ‘what is going on’, which can occur in relation to number of focal areas”: Key events such as celebrations, rituals, transitions, turning points, etc; patterns – behavioural patterns, routine activities and their common cultural meanings; space and time – social and cultural practices in situ, visual representations of homes, communities, organizations, etc., and reflection on time; cultural meanings and themes, which are recurrent and have a high degree of generality. Kerry J. Daly (2007, p. 225-226)

In cases where the ethnographic research has an emphasis on families, which is the case in this study, Kerry J. Daly (2007) described two ways of analysing family experiences: *family as context* and *family in context*. In this ethnographic analysis, family as context was chosen as the analytical strategy so as to understand the life of Russian speaking students and their migration experience.

As Karen O’Reilly (2005) stated, ethnographic analysis is, generally speaking, making sense of all your data. It means summarising, sorting, translating and organising. As she continued: “it involves exploring deeply to see what is there that might not be obvious, standing back to see what patterns emerge, thinking and theorising to draw conclusions that can be generalised in some way or other” (O’Reilly 2005, p. 184). And that’s precisely what has been done in this dissertation.

Transcribing interviews, making and reading my field notes, then following coding were very important parts of the ethnographic analysis. During the process of collecting data, all the transcribed and visual material was coded and sorted according to particular topics. In this way, I was also able to discover which themes, events, things, etc., occurred more often in the participants’ narratives and how they related to the participants’ migrant experience and their life in the Czech Republic. These findings also inspired the particular structure of this ethnographic work and the way it’s written.

In addition, I have to admit that writing this ethnographic work is also the part of the analysis. As Wolcott (1989 cit. according to Hendl, 2008, p. 240) mentioned, the way

in which an ethnographic report is written, determines if we can talk about ethnographic study. Karen O'Reilly referred to this stage as moving from writing *down* to writing things *up* (2005, p. 175). In this stage, the researcher also constantly analyses and interprets data by making the structure of the ethnographic report, moving parts of the paper in and out. According to Wolcott (1989 cit. according to Hendl, 2008, p. 241), it's possible to finish and to write the ethnographic report but it's never actually finished.

As the ethnographer interprets the behaviour and stories of research participants, it's important that he or she pays attention to his or her own assumptions and beliefs. This is also why self-reflection is an essential part of analysis and ethnographic writing in social and cultural anthropology. Unable to omit this important part in the dissertation work, the next chapter reflects upon my position as a researcher in the field and with the ethical concerns connected to it.

1.5 Reflections on the position of the researcher

In anthropology, reflexivity is a central imperative to the researcher. Reflexivity in anthropology brings much attention to how ethnographic texts are produced, what role an anthropologist plays in the field and in what context.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 73) have already drawn attention to the fact that there are some aspects of a researcher that may limit the negotiation of identities in the field; these include so called "ascribed" characteristics (gender, age, "race" and ethnic identification), although they claimed it would be wrong to think of the effects of these as absolutely determined or fixed.

As Karen O'Reilly states: "social researchers are part of the world they study, not some sort of objective, detached research tool. Even your choice of topic is influenced by your own personal biography, by funding bodies (who are themselves influenced by internal and national politics), your academic institution, your academic and personal biography. Who you gain access to and the type of access you gain are affected by your age, gender, class, personality and nationality. Your interpretations are affected by all of the above, plus your foreshadowed problems, your theoretical orientation, your academic training." (2005, p. 142)

In anthropology, it's very important to write in an autobiographic and reflexive mode, hence why I have devoted attention to reflecting upon my field research experience. The integral aspect is that I also came to the Czech Republic on a student-visa 6 years ago

from Russia. Like all the research participants, I took the Czech language course and then entered university. The difference was that I knew the approximate topic/interest of my research before coming to the Czech Republic, although, it was still fairly difficult to manage different identities in the field. In everyday life, I live approximately the same experience as other students from Russia: I also have to deal with immigration laws, with the process of adapting to a new cultural, social and economic environment. And honestly speaking, sometimes I had the feeling that the boundaries between my life and the field were blurred. During the field research, I asked myself over and over the following questions: does my migration background help me do this research or does it influence the research in a negative way? How does my own experience help me understand the experience of student migrants from Russia and Kazakhstan? Do I, as an insider, sometimes lose a necessary perspective of the situation?

My situation isn't an exception as many anthropologists study an aspect or segment of the society of which they themselves are members (Ginkel, 1998, p. 251). This fact has raised a debate on anthropology at home or native anthropology, and there have been many concepts used to illustrate an anthropologist's position in the field and how she or he relates to the group that he or she studies.

The most common terms are "native anthropologist", "indigenous anthropologist", "endo-ethnographer", "insider", "local", "anthropologist at home", "domestic" or "auto anthropologist" (Ginkel, 1994, p. 16)

Rob Van Ginkel, in his texts "The Repatriation of Anthropology: Some Observations on Endo-Ethnography" (1998) and "Within Culture from Within. Reflections on Endogenous Ethnography" (1994), defined the term endo-ethnography as research on an anthropologist's own national setting and ethnic group. As he asserted, there is no consensus on what to call the anthropology one does in one's own society, and he used the term endogenous anthropology or ethnography interchangeably with anthropology or ethnography at home. Although he acknowledged that "some anthropologists distinguish between insider anthropology or anthropology at home (preferred by North American and European anthropologists who conduct fieldwork in their own society), native anthropology (ethnic and minority anthropologist doing research in their own ethnic group), and indigenous anthropology (used in a Third World context)" (Ginkel, 1994, pp. 16-17), he also used the concept or term "true insider" and defined it as "being a member of a subculture under study".

Abdi M. Kusow (2003), in his paper “Beyond Indigenous Authenticity: Reflections on the Insider/Outsider Debate in Immigration Research”, used the concept of native ethnography. He used it to represent the immigrant scholar, insofar as the major topic of study is the original home country and culture of his or her ethnic community in the diaspora. He claimed that “despite some exceptions, most sociologists, particularly immigration scholars, at least implicitly, have accepted normatively shared understandings of who has insider and outsider status on the bases of certain categories such as race and cultural differences. For example minority social scientists studying minority groups are considered insiders, whereas nonminority social scientists studying minority groups are considered outsiders” (Kusow, 2003, p. 598).

Kirin Narayan (1993, p. 671) claims that “those who diverge as “native”, “indigenous”, or “insider” anthropologists are believed to write about their own cultures from a position of intimate affinity”. But as she pointed out, to think about “insider” and “outsider” anthropologists as stable categories seem terribly obsolete. Identities are always multiplex and complex, every individual may have many standards of identification, not just his or her ethnic or national background. (Narayan, 1993, pp. 671-672)

Regardless, the use of alternative words like indigenous or insider or any other words doesn't help. Narayan said that “the same conceptual underpinnings apply to these terms too: they all imply that an authentic insider's perspective is possible, and that this can unproblematically represent the associated group. This leads us to underplay the ways in which people born within a society can be simultaneously both insiders and outsiders, just as those born elsewhere can be outsiders and, if they are lucky, insiders too.” (Narayan, 1993, p. 678)

Though many authors have expressed criticism of the concept “native” anthropologist and there is no clear agreement on the terms related to ethnographic research at home or one's own ethnic group, the specifics (especially advantages and disadvantages) of this kind of research have been acknowledged in anthropological literature.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) claimed that in researching settings that are more familiar, it can be significantly more difficult to suspend one's preconceptions, whether these derive from social science or from everyday knowledge. They suggested that sometimes it may be necessary to “fight familiarity”. As an example, they provided Becker's (1971, p. 10, cit. according to Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 82) research on educational institution. He pointed out, that sometimes everything that happened in

the classroom seemed so familiar that it became impossible to single out an event that occurred in the classroom as things that had occurred, even when they happened in front of him. He compared research in familiar a setting to “pulling teeth to get them to see or write anything beyond what ‘everyone knows’” (1971, p. 10, cit. according to Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 82).

I have to admit that in my case fighting with familiarity and writing beyond what “everybody knows” was also a difficult task at the beginning of the research. I had doubts that I could shed light on this topic, as the reasons to migrate for educational purposes seemed so simple and obvious to me. But it was a mistake, which after I began to observe more, perform interviews and collect other data, I understood - how all students were diverse and how their decisions to come were different from mine. Through time, I also understood that everyone’s migration process had its own specifics, and the migration strategies of students vary no matter their country of origin.

Hammersley and Atkinson added that even when the researcher is in a familiar setting, he/she has to adapt to the new role as a participant observer. An example could be Styllés’s (1979, p. 151) research on gay baths. He claimed that before he started, he assumed that as a gay man he was “among the ‘natural clientele’ of the baths,” adding that he never thought he might not understand what was going on. (Styilles, 1979, p. 151 cit. according to Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 79). In the beginning of this research it also took me some time to adapt to the novice role as a participant observer.

So-called “true insiders” or indigenous anthropologists are also often blamed for being unable to hold “a neutral, uninvolved position”. As Ginkel (1994, p. 10) stated, when the anthropologist is a member of the subculture he/she studies, he/she is always under the control of the research group, while at the same time its members cannot risk non-conformity. According to Ginkel (1994, p. 10), this can lead to it being impossible for the ethnographer to retain the role of a detached observer. I must further add that a research topic in social science can very often be an emotional issue, and anthropologists especially very often choose marginalized groups for their research. The position of migrants amongst the majority and the existence of xenophobia and discrimination against them could be one such emotional topic. Moreover, my position as a NGO worker, where I advocate on behalf of migrants, could have possibly influenced the research process. However, throughout my work with the NGO, I tried to be aware of this bias and not immediately identify with the victimisation of migrants due to solidarity or any other reasons. In addition, I always discussed the process of my research and its findings with

other experts and academics who are not migrants themselves and who had an uninvolved position.

But it's also important to point out some advantages mentioned in literature that relate to the position of the insider, the native anthropologist, or the endo-ethnographer. For example, Ginkel claimed: "Endo-ethnographers are supposed to have: a good understanding of the macro-society and its daily routines, symbol and value systems; no culture shock; feelings of empathy; and easy access to the intellectual, emotive, and sensory dimensions of behaviour" (1994, p. 10). Other advantages, which were mentioned in Ginkel's article, that insider can establish better rapport in the field and less affect by their presence, who and what they study.

Also Narayan (1993, p. 674), regardless of being critical of the term "native anthropologist", pointed out that when she was performing research in Nasik, India on the storytelling of a Hindu holy man whom she called Swamiji, she had the benefit of years of association with not just Swamiji himself, but also the language and wider culture. And while making the research in the Himalayan foothills, she was well aware of the traditional expectations of proper behaviour by an unmarried daughter and tried to behave with appropriate decorum and deference.

Another example was introduced by Marta Kempny in her article "Rethinking Native Anthropology: Migration and Auto-ethnography in the Post-Accession Europe" (2015). She stated that in her research of Polish migrants in Belfast, the fact that she is a Polish native speaker was a great advantage, and her status as a native anthropologist helped her at the initial stage of the research. Kempny claimed that she knew tacit rules or so called "socio-grammar that guides behaviours and interpretations of these behaviours" (Fleisher, 1995, 12, cit. according to Kempny, 2015, p. 45). Thanks to that, she was able to maintain good relations with her research participants, as she possessed intuitive knowledge about what kind of behaviours were acceptable in particular situations and which were not (Kempny, 2015, p. 45)

I must admit that the fact that I grew up in Russia helped me understand the situation of student migrants, as well as choose the right strategy of communication. Knowing the hierarchical character of the society helped me open some doors and introduce myself in the correct manner. The fact that Russian is my mother tongue was also very useful in establishing good trustful relations with my research participants. As I already mentioned, Russian is the mother tongue of all the research participants (even the Kazakh research participants). Therefore, sharing the same native language helped me

to establish rapport more easily, to communicate and understand specific phrases and word expressions. But, on the other hand, some people were still not willing to participate in the research despite being from the same country of origin. For example, I shared a flat with other Russian students in the Czech Republic for a period of a year. These two girls knew the research topic, but one of them declined to talk about anything personal, about her aims or plans in the Czech Republic. She didn't want to share any personal information and her intentions about life in a new country.

Likewise, I used the snow ball technique in order to gather a sample of research participants. However, even though some research participants referred me to other students from Russia or Kazakhstan they knew, it didn't always work. Instead, I encountered the same problem Kusow (2003, p. 596) met during his research on Somalian migrants, where he claimed that problems of access and rapport are not resolved for the insider ethnographer even if research participants make the referrals – the classic snowball method of sampling.

When we talk about conducting participant observation in the Russian speaking community of the Czech Republic, it's also important to mention the characteristics of it. During the research, I noticed a tendency to keep a distance from other Russian speaking migrants, or migrants from former countries of the Soviet Union. Many newcomers had had bad experience with so called "country pads", and some of the student research participants mentioned that at the beginning of their stay in the Czech Republic other Russian speaking migrants tried to cheat them or make easy money off them. After some bad experiences, they were afraid to trust their "country pads", especially those who were older than they. In the same way, some students from Russia claimed they had moved to a different country to be further from the rest of the "Russians".

Abdi M. Kusow (2003, p. 597) also mentioned that in politically conflicted societies, the so-called insider may face similar or perhaps more difficult problems than those of an outsider. In such situations, according to Kusow (2003, p. 594), political identities implicate the insider in the conflict. However, even when my research participants and I differed in our political views, it didn't emerge as a conflict. Furthermore, I have tried not to impose any of my views on them.

To eliminate all the negative aspects of being a so-called insider, I have tried to play with different aspects of my identity and to wear different masks. For me, it was very helpful that one of my family members is Czech, which in the eyes of some of my research participants somehow made me less "Russian", helping me establish both a rapport and

trusting relations with them. On the other hand, sometimes the perception of me as the person on the “Czech side” (a Czech husband, working and making research for a Czech institution) served as a barrier and stopped people from relating any negative thoughts about the majority population. Some research participants were also curious why Charles University was interested in knowing something about them and their lives in the Czech Republic.

Abdi M. Kusow (2003, p. 594) also referred to this problem. He stated that one of the main complications he faced during his research was becoming a kind of “suspicious insider”, especially in discussions pertaining to politically or culturally sensitive issues. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that all of my research participants spoke rather openly about some illegal or informal issues, as they had been ensured everything would remain anonymous.

To finish this discussion, it is worth mentioning that regardless of sharing the same country of origin with some (as in the case of students from Russia) and the same mother tongue, many of the research participants come from mixed marriages and are related to different cultures. Also, although all the research participants have Russian or Kazakhstan citizenship, it doesn't mean they were born in these countries, nor that they lived their whole life there before moving to the Czech Republic. Some of the research participants spent their childhood in Kyrgyzstan, some in the Ukraine, while others were born in Kazakhstan but moved to Russia, holding Russian citizenship and vice-versa - a common occurrence in former Soviet states. The identities of the research participants are flexible and multiple, as is mine, and it's difficult to say who is “truly an insider” and whether somebody belongs one hundred percent to a particular group.

Moreover, there are always varieties of different class, gender, and locality - if research participants and researchers are from urban or rural parts of the country. Russia and Kazakhstan especially have very diverse and multi-ethnic populations. And as Karen O'Reilly (2005, p. 86) claimed, it doesn't matter whether the researcher has “native” status, there will be always some places the researcher just cannot access because of his/her own attributes: age, sex, colour, even social class.

It must also be mentioned that my own student status helped significantly in the research. If I wasn't also a student from Russia, it wouldn't have been possible to live together with other students in the same dormitory, nor visit the same language school as it was for Russian speaking people only, and primarily for those from Russia and Kazakhstan. I was living almost the same life as the research participants, often solving

the same problems, spending days and nights together, which I believe wouldn't be possible for somebody from "outside". This situation enabled the gathering of deeper and holistic data, but it also brought up quite serious ethnical concerns.

1.6 Ethical issues

The job of anthropologist is to reveal peoples' lives in as natural a setting as possible and become an integral part of it. In order to craft ethnographies, the anthropologist has to explore the life-worlds and life projects of research participants holistically. Ethnographic research involves extended, experiential participation of the researcher in a specific cultural context, and it often involves socialization with a vengeance (Eric j. Arnould, 1998, p. 72-74).

But very often the source of information is informal interviews and discussions which spontaneously occurred during the field work. This requires deep reflexion on the ethical issues which occur during the field research. Throughout the research the ethnographer can learn a considerable amount of personal information and, as Lichtman (2006, p.55) pointed out, some of the interviews can move in various directions as they are usually open ended.

This character of the participant observation method forces one to think more about the different ethical issues and challenges that are integral to the work of the anthropologist. My own experience isn't an exception; during the field work and the writing of this dissertation, I had to face different ethical dilemmas related to the research.

As has already been mentioned, my own national and cultural background made the access to the research participants much easier. Even when making the acquaintance of a new research participant, the topic of the research and my academic role was always introduced - as time went by, many of the research participants became friends. The establishment of rapport and trusting relations with research participants are the goals of an anthropologist, but as Lichtman (2006, p.52) pointed out: "as a consequence of developing rapport with participants and getting them to trust you, you may find they open up to you in very personal ways."

That was the main dilemma - what information should be shared in the research and what should not be? It was understood that some things the research participants revealed to me were as a friend, country pad or as another migrant, but not as a researcher. Some

issues were very sensitive, personal, and were connected with legal-illegal boundaries, a situation which can be quite dangerous for migrants.

During the course of the research, I turned to different ethnical codes of anthropologists and other social scientists. As the author of the book *Qualitative Research in Education*, Marilyn Lichtman (2006, p. 54), claimed, “although research on human subjects has been conducted since the Middle Age, codes of conduct regarding appropriate researcher behaviour did not emerge until 20th century”.

According to the code of ethics of the American Anthropological Association (2012), in conducting and publishing their research, or otherwise disseminating their research results, anthropological researchers must ensure that they do not harm the safety, dignity, or privacy of the people with whom they work, conduct research, or perform other professional activities, or who might reasonably be thought to be affected by their research.

Of course, the identity of all research participants was dutifully protected and all of them remain anonymous. But anthropological research isn't ever about people in general, but about the lives of the actual people participating in the research, about their biographies in real time, in existing communities. And as Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2011, p. 95) explain, “quotations or other data from the participants, even though anonymous, could reveal their identity”. They suggested that ideally participants of the research have to approve the use of quotations used in publications. (Orb, Eisenhauer, Wynaden, 2011, p. 95). In some cases, the research participants were asked about using particular quotations, especially those which emerged during informal talks.

Consider the official interviews. In practise, only one participant wanted to see her transcribed interview. Other participants read the articles where they were quoted, but didn't want to see it before publishing. Similarly, most research participants didn't have much interest in the research and publishing of their results after giving an interview.

Of course, attempts were made to collect research participant consent from every research participant, but as participant observation was conducted in public spaces at universities, language schools, the foreign policy department and during public events organized by NGOs, it wasn't always possible. Furthermore, another ethical dilemma had to be dealt with. According to code of ethics of the American Anthropological Association (2012), anthropological researchers should obtain advance informed consent from the person being studied. But during the readings of academic literature on participant observation methodology and field work experience, it was clear many anthropologists had challenges with obtaining informed consent from every single research participant.

For example, Lichtman (2006, p. 62) wrote that one of his students was observing visitors of public libraries without obtaining consent from these individuals because they were in view of everyone. As Lichtman claimed, even if his student was possibly invading their privacy, he didn't think she would need to obtain consent. "There are plenty of public places where anthropologists and other social scientists might want to conduct field research, but if they approach every person they study in this public space, people would think they are crazy" (Lichtman, 2006, p. 62). Moreover, ethnographers shouldn't intervene in the activities of the people being studied.

However, nowadays public places are not only physical, but also virtual, such as public forums on the internet, public Facebook pages, or YouTube channels. During the research, the internet, and different social media in particular, played a large role in the lives of student migrants. Russian speaking students living in the Czech Republic have established different open groups on Vk.com², blogs, forums, and YouTube channels. As a researcher who wanted to explore the life of young migrants, it would be absurd to ignore this part of their life. Hence the reason why different online platforms became one of the fields. Of course, another ethical dilemma emerged with this part of the research but, as always, others were dealing with it as well. And as Lichtman (2006, p. 56) acknowledged, before the wide spread of internet, there was no general procedure for seeking consent in these arenas and researchers have only just started to explore ways of obtaining consent from such groups. In this case, only information gained from public groups, forums or web pages are used and cited. All this information was available to everyone and there seems to be no reason why it can't be used as research material. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to apply some anonymity in this case as well.

Another important ethical issue is the relationship with participants of the research. As with all human relations, the relations between researcher and participant are unpredictable and have their own ups and downs. Some of the research participants became friends over the six years of research as I was also a foreigner in a new country without many social contacts. In some cases, old friends also became research participants, as they had also moved to the Czech Republic for educational purposes. Some scholars suggest that researcher and participant have to avoid friendship, but some think that if the relationships are well negotiated it could enrich the research and its findings. I adhere

² Vk.com is the online social network, which some kind of "Russian version" of facebook.com

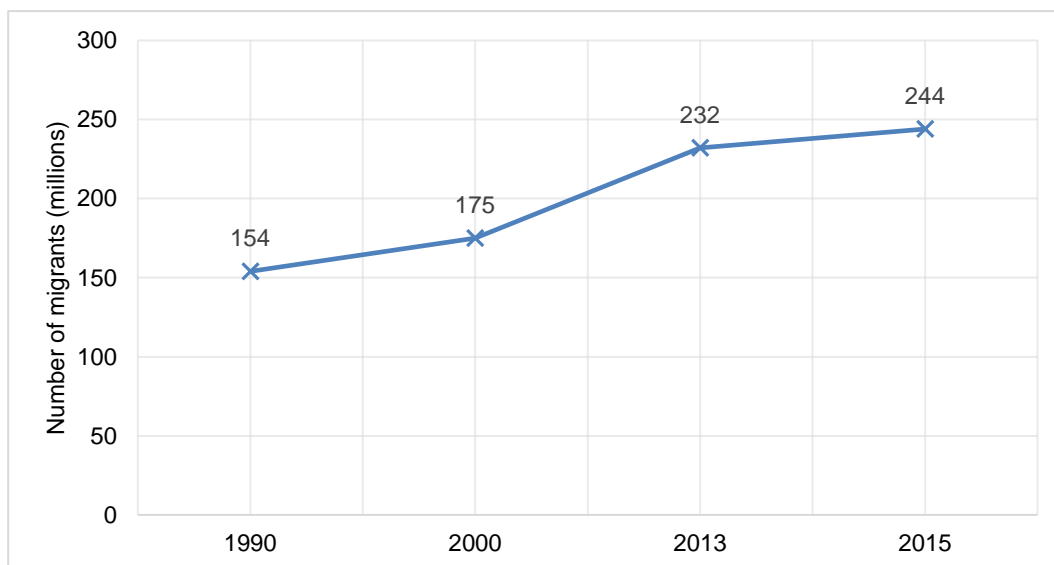
to the second opinion and think that friendship with the research participants opened my eyes to many aspects of the student migration process.

2 Overview of the interdisciplinary approach to migration theories

Interest in migration research has grown in recent years and theoretical approaches from different disciplines have developed to form a more complex understanding of migration. Disciplines such as sociology, political science, cultural studies, history, economics, geography, psychology and anthropology all seem relevant when researching migration.

Even though the phenomenon of human migration is as old as human history, over the last few decades it has become a very popular topic of public debate. Migration is the hot topic in media, in political campaigns, amongst policy makers and academics.

Nowadays there is approximately 244 million international migrants in the world, or 3.2 % of the world population (UN, 2015). And while this is still very much a minority, thanks to the development of transport, tourism, communication technologies and transnational companies, the movement of people has intensified.



Graph 1 Increase in the number of migrants in the world according to the United Nations. Source: <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015.pdf>

According to the United Nations' most recent data, in 2015 half of all international migrants lived in 10 countries. Amongst the top immigration countries were the United

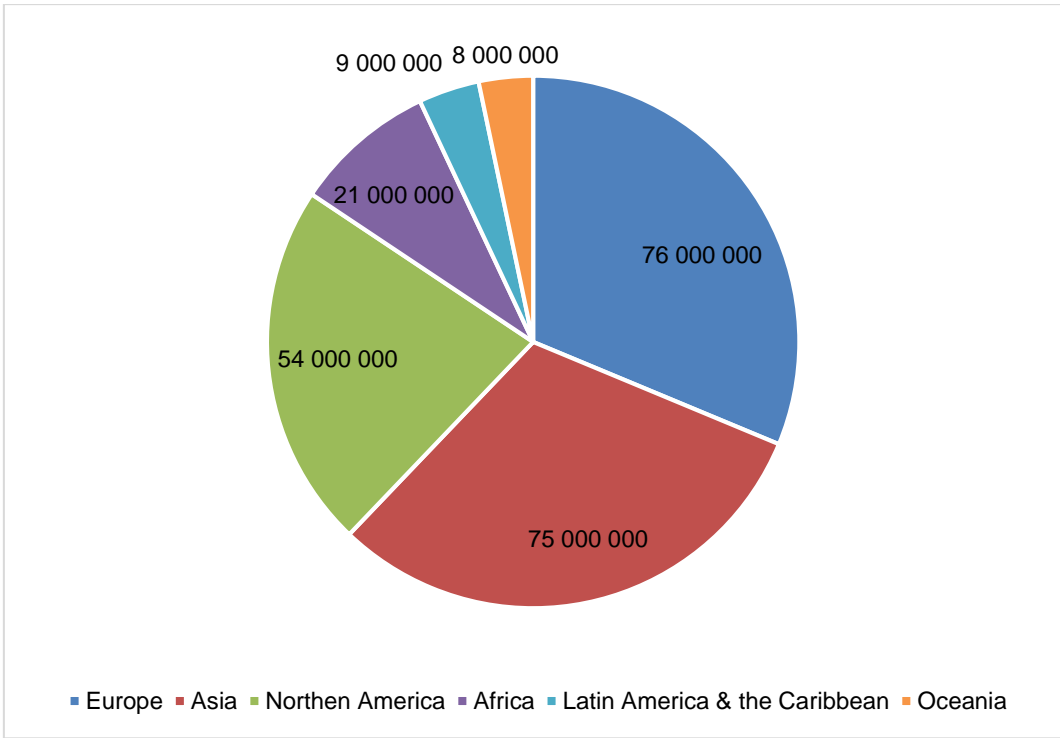
States of America, followed by Germany and the Russian Federation. Most often people left India, Mexico and the Russian Federation.

Immigration countries	Number of immigrants	Emigration countries	Number of emigrants
United States of America	46,6 mil.	India	15,6 mil.
Germany	12 mil.	Mexico	12,3 mil.
Russian Federation	11,6 mil.	Russian Federation	10,6 mil.
Saudi Arabia	10,2 mil.	China	9,5 mil.
United Kingdom	8,5 mil.	Bangladesh	7,2 mil.
United Arab Emirates	8,1 mil.	Pakistan	5,9 mil.
France	7,8 mil.	Ukraine	5,8 mil.
Canada	7,8 mil.	Philippines	5,3 mil.
Australia	6,8 mil.	Syrian Arab Republic	5 mil.
Spain	5,9 mil.	United Kingdom	4,9 mil.

Table 1 Top 10 immigration and emigration countries. Source: <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml>

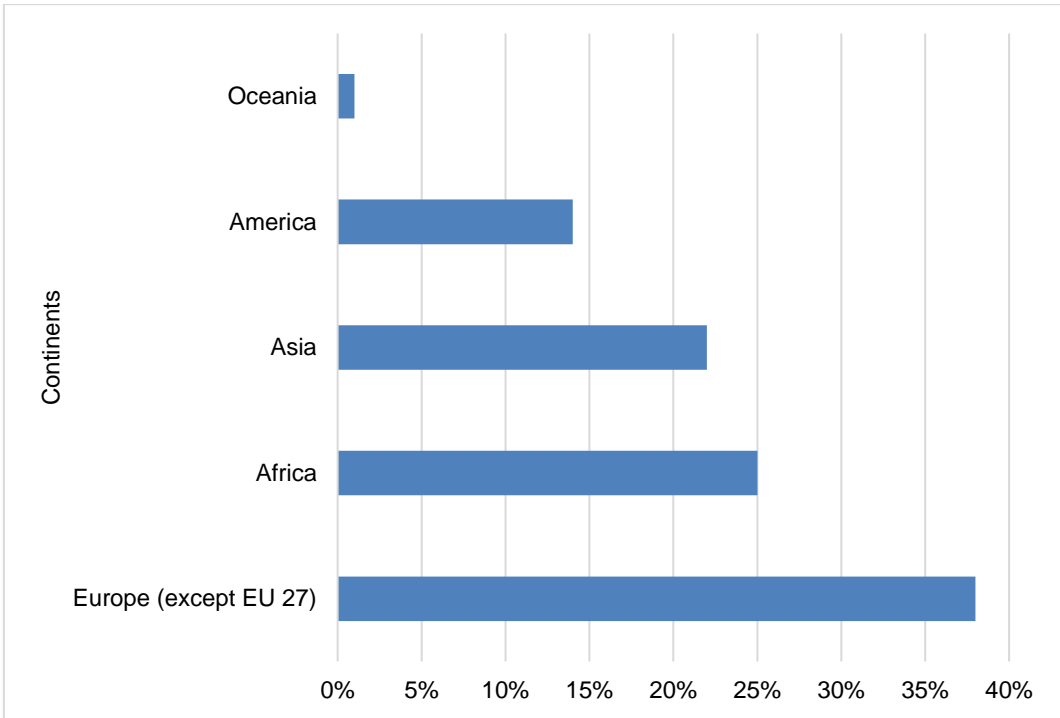
European context:

The whole history of Europe is shaped by migration movements. Both the massive migration to North America in the 19th century and the forced migration of the 20th century due to war have influenced the European population and its present situation. Only in the second half of the 20th century did Europe, or rather the block of member states making up the current European Union, become one of the most popular destinations for migrants. Currently, the UN estimates that 76 million international migrants live in Europe.



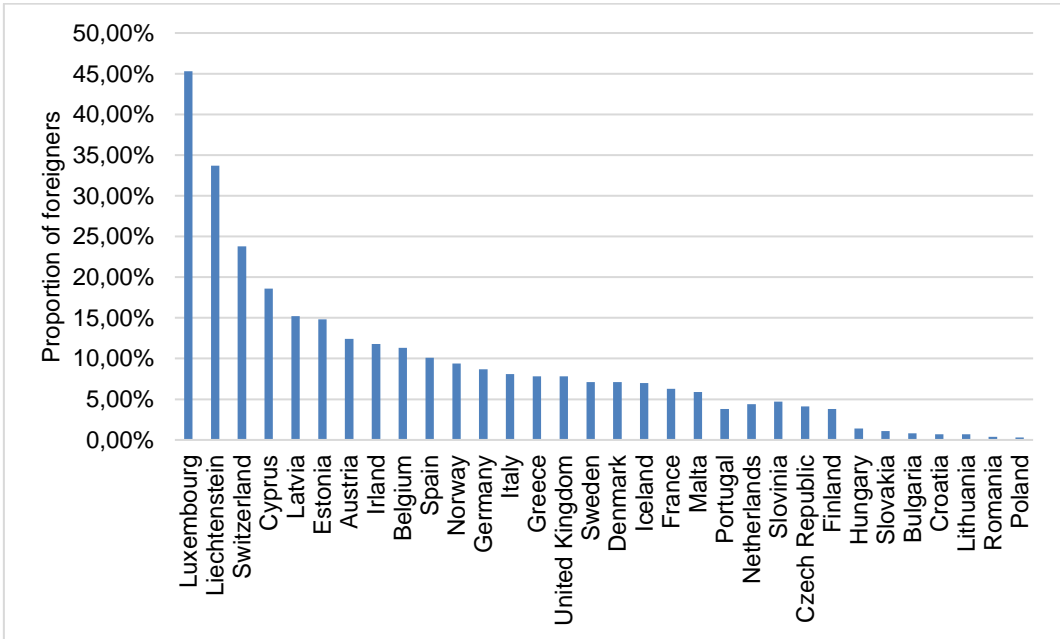
Graph 2 UN estimate of migrants number throughout the world (2015). Source: <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/migration-regions-infographics.pdf>

The total number of foreign nationals living in the EU member states numbered 34.1 million people, of which 20.4 million came from outside the EU and 13.7 million were citizens of other EU member states.



Graph 3 Continent of migrants origin from outside EU, but living in one of the European Union countries. Source: EU Home Affairs Background statistics: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/docs/infographics/ha-in-numbers/home_affairs_in_numbers_en.pdf

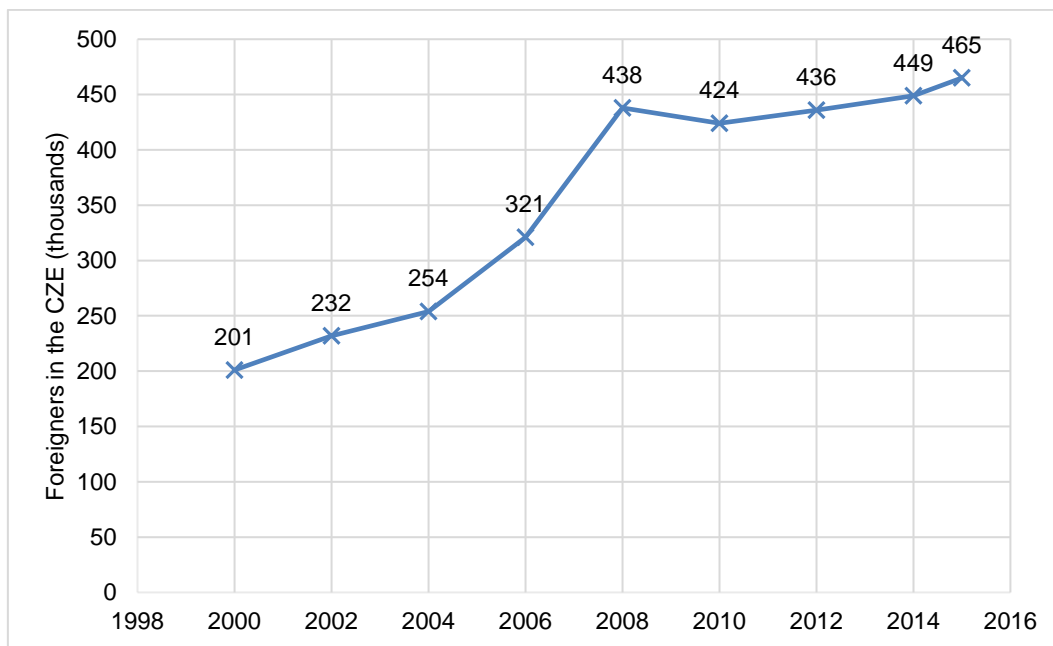
Thanks to external and internal migration within the European Union, the population of some European countries is very heterogeneous and culturally diverse and the proportion of foreign nationals amongst the population is quite high.



Graph 4 Proportion of foreigners amongst the population of individual European countries as of 1.1.2014. Source: The Czech Statistical Office

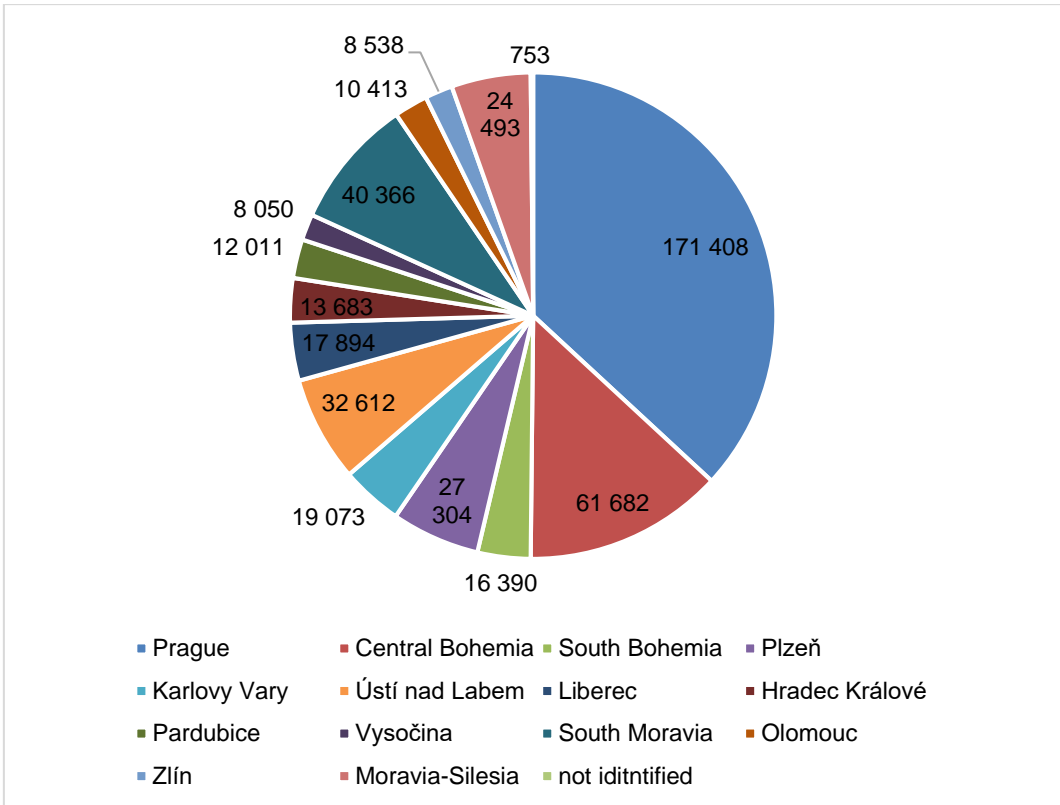
At the end of the last century and before entering the EU, the Czech Republic was considered more of an emigration country or transit country for migrants from East to West than a receiving country. However, after the transformation of the political and economic systems, its popularity as an immigrant destination started to increase.

At the turn of the 20th century, the number of migrants in former Czechoslovakia was very low (only 35 198 foreigners), but by 2015 the number had increased to 464 670 migrants (now including Slovaks) - about 4,5 % of the entire population.



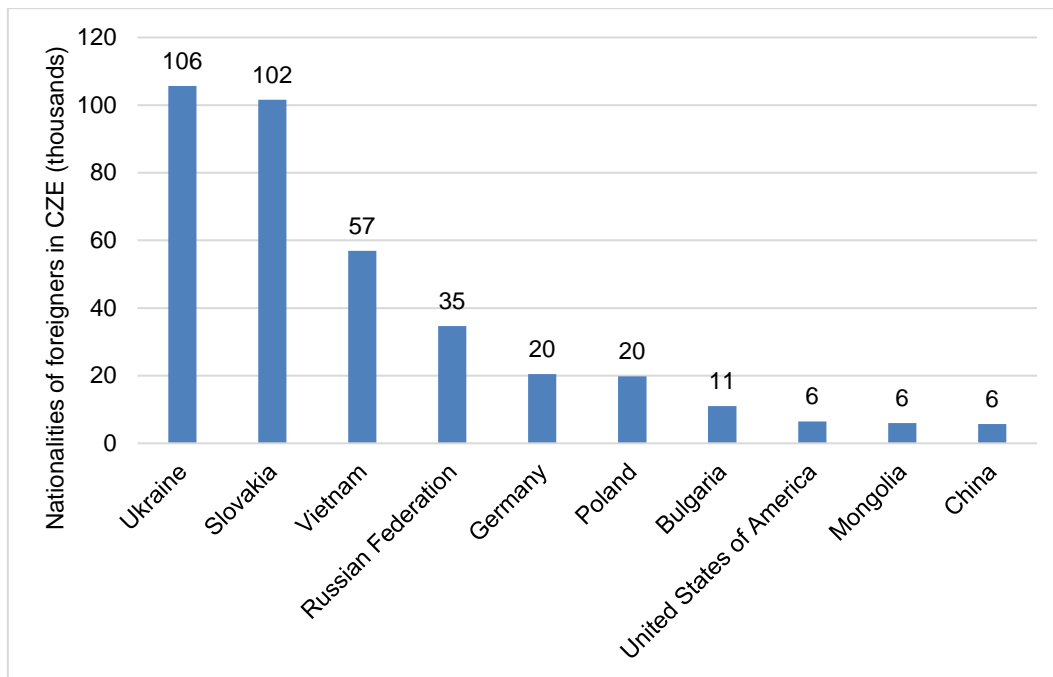
Graph 5 Foreigners in the Czech Republic from 2000-2015. Source: The Czech Statistical Office

Of course, when compared to other European countries, the number of migrants is still relatively small. Nevertheless, the number has had a tendency to increase as the Czech Republic, and particularly Prague, becomes an exceedingly attractive place for investment, business and outsourcing. According to Tholons, the Czech Republic was 16th amongst the top 100 outsourcing destinations in 2014. Nowadays, Prague is also home to the majority of migrants in the Czech Republic.



Graph 6 Foreigners by region in the Czech Republic. Source: The Czech Statistical Office (2015)

Usually people come to the Czech Republic from Ukraine, Slovakia, Vietnam, Russia or Poland. This is not surprising because of the historical, economical, cultural and geographical connections with those countries. It's also worth mentioning that the USA is one of the top ten sending countries of migrants to the Czech Republic.



Graph 7 The most common nationalities of foreigners in the Czech Republic. Source: The Czech Statistical Office (2015)

Another interesting fact is that almost 40% of all migrants in the Czech Republic are from former countries of the Soviet Union. This aspect of the Czech Republic's position as an immigration country is related to the historical development of the country. Most of these migrants come from Ukraine (105 614), the Russian Federation (34 710), Moldavia (5 055), Kazakhstan (5 324), and Belarus (4 825).

Typically, the threshold for defining who counts as a migrant is set to one year. For example, the United Nations defines a migrant as an individual who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes. This definition excludes tourists and business people who travel for short periods of time, but there are some exceptions such as seasonal workers. In some literature they appear as seasonal migrants, even though their stay abroad is usually less than a year.

Another challenge in defining the term migrant is that the migration statistics of different countries include different groups of people: according to citizenship, birthplace, or prior residence (King, 2012). As King explained: "Naturalisation converts foreign-born immigrants into citizens and thus removes them from the migration count if citizenship is the criterion of measurement. Conversely, people born in the host country to immigrant parents – the so-called "second generation" – can remain classified as non-citizens on the *ius sanguinis* or "blood" rule thus be counted as part of the "foreign" or "immigrant" population, even though they themselves have not immigrated" (2012, p. 6).

In the Czech Republic, after naturalisation the migrant disappears from the statistics on foreigners and is counted as a Czech citizen. In this work, the term migrant is also used in accordance with the United Nations definition.

Experts and academics usually distinguish between different forms of migration, for example: voluntary and involuntary, internal and international, temporary and permanent. International migration is the most common topic in migration studies, but, as Russell King (2012) claimed, even though it seems obvious that for international migration to occur a nation-state border has to be crossed, “this is not so strait forward as may appear at first sight, since such borders can come and go (as in former Soviet Union or ex-Yugoslavia), and can be of varying “thickness” and therefore be “open” or “closed” borders to migration (for instance the internal borders within the EU versus the external border of the Schengen area)” (King, 2012, p. 7).

Migration is usually seen as a process in which, not only is the individual who migrates involved, but the collective country of origin. According to Castles, De Haas and Miller, migration is a process which affects every dimension of social existence, the whole society in both sending and receiving areas, and which develops its own complex “internal” dynamics (2014, p. 27). Moreover “migration is arising out of social, economic and political change. It’s an intrinsic part of a broader processes of development, globalization and social transformation” (Castles, De Haas, Miller, 2014, p. 26). As Castles et al. claimed: “the concept of the migration process sums up the complex sets of factors and interactions which lead to migration and influence its course” (2014, p. 27). As the authors pointed out, “the experience of migration and of living in another country often leads to modification of the original plans, so that migrants’ intentions at the time of departure are poor predictors of actual behaviour” (Castles, De Haas, Miller, 2014, p. 25). Migration is a very dynamic and constantly changing process.

Moreover, Roger Sanjek (2003) offered that human migration may be disassembled into a set of seven processes – expansion, refuge-seeking, colonization, enforced transportation, trade diaspora, labour diaspora, and emigration. These processes are sequential in historical appearance and cumulative in impact, each continuing to occur after each later process has emerged. Every receiving country, like sending countries, is influenced by these processes, so it’s necessary to pay attention to national and ethno-cultural histories, and to analyse not only today’s immigrants, “but to pay heed to where and among whom, they are arriving.” (Sanjek, 2003, p. 328).

In order to understand migration, Castles, De Haas and Miller distinguish between two groups of migration theories: first are the theories which try to explain the causes of the migration process, and second are the theories on the impacts of migration for sending and receiving communities and societies (2014, p. 26). The next part of the paper is devoted to those theories relevant to this work on the causes of the migration process.

2.1 Theories on the causes of migration

As Castles, Haas and Miller claimed, all migration theories can be divided according to two paradigms in the social sciences: “functionalist” and “historical-structural”. As per these authors, “functionalist migration theory generally treats migration as a positive phenomenon serving the interests of most people and contributing to greater equality within and between societies” (Castles, De Haas, Miller, 2014, p. 27). And vice-versa, “historical-structural theories emphasize how social, economic, cultural and political structures constrain and direct the behaviour of individuals in ways that generally do not lead to greater equilibrium, but rather reinforce such disequilibria”. In the context of migration, it means that migrants serve as “a cheap, exploitable labour force, which mainly serves the interests of the wealthy in receiving areas, causes a ‘brain drain’ in origin areas, and therefore reinforces social and geographical inequalities” (Castles, De Haas, Miller, 2014, p. 28).

Neoclassical theory and the “push-pull models” are possibly the best-known functionalist theory in migration studies. According to the “push-pull model”, the causes of migration lie in a combination of “push factors” (demographic growth, low-living standards, a lack of economic opportunities and political freedoms), which impel people to leave the home country; and “pull factors” (a demand for labour, availability of land, political freedoms, etc.), which attract people to certain countries.

Neoclassical theory explains the appearance of migration as a function of geographical differences in the supply and demand for labour. The main argument of this theory is that migration has primarily economic reasons and at the micro-level “views migrants as individual, rational actors, who decide to move on the basis of a cost-benefit calculation, maximizing their income” (Castles, Haas, Miller 2014, p. 29). At the macro-level, according to neoclassical theory, migration regulates labour and wage differences as time goes on in both the destination and sending country, therefore lowering the incentives for migration.

However, this functionalist approach has been criticized, especially by historians, anthropologists, sociologists and geographers, as incapable of showing other important factors which influence migrant behaviour, such as historical experiences as well as family and community dynamics (Portes and Borocz, 1989, cit. according Castles and Miller, 2003, p.23). Nevertheless, as the authors (Castles, Haas, Miller, 2014) added, it's naive to think that people only behave in a rational way, calculating every step.

As Castles, Haas and Miller claimed, the historical-structural approach was provided in the 1970s and 1980s as an alternative explanation of migration (2014, p. 31). This approach emphasizes that people are fundamentally constrained by structural forces without free choice. Within this approach, migration is a way of mobilizing cheap labour and exploiting the resources of poor countries.

These claims are based on *dependency theory*, which explains world inequality through the assumption that resources flow from a “periphery” of poor and underdeveloped states to a “core” of wealthy states. As a result, rich states get richer at the expense of poor states, thus impoverishing them. At the same time, this disorder or disharmony is the part of the world system, where the world is divided into core countries, semi-peripheral countries, and peripheral countries (Barfield, 1997, p. 498).

As Castles, Haas and Millers assumed, the dependency and world systems theories “can be seen as precursors of the globalization theories that emerged in the 1990s, which also stressed the need to understand migration as an intrinsic part of much broader relationships between societies” (2014, p. 33).

The authors (Castles, Haas, Miller, 2014) continue to say that another attempt to explain migration, apart from the historical-structural approach, emerged from dual (or segmented) labour market theory, which demonstrates the importance of institutional factors, as well as race and gender, in bringing about labour market segmentation (Castles, 2003, p. 23). The main point of this theory is that economies are divided into two sectors: “primary” and “secondary”, and international migration is caused by structural demand for both highly-skilled workers and lower-skilled manual workers (Piore, 1979 cit. according to Castles, Haas and Miller, 2014, p. 35).

In general, the historical-structural approach has been criticized by migration scholars for paying inadequate attention to human agency and for failing to explain the complexity of migration. But since the 1980s, as Castles, Haas and Miller (2014) pointed out, “an increasing body of studies has highlighted the diversity of migration and stressed the role of migrant’s agency by describing the various ways in which migrants try

to actively and creatively overcome structural constraints such as immigration restrictions, social exclusion, racism and social insecurity. Most of these theories focus on the micro- and meso-level and are interested in what motivates people and social groups to migrate, how they perceive the world and how they shape their identity during the migration process” (Castles, Haas, Miller 2014, p. 37).

For example, in the 1980s, the new economics of labour migration approach emerged (Taylor, 1987; Stark, 1991 cit. according to Castles, Haas, Miller 2014, p. 38), arguing that the unit of analysis in migration research had to be the social group. The main argument of this theory is that the decision to migrate is often not made by isolated individuals, but frequently by families or households (Castles, Haas, Miller 2014, p. 38).

Social groups have always been of interest to anthropologists, sociologists and other social science researchers. Particularly in anthropology, claimed Brettell, the study of kinship and social organization became the core unit of migration research (Brettell, 2000, p. 106). Within this theoretical development in migration studies, the concept of the social network gained great importance and migration network theory emerged. This theory explains “how migrants create and maintain social ties with other migrants and with family and friends back home, and how this can lead to the emergence of social networks, which can facilitate further migration” (Castles, Haas, Miller, 2014, p. 39-40). According to this theory, new or potential migrants follow pioneer (or already settled) migrants and migrate to the same destination where the migrant community is being formed.

Nowadays, potential migrants might have never seen settled migrants in real-life, but could still follow them. With the formation of online communities, improvement in transport and communication technology, it has been made increasingly easy for migrants to form and maintain relationships across borders. This social phenomenon led to emergence of transnationalism theories in migration studies.

According to Nina Glick Schiller (2012, p. 30), “the concept of transnational migration was developed in the 1990s as part of an effort to move migration studies beyond the bounded nation-state bias that pervaded much of that decade’s approach to the migrant experience. It began with the simple observation that many people from all over the world migrate and settle yet are not ‘uprooted’ from those they ‘left behind’”.

Different authors contribute to the definition of transnationalism in slightly different ways. For example, Basch, Schiller and Blanc (1994, p. 7) define transnationalism as “a process by which migrants, through their daily life activities create social fields that cross-national boundaries”. Vertovec (2004, p. 3) refers to it as “a set of

sustained long-distance, border-crossing connections”. Common to the different definitions seems to be an acknowledgement that transnationalism refers to a situation or a process where migrants maintain ties with more than one country (usually with the country of origin and the country of destination), and thus develop identities and social relations in multiple national contexts rather than being rooted in only one country at any given time.

As Bryceson and Vuorela claimed (2002, p. 6): “Going beyond a view of migration as bipolar moves of people and mapping transnational space vis-à-vis the accelerated and densified movement of people, current literature stresses how one’s sense of place and associated social identity is changing as a result of the relative easy movement and communication”.

So-called transnational migrants or transmigrants have multi-local identities, which bridge geographical spaces regardless of national borders. They are involved in economic, social and political activities and institutions simultaneously, both in the country of immigration and in the country from which they have emigrated (Glick-Schiller et al. 1997, p. 121). Moreover, migrants are part of transnational families, which can be defined “as families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely ‘family hood’, even across national borders” (Bryceson, Vuorela, 2002, p. 3). According to Bryceson and Vuorela, sometimes transnational families are referred to as multi-local or multi-sited families, or families living in spatial separation. But as the authors add, “these families are not creations of recent globalizing trends but have played an integral part in European colonial and settler histories. However, it is only with the creation of the ‘informational society’ and transnational restructurings of capitalist production and international trade that they are increasingly becoming a pronounced part of everyday European ways of life” (Bryceson, Vuorela, 2002, p. 7).

As Brettell (2000, p. 106) claims, anthropologists usually analyse transnational processes within the lives of individuals and families. And indeed, transnational families have been at the core of migration research, but most researchers have focused on the relationship between parents who migrated and children, who were left behind. But as some studies show (including mine), sometimes this is the other way around. Those who migrate are children. This trend has been spreading with the tremendous increase in popularity of overseas education and has been represented in the research of minors from Asian countries (such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, etc.) who have come to the United States to study (Zhou, 1998). According to Tsong and Liu (2009), the concept

of parachute kids has emerged to explain this trend. They define parachute kids as “foreign minors, ranging in age from 6 to 18, who are sent to live and study in the United States without their parents as early as in the first grade (also known as air-dropped children)” (Tsong and Liu, 2009, p. 378). Lee and Koo (2006, p. 533) also introduce the concept of the “kirogi family” and define it as a family which is separated between different states for the children's education. Social geographer, Waters (2005, p. 370), also talks about “astronaut families”, in which the mother usually emigrates abroad together with the children and the father stays in country of origin, providing finance for the entire family.

Brettell (2000, p. 107) claims that the research on migrant families and their connections to sending and receiving contexts help to combine macro- and micro-perspectives of analysis through the filter of the household, and brings the migrant-as-decision-maker back into focus; however, it also reintroduces social and cultural variables that must be considered in conjunction with economic variables. “It also provides more understanding of how migration streams are perpetuated despite changes in economic and political policies that serve to constrain or halt them” (Brettell, 2000, p. 108).

However, Stephen Castles, in a yearly edition of the book “The Age of Migration”, argued that it’s important not to concentrate only on one group of factors, but to reconceptualise migration as a complex process in which economic, political, social and cultural factors all work together (2003, p. 25).

The attempt for a more interdisciplinary approach was the introduction of migration systems theory. A migration system is constituted of two or more countries which exchange migrants with each other (Castles, 2003, p. 27). Migration systems theory suggests that migratory movements generally arise from the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries based on colonisation, political influence, trade, investments or cultural ties (Castles 2003, p. 27). In the same book, Castles (2003, pp. 27-28) claimed that the basic principle of the migration systems approach is that any migratory movement can be seen as a result of interacting macro- (the political economy of the world market, interstate relationships, the laws, structures and practices established by the states), micro- (the informal social networks developed by the migrants themselves), and meso- (the so-called “migration industry”, consisting of recruitment organizations, lawyers, agents and other intermediaries between migrants and political or economic institutions) structures.

Moreover, in order to explain the continuation of migration within a migration system, the theory of cumulative causation has been used. In migration studies, this has its roots in the discovery of the Swedish economist, Myrdal (1957). He introduced the theory of cumulative causation, which consists of four concepts: the concept of the “backwash effects”, “spread effects”, the importance of institutional factors and political implications.

Lately, Massey (1990) has extended the theory of cumulative causation to the field of migration and answered the question: why, once a migration flow begins, does it continue to grow? According to Massey, the primary mechanism underlying cumulative causation is the accumulation of social capital, by which members of a community gain migration-related knowledge and resources through family members and friends who have already travelled to the destination country (Massey, 1999, pp. 45-47). Aspiring migrants, through social networks, get information, assistance and support in the destination area (Massey, 1990).

As Massey (1999, p. 45) stated, “causation is cumulative in the sense that each act of migration alters the social context within which subsequent migration decisions are made, typically in ways that make additional movement more likely”. According to the author, migration became a symbol of success and changes values of a community, which gives the rise to a ‘culture of migration’. In a frame of a ‘culture of migration’ it’s becoming more socially acceptable to migrate than to stay in country of origin, as staying home is associated with failure (Massey et al., 1993, p. 453). Once this process begins, it changes the community values. People are attracted by storytelling, information about jobs, and lifestyles in the destination country. Migrants and the process of migration are romanticized and glorified. Especially for young people, such as in Mexico, migration becomes a ‘rite of passage’” (Massey et al., 1993, p. 453).

In my research, migration system theory has also been applied; the educational migration phenomenon has been looked at from micro-, meso-, and macro- levels of analysis; and the theoretical concepts mentioned above have been used.

Students, who come to the Czech Republic with the aim of getting a higher education, usually stay in the country more than 12 months and are undoubtedly part of global migration flows. Which is why, from my point of view, it is important to look at student migration in the frame of migration studies. Moreover, students from Russia and Kazakhstan usually come to the Czech Republic alone, without parents or other family members, but maintain contacts with the family regardless of the existence of national borders. Hence why this work looks at students as part of transnational families and

considers transnationalism as an important theoretical concept in understanding a student's life, their migration process and migration strategies. As was previously mentioned above, transnational families have always been at the core of migration research, but much of it has been focused on relationships between a parent who emigrated and a child who stayed in a country of origin. In the case of migration for educational purposes, the situation is the opposite. Children (sometimes at a very early age) are the pioneers of migration and is why the concepts of "parachute kids", "air-dropped kids", or "satellite kids" have been used in the research, so as to understand the migration process of students from Russia and Kazakhstan in the Czech Republic.

2.2 Impacts of migration on societies.

As migration phenomenon impacts the country and society of a migrant's origin, so too does it impact the migrant's destination country. It transforms not only the society as a whole, but also influences individuals and families, and it's very important to outline related theoretical concepts for a complex understanding of migration. In this chapter, I will first outline the economic impacts of migration, then demographic, social and cultural (with an emphasis on integration) as well as its impacts on families and individuals.

One of the major impacts of migration on the country of origin is financial; as quite often migrants go abroad in order to financially support their families by sending remittances.

According to the World Bank, about \$435 billion in remittances was sent to developing countries in 2014. Not all experts are agreed on whether this is positive, however. On one hand, some experts argue that sending remittances slows down development and has a negative impact on society. Dependence on money and goods from abroad hampers local economic activity, contributes to an increase in inequality within society, and helps the formation of a so-called "culture of migration", where young people cannot imagine their future differently than abroad. On other hand, remittances enable families to improve housing, food, education and health care. This widespread trend, where remittances are invested in the construction of houses in the country of origin, stimulates economic growth, creates jobs in construction and supplies money even to non-migrants. Remittances can therefore be used for investment, the creation of market relations, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Another significant phenomenon that affects immigration countries is the so-called “brain drain” - the emigration of skilled and educated people. These people appear to be important elements of the future of countries, and in cases where they leave their country of origin, that country loses its investment in their study, the value of their work, and above all the potential stored in them - that they can be an economic and intellectual elite of the state. These losses are essential if the exodus of educated people is permanent. According to Castles, Hass and Miller (2014), increasing student migration can be seen as part of the brain drain. Moreover, in cases where educated and highly qualified migrants are not able to find a job suitable to their education level, it represents another loss, known as “brain waist”. “The image of surgeons working as waitress or engineers driving taxis reflects reality for some” (Castles, Haas, Miller, 2014, p. 72). But in cases where migrants return to the country of origin, it can bring a positive effect, as they might have had the opportunity to develop their skills and experience life abroad, both of which can be used in their country of origin. That's why, in connection with the new migration trends, it's possible to hear speak of profiting from a so-called “brain gain” or “brain circulation”. Usually, it's supported through different exchange programs, reintegration, and the requalification of “re-emigrants”, as well as provided micro-loans from the state to start small companies or businesses.

The positive economic effects of migration can be also witnessed in countries which host migrants, as they contribute to local economies. For example, a study by the University of London shows that between 2000-2011 migrants from new EU countries contributed 12% more to the UK budget than they were provided. Migrants from outside the EU contributed 3% more. According to research by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, migrants expand the domestic market and create one extra job for every working place they occupy, and in cases where migrants own companies, they directly create extra jobs. In addition, very often migrants fill gaps in the labour market, for example, in spheres such as healthcare, education and information technology. According to experts, the health system of the European Union would be unable to provide adequate medical care without highly qualified personnel from abroad.

But, of course, there can also be negative impacts on host countries. Take, for example, the phenomenon of illegally employing migrants and the demand for cheap labour and a lowering of wages, leading to unfair competition in the labour market and the expansion of the informal economy. Moreover, migrants in irregular positions are quite

often the subjects of unfair dealings, smuggling and trafficking for various kinds of exploitation.

Consider the demographic consequences of migration, some experts claim that migrants may stop or mitigate the current trend towards an aging population and low birth rates in economically developed countries. According to Rainer Munz, “in the future, many rich countries will confront a stagnation or decline of their native workforces”. International migration and internal mobility could be one of the ways (but not the only way) of addressing the growing demographic and persistent economic, disparities. (Munz, 2013, p. 1)

Debate over the social impact of migration quite often stimulates contradictory reactions and division within society. On one hand, migrants are said to be needed for economic and demographic reasons, but on the other hand, they are often accused of taking jobs from locals and reducing wages in some sectors, due to which they are bringing a decline in living standards to some parts of the population. These views are quite common in times when unemployment is rising, elections are coming and the economy is in recession. Some politicians - not only representatives of radical right-wing parties - try to evoke fear of the unknown “aliens” amidst the local population, and put a large emphasis on the connection between migration and security. Recently, migration has also often been connected with the fear of terrorism. This applies especially when the “others” are perceived as being completely different culturally (e.g. religiously) from the local population.

The cohabitation of migrants and the major population can take place in different ways and lead to different social impacts. According to Barsa and Barsova (2005, p. 64), these different ways of living together arise from the approach of the host society’s majority population and the migrants themselves. For example, it can lead to a permanent separation of immigrants thanks to the processes of marginalization and segregation (e.g. to ethnic enclaves, ethnic communities or the formation of ghettos), or their incorporation into peripheral, marginal segments and sub-cultures of the host society through the process of segmented assimilation (Bosswick and Heckmann, 2006). These processes and their consequences are an expression of integration deficits. An example of which is the situation in France, where in the suburbs of big cities areas have arisen with high unemployment and poor education levels. This condition causes discontent and radicalization among second and third generation immigrants who do not experience

the gratitude their (grand) parents had for being adopted, but rather anger at the poor social situation.

Even though segregation and marginalization is a risk for both the host population and migrants, say Barsa and Barsova (2005), so too is the total assimilation and suppression of migrant differences; their original identity isn't necessarily a condition for maintaining social peace and solidarity, nor does it maximise the benefits and minimise the risks associated with migration. More important seems to be social integration, which includes space for maintaining diversity and corresponds to the fact that host societies aren't actually totally homogenous at all. According to the authors (Barsa, Baršová, 2005, p. 64), contemporary immigration policies in European countries emphasize the integration of migrants into the majority society, which is based on a unity in key areas (especially language and liberal-democratic principles) and on respect for differences among migrants, in the sense of their cultural and religious identity.

Integration is a separate and very important topic in migration studies and different migration scholars intellectually contributed to the definition of this theoretical concept. For example, Olwig and Paerregaard (2011, p. 11), in the book "The Question of Integration. Immigration, Exclusion and the Danish Welfare State", stated that a "common definition of 'to integrate' included to 'incorporate', 'absorb', 'assimilate', or 'adapt' something or somebody into 'a large whole'". But from an anthropological perspective, the authors state that "integration concerns not only the particular processes of adaptation that migrants experience when they adjust to life in a new society. Integration also refers to the more general processes of adaptation that all individuals must go through if they are to become part of functioning society. A society exists through time if it only consists of individuals or groups who insist on doing everything their own way without regard for the welfare of the larger collectivity. Members of a society must come to some sort of agreement regarding how they are going to live together if a society is to function. This agreement does not necessarily imply cultural conformity, but rather some sort of mutual understanding concerning what sort of cultural differences can be accommodated and how" (Olwig, Paerregaard, 2011, p. 11).

Martikainen (2005, p. 3) also pointed out that integration is like a two-way process, during which migrants, like the host population, acquire new characteristics as a result of mutual interaction. Integration can also have a transnational dimension.

Bosswick and Heckmann (2006, p. 2) define social integration as the inclusion and acceptance of migrants into key institutions, relationships and positions within a host

society. Integration is an interactive process between migrants and a host society, which means for migrants, the learning of a new culture, acquiring rights and obligations, gaining access to positions and social status, building personal relationships with members of the host society and the creation of a feeling of affiliation and identification with the society. For the host society, according to the authors, integration means opening institutions and guaranteeing equal opportunities for migrants.

Esser (Esser, 2000, cit. according to Bosswick and Heckmann, 2006, p. 3) proposes four basic forms of social integration: acculturation, placement, interaction and identification. “**Acculturation** (also termed socialisation) is the process by which an individual acquires the knowledge, cultural standards and competencies needed to interact successfully in a society. **Placement** means an individual gaining a position in society – in the educational or economic systems, in the professions, or as a citizen. Placement also implies the acquisition of rights associated with particular positions and the opportunity to establish social relations and to win cultural, social and economic capital. Acculturation is a precondition for placement. **Interaction** is the formation of relationships and networks, by individuals who share a mutual orientation. These include friendships, romantic relationships or marriages, or more general membership of social groups. **Identification** refers to an individual’s identification with a social system: the person sees him or herself as part of a collective body. Identification has both cognitive and emotional aspects”.

According to Castles, Haas and Miller (2014, p. 268), in spite of the fact that governments have replaced assimilation with the principle of integration, very often the final goal has still been to absorb migrants into the dominant culture, but in a slower and gentler form. However, in some countries there has been an emergence of “multicultural” models, in the frame of which the long-term persistence of group difference has been recognized. According to authors (Castles, Haas, Miller, 2014, p. 270), “multiculturalism meant that immigrants (and sometimes non-migrant minority groups) should be able to participate as equals in all spheres of society, without being expected to give up their own culture, religion and language, although usually with an expectation of conformity to certain key values”. During the last few decades, multiculturalism has become a major topic of political and intellectual discourse in many European countries. This concept has faced both criticism as well as support. On one hand, multiculturalism has presented an opportunity to learn “from the errors and fatal consequences of nationalism, chauvinism, forced assimilation and ethnic persecution”, and on the other hand, it has been

seen as an “illusory concept that overlooks the necessity for a common culture, language and identification, if the integration and stability of the society and state is to endure” (Bosswick and Heckmann, 2006, p. 8).

Apparently, migration has effects on individuals and their families. In cases where migrants move abroad by themselves, it can serve as a means for individual freedom, growth and release from the social pressures of their communities in the country of origin. Migration can also affect the position of women within society and leads to freedom from gender stereotypes or changes them. For example, a situation where a woman leaves to work abroad and becomes the main breadwinner of the family while her husband takes care of the children, is a complete rotation of the gender stereotypes in some countries. Even though the members of the family can have agreed upon such a situation, within society women (especially mothers) are publicly criticized for the fact that they leave their children, or older parents, alone and thus fail to fulfil their traditional role. The migration of mothers can provide better education, and thus a better future for their children (which is also a frequently mentioned reason for migration), but alternatively, those children are often called social orphans. While the migration of men is generally perceived quite positively, transnational mothers must cope not only with feelings of isolation and loneliness, but also with the critique of the family and the public. It's difficult to assess whether a life (or several years) of separation from the mother is more traumatic for children than life within a nuclear family experiencing poor conditions and unemployment.

For those experiencing life in a new country, migration can impact them by bringing feelings of inferiority, powerlessness and alienation (in cases when migrants are not accepted by society and are subjected to discrimination in everyday life), while conversely, many migrants consider migration to be an important part of their personal growth and an irreplaceable life experience, bringing them a sort of invincible feeling - if they can handle life in a foreign country, they can handle anything. As an example, read the following citation said by Alexandra in a radio documentary (Český Rozhlas, 2013) about young Russian migrants: “I think that here, in the Czech Republic, in Prague, I have learned that if I want something and just think about it, I can do anything. I can learn any language; I can learn how to live life in any country. It was a real school of life for me here”.

3 Ethnography. Empirical part

3.1 Historical background

3.1.1 Migratory movements from the 20th century to the present

Migration issues were always important for Russia and Kazakhstan due to their geo-political, economic, social and historical situations. Although both countries have a great history of inward and outward migration, in the frame of this work and for analytical purposes the concentration will be on the outward migration and its demographic, economic and historical framework.

As we know from history, Kazakhstan was first part of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union. Therefore, the modern Russian Federation and the modern Republic of Kazakhstan share some past events which still have an influence on today's migratory situations in both countries.

The migration of Russian citizens and former citizens of the USSR has a long tradition, which Popkov (2007, p. 144) divides into four waves. The first lasted from 1918 until 1923, and was caused by the famous events of October 1917, the establishment of Bolshevik authority, and the White movement's defeat. According to various data, roughly 1.5-3 million people left Russian territories during this short period (Polian, 2005). At that time, emigration had a political, anti-Bolshevik character. For most people, not emigrating meant risking their own physical safety as well as the destruction of the homeland.

Moreover, during the early Soviet period, Kazakhstan experienced mass emigration due to the repression of the Kazakh elite, forced collectivisation and mass hunger. But on the other hand, Kazakhstan also experienced a mass inward migration because of the transfer of industrial objects during Soviet times and the "Virgin Land (Celina)" project (Migration Policy Institute, Extended Migration Profile, 2010, p. 7).

The second wave of emigration during Soviet times, claims Popkov (2007, pp.147-148), was the emigration of those who, during the Great Patriotic War, made their way, via different methods both forced and voluntary, to the West - mainly in the territory of the Third Reich. After the end of the war, most migrants were repatriated, again forcibly and voluntarily; however, a significant amount of them stayed in European countries (behind the Iron Curtain) or emigrated across the Atlantic.

According to Polian (2005), the total number of people who didn't return was about 700 000 people, in comparison with an approximately 8.7 million deported soviet citizens. In contrast to the first wave of emigration, a desire existed in the second wave to "escape" a closed country. The occupation was a possible chance "unlocking" of the Bolsheviks' closed borders.

The third wave of emigration consists of all the emigration throughout the Cold War, beginning with the post-war period and continuing until 1991, when the law passed removing all travel restrictions abroad. During this period, the Soviet Union lost 1 136 300 of its citizens. 592 300 Jews, 414 400 Germans, 84 100 Armenians, 24 300 Pontiac Greeks, 18 400 Evangelists and Pentecostals and 2800 people of other nationalities left (Heitman, 1991, cit. according to Полян, 2005).

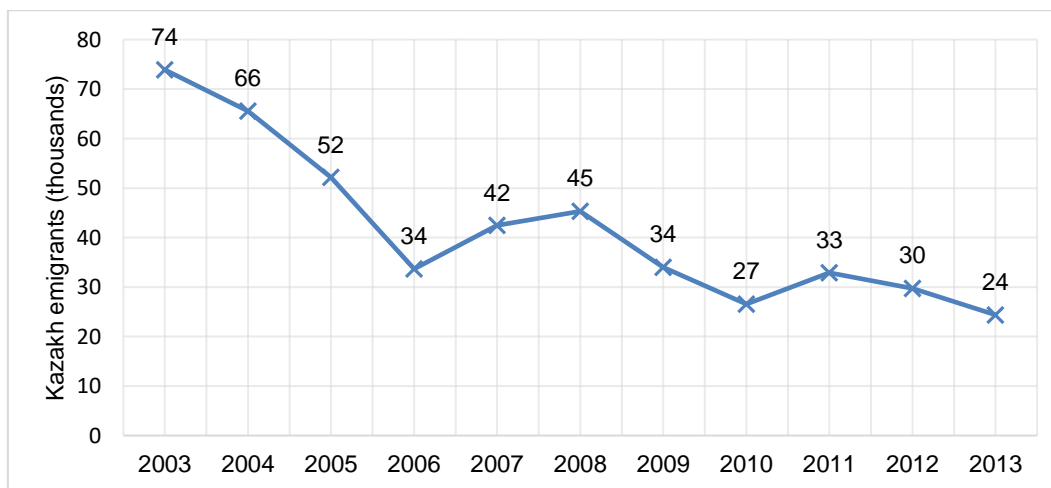
Emigration in this wave was largely voluntary, prepared, planned and officially authorized, in the sense that "permission to leave" was given, permission the Soviets reserved solely for particular ethnic or religious groups. According to Popkov (2007, p. 150), for many people leaving the USSR during the third wave, the failure of the Soviet state was obvious: the permanent shortage of goods, queues, poor living conditions, etc. The economic factor of emigration predominated, and was aided by the obvious lies of the media, party workers, the prohibition of a free press, literature and music (Popkov, 2007, p. 151).

The fourth wave of emigration that Popkov (2007, p. 154) mentions is associated with a law passed in 1991 "on procedure of exit from the USSR and the entry for USSR citizens", which came into force on the first of January, 1993. In contrast with the three previous waves of emigration, the fourth wave didn't have any internal restrictions on the part of the Soviet Union, and later – the Russian government. The scale was only governed by the immigration quotas of host countries, and it changed the situation fundamentally.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia began the difficult period of transformation, which led to dramatic changes within the society. An atmosphere of instability, bad economic conditions, and a high rate of criminality forced many people to consider emigration. It's possible to observe in the statistical data that the majority of emigration over the last 25 years occurred in the early 1990s. Conversely, many people also came back to Russia from former Soviet Union countries during this period, including Kazakhstan.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the independent Republic of Kazakhstan was formed and people chose to return to their “native lands”. As reported in the Extended Migration Profile (2010), it is estimated that from 1991 to 2000 more than 2 million people emigrated from the country. In 1993-1994 emigration was at its highest and the majority of emigrants were economically active people, with close to half of them highly educated and/or qualified specialists. People were mostly migrating from the northern, western and eastern parts of the country, where the concentration of Russian speaking and German ethnic populations were the highest (Extended Migration Profile, 2010, p. 7). According to the Agency of the Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the principal countries where people migrated during these years were the Russian Federation, Germany, Belorussia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Israel. According to the Extended Migration Profile, the emigrants were mostly representatives of Russian, German and Ukrainian ethnic groups. (Extended Migration Profile, 2010, p. 33).

Nowadays, Kazakhstan is experiencing negative net migration, despite the fact that from 2004-2011 it had remained positive with more people coming to the Kazakhstan Republic than leaving it. In 2013, 24 384 people emigrated from country and 24 105 immigrated. The table below shows the total number of migrants in by year, as published by the Ministry of the National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan’s Committee on Statistics.



Graph 8 Total number of Kazakh emigrants: 2003 – 2013. Source: The Ministry of the National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan’s Committee on Statistics

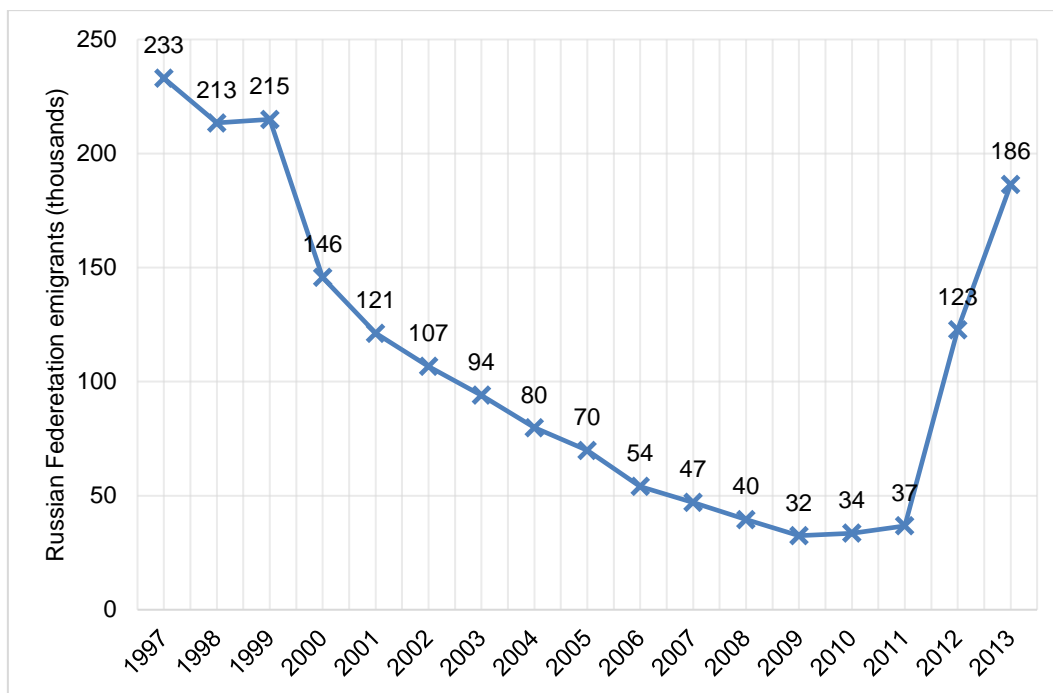
The largest estimated numbers of persons belonging to Kazakh Diasporas abroad are in Uzbekistan (1 500 000), China (1 300 000) and the Russian Federation (900 000), according to the Ministry of International Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

At the moment, the Russian Federation is one of the top immigration and emigration countries. Unfortunately, there is a lack of public data concerning the total number of people who have emigrated from Russia or the available data is incorrect; however, according to the UN (2015), there are about 11 million Russian emigrants worldwide.

The Migration Policy Centre (2013) reported that in 2011, according to consular statistics, there were estimated to be 1 706 103 Russian citizens residing permanently abroad and 162 301 living abroad on a temporary basis, equalling a total of 1 868 404 migrants. These numbers are confirmed by looking at destination countries' statistics, according to which 2 149 607 Russian migrants lived abroad in the years surrounding 2012.

As we can see, different organizations, authors, and experts show different numbers. And of course, it also depends on the way in which emigrants are calculated. As the Migration Policy Centre (2013) reported in its migration profile: "In non-CIS countries, consular statistics seem to underestimate Russian migrants mainly because registering is not compulsory: in the European Union, the ratio between destination and consular statistics stands at 1.3, while in the US and Israel, the same value stand respectively at 3.4 and 1.7. On the contrary, in the post-Soviet area, consular statistics seem to give better (and larger) estimates of Russian migrants as they probably capture a portion of temporary migrants who are here not counted by official statistics: in CIS countries, the ratio between destination and consular statistics stands in fact at 0.4."

2014 saw a federal law came into force, according to which all Russian citizens have to register their foreign citizenship or permanent/temporary residence permits abroad. Furthermore, the Federal State Statistics Service regularly collects data about people leaving the Russian Federation. The table below shows the tendency towards emigration between 1997 and 2013.



Graph 9 Number of people, who left the Russian Federation from 1997-2013. Source: The Federal State Statistics Service

According to the Migration Policy Centre at least 1 out of 2 Russian migrants live in the European Union, with Germany hosting the largest number, followed by Estonia and Latvia. Other preferred destinations are Ukraine, Israel and the United States of America.

The Centre also claimed that Russian migrants have an intermediate skill profile, 70.0% of which have a medium-high level of education with no significant differences according to destination. But in OECD countries, there is a huge mismatch between education and occupation level: 2 out of 3 (65.9%) Russian migrants were indeed employed in low-skilled jobs, such as “service, shop, craft and related trade workers”, as well as “plant and machine operators or assemblers”, or simply in “elementary occupations” (MPC – Migration Profile: Russia, 2013).

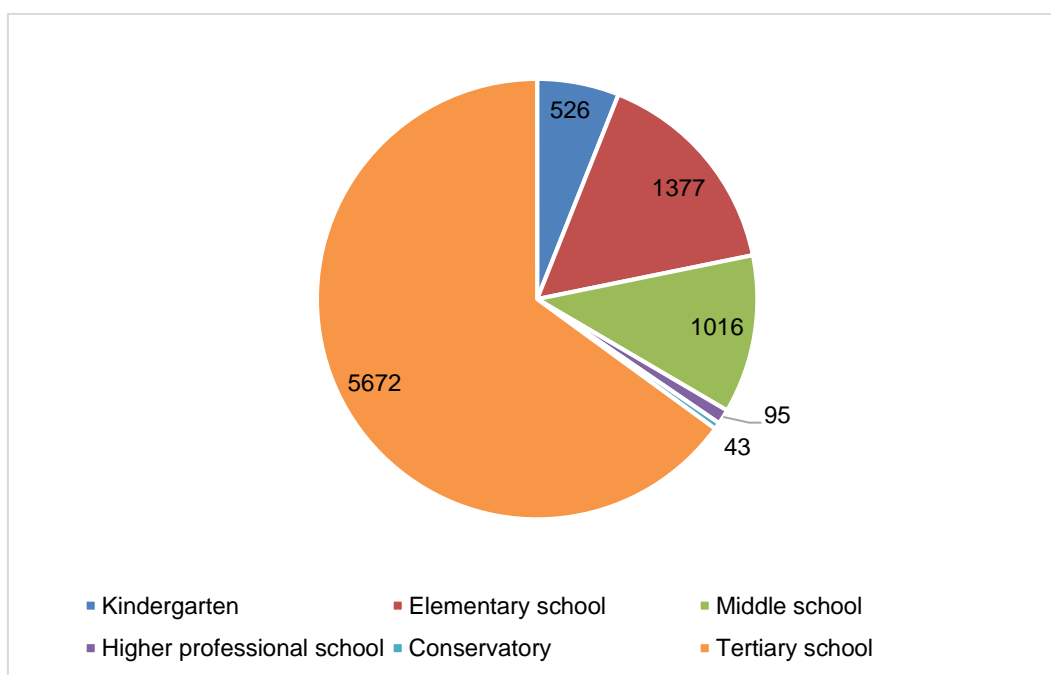
3.1.2 Migrants from Russia and Kazakhstan in the Czech Republic.

As we can see from the statistics, the Czech Republic isn’t the most popular destination for migrants from the Russian Federation or the Republic of Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, there is still a relatively large number of migrants from these two countries.

In the Czech Republic, there were 14 040 registered Russian citizens with temporary resident permits and 19 494 with permanent resident permits as of the end of 2015 (Czech Statistical Office, 2015). Interestingly, 57,11 % of all Russian citizens in

the Czech Republic are females. According to the census (2011), 17 872 people referred to themselves as the representatives of the Russian national minority. The latest data also showed that during the 2014, 465 people from the Russian Federation gained citizenship to the Czech Republic.

Russian migrants in the Czech Republic seem to be actively involved in economic and educational activities. 5 959 economically active migrants were registered in 2012 and 8 729 migrants were studying in various levels of school in the 2015/2016 academic year. Below is a table showing the data about Russian pupils and students in detail.



Graph 10 : Russian pupils and students at different levels of the education system in the Czech Republic as of 20.1.2016. Source: The Czech Statistical Office.

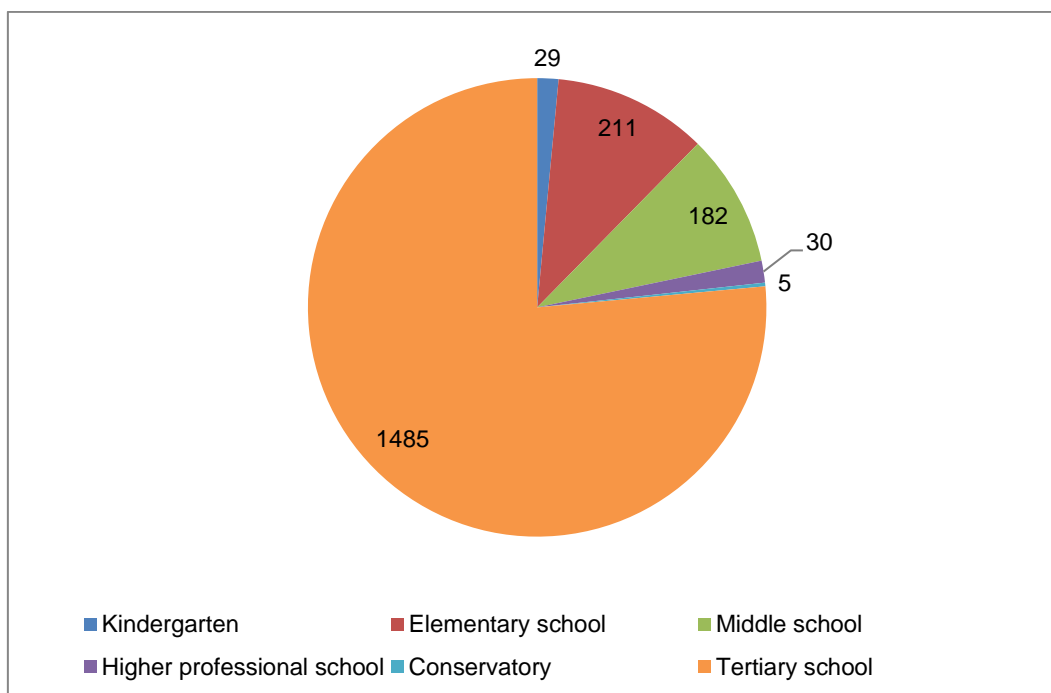
Out of 5 672 Russian students in tertiary education, 4 094 studied at public post-secondary institutions in the 2015/2016 academic year. Most of the students were working towards a Bachelor degree (3 963), followed by Master degree students (1 036) and PhD's (259).

In the Czech Republic, different “Russian” or Russian-speaking schools also exist such as: the Russian school in the Russian embassy; the school “Dialogue”, a Russian-Czech gymnasium; a Russian-Czech school “Veda”; the International Prague University; the Open European Academy of Economics and Politics; and the Russian Centre of Education in Prague, to name only a few.

Moreover, there are different NGO's which try to unite Russian speaking youngsters living in Prague. The most well-known are the “Association of Russian

speaking students and their supporters Artek”, Prague Inspiration, Club PRAGmatiky, Amiga and its informal group for Russian speaking students, “Express Yourself”, Prague meetings, and the theatre club KSI.

Kazakhstan citizens also have quite a large community in the Czech Republic. In 2015, according to the Czech Statistical Office, there were 5 324 (56,7 % females and 43,3% males) Kazakhs citizens living in the Czech Republic, 4 691 of them had residence permits of 12 months and longer, including 2032 permanent residents permits. People from Kazakhstan obtain different degrees of education at Czech schools.



Graph 11 Kazakh pupils and students at different levels of educational of educational system in the Czech Republic as of 20.1.2016. Source: The Czech Statistical Office

Slightly over half (869 from 1 485) of the total number of students from Kazakhstan enrolled in tertiary education studied at public post-secondary institutions in the 2015/2016 academic year, and as with their Russian counterparts, the majority were studying for a Bachelor degree (1 188), as well as a Master degree (215) and PhD degree (26).

Under an initiative of the Embassy of the Kazakhstan Republic a Kazakhstan student council was formed. Other important organizations in the lives of Kazakh people in the Czech Republic include the cultural centre «ЕЛИМ-ай» («My native land»), and an association of Kazakh youths in the Czech Republic named “Tarlan”.

According to migration system theory, migratory movements generally arise from the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries, and is therefore why

the next chapter is devoted to the historical, cultural and economic connections between the Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Czech Republic.

3.1.3 The Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic: historical, cultural and economic connections.

The movement of people has always been an integral part of human history, and similarly, the history of the titled countries tells of a frequent exchange of migrants. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries a relatively large number of Czechs moved to the Russian Empire. According to Kratochvil and Krichynkova (2009, pp. 61-62), a wave of romantic Russophile movements occurred during this period. The authors claim this was mostly because Russian foreign policy occasionally decided to support fellow Slavic countries during World War I and the Russian Empire, as an enemy of Austro-Hungary, was increasingly viewed as a possible saviour for Czechs. But Kratochvil and Krichynkova added:

“On the one hand, Czechs, ever since the 19th century, have perceived themselves as members of the larger family of Slavic nations and in the period of the national revival, the Russian Empire and Russians were idealized as the “Slavic oak” in the East and as the ultimate protection of Slavhood against the encroachment of the Germans from the West. Yet, on the other hand, being Czech has always been interpreted as belonging to Western civilization. This equally applies to religion (the predominance of Catholicism, but also the reformatory Hussite movement) and political allegiance (the Lands of the Czech Crown were part of the medieval Holy Roman Empire) as well as cultural identity. At the same time, Czechs – unlike Poles or the Baltic nations – were never exposed to a long-term influence from Russia prior to the second half of the 20th century” (Kratochvil and Krichynkova, 2009, pp. 61-62).

A peculiar phase of Czech-Russian contact is the work of the Czech Legions in the Russian Empire during the First World War and the Civil War. Immediately after the beginning of the First World War, many Czechs living in the Russian Empire decided to establish independent Czech military units. First they were fighting against the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but after the end of the World War I they started to fight on the side of anti-Bolshevik forces, supporting the White Movement. After the Bolsheviks consolidated power, Czechoslovakia became a main emigration destination of the White Movement’s adherents.

During this period, different Russian speaking schools were established for these political migrants; it was believed that Bolsheviks wouldn't hold power for long and they would be able to return soon. Therefore, their stay in Czechoslovakia was considered temporary, without the necessity to learn the Czech language. Hence, the establishment of schools where the education was only taught in Russian. Moreover, Prague was considered to be a possible Russian university centre and, as Ivan Savickij claimed, by approximately 1921 the Committee to Support Russian Students in Czechoslovakia (Комитет по обеспечению русских студентов в ЧСР) had been established. Amongst emigrants from the Russian Empire, Prague was known as the "Russian Oxford". In spite of the fact that the whole so-called "Russian action" and educational programme didn't really work in the end, around 3,5 thousand Russian migrants got their higher education in Czechoslovakia, as noted by Savickij (2012, pp. 54-55).

According to Kratochvil and Krichynkova (2009, p. 62), after the establishment of the Soviet Union (1922) there were different perceptions of it. Communists in Czechoslovakia were inspired by the new Soviet society, while contrariwise there was a strong critical attitude toward the Soviet Union coming from the legionnaires, politicians and anti-Bolshevik migrants.

The government of the USSR didn't have a positive attitude of Czechoslovakia in the beginning either, chiefly because of its acceptance of the White Movement's adherents. Only in 1934 were diplomatic relations between the two countries established, with an agreement of mutual help signed in 1935.

In World War II, part of Czechoslovakia was liberated by the Red Army. The composition of the Red Army was multinational and, according to different historical sources, Kazakhs also played a direct part in the liberation of Czechoslovakia. Later, as per the Yalta Conference, Czechoslovakia came under the political influence of the Soviet Union.

Post-World War II Czechoslovakia witnessed the Communists become the strongest party and the countries entrance into the socialist camp of Soviet satellite countries. The subordination to the Soviet Union caused major changes in Czech society. Communism became the state ideology, and Czechoslovakia fell under a shadow of repression. The Russian language was introduced in schools as a compulsory subject. Cultural contacts and official friendships between cities were developed. Different connections between the USSR and Czechoslovakia intensified and quite often there was an exchange of students and workers.

Kratochvil and Krichynkova (2009, p. 62) pointed out that although part of the post-war society believed in the ideals of socialism, the Soviet onslaught gradually caused the decline of genuine interest in the USSR, and even a hatred for all things Russian following the 1968 invasion and occupation. In the spring of 1968, Czechoslovakia started a nationwide movement for freedom that has come to be known as the Prague Spring. That August, the movement was crushed by the invasion of five Warsaw Pact countries under the leadership of Moscow. Seventy-Two Czechoslovak citizens were killed. Kratochvil and Krichynkova (2009, p.62) went on to say that: “the invasion of the Warsaw Treaty armies in 1968 that marked a deadly blow to any remaining positive feelings about the Soviet Union. Beyond the official propaganda, it would be impossible to find any sustained societal discourse that would refer to Russia/the Soviet Union in a positive manner.”

The events of 1968 represent the most tragic point in the Czech-Russian relations, and they continue to have a negative impact on them. Between 1968 and 1992, in accordance with an agreement between the governments of the USSR and Czechoslovakia on 16.10.1968, there were Soviet soldiers (Central Army Group) within the territory of Czechoslovakia, focusing on several strategic areas. Many of them travelled to Czechoslovakia as part of their mandatory military service in the army. Of course, there were not so many residents of Czechoslovakia willing to be friendly or help the soldiers, but in a few villages, friendships between local people and soldiers were also established.

Kratochvil and Krichynkova (2009, pp. 62-63) claimed that the recent history of democratic Czechoslovakia (or, after 1993, the Czech Republic) can be divided into three phases in regards to Russia: the first phase dates from 1989 to 1992, the second from 1993 to 1999 and the third one from 2000 until today. The first phase covers the phase during which the main task for Czech politicians was to ensure the “escape” of the country from the Soviet yoke, through the removal of Soviet troops, the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty Pact, and the weakening or dissolution of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The main task during this phase was to break the military and economic dominance of the Soviet Union over the country. During the second phase of relations between the states, Czech foreign policy regards Russia predominantly negative, since Russia opposed the Czech NATO entry and grew suspicious of the eastern EU enlargement. Moreover, from the perspective of the Czech government, there was occasional criticism of the Kremlin and Russian domestic policies during this phase, and the war in Chechnya in particular. The third phase, which started in 2000, led to a gradual

warming in mutual relations, according to Kratochvil and Krichynkova (2009, p. 63). The Czech NATO entry was forgotten for more pressing issues and both countries had to deal with more pragmatic questions of mutual concern, such as, for example, the preparation of the Czech Republic to enter EU and connected to it, visa issues and trade relations. According to authors (Kratochvil and Krichynkova, 2009, pp.61-62), this period was marked by a substantial increase in state visits as well. The Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov visited the Czech Republic in 2001. The following year, the Czech Prime Minister visited Russia and, finally, in March 2003, the visit of newly elected President, Vaclav Klaus, was interpreted as the ultimate reconciliation between the two countries. Later, in 2006, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the Czech Republic as well (Kratochvil and Krichynkova, 2009, pp. 61-62).

Vladimir Putin during his official visit to the Czech Republic in 2006 expressed his apology for the occupation of Czechoslovakia.

Putin: “The past should not be used for fanning anti-Russian sentiment. We don’t carry any legal responsibility for the past, but of course there is a moral responsibility.”

Klaus: “I thank president Putin for these words. I see no reason for me today, in 2006, to deal with what Brezhnev decided in 1968. We should focus on the future.” (Aktualně.cz ©2006; iDNES.cz ©2006)

By the beginning of the 21st century Czech-Russian relations were mostly of an economic character. Industries such as tourism, real estate, and mechanical engineering benefited from connections between the Russian Federation and the Czech Republic; tourists from the Russian Federation are one of the largest tourist groups in the Czech Republic.

Since 2014, however, the situation has changed due to the Ukrainian conflict. After the Maidan revolution in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, the Czech media has portrayed Russia, and especially Vladimir Putin, in various negative ways. In public discourse, voices concerned with “Russian aggression” and parallels with the events of 1968 started to be heard more often. Vladimir Putin was equated with Hitler and tourists from Russia weren’t wanted in some hotels, restaurants, and other places. Some politicians were even suggesting that visas should stop being given to Russians, especially those who support Putin or the annexation of Crimea.

Relations between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic, however, seem more stable and less ambiguous. Diplomatic relations between the Czech Republic and the Independent Republic of Kazakhstan were established in 1993; after eleven years,

in 2004, the first Kazakhstan embassy began functioning in Prague. Diplomatic, economic and cultural relations started to develop very dynamically. The same year, Vaclav Klaus, the former president of the Czech Republic, visited Kazakhstan, and in 2012 Nurslan Nazarbaeva visited the Czech Republic.

Nowadays, Kazakhstan is one of the priority countries for Czech export and cooperation in the field of education is growing rapidly. According to the Embassy of the Kazakhstan Republic in the Czech Republic, in 2005 the Embassy negotiated education possibilities for Kazakh students with representatives of Czech universities. Today, some students study at Czech universities through the governmental program “Болашақ³” (“Bolashak”).

3.2 Trip planning

This chapter provides portraits of some of the research participants, including their personal and family stories before arriving to the Czech Republic. It tries to outline the individuals’ values, desires and expectations during their study abroad and what kind of reasons and factors have played role in their decision making process about educational migration. The stories of all research participants are not presented here, but rather only a few of them, those, which it is believed, demonstrates the complexity of the decision making process and diversity of life situations the research participants experience. Some unnecessary details in the text were omitted to ensure the anonymity of the research participants.

Alla

Alla never thought that she would go somewhere to study abroad. She was born in a village and grew up in a small Siberian town. Her family never travelled abroad because both parents were school teachers and there was not enough money for such trips. Her family only travelled to Alla’s grandmothers once a year. *“It was such an exciting event because we had to pack our bags and I always liked it. The whole process when you go somewhere, that something new is waiting for you”*. When the time came to choose a university, Alla considered applying to a university in Saint Petersburg since one of her schoolmates was already studying there. *“She was some kind of guiding star. She worked*

³ Bolashak is the scholarship of the President of the Kazakhstan Republic with the purpose of improving the level of education of experts in Kazakhstan. This program has been operating since 1993 and finances the education of young Kazakh citizens abroad for the good of the country. The obligatory requirement of this program is that after obtaining an education abroad students would return to Kazakhstan and work there for at least 5 years.

in the tourist industry and went on business trips to different countries. This was also attractive to me, and I wanted to study at the same university she was. She was paying for her education, but I knew that my parents could not afford it. There were some budget places for free education, but only 4 of them for the entire country, and I understood that the chances of getting into one were very low”.

Meanwhile, the mother of Alla started to work at a private language school and once came home with the suggestion that Alla study in the Czech Republic. Alla agreed to it with enthusiasm: *“Of course I agreed to it. This private language school was constantly organising different international programs and colourful posters from the countries that students had travelled to were hanging in their office. I once saw pictures from Prague and thought that it would be great to visit it. I started to be interested in learning the Czech language even before I was going to be going anywhere. I was interested in Slavic culture and I thought that it would be great to know some other Slavic language”.*

Alla’s parents decided to take two loans out from the bank in order to pay for the language school and for accommodation in a dormitory during the first year, but warned her that she wouldn’t be able to return to Russia very often as tickets were quite expensive. Alla agreed not to do so; she didn't see it as a problem because the relationships inside the family were quite complicated. *“I’ve always had a strained relationship with my mom... or maybe it’s better to say that we’ve had some misunderstandings. And during this period, before I went to the Czech Republic, she started to complain about her father a lot and I didn’t like it. I thought that if I stayed somewhere close by, she would be visiting me and would be getting on my nerves. That’s why going somewhere far away was what the doctor ordered⁴”.*

During the spring, Alla and her parents began to collect all the necessary documents for a visa to the Czech Republic. Alla didn’t want to tell anybody about her plans, but during her prom the representative of the private language school came and gave her a certificate saying she was the only graduate who was going to continue an education in Prague.

The whole summer Alla had the feeling that she was **finally** going somewhere, that she would **finally** fly for the first time in her life, and that she would **finally** see something. *“I didn’t have any fear. I was curious”.* In spite of the fact that after the prom Alla started

⁴ Alla’s parents had recently divorced.

to date one boy, she didn't want to change her plans, and at 17 years of age she arrived in the Czech Republic.

Irina

Irina was 16 years old when her mother suggested she obtain her higher education in the Czech Republic. Her mother's friend told them about the possibility of getting education for free in the Czech Republic and suggested a trusted language school, the director of which she knew personally.

Irina wasn't happy about this. She was in love and dating her boyfriend, had very good friendships with her classmates; she didn't want to leave. Moreover, Irina is a big patriot of Russia and her native city, which she had considered to be the best place on earth. But, in the end, she thought that to get a European diploma wouldn't be such a bad idea. Like her friend told her: *"With a European diploma you will get a much better job here and you will get more money than a person who has the same position but with a Russian diploma"*. So she agreed to get a diploma abroad and return to Russia as soon as possible.

However, her mother kept telling her: *"What is there do in Russia? Stay there, find a life partner and live in Europe, where it's calm and safe"*. Irina didn't agree with her mom and also wanted to receive a Russian diploma through correspondence, together with the Czech education, so that in future she would have a European and a Russian diploma. The final decision about studying abroad was very emotional. She was a little bit afraid, as she would be alone for the first time, very far from home as well as her family and friends. But her mother's friend also knew some students who were already in Prague and helped Irina find a room in a flat with a girl from the same city, making Irina's adaptation to the new country smoother.

Angela

Angela never wanted to live in Russia and had been thinking about emigration for a long time. One of her father's colleagues lived in Prague and Angela and her family became interested in the Czech Republic as well. Angela read about the different possibilities of getting an education in Prague and what kind of options exist for permanent residence after her studies. She already had a master's degree from a Russian university, but decided that it would be better to get a European one, as it would help with later inclusion into the Czech labour market. She also came to the Czech Republic as a tourist once, to see if she would like to live in the country.

Before Angela actually moved to the Czech Republic, she knew precisely what kind of university and faculty she would apply. She also knew that after graduating from a Czech University foreign students have open access to the Czech labour market, without any need for a work permit. Angela's plan was to learn the Czech language through a one-year language course, then to get a diploma from a Czech university, get a trade licence, get a job and on that basis, change her student long-term residency to one based on her work or business status. Steps were planned even for bigger dreams such as having a family house near Prague. This dream was supported mainly by her father, who generously financed all her expenses as he always wanted his daughter to live in Europe.

Angela was attracted to the European life style, its beautiful architecture and the possibilities of travelling in the Schengen Area without any restrictions. So finally, at age 22, she came to Prague together with her best friend, leaving her long-term boyfriend back home.

Svetlana

Svetlana had already earned two higher education degrees in Russia. It was pretty popular getting two different Master's degrees at the same time, so she thought that if one degree is great, then two is even better, and, moreover, you never know which one will be the most useful. However, even after graduating from both universities and finding a job, she wasn't happy as there was no life partner in her life. She was 26 and all her classmates were married, pregnant, or having kids - she wanted the same. However, she had a feeling that either all the men were taken or they were looking for kind of model: a thin girl, with blond hair and, of course, on high heels. She didn't feel that she fit this image.

At one point, Svetlana and her friend Anna had gone to a summer school in Europe, where Anna met a guy from the Czech Republic who fell in love with her. After the girls returned to Russia, Anna started exchanging emails with the guy from Prague. Later, their relationship developed and they were engaged. Their story became an inspiration for Svetlana. She understood that maybe it would be easier to find a partner somewhere else rather than in Russia. This opinion was also supported by different dating agency advertisements, which referred to a demographic problem in Russia and offered to arrange dates with foreigners. Svetlana, however, didn't trust these agencies and knew it would be better to just go abroad and meet a guy there. After some time, she learned about the possibility of studying for free in the Czech Republic and thought that it would be the better to go abroad. So she used some savings and money she had inherited and paid for the one-year language course and for accommodation in a dormitory.

Lisa

Lisa was very active during her school years in Kazakhstan, organising different community events, singing, and writing articles for local newspapers. When the time came to decide on a university, she considered applying to Russian universities in Moscow and in Saint Petersburg. She wanted to move away from Kazakhstan since she didn't feel at home there. Lisa claimed the reason was mainly the usage of the Kazakh language. *"I don't know the language, and nowadays the Kazakh language is strongly promoted. So you have to learn it... but it's not mine... I don't know it at all, even after 11 years of learning it at school"*.

One day, Lisa's mother suggested she go to Prague to get an education, but her father wasn't keen on this idea. *"At first, father didn't want to let me go. I am the only child in the family. But then both parents told me that I had to decide what would be better for myself. I thought... thought about it for half a year. I considered the pros and cons since I was a very active person and it was very important for me to stay active. Moreover, I had been thinking of moving to Russia. However, I weighed everything - what studying in the Czech Republic or Russia would bring me - and decided on the Czech Republic. First of all, because I could get an education for free here and that I could learn something interesting"*. The other reason why studying in the Czech Republic weighed in favour of studying in Russia was that Lisa broke up with her boyfriend, who lived in Moscow; so Prague actually presented a new chapter in her life and she has chosen it.

Eugene

Eugene also didn't consider Kazakhstan his home, even though he was born there and has spent his entire life living there with his parents. His family owned a rather successful business, and after graduating from university Eugene could have worked in his father's company. Instead, he wanted to find a new home for himself and his girlfriend. Eugene and Olga didn't consider Russia, as they thought that the quality of life and possibilities for self-realisation are worse than in Kazakhstan. They were especially concerned about the level of criminality, and decided that Russia wouldn't be a safe place to live and raise kids in the future. The option to come to Europe seemed better, especially through education. *"Because if you want to live in Europe and have a good job, it's better to have a European diploma"*. So they decided that Eugene would go to the Czech Republic first and Olga would follow him in one year, as soon as she finished university in Kazakhstan.

Discussion:

As it's possible to see from these short portraits of the research participants, the reasons for obtaining an education abroad were quite different and very often it was a combination of various factors in the person's life. Somebody was curious about life in Europe and an opportunity to live and study in the Czech Republic seemed like an interesting experience. Other students were enticed by the prestige of a European diploma and saw studying in the Czech Republic as the way to get better work than in Russia or Kazakhstan.

Other research participants, especially right after school, had a dilemma concerning which university to apply to and the possibility of a free education in the Czech Republic simply had more advantages than other options. Some students didn't believe in fair competition for the budget places, placements in Russia and Kazakhstan for low-income students who then receive free education, claiming that the corruption in education is very wide spread. As Polina explained from Russia: *"I wanted to apply to university in Moscow or Saint Petersburg, but my parents had doubts that it would work without protective connections. And both the MGIMO (Moscow State Institute of International Relations) and MGU (Moscow State University) are so expensive. My father told me that we didn't have the kind of money needed to study there and that it would be easier to send me abroad than to apply to our university..."*

Even with quite serious investments in education abroad, the research participants claimed it would be still less expensive than paying for higher education in Russia or Kazakhstan. For example, enrolment fees at some universities in Moscow can vary between 70 000 roubles and 350 000 roubles per year.

Ljuba from Kazakhstan said: *"I didn't know how to get an MA degree in Kazakhstan. There is no free education. Only by winning some grants, but that's not guaranteed...they usually give grants only for some special professions. And the competition is very high"*.

In the research participants' narratives, it was quite obvious that their parents played a large role in the decision making process. In some cases, the initiative to get a foreign education came directly from the parents, while in others parents just supported the children in their decision. It's interesting that in some cases the students professed that the decision to come to the Czech Republic was made regardless of their own wishes. According to some students, their parents sometimes tried to fulfil their own ambitions or dreams through their children, as they hadn't had such opportunities to travel behind

the iron curtain. For example, Alla claimed: *“I think it was my mother’s dream to live abroad, to use foreign languages every day. But she wasn’t able to fulfil it when she was young”*.

Parents sponsoring these studies abroad wanted to ensure comfort for their children and, in some cases, for themselves in the future. Some of my research participants claimed that their parents have plans to follow them when they are retired and once their children become successful and have a stable position in the Czech Republic. Meanwhile, the children are sent to monitor the situation in the country, to learn about the immigration laws, about business possibilities and purchasing real estate.

Through observation and interviews with the research participants it also became apparent that in some cases getting an education was part of a long-term plan, and the first step in opening other doors and possibilities in the Czech Republic, as well as gaining permanent residency in the future. Immigration to the Czech Republic (or emigration from Russia and Kazakhstan) had been their dream and studying at a Czech university was a part of a plan for better inclusion in the Czech labour market or, alternatively, the international labour market.

Some students held that leaving their native Russian or Kazakh city was always their desire. Some felt they couldn’t breathe there, everything was too predictable and boring. Some of my research participants also had quite stable jobs in Russia or Kazakhstan, some were in a long-term relationships or even married, but they wanted to change something and were not satisfied with how their life was unfolding. In the course of in-depth conversations with students, it was clear that sometimes their educational migration was something like “a good excuse to leave” or a “an excuse to exit a complicated situation”. In some cases, young migrants run from a partner/husband, a mother that is “too interfering”, or just from their social surroundings, declaring “that they have never felt on the same wave-length as other people”.

Some research participants were very negative about their country of origin. Research participants from Russia said that they wanted to escape from the “Russian winter”, “Russian roads and Russian fools”. Talking with students with such attitudes, gave me the feeling they were blaming Russia and the Russian government for all possible sins and thinking that somewhere abroad would be one hundred percent better. There would be better people, better roads, better education, better ecology, etc. Some students from Kazakhstan were also quite critical towards their country of origin, pointing out the high level of corruption, problems with housing, etc. Some research participants also

made complaints about language reforms and restrictions on the usage of the Russian language. But it's important to mention, that amongst research participants from Kazakhstan, the majority of students were very patriotic and proud to be citizens of Kazakhstan. These research participants saw more possibilities for self-realisation and a career there and were planning to return to their home country as soon as possible.

There were also some gender aspects in the decision making process. For example, for some young males, educational migration was a family strategy to dodge compulsory military service in Russia⁵. The case of Alexander is illustrative of this situation. Right after graduating basic school in Russia, his mother sent him to study in the Czech Republic as she feared he wouldn't pass the entrance exams to university in Russia and would therefore have to participate in compulsory military service. In the Czech Republic her only son was safe.

For some Russian women, educational migration to the Czech Republic was a sort of strategy to meet a life partner, as the demographic situation in Russia isn't balanced with approximately 11 million more women than men in the country; as Tatyana expressed: *"I think all girls come here to get married"*.

Research participants choose the Czech Republic as an immigration country in particular for a number of reasons. First of all, as has already been mentioned, for the opportunity to get a free university education when the foreigner knows Czech. Furthermore, the Czech Republic is usually seen as a culturally and linguistically similar country to Russian speaking students. As Egor from Russia concluded: *"For me, it was easier to learn Czech and study in it than, for example, in German or in Spanish"*. Another reason why people choose the Czech Republic for migration in particular was the relatively low costs for living, especially in comparison with Western European countries and in some cases with Russia and Kazakhstan. As Boris from Kazakhstan stated: *"Rich youngsters go to London or to the USA, but the middle class goes to the Czech Republic"*.

Students also chose the Czech Republic because they already had some relatives, friends or classmates here. They could gain first-hand knowledge information about the Czech Republic and get advice as to which language school they should enrol in. Many

⁵ Every man from age 18 has an obligation to complete their military service and this obligation lasts until the age of 27. In Russia, the military service is still a threat to many young Russians and their parents, most of all because of wide spread hazing. One of the legal opportunities to avoid the military service is emigration, amongst illegal options is a bribe for a medical certificate claiming an inability to do this duty.

researches on international migration have proved that social networks seem to be the most trusted source of potential migrants and in some literature it has been called the “friends and family effects”, which help people perform the actual act of migration. (Koser and Pinkerton, 2004). Take, for example, Veronica, who had a classmate that was writing a blog about his life as a student in the Czech Republic. He advised her to come to Poděbrady in order to learn the Czech language and helped her at the beginning of her stay. Almost the same situation happened to Egor, who came to Prague on the recommendation of his friend who had moved to the Czech Republic just a year earlier. Boyfriends and girlfriends also followed the student migrants to the same language schools and were applying for student visas rather than family reunification, even though the Czech Republic allows family reunification with a civil partner.

Of course, the reasons and factors for educational migration to the Czech Republic are very mixed. Typically, different reasons are connected together in combination with it being the “right time” to migrate. However, it is worth devoting special attention in the next chapter to the role of an imagined-Europe in the decision, as it was mentioned by all research participants and emerged as an extremely important topic in their narratives.

3.3 The imagined Europe

As we can see from the previous chapter, students first of all considered the Czech Republic as part of the European Union and the Schengen Area. Nowadays, Europe is one of the main destinations for migrants from all over the world and it’s not surprising that young people from Russia and Kazakhstan are attracted to it. It is worth mentioning, however, that in the research participants’ interviews the students had some sort of common imagination about Europe in general, and about its high living standards and the high quality of European education specifically. From the author’s point of view, those positive images of Europe played quite a large role in the students’ decision-making process about migration.

Powerful images of place have been discussed by many geographers (Wright, 1947, Gregory, 1994), and the geographical imagination has a central place in humanities and social science. For example, Alan P. Marcus (2009, p. 481), in his study of Brazilian immigration to the United States and the geographical imagination, defined it as “the spatial knowledge – real or abstract that allows individuals to imagine place”. According to Stephen Daniels (2011, p. 182), “the imagination has conventionally taken up

a location somewhere between the domains of the factual and fictional, the subjective and objective, the real and representational”. The geographic imagination can be used to understand the connection between identity and space, the production of spatial meanings and myths and the individuals within them. Theo (2003) asserts that, there are different imaginations that push people to emigrate.

If we look at the history again, it’s possible to see that the imagination of Europe as part of the Russian Empire began its formation during the rule of Peter the Great, who opened the “window to Europe”, as it was becoming a model of the human development, the embodied idea of progress, the cradle of science and culture. In the course of Peter the Great’s reign, regular diplomatic relations with main European countries were established and as a result of his “Grand Embassy” to Europe (1697-1698), different innovations in economics, politics, culture and society were made in the Russian Empire. Peter the Great was inspired by the way things worked in Europe and convinced that the Russian Empire was too backwards. In his travels, he learned about the latest technology, economic theory and political science, and later implemented this knowledge while governing.

At the same time as the reforms in the political, economic and educational systems, there were very significant changes in common lifestyles: beards were shaved off; European-style clothing came to fashion; western-style tea parties, balls and other social gatherings were introduced. There was the notion that European customs were in several respects superior to Russian traditions. Travelling to Europe and gaining experience and knowledge there became popular in the Russian Empire. Young Russian noblemen were encouraged to broaden their horizons abroad and adopt western values.

Peter the Great’s innovations and the manner in which he ruled the country were a subject of discussion amongst historians and analytics. Some of them were against the “European path” of development for Russia and contended that it had to change in its own manner and with the retention of old traditions. Others argued that Peter the Great was a man who succeeded in raising his country to a European level. Despite differences in opinions, Europe became part of the fashion and a matter of prestige, especially amongst noblemen. It became a popular destination for studying, travelling, relaxing, receiving treatments, investing money or escaping during unstable times.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, some politicians, celebrities and other elites started to send their children to study abroad. Nowadays, this trend has yet to end and sending children abroad, especially to Western countries, is still common for the elite.

This, despite politicians constantly speaking about the importance of patriotism and necessity to improve the prestige of local universities, which sometimes generates resonance within society. However, if in 1990s, sending children abroad was mainly the prerogative of the “upper class”, by the beginning of 21st century it had also become accessible to representatives of the “middle class”.

Tourist and real estate agencies, language schools and foreign universities try to support a positive image of Europe through advertisements and marketing strategies oriented towards selling the “dream of a better life” in Europe. Take, for example, one advertisement offered by an agency:

“Want to get a secondary or higher education in Europe and live in a prosperous developed country? Now the dream is closer! We’ll open the door to a civilized life in Europe! The Czech Republic is a modern dynamic developing state in the heart of Europe.”

The image of a “perfect” Europe is very often built in contrast with Russia, as another advertisement shows. This agency, which offers a Czech language course for Russian speakers, asks students to choose the life they want, showing the following four images:



Picture 1 Been wanting to get away from Russia for a long time? Source: Social network page vk.com



Picture 2 Would you like to live in a clean and beautiful country? Source: Social network page vk.com



Picture 3 In Prague, studies, new friends, parties and travelling are waiting for you. Source: Social network page vk.com



Picture 4 Choose your reality. Source: Social network page vk.com

Many of my research participants actually dreamed about a European life-style full of travelling, intercultural exchange and a slower pace of life than in their country of origin before their arrival in the Czech Republic. The romanticised image of Europe, connected with its cultural heritage and architecture, had also prevailed. As Igor noted, *“I had always dreamed of living in Europe. I especially like gothic Prague. I found it extremely beautiful and magical!”*

The perception of Europe as a social-oriented entity with an effective welfare system, with high-importance placed on ecology, and a place where the application of democracy and human rights work on the scale of a single individual, was fairly common amongst the research participants. Since Europe portrays itself as an entity of people from different cultures and diversity - well discussed in public discourse - some people think that there is no discrimination or inequality among those living in Europe, that the whole of Europe is united. As Galina expressed, *“I thought that in Europe people smile and are more open and that all European countries are united and have good relations”*.

Later, the research participants’ expectations and their perfect image of Europe clashed with the reality and the problems of everyday life living in a foreign country. Accordingly, their primary plans and strategies started to change with the unexpected situations they faced.

3.4 Disillusion vs. excitement. From the process of applying for a visa and a long-stay for study purposes until the end of the first year in the Czech Republic

Visa application process:

After making the final decision to get a higher education in the Czech Republic, choosing a Czech language school and paying the course fee, students start the process of applying for a visa or a long-stay, since citizens of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan have visa obligations to enter EU countries.

The experience with the visa application process differs considerably among research participants. Some students found this process to be very smooth and unproblematic, while others (especially those who applied for a visa after 2008) faced different complications with visa documents, unpleasant interviews at the Czech consulate and terms for visa decisions that went unfulfilled.

The story of Natalia from North Kuakas illustrates one such case. Natalia wanted to start obtaining her education in the Czech Republic in September 2010. During the spring, she applied to a Czech language school in Prague and paid the course fee of 6 000 Euros. Natalya got the document package from the language school and started to collect all the other necessary documents right away. In June, she went to Moscow, the nearest Czech consulate to her city, so as to apply for a visa. She expected to get it at the end of August as the official decision period to grant a visa was 2 months.

Natalia filled in the application, brought the insurance certificate, which covered her first year in the Czech Republic, contracts with the language school and dormitory, proof of her financial means, clean records from the Russian and Czech police. All documents had to be translated into Czech, and notarized at the Czech consulate in Moscow. Natalia successfully submitted all documents and returned to Moscow at the end of August, expecting to get her visa and start her Czech language course in Prague on the 1st of September.

In spite of this, when she went to the Czech consulate to collect her visa, they announced that the decision had yet to be made. She asked why, but nobody was able to answer. She continued to visit the Czech consulate almost every day, inquiring about the status of her visa application.

Natalia: *“The legitimate period for a decision on the visa ended and I started to ask why I couldn’t get my documents? Why I couldn’t get a clear response if I would get the visa or not? They kept saying that they didn’t know and that the consul decides everything. I called the woman from the language school, explained my situation, and asked if she could call to the Czech consulate and find out what was going on. I thought that people from the language school might have connections and some influence at the Czech consulate. I was living in Moscow and didn’t know what would become of myself. I was just waiting for the decision. It’s good that my aunt lived there and at least I had place to stay.”*

In the end it turned out that one document from the Czech police was missing; this came as a surprise to Natalia since all submitted documents were checked by an officer when she applied for the visa, and she received an official document as proof.

“This whole process was torture. I only got the visa and came to the Czech Republic in November. I was waiting for a decision about my visa application for 4 months. Even though I missed two months of the language course and accommodation in the dormitory, nobody returned any money.”

Moreover, Natalia had to have two interviews with the officer at Czech consulate instead of the usual one. The first interview was in the Russian language and Natalia was asked why she had decided to go to the Czech Republic, what were her interests there, what kind of language school she was going to be studying at and how many hours of Czech language she would have. She was invited for the second interview after it was determined that the one document was missing. The second interview was in the Czech language. Natalia: *“I was shocked. I asked how I was supposed to answer questions. I don’t know the Czech language yet.”* Fortunately, it was possible to have a Czech-Russian translator from the Czech consulate during the interview for free. The questions were quite similar. *“They were comparing answers from the first interview and when something didn’t match, they were pointing them out strictly, like, ‘look, the first time you said something different!!!’”*

Of course, the suspicion of the Czech consulate and its attempts to catch someone in a lie or uncover an aspiration to stay permanently in the Czech Republic don’t give students the feeling that they are welcome. Furthermore, some students give up on the complicated visa process in the end, leaving their dream of studying at a Czech university unfulfilled.

The problems associated with non-EU foreigners obtaining a student visa to the Czech Republic got the attention of the Czech media. Richard Smejkal, the director of the language school Uniprep, pointed out the problems with Visapoint⁶ in a report for Radio Wave (2012). According to Smejkal, sometimes students (especially those from the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) couldn't even register for the visa application process, nor the personal interview at the Czech consulate: “One of the problems, which we face as an institution and for which there is no help, is that students have very big problems with getting to our representative office (consulate). This is where the majority of problems happen”.

Another complicated phase of the visa application process is in the verification of all necessary documents for long-term student visas or for long-term stays for study purposes. Besides a filled-in application form, 2 photographs and a travel document, students have to bring confirmation of enrolment into their studies, proof of accommodation for the whole period of their stay in the Czech Republic, health insurance and funds to cover their stay (funds are required to be 15 times the amount of the existential minimum – 2 200 CZK for 2012 - for the first month and double the amount of the existential minimum for every month afterwards). Upon request, students also have to bring a criminal record check and a medical report that he or she doesn't suffer from a serious illness.

Reports on the Czech national radio from 14.2.2012 criticized the complicated process of applying for a student visa and presented the dissatisfaction felt by the university staff and students themselves. “Foreign high school students very often have to wait for several long months till they get a Czech student visa. The bureaucracy of the [Czech] authorities discouraged them so much, that in the end they didn't even come for a semester. Even university rectors don't like the rules of granting a long-term stay and want to change the situation”. University representatives, first of all, complained about the requirement that all documents must be notarized, even though they contain an official university stamp and the rectors' signature. Another problem is that the whole decision process for a student visa usually takes far more time than is stated in the immigration law. The Technical University in Ostrava has done an analysis of the processing time for student visa applications: “It is from 59 to 107 days, while the legal limit is 60 days. This way students can't start their studies on time”, says rector Ivo Vondrak.

⁶ Visapoint is the internet system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic through which foreigners must register their long term visa applications. This system was introduced in 2009

The Ministry of the Interior (2012), in reaction to this reporting, wrote that according to their statistics, applications for long-term residency permits for the purpose of study and for “other” educational activities, are on average resolved 44 days after the date of application submission to a Czech consulate. The Ministry of the Interior also proclaimed that the requested proof of accommodation and proof of sufficient funds from the applicants is in the interest not only of the Czech Republic, but the foreigner who intends to reside in the Czech Republic as well, so as to ensure they are guaranteed a standard of living. In addition, the definition of proof of accommodation was refined in the Alien Act from 1.1.2011, as “in the past there was a common practice that many foreigners presented proof of accommodation containing facts, which were not possible to verify or documents that were made without the knowledge of the owner or user of the property, or in buildings, that were not designed for housing” (The Ministry of the Interior, 2012).

Some of the research participants indeed didn't have very regular proof of accommodation and wanted to find accommodation after arriving in the Czech Republic on their own. This decision was frequently made since students didn't want to live in a dormitory, didn't want to sign a contract with an unknown real estate manager from a distance and were afraid that the rental flat or dormitory room wouldn't match the pictures from the internet. But because of the visa application process they used the services of language schools or agencies to provide them the proof of accommodation. Usually this paper/document costs about 1 500-2 000 CZK.

This was the case for Milana. She paid a language school for proof of accommodation in a dormitory for the first year of her stay in the Czech Republic. She had an acquaintance living in Prague who had a vacant flat, where she could stay during her first few months in Prague. Milana didn't want to live in a dormitory or rent a flat as she and her mother were going to buy a flat in Prague as soon as possible, and she was able live with their family acquaintance until that time came. So the proof of accommodation was only necessary for the visa application process.

The narratives of other research participants demonstrated that the story of Natalia, who came to the Czech Republic two months after her studies officially started, wasn't the only one to experience non-adherence of the legal terms on a visa decision made by the Ministry of the Interior. However, it's important to mention that this was more common for students who came to the Czech Republic after the 2008 economic crisis, after which

the Czech immigration laws became stricter. From those research participants who came before, I heard quite positive stories about the visa application process.

One of the examples is Alla's, who came to the Czech Republic in 2007. *"I didn't even have to go to the Czech consulate personally. Everything was made by the language school employee. It was 2007, and one's presence during the visa application process wasn't necessary. I just brought my travel document and insurance to the language school in Krasnoyarsk and they said that they would inform me in August about my visa. I never even thought that I wouldn't get it or that some problems might occur. It wasn't so popular to study in the Czech Republic at the time."*

Interestingly, some of my research participants, didn't want to tell anybody about their trip until they finally got their visa and everything was confirmed, as they were afraid of jinxing their trip, and weren't sure if they would get visa or not. Others wanted to keep their trip secret because they were afraid that there would be too many people who might also be interested in going to the Czech Republic to study. Alla: *"I didn't want to tell anybody that I was going to the Czech Republic, but the language school wanted to make an advertisement for themselves and came to my prom and gave me a diploma saying that I was the only student going to study in Prague! Representative of the language school gave me this diploma in front of the whole school, and of course everybody started to ask me why I hadn't told anybody before. Some people began saying that if they had known, they would have gone with me. I had one classmate whose mom was followed her everywhere. My father told me that if this classmate knew, her mom would have pushed Svetlana onto me and I would have had to make her a nanny in Prague. Of course I didn't want that and I kept my silence. When everybody found out that I was going to Prague, it was already too late for applications. Of course, the mom of my classmate Svetlana came and said 'why didn't you say something earlier? I could have sent Svetlana with you'. At that moment I started to think about how great it was that I had kept silent about my trip"*.

Some didn't want to parade around their final decision to go abroad for studies because there was a negative attitude associated with this idea. This was especially the case for students who already had a university degree, a stable job and serious relationships in Russia or Kazakhstan. Often, their friends and relatives didn't understand why they would want to go somewhere abroad and start everything over again. Galina: *"Nobody knew that I was going to the Czech Republic until I got a visa and said goodbye to everybody. I didn't*

want to say anything in advance about my trip because everybody would try to talk me out of it”.

Coming to the Czech Republic: accommodation

After the students had received their visas, packed their luggage, said goodbye to their relatives and friends, and boarded the plane, they finally arrived in Prague. Most of the students were met right at the airport by language school representatives, while others were met by their acquaintances living in Prague. Usually, the first thing they saw in Prague was their new place of residence: most often a room in a dormitory or rented flat.

As Marie Jelínková and Marek Canek wrote in their article “Na ubytovně” (2008), accommodation for most migrants coming to the Czech Republic is often arranged as part of a service package through some kind of intermediary, which may be not so convenient. As was already mentioned above, very often the students didn’t have other options other than to arrange accommodation via intermediaries or through the internet because of Czech legislation related to foreigners and the visa requirements. The majority of students are usually accommodated in state or private dormitories, which are arranged by language schools. In order to get a student visa, they must prove the existence of accommodation for the entire length of the visa they are applying for, so students must pay for accommodation in a dormitory they’ve only seen pictures of on the internet a year in advance of actually going to the Czech Republic. Obviously, reality was sometimes a little bit different than what was presented on the internet and many research participants were quite disappointed on their first day in the Czech Republic due to the living conditions.

Some assumed that they would be living in comfortable modern dormitories. However, after they arrived in Prague and moved to their new residence, they found the living conditions in the dormitories unsuitable. However, because they had already paid for the entire academic year and it wasn’t possible to have the money refunded, they decided to accept the situation, not wanting to raise their migration costs.

Angela: *“We lived in a dorm, which was facilitated by school. But we paid for it in advance. When we arrived, we expected a European dormitory but we found ourselves in a Soviet one. It wasn’t exactly what we had been dreaming about. But the contract was for a year and we had paid for the whole year, so we stayed there for that period. If we had known before about the quality of housing, we would have moved out earlier. We weren’t happy with the area and due to the absence of a kitchen we couldn’t cook there either”.*

In the interviews with the research participants it's obvious that some of them had certain expectations associated with life in Europe. Some of them thought that living standards would be higher, but by living in some dormitories they were disappointed. Moreover, students usually imagined Prague as something other than a town with quite a large number of socialist apartment blocks, largely due to well-known tourist brochures and advertisements: *"I was looking forward to the narrow streets of Prague, to old European architecture, but ended up in an ugly socialistic housing estate"*, claimed Igor who used to live in Hostivar.

Regina also paid for a dormitory that would cover her entire academic year, but arrived in Prague with her father, who wanted to ensure her daughter would have accommodation in a good place. As they were sitting in the dormitory next to reception, they met a Russian speaking student, who was leaving the dormitory and he started to chat with Regina's father: *"Why did you bring your daughter here? Everybody takes drugs here. Watch your daughter!"* Regina reported that her father was so shocked that first day, he didn't know what to do. *"The money had already been paid. What can we do?"*

Some of research participants were in a better position and had some friends or acquaintances in the Czech Republic willing to help them with accommodation. The so-called "family and friends effect" (Massey, 2005, p. 30) facilitated and ensured initial acceptance into a new space (Pořízková, 2009, p. 53). For example, Irina found her first residence in the Czech Republic through the daughter of her mother's acquaintance, a woman who has lived in Prague for a year and was looking for roommates to rent a flat together at the time. Irina's mother didn't want her daughter to live in a dormitory because of the possible bad influences she could be exposed to through life in a dormitory, which are known for their parties. Instead, she believed 16-year-old Irina would be better off living with a family acquaintance. Irina didn't know in advance where she would be living, she relied completely on the family acquaintance and saw the flat, which they had to share, only when she moved to Prague.

Kristina also wanted to rent a room or flat in Prague, but she didn't have any friends or acquaintances in Prague. She decided to pay for the dormitory for at least 3 months and stay there while she found another suitable accommodation. However, when she arrived, some problems had occurred and she learned that there was no place for her in the dormitory.

Kristina: *"I had paid for 3 months' accommodation in a dormitory. I only did it for such a short time because I knew from the beginning that I wouldn't want to live there. But*

when I arrived some problems occurred. In Hostivar, where everybody lived, it was only possible to be accommodated for half a year or for the whole year. But not for three months. We arrived at midnight and they (language school staff) told me they would accommodate me in a dorm at another university, but they couldn't take me there now. I had to stay in Hostivar all night after three days of travelling. The following day, I tried to resolve the situation, but in the end I took the money which I had paid and moved to a flat, where girls from the same language school lived and who occasionally had a spare room. I had my own room, but without furniture, without anything”.

Part of the problem for some research participants in dealing with accommodation is that in the first few months the majority of students come to the Czech Republic full of excitement, attending parties, making new acquaintances and having new experiences. Most students experience a classic honeymoon stage in the process of adapting to a new country: they are excited about their new surroundings and are eager to explore the new country and new people. During this period, it was possible to hear exciting telephone calls from students to their parents about how “they are glad to be in Prague and that they would like to stay there forever”.

Life in a dormitory is especially connected with fun and non-stop parties, and some of the students were satisfied with that fact as it corresponded exactly with their expectation of studying abroad. Dormitories are well known as a common place for parties, alcohol usage and sometimes drugs; however, the students who rent or have their own flat, of course, also experience life with greater freedom and without the social controls they would have had if they lived with their parents, as many did in their country of origin. As Chiang-Hom's (2004) study suggested “because parachute kids or unaccompanied minors experience a greater level of freedom from their parents or other adult supervision, they are often less fearful of trying out typically discouraged behaviours such as smoking and drinking. They also have greater access to more spending money than other adolescents due to the large allowances they receive from their parents to cover all their living expenses”. (Chiang-Hom, 2004, cit. according to Tsong and Liu, 2009, p. 369).

Sometimes, this behaviour acts in contradiction to the purpose of the stay, which is to study, and some language schools try to arrange at least a little student supervision. One of the instruments of students control is monitoring their class attendance at the language school. As Richard Smejkal, the director of Uniprep language school, claimed on the radio show, Crossings (Radio Wave, 2012): “If student absences total more than 15%, then a special procedure starts running. Of course, the student will first be invited to explain his

or her absence. But if the student doesn't come, unfortunately, we have to notify the relevant authorities at the Ministry of the Interior. This happens. I don't judge the person if he or she violated it (the purpose of stay in the Czech Republic) intentionally or there was a legitimate explanation for it - that this person just doesn't like it here”.

Some language schools also provide students' parents access to an online system, where they can study their children's progress and control their class attendance. However, this long-distance monitoring doesn't always work as the students themselves are responsible for their studies and academic success.

Together with their scholastic responsibility, they also have to take care of day-to-day living responsibilities such as shopping, cooking, supervising their finances and bills, finding doctors in case they need them, etc. For some of the research participants, it was the first time they were without adult guidance and doing things on their own. Their independence, of course, has both positive and negative effects on them. For example, Lisa expressed that: *“I was very nervous because I was only 18 years old and I was a child. Everything was new for me. I'd never lived alone before. I didn't even know how to cook. My mom packed my luggage and I always got some instructions through Skype from her. But it was very hard. I didn't have friends here and I felt very uncomfortable here during the first 3 months. I was afraid that I wouldn't get into the university and that my parents had paid so much money for me to be here - what if I disappointed them?”*

According to Tsong and Liu (2009, p. 370): “This early independence is felt in the parachute kids' emotional experience and day-to-day activities such as being responsible for finances, chores, and grades. At the same time, they are also experiencing other developmental tasks, such as identity formation, engaging in interpersonal and social relationships, and re-negotiating relationships with their parents”.

Moreover, students also have to deal with adaptation to a new language, culture and living conditions. Some students need less time to adapt, while others need more. As Alex said: *“It wasn't so horrible, but it was difficult during the first 9 months. I was alone almost all the time. I am also a little bit of a special person; I don't make new acquaintances so fast. So I was thinking about something the whole time I was learning the Czech language. It was difficult to exist; new people, new culture. You have to adapt to it. I said to myself: nobody invited you here, so you have to make an effort to exist normally, like all normal people”.*

As previously mentioned, students usually live with other Russian speaking students in a dormitory or in shared rented flats. On the one hand, living together with

other Russian speakers helps when adapting to a foreign country and alleviate the cultural shock. But, on the other hand, it doesn't create much opportunity to communicate with the Czech speaking majority, especially, when students additionally only study the Czech language in Russian speaking classes. Polina's citation describes such a situation: *"There were only Erasmus students at the dormitory. Of course, everybody would rather get to know Czechs. Everybody suggests finding a Czech friend when you come to the Czech Republic. At the dormitory there were only Erasmus students, who were doing different stupid things. And in the Czech classes, there were only Russian speaking students except teachers and some Czech tutors."*

The language barrier during this first period is a major problem for most of students. Even for some students who had been learning the Czech language before their trip. They understood that there was a big difference in learning a foreign language and actually talking in it, and especially studying in it. Alla remembers her first encounter with the Czech language: *"I remember I was at the bus and was listening to the names of the bus stations and thought: 'Om my God, I'll never learn this language.'"*

Lena added: *"For me, the first 6-7 months were very complicated, because I wasn't speaking Czech and I couldn't even ask for anything at the shop. It was difficult at the university too. I came to the Czech Republic in February and in May I already had entrance exams. So I had been learning Czech for only 4 months and I had problems with it. Most of the problems I had were during this first period, those first 6 months. This period was the most important and the most difficult for me".*

Another thing, which Russian speaking students learn during their first months in the Czech Republic, is that the relation to them is not always positive. Students learned about the negative stereotypes accorded them in different situations. For example, at the dormitory, they heard a cleaning lady swearing that "Russians are pigs". Polina remembers that in her first year at the dormitory, even though she liked it there, there was an event which left an unpleasant mark on her memory. There was an article in the student journal in Hostivař, in which the administrator of dormitory and cantinas wrote that students from the former Soviet Union brought bedbugs to the dormitory and added that "for those students, it's normal to have bedbugs in flats, in their countries of origin, and now they've brought them to us, to Europe".

Some students even experienced discrimination against them once they were recognized as Russian or Russian speaking. This is present in Alex's story: *"On my first day in the Czech Republic, I wanted to get a student credit card and put money on it.*

I went to bank. I didn't know Czech, so I said in English that I would like to open a bank account. The bank worker said that it's ok and she would just need my passport. I gave her my passport and when she saw that I was Russian, she said that there was no one who would be able to work with me and through my passport at me. I was very surprised and very disappointed, because it was just my first day here. I was thinking about what I would do if I stayed here..."

In one way, students feel excitement about their new lives and independence, but they also have feelings of alienation, loneliness and homesickness. Tsong and Liu (2009, p. 370) state that the psychological and emotional well-being of parachute children are affected by the stress of immigration, coping with separation from parents and having high academic expectations. "Whether the children live alone, with relatives, or with [a] paid caregiver, many of them expressed experiencing loneliness and homesickness" (Tsong, Liu, 2009, p. 370)

Take Alla, for example, even she, who was very excited and happy to be in the Czech Republic, started to feel sad around Christmastime. *"The first time I started to feel blue here was around Christmas and New Year. Everybody went home for the holidays except a few of us who stayed. I started to ask myself whether, maybe, it was a mistake to come here"*. Her roommate's experience of being far from home and her parents was even harder, who according to Alla *"was crying almost every night about how much she missed her family and home"*.

The first year in the Czech Republic seems to be one of the most important in a frame of adaptation and of choice over their life direction in the Czech Republic. Some students don't cope well with life abroad, far away from their families, and return after the first or second semester of the language school. Others cope with their new life situation and with the responsibilities for not only achieving high grades and academic success, but also for different bureaucratic issues related to university study and prolonging their stay in the Czech Republic.

One such task is obtaining recognition of their previous education in their country of origin, as it is a necessary obligation for admittance into a Czech university. All students have to ensure the translation of their diplomas including the number of subjects and the allocated hours into the Czech language in order to enable a comparison of the Czech and foreign educational program. Students who finished elementary or secondary school in Russia or Kazakhstan also have to take a "nostrification" exam, which usually takes place at some secondary school with an examination committee. Should the exam be

completed successfully, the previous education is recognized and the student can continue to pursue their education. Students who would like to have their university diploma recognized don't have to take any extra exams. According to Lukas Radostny (2009): “an authorized person at the appropriate public university, on the basis of submitted documents, compares the content and scope of a foreign study program with the accredited equivalent in the Czech Republic. If it found that the foreign and Czech study program differs too much, the request for recognition of previous education is usually rejected”.

Most of my research participants didn't have problems with the recognition of their previous education, but there were also cases when students were rejected from one university and had to resend all their documents to another university and were asked to compare study programs there. For example, Valeria only got her teaching education recognised on the third attempt. The whole process of nostrification took almost 8 months and she was quite worried it wouldn't be finished before her university study in the Czech Republic.

During the spring of the first year in the Czech Republic students also have to apply for their chosen universities. Even though some students come to the Czech Republic for a one-year language course, it is not a lot of time to decide which university to apply to and to obtain all the necessary documents. Students are also afraid of applying to the wrong university or to fail the entrance exams, thus no longer being able to continue to stay in the Czech Republic. That's why some students chose a strategy of applying not only for the study program they would like to study, but also for some programs where no entrance exams exist and where acceptance to this study program would still ensure their stay in the Czech Republic was prolonged, as it's a yearly obligation for every foreign student.

Prolonging a visa:

As per the Ministry of the Interior, “an application for a long-term residence permit for the purpose of ‘studies’ in accordance with § 42d following up on a long-term visa granted for the same purpose is filed in person in a deadline of 90 days at the earliest and 14 days at latest before the long-term visa expires. The application is filed at the Ministry of the Interior offices under whose competence the applicant will fall according to the proof of accommodation”. (Ministry of the Interior, 2015). Together with the completed application form and proof of accommodation, students also have to bring a financial statement, proof of their student status and health insurance. The period of validity for a long-term residence permit for the purposes “studies” is maximum 1 year,

so students have to go through the same procedure each academic year, usually during their summer exams. Alla described her first experience with prolonging her legal status in the Czech Republic as such:

“When we were at the language school they said that we could get into university ahead of schedule if we pass this exam and that exam. After, they said that it wasn't possible. Then again, yes... At the end of the Czech language courses we had problems with visas. The visa was only until the end of June and it had to be prolonged, but universities hand out documents later. At our Czech language school, they offered to write a confirmation for 10 000 crowns that we were in summer school. But I didn't want to pay that kind of money and I decided to find out more about how to get into university ahead of schedule. I passed some exams, but in the end, I found out that some essay had to be submitted and unfortunately, I didn't have time for that. So, I went to the entrance exams at the usual time. But since I had to prolong my visa even before my exams, I asked people at the university to write some document saying I was going to the entrance exams and would possibly be studying there. I had my insurance and I had a fake document of accommodation. I didn't want to pay for accommodation during the summer because I was not going to be in the Czech Republic. And with this package of half-legal documents I went to the foreign police scared and shaking. Before, I had heard all these stories about how hard it is to prolong a visa and that so many documents are needed. We were waiting and sitting in front of the foreign police all night long in this nervous atmosphere. We saw a lot of things there that night. But some Ukrainian workers felt sorry for us because we were 5 young girls, so they let us go ahead and in the end I was number 5 in the queue. I remember, I put all my documents on the table and was shaking with fear. But the woman, without any expression on her face, just glanced over the documents, took my passport and put on a one-year visa. I was so shocked that it was so easy in the end and that I didn't have any troubles. People usually had to buy different documents and I had a weird document about education, and still got my visa without any problems. The girls, with whom I was prolonging the visa with, had the same accommodation documents; that 3 of us were living there. But the police officer told them that the place of accommodation isn't housing but a technical space, and started to dig through their documents. Afterwards, I slept very badly and was afraid that somebody would call from the police and say that I had to bring my visa back. But in the end everything was good and I also passed the entrance exams to university”.

Alla's story shows that students are not always able to apply to prolong their stay in the Czech Republic and provide all the necessary documents in compliance with the laws. As Rytter (2012, p. 97) argues, creating policies inevitably creates the potential for actions that contravene these policies (Bledsoe, 2004, p. 97) – some of these are legal, others are not. In the case of Russian speaking students, there are a plenty of options, with the help of the migration industry, to get a bank statement, proof of accommodation or proof of studies so as to prolong a legal stay in the Czech Republic.

In order to understand this phenomenon, the concept of the migration industry is useful. This concept was introduced by Robin Cohen (1997), which he defined as comprising private lawyers, travel agents, recruiters, fixers and brokers who sustain links with the origin and destination countries (Cohen, 1997, cit. according to Sorensen, 2012, p. 68). Castles and Miller (2003, p. 29) defined the migration industry as a scope of recruitment organizations, lawyers, agents, smugglers, and other intermediaries, which have a strong interest in the continuation of migration and often confound government efforts to control or stop movements. Kype and Koslowsky (2001) referred to service providers for migrants as “migration merchants” (Kype and Koslowsky, 2001, cit. according to Sorensen, 2012, p. 68). According to Sorensen “common to early conceptualizations was to focus primarily on informal and/or illegal activities and excluding the formal and legal ones” (Sorensen, 2012, p. 68). However, Hernandez-Leon (2008, cit. according to Sorensen, 2012, p. 68) “argued in favour of a more comprehensive conceptualization, including legal/illegal and formal/informal activities and their interaction and articulation with demand-side actors of the social process of international migration, such as governments, employers, migrants and their networks and advocacy organizations. Migration industry actors not only respond to migrant demands for services, they also play a role in the organization and even the causation of migration.”

Sorensen (2012, p. 69) also suggests analysing the migration industry in market terms and refers to a conception of the “markets of migration management”, which according to her proves helpful in appreciating how states, commercial entities and social, as well as illicit networks, operate in a world that is globalized in its opportunities for action and cooperation, but still largely localized or nation-state-centred in its legal foundations. Sorensen claims that state policies impact social market actors and activities that constitute the migration industry at any given point of time. “Migration policies create conditions that stimulate or inhibit demand for certain services and the supply of others. Yet, only in combination with an understanding of how migration flows, the networks

surrounding various migration industries, and individual agents react and adapt to regulation efforts at the policy level, does it become possible to appreciate how the industry and markets are mutually constitutive” (Sorensen, 2012, p. 70).

From the students’ point of view, unnecessary laws are very often introduced which people can’t handle and they try to find other ways out. For example, students are sometimes unable to show 80 000 CZK in their bank account, as they frequently get money from their parents on a monthly basis and not everybody has such an amount of money at one time to show to the Ministry of the Interior. Instead, they use the services of some companies which offer to create proof of the sufficient financial amount of money needed to prolong their stay in the Czech Republic. Usually, this service costs about 1 500 CZK for a one-minute transaction. Svetlana describes her experience: *“I just met a guy in front of the bank. He had 80 000 CZK in cash and we put it in my bank account. Immediately, I asked for the bank statement. After, I withdrew the money and gave it back to him. I paid 1500 CZK for this service.”*

It’s also quite regular for students to be unable to find a flat or space in a dormitory after they finish their language courses, or don’t want to pay for accommodation during the summer months when they travel back home. In these cases, students also address different companies who provide proof of accommodation.

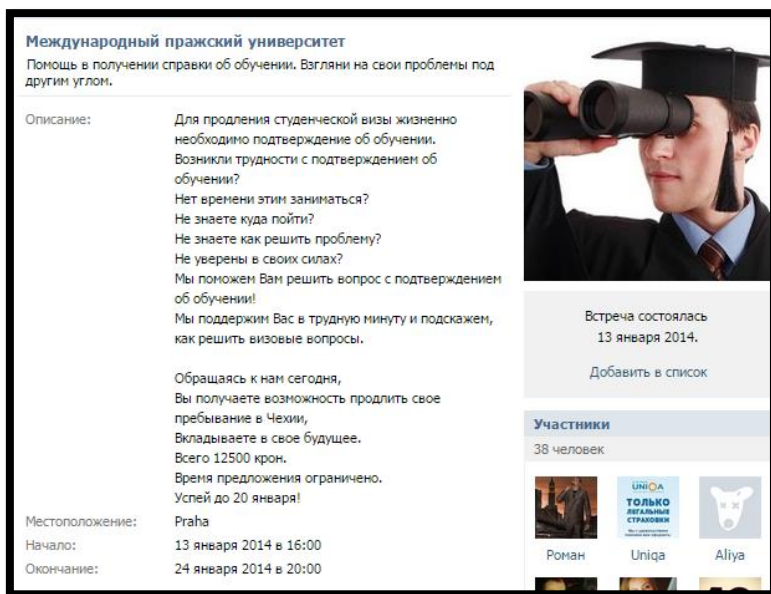


Picture 5 Goldenviza.cz advertisement (proof of accommodation for 2500 CZK). Source: Social network vk.com

Another possibility, described by Alla during a time when she had to prolong her stay in the Czech Republic and she still didn't know if she had been admitted to the university or not, was that she couldn't get proof of her student status at the university. As she mentioned, some students paid for summer schools in order to have student status until they received confirmation from the university. Sometimes, students also choose universities without entrance exams or buy fake confirmation from some bogus schools or companies which offer such services.

As Polina notes: *“I have friends who one year didn't bring any regular document to the Ministry of the Interior and they got visas. Quite often people bring fake proof of accommodation and nobody notices it. But I am shocked that fake proof of studies also usually passes. There is even a list of phoney schools and universities, which are known to issue these fake confirmations of study. These schools don't even have normal web pages or references”*.

In fact, when browsing the Russian-language websites, one can see that advertisements about renewing a student visa and providing proof of study to the Ministry of the Interior are quite common. There are different bogus or suspicious schools which run the business of selling different papers to students. One advertisement says: *“Help in obtaining proof of study. Look at your problems from another angle. To prolong a student visa, proof of study is essential. Are you having problems with it? Do you have time to solve this? Do you know where to go? Do you know how to solve this problem? Are you sure it's within your power? We'll help you solve problems with proof of student status! We'll support you in a difficult moment and advise you how to solve your visa problems. Come to us today and you'll get a chance to prolong your stay in the Czech Republic. Invest in your future. Only 12 500 CZ for a limited time only”*.



Picture 6 Screen shot of event advertisements at the International Prague University. Source: Social network vk.com



Picture 7 Goldenviza.cz advertisement (proof of study). Source: Social network vk.com

In some cases, these kinds of schools and companies help potential students not only stay in the Czech Republic, but get there as well. From the introductory stories of students mentioned above, it can be seen that the commercialization of education and the possibility to study abroad, was one of the main reasons they came to the Czech Republic. Many students also used the services of an agent, who helped them with all

the requirements needed to organize the trip. And in the Czech Republic, as is demonstrated in the student narratives, agencies are quite commonly used in helping them prolong their legal stay in the country. The stories of the students are good examples of how migration industry actors participate in the different phases of a migrant's life. The migration industry plays a significant role in the causation of migration, in the organization of it and in the migrant's ability to remain in the destination country, since they are the main sources of profit.

The existence of counterfeit schools and irregular services from some companies has received attention not only from students, but also from NGOs and representatives of the Ministry of the Interior. As suggested by Marie Jelinkova and Pavla Rozumkova (2012) in their article, "Problems in migration and the mobility of students and professional staff", on migraceonline.cz, the "function of some agencies, which massively propagandize study at universities in the Czech Republic "for free", is quite problematic especially in regions of the former USSR. These agencies accommodate all students at the same address and as a contact number, show the same number for all of them. Students who use their services then are very well informed about the different benefits they can obtain in the Czech Republic (or at a specific university). The majority of them are instructed as to what to do in case their studies are unsuccessful (how to maintain legal status). It seems that some of them use study simply as cover for their legal stay in the Czech Republic" (Jelínková, Rozumková, 2012)

Some stories from students corroborate this. For example, Polina states: *"I know many people who have been studying in many places and never finished. Somehow, they live like this: they apply for any university to prolong their stay in the Czech Republic. Not every university reports to the Ministry of the Interior that a student has dropped their studies. Not even close to all. Maybe the Czech Technical University in Prague does it; others, I don't think so. I have one friend, she just applies to a private university every year and pays her tuition fee, and nobody cares if she passes the exams and continues her studies. She just works here"*.

Of course, it wouldn't be fair to say that all students use their studies only to legally stay in the Czech Republic, and that all language schools or private and state universities make money helping them in this endeavour. Indeed, the existence of counterfeit schools and agencies, which issue fake documents and other irregular practices, make it extremely difficult for regulated education providers to survive. The restrictions in immigration law, which were made to reduce such shady businesses, influence the process of obtaining and

prolonging student visas and make it more complicated for every actor involved in this process.

It's possible to see that the border between the migration industry and commercialized (and not only commercialized) education can be very thin. As Pan Darcy (2011) explains in his article, "Student visas, undocumented labour, and the boundaries of legality: Chinese migration and English as a foreign language education in the Republic of Ireland", the case of Chinese students in Ireland vividly showed "that the criteria set up by states are often translated into bureaucratic categories which can be manufactured and commercially supplied in the process of migration, thus suggesting that policies become opportunity structures to be compared and negotiated (Castles 2004, p. 860), unsettling the popular conceptions of legality vs. illegality and the formal vs. the informal" (Pan Darcy, 2011, p. 284).

It's fairly common for students, to distinguish on their own between so-called "good" and "bad" Czech language schools and between "real" students and students who use universities only to maintain their stay in the Czech Republic. According to them, some language schools just try to make as much money as possible off students and often create problems for them. Some students decide to take the initiative in this area with the help of local NGOs, who try to solve problems usually dealt with by students. For example, Lisa and her friends wanted to organise a special conference for students on this topic. Lisa: *"There was an idea to host a conference for students. We wanted to bring students who would like to study in the Czech Republic. We wanted to tell them the truth about education here. Because I was very angry about everything that was going on. These different language courses lie to people, they are not telling the truth. I have been working with students for 3 years already and I have been making presentations at different language schools, but only Uniprep lets me do it repeatedly. The rest told me: you were here last year and we won't let you to do it again. They do it because they want students to hear only one truth about education here, only what they are telling them, because this is the source of their money. I have tried to solve this problem through NGOs. Because various strange things are going on with student visas. Many students have problems with visas, because language schools do some strange things with them. One student had problems with a visa and I went with him to a lawyer. Even the lawyer didn't understand what kind of visa he had and how he got such a visa. This student had some short visa and wasn't registered. In the end, he had to return to Russia and renew the visa. All these problems were in the middle of the school year."*

Lisa also added that she thought there were too many unfair business practices. *“Some language schools make an advertisement for particular universities and faculties, others don’t. Nobody shows the whole picture. Students also have to be careful of contracts with the language schools. For example, in the contract of one language school, it is written that they would give back the entire amount of money if the student doesn’t get into a public university after their language courses. But in very small letters it is also written that it counts only in ‘the case of 100% student attendance’. Another wide, broad thing is that there is one price for language classes, but when students come to the Czech Republic, schools usually ask for more and more money from them. Money for extra classes, for recognition of previous education, etc. 500 CZ more, then 1 000 CZ more, and in the end, all together, it takes an extra 1-2 thousand Euros. Many students complain about that”*.

According to some students, the language school business and different agencies are somehow connected with the Ministry of the Interior. As Lisa accuses: *“Of course they [the Ministry of the Interior] know everything; which companies are issuing and what kind of documents are issued and what is going on in different phony schools. Money goes in both directions. But it is two sides of the same coin. On one side is how to survive here and how to stay? But on the other is these people and companies who are just making money on nothing”*.

Polina also added that language schools, which students attend during their first year, are somehow responsible for students and have to inform them about different uncommon practices. *“I think that these problems with all these services are somehow the responsibility of the language courses. They don’t instruct students that it’s bad to make all these fake documents. They say: we’d rather you didn’t do it, but don’t explain why. And when students finish the Czech language courses and can’t find a flat or a dormitory, they buy these fake confirmations right away”*.

Another well-known practice is to buy a spot in the queues or numbers to see a police officer. It was especially common when the migration agenda wasn’t under the Ministry of the Interior but under the Foreign Police, and it wasn’t possible to make an appointment by telephone. Previously, people had to take a place in a queue during the night in order to see the police, as was the case for Alla, mentioned above. This process was usually described by students as humiliating and unfair. As Alex pointed out: *“You have to wait there almost all night long, and after the police officer opens a door at 7 a.m. everybody starts to push each other and shout at each other. It’s like in a cattle-shed, and the police officers treat you like an animal”*.



Picture 8 Screenshot from the video “The Foreign Police Station in Prague” (published 23.3.2008). Source: YouTube.com

Of course the whole process of prolonging one’s legal status in the Czech Republic took a lot of nerves and people just couldn’t handle it, so they paid a special service, such as standing in a queue instead of them. But, as some students mentioned after the migration agenda fell under the Ministry of the Interior, the situation has improved. Polina: *“I think that it is better now at the police in comparison to how it was when I went there. At the time, people spent their day there, and still couldn’t see a police officer. Now it’s better. Of course, there are still some queues, but they are not as horrible as before. I heard a lot of horrible stories about Chodov, but now it’s the nicest place - at least for me. I submitted all the documents without problems when I go there. This year I just arrived at 6.30, took my place in the queue and after, some acquaintances of mine came. I was standing in a queue, I had number 21 and at noon I was already free. I was happy about it and returned home to get some sleep. Of course, now you can even call and make an appointment, but it’s hard to reach them on the phone”*. Polina also added that she felt sorry for the police officers, because people who come to them very often don’t speak Czech and understand nothing. But now, as she added, *“there are at least some translators from different NGOs who help with the communication between foreigner and the police officer.”*



Picture 9 Comics about student dialogue and the Foreign Police officer. Source: Social network vkontakte.com

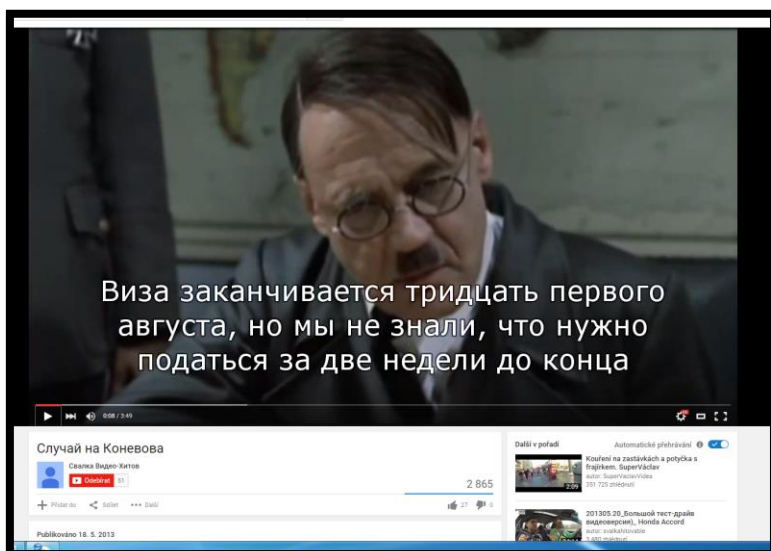
Miroslava also mentioned that “*now there are so many young police officers, who speak English and explain everything. Now, they are very helpful. But before, it was horrible. They were so rude and arrogant and behaved really bad in regards to foreigners. Now it's not as stressful as before. I just make appointment by phone and go there.*”

However, even with a general improvement in the process of prolonging legal status at the Ministry of the Interior, many students have problems whereby their new long-term visa or a long-term residence permit wasn't issued within the allowed time limit. The cases where students were waiting for a decision on their visa more than half of year aren't exceptions. Not receiving a decision for a long time made them feel very unstable and uncertain in the Czech Republic and limited their possibilities to travel. Some students were informed that they could get at least a “bridging label” on their passport and travel from or to the Schengen without any problem, as this “bridging label” serves as “a testimonial to having filed an application and it serves as a proof of the legality of stay in the territory of the Czech Republic until a legitimate decision is made on the application, on the condition that the so-called fiction of the validity of the previous residence permit applies to the foreigner” (Ministry of the Interior, 2015). Although not every student knew about this possibility and some students were very nervous about not having any visa or residence permit in their passport. They were especially afraid

of occasional inspections of foreigners or any other problems which could emerge due to the absence of a visa in their passport.

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Anxiety as a result of the problems with prolonging a long term residence permit is regularly expressed by students in jokes, pictures and videos. One such example is a video named "The Case on Konevova Street" (in original: sluchaj na konevova <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIM62cefrPc>). This video was published in 18.5.2013 and 3 416 people watched it (by November 2016). This video is the Hitler parody, an extremely famous video on the internet, anyone can edit and place subtitles over. One student from Russia added new subtitles, expressing his view on the process of prolonging a long term residence permit for study purposes in the Czech Republic.



Picture 10 Screen shot from the video named "The Case on Koněvova Street". Source: YouTube.com

Here is the translation of the Russian subtitles for this video:

Student: *Hello, we have been living in the Czech Republic one year already. We finished preparatory courses. We live in a dormitory in Prague 6, before we used to live in Chodov. Our visa is due to expire on the 31st of August, but we didn't know that we had to apply for a new one no later than 14 days before the expiration. Today is the last day and we really need you to accept our application.*

Hitler: *The working day is over. You had to make an appointment earlier.*

Student: *But sir... we can be deported if we don't prolong our visa today. Please give us only 5 minutes of your time.*

Hitler: *I will try to explain it to you lucidly. Citizens of the Ukraine please leave the building. Where do you think you are? On the Azure coast with a million euros? Even a total idiot from Uniprep knows that a biometrical card is worth more than gold. Some people are ready to sleep in boxes for it. I would rather put you on tanks and send you back to Murmansk to plough the frozen ground and hide from the snow in June. Why should I help you in any way when you even don't speak Czech?*

Another student: *I have a B2 certificate, mluvím česky velmi dobře!*

Hitler: *Tell to your mom how you learnt Czech language in Chapeau Rouge.*

Student: *Sir, I haven't smoked pot for 3 months.*

Hitler: *Are you trying to cheat a police officer? I have had enough! I have been working here 10 years, but I haven't seen such idiots since Supervaclav. Even my grandmother can lie better than you. How dare you to come to prolong your visa if you don't even have a document of enrolment into a study program, and a document about your finances bought in G-money! It's unprecedented! I doubt that even the majority of you will leave the country in two years! But at home you are now "Europeans". Your mom and dad are probably proud of you. They say - my son is at Charles University! Well, you dream of being an economist, but you even don't know there is more to an economy than a Macbook and an Iphone. You are the typical representatives of your country. Where have you seen Russian students really preparing for exams? Even if you threw a horse head into the dean's bed, you wouldn't get into university*

Somebody is saying to the girl - stop crying, they admit you without exams to the University of Chemistry and Technology in Prague.

Hitler: *I think you have no other choice than to fly to Moscow and apply for a visa at the Czech consulate. Although I am sure that it will be denied. The Czech Republic is not for you. I don't know what you were counting on when you came here, you have nothing to do here. It's time to pack your suitcases and Na schledanou. Say hi to the consul.*

As a conclusion, it is important to mention that in general many students feel inhuman and arrogant treatment directed towards them from police officers (especially when the migration agenda wasn't under the Ministry of the Interior), and find the whole process of prolonging their legal status in the Czech Republic humiliating. The legal status of being a foreigner in the Czech Republic is also seen as a barrier to feeling welcome in the Czech Republic by many students from Russia and Kazakhstan. Restrictions connected

to their legal status are seen as the reasons behind their disadvantaged position within society and especially, the labour market.

3.5 Work, moral obligations and balancing in the legal sphere

From the ethnographic cases of the students we can see that families invest quite a large sum of money sending their children abroad to study. This money is required for the agents, tuition fees, and plane tickets. Referring to the classical work of Marcel Mauss (1999), "The Gift", we can say that any act of giving creates a moral obligation to reciprocate on part of the recipient. From the perspective of the author, the existence of reciprocal relations between migrants and those they left behind is not only material. On the contrary, it is the author's hypothesis that in the case of the student migrant, it can be the expectations of their parents that they be independent and be able to support at least themselves, and in certain ways, become an adult. As Philpott (1968, p. 467) claims, migration can be a process of attaining adulthood for young migrants; leaving can be regarded as a stage in a migrant's social maturity.

Since student migration is connected with substantial financial expenses and the need for investments from the entire family, it can place a large responsibility on students who go abroad. The interviews with students demonstrated that there were some research participants who were enjoying an unlimited amount of their parents' money. However, there were also those who tried to find a job as soon as possible as they could not take money from their parents any longer and had to start to support themselves.

Some students start work during their first year in the Czech Republic while attending language school, while others wait until they enter university and have a more flexible schedule. In theory, it should be possible to combine work and study, but it seems that it is not as easy as was expected. Students are trapped in a situation where, on the one hand, they must be able to support themselves and not ask for money from parents, and on the other hand, be "good" students, have high attendance so as to renew a student visa the following year, as well as pass all the necessary exams. As Olwig (2011, p. 91) claims, "migrants navigate not only within a political landscape, but just as significantly, within a moral landscape that has a great bearing on their motivations for travel, their dwelling in migratory destinations and their continued relations with their place of origin".

The research conducted for this paper is in agreement that a moral aspect has very significant influence on a migrant's life in the country of destination.

The investments of the parents do place some kinds of responsibilities on the children's shoulders. It is not surprising that student migrants attempt to enter the labour market and at least support themselves, without asking for money beyond the large sum their parents have already invested in their migration. Occasionally, the moral obligations of students to their parents are one of the reasons they fall into a kind of grey zone in the Czech Republic, since not everyone can find regular work immediately.

One such example is the case of Alla. Her father has been working for 2 years without a day off to support her stay in the Czech Republic. He used to work at a furniture company and had to send almost his entire salary to Alla. When most of the students went back to Russia and Kazakhstan after the entrance exams, Alla didn't want to leave the dormitory as the summer months had already been paid for and started to look for a job. *“For one month, nobody wanted to give me a job. I was going to different shops in the city centre with my printed CV. I wanted to earn money for the laptop, but nobody believed that I could find such work. But one of my friends, from another language course, used to work illegally as a packer at a warehouse. I just called him and asked if he would take me there the next day! He said that I was crazy and that they had 12-hour shifts there.”*

Alla's friend also warned her that the warehouse was very far from the city centre and that it was very hot inside. However, Alla wasn't deterred and decided to go. They met at 5.30 at a metro station. *“The work was very hard. I had to pack everything into oilskin and move it through hot air. I had to then stick labels on but the thing which I used for it was also very hot and all my nails fell off. Moreover, I twisted my hand on the first day because of the 12-hour shift. In the evening that day I couldn't even raise a spoon. But it was good that they paid every day and 55 CZK per hour, so every evening I got 600CZK. All the money I put in a special envelop. I almost haven't slept this month.”*

Alla worked in that place 4 days per week for a few weeks, but later found that most girls were sent to another place: a cosmetics warehouse. *“The working day there was shorter and the job wasn't as tough. So I asked if they could transfer me there, but they said that it was only for permanent workers. Anyway, I decided to call one girl I knew from this cosmetics warehouse and invited myself there. It was such an easy job! We were just packing shampoo in beautiful boxes and chatting around the table. So in the end I saved 9 000 CZK”.*

Alla's case illustrates a way in which foreigner workers are sometimes employed in the Czech Republic, through the frame of a so-called "client system". According to Jan Cernik (2005), even though it is hard to define the term "client", it is possible to say that it is a subject of a particular economical negotiation that is very dynamic. In the context of labour migration from former Soviet Union countries to the Czech Republic, the "client" isn't the customer, but the person who ensures the sale of unqualified labour (usually), while at the same time satisfying demand in the labour market of the Czech Republic. Cernik claims that in the Czech Republic, the client usually has a normal, registered company that does work intermediation for building and cleaning companies. The client, usually together with work intermediation, supplies the spectrum of migration and other services from transportation to accommodation, and even services to ensure the legal stay of migrants in the Czech Republic. The client works on the border of different worlds: not only on the border of economic and legal worlds, but also on the borders of different organizational norms of economic negotiation. The client system was developed through interaction with Czech migration laws during the so-called liberal period of the second half of 1990s, and forms the basis of the structural preconditions for the functioning of the client system by ignoring the engagement of organizational crime in the temporary migration field and the illegal employment of foreigners (Cernik, 2005).

According to Cernik (2005), the client system in the Czech Republic was at its peak at the turn of the millennium. During this period, this phenomenon could be seen as the dominant form of organising temporary labour migration in the Czech Republic. The "clients", who had earlier worked in less formal forms (for example, as representatives of traditional working groups), established different forms of legal entities so as to have the possibility to reflect changes in the legal environment; thereby this method of organization moved away from the shadow economy and informal structures. Clients have also included in their migration services the arrangement of new necessary administrative tasks, such as visas or membership in a statutory authority of cooperatives and business companies.

Polina's friend also worked through this system. Petr used to work in a clothes shop as a security guard. He found this job through an agency and didn't have a contract directly with the shop. The salary wasn't regular and sometimes he received nothing. Nevertheless, he couldn't complain as he wasn't an official employee of the shop.

Students must often balance between immigration policies/restrictions, moral obligations they have according to their parents, and their own needs. To understand better the situation of student migrants, the concept of semi-legality can be used.

Semi-legality:

Mikkel Rytter (2012) in his text “Semi-legal family life: Pakistan couples in the borderlands of Denmark and Sweden” introduces the concept of semi-legality to describe the situation whereby Pakistani transnational couples commute on a regular basis between their legal residences in Sweden and their places of work and networks of friends and family in Denmark. Married couples subjected to this mobile lifestyle are always in the process of becoming illegal, which is the consequence of “overstaying” in Denmark or “under staying” in Sweden.

According to Rytter (2012, p. 93), recent studies emphasize a more process oriented approach and document how migrants may move between the statuses of legal and illegal. Rytter (2012, p. 93) explains that “the concept of “semi-legality” bears some resemblance to the concept of “semi-compliance”, recently introduced to describe and discuss the employment of migrants who are legal residents but who violate the employment restrictions attached to their immigrant status, and so move between different legal statuses” (Ruhs and Anderson, 2010, p. 201)

Ruhs and Anderson (2010, p. 201) introduced the new concept of “compliance”, and identify and distinguish between three levels of compliance: “compliant migrants are legally resident and working in full compliance with the conditions attached to their immigration status. Non-compliant migrants are those without the rights to reside in the host country. Semi-compliance indicates a situation where a migrant is legally resident but working in violation of some or all of the conditions attached to the migrant’s immigration status” (Ruhs and Anderson, 2010, p. 201). They argue that – at least to some degree – semi-compliance is simply a logical result of the tension between the needs of a flexible labour market on the one hand, and the desire to closely monitor the employment of migrants for immigration control purposes on the other.

Ruhs and Anderson (2006, p. 8) distinguish between two “types” of compliance. “R-compliance”, where the “R” stands for “residence”. “R-non-compliant migrants include people who overstay visas, or who enter illegally, and failed asylum seekers who have exhausted rights of appeal. ‘E-compliance’, where the ‘E’ stands for ‘employment’, indicates whether a migrant is complying with all the conditions of employment attached

to the migrant's immigration status (E-compliant) or not (E-non-compliant). An example of E-non-compliance would be a student working more than the legally allowed 20 hours during term time" (Ruhs and Anderson, 2006, p. 9).

According to Ruhs and Anderson (2006, p. 10), "semi-compliance indicates a situation where migrants have a valid reason to remain (R-compliant), but are in breach of some or all of the conditions pertaining to the employment attached to their immigration status (E-non-compliant)". However, at the same time, the category of semi-compliance is extremely broad and could capture a wide range of violations – with varying degrees of severity – of the conditions of employment attached to a migrant's immigration status.

The concept of semi-legality is a broader concept and explains not only the relationship between the rights to residence and rights to work, but the whole process of balancing between legal and illegal spheres, between policies and personal needs. And once a violation or disregard of the law is noticed, state governments always try to introduce new policies that place a certain population under control. This suggestion is relevant to the process of prolonging a student's legal stay in the Czech Republic, as well as to the process of their employment, since these two processes are quite interconnected.

During the research, it was observed that students usually work at unqualified job positions in the beginning of their career in the Czech Republic. For example, they often work as cleaners, waitresses, security, babysitters and sales positions at gift shops or "Russian" shops. Also, students work at hotels as receptionists, as tutors for other students, as tourist guides and insurers. Even though non-EEA students are allowed to work 20 hours per week in the Czech Republic, it is sometimes difficult for them to find a "proper" job with a contract. Furthermore, in some cases, students work more than they are legally allowed, including full-time. Occasionally, the terms and conditions of employment are not the best, and the student permission system is exploited. Conversely, people who would like to work and want to avoid the complicated scheme of getting a work permit for non-EU citizens, can use the student residence permit.

For instance, Natasha, after finishing her language courses, didn't get into the university she wanted. She decided to apply for the Faculty of Nuclear Physics, as there were no entrance exams and it would ensure the student status needed to prolong her stay in the Czech Republic. Immediately, she found a job in a souvenir company, which she could do from home. She was paid in cash without a contract and it lasted almost a year. She decided that she didn't want to study again, as she had already obtained a master's degree in Russia. However, the next year she applied for the Faculty of Nuclear Physics

again, just so that she could prolong her stay on the basis of her student status and continued to work, now in a different shop.

On occasion, students lose their motivation to study and decide just to stay and work in the Czech Republic. Some students change their purpose of stay to working or business, while others continue to be officially enrolled in a university and carry a student status.

Of course, there are also students who try to combine work and study. For some students it works well, while others, turn to their fellow students and ask for help when they aren't able to handle all their study obligations. In some cases, students are paid for such help, so it becomes mutually beneficial for both sides. There are also some “professional” services for Russian-speaking students such as writing an essay or diploma work in Czech, English and Russian languages.

Услуги	Цена
Написание работ для средних школ	170,- Kč / страница
Написание рефератов и эссе	200,- Kč / страница
Бакалаврская работа	320,- Kč / страница
Семинарская работа	260,- Kč / страница
Написание работ для зачетов	260,- Kč / страница
Дипломная работа на чешском языке	350,- Kč / страница
Дипломная работа на английском языке	380,- Kč / страница
Написание работ по направлению MBA	370,- Kč / страница
Перевод текста с русского на чешский (и обратно)	290,- Kč / страница
Переводы текста с русского на английский (и обратно)	340,- Kč / страница
Смысловая коррекция чешский, английский, русский	по договоренности
Проверка грамматики чешский, английский, русский	по договоренности
Подготовка презентаций для высших учебных заведений	от 50 крон слайд
Форматирование текста по определенным нормам	80,- Kč / страница
Написание проектов	по договоренности
Репетиторство по предметам	по договоренности

*В зависимости от работы цена может изменяться, в цену не включены изготовление титульного листа, содержание, список литературы. В случае написания работ в короткие сроки, используются коэффициент срочности. Множитель коэффициента зависит от срока написания работы.
** Цены указаны без учета налога!

Picture 11 Picture of the price list for writing a diploma work. Source: Social network vk.com

This, of course, does not mean that all students who combine work and study pay for such services, or that all students who do not work refrain from using them sometimes. Most of the students successfully combine university study and work, or start to work only after they graduate from university, since any foreigner who obtains a university diploma in the Czech Republic does not need a work permit and can enter the local labour market without any legal restrictions.

As Cernik (2005) writes, it is very important to mention different factors of integration for foreigners, such as increasing their qualifications, acquiring the Czech language, and establishing friendly relationships with Czech citizens, thanks to which the dependence on the client system can be eliminated. This statement is also relevant to the situation of students, as it seems that the use of any visa company services or client system is part of their adaptation to the Czech Republic.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that the above ethnographic cases demonstrate that the students did not come to the Czech Republic with the direct intention of violating laws, but due to the high expenses connected with migration, misleading information about the country, and a lack of orientation with its laws, migrant students are trapped in a situation where, on the one hand, they must be able to support themselves and refrain from asking for money from their parents, while on the other hand, be “good” students, attend school, and fulfil the academic obligations necessary to renew a student visa for the next year.

Usually, the use of different migration services and the client system is interconnected and one offence creates a need to find more and more solutions to find a balance in the semi-legal sphere. It creates a cycle of actions which aims to maintain legal status in the country. Students are supposed to find more and more variations of how to balance in the semi-legal sphere. And oftentimes it causes a dependence on others, such as on other students and/or representatives of the migration industry.

Student migrants use different strategies and the services of different actors in order to balance in the semi-legal sphere. Firstly, they can retain their legal status using their own tricks, like applying for studies where no entrance exams are needed; secondly, they can use a sophisticated partnership with other students; and thirdly, they can use the services of counterfeit schools, the client system and different agencies, as was already mentioned in the previous chapter.

3.6 University life

A major part of the students' lives take place in the university environment, as study is the main purpose of their stay in the Czech Republic. And even in cases where students work, they need to combine it with studies and fulfil their obligations at university so as to maintain their legal student status and prolong their residence permit. Moreover, university is very often a main place where the majority society is encountered more intimately, since most of the students, teachers and university staff are Czech; this is in contrast with the language schools, where the students are usually foreigners.

The initial stage at university is quite complicated for students, as it's an unknown foreign environment and the Czech education system is somewhat different than that of Russia or Kazakhstan. For example, Alena felt lonely and lost during her first year at university. Everything was new to her: the education system, the way students have to make their own schedule and choose lectures. She felt that there was nobody to help or advise her about how things work at university. *“We (foreign students, who study in the Czech language) are thought of as locals and that we don't need any special assistance. But it's not true. We need the same help given to us as that given to, for example, students who have come to study through the Erasmus program or any other scholarship. Those students get orientation week and help from the foreign students' department, but we don't.”*

Regardless of some frustration and disorientation during this first period, in general, students value their studies at university in a positive way. Even those students who could not compare Russian and Czech or Kazakh and Czech higher education since they had come to the Czech Republic straight from school, mentioned that they were happy to study here, as they had heard a lot about corruption and the unfair treatment of students in their country of origin. As Alla says: *“When I look at my classmates who study at Russian universities, I am a little bit shocked, as they always pay for some exams or for something else. And I value that I do everything by myself here a lot. Of course, I guess, here there also exists some corruption at university and it's possible to find some loopholes to pay for exams or for something else. But if you study hard, everything depends on you, and you can get an education without any bribes. But in Russia it's quite hard... For example, my boyfriend used to study at the Krasnoyarsk State Academy of Architecture. He dreamed a lot of studying there, but he was very disappointed in the end, as it wasn't possible to finish the exam session without money. And here, if you don't finish the exam session, it's*

because you haven't studied enough, but not because the professor didn't like you and wanted to get money from you. My boyfriend said that students were walking around the dormitory, collecting student gradebooks and money. The price for an exam was 4 000 rubbles and 15 000 rubbles for the whole exam session. These students were sent by professors to collect money and student gradebooks, and then to bring them back after a while with all the exams marked. Of course, when my boyfriend saw all of this he was very shocked.”

Galina had been studying in a PhD program at a Russian university for one year but decided to come to the Czech Republic and start her PhD education here. Comparing the education in both countries, she claimed that in the Czech Republic the level of education is higher than in Russia, but *“if you have an opportunity to travel to different countries, like to England or Scandinavian countries, you understand that the level is lower in the Czech Republic. You understand that here are not so many options for an academic career in comparison to other European countries. But when you just come from Russia, you see the difference, you see that here some research is made, that teachers try to involve students in the study process and aren't just reading lectures.”*

Another research participant from Russia, Alexander, pointed out that at universities in the Czech Republic people are more concentrated on practices rather than on theories, and students are well prepared for real work after graduation. Polina valued the independence and freedom given to the students at Czech universities a great deal: *“Here, you can attend or not attend lectures and seminars, the most important thing is to pass an exam at the end. But in Russia, I think they are stricter with attendance. I also like that I can choose different subjects by myself and make my own schedule. Of course, a study plan exists here but there is a lot of optional courses which you can choose yourself.”*

In general, all research participants, except for a few of them, noted that they have good relationships with classmates and teachers, and that they don't feel any prejudice against them as foreign students. As Victoria explains: *“I didn't feel any discrimination at university here. It has never happened that one of the teachers said something negative or drew attention to my status as a foreigner. Alternatively, they usually help, saying that for foreign students it's harder to study in Czech. Maybe it's because the people who work at university are more understanding and intelligent people.”* Victoria also added that she feels she has as equal chance as all the other students to pass her exams, the only limitation

is that the Czech language isn't her native tongue; however, if the exam takes place in English there is no problem at all.

The language barrier is indeed sometimes the cause of failure in exams, especially when the subject requires good oral skills such as in history. An example is the negative experience Alla shared when once, during a history exam, a teacher said that *“she speaks Czech like a 5-year-old mentally handicapped person.”* Needless to say, Alla didn't pass the exam and received a bad impression from this teacher, but it was her only negative experience during all her years of studying at university in the Czech Republic.

Relationships with classmates seem like an extremely important factor in the adaptation and inclusion of Russian speaking students into the university environment. Vasilis, while sharing her feelings, remembers one of the informal evenings with her classmates where she felt her and her friend from Russia were accorded different treatment: *“We were just drinking and talking at the bar, but at some point they started to push us to buy drinks for everybody, implying that we are rich Russian girls. It was very awkward and in the end we bought drinks for everybody, but we felt disappointed and never went out with these classmates again.”* Lisa from Kazakhstan has heard a lot from her friends that *“Czech classmates don't accept them”*, but she claimed to never have experienced something like that. *“I have never felt something like that. I don't know why, but I communicate with everybody in the same way. The only thing, which happened in the middle of my second year, is that I was fed up with one fact - that when classmates find out that I am from Kazakhstan they begin to ask the same questions and I have to tell them the same things, like from a script. What is your national food? How did you get here by yourself? Or... you're so brave... I would get so fed up with these questions and that I had to answer them”.*

In cases where there are more Russian speaking students at a university, students had a tendency to create their own Russian speaking community. According to Alla, foreign students create barriers between them and local students by themselves. *“In my experience, Czechs really stay in contact when you study together and it depends on you how good friends you become with them. I have some Russian speaking friends who almost don't communicate with Czechs; for them it's like being in contact with people from another caste. But I think if they made the first step, everything would be fine. But it's like a closed circle: I don't communicate with Czechs, because I speak the Czech language badly, and I speak Czech badly, because I have no Czech friends. Until you start to communicate and have friends amongst your classmates, you will never get out of this*

circle". Alla also added that if she considers the relationships between Russian speaking students, she believes that in the beginning of her studies at Charles University in Prague, there were just a few students and they made a cohesive collective. *"But now I can see that there are different Russian speaking crews and people don't communicate with each other. I don't think it existed before. The smaller the society, the more united it is, and when more and more people appear it turns into a mini-Russia or like a regular Russian school. For example, at language school there were many Russian speaking students and differences and division were quite obvious. There were people for whom it wasn't a problem to go shopping to Milan on weekends, while we were sharing one apple between three of us. But it was at language school and it disappeared when I started to study at university, because we were in the same boat and were helping each other with exams and didn't feel any division"*.

Another important factor while studying at university that was mentioned by research participants is the student life. Post-secondary school is a unique place of socialization. According to Rozanov (Rozanov, 2010, p. 10), the range of topics and events able to be classified under the term "student life" can be divided into 6 groups: (1) everything associated with the process of education and academic activities at the university; (2) the period in a human life lasting from 3 to 5 years and ending with the reception of a title; (3) the range of topics associated with life in a student dormitory; (4) the complex relationships arising on the university grounds with the participation of students; (5) the students' informal communication outside the boundaries of the university, may it be a student party, student demonstrations or rallies; and (6) the student media.

Most research participants, however, claimed that they missed out on student life in the Czech Republic, despite studying at Czech public universities. It is often explained by the lack of a strong and stable student group, as each student can create a schedule by themselves and usually meets new people at every course. As a consequence, there is not enough space and time for the creation of strong relationships between students. As Irina states: *"There is no unity of students, you sit with a different person in each different seminar since everybody has their own schedule. Of course, you can become acquainted with somebody, but also not everybody attends the course regularly. In Russia, there is always a student group with a headman and you see the same classmates almost every day; so you feel the unity and make friendships which last for a long-time"*.

Irina and other research participants also miss different student and youth celebrations in Russia. For example, there exists "the first day of a student" when all first year students of all faculties meet with deans, participate in a parade together, and then do other joint activities. During a student's academic career, students also celebrate the "equator" (median). It is an unofficial student holiday celebrated in a student's 3rd year after the winter examination period and symbolizes the half-way mark of a student's life. Other student holidays are annual, for example, Youth Day (June 27) and Student's Day, also known as Tatiana Day on (January 25). As Oxana claimed: *"I don't consider Student's Day a holiday here. I don't feel that I am a student here because there is no student life like in Russia. We have different clubs, festivals, competitions and other fun there. But here the only fun is: home, university and shop. Going to let off steam here is to go and buy something. Then the mood lifts and it seems that everything is OK again."*

Especially for students who came to the Czech Republic right after school, student life and different unofficial communication with classmates seemed to be an important part of their student experience. But not all their expectations of student life were fulfilled. *"I expected that it would be more emotional and lively here, and that my student years in the Czech Republic would leave more of an impression on me. But I don't see too many opportunities for that here. And if you don't go somewhere and don't ask about something, everything will pass you by. University staff don't try get you interested in non-study events."* They also compare their student life in the Czech Republic to that of their friends and classmates in Russia and Kazakhstan, and sometimes have a feeling that they are missing out on better student years. As Svetlana stated: *"Recently, I was at my classmates' graduation in Russia. I was sitting and watching it and thinking that I've never had it and would never have it. I've had nothing like this in the Czech Republic, no student life at all. There was no proper matriculation. I just came there and they just shook my hand. That's all! I don't even expect a great graduation here"*. But students who used to live in a dormitory experienced student life in a more intense way, since there is a greater concentration of students from different countries, including students who came to the Czech Republic through different exchange programmes. As Galina explained: *"At our dorm, where I used to live, we celebrated almost every holiday. Just to have a reason to celebrate, we celebrated something nearly every day. Sometimes I miss it, sometimes it's boring at home. It's not because I now have more of a family life here, but there was for sure more communication in the dorm. If you're bored, you just go to a party. We had*

different theme parties on different floors at the dormitory. The Italians and Spanish lived on the 4th and 5th floors. It was fun”.

Students also found a great advantage as part of university life in the Czech Republic, in that they could participate in different European student mobility programmes in spite of the fact that they were not citizens of any EU country. Many of the research participants used the Erasmus program and spent one or two semesters at university abroad, claiming that in Russia or Kazakhstan it would be almost impossible. This experience also enriched the students’ university life, although not every research participant was able to use this opportunity.

There were also some research participants who professed that they didn't feel like students in the Czech Republic. Unlike their peers in their country of origin, who still live with parents or nearby, they didn't have a care-free student life and had to grow up and look after themselves. Those students stated that their lives in the Czech Republic remind them more of adult life rather than the life of a student. Lisa: *“I stopped feeling like a student here. I started to work. And even though I still study here, I think that all this student stuff passed me by. I think that I live a little bit differently than students usually do.”*

In literature (Tsong and Liu, 2009; Kim, 1998) concerning parachute kids, this phenomenon is described as the development of a “pseudo-adult” role, in which the children have to take on responsibilities beyond their years and suppress their loneliness in order to be self-sufficient and independent in a foreign country without adult supervision.

3.7 Celebrations in the life of students

As was previously mentioned in the chapter discussing the university life of Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic, some of the research participants were not truly satisfied with the student life and communication within the university. A lack of communication with classmates and entertainment at university was compensated for by different cultural and social activities; for example, by celebrating holidays/feasts other than the student ones, but which are also very popular among the younger generation.

According to Jurlova (2007), any feast is implemented into the cultural tradition, not only in a calendar model, but also in real practices (including fixed habitats of celebration). The “feast has a place, if it’s celebrated” (Jurlova, 2007, p. 243).

The feast is also one of the most important forms of culture, representing national-cultural identity. As Bakhtin (1990) writes: “festiveness is [a] very important primary form of human culture”. The feast has a number of functions in culture, one of them being the social-cultural integration of society. According to Jurlova (2003, p.2443), the holiday/feast has the following functions:

- The usage of identical habits;
- The establishment of intergenerational relations;
- The usage of complex national traditions

In addition, Jurlova (2003, p.244) claimed that for integrity of existence, “internal” (family, corporate) holidays are not enough and there is a need for forms of culture which “incorporate” humans into the socio-macro integrity. Moreover, the feast is in opposition to everyday life, to routine, and gives humans the feeling of being part of wider society. (Jurlova, 2007, p. 244)

The feast is like a different reality through which humans realize their need for new experiences. The feast is not static but dynamic, as in the elements of the celebration are in perpetual transformation. As a rule, changes in holidays/feasts are part of social changes within the societal culture. These changes are usually the result of changes in the life conditions of the society, its social-economical structure, its political apparatus, its social consciousness, or its value system.

During the migration process the culture of celebrating feasts also changes. In the case of Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic, we can see how the forms, content and meanings of feasts change and how different holidays lose or gain their importance in the different life stages of students.

An analysis of the research participants’ responses suggests that holidays are an important element of the social life of Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic. Mainly because it's a reason to get together with friends and countrymen, but also because the celebration of different “home” holidays, reminds them of the home and family atmosphere while in the Czech Republic. However, there were also those who claimed that the celebration of some holidays lost their meaning and importance, as they are related to family events, and almost none of the research participants have family in the Czech Republic. For some students, the celebration of different feasts serves as an escape from their loneliness, while others feel even more alone during different celebrations. This may be the result of the extensiveness and the quality of social networks that students have managed to establish and at what life stage they are.

The most important event for all students without any exception is New Year's Eve. The majority of students consider it to be a family celebration and attempt a return trip to Russia or Kazakhstan in order to celebrate it (especially during their first years in the Czech Republic). Those who stay in the Czech Republic because of different study or work obligations, try to celebrate New Year's Eve with their friends and partners, and eat at least some traditional food; for example, Olivier salad, red caviar, champagne and mandarins. The experience of sharing traditional food can create the feeling of being part of a remote original society, which is very closely connected to Anderson's concept of the "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991, p. 7).

However, according to the research participants, it is also important that the celebration be in the "right" atmosphere, which they miss quite often in the Czech Republic. As Igor mentioned: *"I miss the whole atmosphere of celebration here, when you can just go out and everybody you meet will say "Happy New Year!!!" to you, hug you and offer you a glass of champagne! This is wonderful"*.

Svetlana also doesn't think the New Year's atmosphere in the Czech Republic feels right: *"At home, when the clock strikes twelve, you run out happy and joyful to visit your friends. But here, after the midnight, you just sit at home. In Russia, I have plenty of friends and every holiday is a real celebration. You just feel it, it's more joyful. A lot more joyful."*

Another tradition students try to maintain is to listen to the President's speech before midnight. Vladislav: *"We always listen to the Russian President, because it's very important for us on New Year's Eve. At least for me it is. Although I am not a patriot, I do it every New Year's"*. This tradition is very common among research participants, and frequently they try to listen to the President's speech while opening a bottle of champagne with their friends and relatives in Russia, regardless of the time difference, to feel unity across borders.

Some of the research participants also make an effort to maintain the eastern New Year's traditions and celebrate it according to the Chinese calendar. According to it, every year is symbolized by one of twelve animals and by one of five elements; people try to celebrate New Year Eve's with respect to that year's animal and element. For example, to cook something that this animal likes or present gifts that symbolize this animal. As Angela said: *"I always follow what kind of year it is, and what kind of food has to be on the table, and what colours I have to wear. If it is the year of the rabbit, there has to be vegetables on the table. If it is the year of the cock, there can't be any chicken on the table. I take into account everything. I also celebrate the new year as something new, because it*

has to be this way. I follow the kind of jewellery I have to wear, because if it is the year of the fire tiger, you have to wear gold jewellery. I follow all these traditions”.

Of course, not all research participants follow these traditions or do it to such an extent. Sometimes people just buy some stuff which symbolizes the particular animal, or try to decorate a New Year’s tree with animal toys. Whether students buy a lot of decorations or a New Year’s tree depends on whether they consider their stay in the Czech Republic to be permanent or temporary. Furthermore, many students don't have their own accommodation and don't want to have extra things when they move from one rented flat to another. As Galina said: *“We decorate the flat here, but don't buy a New Year’s tree. We bought only some branches and decorated them with home-made cookies, etc. Of course, we bought some decorations too, but not that many and not too expensive, so we don’t feel sorry when we have to throw away everything, in case we move somewhere else.”*

But not all research participants consider New Year's Eve the most important feast. Oxana, for example, claimed that after moving to the Czech Republic, Christmas (which is celebrated on the 24th of December) grew to have greater importance for her. *“For me, Christmas is more significant than New Year’s. I don't know why, but it's like that. Maybe because when you move away from Russia, you don't feel the same atmosphere with all these mandarins and silly TV shows. I got used to it very quickly and I can't say that I am sorry about it.”*

Orthodox Christmas is almost not celebrated at all by the research participants. In only a few cases did students go to orthodox church to put some candles or did girls meet together and tell fortunes or read tea-leaves.

Other feasts which lose their meaning in the Czech Republic are the 23rd of February (the day of men, officially known as “Defender of the Fatherland Day”), and the 8th of March (International Women's day), which are a “gender couple” according to Jurlova (2007, p.245). In Russia and Kazakhstan, the 8th of March is one of the most important dates, and is both an official holiday and a day off work. Regardless of age and status, people in Kazakhstan and Russia try to present flowers and gifts to women at home, at work, at schools and in universities on this day. But in the Czech Republic female research participants don't get the attention they are used to. As Svetlana stated: *“Here, it is like a day that doesn't exist at all. It's not celebrated here and I am mad about it. There isn't a tradition like this where flowers are given to women on that day, is there?! Without*

flowers it's not a holiday. It's already the second year that nobody has wished me well about it."

Flowers or gifts on Women's Day is expected from partners in particular. Angela: *"We celebrate International Women's Day. My boyfriend gives me flowers and we go to some restaurant, so I don't have to cook. He also gives me some presents. I always wait for this day and want my boyfriend to make a celebration out of it". However, in cases where the partner is a representative of another culture, which is the case of another research participant, they must always be reminded of the 8th of March. Marina: "Here, I get flowers if I say to my boyfriend in advance that tomorrow is International Women's Day and ask him to buy me flowers."*

Out of the male research participants, almost nobody celebrated Defender of the Fatherland Day (the 23rd of February according to the Russian calendar, and the 7th of May according to the Kazakh calendar), even though it is an official holiday in both countries. According to Igor, this celebration has lost its meaning in the Czech Republic: *"I am not expecting any gifts on Defender of the Fatherland Day. I don't consider this holiday to be a men's day, but as a day for actual defenders. The day of those who served the fatherlands welfare. And I betrayed mine. I escaped it, and that's why I don't accept gifts on this day. And moreover, I don't have anybody who would give me something on this day."*

During spring there are other feasts which are celebrated by Russian speaking students. For example, there is Pancake Week (which is the week before Lent and seven weeks before Easter). According to the research participants, they used to celebrate it a lot in Russia, whereby their mothers or grandmothers made plenty of pancakes for the whole family. But in the Czech Republic, most of them do it only by themselves occasionally and for a very few students this spring feast has a social meaning. For example, for Vladislav, who always gets together with his friends during Pancake Week: *"We celebrate Pancake Week - a week before the beginning of Lent. We always make plenty of pancakes, so we eat enough of them for the entire spring. We always know when Pancake Week is and we always celebrate it."*

After Lent, Easter celebrations begin, which is also rather popular among Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic. Students usually go to an Orthodox church on Eastern Sunday, colour eggs and make Easter cake. Of interest is that some students started to attend church, even though they had never done it before in their country of origin, claiming they started to feel the need to go in the Czech Republic. As Irina

stated: *“My grandmother goes to church very often, but I never went with her. Here, I feel this need to go to Orthodox church, just to put some candles there, to feel this atmosphere and to think about my family in Russia.”*

But of course, everybody has their own rituals connected with Easter. Some research participants celebrate this feast with their compatriots and try to uphold the traditions of their country of origin. Others, especially those who have foreign partners, celebrate it according to traditions which are acceptable in the culture of their partners. Galina: *“We celebrate Easter in a Greek way. We cook traditional Greek food like grilled lamb.”* Some research participants try to mix different traditions; for example, Maria celebrates Easter on Monday together with her Czech boyfriend and his family according to Czech tradition, but also tries to go to Orthodox church on Easter Sunday, a day before the Czech Easter celebration officially starts.

During spring, students from Kazakhstan have one more very important holiday, called Nauryz. This holiday marks the beginning of a new year and is celebrated over several days starting on the 21st of March, the spring equinox. Nauryz is a public holiday in Kazakhstan and it means “new day”, symbolizing goodness, wealth, happiness, love and a great friendship. It is celebrated in large and small cities, and villages that become festival centres where people can find traditional gifts, play games and sing songs. Even in the Czech Republic, Russian speaking students from Kazakhstan try not to forget this tradition and organize something similar here. For example, Lisa with the help of local NGOs and the embassy of Kazakhstan, managed to organize Nauryz in Charles Square in 2012. As in Kazakhstan, there were traditional games, food, music concerts and the cosiness of real Kazakh yurts in the centre of Prague.



Picture 12 Festival Nauryz in Charles Square, Prague. Source: From archive of research participant.

Another spring holiday is the first of May. The meaning of this holiday has been changing throughout history: from an international day of solidarity with working people to a celebration of spring. Even Soviet culture had a strong tradition of celebration on the 1st of May. Nowadays, for most people this holiday is just an extra day off to spend outside the city. The research participants are not exceptions, and as Svetlana said: *“the 1st of May isn't a holiday for me. After all, I am not from ‘that’ period.”*

However, many research participants have adopted the Czech tradition of celebrating the 1st of May, since in the Czech Republic it's considered more of a day of love. Many couples in love have a tradition of going to the park and kissing each other under a blooming cherry tree. An interesting fact is that many students keep up this tradition regardless of whether their partner is Czech or a representative of another nationality. As Angela from Russia and Viktor from Kazakhstan claimed: *“We always go to Petřín on the 1st of May to kiss under a blooming cherry tree. We think that this is a very beautiful and romantic tradition.”*

Another holiday, which takes place in May, is Victory Day. The majority of the Russian population, regardless of their political and religious beliefs, their gender or age, consider Victory Day the most important historical holiday in the country. And it's

also a very important day for the population of Kazakhstan, as many Kazakh veterans took part in the battles of World War II.

According to Jurlova, celebrating Victory Day carries a mix of social and existential meanings (2007, p. 247). War has affected many destinies in the Russian and Kazakh populations and almost every family has someone who remembers the events of the war. This memory is supported not only by states, but also by the memory of the people, and for many families Victory Day isn't only a state holiday, but also a personal and family holiday. However, the celebration of this holiday isn't exclusive to veterans' families, other families also celebrate those who used to fight for their native land (Jurlova, 2007, p. 248).

One of the rituals of the research participants is to go to Olšany Cemetery in Prague, where the Russian speaking community usually gathers on Victory Day. Inna: *“I go to Olšany Cemetery. We have already been there twice. We bought flowers. Last year they were blue chrysanthemums. This year we bought clove gillyflowers. Last year was an anniversary and everything was more grandiose. This year it wasn't like that, there were less people. But everybody puts flowers on the soldiers' graves. There was also a priest who led the church service. He walked with the icon and we followed him. After, we all (me and my friends) went for a beer. For me, it's important that I go to Olšany Cemetery every year and remember the significance of this day.”*

The actuality of this holiday isn't only in its meaning, but also in how it's anchored in rituals and ceremonial forms of culture. On a state level, it's the ritual of bringing flowers to the graves of those who fell while fighting and the ritual of having a military parade through Red Square in Moscow and other big cities. The new ritual, which is connected to Victory Day and which was initiated by different public organizations, is an action called the “Ribbon of Saint George”.



Picture 13 The Ribbon of Saint George. Source: Wikipedia

According to Jurlova (2007, p. 248), this is a very important element in the actualization and fixing of the historic and social-organizational meaning of Victory Day. Every person that puts the Ribbon of Saint George on their clothes or car as a symbol of Russia (as the winner in World War II) becomes involved in national unity and the integrity of the nation's historical destiny (Jurlova, 2007, p. 248). Svetlana: *“the 9th of May, or Victory Day, is very important to me. Even though I didn't celebrate it in some special way this year, I walked everywhere with the Ribbon of Saint George on my jacket the whole day. Everybody was staring at me, but I was so proud of it.”*

Some research participants expressed disappointment that the public holiday and the day off is on the 8th of May in the Czech Republic and not the 9th of May as it is in Russia and Kazakhstan. Also, according to the research participants there is not enough space devoted to this holiday and historical event in the media. In Kazakhstan, and especially in Russia, the media plays a great role in maintaining the meaning of this holiday. Every TV channel and every radio station in Russia congratulates the war veterans and (according to Jurlova, 2007, p. 248) look for new forms of actualising the historical meaning of this event in the consciousness of the post-soviet generation. “Victory Day is an extraordinary holiday, when propagandistic actions and activities of the state find

understanding and support from the population of the Russian Federation” (Jurlova, 2007, p. 248). This is demonstrable in the narrative of one of the research participants, Marina: *“the 9th of May is good for the fact that on this day there are a lot of movies about World War II on TV. You watch all these old, good, Russian movies and your mood improves. Also, there are a lot of different reports and interviews on this topic in the news. Everybody talks about it and you can feel the atmosphere. But this year in the Czech Republic, I watched all of these on the internet, on Channel 1’s webpage. There was a report about every city-hero, where the war took place, and there were interviews with the grandchildren of veterans. It really creates the whole atmosphere of the holiday.”*

Heers claimed that it is never possible to separate the holiday from the social context in which it has arisen. This social context gives the colour and meaning to the holiday, as the aim of every holiday is the celebration of the fundamentals and values of the society, its privileges and power (Heers, 2006, p. 17). According to Heers, the holiday is also the reflection of a concrete society and certain political intentions (2006, p. 11). And the political holiday especially is more than a celebration of triumph, but rather a game or contest which satisfies the desire for competition and enables the strengthening of a certain solidarity and mutual measurement of particular groups (Heers, 2006, p. 15).

One of the important aspects in understanding the celebration culture of Russian speaking students is an analysis of their relationship to the modern state holidays, such as Russia Day or the Day of the 1st President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

No research participants from Russia feel any relationship to Russia Day, which is celebrated on the 12th of June. Inna: *“Russia Day is only connected to problems, as the whole country succumbs to alcoholism”*. Igor also looks at the modern state holidays negatively: *“As I am not a patriot, I don’t consider these holidays to be holidays and look at them sarcastically.”* From the narratives of some research participants, it’s possible to see a particular distance from the Russian State. Galina: *“I don’t identify myself with the Russian State. For me, Russia is just some connection with family that lives there.”*

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, there was a period of transformation and Russia needed new symbols of national unity and patriotism. But according to Jurlova (2007, p. 249), Russia Day is too “young” a holiday with no clear meaning. So far, in Russia, Victory Day is the “most patriotic” holiday, and it is seen in the students’ responses. Their tendency to keep their distance from the Russian state and its modern

state holidays can be a sign of disagreement with the political and social situation in Russia.

The situation of research participants from Kazakhstan and their relationship to modern state holidays doesn't much differ. Many research participants consider the Day of the 1st President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, celebrated on the 1st of December, to be just an additional day off. However, of interest is that during the field research it was observed that some of them had the picture of their president, Nazarbayev, and flags of the Republic of Kazakhstan in their homes. But the domestic culture of Russian speaking students from Kazakhstan and Russia in the Czech Republic is the topic of a separate chapter in this work.

3.8 Housing culture

As was previously mentioned, very often students live in a dormitory during their first year in the Czech Republic, and only after the expiration of a contract with the dormitory do most of them start looking for new accommodation with roommates. If, during their life in a dormitory and study at a language school, they had some kind of supervision (at least some language schools try to supervise students), their independent life only fully begins after moving to a private flat and starting to study at university. The importance of living independently can be found on different planes. One of them is the link to the process of growing up. For many students the fact that they had started to live separately from parents and without any direct supervision, had started to take care of their daily routines and house by themselves, was one of the marks of their adolescence and they pointed it out frequently. The fact that all of these happened in a foreign country made them even more proud of it. Angela: *“At the beginning (of their stay in the Czech Republic) it was more fun to live in a dormitory than it was interesting to live in a new flat, to live in Europe...Now, it's already an adult life with a man. Such developments in housing, if one can say so.”*

The interesting thing is that even those research participants who had lived separately from their parents before migration, connect life in the Czech Republic with adolescence and personal development. The strategy of settling in the Czech Republic is very closely connected to the migration story of every research participant. Inna: *“At the beginning, when I came here, I was buying cheap things. My friend would make fun of me for buying plastic dishes. But now we are trying to buy normal things. I do not*

know 100% if I will stay here or not... But I would like to live here – to live comfortably. The same way you were used to living...not just getting by...”

Searching for personal housing isn't only a part of adolescence but also an important factor in the adaptation to the host society. According to Rákoczyová and Trbola (2009, p. 45), the aim of adaptation is initial orientation in society, creating social contacts and familiarity with Czech culture. Thus, the search for independent living can be understood as a manifestation of one's ability to orient in a new environment.

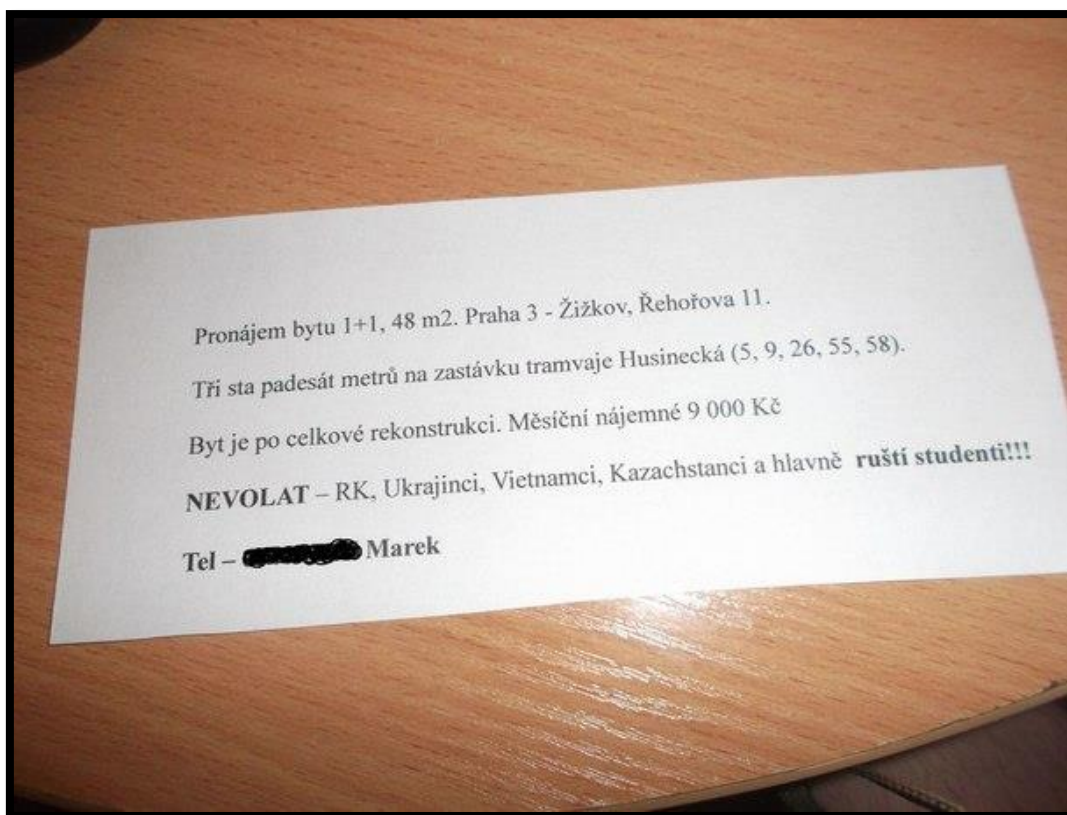
In searching for a flat to rent, most research participants searched the website *bezrealitky.cz* for economic reasons. They communicated with landlords by themselves so as not to pay a commission to real estate agencies. Some research participants, those whose Czech language skills were limited even after studying at a language school, used the services of Russian speaking real estate agents. In this case, the prices for a rental flat were higher than general prices in the real estate market and the commission for the agent was usually the equivalent of one month's rent. There were also some research participants whose economic capabilities weren't very limited and who, with the help of their parents, had arranged their own flat, but these research participants were quite a minority.

Unfortunately, there were cases when students were cheated by real estate agencies or by flat owners. Some dubious firms concealed important information and exaggerated prices, counting on the fact that students are alone in a foreign country and don't orient themselves perfectly in a new environment and through Czech legislation. For example, Marina found her first flat through a Russian speaking agent. The price of the flat was higher than the medium rental price of a flat in Prague and, moreover, the owner of the flat tried to extort money from Marina and her roommate by providing fake electricity bills. At the end of the rental period, he gave them a bill of debt for 25 000 CZK. Luckily, Marina went to a lawyer and learned about everything. After this experience (2 years of her stay in the Czech Republic), she was able to look for the flat by herself without the help of an intermediary.

From this example, it can be seen that as time went by students learned to defend their rights and stop relying on intermediary services. They started to understand that they could avoid high margin brokers and managed to obtain the services for the same price as locals. Galina: *“We were looking for an apartment through a Russian website because we didn't speak Czech. We couldn't search for a flat through a Czech real estate agency because of the language barrier. At the Czech language school, they promised to help us to find a flat, but they didn't. They just offered the service of their real estate agent, who*

charged 100% commission for everything. They said that it was their agent and that he was trustworthy. Eventually, we found a real estate agent through the website "Guide.cz". There he took only 50% of one month's rent".

Some research participants met with direct or indirect discrimination when attempting to access housing, as Czech landlords often didn't want to rent a flat to foreigners, falling victim to the stereotype about foreigners as those who make problems (Leontiyeva and Nečasová, 2009, p. 141). Vika: "Before I wrote emails to flat owners, but in one place they didn't want to accommodate Russians, in another place the flat was just occupied quickly. Normal flats for low prices are gone quickly."



Picture 14 Ad concerning accommodation, which was shared by one of the Russian speaking students at vk.com. Source: Social network vk.com

Translation of advertisement:

Flat for rent 1+1, 48 m², Prague 3 - Žižkov, Rehorova 11

350 metres to train station Husinecká (5,9,26,55,58)

Flat has been completely reconstructed. Monthly rent is 9 000 CZK

Don't call: real estate's agencies, Ukrainians, Vietnamese, Kazakhs and above all, **Russian students!!!**

But there were also those who during their housing search “surprisingly” didn’t experience any of the discrimination they had expected. Inna: *“Before we started looking for a flat and started to call owners, everybody had warned us that Czechs react very badly. That they don’t want Russians to live in their flats and so on. That they behave in a prejudiced way to Russians. But during our search we didn’t experience such problems, every owner was willing to show us their flat”*.

Discrimination against immigrants in the housing market is a situation where foreigners realize their unequal status within society. According to Kenneth L. Dion (2001, p. 523-539), perceptions of discrimination by immigrants indirectly reflects their satisfaction or successful inclusion: the more discrimination is perceived, the less successful integration into the host society is.

Students choose accommodation in relation to their life course and migration strategies. Students who were sent by parents only for the purpose of getting a degree and who didn’t have intentions to stay in the Czech Republic have tried to minimize the costs of accommodation. Usually students were looking for fully-furnished flats and perceived them as places of temporary stay. But the same is possible to say about students who finance their migration to the Czech Republic by themselves.

By looking at the student’s place of residence, we can see not only physical space but social as well. A place where the life of the research participant happens in the Czech Republic and where different social relations are developed. Most of the students had the experience of living with a roommate, which can be both an economic and adaptation strategy. According to authors of the book, “Social Integration of Migrants in the Czech Republic”, one possible adaptation strategy during the initial period is forming foreigner communities, which helps to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation in new environments. Foreigners have pretty similar problems and experiences, which brings them closer to each other and helps them share important information and contacts amongst each other. (Pořízková, 2009, p. 64).

For example, Irina after 6 years in the Czech Republic still lives with roommates. As she noted, her arrival here was emotionally challenging, as it was her first time alone, so far away from the family. Irina: *“I couldn’t live alone here... or maybe if someone were to visit me often.”* The end of living with roommates is also connected to a new stage of life, transforming the house from a common to a private place. The longer a student stays in the Czech Republic, the stronger the wish to have a space just for themselves or

to share it with their partners. Galina: *“After two years, it was complicated for even the two of us to live together. Everyone is different, each has their own rhythm”*.

The social life of some students, regardless of their length of stay, still seems very limited in the Czech Republic. The number of friends is not comparable with the number of friends in Russia or Kazakhstan. Spontaneous home visits are also important parts of social life, but in the Czech Republic they were missing. As Lisa stated: *“You cannot visit this friend today, invite another one to your house tomorrow, etc.”*

It's not a secret that every person, especially in a foreign country, sometimes experiences feelings of loneliness and homesickness. Maybe that is the reason students surround themselves at home with pictures of family, friends and other loved ones, those they miss. Angela: *“Of course, I have photos of my family. Photos of parents, my sister...they always support me and I know that they expect me to achieve something here and I must achieve it.”*

Communication with family usually takes place via Skype, via vk.com, via Viber or WhatsApp, and, therefore, computers and smartphones have great value in the life of these students. As Vika said: *“The most valuable thing I have is my computer”*. Another research participant, Angela, shared her experience of understanding her addiction to computer: *“Once, it was broken and I couldn't use it. At that time, I realized that I felt very lonely and separated from my loved ones.”*

Another important aspect of the student's life is their relationship to neighbours and the way they perceive their neighbourhood. For example, Igor was expecting that there might be some hostility from the neighbours because he is Russian. *“An old woman, who lives upstairs, caught me in the hallway. She was very friendly and ready to communicate. She started to ask me where I came from, what I was doing here. But I didn't feel any hostility from her. All my neighbours, who are also old ladies, are very nice regardless of the fact that they are all Czechs and I am Russian. My name is written on my doors, so it's very easy to understand that I am not Czech. However, I have very good relationships with all my neighbours.”*

Marina also pointed out that she had very good relationships with her neighbours, despite the fact that she was from Russia. *“I have very nice neighbours. They also have dogs. Sometimes we talk about our dogs. Nobody cares if I am from Russia or not. Maybe because it's a Czech house, I feel very comfortable here.”*

Another interesting thing is the relationship between students and landlords, since they are often representatives of the majority. Most research participants managed to build

up friendly relationships. For example, Galina had a good relationship with the owner of her flat, with whom she could share some personal things and, in case of financial complications, could always ask for a postponement of the rent payment. Marina even considered her owner a friend and sometimes spent free time with her. Marina: *“We are friends with the owner. When she is in Prague, we sit in the apartment I rent and drink tea or coffee. We speak Czech. We're both crazy about dogs. She has a big shepherd and I have a small Yorkshire. I'm lucky, sometimes she helps me with Czech, for example, with proofreading.”*

As a side note, some research participants have a very interesting strategy for opening the gates to the majority society. Their dogs appear to be a connection between them and the Czech community, as Czechs are known worldwide as dog-lovers. People who arrive in the Czech Republic quickly notice that “it’s a paradise for dogs”. According to statistics from the City of Prague’s webpage of (2009), there are about 85 000 dogs who are registered and the estimated number is even higher. The estimated total number of dogs in Prague is between 90 and 120 thousand. As Galina explained: *“It's very funny how Czechs love dogs! When you're with a dog everybody wants to talk to you, but when you're alone - nobody notices you.”*

Where students live is also where they meet not only the majority population, but also with their compatriots and other foreigners living in the Czech Republic. Some of them were excited about the possibility of meeting people from the same country of origin, such as Vika: *“Once, I found an ad with photos of the flat. In the pictures you could see that there was something written in Russian on the door. And in the contacts regarding the flat was the name Alexander. I was happy that those who rented the flat are Russians, that we could easily communicate, etc.”*

However, there were also research participants who had at the time of the interview already had bad experiences with their compatriots or migrants from FSU and tried to keep a distance from them. Igor: *“We have a house with five entrances. It's quiet, but once I heard drunk Ukrainians. They were not from my entrance. Otherwise, this district is possible to describe with these words: you can never run away from your homeland. When we were living with my friend on Hurka, there was a Russian shop in front of us. I couldn't even imagine that here might be a Russian shop again. But there is. Right in the shopping centre. So Russians as well as Ukrainians live in my district. There is no place to hide from them (laughs).”*

As was previously mentioned above, where students live in the Czech Republic isn't only a physical space, but a social one. And as many of them have no relatives here, they try to fill their rental accommodation with new social narratives. Most of them try to create a new social world with the help of gifts from people in their country of origin and with their pictures. In this way, students try to connect the new space with their life before moving to the Czech Republic and make a rented flat more cosy and homey.

Gifts connect things with people and anchor the flow of things into a stream of social relationships. Gifts and the spirit of reciprocity, in the frame in which they are exchanged, are in opposition to the spirit of profit and self-centredness, and is characterised by the circulation of commodities. Gifts from students' loved-ones remind them of those who stayed in Russia or Kazakhstan. For example, Irina has jewellery which her mom gave her: *"When I see the jewellery, I remember my mom."* Kristina has the bed sheets from her mom and bath towels from her grandfather. Some research participants also have stuffed animals from their friends. Igor has a special gift right from his hometown in Russian: *"These are gifts from my friends in Krasnoyarsk, from my hometown. For example, an image drawn on parchment."*

Gifts become artefacts, caused by close links with a particular individual, becoming his or her literal extension; for example, clothes, jewellery, or other articles of personal use. According to Miller (1987), such an object can be considered an integral part of the person and may even substitute to some extent in case of the person's absence. Therefore, things that travel with their owner to a new country gain important characteristics, they have their own story, their own past, present and future, as Kopytoff (1986) pointed out.

Moreover, for a person who leaves home for a longer period of time, it's very important to take "a portable concept of their home" (Buriková, 2006, p. 104), implying that things which can travel with a person and to a new place, in a new home, help them to articulate their identity.

Regardless of what kind of intentions students have in the Czech Republic, all of them have something which reminds them of home. For example, Irina has a kitchen mug and a spoon from home, Kristina has lots of stuffed animals sent by her mom via the post.

When Angela moved out of the dormitory to a rental flat, she started to bring more things to Prague from Russia. *"I started to bring different trinkets, sea shells, souvenirs..."*

something that would remind me of home... A few stuffed animals... so that I wouldn't have the feeling that I was just a visitor or a renter, and could create a homey flat."

Together with their establishment and successfully finished adaptation in the Czech Republic, students start to anchor themselves more in their new place of living with the help of things, which were usually from their homes in Russia or Kazakhstan. As Vika said: *"I have a lot of things from home. Really a lot. I have various nice boxes, statuettes. I have almost my entire house here (laughing)."*

A temporary home gains power from things, people and the cultural practices of the original home. That's why maintaining contacts with the original home becomes very important (Szaló, 2007). In other words, home can be seen primarily as a social space, as a place where social relations and cultural practices develop and which can be recreated anywhere (Gardner, 1993, pp. 7-9).

What was very common for the Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic was their respect for books written in Russian. It can be said that these books act as a bridge between cultures. As Pešková et al. (2006, p. 204) explained, Russians have a very deep relationship to literature and the Russian language, as a literary heritage is a personal heritage for everybody in Russia.

Amongst the research participants, there were those who have orthodox icons at home. Some of students also have things which are typical for their region or some souvenirs. For example, Kristina has small slippers made from birch crusts at home.



Picture 15 Traditional souvenir from Russia. Source: personal archive of research participant.

The relationship with the new space is mediated through things that are bought in the Czech Republic. For example, Vika has a mug with the Mole (the hero of the Czech animated film, *O krtkovi*) at home. Kristina has a calendar with castles in the Czech Republic. In the new homes there are also new flowers, which are not very common to see in Russia or in Kazakhstan. For example, Galina has a poinsettia and other girls have cyclamens.



Picture 16 Poinsettia or a so called “Christmas Star” in the Czech Republic. Source: Wikipedia

3.9 Assessment of the position

As was already stated in previous chapters, in general, students value the study and the diploma they receive from a Czech university positively, but what they see as problematic is their chances of employment after graduation from university.

After spending some time in the Czech Republic, graduating from language school, and a few years of studying at university, students start to think about their future life in the Czech Republic or outside of it. At this point it's very important how they see their position within the majority population and what kind of chances they have in the local labour market. While making the decision to come to the Czech Republic, the majority of students and their parents assumed that a European diploma would open all doors for a great job and high status within society, but reality has been shown to be more complex than they thought.

For example, Svetlana, a graduate bachelor student from Charles University in Prague, claimed that she felt like a “humiliated migrant” and that this is one of the reasons she is considering returning home: *“I don't feel like an equal. There is*

a different relationship to foreigners here. I don't have rights here. When I was in the hospital, I felt such powerlessness. At home everything is clear and understandable. Here, I feel like an immigrant, it's not my country."

Students attribute their inequality or "bad" position within society to different reasons. First is the status of being a foreigner and the prevailing bad attitude towards foreigners within society. The negative attitude to foreigners in the Czech Republic can be confirmed using data collected by the Research Centre of Public Opinion of the Sociological Institute of Academy of Science of the Czech Republic. According to the research from September 2015, 65% of respondents see foreigners as the reason for a rise in criminality; 63% think that foreigners mean a health risk because of the possible spread of diseases; and 60% think that foreigners, who live on a long-term basis in the Czech Republic, are one of the main causes of unemployment. More than the half respondents (54%) agree with the statement that foreigners threaten the way of life in the Czech Republic. Also, a large segment of Czech society doesn't agree that foreigners, who stay in the Czech Republic for a longer period, make the culture richer, contribute to economic development, and resolve the problem of an aging population.

In the Czech Republic, a major part of the public encounters migration and migrants through media outputs. This often leads to a situation where the public has distorted images of foreigners, who are very often represented in a negative light by journalists in the media. According to an analysis by HlidaciPes.org, conducted only between 1.9.2015 to 31.10.2015, there were 1755 articles published about migration in the 7 most widely-read daily newspapers. Only 191 of them had titles with positive impressions, 339 with negative and 1225 with neutral. Another study on a similar topic was produced by NEWTON Media (2013). It focused on the stereotypical attributes of national groups, specifically Albanians, Vietnamese and Ukrainians living in the Czech Republic. According to this study "the Czech media predominantly writes in a negative context about these groups of foreigners. The positive information is absent. Foreigners from these chosen groups are pictured in context, where they are on or outside the legal, normal and common borders, supporting the stereotypical image of the unknown and potentially dangerous foreigner."

Students also see a difference in attitudes between different groups of foreigners. Svetlana: *"From my point of view, they do make a differences if you are Czech or Russian. But if you're Russian or Ukrainian, it doesn't matter to them. They put everybody into the same box. Of course, I am not sure about it, but I have a feeling that this is how it is."*

On the other hand, I think that if the foreigner is an Englishman, for example, there would be a better attitude given to him than to a group of Russians or Ukrainians. From my point of view, they think that we come here only for work, to take their jobs.”

The predominantly negative attitudes towards Russians, an echo of year 1968, influence the everyday life of Russian speaking students and the way they see their position within society. As was previously described, some students have experienced discrimination or a xenophobic attitude towards them in public space, especially when they were speaking Russian. For example, Polina’s negative experience: *“Once, my friend from Russia came to visit me. Of course, she doesn't speak Czech and we had to communicate in Russian. We were on the way to IKEA and were speaking Russian very quietly. Suddenly we heard behind our backs ‘shitty Russians’. It was a woman, maybe 35-years-old, not some old woman, but so angry... I was thinking: what did I do to her? We were speaking very quietly and not bothering anybody. Sometimes these kind of situations happen, but luckily not so often.”*

Again, media very often plays a crucial role in providing the kindling for conflicts and negative attitudes towards some groups of foreigners. If we look at some media outputs, we can see that negative, sometimes stereotypical articles about Russians in the Czech Republic are not the exception. As an illustration, here are a few media titles about Russian or Russian speaking students:

“They are everywhere”, Reflex.

“There are too many Russians in universities”, Mlada Fronta.

“The number of Russians is increasing in the Czech Republic, they like it here. Will their influence grow?”, Mlada fronta Dnes.

Negative articles about foreign students, especially students from FSU countries, are also not absent in the Czech media. Just one illustration of it is a report from Czech National Television, which accuses foreign students of using university study only as a means to obtain a residence permit in the Czech Republic.

Study at University – the Trick to Getting a Residence Permit in the Czech Republic.

Czech National Television 19:00 Events 05/22/2011

Josef Marshal, Moderator

Foreigners have found a new way to get legal residence in the country, the magazine Profit stated in its Monday edition. According to the magazine, foreigners can easily register in a university, especially a private one, after paying the tuition.

Štěpánka Martanová, Editor

Fake weddings or a recognition of paternity. Until recently it was an ordinary way for foreigners to ensure a residence or work permit. Now, they register at universities, especially third country nationals.

Tomáš Haišman, Director of the Department for Asylum and Migration Policy, Ministry of Interior

We came across it not only in Prague, but also, for example, in Liberec.

Jaromir Drabek, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs / TOP 09 /

They absolutely violate the law, because a residence permit states clearly the defined purpose of the stay.

Štěpánka Martanová, Editor

35,000 foreign students study in the Czech Republic. Most of them study at public schools. 16% of all students study in private schools. Foreigners, who use university to obtain a resident permit, register at private ones. For admission, they only have to pay the tuition.

Tomáš Haišman, Director of the Department for Asylum and Migration Policy, Ministry of Interior

State universities have a time-tested system, while some of the private universities don't have this experience or aren't even looking for it.

Štěpánka Martanová, Editor

Foreigners can get a student visa at home as well, at the foreign branches/subsidiaries of Czech schools. For example, in the Ukraine and Hungary the accreditation committee examines the Banking Institute.

Vladimira Dvorakova, Chair of the Accreditation Commission, Ministry of Education.

A lot of things suggest that there is a kind of teaching that we didn't know about and which takes place in a form that wasn't officially authorized.

Editor / quote: Josef BENDA, Vice-Rector of Banking Institute // Source: Profit /

“Teaching here is done in compliance with accreditation and it's provided by professors and associate professors. Their work has been approved by the management of the University”

Štěpánka Martanová, Editor

But there is another problem: fake university diplomas.

Bohuslav ŠENÝŘOVÁ , Dean, The University of Finance and Administration

Out of 20 presented diploma copies, 9 of them were fake.

Štěpánka Martanová, editor

Police are investigating the case. The school management verifies all certificates from foreigners. The new law has to change the abuse of universities. The Ministry of the Interior is preparing it and there is going to be more inspection of students.

Štěpánka Martanová, Czech Television.

It's possible to see from this report that foreigners studying in Czech universities is presented as problematic to the public. Students, especially those in private universities, are also generalized as those who abuse the system. Even though these cases cannot be excluded, this generalized presentation of foreign students to the public is quite problematic. Moreover, there was no mention of any positive aspects of foreigners who study in Czech schools, nor the voice of any students themselves.

Another problem Russian speaking students face is having an insufficient level of the Czech language, which is very often seen as a barrier to full-fledged communication, inclusion in the society, and for job opportunities. Even though students had a few years of study in the Czech language, they assume that they don't have a level of language

comparable to a native speaker. Irina: *“As a student, I have only half the opportunities here, particularly job opportunities. As a foreigner, I have some language limitations. It's very hard to overcome the language barrier. Moreover, people see that I am foreigner. They look at me in a different way, maybe they are surprised when I say something. In most cases, maybe it's easier to keep silent and not show your handicap, that you can't normally express your thoughts. I am not ashamed to be foreigner, but I am not proud of it. But I am proud that I am Russian and am not willing to stay silent and be ashamed of it. But still, there is different attitude to foreigners here, especially to Russians. In the beginning, I thought that it was mostly negative because there are many students from Russia here. They come here and occupy places at universities and jobs. Secondly, because Russians are considered “bad communists”. Maybe their parents have been repeating it to them since childhood. But now I see that more and more young people don't have such prejudices and that they are much more open to communication with foreigners. Maybe it's because Prague is the capital and there are many foreign people studying at universities here.”*

From the participants' narratives it's possible to see that not knowing the Czech language on a native level is very often considered a handicap. This is heightened in some situations because their surroundings make it manifest. For example, Polina met different reactions due to her accent in society. As she claimed, some "normal" people react to her accented Czech language normally and try to listen more carefully, support and help with words if she forgets any. But *“there are also those people who start to ask in a spirit of: “what the hell you are doing here?””*

Svetlana has experienced certain problems in finding a job because her language skills were not high enough: *“I still don't know where I am going to look for a job. I think that I have quite a small chance, because I don't have good enough language skills. From my point of view, if I knew the language at a native level, nobody would know differences... however, maybe they would also want a permanent residence. Maybe, if I had a permanent residence permit and I knew the Czech language at a native level, nobody would say to me that they didn't want to employ me because I am Russian. But just because I am Russian, there are a lot of consequences (for example, the Russian accent and citizenship from the Russian Federation). But in the case of knowing the language 100% and having a permanent residence permit everything would be fine.”*

Since students from Kazakhstan and Russia are considered to be migrants from non-EU countries, there are different legal limitations which create barriers for getting

work and establishing a stable life in the Czech Republic, which were mentioned by Svetlana. Students see their unequal position in the Czech Republic above all as a consequence of their type of residence permit obstructing them from accessing all the possibilities inherent to the Czech and European labour markets.

Galina: *“I think that as long as I don't have European citizenship, I can forget about grants and other possibilities connected with university. If I ever get citizenship, all the doors will open. At university they told me this directly: you can be in a PhD program, but if you want to stay after and take part in different grants and state programmes, you need to marry a Czech or don't even think about it. Just marry some Czech and the problem will be solved.”*

According to Daria, foreign students have only a 10% chance of getting a job, even though they have higher education from the Czech Republic. *“To get a job is very problematic. When you send your CV, primarily Czech citizens will be chosen, then EU citizens, and only after them citizens of other countries.”*

Students also see the vulnerability of their situations in the absence of their family, relatives and friends, on whom they count in different times; this is especially obvious during their first years in the Czech Republic. During this period, students usually don't have such widespread and strong social networks. For example, Valentina claimed that sometimes she was afraid to return to the dormitory late in the evening. *“At home I would call my friend or my father and would ask them to pick me up by car and it wouldn't be a problem at all.”* At the same time, Valentina doesn't see the Czech police as an object upon which she can rely on in dangerous situations. *“If I approach them with some problem they would say: Aha, a foreigner, where is your visa? Or would give me a fine.”* Students see the police as a controlling authority rather than a protective one.

For students, it is also difficult to orient themselves within the services offered by the social system of a new country, as they don't have such an expanded network of known professionals as they do in their country of origin. Moreover, in cases where students are not employed in the Czech Republic, they have very limited access to health care. For example, according to Veronika everything is easier in Russian hospitals. *“We have a family doctor and if anything is bothering me, I can go to her and ask for a medical examination without any problem. But here it's a problem.”* In the Czech Republic, students don't have access to public health care and have to buy commercial health insurance, which has a lot of limitations and exceptions; for example, the treatment of chronic diseases, dental care (if it's not an emergency) and preventive health checks.

All of these and many other services are not part of commercial health care and students who have the possibility to travel to Russia or Kazakhstan try to request medical care in their country of origin. The rest have to pay for “extra services”, quite a big sum, despite paying between 5 000 to 12 000CZK per year for this obligatory commercial insurance.

It's possible to conclude that students see their disadvantaged position in the Czech Republic on different levels. Firstly, on the level of being part of a so-called group of “foreigners”. Even though, the majority of research participants have been living in the Czech Republic from 5 to 7 years and have graduated from Czech university, they still see their position in the Czech Republic as the position of a foreigner. Moreover, stemming from their “foreigner” status other consequences can be seen, such as inequality in the legal field and the legal limitations and obligations connected with it.

Another level, where students feel the inequality, is the affiliation with the “Russian” ethnic group or the “Russian speaking” linguistic group and their experience with negative reactions from the surroundings, which are very often echoes from events of the last century, as well as the recent conflict in the Ukraine. In Russian speaking students’ online groups, the relationship of Czechs and Russians is very often a topic of discussion, and when anybody finds an article about Russians in the Czech Republic it's shared for appraisal immediately.

The third level is the language barrier itself. If many students believed the Czech language to be very similar to Russian and easy to learn before coming to the Czech Republic, they found out that in reality, even after quite a long period of time in the Czech Republic and after a graduating from university in the Czech language, it's very hard to achieve the level of a native speaker and self-confidence with the language. Moreover, because it is a very big part of job positions, where knowledge of the Czech language must be at a native level, these have become inaccessible for students.

Another level is the absence of so-called “strong and weak ties” in the destination country (Granovetter, 1973). By moving to another country, students lose their usual social circle in the frame of which they used to live and solve different life situations. This problem is even more obvious at the beginning of their life in the Czech Republic - until students find/develop new social networks and adapt to a new environment.

The perception of the student position as negative in the Czech Republic can be compensated for by the prevailing positive perception of people from their country of origin i.e. the perception of getting a prestige diploma abroad. For example, Lisa, talking about her friend, said: *“She used to study at the University of Economics here and*

then moved to Saint Petersburg. She arrived at the university in Saint Petersburg and they asked to see her previous education. They were really impressed, really. They said 'Wow, that's really something!'"

Moreover, parents are proud of their children and evaluate them in a positive way - because they live an independent life abroad.

Regardless, cases of discrimination and prejudice against foreigners from the east, and specifically Russian or Russian speaking students, mostly underlined that these situations were more the exception, and, for example, at university and later on in the work environment, they didn't face discrimination as often. Anyway, it's good to try to understand the roots of the negative attitudes towards the Russian speaking community, which is the topic of the next chapter.

3.9.1 Where does prejudice come from? Collective memory and historical events

Almost every research participant has been the object of some kind of discrimination or prejudice towards Russians or Russian speakers in the Czech Republic. As it has been shown in previous chapters, past events are not easily forgotten and the collective memory of them serves as a source of legitimization for particular social groups and their actions.

In this chapter, the focus will be shifted towards how the common socialist past and collective memory influence current relations between the majority population and young Russian speaking migrants from Russia and Kazakhstan in the Czech Republic.

Transitions in history and past heritage from one generation to another has existed for a long time. Nowadays, however, collective memory has received special attention from academics and experts as it plays an important role in politics and society. According to Levinson (1996), when a new social group appears in the public arena, it usually brings its own interpretation of a common past. At the same time, drawing attention to one event is closely related to neglecting other events, which can be linked to the society as a whole, or to a concrete group.

The concept of collective memory was introduced by the French sociological school and has become widespread due to the works of Maurice Halbwachs (1992), a student of Emile Durkheim. According to Halbwachs (1992, p. 38), memory as access to the realities of the past is very unreliable, but nevertheless, it forms the basis for social

order. Furthermore, there is no society, which could live without a collective “fund of memories” since religion, family, professional organizations and social institutions are held together by nothing more than collective memories. Memory is personal as well as social, and these two characteristics of memory are interconnected to each other. “It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also inside society, that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories” (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 38, cit. according to Olick, 1999, p. 334).

Halbwachs (1992, cit. according to Olick, 1999, p. 334) thus alternately referred to autobiographical memory, historical memory, history, and collective memory. “Autobiographical memory is the memory of those events that we ourselves experience (though those experiences are shaped by group memberships), while historical memory is memory that reaches us only through historical records. History is the remembered past to which we no longer have an “organic” relationship—the past that is no longer an important part of our lives—while collective memory is the active past that forms our identities” (Olick, 1999, p. 335).

Olick (1999) distinguish a few kinds of collective memory. He talks about collected memory, which he defines as “kind of collective memory, which is based on individual principles: the aggregated individual memories of members of a group” (Olick, 1999, p. 338). And genuinely collective memory, which refers “to public discourses about the past as wholes or to narratives and images of the past that speak in the name of collectivities” (Olick, 1999, p. 345).

Describing collective memory as a social phenomenon, Halbwachs (1992) emphasizes its selectivity. Personal memories are prone to extinction if they are not repeated, not called into memory again and again. According to him (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 51) “the mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society”. Group memberships provide the material for memory and prod the individual into recalling particular events and into forgetting others. Thus, autobiographical memories can survive only if they meet the institutional needs of someone. But as Halbwachs (1992) claimed, while it doesn’t mean that memories, which became the heritage of collective consciousness, are unreliable in the way they portray past events, some of events, revised by the collective memory, gain in importance. It is due to this that they are recalled more often and longer in comparison to the enormous quantity of other events that fall into oblivion (Halbwachs, 1992).

Emotional involvement with the past occurs through the use of collective memory. From childhood, people are exposed to different components of collective memory such as memorial places, monuments, religious rituals, folklore, etc. They are taught to respect the past, to know their historical roots and to have empathy for some historical figures and to hate others. In some cases, this uncritical perception of the social memory may block independent historical interests, since myths, fundamental components of the collective memory, give a full and complete picture of the past and can hardly evoke impulses to add something to it.

Halbwachs (1992, p. 38, cit. according to Olick, 1999, p. 335) also argued that “memory is in no way a repository of all past experiences. Over time, memories become generalized “*imagos*” and such *imagos* require a social context for their preservation. Memories, in this sense, are as much the products of the symbols and narratives available publicly—and of the social means for storing and transmitting them—as they are the possessions of individuals” (Olick, 1999, p. 335).

There is a close connection between private and public, psychologically existential and political in the collective memory of a nation. The collective memory is usually connected with the near past and the revision and rethinking of it isn't made only in historical archives, but also by individuals, who reconsider their past life, motivation, identity and relation with previous generations. Moreover, collective identity is closely related to the issue of collective, particularly national identity.

There are different sites of memory: monuments (memorials, museums objects, documents), language, music, literature, textbooks, mass media, etc. Different sociologists have tried to explain the process of folding and fixing the collective memory with monuments, which usually are used for fixing a particular interpretation of past events. In this way, monuments express public values and their construction is possible only in cases where a particular version of the past is automatically recognized by the entire society. However, when some part of the society is not in agreement with a particular interpretation or representation of the past, it can divide the community and activate former historical conflicts. It is worth mentioning that memory is politicized; manipulated in order to achieve particular goals and power.

In cases where the society is becoming more heterogeneous and multi-ethnic, every group may have their own interpretation of the past. Discussions of past cooperation, friendship or conflicts are brought to life, and it is upon this basis that new relations are formed. According to Bar-Tal (1997, p. 500): “Past events are not easily forgotten. Each

group carries its history and transmits it to new generations. The collective memory stores the events of the past and many of them not only serve as a group heritage, but also become part of the ethos maintained through culture, education and other institutions. Past intergroup relations are selectively remembered and serve as foundation on which new types of relations are constructed”.

Migration as a global phenomenon brings together diverse social, cultural and ethnic groups. It confronts different perspectives and changes or shapes the identities of people. In the case of the post-socialist space, after the fall of Iron Curtain, the opening of borders, and the possibilities for voluntary migration, different interpretations of past events are becoming more of a challenging and emotional issue than ever before.

The last century was full of historical events which still evoke emotions and which are interpreted in different ways by different groups of people. One such event is the invasion of the Warsaw Treaty armies in 1968. As was previously mentioned, it was this event which significantly marked the relationship between people from Czechoslovakia and people from the Soviet Union.

All my research participants were children when the Soviet Union collapsed; life under the communist regime has been explained to them by their parents, grandparents, teachers or read about in historical books. And in spite of the fact that nowadays they don't identify themselves with the Soviet Union at all, in the Czech Republic they still face the spectre of the past conflict and feel its impact on their life as migrants.

As stated earlier, all of the research participants speak Russian as their mother tongue, and even though they study in the Czech language at the university, the Russian accent in the Czech language is easily recognizable and identifies a Russian-speaking person. The language is a part of the collective memory and, in this situation, the sound of the Russian language is usually connected with the traumatic past events of 1968. Moreover, if we look at the way in which the Soviet invasion was described in some Czech mass media, it was mentioned that there were Russian tanks, Russian soldiers and that they were speaking Russian.

“I spoke with many Russian soldiers. You cannot explain anything to them. They are like a wall”.

“At this very moment, as I am recording, Russian tanks, prepared for any action, are standing in a big park just under my window”.

From “Shock and Disillusionment: Students Respond to the 1968 Soviet Invasion”,
10-03-2012 02:01 | David Vaughan

During socialism, the Russian language was mandatory, so everybody was forced to learn it even against their will, which evoked a rebuke within society. Some research participants mentioned that during their first months in the Czech Republic, while they didn't know the Czech language, they tried to speak in Russian (especially those who didn't know English) in the hope that people may still remember it, but people refused to speak in Russian, even those who were of an age where everybody was learning it.

Some of research participants have had bad experiences speaking Russian in public spaces, provoking conflicts and upsetting situations. For example, Kristina said: *“One day I was on Charles Square and was talking on the phone with my friend in Russian. One man heard it and started following me, screaming that all Russians are rats. I was scared and wanted to escape, but he kept following me till I got on a tram.”*

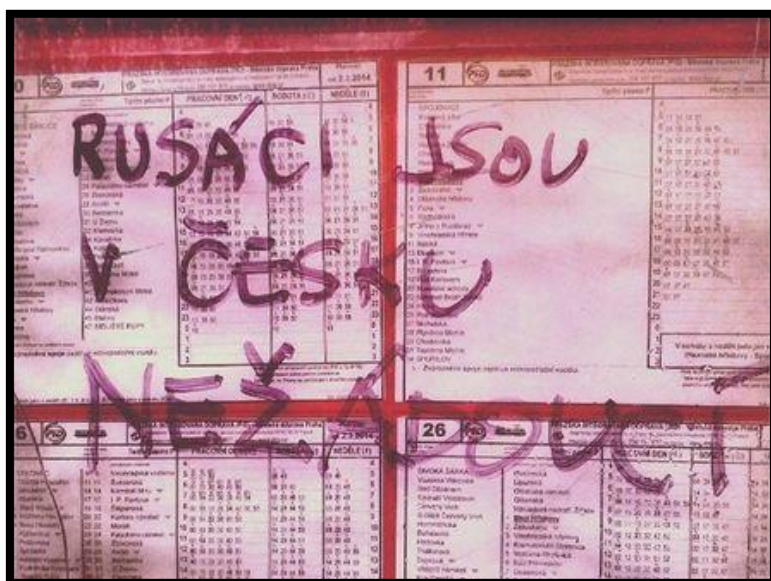
Another research participant, Veronika, was talking on the phone in Russian and was carrying heavy bags. She wanted to sit on a bench in a free spot between people. But those people wouldn't let her sit down. From her point of view, these people didn't want to move even a little bit and give her a space on the bench because they heard her speaking Russian. Upon getting on the tram after the incident, she started to cry.

Thanks to bad experiences of their own or the advice of other students, some research participants changed their behaviour. For example, Maria from Krasnoyarsk mentioned: *“When I'm on a bus and some of my Russian friends call me, I always try to speak very quiet, because I understand that for somebody else it can be unpleasant. And I try not to put on a show. When I first came to the language school, one guy who was already studying here told us: behave decently, don't scream, don't speak loudly – you're in foreign country and you should accept the social rules here”.*

Many of the research participants who reflected on these negative situations and had sensed “anti-Russian moods” wondered why such things still happen nowadays. And as one research participant said: *“I had nothing to do with the invasion. And I don't even know anything about it, and don't want to be connected with that...”*

Interestingly, many of research participants really didn't know much about the invasion and what had happened at the time or refused to speak about it openly. The general sentiment was that the incident is why the *“Czechs don't like us now”*, and most research participants maintain the conviction that Czech society's attitude towards Russians is mostly negative.

Furthermore, in the Czech Republic, there exists a “special” name for Russian citizens, Russian speakers, or just about anyone else identified as a Russian. This “special” name is Rusaci. It has a negative connotation and is usually used in a pejorative way.



Picture 17 Text at a tram station: Rusaci are not wanted in Czechia. Source: Social network vk.com

Some research participants have also have shared the feeling that a majority of the population don’t distinguish between different Russian speaking nations, that for them everybody is a “Rusak” or an “occupier”. But as Alexey claimed: *“I understand the older generation... this is the history... I can’t change it. I think that this occupation... the older generation doesn’t want to tolerate it, doesn’t want to forget it. I understand this. My grandparents were always speaking about World War II and about the Germans as fascists. That they are occupiers. I understand this. When time goes by it will just be history. But for now, I can’t do anything with it... Honestly speaking, this is very hard, it’s very complicated....”*

On one hand, we can hear the feeling of collective guilt for the events of 1968, while on the other hand, the young generation doesn’t feel connected to this part of history and doesn’t want to be held responsible for what happened in the Soviet Union.

When the victory of World War II is spoken about however, it is obvious that for them this historical event is very important and is part of their collective identity and self-perception. Most research participants consider the 9th of May as the most significant public holiday of the year. Students from both Russia and Kazakhstan were quite surprised

to learn World War II victory celebrations were held on the 8th of May, and no parade took place in commemoration.

Georges Mink (2008, p. 482) notes that “during the 60th anniversary commemorations of the end of the Second World War, the historicizing game of appropriating the victory over the Nazis (see for example the controversy around the day the war ended: May 8 for Western Europe, May 9 for the Russians) clearly showed how greatly representations of the year 1945 vary as we move from Moscow to Warsaw to Riga to Berlin to London. They also demonstrated that this anniversary remains a legitimization card in geopolitical competition, and is also used to activate identity reflexes, pro- or anti-Russian, depending on the country.”

The way Victory Day is represented, and what kind of meaning this event has for different groups of people, says a lot about present relations. Even though there are some positive words and words of gratitude accorded to the liberation by the Red Army during World War II, some negative opinions are heard rather often as well. For example, it is noted that after the liberation and the victory of World War II, the communist direction and hegemony started.

Many of the monuments created in honour of the Red Army were later destroyed or damaged by vandals after the Warsaw Pact invasion. For example, in August 1968, two days after the intervention of the Warsaw Pact armies in Czechoslovakia, and while the Soviet army was staying in Carlsbad, “The Monument to Russian Heroes” was pulled to the ground by an infuriated crowd. During the time of normalization, a replica of the statue was created. The replica was put on the same base, which had remained undamaged. However, in later years, during the so-called “Perestroika”, the statue was moved to the Carlsbad Cemetery and after the “Velvet Revolution” another incident occurred, whereby an unknown vandal knocked down the statue, destroyed memorials of soldiers, and broke the head off one that had to later be replaced.

Another example of defacing monuments that was connected to the Soviet Union is “the Monument to the Red Army” in Prague, located on Evropská Street, where somebody wrote “Occupiers”.

One more controversial issue, which aroused many discussions and the resentment of World War II veterans, is a tank from that war that was painted pink. The tank was exhibited in Soviet Tank Square (it is now known as Kinski Square) in Smichov between the years 1945 and 1991 to commemorate the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army. The first time the Soviet tank was painted pink was in April 1991 by artist David

Černý. As the tank was registered as a national historic landmark at that time, Černý was prosecuted and the tank was painted in green again. However, after its status as a national historic landmark was removed in May 1991, a group of Members of Parliament used their immunity to have the tank painted in pink again. In June 1991, the tank was removed from the Square in Smichov and was entered into the collection of the Military Historical Institute in Prague.



Picture 18 The famous pink tank. Source: Wikipedia

Most of the research participants consider this to be disrespectful to the people who died during World War II in order to achieve peace. As Angela from Nizhniy Tagil stated: *“On Victory Day, I always think about my grandfather, because he was war veteran. I remember the kind of parades we had in Russia on that day and how everybody went there on this day. I miss it in the Czech Republic because I consider this holiday to be a holiday for the whole world, and everybody is supposed to celebrate it no matter what happened after. Maybe some people perceive it in a different way, maybe some people feel this was a lesser evil than the Russians. But, as my grandfather said, for these heroic acts the whole world is supposed to be grateful to each other and to the winning country, which was Russia.”*

One more sensitive matter related to the liberation by the Red Army, is the rape of local women in liberated areas. On internet forums as well as in the Czech media this is a rather popular topic and was also portrayed in the well-known Czech movie “Želary” (2003), where it showed Soviet soldiers harassing local women after the defeat of the Nazis.

This also demonstrates to us the different versions of events in the collective memory of nations. Russian speaking students see the Red Army’s liberation only in a positive light, and this was the first time they had heard about such issues in connection with the victory of World War II.

In her speech “The Evaluation of the Post-Soviet Identity: in Search of the Russian Soul” (2007), Anna Vassilieva pointed out that it seemed the revived notion of World War II victory was chosen by the government for nation building and to install a sense of collective identity.

Moreover, for the research participants, Victory Day isn’t only a public celebration, but also a private one as some have grandparents who are veterans and the 9th of May is a family celebration. Nowadays, instead of going to a parade as they used to do in Russia or Kazakhstan, they visit Olšany Cemetery. On the 9th of May it is where the Russian speaking community from all FSU countries meets to salute the Red Army soldiers who died during the World War II.

Andrey from Astana: *“This year I went to Olšany Cemetery, to the Monument of the Red Army. Since the year before it was very pleasant to see so many people who came to put flowers into the eternal flame. But this time I was there by myself and I was a little bit sad. However, my mood got better when I saw that there were many of “ours”.”*

As a tradition, research participants also wear the Ribbon of Saint George as a symbol of military valour and in commemoration of World War II. As Irina from Yekaterinburg attested: *“Victory Day is very important to me. The whole day I was wearing the Ribbon of St George on my jacket. Everybody was staring at me, but I was so proud of it.”*

From the research participants’ narratives we can see how some historical events are very significant for them, but others are not considered as important. It is possible to say the same about the majority population; some parts of the past are easily forgotten, while others are still very much alive. Those different interpretations of historical events bring people into new conflict and influence the life of young Russian speaking migrants in the Czech Republic and their perception of self.

4 Family influence, gender and life course of students

With the expansion of the theory of transnationalism in migration studies, more and more researchers have begun to explore the lives of transnational migrant families. As Bryceson and Vuorela (2002, p. 4) explain, if transnationalism was discussed in the 1990s primarily in regards to the movement of commodities and capital, lately the field of research has expanded to the multiple national residences, identities and loyalties of transnational families. Moreover, migration and diaspora studies have contributed to it through their “long track record traced in terms of ethnic streams moving from a clearly specified country of origin to a specified destination country. To the extent that they have traced the influence of locational change on individuals at different stages of their families’ life cycles, they provide useful insights” (2002, p. 4).

In this chapter, attention will also be devoted to transnational families, particularly to families of Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic. Even though transnational families have been the focus of many social science researchers, there have been only a few studies focused on family strategies and migration for educational purposes. This chapter attempts to show what kind of role family plays in student migration from Russia and Kazakhstan to the Czech Republic, and what kind of transnational strategies and migration goals parents have when sending their children abroad and how they later influence the behaviour of students in the Czech Republic.

Bryceson and Vuorela (2002, p. 8) point out that: “worldwide, there are many families leading transnational lives, who are generally not seen as migrants, such as people working in the higher echelons of transnational companies, or those working in ‘foreign service’ of various kinds, such as the UN and development cooperation organizations, the EU bureaucracy and a whole array of mobile professions. The word ‘migrant’ tends to carry class connotations and is applied more readily to people that are considered economically or politically deprived and seek betterment of their circumstances.” Authors pointed out, that those families, working in the higher echelons of transnational companies, usually have higher status than those, who work on low income positions. “Transnational elites are perceived as ‘mobile’ rather than ‘migrant’ (Bryceson, Vuorela, 2002, p. 8).”

In mass media, we can often hear, that people who travel for work in some international companies, are called “expats” or “cosmpolotinas”. And in opposite “migrants” are presented as those people, who work on jobs, who nobody wants.

The authors also listed a few characteristics of transnational families (Bryceson, Vuorela, 2002, p. 7):

- Attitudes to place in transnational families are highly varied, ambiguous, and subject to change.
- Transnational families are primarily relational in nature. They are constructed by relational ties that aim at welfare and mutual support and provide a source of identity. They have multiple community identities related to all the places where their members reside or have resided in the past. There is thus a complex locational spread, with some nodes more important than others given the number and depth of contacts found in that location. Family traditions and individual needs are weighed against the sheer physical practicalities of transnational families’ temporal and spatial logistics. In summary, transnational families are not simply blood ties nor are they fixed entities. They are highly relative. (Bryceson, Vuorela, 2002, p. 19)
- Their fundamental *raison d’être* is mutual welfare, which can be severely tested.
- Transnational families have had to face atrocities such as genocide, wars, forced migration and intolerant immigration laws. Family members may become forcibly separated from each other.
- Like other families, transnational families must mediate inequality amongst their members. Within transnational families, differences in access to mobility, resources, various types of capital and lifestyles emerge in striking ways.

Russian speaking students are members of transnational families and their migration experience is influenced by relationships inside the family in a different way. First of all, as was made evident in the portraits of the research participants in chapter 3, family (primary parents) have played a big role in the decision-making process about migration to the Czech Republic and in further intentions within the country.

One of such example was the story of Angela, whose father supported her to come to the Czech Republic not only for study but to stay, as his dream was also to emigrate abroad later on. After her graduation from university, Angela was unable to easily find a job. At one of our meetings during this period, she said desperately that she would like to return to Russia but can't disappoint her family as they would like to have a family house somewhere close to Prague in the future, and since her father has been supporting her financially and morally during her studies, he wouldn't understand her decision to come back.

From this case, it can be seen that sometimes Russian speaking students are the migration pioneers of the family. Very often children, because of their age, are considered to be more adaptable to a new environment and more capable of learning foreign languages. Parents often claim that they are not migrating with their kids right away because they have a job and responsibilities to take care of elder members of family (their own parents and the grandparents of students). Additionally, many adults, with whom I communicated, are more afraid of the language barrier and of the inability to learn the language at an advanced level suitable for work. However, many have plans to follow their children when they are retired and once their children are successful and have stable positions in the Czech Republic. Meanwhile, children are asked to monitor the situation in the country, to learn about the immigration laws, the possibilities for business and to buy real estate.

As was previously mentioned, quite often parents try to fulfil their own ambitions through their children. The story of Alla demonstrates how her mother wanted her daughter to achieve something that she couldn't. Alla's mother is an English language teacher from a small village in the Krasnoyarsk region. She has never been abroad and spent her whole life in her native village. That's why when her mother learned of the opportunity to send Alla abroad to study, she persuaded Alla's father to take out a loan and use this opportunity. As Alla states: "I think it was my mother's dream to live abroad, to use foreign languages every day, but she couldn't realize it when she was young."

Many parents of students living in the Czech Republic didn't have such opportunities to travel abroad because of the Soviet regime, nor afterwards (in the 1990s) because of unstable economic conditions in Russia and Kazakhstan during the period of transformation.

This also demonstrates itself in the case of Anastasia. She came to the Czech Republic at the age of 21, sponsored during her first year in Prague by her mother, who

took out a loan to send her daughter abroad. When her mother came to the Czech Republic, it was her first time in Europe. Anastasia: *“I think my mom sacrificed a lot to send me here, so I have to work hard and give her an opportunity to live in Europe and travel at least on a pension, because she didn’t have a chance to do it when she was young.”*

It’s important to mention that according to Czech immigration laws, a foreigner can apply for a temporary residence permit for purposes of family reunification in the case of a parent who is over 65 years-old and alone in their country of origin, or (regardless of age) when a parent is unable to take care of him/herself. Few migrant families meet such requirements and few want to sit through the long wait for their parents to get older. Furthermore, the pension age in Russia is 55 for women and 60 for men. In Kazakhstan, it’s 58 for women and 63 for men. Sometimes, when the family has the capital to start a business and isn’t dependent on a monthly income such as wage or pension cheques, parents can forgo the wait for retirement and can come to the Czech Republic through a business visa.

One such example is Alexander's family. Alexander was sent to the Czech Republic at the age of 17 in 2007, immediately after his graduation from school. As was described above, one of the reasons for sending him abroad was to dodge Russia’s compulsory military service. While studying in the Czech Republic, he also had the task of coming up with an idea for a family business and researching everything about the laws related to it, so that his mother could follow him on a business visa. In 2012, they managed to establish a company, bought a flat in its name, and his mother moved to the Czech Republic. Now she is actively learning the Czech language and looking for a Czech partner, as she is a single mother.

Agatha is another student who had the same goal. During her first year in the country, while learning Czech, she was trying as hard as possible to bring the family to the Czech Republic on a business visa. She wasn’t happy to come to the Czech Republic and, as she stated, she was crying constantly as a result of her separation from the family. It was one of her main aims - to reunite with her family as soon as possible - but this aim wasn't achieved in the Czech Republic. Agatha understood that it would be too complicated from a bureaucratic point of view to bring all the members of her family to the country. Later, her parents decided that it would be better if she came back to Russia, after which they would try to emigrate to New Zealand as there were more favourable conditions to migrate as a family.

Even though bringing parents to the Czech Republic wasn't part of the plan in the beginning, some of the young Russians started to think about it. This is illustrated by Kristina's story. She came to Prague in 2009 at the age of 26, just for a "trial" as she described it, to see if she liked living here or not, to see how things went. She had already earned a university degree in Russia and had work experience, but she decided to change her life and see what happened, with the back door still open. She enrolled in a language course, then entered a university in Prague only to drop it later on. She tried various kinds of jobs but wasn't satisfied with her position as a migrant in the labour market. At different periods of time, when we would meet, she was constantly in a condition of uncertainty and was unsure as to whether she would like to stay in the Czech Republic or not. However, after visiting Russia in 2012, she stated that her native town (a small town close to Krasnoyarsk) seemed very depressing.

Kristina: *"When I was at home, I realized that everything was in very bad condition. There were no jobs because of the crisis. The ecology was very bad and everyone looked so angry and unhappy."* Kristina added that she was sad that her parents live under such conditions and that she would try to find a way to bring them to the Czech Republic. Since Kristina is an only child, the responsibility to take care of the parents rests only on her shoulders.

Lisa, from Kazakhstan, is also an only-child and she would also be happy to bring her parents to the Czech Republic, but she has some doubts concerning their ability to adapt to life abroad. Lisa: *"Oh, when I start to think about my parents I become sad. It's very complicated. I feel a responsibility for their future and I understand that in approximately ten years I will have to take care of them. I must support them materially and I want them to live close to me, but with my complicated inner "I", it's not easy. I don't know where I am going to be, who I am going to be. I talk to people who also want to bring their parents here, but I think that for me, at 17 years-old, the period of adaptation was very complicated and for parents it would be even harder. What will they do here? There are different people here, and in Kazakhstan they have their own social circle. It would be hard for them, and I really don't know what to do. I want them to be close to me and I want them to feel comfortable. A young person will find something to do, but for people who have lived the majority of their life somewhere else and who are almost at a pension age, it's hard to adapt. They have a different approach to things, and for them it's not so easy to learn new things. But maybe it also depends on the individual... But I think it's very important in life to have your relatives and those that are close next to you. What is*

the meaning of life? To be happy! And being together with 'your' people is a very important aspect of happiness."

But, of course, not everybody wants to bring their family to the Czech Republic. Take Alla, for example. When asked her if she would like to do bring her family, she answered: *"No. This is my only victory (laughing) and I don't want to share it with anyone else. But, there was one period when I wanted my father to come here to work. But in reality, I can't imagine how he could adapt here. He came once to visit me and to see my graduation and he liked it quite a lot here. After his trip, everybody in Russia started to ask him if he wanted to stay in the Czech Republic, but he answered: 'what I would do there? Here (in Russia) I have a job and friends'. From my point of view, it's not so easy for adult people to move. Moreover, it wasn't like that. I wasn't sent here with the intention that the whole family would move here too. It wasn't like that! This is only my path! For example, even my brother said that he would be glad to visit me, but he would like to live in Russia. He is a very patriotic boy and it wouldn't be acceptable for him to live outside of Russia. It would be strange for him."*

Polina from Krasnoyarsk also doesn't see migration of the whole family to the Czech Republic as an option: *"My dad works and I don't think that emigration is possible. My parents visit the Czech Republic as tourists, just to travel through Europe. My dad had been here twice before I came here and then he visited me once. I miss them. The only thing I miss here are them. Everything is good here, but my parents are not here. And still, my home is where my family is and my family in there, in Russia."*

As has been shown, not all parents of research participants have the possibility to visit their children as tourists in the Czech Republic. Some can't do it because of financial issues, other's due to family responsibilities, such as taking care of elderly family members. For example, the mother of research participant Alisa, from Kamchatka, has never visited her daughter in the Czech Republic as she must take care of her older mother and can't leave her alone even for a short period of time.

However, the fact that some Russian speaking students don't see their parents very often doesn't eliminate the influence of parents on their lives. Students are connected with them by email, Skype, social networks and different kind of messengers such as Viber and WhatsApp.

Polina: *"My mom writes me emails sometimes. Sometimes we call each other on Skype. Before they had a slow internet connection and didn't have Skype, but now I can at least see them. But, I don't call my grandparents very often as its expensive."*

Through this long-distance communication, parents sometimes try to influence the children's choices of life partner or career path. As Polina continued, her parents weren't happy about her choice to study the civil sector and become an NGO worker: *"When I told my mom that I want to study to be in the civil sector, she didn't like it. She told me: 'You will be a human rights activist and you will get put in jail!' My parents are connected about the politics in Russia, so they don't like the idea of me working in this sector. They think that their daughter is doing something strange."* Polina's parents also have a plan B for her: *"They said that if I fail here - I will go back to Russia and go to a medical university like they did."*

Inna's case also exemplifies a situation where parents try to control their children's behaviour across borders. Inna claims that she had finished university in Russia, was working as an accountant, and was involved in serious relationship. Coming to the Czech Republic at the age of 26, living in dormitory and not being able to find a "normal" job was very hard for her. But even when she wanted to visit her native Krasnoyarsk on a vacation, her mother tried to prevent it. She was afraid that Inna would renew the old relationships, or get used to Russia, and would not want to return to Prague. Her mom always insisted that it would be better if she and her husband came to the Czech Republic rather than Inna to Russia. It happened for the first time only after Inna had been living in the Czech Republic for 3 years already.

Inna's mother also tried to influence her choice of life partner. Inna used to date another foreigner for a while, but her mother wasn't happy about it. She wanted her daughter to find a Czech boyfriend, as it seemed more reliable, and it would be easier to get permanent residence after marriage in the future.

This situation also shows that family members expect their children to behave according to some gender and age stereotypes. It's no doubt that gender plays a crucial role in the process of migration, and there are different migration patterns for women and men. Women have different strategies, goals and aspirations in a receiving country than men, however, the responsibilities they have to the families they have left behind can also differ from those of men.

Eugenia, 26-years-old, claims she is already considered an old maid in Astana. Her family and friends in Kazakhstan keep saying that it is already time to have kids and get married, and that this is one of the reasons she doesn't want to return. *"There is huge pressure from those around me, but here I am free as a bird."* Moreover, she believes that in Kazakhstan, Islam has influenced many women recently; their behaviour, the way they

dress and what is expected of from them in public. *“My former classmates, who used to go to the disco, night clubs and wear short skirts, now put on headscarves and don’t go anywhere outside the house.”* For Eugenia, this position of the female within society isn't acceptable and she doesn't want to live this way.

Alla feels the same way about gender stereotypes. *“Many people in Russia bother me with questions about marriage. They say that I am already too old and that it's time to get married. I like the approach to it here more and the western life style.”*

For some young women from Kazakhstan and Russia, migration to the Czech Republic led to emancipation and liberation from “traditional” gender stereotypes, and to a change in attitude towards family, marriage and gender roles. Alla: *“I became very emancipated here. Even though I live with my boyfriend, I started alone and I consider myself to be more experienced. So, I would say that I am the leader, as I know more, I have been here longer, I speak Czech better. Maybe this dominancy was in me before (like my mom), but it became more obvious here. I’ve got used to being independent and I’m not in need of anybody here as much.”*

However, there were also girls amongst the research participants, for whom marriage was indeed one of the main aims of migration to the Czech Republic, and finding a life partner and having kids were more important than obtaining a degree. As was mentioned previously, some of the research participants came to the Czech Republic after graduating university in Russia or Kazakhstan, and from some of the female narratives it was clear that the establishment of their own family was more important at this stage in their life stage than an education. This was also mentioned by Polina: *“At the language school, those who were older than me, about 26-27 years old, almost all of them find Czech life partners here. Some of my older classmates from language school had already got married. They knew what they wanted. Not like us. We were the “crazy youth” who came just after school. They were more serious. People who had already received a higher education in Russia or Kazakhstan, had also got into the university they wanted. They had made up their minds on their studies. And even though they partied, they were still the best at the Czech language and got into the university they wanted. One of my classmates finished medical university in Kazakhstan and got into the doctoral studies program at a medical faculty here, which was very difficult. Another classmate married our Czech teacher.”*

No matter what age the students were when they came to the Czech Republic, for most of them migration to a foreign country was a kind of “rite de passage” –

an initiation to a new life stage and their independence from their parents. As Viktoria explained, she stopped living under her mother's wing in the Czech Republic: *“At home I would live with my mom, but here I live alone. I rent a flat and I wouldn't do that in Russia. I would still live with my mom. Here I have more freedom. Also, if I want to travel, I can easily go to France or somewhere else.”*

For Polina as well, living in the Czech Republic has become a lesson on how to live without parents: *“I used to depend on my parents a lot. We live outside of the town, where public transport doesn't go and my mom used to drive me everywhere. But here I do everything alone. I take care of myself and equip myself with the necessary facilities for my life. Now I cannot even understand why my parents do something one way while I do it in another. I have already started to create my own cell within society... I have learnt how to live independently, without parents. I think that this is the most important thing, that when you go somewhere, you're by yourself. You must do everything alone. There is no mama who will clean after you, wash your clothes, cook for you, etc. You must do it! This is the perfect school of life. It's a real independent life without embellishments.”*

Alla also pointed out, that migration helped her to overcome some personal issues: *“When I was at home, I was very shy. It was a big problem for me to go and pay for the telephone or to ask a stranger about something. My mom used to push me to go to the shop. I felt physically ill, it wasn't comfortable for me. So, when I was moving to the Czech Republic she kept asking me: ‘How will you get on there? You can't do elementary things!’ But when you come here, you understand that nobody will do anything for you, or instead of you. And even when your parents suddenly show up, they still can't help since they don't speak Czech. This is only your thing! Everything depends just on you! Now, I am not afraid of any work. I know that I can orient myself through any situation and find a solution.”*

As can be seen, migration, and the resulting separation from family, becomes a kind of transition to adulthood for Russian speaking students. It becomes a very important milestone in the course of their lives. In some cases, it also led to empowerment and a belief in their capacities/competence/skills. Julia: *“I think that here, in the Czech Republic, I have learnt that if I want something or if I think about something, I can do anything! I can learn any foreign language, I can learn how to live in any place. This was a real school of life for me.”*

Male research participants also pointed out that migration experience made them stronger and more adaptable in life; as Alex mentions, *“nobody calls you here and you have to learn by yourself how things happen.”*

But at the same time, some male research participants complained that in Russia or in Kazakhstan, they would probably have a better career and better social status at their age. Moreover, there is a stronger expectation from the male’s families that they will be successful in their professional life abroad. And when this expectation isn't in compliance with reality it can lead to the feeling of failure. For example, Rostislav from Tomsk felt that there was a glass ceiling for him at work since he is a foreigner. He understood that even after graduation from a Czech university, he would never achieve the kind of professional success in the Czech Republic that he could in Russia. In the end, it was the main reason he returned to his native town.

However, in general, the research participants tried not to complain about any complications at work or in their studies in the Czech Republic, since all the parents, who sent their children abroad, were sure that a better life was waiting for them in Europe. As Maria from Krasnoyarsk said: *“I don’t want to disappoint or make my parents sad. That’s why I always say that everything is good”*. And Viktoria added: *“I think my mom has no clue what my life here is like. She thinks that I’ll get a super outstanding education. But honestly, I think it’s not like that.”*

Wood & King (2001) claimed that, it’s very common for migrants to deny any element of failure to their relatives and friends. And sometimes, as a result of it, those surrounding them in their country of origin can have a distorted picture of the life of Russian speaking students abroad. In some cases, their life in the Czech Republic become the subject of envy for those who stayed in Russia or in Kazakhstan.

The migration experience, and what Russian speaking students have achieved during it, is also part of their identity. Furthermore, this part of their identity is supported by the way their family and friends see their migration to the Czech Republic. As Polina pointed out: *“My parents are very proud of me. They talk about me to everybody. I think that it’s much more complicated to study in a foreign language here than if I studied in Russia.”*

Another important part of the identity of Russian speaking students is the concept of home, and home and family are inseparably connected to each other. Sometimes from the research participants’ narratives it's possible to see that without family, they feel unrooted in the foreign country. The situation of students who were sent abroad is even

more complicated, as some of them felt that they had no place to return to, as their parents had insisted on their study in the Czech Republic. This was Pavel's situation, whose parents were divorced and each of them had a new family with younger children. Pavel had the feeling that he was sent to the Czech Republic so as not to disturb his parents and their new lives.

But even students who came on their own will sometimes feel lost between two countries. Alla: *"I had a crisis during my first year at university. I had a feeling that I had no place to go home to. I told my dad and he was very sad that I felt this way, and he told me that as long as he was alive I would always have a place to return to. I guess I needed to hear something like that and I felt better after it."* Moreover, Alla added that even though she has been living in the Czech Republic for 9 years already, her visits home to Russia are very important for her: *"When I visit my home, I realize every time that Russia is the best country, where my friends and family live. But it just so happens that I probably will never live there again. I have visited home 3 times and once I visited my friend in Saint Petersburg. I like it in Saint Petersburg! It's a very cool city and maybe I could live there. But, on the other hand, I am not sure about it... I think that maybe as time goes by, you are losing your "I". You are not here and not there. It's not hard, it's interesting. You just go to another category of people... For example, I can't say that I am already a Czech girl. I can't refer to myself like that, even though my friends in Russia call me that when I am back there. But, when I come home, I start missing the Czech language, I start watching some Czech TV channels on the internet. Everybody looks at me in a strange way because of that, saying: "How you can do that? You are Russian!" So everything is mixed inside me. I want to have something from both cultures. I am very proud of my culture and origin, but, on the other hand, I want to incorporate something from here (the Czech Republic) into my personality. I want to combine both. To take something from here, which isn't there, but I like it."*

From the research participants' narratives and statements, it can be observed that their parents have played a large role in the decision to come to the Czech Republic for educational purposes. Usually parents financially support the initial stage of moving abroad and the beginning of a stay in the Czech Republic, or until their children finish their studies. Families invest quite a large sum of money sending children to study abroad. Referring to the classical work of Marcel Mauss's "The Gift" (1999), it can be said that

any act of giving creates a moral obligation to reciprocate on part of the recipient. From the authors point of view, there exists reciprocal relations between educational migrants and their parents. Referring to Olwig (2011, p. 91), it's important to mention once again, that migrants exist within a political landscape, and just as significantly within a moral landscape, which influences their motivations for travel, their dwelling in migratory destinations and their continued relations with their place of origin.

The many stories demonstrated above have shown that sometimes students are caught between their needs and wishes, and their obligations to their family. It seems that student migrants in some cases are obligated to fulfil a family migration plan or their parents' ambitions. In these cases, coming back to Russia or to Kazakhstan would mean failure to meet the expectations of the family.

Additionally, it's important to mention that family in Russia or in Kazakhstan usually has an extended character. And children have responsibilities to take care of their old parents as the welfare system doesn't work very well. So, following children abroad in retirement can be seen as a good option for many parents, but which can be complicated by the hard process of adaptation for older people.

Family and home are important parts of Russian speaking students' identity regardless of national borders. However, on the other hand, they also try to establish their own social unit and create a new home in the Czech Republic. During the field research, a group of students were even witnessed "playing" family. This family consisted of "parents" and their "children". Everybody had their own role within the family - somebody was a daughter, somebody was a son, etc. In real-life they were not relatives, they were just pretending to be. Once the "parents" even had a wedding. It happened in a dormitory study room, and of course it wasn't official. But it looked as if it were: the groom was in a suit and the bride was in a white dress. There were guests and a banquet, and the bride and the groom exchanged real gold rings. From my point of view, it was a kind of substitution for their real families left in Russia and Kazakhstan. As one of research participant put it, the only thing missing is family and it's hard to get used to that.

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to explore the life of young Russian speaking student migrants in the Czech Republic. To this end, their decision-making process was investigated as it concerned migration and their further life in the new country. Migration system theory helped in the analysis of student migratory movements from Russia and Kazakhstan to the Czech Republic on different levels: micro, macro and meso. Student migration was seen as the result of the interaction on those levels, as well as the result of prior existing historical links and economic, cultural and political ties between Russia and the Czech Republic and between Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic.

To name just some of them, on the macro level, student migration can be attributed to the worldwide prestige of studying abroad, the “pressure” to be a global citizen with knowledge of foreign languages, and with experience living abroad. It was demonstrated in the narratives of the research participants and played a large role in their decision to migrate for study purposes. Moreover, the existence of prior historical connections between the Czech Republic and Russia and Kazakhstan, couple with today’s mostly economic interstate relationships, played a big role in why Russian speakers chose to pursue a Czech education. In addition, the reason why young migrants chose to come to the Czech Republic as students in particular were the more “favourable” migration laws for international students; the possibility to work a limited number of hours; the possibility to change a student visa or residence permit into another purpose of stay, such as work, business or family reunification, in the future. On the micro level, the students’ aspirations, goals, dreams and expectations played a significant role in migration movement from Russia and Kazakhstan to the Czech Republic. A “perfect” image of Europe, its lifestyle, and what the research participants viewed as a more stable future for them and their families after migration enticed most of them.

At the meso level, there is so-called “migration industry”. Without the existence of different language schools, universities and migration agencies, there probably wouldn't be the same amount of student migration from Russia and Kazakhstan to the Czech Republic.

Moreover, student migration has become cumulative (Fussell and Massey, 2004); as students gain migration related knowledge, they later start helping their family members and friends with migration to the Czech Republic. From the research participant's stories, it has been shown that some of them have already brought their parents, siblings, partners

or friends to the Czech Republic. Students become pioneer migrants and provide family members and friends with information, assistance and support related to life in the Czech Republic. Sometimes bringing family to the Czech Republic was the part of the original migration strategy of students. In these cases, the whole family participated into the migration decisions of the child with the aim of migrating the whole family in the future. Of interest was that sometimes it was not the student themselves who made the decisions about educational migration, but their parents. Quite often they reported that one of the parents insisted on educational migration more than the other. From the research participants' stories, it's obvious that it was usually the mother who initiated and insisted more on migration to the Czech Republic. In some cases, decisions were taken even against the will of the children, who would rather have stayed in their native countries, close to school friends and relatives. However, it would also be wrong to insinuate that students were only passive actors, who just executed the orders of their parents. In some cases, the decision about migration was made by the students, first and foremost, and parents just supported them in their decision financially or morally. Cases where parents were against the migration of their children were very limited, and most of the families were 100 % sure that a much better life awaited their children abroad and that it was a great life opportunity.

In most cases, the decisions were well planned and thought out. More often than not, it was made a minimum of one year ahead, because of the rather long process of applying for a student visa or temporary residence. Nonetheless, there were also quite spontaneous migration decisions when students decided to travel to the Czech Republic and pursue higher education at the last minute.

In countries of the research participants' origin (Russia and Kazakhstan), those who surrounded the students predominantly saw student migration as socially acceptable, sometimes even with some envy. From my point of view, it's possible to say that in Russia and Kazakhstan there exists a kind of "culture of migration", and migration abroad is seen as a symbol of success and the good life. On the contrary, as the research participants claimed quite often, not everything about life abroad is as rosy as people who stay in their country of origin may think.

First of all, students face different complications with the (sometimes drawn out) process of applying for a visa and prolonging a visa or residence permit. And in the end, their life in the Czech Republic can become an unbreakable circle of bureaucratic procedures which are sometimes exhausting and irritating.

Moreover, from the research participants' narratives, it emerged that discrimination in the housing market, the labour market, and occasionally in public space is part of the reality of Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic. The majority of students experienced bad reactions to the Russian language or a Russian accented Czech language, which is easily recognizable. They also pointed out that representatives of the majority very often have a slightly different interpretation of some historical past events, which causes new conflicts from time to time.

After graduation from university, students have no legal limitation to enter the Czech labour market and have the possibility to change their status, prolonging their residence permit from educational to work. But it also surfaced that students quite often felt that there is a so-called "glass ceiling" in achieving high social status, in obtaining a good professional position and to develop a career in the Czech Republic. Students pointed mostly to two reasons. First, because of language barrier since even after a quite a long period of learning the Czech language most students are still unable to communicate at the level of a native speaker. And secondly, because of the label of "being a foreigner" and the different negative stereotypes connected to it.

Despite some of the problems which Russian speaking students face, from the narratives of the research participants it was possible to see that students are quite well integrated into society - they have a rather good grasp of the Czech language, most of them have gone through the Czech education system and gained social contacts (very often friendship or romantic relationships) with locals. They have come to know the new culture and the social norms, and most of them are aware of their rights and obligations. Regardless, Russian speaking students don't consider themselves to be "Czechs", even after a long time living in the Czech Republic. Instead they have a certain feeling of affiliation and identification with society, usually feeling flattered when somebody doesn't recognize the foreigner in them or when people say that they don't have any accent in the Czech language. They are not fully assimilated and don't feel the pressure to assimilate totally and suppress their differences and identities. Most of them try to combine both (or even more) cultures, and it's possible to see it demonstrated in their daily lives, in their culture of celebration, in the commodities they have at home. They are transnational migrants and their identities and social relations are developed in multiple national contexts.

As the students are members of transnational families, their relationships with their parents are an important part of their life in the Czech Republic. Even though parents

in Russia and Kazakhstan are well-meaning and send their kids thousands of kilometres away, life with no supervision and too much freedom can, for some students, be very dangerous and devastating – this is especially evident during their first year in the Czech Republic. Due to a combination of too much freedom and money with no parental supervision, in the end some students enjoy parties more than studying and don't fulfil their purpose of coming to the Czech Republic, unable to meet the parental expectations about their life and study abroad.

Some students also feel extremely lonely and lost in a new country without family and friends from Russia and Kazakhstan. In some cases, if they don't feel accepted and are discriminated against, this feeling can also grow into a feeling of inferiority, powerless and alienation inside the new country. However, the separation from family and friends, can be also seen in a positive light and has led to irreplaceable life experience, adolescence, personal growth, freedom, and even a release from gender stereotypes and social pressures that exist in the communities of their country of origin.

For instance, in Alla's case, the migration experience led to liberation from different stereotypes that are widespread in her place of origin: *“Many people in Russia bother me with questions about marriage. They say that I am already so old and that it's time to marry. I like the approach here more. Also, in Russia when you don't go to university right after school, you are strange! But here, you see that people aren't puzzled over it. They can travel after school, work somewhere abroad and never continue their studies. And it isn't considered a civil problem, where people are backward or not very smart. I like the freedom here more. In our city, maybe because its provincial, everybody tries to get into the pedagogic university; even though they understand that they will never work as teachers. But appearance is very important. I think that people live according to a template and I am already out of it. I see it and I don't like it. For example, I was chatting with my classmates recently and we were discussing phones. She wrote me: ‘You have to buy an iPhone too!’ I was thinking that this is it: you have to buy an iPhone just because all your friends have it. But why do you need to have it??? This scares me. Or another obligatory program is to finish university, get a driving license and go to Thailand as a tourist. This is some kind of standard package and if you don't do it, you look somewhat strange, you are not in.”*

Many research participants connect this feeling of freedom with a kind of “western life style”, and in many cases this was one of their reasons for coming to the Czech Republic as well as a reason they choose to remain here. Still, it's not entirely possible

to say for sure whether student migration is temporary or permanent. What can be seen clearly is that education is seldom “the only” reason for migration and very often life in the new country isn’t completely dependent on education, but on the different life phases of the students and how the migration experience complies with it.

Moreover, living in another country often leads to a modification of original plans. It was possible to witness students learning that to bring other family members wasn't as easy as expected, changes in the family plans, disappointment in the foreign education system, and that to get a "proper" job and obtain social status wasn't as simple after graduating as they had presumed. For some students, it is important to find a "proper" job after their graduation in order to stay in the Czech Republic, as it would be in compliance with their achieved education and their only basis for staying in country.

One of such example is Viktoria: *“Well, we will see... for example, I don't want to finish university here, have a higher education, but stay here and work in a shop or at McDonalds. Being here just to stay here doesn't make sense. I would rather go back home than live in the EU and work the hell knows where for the rest of life. I am not against such jobs as a temporary job during studies. But if there are not going to be other possibilities to such a horrible job - no, I wouldn't stay here.”*

Nonetheless, there are also students for whom the most important criteria when job searching is to acquire a proper job contract allowing them to prolong their residence permit and stay legally in the Czech Republic after graduating from university.

Take Alla, for example: *“I am joking that after graduation I would have to take any job to prolong my visa. Honestly, I don't know what to do... I can imagine myself working in an NGO and using my master's specialization in civil society. But there is a problem, that when you work in an NGO some problems with your visa can occur, because they usually employ you only for the duration of some particular project. Another problem is that in an NGO you can be without a job quite suddenly, any day. I was thinking about some job as a secretary in the university. There everything is official and it can be a good step from a student visa to a permanent residence permit. I can imagine myself in such a workplace for a few years.”*

Most of my research participants do everything they can to stay in the Czech Republic and are not going back to their country of origin. The most common practices used to stay in the Czech Republic were to become an employed worker, a businessman, or stay as a family member of a Czech or EU citizen. But there were also some participants, who left the decision about staying or leaving the Czech Republic open, leaving it for later

and haven't eliminated the possibility of returning to their country of origin. This is, for example, Polina's case: *"I haven't eliminated the possibility of going back to Russia, even to my home town. I know that many who leave Krasnoyarsk criticize it, that everything is bad there, and that there is no reason to go back to that horrible, dirty city. But I don't think so, and when I go there every summer I see that it's getting better and better. People have become more cultural and new cultural places appear."*

Another research participant, Lisa, would also like to see how the things go, and in accordance with that, decide whether she stays in the Czech Republic or not. But what she knows for sure, is that she doesn't want to go back to Kazakhstan, despite being born there.

Lisa: *"What I need to do here is to finish university. This is for sure. But I don't have a wish to stay here at any price and to take any opportunity to do it. Some students think 'Oh my god... I'm going to finish university soon, how will I be able to stay here?!? They try to find any way they can to do it. I don't have this feeling and wouldn't take just any chance to stay here. Only if everything goes well and I feel comfortable with it and I come to find that I'll miss it here, would I stay. But if not, I'd probably rather go to Russia. But not to Kazakhstan. I don't feel at home there."*

Some students moved to the Czech Republic with the plan of staying only temporarily. Later though, some met life partners in the new country, had children of their own and came to understand that they had to consider the Czech Republic a place not only for themselves, but for future children as well, establishing a home for them first and foremost.

Galina: *"I think that if everything works and if I stay in university, everything will be fine and without problems. Therefore, I think living with kids here would also be without problems, their adaptation and integration will flow in more of a normal way. But another question is whether I want my kids to live in the Czech Republic."*

In addition, the more time students spent in the Czech Republic, the more they got used to it, and it became harder to change anything and move to another country. Usually, when one of the research participants left the Czech Republic, returning to their country of origin, it occurred in their first two or three years abroad. And it happened for different reasons. For example, there were quite a few cases when female participants decided to return to Russia, quitting their education in the Czech Republic, because they had met their life partner during vacations at home. Some research participants couldn't stand having long-distance relationships with their family and friends. In one case, a girl had to return to Russia to help her mom look after a new born baby, which demonstrates

the necessity of taking into consideration not only the life cycles of students, but the whole family when looking at different migration experiences.

In regards to a student's decision about staying permanently in the Czech Republic, let me quote the observation of one research participant. Alla, in conclusion: *“I think that people who stay here have some kind of tragedy or something more than only a wish to study in Europe. For example, my friend from Georgia told me that they used to live in very poor conditions, sometimes even without light at home. And for him to study in the Czech Republic was an opportunity to escape. He used this opportunity. Also, people stay when something has happened at home, not only something tragic, but something that has influenced you and you decide that you don't want it that way anymore. But it was not the majority. There were students at language school who would say: ‘What reason do I have to study here? I better go home, where I can have my car, my flat and my parents, who make my every wish come true. And here, I have to live in a dormitory and learn something’. People like that do not stay here a long time. In order to stay, it is important to have some kind of personal incident. People who have it, have more of an obvious aim of staying and a stronger motivation. They understand what they will have if they don't make it here. For example, my dad told me: ‘You can say that you don't like it in the Czech Republic and come home and go to a pedagogical university’. And I thought about his words and understood, that if I were to perhaps live in Moscow and everything was cool, maybe I would come back. But in my case, I knew that if I returned, I would return to my small town, where I have never wanted to live, and would have to start all over again. Moreover, I am shocked when people say that they can't live without mom and dad and that they need to see them often. Of course, I miss them too and want to see them. I also want to communicate with my grandmothers more often, but they don't know how to use Skype and to call by phone is very expensive. But all this is the price you pay to be here. I read somewhere that if I don't make it, it says that I chose my family. Maybe that's the point. But it doesn't mean that I sacrificed them or that I abandoned them; our relationships have just changed. My family hasn't disappeared from my life or hasn't become less valuable to me if I don't see them every week.”*

This quote establishes that there are many more interesting areas for research on the topic of student migration, and that one suitable method which can be used is a family biography. From my point of view, it would be extremely interesting to hear full and comprehensive family stories, recounted by all members of the student migrant's family, and build on the findings of this research when researching the topic of student

migration, transnational families or integration of Russian speaking migrants in the Czech Republic. Moreover, I personally find the topic of bilingual children in the Czech educational system to be very interesting research, as many of the research participants have established their own family with a Czech or foreign partner in the country, and the education and upbringing of bilingual or even multilingual children becomes a very relevant topic. Above all, there is the possibility for comparative research on the student migration topic.

This research is important because it tries to explain student migration and describe the life of Russian speaking students in the Czech Republic. The findings from the research can be used in migration management by governmental and non-governmental organizations. For example, Russian and Kazakhstani governmental organizations can use these findings to maintain people in their countries and prevent the so-called “brain-drain”. On the other hand, universities, for example, may also find it useful when planning and organizing educational activities for foreign/international students in the Czech Republic. The education industry can use these research findings to improve services and understand their target groups. Finally, based on this research and the literature which was explored in it, a university course pertaining to transnational migration can be organized.

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List of graphs, pictures and tables

Graph 1 Increase in the number of migrants in the world according to the United Nations.Source: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015.pdf	30
Graph 2 UN estimate of migrants number throughout the world (2015). Source: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/migration-regions-infographics.pdf	32
Graph 3 Continent of migrants origin from outside EU, but living in one of the European Union countries. Source: EU Home Affairs Background statistics: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/docs/infographics/ha-in-numbers/home_affairs_in_numbers_en.pdf	33
Graph 4 Proportion of foreigners amongst the population of individual European countries as of 1.1.2014. Source: The Czech Statistical Office	33
Graph 5 Foreigners in the Czech Republic from 2000-2015. Source: The Czech Statistical Office	34
Graph 6 Foreigners by region in the Czech Republic. Source: The Czech Statistical Office (2015)	35
Graph 7 The most common nationalities of foreigners in the Czech Republic. Source: The Czech Statistical Office (2015)	36
Graph 8 Total number of Kazakh emigrants: 2003 – 2013. Source: The Ministry of the National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan’s Committee on Statistics	52
Graph 9 Number of people, who left the Russian Federation from 1997-2013. Source: The Federal State Statistics Service	54
Graph 10 : Russian pupils and students at different levels of the education system in the Czech Republic as of 20.1.2016. Source: The Czech Statistical Office.....	55
Graph 11 Kazakh pupils and students at different levels of educational of educational system in the Czech Republic as of 20.1.2016. Source: The Czech Statistical Office	56
Picture 1 Been wanting to get away from Russia for a long time? Source: Social network page vk.com.....	71

Picture 2 Would you like to live in a clean and beautiful country? Source: Social network page vk.com.....	72
Picture 3 In Prague, studies, new friends, parties and travelling are waiting for you. Source: Social network page vk.com	72
Picture 4 Choose your reality. Source: Social network page vk.com.....	73
Picture 5 Goldenviza.cz advertisement (proof of accommodation for 2 500 CZK). Source: Social network vk.com	88
Picture 6 Screen shot of event advertisements at the International Prague University. Source: Social network vk.com	90
Picture 7 Goldenviza.cz advertisement (proof of study). Source: Social network vk.com	90
Picture 8 Screenshot from the video “The Foreign Police Station in Prague” (published 23.3.2008). Source: YouTube.com.....	94
Picture 9 Comics about student dialogue and the Foreign Police officer. Source: Social network vkontakte.com	95
Picture 10 Screenshot from the video named "The Case on Koněvova Street". Source: YouTube.com.....	96
Picture 11 Picture of the price list for writing a diploma work. Source: Social network vk.com	103
Picture 12 Festival Nauryz in Charles Square, Prague. Source: From archive of research participant.....	116
Picture 13 The Ribbon of Saint George. Source: Wikipedia.....	118
Picture 14 Ad concerning accommodation, which was shared by one of the Russian speaking students at vk.com. Source: Social network vk.com.....	122
Picture 15 Traditional souvenir from Russia. Source: personal archive of research participant.....	128
Picture 16 Poinsettia or a so called “Cristmas Star” in the Czech Republic. Source: Wikipedia	129
Picture 17 Text at a tram station: Rusaci are not wanted in Czechia. Source: Social network vk.com	142
Picture 18 The famous pink tank. Source: Wikipedia	144

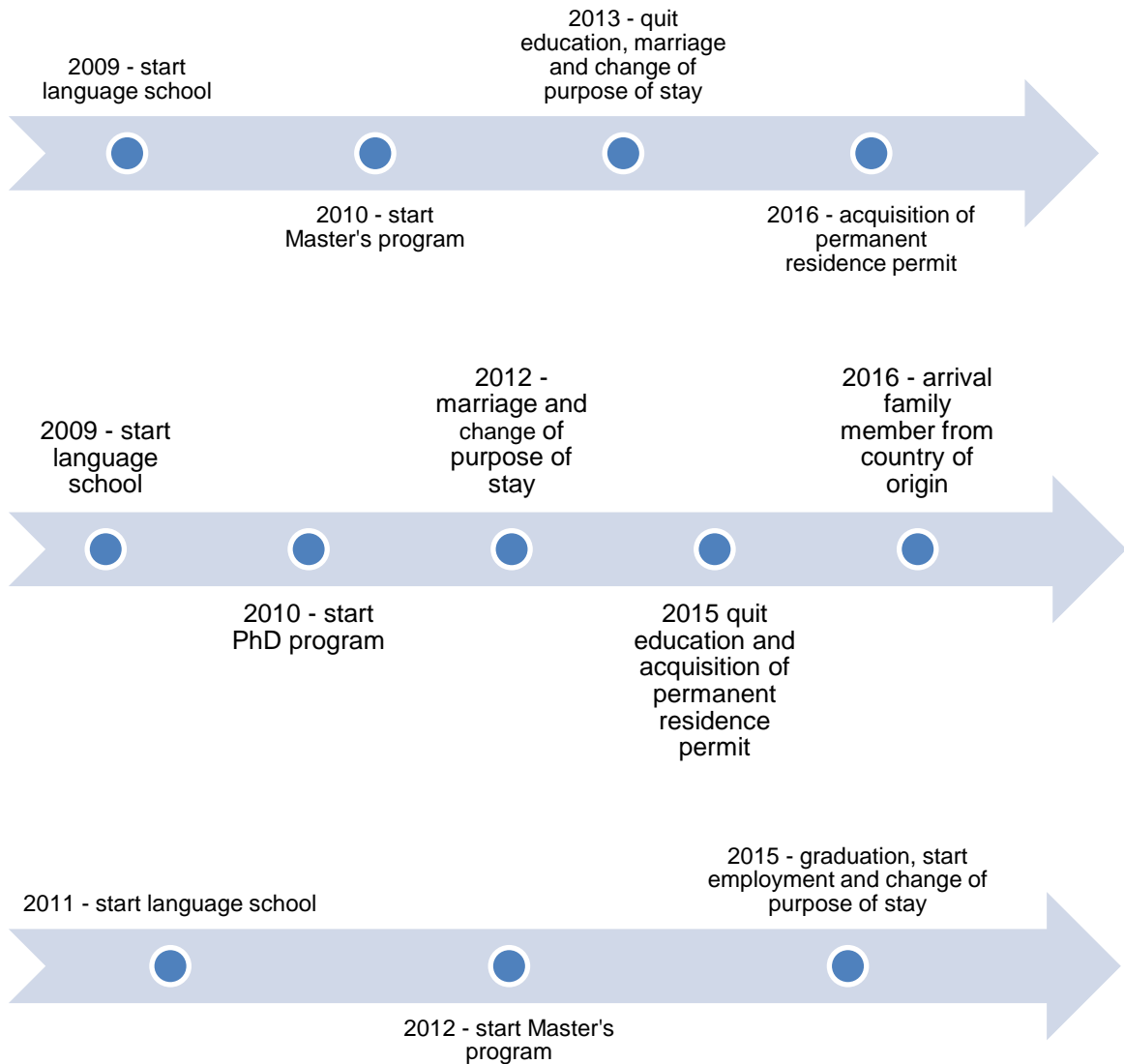
Table 1 Top 10 immigration and emigration countries. Source:
<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml> 31

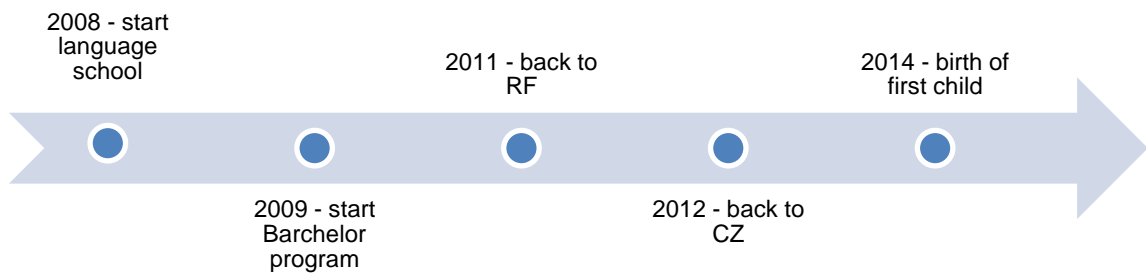
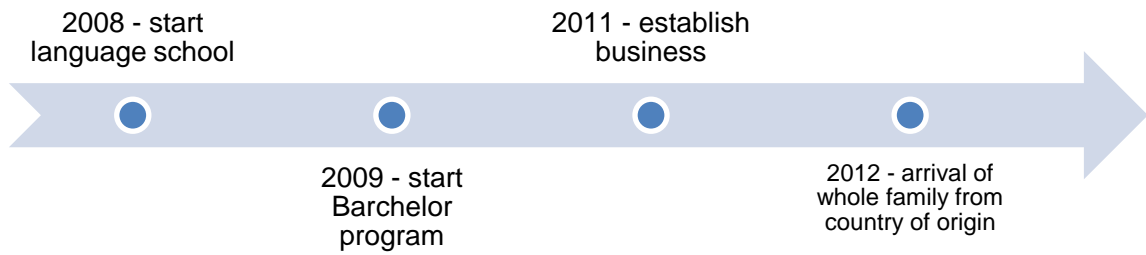
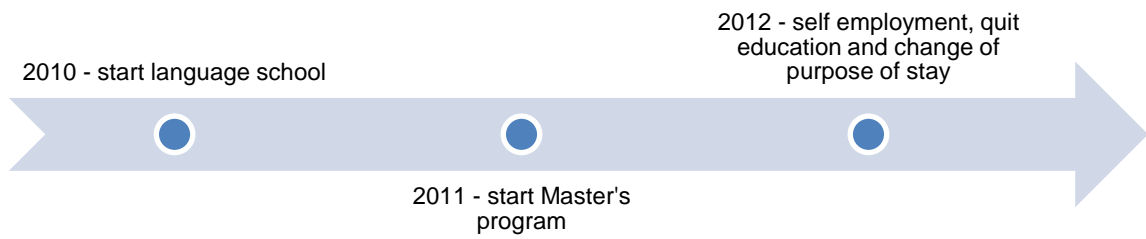
List of abbreviations

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
ČSÚ	Český Statistický Úřad
CV	Curriculum Vitae
CZK	Czech Koruna
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
FB	FaceBook
FSU	Former Soviet Union (countries)
MA	Master of Arts
MGIMO	Moscow State Institute of International Relations
MGU	Moscow State University
MPC	Migration Policy Centre
MŠMT	Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy České republiky
MVČR	Ministerstvo vnitra České republiky
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US/USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VK	Vkontakte (social network page)

Appendix 1

Life paths of some chosen research participants remaining in the Czech Republic





Appendix 2

Life paths of some chosen research participants who left the Czech Republic

