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Alena PAŘÍZKOVÁ

University of West Bohemia, Department of Sociology, Plzeň
parizkov@kss.zcu.cz

Czech Migrants in the European Migration Space

SUMMARY

Free movement of people is one of the fundamental rights of citizens of the European Union. However, in the European space, there are migrants of different status and different power and recourse for constituting their positions and also shaping their own perspective of the migration space. This text is analyzing the interconnection between the actors' perception of the migration space and their behaviour. The text is based on qualitative research among Czech migrants in the UK. In-depth interviews were conducted with 48 migrants. The perception of space is strongly influenced by political factors, which still have power to define barriers of mobility or, on the contrary, open the gates. In narratives with Czech labour migrants, there appear to be two basic conditions to European migration space represented by the United Kingdom – proximity and simplicity. The legality of migration and work and plenty of services within the migration industry changes the perceived geographical distance. But despite openness within the space, migrants live their everyday lives locally and retain their Czech identity. After initial migration, they then move across Europe, more so as tourists than as transmigrants. Nevertheless, the openness of the European space changes the need to create a community based “only” on a common national identity. More frequent contacts with family and friends across the state borders weaken the need for the cohesion of immigrants in the destination country.

KEY WORDS: labour migration, European space, mobility, political factors, community, United Kingdom, transnationalism

INTRODUCTION

The current European migration space began to be constructed shortly after the Second World War, thanks to a series of political decisions.¹ In the beginning, Europe was politically divided into two separated spaces, clearly separated by territorial borders. Then the countries of Western Europe began the unifying process that led to the creation of the European Community (EC). This act politically constituted

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a European space of free movement. The founding agreement of the EC ensures its inhabitants the privilege of freedom of movement for workers within it². However after 1989, a new process towards the significant redefinition of European space began. The bipolarity of the world system collapsed and a “proper” Europe began newly to constitute the external borders and along with new actors, in the shape of the new member states, they started also to construct the contemporary European space. As the space is the product of interrelations (Massey, 2009), the different actors in the European migration space have different possibilities and limits to negotiate their positions according to the influential political, economical and social context (Morokvasic, 2008).

Within the European space there are migrants of different status and varying levels of power and recourse for constituting their positions and also for shaping their own migration space. Generally, two big groups³ of migrants can be seen: insiders and outsiders. On the one hand, in the context of the mobility of workers, happy Eurostars exist from the old⁴ European Union (EU) countries (Favell, 2008) for whom the European migration space is wide, open, and warmly welcoming. These are the symbol of the insiders – citizens of the European Union with access to all rights and duties of the EU. Since 2004, there has also been another section to the insiders group – the newly⁵ acceding countries to the EU, which meet less friendly welcomes and a migration space characterized by significant limits. On the other hand, there are immigrants from the so-called third countries, for whom this space has a very different shape. As they are the outsiders, their migration experience is full of limits, barriers and marginalization processes (also Morokvasic, 2008).

This article focuses on the category of migrants who have experienced a major turn-around in their migration possibilities and limits over the last twenty years. It focuses on the citizens of the Czech Republic who participate in labour migration within the EU. These migrants have experienced the transformation of their status from outsiders to insiders and this process has been completed just recently. Twenty two years ago, migration of Czech citizens was limited and controlled by the communist state. The freedom to leave, especially to the West, only occurred after the year 1989. This freedom was and, in a global context, still is quite limited.

² It is stated explicitly in *Regulation (EEC) No. 1612/68 of the Council of 15 October 1968 on freedom of movement for workers within the Community (Regulation..., 1968)*.

³ I am aware that this division is very simplified, but I use it to emphasize how different the migrant experience can be in current Europe. As will be shown in the text, the groups are heterogeneous.

⁴ All the states that entered the EU before 2004 are marked as old EU countries.

⁵ These are the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia, and Cyprus (usually referred as EU 10) – also labelled as newcomers in the text. In 2007, the process of integration continued with the accession of Rumania and Bulgaria to the EU.

In the case of the Czech Republic, the freedom exists to leave the Czech Republic, but this does not mean that there also exists the freedom to enter any country the migrant chooses. The achievement of freedom of movement within the EU is a gradual process, which is shown in its consistent importance in national politics.

The first freedom of movement came for Czech citizens in the form of tourist visa-free trips to other European countries. However, the concept of the free movement of people as one of the fundamental rights of the EU should also include the right of the free movement of workers. The application for this type of right shows that there are different categories of EU members. The right of free movement of workers was restricted to countries that had newly joined the EU in 2004. Czechs and citizens from other EU newcomers could move freely around Europe – but not as workers⁶. However, as the European space is dominantly constructed through political definition of member and non-member, Czechs are the lucky ones. They are insiders. But this does not mean that they are Eurostars. The migration space opened slowly for them and various limitations exist, which still delegates the space differently for them than for other EU citizens.

The objective of this article is to show how Czech migrants reflect the European space and how they modify their behaviour according to it. How do they behave in these migration spaces and how does that influence the migration process? Where do they see possibilities and limitations in their mobility? The structure of this text follows the migrants experience within the European space. I shall first introduce the theoretical concepts underlying this study. The empirical part of the text is based on qualitative research among Czech migrants in the UK. Firstly, I demonstrate the perception of space in the analysis of factors that influence the decision-making process of migration. Furthermore, I am trying to show how the perceptions of space shape the mobility of migrants. In this context, I focus on some of the features of migrant behaviour and their way of thinking towards European space. However, the European space is represented here with the major destination of Czech migration flow – the United Kingdom. In the last part of this text, I show the interconnection of the definition of space and creation/cohesion of the immigrant community.

⁶ Most “old” EU countries introduced so-called “transitional measures” on the movement of workers from the new member states, as will be mentioned later in the text.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this text, I use the perspective of transnationalism to analyze the perspectives and behaviour of current Czech migrants in European space. Transnationalism is an “umbrella” concept for two other important theoretical models that enable us to grasp the migration flows and individuals within their experience. These two concepts are network theory and institutional theory.

Transnationalism “entered” migration studies in the early 1990s as a “new⁷ analytic optic” (Vertovec, 2009: 13) and gained a stable and strong position within the migration analytical approach. Through this perspective, migration is perceived as a phenomenon characterized by “the high intensity of exchanges, the new modes of transacting, and the multiplication of activities that require cross-border travel and contacts on a sustained basis” (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999: 219). According to this perspective, individuals who “develop and maintain multiple relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political” can no longer be labelled as immigrant men and women (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1992: 1). This new category of migrants – transmigrants – live in two or more countries, in which they carry out their permanent, significant and repeated cross-border activities (Castles, 2008) and multiple involvement is a key element of migrant transnationalism (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1992). However, not only are the participation of the two countries and two societies significant features of transnationalism, but also the redefinition of the identity of individuals and their belonging is a part of this process. As Stephen Castles (2002: 1157) points out, we should see the “transnationalism and transnational communities as new modes of migrant belonging. Transnational communities are groups whose identity is not primarily based on attachment to a specific territory”.

For the growth of transnational migration it is necessary to meet two basic conditions: the development of technologies enabling time-space compression and networking across the space⁸ (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999). Therefore, analyzing the perception of space through the lens of a transnational concept, it is necessary to include network theory. This theoretical model focuses on the social and collective networks that are created routinely among individuals. “Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin” (Massey et al., 1993: 448). The analysis focuses on “the

⁷ On basic arguments of discussion about the “new and old” aspects of migration process in the context of transnationalism, see Vertovec (2009: 14–17).

⁸ Other factors that enabled the current changes in migration processes are changes in social structure and cultural values (Castles, 2002).

social and symbolic ties of the movers and stayers vary with respect to their structure, such as density and strength and their content” (Faist, 2000: 33). All these ties reduce the risks and costs associated with migration, and thus increase its likelihood. The network theory sees the power of ties not only in their ability to initiate migration flows, but especially to maintain and reproduce them. These networks are made up of several types of bonds. There are the social ties, which form both strong family ties with an intense, but less numerous connection of individuals, as well as weak interpersonal ties with the possibility of including a wider range of individuals (for example Granovetter, 1973).

In the migration process, the broader category of symbolic ties also influences migrant behaviour. These symbolic ties are based on kinship, ethnicity and nationality as well as on political and religious belonging (Faist, 2000: 31). Their containment is in obligation, reciprocity and solidarity. They are also a tool for obtaining information, control and access to the resources of others (Faist, 2000: 31). Migrant networks also explain why migrants with certain characteristics occur in some target countries and not elsewhere (Faist, 2000). The weakness of this model is that it is unable to absorb a substantial portion of migrants, who move through a highly formalized bureaucratic relationship initiated by corporate recruiters or government agencies (Goss and Lindquist, 1995).

This gap fulfils the concept of the migration industry, which is a part of institutional theory. This theory points out that private institutions and NGOs respond to an imbalance between a large group of migrants, and a limited number of residential and work permits. Through their activities, these institutions then not only help migrants and remove obstacles, but generally maintain migration and regulate its flow (Massey et al., 1993). The migration industry itself includes “a broad set of actors and services that play an active role in every step of the process of migration (i.e., initiation, continuation) and are present in different types of migratory movements (i.e., permanent, cyclical, return)” (Hernández-León, 2008: 155). The industry includes not only legal labour recruiters, lawyers, transportation companies or agencies, but also smugglers and various semi-legal service providers.

With the help of ties, networks and organizations (and networks of organizations), which are found in geographically and internationally distinct places, the transnational social spaces are constructed (Faist, 2000). Nevertheless, this transnational approach is, to a certain extent, rectified. There are arguments which show that not all migrants should be labelled as transnationals. The basic example is that sending a present to the family of friends in the sending country does not constitute a qualitatively new dimension in migration behaviour (Portes, Gurnizo and Landolt, 1999: 219). Part of the critical reflection of this analytical perspective is also

the notification of certain “blindness” to the concept of transnational migration. Transnationalism does not pervade all current migration flows (Levitt, 2001) as well as not precluding the co-existence of other patterns of migration. It is one form among many other alternatives of adaptation (Portes, 2001: 183).

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The essential source of data for analysis is the qualitative research carried out in 2008 and 2009 in the United Kingdom. The research focuses on migrants from the Czech Republic who are or were, at the beginning of their migration experience, directed to low-qualified occupations. I have focused on these individuals for two reasons: 1) According to British authorities, the majority of immigrants from countries newly accessing the EU acquire occupations of low qualification requirements⁹ (Home Office, 2009). 2) This targeting was derived from stereotypical thinking about migration for work which I took as my theme, based on the research presented. The smaller group is formed of highly qualified migrants. Through different programs, these migrants are invited to the destination country and are positively accepted into society. The second and bigger group is labelled as non-qualified. It includes all other migrants. These migrants are welcomed less warmly than the first group. Nevertheless, this migrant label creates the visible symbol of current migration. The study concentrates on migrants within the United Kingdom, as that country is attractive for labour migration and therefore also important to the existence of the most significant contemporary migration flow from the Czech Republic (e.g. Vavrečková, 2006; Vavrečková, Musil and Bařtýř, 2007).

The second criterion for migrant selection is length of stay. The migrant’s experience has to be at least six months. That time is necessary to create some experience and a working career.

The participants in the research were contacted through personal networks, by means of a snowball technique, and through websites focusing on immigrants to the United Kingdom. During both years, I carried out in-depth interviews with economic migrants who were, at the time of the interview, working and living in the United Kingdom. In total I interviewed 48 people¹⁰. Among those interviewed, men

⁹ Between May 2004 and March 2009, migrants from the newly accessed EU countries most frequently registered into various positions in factories as process operatives and other factory workers (28 %), warehouse operatives (8 %), packers (6 %), kitchen and catering assistants (6 %) or cleaner and domestic staff (6 %) (Home Office, 2009: 14). Other most frequently registered occupations are waiter, waitress, maid, farm worker, construction and sales assistant (Home Office, 2009).

¹⁰ A participant in the research was promised anonymous processing of the information and also, therefore, retainment of their own anonymity. To meet this promise, interviewed migrants are represented only by their gender and duration of stay in the UK.

and women were almost equally represented (25 women, 23 men), the age range was 22 to 56 years, the majority of the migrants (29) being between the ages of 27 and 31. This group composition corresponds to the statistical data of registered employed foreigners from the “new” EU member states, whose age is most frequently between 18 and 34, while the ratio of men to women is 56:44 (Home Office, 2009). In terms of education, the most numerous group among interviewees was made up of individuals with secondary education (29). A smaller group consisted of migrants with a university degree (15) and only four interviewees had finished study with a vocational certificate. In most cases, the migration was the individual act, a process independent of family decisions. This, according to some authors, is typical for most migrants from Central and Eastern Europe (for example Morokvasic, 2004).

The main topic of the interviews was the migration experience of each individual. The interviewees first told their ‘stories’ of migrating abroad and then they were asked additional questions concerning particular more specific issues of the migration process. The goal was to elicit a comprehensive description and evaluation of each migrant’s experience. The data was analysed using MAXQDA 10 software and applying the principles of subject analysis.

FIRST STEPS IN THE MIGRATION PROCESS

The picture of the European space was already playing a significant role by the beginning of the migration process. Political, social, economical and, last but not least, geographical factors influence the migrants’ view of the European space and their position within it. Potential migrants modify their plans and strategies according to the space picture. How these factors influenced the migrants’ decisions can already be seen before the migration process even began. It shows up when they make decisions about the destination country of migration. Among the interviewees, the dominant reasons for choosing the United Kingdom were proximity and simplicity. One of interviewees describes the factors that subsequently influenced the choice of destination of migration:

The United Kingdom and Ireland are the only English speaking countries in Europe, if you prefer English language. Here (London)¹¹ is easy and affordable access from us (the Czech Republic), which turned out to be fine for visiting home. And the main thing is that the labour market here is open to us without any restrictions. These are some basic things, which are so basic that I almost forgot to mention them (woman, 4 years¹²).

¹¹ Marks in transcripts: (...) an omitted part of citation; (.) pause; (---) a concretizing name omitted; (text which is not in italics) text inserted by author.

¹² I use gender and the length of stay in the United Kingdom to identify my interviewees in the text.

The English language plays an important role in the migrants' narratives. One of the strongest motives for migration was an effort to improve their English skills. This is also the reason why an English speaking country is so popular among Czechs migrants.

The first important factor is proximity and is closely connected with the level of security of migration. The fact that *it is not far from home* (man, 3 years) plays an important role in the decision process about migration. *And for me it is important that it is near the Czech Republic. Always, if anything happens, it is easy; it is easy to leave for the Czech Republic* (woman, 6 years). In migrant narratives, there is also included the fear and insecurity that is connected with the process of leaving the security of home and a familiar environment. *I have always said that if something goes wrong, that you can go home. Of course, I am in such a big city for the first time in my life* (man, 1 year).

The sense of proximity and simplicity is due to a number of factors that can be divided into several categories. The most important of them falls into the category of political factors. The process of migration started to become easier and the distance shorter due to changes in the political situation. Czechs, since 2004, are citizens of the European Union. From the perspective of the grounding principles of the EU¹³, there should be no bureaucratic barriers that would hinder the mobility of Czechs within Europe. With certain limitations, the United Kingdom and Ireland followed these principles and opened not only their borders but also their labour markets to citizens of newcomer countries. In the context of labour migration to an English speaking country, travel outside Europe would mean going through bureaucratic procedures to obtain visas and payment of fees. From a migrant perspective, such procedures are time and money consuming. *Because I think that it is easier than to go to United States* (woman, 6 years). *Well, so it was that I wanted to learn English, so it was better than to go somewhere to the United States or somewhere else. (Why better?). Well, it was not so far and also it was a lot easier to arrange everything* (woman, 5 years). Two interviewees wanted initially to go to the United States¹⁴. After they had filled in all the applications and paid the fees, they did not obtain a visa. Both wanted to travel there as tourists and then work there without permits. When their dreams about America were shattered, they chose the United Kingdom. The reason was that they could travel without visas and with the legal possibility of work.

¹³ Especially *Regulation (EEC) No. 1612/68 of the Council of 15 October 1968 on freedom of movement for workers within the Community (Regulation..., 1968)*.

¹⁴ They planned their trip to the US before November 2008. Since November 17th, 2008 the Czech Republic is included in the visa waiver program of the United States of America. This programme allows Czechs to travel for short tourist and business trips visa free. However, there is a mandatory condition of registration and paying fees prior to departure (MZV).

As EU citizens, the Czech migrants should experience free movement and the right to settle and work in any EU member state. However, Western countries feared a huge immigration flow of the labour force from Eastern and Central Europe. Even if their fears were not realized (Wallace and Stola, 2001), certain restrictive measures were launched as a reaction to them. Citizens of newcomer countries were limited in their participation in the labour market of the old EU member states. Only three countries opened their labour market to all EU citizens (United Kingdom, Ireland, and Sweden). The rest applied a transition period¹⁵ for the restriction of the free movement of workers from the Czech Republic and other acceding countries¹⁶. Germany and Austria, two neighbouring countries, preserved the transition period until the 1st of May 2011, with some lessening of restrictions¹⁷ during that period.

This indicates two things. Firstly, political factors very strongly influence the migration process and even movement in Europe is still a movement from and to a national state not in nationalized Europe (Favell, 2008). Many authors have paid attention to the role of state policies in the migration process (for example Wallace, 2001; Hollifield, 2004). The state has the power to define categories of migrants through its policy. According to these categories the state decides the migrant's status in its legal system. It creates migrants with different rights to immigration (Wallace, 2001). Secondly, the citizens of the new member states of the EU from Eastern and Central Europe still are not perceived as very welcome insiders in the fortress of Europe. Therefore, concerning entrance to the country, Czech migrants belong to the group of the privileged who are inside the Europe fortress.

Adrian Favell offers an apt description when writing about Eurostars: “Nobody notices or complains about well-spoken French, Italian, or German kids working in cafés, trains, hotel lobbies, or bargain airlines. They are unproblematic, and no politician or policy maker need ever make a fuss” (Favell, 2008: 35). But the British anti-immigrant discourse is concentrated on the “exotic”: Islam, Romas or too many Polish workers (Favell, 2008: 35). A Czech can easily be associated with the second group. *Usually; when I usually meet someone, so they ask me straight off:*

¹⁵ These restrictions are referred to in EU circles as “the 2+3+2-year arrangement”. This scheme obliged the member states to declare in May 2006, and again in May 2009, whether they would “open up their labour markets to workers from the EU-8 (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia) or keep restrictions in place” (*Free Movement...*, 2009). These transitional period restrictions were not applied to Cyprus and Malta.

¹⁶ Transitional periods were also implemented when Greece (1981) and Spain and Portugal (1986) became member states of the European Economic Community (EEC). In the case of Greece, this period involved the restriction of movement of workers, which was limited for a 7-year transitional period after Greece entered the EEC (ENA). Nevertheless, in the year 2004, citizens of these countries could freely move as workers in the EU.

¹⁷ During the transitional period, these countries opened their labour markets for specific professions and to workers with university degrees.

where are you from? From Poland? Yes, mostly they hit Poland (woman, 9 years). Well, there are millions of Polish here and only fifteen thousand Czechs, right? (man, 7 years). According to the interviewees, Czech and Polish migrants are perceived as the group of migrants from Eastern Europe. This group is symbolically represented by an image of the Polish worker, which has, in many cases, negative connotations (see also Cekalova, 2008). This is a consequence of the arrival of bigger numbers of migrants from Eastern Europe who arrived after May 2004, among whom the Polish migrants form the largest group. The Czech migrants become lost in the number of migrants from Poland, from the viewpoint of the British public and media.

However, the opened labour market makes labour migration easier and, therefore, the possibility of legal work without the bureaucratic procedures popularized the United Kingdom and Ireland. As the interviewee cited above mentioned: *The main thing is that there is an open labour market for us here without any restrictions.* For the interviewee, it was a basic factor when she decided to migrate. This also could favour the United Kingdom over other EU member states. One man, a cook, tried to get a working visa to Austria in 2007. He went to Austria, started to work there illegally and submitted the application for a visa. After a month it was rejected. *I tried it in Austria, but there, you know work without a permit is (.). They prefer to accept other nationalities than Czechs, you know (man, 27 years old, 1 year).* After this rejection he decided to go to the United Kingdom and find work there. Legal work is also included in the ease of the migration process emphasised by interviewees.

Not only has the geographical distance played a role when migrants speak about the proximity of both countries, but also availability and frequency of transport determines the perception of distance. As was mentioned in the earlier statement *easy and affordable* access is available between the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic. This accessibility is also made possible by technological development and the migration industry.

The migration industry smoothes human mobility and enables more people to participate in the migration process (Hernández-León, 2008). Transportation services are one of the most visible parts of the migration industry. Technological developments during the last few centuries have changed the possibilities of transport. In the last decades, development has made transport easier and more accessible to the broad masses of the population. The biggest shift occurred in air transport. Low-cost airlines started to operate their flights across almost all of Europe and sufficiently connecting both countries – the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic. These services significantly lowered the travel expenditures in time and money and

made affordable travel for many migrants. European countries are also very well connected through cost-effective bus services (see also Wallace, 2001).

Concerning technical development, there is another important factor that has influenced thinking about distances today. The improvement in communication technologies has influenced the migration process. Current technologies allow for the fast flow of information almost all over the world. Thanks to the Internet, there is a possibility to be in daily contact with family and friends in the sending country. *It is easy to call whenever you want. Also e-mail, Facebook. So, all this makes it much easier than it used to be. (...) Sometimes I am thinking that if I lived in Prague, because I think, I would not stay in (---), so I would also have contact with parents, relatives or friends who live in (---) only via phone, more or less. Well sometimes I would meet them. Well, it would be almost the same (woman, 7 years).* Even if there are hundreds of kilometres differences in distance, for interviewees, they seem to be almost the same. The Internet not only provides contact with family and friends but also provides migrants with a great deal of information (see also Wallace, 2001).

Travel agencies are another significant part of the migration industry connecting both countries and influencing the thinking about space; they offer programmes for mediating work and accommodation. Interviewees, who decided on an agency, used it to secure their trip. Here is one answer given to the question of why some migrants decided to use an agency: *I had never been here before (Britain) and I didn't know the country. Most people don't go blindly, and at least it's good to have accommodation. The agency arranges this. You can't (otherwise) get accommodation without the help of a friend. With an agency, accommodation is certain. There are agencies for everything here (man, 2 years).* Another interviewee also mentioned the need for safety, which an agency should satisfy: *I used it as a crutch to help if anything happens. But now I say, don't go with an agency, just let them arrange accommodation for you (man, 4 years).* These statements show how the migration industry provides migrants with a “crutch” for fast and safe travel into a politically defined open space. As a consequence, the migration process can start to be less selective and more accessible. On the other hand, the last statement also shows that the agency does not necessarily secure all parts of the migration process. The agency secured accommodation but not work for the cited interviewee.

Other effective sources of information and security in the migration process are social networks. After his experience, the last cited man emphasises the effectiveness of social contact and the Internet. He was accommodated with other Czech migrants and realized that direct contact with other migrants is a more useful source of information about life and work in Britain than an agency. Other migrant narratives also stress social networks as another important “crutch” used at the beginning

of the process. That is not usually the only reason to choose the destination country but it is seen as an important bonus, as shown in this statement: *And the last reason, because there was (---) and I knew that she would help me. Well for sure it's better if you know someone who is here. Someone who is already there* (woman, 3 years). This shows how personal ties are still one of the most effective resources of information in the labour market and destination country in general. It is especially possible to recognise therein the strength of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973).

The last influencing factor that shapes the reflection of the European migration space is cultural perspective. Some interviewees were aware of a common cultural basis in European countries. *Even they don't want to hear it, it is still Europe, so they are close to us* (woman, 2 years). They assume that the culture and social life is based on the same or similar principles, so they do not expect difficulties in adapting. They do not expect to experience culture shock.

DURING MIGRATION

The legal process enables migrants to travel there and back without any restriction. The transportation service supports this possibility. Therefore, the only limit can be an economic one or time. When migrants plan their trip, they see the European space as relatively open and safe. How does this influence their behaviour during the migration process? I will focus on the frequency and purpose of their trips to the Czech Republic and other countries and also the use of certain services within different territories. Furthermore, I will describe how influential the definition of the migration space is on the migrant's community.

According to interviewees, when they travel within Europe, they mostly visit their family and friends at home in the Czech Republic. Most of the interviewees stated that they visited the Czech Republic twice a year. It depends on the amount of time and money they have. The scale of travelling to the Czech Republic started at one end with six visits per year and with one visit in two years on the other. The frequency of visits can be influenced by the length of the migrant's stay in the UK. The longer the interviewees stay the less often they need to go to the Czech Republic, even if their financial situation allows for it. This is due, in their own words, to the possibilities of visits from home. However, for some, a year without a visit home is *terribly long and I don't want to experience it anymore* (woman, 7 years). Most interviewees still see the Czech Republic as their home and plan to return in the future.

However, migrants are also mobile in other European areas. They mostly travel to other European countries as tourists on holiday or visiting friends for a short

while. The question arises here if they ever think about migrating to other countries. It is necessary to note that migration is distinguishable from tourism according to the goal and length of movement. Although the definition and relationship between both terms is the subject of more complex discussions, in this case the main difference is seen in the length of movement and clearly given intention of return (more in Williams and Hall, 2000). According to the interviewees' statements, it is possible to find three types of answers to the possibility of migration to other countries. The first group of migrants (30) did not consider moving to another country at all and, if so, they would always go back to the Czech Republic. They said that they would like to travel as tourists but not as migrants. *I thought about Spain, mainly because of the weather, and because of the sea. But otherwise, I would not move anymore. I would like to travel, but not move* (man, 4 years).

The second small group of migrants (7) would like to move and try living somewhere else, but they no longer wanted or were able to implement the idea. A particular age and the need to settle and have a family were the usual reasons why they did not go. This reasoning points to the existing link between migration and the concept of the course of life. The next reason emerging within this group is the difficulty of a new beginning. One migrant mentioned dreaming about making another move to another destination country, to Norway. This dream would not be fulfilled because her boyfriend was strictly against it. *I don't want be starting up again. I am too old to do it again. You make something here and leave it again? It is not possible for a short time. You don't know how it will be. You start something and you leave it* (man, 4 years). This interviewee saw his return to the Czech Republic as a certainty. Therefore, he knew he would have to be at the beginning again. He also remembers what it was like at the beginning in the United Kingdom. According to him, it was hard and took time to build a background. It takes time to create some *bubble* around himself where he knows everything and can orient himself, where his friends are. The worry about a new beginning limits him from future migration.

Thirdly, there are the migrants (5) who see rather the open space and do not close themselves to opportunities. As this interviewee says: *And you know, I am thinking about this, that if I leave England someday, so I think about this, that I would like to go somewhere else and I want to learn other languages, because I am here so long I have friends across Europe, because people come and go, so I know that I can go to Italy and I will find a job there, to France, to Spain. There are many friends with whom I still stay in touch via Facebook. I like travelling very much. I don't plan somehow, where I want to settle. I leave it open* (smile) (woman, 3 years). This small group of interviewees are part of the transnational networks created and sustained in the migration process (Morokvasic, 2008; Massey et al., 1999).

Migrants use these networks as an important resource for their mobility. Even if the migration process in the EU is legal for its citizens and supported by the migration industry, it is the migration networks that are still the most effective capital, with plenty of information and security.

The smallest group of interviewees can also be framed within the transnational perspective. These migrants (3) did not want to bind themselves to only one territory. They would prefer to use Europe as a space for constant movement, which allows them to settle in more than one national territory. The easiest way to achieve this appears to be having one's own business: *I would rather like to find some way that allows me to live in both places.* (Question: Is there some way?) *Hm, probably to set up some firm which could do something in the Czech Republic, so I could live here and go there very often, or conversely. So, basically I would not want definitely to go to Bohemia. I don't want to lose the opportunity to return here* (woman, 7 years). Another interviewee started a delivery service operating between the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic. He saw the *gap in market* and it also allowed him to make visits to the Czech Republic quite frequently.

The next topic arising in the narratives of the interviewees is connected with a reflection upon the possibilities in the use of the health services within the migration space. When travelling home to visit family and friends, more than half of the interviewees also see a doctor. *I deal with acute problems here, but when there is a possibility to go to the Czech Republic, I go there* (woman, 5 years). According to them, they prefer to see a doctor in the Czech Republic because they value the medical service they get. *I go to the Czech Republic, it is cheaper and better. One believes them more* (woman, 4 years). They mostly mentioned seeing a dentist and also a gynaecologist. Trust in the quality of the medical treatment plays a significant role in the choice of doctor. The legality of the process and the good infrastructure gives the contemporary migrants an opportunity to choose according their values and preferences. Nevertheless, length of stay can influence preference. The more migrants settle, the more they focus their life and needs on the United Kingdom. One interviewee answered the question on if she gets some medical treatment in the Czech Republic, briefly and clearly: *Earlier yes, but not now, not even a dentist. I use the health services here* (woman, 7 years). Her answer also shows how dental treatment is a common medical treatment that migrants use without the limits of boundaries.

COMMUNITY

The contemporary definition of European migration space and the position of Czech migrants within it bring many positive features to the migration process. Czechs can be more mobile than they ever dreamed of being, at least in the last sixty years. Only twenty years ago, their situation was totally different. Their possibilities for spatial mobility and the free movement of labour were strongly restricted. In those days, illegality was a common feature of the migration process and migrants had to invest their time and capital (social and financial) into strategies to help them evade restrictive politics. Recently, although still having the stigma of “Eastern Europeans” and their rights restricted (freedom to work and some social rights), they are insiders who are not “pushed” to return to their home country. The weak push factor lies in the relative stable economic and political situation in the Czech Republic. The situation of Czech migrants has radically changed over the last twenty years.

This development has influenced the needs of community life. When writing about migrants in destination countries, they are collectively referred to as a community. Migrants themselves also use the term community when referring to Czechs living in the United Kingdom. These communities are constructed on the basis of ethnic identity, common language and country of origin. To a large extent they are imaginative (Anderson, 1991). The term community is used to describe a supporting group of people who hang together, and give social, financial and emotional support and help to one another. According to the narratives of the interviewees, the need to meet other migrants from the same country of origin is built on some basic common features: *You can speak in your own language* (woman, 6 years). *You have common memories. You don't need to explain anything and both will understand* (man, 4 years). *There is a mental closeness* (man, 7 years). Obtaining information and sharing experiences were also reasons to meet other Czech migrants.

The community of Czechs, particularly in London where the research was conducted, has significantly changed according to the interviewees. The different status and openness of space has had an impact on community and the cohesion of the Czech migrants. *Earlier there was a bigger community in England, but not now. It changed when the Czech Republic entered the EU. Before, migrants had not been sure that they would go back, so they stayed and held together. Today, it does not happen so much anymore* (woman, 6 years). *When the borders opened it changed a lot. Czechs don't look so much for other Czechs. In the past they celebrated Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve together, but now they can go home at anytime* (woman, 7 years). The legality of migration and the possibility to see family and friends at home has changed the need to create a community based “only” on common

language, mentality and memories. The legality of the process enables one to be selective. Migrants select people according to their personality; the common origin is no longer enough to keep a friendship.

Nevertheless, that does not mean that there is no more need for intensive contact between fellow migrants. *Well, community. For us, that is our neighbourhood. Here we have some acquaintances. We go to the pub, sometimes we throw a party. But what is happening on the other side of London, I don't know. I don't know anybody there* (woman, 9 years). *Here are groups of friends who meet to have fun* (man, 2 years). Open borders also brought about a greater influx of people. New migrants were coming and old friends returning home. Some interviewees with a longer duration of stay speak sceptically about making friendships with the newcomers. They are not interested in answering the same questions again and again. They are at a different level of the migration experience. They find a small circle of friends and enclose themselves within it.

Some interviewees mentioned that they do not even look for Czechs and do not want to be part of the so-called community. They have their close friends and they are happy with them. *We are looking for Czech culture but not people* (woman, 2 years). It is also possible that a virtual community within London exists, which has been created around specific websites¹⁸. These concentrate on migrants providing an informational and cultural platform. But cohesion in everyday life is seen as weak.

CONCLUSION

Europe is constituted as a space of free movement. This freedom of movement should also include the free movement of workers. Czechs are categorized as European citizens, which marks them as insiders, who should participate in the duties and rights of the political entity (Kivisto and Faist, 2010). Nevertheless, the European space is still divided into the national interests and immigration policies of each member state, and citizens are categorized according to their access to rights. In the case of Central and Eastern European states that joined the EU in May 2004, a second class category was created with a restriction of movement of workers and access to only some social rights.

Czech migrants are aware of this stigmatization, and yet they see the space as open and safe. The legality of the migration process, a well developed infrastruc-

¹⁸ This one is the most popular one among the respondents. It offers a platform for information and experience exchange, advice, culture events, and support communication among migrants, <http://www.pohyby.co.uk/index.php?lang=en>

ture, the migration industry and cultural “closeness” orients the migrants’ interest in Europe, especially in the United Kingdom. These factors have also created a sense of proximity of space and simplicity in the migration process. Politics plays a most important role in this process. The form of migration politics determines the migrants’ behaviour because it builds limits and barriers to their opportunities.

The time-space compression is also intensified through the development of technology and a migration industry. They cut the sense of distance by hours and hundreds of kilometres. Moving across half of Europe can be the same as moving within the relatively small Czech Republic. This sense of space and the legal side does not necessarily make most contemporary Czech migrants transmigrants. The open migration space can be seen as a sustainable factor in incorporating the transnational analytical perspective. All interviewees are closely connected with their home country and their family and friends there. They also use some services there, such as medical treatment. However, most of them do not maintain homes in both countries, and/or „pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require their presence in both“ (Portes, 1997: 812). However, some potential in the new qualitative phenomena can be found among interviewees. A small group of interviewees (3) can be labelled as transmigrant or potential transmigrant, especially those who operate delivery or translation firms, which conform to the definition of transmigrant entrepreneurship (Portes, Haller and Guarnizo, 2002). The rest do not engage “in routine and sustained cross-border activities” (Kivisto and Faist, 2010: 148). They keep their Czech identity and cross borders mainly for short visits. Their everyday life is in the UK and most of them put off into the future dreams of returning.

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Alena PAŘÍZKOVÁ

Češki migranti u europskom migracijskom prostoru

SAŽETAK

Slobodno kretanje ljudi jedno je od temeljnih prava građana Europske unije. U europskom se prostoru međutim nalaze migranti različita statusa te različite snage i uporišta u konstituiranju svojih položaja, koji također oblikuju vlastitu perspektivu migracijskog prostora. U radu se analizira povezanost percepcije sudionika migracijskog prostora i njihova ponašanja. Tekst se temelji na kvalitativnom istraživanju čeških migranata u Ujedinjenom Kraljevstvu. Dubinski intervjui vođeni su s 48 migranata. Na percepciju prostora snažno utječu politički čimbenici, koji i danas mogu postaviti barijere mobilnosti ili joj, naprotiv, otvoriti vrata. U razgovorima s češkim radnim migrantima pokazala su se dva osnovna uvjeta europskoga migracijskog prostora koja zastupa Ujedinjeno Kraljevstvo – blizina i jednostavnost. Zakonitost migracija i rada kao i mnoštvo usluga u okviru migracijske industrije mijenjaju percipiranu geografsku udaljenost. Ali unatoč otvorenosti u prostoru, migranti svoj svakodnevni život žive lokalno i zadržavaju svoj češki identitet. Nakon početne migracije kreću se širom Europe, ali više kao turisti nego transmigranti. Ipak, otvorenost europskog prostora mijenja potrebu za stvaranjem zajednice temeljene »samo« na zajedničkom nacionalnom identitetu. Češci dodiri s obitelji i prijateljima preko državnih granica slabe potrebu za kohezijom imigranata u zemlji odredišta.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: radna migracija, europski prostor, mobilnost, politički čimbenici, zajednica, Ujedinjeno Kraljevstvo, transnacionalizam

Alena PAŘÍZKOVÁ

Les immigrés tchèques dans l'espace de migration européen

RÉSUMÉ

La libre circulation des personnes est l'une des libertés fondamentales des citoyens de l'Union européenne. Cependant, dans l'espace européen, il existe des migrants de statuts divers et de différentes forces et ressources s'agissant de la constitution de leur position, qui se façonnent aussi leur propre perspective de l'espace migratoire. La présente étude se propose d'analyser l'interconnexion entre la perception des acteurs de l'espace migratoire et leur comportement. Le texte se base sur une étude qualitative des immigrés tchèques au Royaume-Uni. Des entretiens en profondeur ont été menés avec 48 migrants. La perception de l'espace se voit fortement influencée par les facteurs politiques qui peuvent, encore maintenant, ériger des barrières à la mobilité ou, au contraire, ouvrir les portes. Les discussions menées avec les travailleurs tchèques migrants ont permis de distinguer deux paramètres fondamentaux de l'espace européen de migration que présente le Royaume-Uni: la proximité et la simplicité. La légalité de la migration et du travail de même que les multiples services offerts dans le cadre de l'industrie de la migration modifient la perception de l'éloignement géographique. Néanmoins, en dépit de l'ouverture spatiale, les immigrés mènent leur vie quotidienne de façon locale et maintiennent leur identité tchèque. Après leur migration initiale, ils se déplacent à travers l'Europe, mais davantage en tant que touristes qu'en tant que transmigrants.

L'ouverture de l'espace européen change, toutefois, le besoin de créer une communauté fondée « uniquement » sur une identité nationale commune. Les contacts plus fréquents avec la famille et les amis par-delà les frontières des états diminuent, en effet, le besoin de cohésion des immigrés dans leur pays de destination.

MOTS CLÉS : migration de travail, espace européen, mobilité, facteurs politiques, communauté, Royaume-Uni, transnationalisme