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Transition to super-diversity in the Czech Republic: its emergence and resistance

1 Introduction

The term ‘super-diversity’ gained exceptional popularity across disciplines of humanities and social sciences, including sociolinguistics, soon after its introduction into the academic discourse by Steven Vertovec (2007). By ‘super-diversity’ Vertovec intended to attract the attention of scholars and policy makers to unprecedented social diversification resulting from present-day mobility and new patterns of migration:

Today newer, smaller, transient, more socially stratified, less organised and more legally differentiated immigrant groups comprise global migration flows [...] Super-diversity is a term intended to capture a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything many migrant-receiving countries have previously experienced (Vertovec 2010: 86–87).

Super-diversity as a concept has three connected aspects: descriptive, policy-oriented and methodological (Meissner & Vertovec 2015: 542–545). From the descriptive viewpoint, population configurations in super-diversity are not only about the emergence of more groups – ethnic, national or other –, they also entail the ‘diversification of diversity’ (Hollinger 1995) or ‘multidimensional diversification of difference’ (Meissner & Vertovec 2015: 546). In other words, ethnic communities are becoming more differentiated internally, consisting of more categories of people according to different variables: countries of origin, languages, religions, migration channels, legal statuses, human capital, access to employment, practices of transnationalism, and responses by local authorities, service providers and local residents (Vertovec 2007). A complex interplay of these variables is characteristic of super-diversity. This should have double implication for its other two aspects: public policies and research methodology. Although the fact of diversity has been taken on board in western societies for some time already (cf. Vertovec 2012: 296ff.), greater recognition of multi-variable migration configurations is called for (Vertovec 2007: 1044–1047; Meissner & Vertovec 2015: 545).

In this chapter, I try to provide evidence of super-diversity’s presence in the Czech Republic (hereafter ‘Czechia’ for short) and of its extraordinary extent in the context of East-Central Europe. I will be describing the nature of post-socialist diversification of Czechia and response to it by both research and policy from the perspective of what has already been written on super-diversity. However, I will also devote some attention to what has thus far been less written about, namely, the local and national resistance to (super)diversity.

I will proceed in two complementary ways. Firstly, sticking to the original Verovec' approach, I will try to prove substantially changed ethnic diversity in Czechia by presenting quantitative data on several variables that contribute to increased social complexity. In order to capture more of this phenomenon, I will, secondly, build on a sociolinguistic adaptation of super-diversity, which centres on communicative effects (Blommaert & Rampton 2011; Blommaert 2014, 2015; and others). This adaptation of super-diversity emphasises the role of mobility and long-distance communication technologies in the growth of social complexity. Social life today, Blommaert (2013) claims, is characterised by instability and the 'non-stop production of exceptions', or what established theories reveal as 'exceptions' (Blommaert 2015: 83f.). Blommaert and Rampton (2011) and Blommaert (2014, 2015) argue that this changed reality requires a paradigmatic change in theoretical and methodological approach. For its focus on complexity, they suggest ethnography. With this additional perspective, I will proceed, similarly to Kroon, Dong and Blommaert (2015), by selecting and describing bits of mundane reality, using ethnographic details on practices and products of diversification.

In short, I will describe super-diversity in the Czech context from both the macro-perspective of statistical data (Section 3) and the micro-perspective of ethnography (Section 4). There would be no point, however, in arguing in favour of super-diversity without specifying what the previous condition was. Section 2, therefore, briefly describes the 'old' diversity in the Czech lands. Finally, Section 5 discusses the so far rather neglected manifestations and acts of resistance to diversity and to the ongoing diversification. The concluding section characterises super-diversity in Czechia in general terms and in an international perspective.

2 'Old' diversity

Central Europe was an ethnically very diversified region until the Second World War. The borders of many Central European states, established on the debris of the multi-ethnic Habsburg monarchy as late as in 1918, very often did not coincide with ethnic borders (for Czechoslovakia, see the map in Boháč 1926).¹ The traditional territorial ethnic groups in the Czech lands² thus included *Czechs* (6.8 million or 68% of the population), *Germans* (3 million or 31%), *Poles* (104,000 or 1%), and less numerous *Croats* (Czech Statistical Office 2015a: Table 1–16). *Jews* used to be a significant religious group. The non-territorial groups included the *Roma* and *Slovaks*, and later also *Hungarians* and *Ukrainians* or *Rusyns* who immigrated into the Czech lands from other parts of Czechoslovakia. The interwar Czechoslovakia also accepted thousands of Russian and Ukrainian emigrants who were fleeing the hardships caused by the Russian Civil War (Chinyeva 2001). The interwar Czech lands were thus highly

1 Also on WWW at <http://mapy.geogr.muni.cz/mr.html?id=850422>.

2 These include the historical lands of Bohemia, Moravia and the Czech part of Silesia, which constitute the present-time Czech Republic.

diversified, and since this was an industrialised part of the country with a multiparty and democratic system of governance, its population used to also be diversified in socioeconomic terms, and in political and religious orientations.

The situation dramatically changed during and after the Second World War: the Jews and Roma were exterminated by Nazis; afterwards, Czechoslovaks displaced most of the Germans and dispersed politically ‘unreliable’ Croats. Although the borderland areas were repopulated by multiple ethnic groups, they mostly assimilated by the 1980s (Heroldová 1985; for details, see Robek et al. 1985, 1986a, 1986b; Čapka, Slezák & Vaculík 2005; Spurný 2011).

Ethnic Czechs³ formed 93 percent of the population in the 1950s already, and 95 percent at the beginning of the transition in the early 1990s. Closely-related Slovaks represented 3.1 percent (315,000 residents), leaving only 1.9 percent to all other ethnic groups (Czech Statistical Office 1994: Table 155). On the one hand, the country entered the transition period with few and tiny minorities, but on the other hand, the traditional ones were internally highly differentiated as far as education and socioeconomic status are concerned.

Immigration was usually strictly controlled and restricted by the socialist state. This concerned not only migrants from ‘capitalist countries’ but also from allied Soviet Bloc countries. As a result, local residents’ opportunities to meet a foreign resident in the country were rare. The first post-socialist population census recorded only 9,000 foreign residents in the 10.3 million country⁴ (Czech Statistical Office 1994). Immigration was possible, but usually smaller and specific groups were allowed to come, and their arrival, placement and movement in the territory was controlled. These groups included Greek refugees (Botu & Konečný 2005; Králová & Tsivos 2012; Otčenášek 2002; Sloboda 2003); Polish female workers in the textile industry (Klípa 2011); Cuban, Mongolian and Vietnamese workers and apprentices (Alamgir 2014; Čelko 2003; Kašpar 1986; Vasiljev 1986); and university students from countries of Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia (see Moravcová & Nosková 2005). Some of these groups disappeared by the end of the socialist period, but some maintained their presence through to the transition period. Szymańska-Matusiewicz (2015) notes that the links established in the socialist era were an important factor determining which particular ethnic groups have settled in after the fall of the communist regime (p. 5). As will be shown below, further diversification took place when more demographic and social categories emerged within these remaining groups, and as new groups arrived.

3 ‘New’ diversity

By ‘new’ diversity I am referring to the occurrence of new and more groups and languages (dealt with in this section) and their situational intersections and blending

3 Including also Moravians and Silesians as regional, or at least ‘majority’, sub-categories.

4 The citizens of Slovakia were not counted as foreigners before 1993.

(in Section 4), which only started to appear in Czechia in a significant amount in the past decade or so. As I will show in some detail below, this development has been a combined result of the opening of borders in 1989, socioeconomic transition and national immigration policy in the context of ‘more people [...] moving from more places, through more places, to more places’ (Vertovec 2010: 86). The opening-up of the country, property restitution, privatisation, and the introduction of market economy have had profound impacts on life in the country overall. The change visibly manifested itself in public spaces, bringing about unprecedented proliferation of signs, their types and languages. This is nicely seen in the book *Prague 1989–2006: City in Transformation* (Birgus et al. 2006), in which photos of various places in Prague taken around 1989 are placed side by side with photos of the same places taken a decade later. The amount of signs and tourists, including East Asians, in the post-socialist Nerudova Street (p. 45) immediately hit the reader in the eye.

3.1 Tourism

It is not common to speak about tourists in papers on super-diversity, but the numerical increase and diversification of foreign visitors in locations like Prague after the 1989 Velvet Revolution substantially affected many places and social interaction therein. The cause has not been in the number of foreign visitors alone, as it was quite high in the socialist period as well,⁵ but in the privatisation of buildings and the tourist infrastructure after 1989, which enabled larger spatial transformations. At the same time, the number of visitors increased to more than 8 million foreign guests registered in accommodation facilities, 5.3 million of which stayed in Prague in 2014⁶ (Czech Statistical Office 2015b: Table 2.3.1). Interestingly, the largest groups included not only visitors from the neighbouring countries (in descending order): Germany, Slovakia, Poland and Austria, but also from more distant countries, such as Russia, USA, UK, Italy, France, and notably also China (ca. 211,000), South Korea (ca. 195,000) and other Asian countries (ca. 570,000). The interest of East Asian visitors in Prague is said to be due to Chinese and Korean romantic films and TV series – from the Korean 2005 ‘Lovers in Prague’ (*Peurahai Yeonin*) to the Chinese 2015 ‘Somewhere Only We Know’ (*Yǒu Yīgè Dìfāng Zhǐyǒu Wǒmen Zhīdào*) – shot in Prague as ‘Prague’, i.e. not simulating another European city (Novák 2013; Opepelt 2015). This is an example of a combined impact of contemporary media with relatively low costs of long-distance travel. Concerning returning visitors, they

5 In 1988, approximately 3 million visitors registered in accommodation establishments. The statistics on border-crossings recorded even 15 million visitors, although 14 million of these came from socialist countries and only one million from ‘non-socialist’ ones, with more than a half from West Germany and Austria (Federal Statistical Office 1989: Tables 19–3 and 19–6).

6 Czechia’s population was 10.5 million (Czech Statistical Office 2015a : Table 1–6) and Prague itself had only 1.25 million residents at the time (Czech Statistical Office 2015c: Table 4–1).

need not come from close countries only and their purposes for visiting can be diverse, as is evidenced in a news report about students of education from Seitoku University, Japan, who visit a Prague suburb kindergarten every year (Klíčová 2015). The post-socialist tourism and the diversity of visitors' backgrounds have obviously brought about changes to experience formation in the local Czech population. For instance, experiences like being sung Japanese songs and taught to make origami by native Japanese in a Prague kindergarten (ibid.) were something unimaginable for Czechoslovak children in the socialist period.

3.2 Immigration

Foreign nationals rather started to come to Czechia very soon after the 1989 Velvet Revolution. Early immigration included various different groups, such as ethnic Czechs relocated from Belarus and Ukraine (Janská & Drbohlav 2001), foreign expats accompanying the expansion of western companies to the country, and ex-Yugoslav nationals. The number of foreigners started to rise dramatically a little later, during the economic boom around the time of the country's 2004 accession to the European Union. Between 2002 and 2008, the inflow of foreign population into Czechia was unmatched in the context of East-Central Europe; in 2007, it even surpassed the inflow into Austria, as shown in Figure 1. The immigration has augmented the size of the residing foreign population in Czechia (cf. Figure 2). Between 2004 and 2008 only, foreign population doubled from 200 thousand to 400 thousand persons, amounting to 442,971 documented foreign residents in 2014 (Czech Statistical Office 2015d: Table R03).

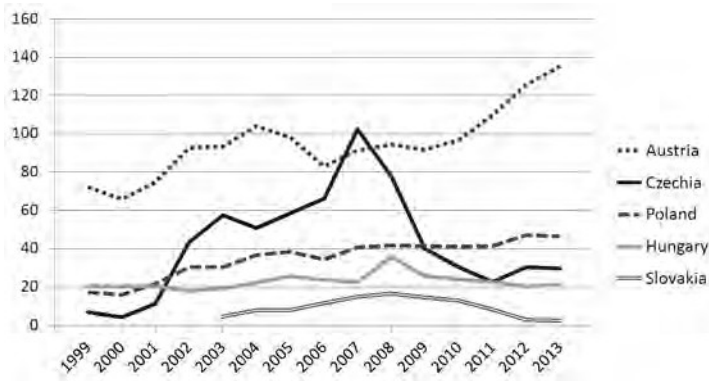
The sharp fall in the number of newcomers in 2009 (Figure 1) mirrors the Czech authorities' severe restriction on immigration in response to the global financial crisis, but also to the previous liberal, non-transparent, visa policy and under-regulated work agencies' practices.⁷ Nevertheless, the number of persons with a *permanent* residence permit has continued to grow (see Figure 2). This is partly related to the restrictions on newcomers, partly to the longer-residing immigrants' intention to settle, and in part also to Czechia's reserved approach to their naturalisation.⁸ However, the new Citizenship Act (No. 186/2013) has opened the possibility of multiple citizenship, which may result in an increase in naturalisation in the years to come.⁹

7 Drbohlav et al. (2010: 147–149) list the following measures taken in 2009: stopping and limiting the receipt of applications for some types of visa (see Trlifajová, Jelínková & Mikušová 2011); the project of 'voluntary returns' (see Plewa 2009); and proposals of legislative measures in the fields of employment and business. For the stages of Czech immigration policy, see Kušniráková and Čížinský (2011).

8 Freidingerová (2014a: 83) shows that, in 2007–2010, the Ministry of the Interior rejected about a half of the applications submitted by the Vietnamese.

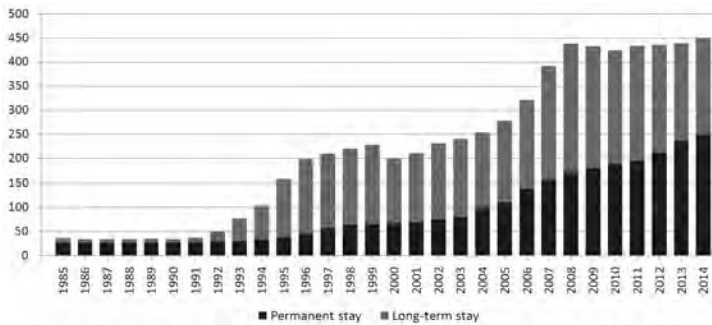
9 Indeed, Czech authorities granted citizenship (on the basis of Act No. 40/1993) to only 1,500–3,500 persons annually in the past decade, but the number rose to 5,037 persons in 2014, which is two times more than in the preceding year (Czech Statistical Office

Figure 1: Inflows of foreign population into East-Central European countries and Austria in 1999–2013 (thousands)



Source: Based on OECD (2007: Table A.1; 2015: Table A.1)

Figure 2: Foreigners with long-term and permanent residence in Czechia in 1985–2014 (thousands)



Source: Based on Czech Statistical Office (2015d: table R03)

Despite the relatively high inflow of foreign population and the increasing size of foreign permanent residents, Czechia is still a relatively homogeneous nation: the documented foreign residents represent only 4.2 percent of the whole population and the size of foreign-born population is approximately 7 percent (Czech Statistical Office 2015e: Table 1–5; OECD 2015: Table A.4). Still, the number is the highest in

2015e: Table 1–11; for the number of applications, see the letter of the Ministry of the Interior No. VS-415/838.2/2-2015, on WWW at <http://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/statistika-poctu-podanych-zadosti-a-pocet-nabyti-statniho-obcanstvi-ceske-republiky.aspx>.

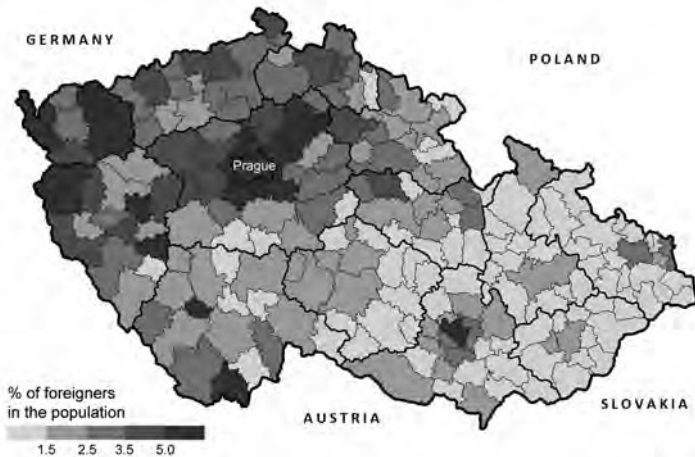
East-Central Europe.¹⁰ Immigration even into a country as large as Poland is lower both according to relative and absolute measures, but significant out-migration of Poles to other countries, such as the UK, and the maintenance of transnational and direct contacts with their homeland very likely increase Poland's internal diversity. For Czechia with a relatively low out-migration, on the other hand, this does not seem to be such an important factor. Also the number of recognised refugees has been low in Czechia, vacillating around 2,000 persons during the past decade. In other words, in contrast to foreign economic migrants, home return migrants and refugees have generally been a rather insignificant element in Czechia's population diversity thus far.

3.3 Regional differences

The share of foreigners in the population may not be high overall, but there are regional differences: some places are more heterogeneous than others. I have already mentioned the highly visible diversification of public spaces in post-socialist Prague under the influence of tourism. Indeed, as will be shown below, Prague belongs to the places in Czechia that are certainly super-diverse. Growth in the number of foreign residents in 2004–2014 was faster in Prague (by 113%) than in the whole country (by 77%); more than one-third of foreigners in Czechia reside in Prague, forming as much as 13 percent of the city's population today (Czech Statistical Office 2015c: Tables 4–1 and 4–12). Although almost two times less than in Brussels, London or Vienna, this is several times more than in Bratislava and Budapest (Přidalová 2015). Prague is not the only place of migration-related diversity, as is clear from the map in Figure 3: high concentrations are in other major cities and, notably, in the western borderlands, including in smaller towns and rural areas, inhabited not only by traditional minorities, but also by Russians and Vietnamese. The Vietnamese started to run their businesses by the Czech-German border as early as the 1990s, capitalising on open border regime and high price differences between Czechia and Germany, and they also run shops in small towns for local inhabitants (iDnes.cz & ČTK 2011; Vasiljev & Nekvapil 2012: 322–326). The spa town of Karlovy Vary, western Czechia, is very popular among Russians, who not only come as visitors, but also buy properties, settle, build houses, and change the physical and cultural landscape of the town and its surroundings in unprecedented ways (see Šhánělová 2005/2006; Čepelák 2010; Šimová 2004).

10 While the share of foreign-born population in Czechia was approximately 7%, in Hungary it was 4.7%, in Slovakia 2.9%, and in Poland 1.7% in 2011/2012 (OECD 2015: Table A.4).

Figure 3: Concentrations of foreign population in Czechia in administrative districts (2011 Census)



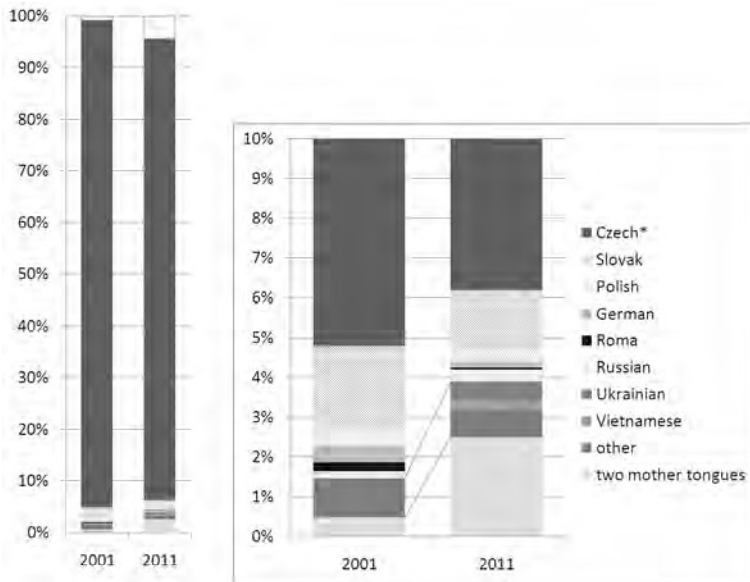
Source: Adapted from Czech Statistical Office (2013a)

3.4 Composition of foreign and minority populations

From the perspective of diversification, the composition of the minority population as a whole, i.e. also including the ‘old’ groups, reveals an important trend. Comparing the data on mother tongue from the last two population censuses (in 2001 and 2011),¹¹ Figure 4 shows that, even though the share of the Czech majority only decreased from 94 to 89 percent and the share of minorities increased from 4.8 to 6.2 percent, the inner composition of minorities changed considerably. The proportion of the native speakers of traditional minority languages, i.e. German, Polish, Roma and Slovak, dropped and the proportion of speakers of ‘new’ languages increased. What is most interesting in Figure 4, is the huge increase in the number of people (from 50,000 to 260,000) who indicated *two* mother tongues. This suggests higher internal diversification and ‘intersecting of languages’ in a part of the population.

¹¹ More than one-fourth (or 2.6 million) of residents did not indicate any ethnicity in the last census, which is why I use data on mother tongue.

Figure 4: Population of Czechia by mother tongue in 2001 and 2011



*Czech also includes Moravian and Silesian

Source: Based on census data (Czech Statistical Office 2003: Tables 12 and 14; Czech Statistical Office n.d.: Table 614b)

'New' groups have not only grown in size, but also in number: documented foreigners came from 150 countries in 1994 and from 171 countries in 2013. The increase is more striking with groups of more than 1,000 residents – from 15 to 32 countries. Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine and Vietnam were the main early sources of immigration. Later, they were joined by post-Soviet, East Asian, and also several Western European countries (see Table 1).

Table 1: Foreign residents of Czechia by citizenship in 2013, compared to 1994

Country	2013	1994	increase (times)
Ukraine	105,138	14,230	7.4
Slovakia	90,948	16,778	5.4
Vietnam	57,347	9,633	6.0
Russia	33,138	3,611	9.2
Poland	19,452	20,021	1.0
Germany	18,507	4,195	4.4
Bulgaria	9,132	3,772	2.4
USA	7,134	3,490	2.0
Romania	6,777	1,368	5.0
Moldova	5,663	96	59.0
China	5,503	2,907	1.9
UK	5,376	1,365	3.9
Mongolia	5,287	418	12.6
Kazakhstan	4,821	31	155.5
Belarus	4,312	154	28.0
Italy	3,503	1,017	3.4
Austria	3,400	1,875	1.8
France	3,025	760	4.0
Netherlands > Croatia > Bosnia and Herzegovina > Armenia > Macedonia > Turkey > Japan > Uzbekistan > South Korea > Hungary > India > Greece	1,000–3,000	less than 1,000 (Greece: 1,897)	
Total	439,189	104,343	4.2

Source: Czech Statistical Office (2015d: Table R04)

Note: Refugees, EU citizens who failed to register (after 2004), and foreigners residing in the country illegally are not included.

3.5 Internal differentiation

Super-diversity is not only about the size and number of groups, but also about their internal differentiation. Above, I already mentioned *residential statuses*: Figure 2 shows that long-term and permanent residence permits are more or less equally

distributed between foreigners. Interestingly, many members of ‘new’ groups have *permanent* residence in the country, and vice versa, many members of ‘old’ groups hold *shorter-term* residence permits.¹² With respect to *purposes of stay*,¹³ diversification is lower in some groups: Vietnamese are least diversified. Employment/business predominates with Vietnamese, Ukrainians and Moldovans, but especially among the Vietnamese, there is a high proportion of those who stay in Czechia on the basis of family reunification. Employment/business and family reunification are almost exclusively and equally the purposes of stay for Chinese, Korean and Japanese nationals. With Belarusians and Kazakhs the study purpose prevails, but also other purposes are frequent among the Belarusians. All the purposes of stay are most equally distributed among the Russian and US nationals (Czech Statistical Office 2015e: Table 1–9). Regarding *human capital*, the 2011 census recorded data on education according to citizenship and ethnicity. A somewhat higher proportion of people with higher education is among the nationals of western countries and Russia; less highly educated people are among the Vietnamese (by both citizenship and ethnicity) (Czech Statistical Office n.d.: Tables 154 and 159). Diversification in *socioeconomic activity* is weak among three ethnic groups: Chinese, Mongolian and again Vietnamese. Whereas business dominates among Vietnamese, Mongolians specialise in the work in manufacturing; the Chinese evenly in trade and catering. Importantly, all ‘new’ groups are extremely thinly represented in the public administration, defence and social security sectors (*ibid.*). The Vietnamese, however, deviate from the other groups with respect to *age*, having a high proportion of children and youth: if we use the data on age according to mother tongue, young people under 30 make up nearly half of Vietnamese speakers, while only one-third of Czech speakers and even less of the other minorities (*ibid.*: Table 614b). This is a very important fact, meaning that Vietnamese children considerably diversify the Czech classroom.

The overall share of foreign children in Czech nursery, primary and secondary schools is still rather low (2%), but their total number is non-negligible 32,528 (Ministry of Education 2015: Tables B1.6, C1.10 and D1.1.12); and almost 40,000 pupils have a mother tongue other than Czech (Czech School Inspection 2015). Emerging handbooks and other educational tools for the integration of these children testify that their presence is substantial, at least in some locations.¹⁴

12 For example, as much as 80% of Mongolians, 76% of Vietnamese and 70% of Chinese have permanent resident permits, and as much as 70% of Hungarians, 60% of Slovaks, and 45% of Poles have shorter-term residence permits (Czech Statistical Office 2015d: Table T02).

13 The statistics used here distinguish the following purposes: employment and business, study, family reunification, and humanitarian and other.

14 In Prague, a classmate of mine and I were the only children with other than Czech, namely, Slovak, background in our class in the 1980s, but my younger sister also attended school with ex-Yugoslav children in the 1990s, and today, Czech children very often also have Vietnamese and Ukrainian classmates.

While Vietnamese children contribute to the diversification of the Czech school, the school in turn is a source of diversification for otherwise largely homogeneous Vietnamese families. Only six percent of Vietnamese households were mixed according to the 2011 census (Czech Statistical Office n.d.: Table 914). In absolute numbers, this represents almost 300 mixed Vietnamese-non-Vietnamese households. A little more, approximately 1,000 Czech-Vietnamese marriages concluded after 1995 remain in wedlock as of 2014 (cf. Czech Statistical Office 2015d: Tables R83 and R84). The number of mixed marriages and households is likely to become higher with the maturing second generation of Vietnamese. Inter-marriage is already very high with the other larger minority groups (except for the Chinese), which can explain the increase in the number of residents with two mother tongues in the last census (Figure 4).

Universities are typical settings in which a significant number of foreigners mix with the locals. A certain amount of internationalisation was already the case in the socialist era (see above), but in the post-socialist period, universities diversified further. The foreign student population grew from 3.5 to 12 percent between 2000 and 2014 (Ministry of Education 2015: Table F23). This share of foreign students may not seem particularly high compared to Western European universities, but it should be taken into account that, at Czech universities, most of the teaching takes place in Czech (cf. Sherman 2015a). For this ‘medium-sized’ language, this has created an important role of a vehicular language or *lingua franca* (Nekvapil 2012).

Foreign language acquisition as such, be it in school, university or at home, is a way to experience linguistic and cultural otherness for a larger portion of the Czech speaking majority. In an extensive survey of 9,500 households, 70 percent of the participants declared they know at least one foreign language, and the younger the respondent the more the mastered languages and the better their knowledge (Czech Statistical Office 2013b). However, the percentage also suggests that as much as *a third* of the population is likely not to have any experience with successful learning of and communicating in a foreign language. Despite this they come into contact with otherness in other situations, some of which are described below.

4 Situational complexity

In this section, we move from a general quantitative image of Czechia’s post-socialist diversification to what seems to be at the core of super-diversity, namely, the micro-level situational complexity (cf. Blommaert 2015; Meissner 2015; cf. Vertovec 2007: 1046f.). Situational complexity emerges as a result of the simultaneous presence or ‘synchronisation’ (Blommaert 2014) of elements of different provenance (geographical, cultural, social or historical), the trajectories of which intersect in one place and time. Current transportation and communication technologies substantially facilitate such intersections by helping to bring these elements together. The result is semiotically and culturally complex objects and practices (for examples, see below).

There are two important consequences, and signs, of situational super-diversity. The first one is the *fragmentariness* of the situational presence of various cultural

influences and bodies of knowledge. For example, a language variety gets into a new place devoid of its original social value, or language skills show to be only partial ('truncated repertoires') (Blommaert 2010). A second consequence of super-diversity, in particular of a high level of mobility, is *unpredictability* (Blommaert 2014: 6) or *unexpectedness* (Arnaut 2012: 12) in what we observe. According to Kroon, Dong & Blommaert (2015) 'people and their attributes move around the world, and they do so in new and unpredictable patterns of complexity' (p. 1). Unpredictability is to a great extent a matter of knowledge, since what one does not predict (or expect) to occur in a particular situation is due to their lack of relevant knowledge or experience. In what follows, I provide several commented examples that, in my opinion, document emerging situational super-diversity in Czechia.

4.1 Old phenomena in new places

One way for situations to become more complex is when 'old' phenomena – people, languages, social categories or cultural artefacts – begin to occur where they have not yet been common. What follows is not a comprehensive description of changes in recent years. Instead, I only briefly mention some social categories that added to those inherited from the socialist period in order to give an idea of post-socialist diversification at the micro-level of social life.

As mentioned above a majority of the traditional, 'old,' ethnic groups were more or less diversified in times of socialist Czechoslovakia, therefore, they could be encountered in various situations. This diversification further increased in the post-socialist period. A notable group that added to the *Poles* in Czechia are Roman Catholic priests – or taken from the other side: Polish priests have become a new part of the Roman Catholic clergy in Czechia. Their number is not particularly high (approximately 100 persons, Czech Press Agency 2012), but it is the nature of their profession that makes them significantly visible and hearable. They contribute to the diversification of Czech when they speak in public with a more or less strong Polish 'accent'.¹⁵ *Slovaks* were also a very diversified group, but their presence as public officials of the Czech Republic (ministers, mayor of Prague) is a specific phenomenon. While it used to be common in the federal bodies of the then Czechoslovakia, a Slovak-speaking minister in the government of independent Czechia, namely, the minister of transport Gustáv Slamečka (in office in 2009–2010), was not something really expected. Indeed, Minister Slamečka repeatedly apologised himself in the media for not speaking Czech (which is mutually intelligible with the Slovak that he used instead). The *German* minority, i.e. the remnants of non-displaced Germans, was under the majority's strong pressure to assimilate linguistically after the Second World War (see Nekvapil 2000: 48–51). After the Velvet Revolution, however, some have found new prospects thanks to the re-established trans-border contact which revived the use of German in new contact

15 I was surprised to hear a sermon in Polish-accented Czech from inside of the Klokoty Church near Tábor, southern Czechia, in the summer of 2010.

situations. Also, larger numbers of German speakers have started to appear in Czech territory as visitors and customers in shopping situations and in services. Also German managers of multinational companies expanding to post-socialist Czechia have brought new communicative experiences to local employees (see Nekvapil & Sherman 2009; Nekvapil & Nekula 2006). *Ukrainians*, some of which later self-identified as *Rusyns*, were a rather small group, originating mostly as refugees from the former Russian Empire and internal migrants from the eastern part of Czechoslovakia.¹⁶ With the beginning of the transition, however, thousands of new migrants from Ukraine itself have started to come, augmenting and diversifying the Ukrainian ‘community’. Ukrainians now appear as workers in industry, but also as students at universities and highly-skilled professionals in various contexts. Czechs regularly meet them as supermarket cashiers or as cleaners in offices, hospitals, universities, hotels, etc. As a result of their significant presence in working positions, unprecedented language mixing of varieties of Ukrainian, Russian, Czech and Slovak can be heard in construction sites. The *Roma* do not seem to have diversified much since the transition period and continue to be a largely socially excluded group.¹⁷ Concerning the public space, however, a news reader and reporters of Roma origin (Richard Samko and Patrik Banga) can be seen on Czech Television since the transition period. The *Greeks* in Czechia have originated as political refugees of communist orientation, directed to work mostly in agriculture and forestry. Today they are more diversified professionally and are notable among the ‘older’ minorities for their intensive transnational links with Greece they have developed after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Some of them live alternately in Czechia and in Greece (Otčenášek 2002). In addition, new migrants from Greece have arrived to study at universities¹⁸ or to run a business with travel services, food, marble and other commodities (cf. Hluchá 2010). The Greek language could have been heard frequently in the town of Krnov in the 1950s (Papadopoulos 1999: 82), but today it appears rarely in public. Besides Greek tourists’ conversations, a striking occurrence was a large sprayed text ‘Ο ΠΑΟΚ ΑΝΗΚΕΙ ΣΤΟ ΛΑΟ ΤΟΥ’ on the wall of the Prague municipal council’s building in 2007. The text, saying ‘the PAOK [a Thessaloniki football club] belongs to its people,’ does not seem to be related to the site it was placed in, suggesting thus its transnational origin. For most of my compatriots this must have been an unexpected unintelligible text in a foreign language and script on an important public building. The post-socialist diversification has also

16 The 1991 Census recorded 8,220 ethnic Ukrainians and 1,926 ethnic Rusyns in Czechia (Czech Statistical Office 1994: Table 155).

17 This concerns particularly education and socio-economic status; there is vast research and policy literature on this topic. In terms of migration, however, the study by Houdek (2010) documents the differentiating between early-settled and newly-arrived Roma immigrants from Slovakia by the Roma in the town of Stříbro, for instance.

18 In the second half of the 1990s, Greek nationals, though not many in absolute numbers, used to be the second largest foreigner group of university students after Slovaks (Hluchá 2010: 54f.).

concerned the majority *Czech* language, which in addition to the above-mentioned speech of Polish priests, can be best exemplified by the emergence in the 1990s of public notices offering courses in ‘Czech for foreigners’. Indeed, Czech started to be learnt and used as a foreign language to an unprecedented extent (cf. Nekvapil 2007).

4.2 New phenomena in old places

Another way for situations to become complex is when new phenomena appear in ‘old’ places. The structuring impact of foreign tourism on the ‘old’ places of Prague was already mentioned above. The visitors’ presence and languages have become commonplace for the locals by now. Services have proliferated and adapted to the international clientele. In a restaurant I am used to having lunches, the waiters have been accommodative, as expected of their profession, communicating with their guests in English, German, Russian or Spanish. One recent experience in this restaurant, however, was unexpected. A Chinese tourist guide entered and greeted with one of the waiters she apparently was familiar with in English, but when her group of Chinese tourists started to come in, the Czech waiter greeted them with ‘*ni hao*’ and, after they had taken their seats, also offered drinks and took orders in Chinese. While possibly thus far an exception in this service branch, it is part of a larger recent expansion of Chinese to Czechia. Other types of businesses, in particular jewellery shops in Prague, have already been hiring Chinese speaking personnel for some time (e.g. Bouc 2011). Kotva, a well-known Prague shopping centre, even recently adopted an official Chinese name, following precedents in London (Fraňková 2016). Czechs – from small children to business people – increasingly learn Chinese, although still in limited extra-curricular forms, such as in one-off school workshops or in language courses (Beneš 2015; Czech Television 2013a; Mazalová 2016). Only 5,500 Chinese nationals are currently part of the country’s population (Czech Statistical Office 2015e: Table 1-1).

The presence of Korean in Czechia seems to be more significant at the moment. Koreans already appeared in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s as university students (Moravcová & Nosková 2005: 45). A more permanent impact of Korean on Czech society dates back to the late 1980s, when the North Korean taekwondo master Hwang Ho Yong arrived to Czechoslovakia to spread this martial art. It has gained popularity in Czechia, with dozens of clubs all over the country today (see Dalecký 2010). Even though the only native Korean speakers in Czech taekwondo have been the three chief masters, all learners, including Czechs, have had to learn Korean commands, numbers from 1 to 10, Korean names for parts of the body and for movements, and the names and identities of important figures of Korean history, after whom taekwondo patterns are named (see the pronunciation guide by Pařík 2010). A similar linguistic impact of a few speakers on proportionally larger segments of the Czech population can be found with other martial arts and also with religious organisations that have been coming to Czechia after the opening of borders (e.g., on Mormon missionaries in Czechia, see Sherman 2015b). More recently, and unexpectedly for some, Korean has appeared along with English, Czech and Russian in

signage and voice announcements at the Václav Havel Airport Prague.¹⁹ In addition to Korean Air, major investments have been made by automobile companies Hyundai and Nexen Tire. Having opened its European plant in the countryside of eastern Czechia in 2008, Hyundai has started to affect the experiences of local employees and also of the wider population, when Koreans, Korean shops and restaurants appeared in the region (Nekvapil 2016). Korean nationals are otherwise a tiny group of 1,300 among the country's residents (Czech Statistical Office 2015e: Table 1-1; for details, see Park 2010).

Much more significant is the presence of Vietnamese. As mentioned above, the presence of Vietnamese during socialism was sizeable, but narrowed to students, factory workers and apprentices (and interpreters), and reduced by the end of the socialist period. The Vietnamese immigrated mostly after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The quantitative image sketched in the preceding section might have suggested that the Vietnamese are poorly diversified in terms of education and socio-economic status, their marriages are homogeneous and their purpose of stay is almost exclusively business and family reunion. On a closer qualitative inspection, however, their diversification, which projects onto their presence in various situations, is considerable. Firstly, they arrived to the Czech lands through more migration channels: either directly from Vietnam, or from former East Germany and other post-socialist countries (Brouček 2003: 22; Minh 2002). Many other Vietnamese arrived after their recruitment by work agencies to work in factories in times of economic boom in mid-2000s (see Krebs & Pechová 2008). These different migration trajectories rendered diverse experiences and linguistic repertoires that are used (and misused) in different ways. For example, during the 2008/2009 global financial crisis, the lack of Czech language skills made the factory workers fully dependent on work agencies and their mediators, sometimes resulting in exploitation (see Čaněk 2016; Krebs et al. 2009; Křížková & Čaněk 2011). In contrast to them, there are also rich Vietnamese businessmen who capitalise on their Czechoslovak experience (cf. Vasiljev & Nekvapil 2012). Unlike for speakers of Slavonic languages who can make themselves understood in a mixture of Czech and their language, language skills are a crucial factor for the Vietnamese. While those older migrants who arrived in the socialist period know Czech rather well, those who arrived afterwards as adults often lack even basic skills in Czech. Those who arrived as children and went through the Czech school system possess a native-like competence in Czech, and either become fairly bilingual, often serving as language brokers for the older generation (Sherman & Homoláč 2016), or if brought up almost entirely in Czech, experience difficulties communicating in Vietnamese (Jirasová 2006: 328; Souralová 2014a; Vasiljev & Nekvapil 2012: 330–334). Namely, the sizeable child population comes into contact with Czech culture not only in schools, but many hard-working parents have arranged for Czech nannies to take care of them (Martínková 2011: 187; Souralová 2014a, 2014b, 2014c), which

19 The reason is that Korean Air bought a 44% share in the Czech Airlines company in 2013 and established a direct flight between Seoul and Prague (Prague Airport 2013).

results in poor Vietnamese language skills. Another consequence of this practice is that Vietnamese children started to appear in the households of older Czechs.²⁰ With the maturing second generation, Vietnamese increasingly appear at Czech universities; some young people come directly from Vietnam. Concerning political activities, Martínková (2011) points to powerful controlling influence of the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, yet the association Van Lang whose goal is to strengthen civil society operates in Czechia. From a religious point of view, there are practicing Buddhists among the Vietnamese (cf. the Association of Vietnamese Buddhist in the Czech Republic or Hội Phật tử Việt Nam tại CH Séc) as well as Roman Catholics with their own Vietnamese priests.²¹ The visibility of the Vietnamese language in public places is naturally highest in Vietnamese marketplaces and trading centres, most notably the Sapa Trading Centre, Prague, the largest of its kind in Czechia, where even traffic signs are in Vietnamese. Customers of various ethnicities regularly visit this trading centre, creating thus a multi-ethnic, albeit visually Vietnamese-dominated, space (for details, see Freidingerová & Svobodová 2015; Hüwelmeier 2015; Martínková 2011: 154–160). The language's appearance in other public places is very low, but it could have been spotted in some non-Vietnamese places, such as a 'HIỆU THUỐC TÂY' ('pharmacy') sign on a pharmacy run by a Czech owner in the town of Cheb, western Czechia (Dorner & Vasiljev 2010: 109); a poster invitation to a film about the Spratly Islands affair on a window of the Novodvorská Community Centre, Prague, in March 2012; or a billboard advertisement in Prague-Libuš in 2014, shown in Figure 5. Although the billboard is installed in front of the Sapa Trading Centre – thus advertisements in Vietnamese are quite common there – this one is special in that it is an advertisement by a non-Vietnamese subject, namely Česká Spořitelna, the largest bank in Czechia, a member of the Erste Group (Austria). Obviously, such advertisement was not a one-off act, but was placed and spotted in other parts of the country as well (Moniová et al. 2014). Its text 'Come with one more person and both of you will get...' (*Bạn hãy đến cùng với một người nữa...*) is an instance of commercial services' accommodation of the 'new' diversity, to which we turn further below. Vietnamese is otherwise more often encountered in its spoken form. Despite the absence of Vietnamese people, language and cultural elements in some types of situations, we can observe that they contribute to the diversification of 'old' places, as the group itself is internally highly diversified (see also Freidingerová 2014a: 90–106; Kušniráková, Plačková & Tran Vu 2013). Due to a high level of their sociocultural distance and physical difference, the 57,000 Vietnamese nationals and an estimated number of 5,000 Czech nationals of Vietnamese

20 This is nicely shown in the documentary film *Malá Hanoj* ('Little Hanoi,' 2012, <http://www.malahanoj.com>).

21 In 2015, services in Vietnamese could have been heard, e.g., in churches in Prague-Kunratic (<http://www.cirkev.cz/cirkev-slavi/cizojazycne-mse-v-praze/vietnamsky/>), Cheb and Plzeň (<http://www.farnostcheb.cz/>, <http://www.katedralaplzen.org/>).

ethnicity (Czech Statistical Office 2015e: Table 1-1; Freidingerová & Svobodová 2015) are a significant diversifying element in Czech society.

Figure 5: Advertisement of a major Czech bank recruiting clients in Vietnamese, Prague-Libuš, August 2014 (photo by author)



Finally, the presence of Russian should not be omitted when speaking about Czechia's new diversity, although one can argue that Russian is not a new phenomenon in the Czech lands. Indeed, Russian used to be a mandatory school subject in the socialist period. Nevertheless, rather few residents had the opportunity to meet and speak with real Russian-speakers in Czechoslovakia. They were usually present as language teachers, visitors and soldiers of the Soviet Army stationed in Czechoslovakia; however, their contact with the local population was rather restricted. Russian ceased to be obligatory in post-socialist schools, but a very diversified Russian-speaking immigration started to come into Czechia. While Russian is probably most frequently heard in tourist sites and tourism-related services, one should not ignore the sizeable post-Soviet, especially Ukrainian, Kazakh and Belarusian immigration, which includes speakers of Russian as well. Figure 6 shows a Russian text in a residential area of Prague. I am showing this photograph and its close-up for three reasons. Firstly, it contains a language 'mistake' or 'idiosyncrasy' (Backhaus 2007: 116ff.), namely the hard yer (ѣ) instead of the correct soft yer (ь) in the expression *ТОЛЬКО БУМАГА* 'only paper'. This reveals the fragmentariness of language knowledge on the part of the sign's author. Moreover (and secondly), the idiosyncratic text, this 'exception to the rule' (cf. Blommaert 2013, 2015), was produced in a large number to be possibly

placed on all waste containers of this type in Prague. Thirdly, it is a very mundane text, obviously not designed for temporary visitors, but for the kind of people who stay for a period long enough to produce paper waste. However, the languages used correspond more to the Czech idea of ‘world languages’, rather than to the actual ethno-linguistic composition of Prague residential areas (note the lack of Ukrainian and Vietnamese, but the presence of French).

Figure 6: Multilingual sign on a waste container in a Prague residential area, March 2012 (photo by author)



Linguistic diversity in residential areas is something that is likely to be quite normal in Czechia, because the de-regulation of the real-estate market in Czechia before and after its EU accession proceeded in a way that prevented ‘ghettoization’ of immigrants. Even the Vietnamese living near the Sapa Trading Centre are not segregated and inhabit both up- and down-market zones of the area (see Sýkora, Brabec & Matoušek 2012). Although there are local concentrations, immigrants (unlike Roma) live dispersed among the majority residents in Czechia.

In addition to the physical presence of ‘new’ categories of people and languages in ‘old’ places, the role of the media is of high importance for experiencing diversity today. Here, I would not like to dwell on the self-evident impact of the new media, but rather point to the increased presence of otherness on television. Persons of ‘new’ ethnic identities started to appear regularly on national TV channels in the post-socialist period. Initially, they included two anchors of partly black race (Ray Koranteng and Zuzana Tvarůžková), which is unprecedented.²² More recently, people

22 We should not forget that the Czech lands have never been part of any colonial power with overseas colonies.

of Vietnamese extraction have appeared as television personae,²³ even in the role of a Czech Police spokesperson (Ivana Nguyenová).²⁴ These personae speak Czech on television. Other languages can be heard more frequently in the last few years, after Czech Television started to use subtitles for interviewees and other public speakers who use languages other than Czech or Slovak on television, leaving the original sound of the speech audible (Czech voice-over was the previous strategy in news; Czech dubbing is used for films). The last two decades have thus witnessed a lot of new features in Czechia's public spaces.

4.3 Intersections

Some intersections of new and old elements that result in more or less complex phenomena have already been mentioned above (e.g. Czechs learn Chinese; Korean or Vietnamese signs appear in smaller Czech towns; signs with non-native idiosyncrasies in Russian appear in residential areas, etc.). In addition to these, cultural phenomena or 'blends' of higher complexity (Blommaert 2014) emerge in Czechia, such as the one in Figure 7. The photo shows two Vietnamese siblings who live in Prague. The girl was born in Vietnam and the boy in Czechia, but he speaks less Czech than his sister, who has been attending Czech kindergarten a year longer. They are sharing a red cap and white beard of Santa Claus, which is an instance of American (U.S.) influence, since Czech 'Saint Nicholas' already visits people's homes on 6 December and, according to local tradition, wears a white bishop suit. The photo was taken on 24 December, i.e. not the day Christmas is usually celebrated in the USA, but the day Christmas is commonly associated with in Czechia. At the same time, the boy is wearing a Superman T-shirt, being a fan of American superheroes (a foreign cultural element in Czechia and Vietnam alike). The girl is wearing a dress with images of Mickey Mouse's friend Minnie, although at that time, like other peers in her kindergarten, she was a fan of Hello Kitty, which is of Japanese provenance, now globalised. Thus, elements of different origin and of different historicity became synchronised on one culturally-specific, but not exceptional, occasion: posing in front of a camera in various costumes on such occasions and being enthusiastic about their heroes is a normal part of the two children's lives. They are just one example of what the study on Vietnamese children by Jirasová (2006: 339) found out, namely, that Vietnamese children in Czechia are being socialized into a new combination of multiple cultural influences.

23 In particular, a Czech Miss finalist and private TV channel anchor Monika Leová (https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monika_Leov%C3%A1), TV series actresses Ha Thanh Nguyen-Špetlíková (<http://www.osobnosti.cz/ha-thanh-nguyen.php>) and Nguyen Thi Thu Anh (<http://www.csfd.cz/tvurce/35616-anh-thu-nguyen-thi/>), and a docu-reality show protagonist Cao Hoang Yen (<http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10718483769-zlata-mladez/9139-cao-hoang-yen>).

24 See <http://www.policie.cz/clanek/preventivne-informacni-skupina-policejniho-prezidia-ceske-republiky.aspx> (as of 2015).

Figure 7: Synchronisation of different cultural elements: Vietnamese children in Prague wearing US cultural artefacts on Czech Christmas day, 24 December 2014 (photo courtesy of parents)



An example of a linguistic blend is shown in Figure 8. This is a cover of a wall calendar that a Czechia-based Vietnamese company produced for its customers. There is a 'HAPPY NEW YEAR' wish in English as well as in Vietnamese (*[chú]c mừng năm mới*), decorated with a twig of a pink peach blossom tree. In Vietnam, these trees bloom in late January or in February. Thus, the new-year wish does not point to the western New Year's Day, but the Lunar New Year. The name of the company contains an abbreviation (initials of the Vietnamese owner for those who know) and the English word 'GLOBAL', followed by the Czech abbreviation for a 'limited liability company' (*s.r.o.*). The information about what the company trades with is in Czech with several idiosyncrasies: missing acute accents that can qualify as native idiosyncrasy (typical of north-eastern varieties of Czech) and non-native use of a different font for the special Czech letter 'Ř', which indicates a problem in typing Czech. Interestingly, only some diacritics are missing, others are in their place, which reveals some, albeit fragmentary, knowledge of Czech. Contact details are provided in English, although the Czech name *Praha* is used instead of the English (and French) *Prague*. The company's website is located in the .com (not .cz, .eu or .vn) domain. As in the previous example, we again observe a Czech-English-Vietnamese intersection, produced by a 'global' business company in this case. The result is a semiotically complex blend.

Figure 8: The semiotically complex cover of a wall calendar (photo by author)



These two cases are more or less oriented to the inside of the Vietnamese group, although the company makes business across ethnic boundaries. Similar cultural and linguistic blends that are ‘accessible to anybody’ are not so easy to find. Nevertheless, there are phenomena approximating this level of complexity, such as a bagpiper in a Scottish kilt regularly playing in front of the statue of the Czech patron St. Wenceslas in Prague, 2013. Another example is Thai massage parlours with Asian staff in the historical Štorch House²⁵ and in a historical building next to the fourteenth-century Charles Bridge. An example from outside of the capital is a controversial Russian village, built in the Slavkov Forest, a protected landscape area in western Czechia (AR 2005).

Linguistic objects in which ‘old’ and ‘new’ elements intersect rather inconspicuously are signs such as the one in Figure 9. The shop is located in a residential area of Prague’s suburbs. The name of the shop in the large sign ‘LEVNÉ OBUVI’ (‘cheap shoes’) is in Czech, but with an idiosyncrasy: the *-i* ending suggests that the word *obuvi* ‘shoes’ is in plural. While the word refers to a collection of multiple things (shoes), it does not have a plural form, being uncountable in Czech. By analogy, the

25 This pseudo-gothic house on the Old Town Square (Staroměstské náměstí) is a protected part of the Czech cultural heritage and is decorated with historical Czech national symbols, so a Thai parlour visible in it through a large window creates a sharp cultural contrast.

form of the adjective *levné* ('cheap') should also be singular according to the noun-adjective agreement rules in Czech. So the shop's name should be written as 'levná obuv'. The use of the plural forms thus testifies to the fact that the sign's author and shop owner are non-native users of Czech (indeed, a sign on the door reveals the owner's name is Vietnamese). What is more interesting, however, is that the incorrectly *used* endings are actually correct plural endings for other, countable, nouns in correct grammatical gender agreement, and the form *obuvi* itself does actually exist: it is the form of the genitive, dative and local cases, i.e. a fairly common form. In other words, this non-native idiosyncrasy is not an accidental 'mistake', but a 'mistake' that reveals some, albeit fragmentary, knowledge of Czech. Linguistic idiosyncrasies were of course common in the socialist era as well. They included, e.g., a lack of accent signs representing vowel length, which is absent from the phonology of north-eastern varieties of Czech, but have become quite frequent also in Prague (as in the word *porcelan* instead of *porcelán* in Figure 9, see the upper-right white sign). The occurrence of *native-like* idiosyncrasies in unexpected parts of the country and the frequency of *non-native* idiosyncrasies are new phenomena brought about by increased mobility of speakers of various languages and varieties and by their truncated linguistic repertoires.

Figure 9: A shop front with non-native idiosyncrasy in Czech, residential area of Prague, 2006 (photo by author)



4.4 Unexpectedness

Unexpectedness, as noted above, depends on a particular knowledge of things. Some of the cases above I mentioned because I have noticed them as unexpected. These exceptions have not yet become the rule (cf. Blommaert 2015: 83). It seems that super-diversity as something that has become commonplace, as Wessendorf (2014) describes it in London, is not so widespread in Czechia. Some cases may belong to this type of diversification, such as when, in a Prague city bus No. 113, there are more Vietnamese than Czech-looking passengers, and of different age groups, children, middle-aged and elderly. Even though I eventually noticed this after several stops once, it was not unexpected, because this bus line goes to the Sapa, and as a native, I knew that.

A view from outside is more likely to reveal what level and kind of diversity is normal in Prague for locals. Indeed, during their visit of the Prague city centre, my relatives from a Slovak countryside noticed and commented on so many people who looked different and spoke different languages, something that has been commonplace to me. Outsiders' ideas of Prague can also reveal something about the nature of diversity, such as a comment 'Pepiks do shopping here' (*Sem chodí nakupovat pepici*) by a man addressing a woman and a child, when we were getting off a bus at the shopping centre Chodov. 'Pepik' is a traditional derogatory term for Praguers that people from eastern (Moravian) parts of the country use with contempt. Its origin as a Praguish variant of the Czech name *Josef* connects it with Czech ethnicity. The shopping centre, however, is regularly visited by Prague residents who speak Russian and Vietnamese, who hardly qualify as Pepiks. The imagery of the man from another part of the country might have conserved an earlier idea of Prague as a city of Pepiks, or can be a projection of a mono-ethnic situation in a Czech (Moravian) periphery onto the capital. The Thai massage parlour next to the Charles Bridge (see above) was noted and mentioned to me by a British person from Brunei, followed by the question of what 'mafia' we have in the city government (that they allow such a thing in its historical part). I had noticed the parlour there before, but did not pay much attention to it, perceiving it still as normal in the context of post-socialist tourist industry in Prague. Views from the outside, such as these, reveal that part of the new diversity has already become commonplace in this city.

There are also inter-generational differences in the perception, or not, of new diversity. I can bring evidence from my experience: when my Asian-looking wife and I walk hand in hand in the residential area we live in, often people older than 50 look, sometimes even stare, at us as if with incomprehension of what they see. When we walk in the city centre, nobody pays special attention to us, but even Czech service providers address us in English, which does not happen to me when on my own. Also some press interviews with Czech residents of non-Czech ethnicity treat mixed couples as an issue to deal with (e.g. Matějů 2013). This suggests that for the locals, especially the older generations, ethnically or racially mixed pairs are still an exception that has not yet become the rule.

4.5 Taking the new diversity into account

Response and accommodation to diversity by public officials, policy makers and service providers (see Vertovec 2012) has followed its occurrence rather quickly in Czechia. There is a lot of evidence on this trend in the private domain – in relation to the Vietnamese only, for example, the above-mentioned advertising of banking services in Vietnamese (Figure 5); letters in Vietnamese from a major telecommunication company Vodafone to its Vietnamese customers; cheaper phone calls with this operator to Vietnam (Vodafone 2007); extremely cheap phone call rates to Vietnam and China provided by virtual operators;²⁶ and the introduction of a special television channel package explicitly aimed at the Vietnamese and Chinese communities by a major cable TV provider (UPC 2015). These are just a few instances of a more general trend (Novotný 2012).

Also public service providers have started to address increased diversity. For example, a maternity ward of a Prague hospital established a counselling service in Vietnamese (Tran 2013) and another one provides Vietnamese versions of some forms.²⁷ Outside Prague, the maternity ward in the Slaný hospital provides mothers with written information in Vietnamese (Trang Nghiễm 2013). Multilingual cards for communication between Czech healthcare personnel and immigrant patients have also been produced as part of the official integration policy (Hynková 2012; Ministry of the Interior 2014: 20). A number of handbooks and instruments for inclusion in public schools have been prepared in the past decade (e.g. Hájková 2014; Radostný et al. 2011; online sources: www.inkluzivniskola.cz; www.czechkid.cz). An extensive and complex network of actors is involved in the teaching of Czech to foreigners, which is one of the four integration policy priorities.

In the domain of public policy, the inclusion of representatives of ‘new’ minorities – Belarusian, Serbian and Vietnamese – in the Czech Government’s advisory body on national minority issues, who thus gained the same opportunity to participate in decision-making as more traditional groups, was an extraordinary step in the European context (see Kascian & Vasilevich 2013; Sloboda 2016). Also migration and integration policy and infrastructure have been considerably developed, albeit with significant contribution by the NGO sector, to a higher extent than in other countries of East-Central Europe, according to Drbohlav (2012: 203). On the other hand, the representation of new minorities in public administration and in politics is minimal.²⁸

26 For example, VietCall (OpenCall), using the infrastructure of Vodafone, and Vinatel, with the infrastructure of O2.

27 According to a doctor of this ward in the Thomayer Hospital in Krč (interviewed in May 2015), these translations are difficult to understand for Vietnamese mothers, which reveals interlingual influence resulting from the fragmentariness of the translator’s language skills.

28 A major political party (ODS – Civic Democratic Party) had a young Vietnamese to stand as a candidate to the European Parliament in 2014. Nguyen Cong Hung appealed to the Vietnamese voters with an ethnicity-evoking billboard ‘Show the

Media, especially privatised, continue to commonly depict foreigners and minority members in conjunction with criminal activities, but a study on news reports published in 2000–2013 showed a slight shift to a more diversified image of the Vietnamese, especially in relation to their second generation (Newton Media 2013).

Concerning social research, ethnologists, in particular, reacted quickly and a number of new groups have been researched. While the *Ethnic Minorities in Central Europe* volume (Gabal et al. 1999) was still devoted to the traditional German, Polish, Roma and Slovak minorities, subsequent publications already dealt with a number of others, even very small communities such as Georgians and Nigerians (see, e.g., Bittnerová et al. 2005; Bittnerová & Moravcová 2006, 2008; Šišková 2001; Uherek 2003a, 2003b; Uherek, Korecká & Pojarová 2008). At the same time, publications authored by policy and NGO analysts approached migrant communities along different axes than ethnicity, such as employment, education and health (e.g., Čížinský et al. 2014; Hnilicová & Dobiášová 2009; GAC & Kocourek 2007; Leontiyeva & Pokorná 2014). In short, new diversity has soon attracted attention through various social actors, service providers, policy makers and researchers alike.

5 Resistance to (super)diversity

Part of the recent attention to diversity was accompanied by acts of its resistance or suppression. Here, I do not aim at a comprehensive description, but only mention a few cases from different areas of life.

- (1) Anti-immigration measures since 2009, described briefly above, can be understood as acts of resistance to diversity. Namely, state authorities justified these measures as protection of the Czech workers' position in the labour market, but employer demand for a cheaper labour force still existed and was saturated by citizens of other EU countries, such as Poland, Bulgaria and Romania (see Trlifajová 2014). The policy of low naturalisation up until 2013 (see above) can also be classified as resistance to diversity, at least in those cases in which authorities refuse to grant citizenship to members of the 1.5 generation of foreigners who had grown up mostly in Czechia (reported in personal communication with NGO workers). Similarly, the very low number of granted asylums (see above) raises questions. Szczepaniková (2011) concludes that Czechia treats asylum as an instrument of migration management and control rather than a fundamental human right. The nature of these state policies as intentional acts against diversity is not ascertained, but they have this effect in their consequences at least.
- (2) Counter-diversity attitude manifests itself in the state of linguistic competences in members of the Foreign Police and of the Interior Ministry's Department of Asylum and Migration Policy, who are responsible for issuing residence permits to foreigners and who quite often do not have a command of any other language

strength of our community' ('Ukažme sílu naší komunity'), but did not succeed (Daňková et al. 2014).

than Czech. The Ministry of the Interior has already admitted this problem (Švec 2011). Interestingly, its spokesperson stated that they ‘endeavour to enable the foreigner to be able to make oneself understood in English’ (ibid.; own translation), which apparently ignored the fact that a significant part of the foreigners, who come from former Soviet countries (cf. Table 1 above), communicate in Russian, not in English. The following is a fieldnote that I wrote down after leaving an office of the Foreign Police department in Prague. It provides some insight into the public servants’ thinking about and management of language problems at this department.

Fieldnote

Foreign Police department office, 27 June 2011 (5.30 p.m.). I am waiting for a document to be issued by one of the policemen in the office.

Policeman 1 (enters the room): Does anybody know English?

Policeman 2: Me not, [a colleague] is old school – maybe Russian.

Policeman 3: [M.] knows it, but she has already left.

Policeman 4: This is a *Czech* office, so...²⁹

According to my later observations, the colleague M. mentioned by Policeman 3 and one more policewoman are the usual persons to turn to when communication with foreigners is necessary in a language other than Czech. While I have not witnessed the former policewoman communicating, I witnessed the latter receiving information from a foreigner (with apparently rudimentary knowledge of Czech) in English, but answering the foreigner in Czech. Considering the fact that dealing with foreigners is an unavoidable aspect of the Foreign Police’s work, this blatant lack of foreign language skills is incomprehensible. The reaction of Policeman 4 that foreigners should speak Czech because they are in a Czech public office also reveals an underlying idea of the Czech Republic as a state of ethnic Czechs to whom others, including even short-term residents, should accommodate.

- (3) The Czechisation of names during naturalisation and issuing identity cards, in the manner it currently proceeds, is another example of resistance to diversity. The Act on Registries, Names and Surnames (No. 301/2000, as amended) orders that women’s surnames are formed ‘according to the rules of Czech grammar’ (paragraph 69), which actually means to add the derivational suffix *-ov-* to the surname’s masculine form plus an appropriate grammatical ending (e.g. *Smith* > *Smithová*). This transformation also concerns foreign surnames by default. Foreigners, their spouses, members of national minorities, and their children have the right, upon request, to have their surnames officially recorded ‘in masculine form’ (ibid.), which ignores the fact that some languages also have their rules for feminine forms of surnames. At the same time, the foreign names should be written in the characters displayable in the information systems of Czech

29 Original record: P1 (příjde): *umíte někdo anglicky?* – P2: *já ne, [kolega] je stará škola, možná rusky.* – P3: *[M.] umí, ale už je pryč.* – P4: *tohle je český úřad, tak...*

public administration, which is further specified by a government regulation (No. 100/2007). This regulation as well as recent cases of Czechifying names against their bearers' will (for individual cases, see Freidingerová 2014b; Sloboda 2014) seem to go beyond the law.³⁰

- (4) Czechs' attitudes to foreigners have been constantly very negative according to repeated quantitative surveys (Leontiyeva & Vávra 2009). Qualitative research shows, e.g., how negative public attitudes prevented the construction of a mosque in the spa town of Teplice (Kantarová 2007). Earlier studies, such as Kašpar (1986) on Cubans and Vasiljev (1986) on the Vietnamese, show that this xenophobia precedes the transition period.
- (5) The Czech government's stance in the 2015 refugee crisis has thus far been unfavourable to the acceptance into Czechia of larger than negligible groups of refugees, especially if they are Muslims, preventing further population diversification. Although the Czech response to the refugee crisis has been well-documented by news media, it is still awaiting a research study that would shed more light on the motives.
- (6) The above-mentioned conspicuous presence of Russians, in particular Russian-only signs, in the town of Karlovy Vary and another spa town Mariánské Lázně were an object of negative attention and regulation by the local governments (Houdek 2013; Zedník 2009). A news report by Czech Television even showed photos from the interwar times when Czech was a language second to German (spoken by a majority of residents at the time), and reported that 'town councilors do not want this to happen again with Russian' (Czech Television 2013b).
- (7) The following example of resistance to the new diversity comes from linguistic research. Linguistics in the Czech lands has had a very strong position since the times of the Prague Linguistic Circle. It is divided into several areas of scholarly

30 The case reported in Sloboda (2014) concerns a former Russian citizen who, during naturalisation, accepted a Registry Office employee's suggestion to Czechify also her given name (from *Mariya* to *Marie*) in spite of the fact that the Act on Registries, Names and Surnames (paragraphs 26 and 69), in my opinion, does not authorise the officer to do such changes to given names (unless they have appeared in older German-language registries used in the Czech territory, as stated in the act's explanatory note). This new Czech citizen did not want to have her name Czechified, but unaware of her rights, she agreed to the change of her given name as well. The other problem, concerning the specification of the characters displayable in public administration's information systems, lies in the fact that the government regulation No. 594/2006 does not merely list the characters, but presents a whole transliteration system based on Czech orthography, thus potentially disabling some forms Romanised on the basis of English or French that actually are displayable (e.g. the Cyrillic *u* should be transliterated as *š* and not as *sh*, although 'sh' is, of course, displayable in the Czech administration's information systems). For completeness' sake, this transliteration procedure does not apply to all cases: authorities should use the Romanised form already available from an earlier ID or registry document, if the person requests so.

interest – the study of Czech, the study of other languages, and translation and interpreting. These areas do not cover linguistic diversity within the Czech sociolinguistic space. For example, the elaborate theory of language cultivation, having been developed as part of the interest in the Czech language, has not paid attention to issues emerging from multilingualism (Nekvapil 2008). Part of the diversity topic is covered in research driven by a recently aroused interest in Czech as a foreign language, including Czech as used by foreigners. Although some sociolinguistic work has also been done on ‘old’ minority languages, multi-aspectual publications like *Language Management in the Czech Republic* (Neustupný & Nekvapil 2003) and *Multilingualism in the Czech Republic* (Nekvapil, Sloboda & Wagner 2009) are still exceptions.

- (8) Finally, the condition of super-diversity does not only evoke reactions to itself, but also provides new resources for resistance to the ‘old’ diversity. A most visible case concerns the escalation of anti-Roma demonstrations in Czechia in 2011–2012. A seriously injured boy from the town of Břeclav had been beaten by three Roma. This news quickly spread across various news and social media, which resulted in the mobilisation of two thousand anti-Roma demonstrators from all over the country in April 2012. The mayor, who defended the Roma of Břeclav, as well as these Roma themselves had very hard times (Kábátová 2012). Eventually, the police disclosed that the boy had fallen from a balcony and made up the whole story. What is bewildering about this case is that the boy himself has a minority, Ukrainian, background, but this did not prevent him from using the Roma as a short-hand for criminality (Lidovky.cz 2012). Whereas the boy’s mother apologised for the disinformation and harm caused to the local Roma (Lidovky.cz & ČTK 2012), I have not found information that the news media which spread the unverified news would do so.

Most of the above-listed cases have been researched to a very limited extent, if at all. Still, I believe that they deserve close scholarly attention, because taken together, they seem to convey an important message about how ethnic Czechs still tend to imagine the Czech Republic, namely, as a country belonging only to them. This idea contradicts the preamble to the Czech Republic’s Constitution that the country is ‘the home of equal and free citizens’, i.e. irrespective of their ethnic identities or mother tongues.

6 Conclusion

In this long but, in fact, still brief description of Czechia’s transition to super-diversity, I have intentionally left out well-known phenomena, such as the retreat of Russian and quick acceptance of English and features of American culture (similar to what Przygoński, this volume, writes about Poland; cf. Kaderka & Prošek 2014), multilingualisation of city centres, the emergence of ‘ethnic’ restaurants, the internationalisation of science and sports, and last but not least, the advent of mobile and online communication. Instead, I have pointed to particular phenomena, unprecedented in

‘spread, speed or scale’ (Meissner & Vertovec 2015), that are contextually more specific and possibly less self-evident.

What is unprecedented and what is not? Diversity used to be higher in the Czech lands before the socialist period and some aspects of super-diversity appeared at the time (see also Silverstein 2015 on North America in times of European colonisation), but Czechoslovak nation-building and socialist-state-building entailed multidimensional homogenisation, resulting from central planning of economy and society with the minimisation of competition and the suppression of dissenting worldviews. Nevertheless, some aspects of super-diversity are unprecedented even from a long-time perspective: (1) more people are coming from more distant parts of the world in more complex patterns of migration; (2) the current transportation and communication technologies make circulation of people, languages and other cultural artefacts very easy; and (3) this mobility impacts the communicative situation in a new way (cf. also Blommaert, Spotti & Van der Aa 2015). As Blommaert (2014) puts it, ‘aspects of sociolinguistic superdiversity [...] now operate in a sociolinguistic environment which, certainly due to the massive presence of online and long-distance communicative contexts, contains features not previously attested’ (p. 8). Also, the nation-state taught us to see in terms of homogeneous units (cf. Silverstein 2015) and to seek regularities and stable elements (cf. Blommaert 2013; Blommaert & Rampton 2011), whereas the super-diversity lens (Meissner 2015), with its focus on complexity (Blommaert 2014), provides a different image. The image that I have sketched here may have been determined by my personal ethnographic experience: my vantage point is among the six-percent minority of non-Czech mother tongue speakers; I was socialised in the 1990s when ethnicity was a hot topic; my working environment is a metropolitan university; my everyday life is with foreigners; and most of it takes place in Prague. A different Czech researcher might have not viewed and described the situation in the same way. Discussing diversity as *emic* and *etic* concepts, Uherek (2011) concludes that the dominant *emic* preference in Czechia is to see the country homogeneous, i.e. contrary to the image this study may have given. Thus, the super-diversity lens has enabled us to see and highlight what otherwise might have remained hidden. While my Prague perspective may suffer from urban focus, some macro data presented here as well as local cases (cf. the above-mentioned effect of a Korean multinational’s presence, the situations in Karlovy Vary and Cheb, or for another example, Czech-Arab interactions in Teplice [Kantarová 2012]) attest to some kind of super-diversity in the western borderlands and rural areas as well.

Addressing Meissner’s and Vertovec’s (2015: 546) question of whether we speak of differently super-diverse contexts, this study suggests that this is the case. On a general scale, Czechia is more super-diverse than the rest of East-Central Europe but less than Western Europe. Ethnic ‘communities’ in Czechia have not settled the same way as in the UK, but live dispersed and apparently intermingled. There are no ethnic quarters in Czechia.³¹ Also the above-mentioned focus of Czech scholarly

31 The Roma are a notable exception.

publications and policy papers seem to show weaker community bias than what Vertovec (2007) reports for the UK, although there is evidence that this issue is not entirely clear and that 'ethnic lens' are still at play in Czech public policy (cf. Sloboda 2016). Another characteristic feature of super-diversity in Czechia is its heavy reliance on a handful of migration-related sources, namely, the presence of Russian speakers and, most importantly, the Vietnamese and some minor East Asian influence, so it is no match for super-diversity in Britain, as described in Vertovec (2007). In this perspective, then, Czechia is differently super-diverse.

Meissner (2015: 560) suggests that super-diversity is not just about more diversity, but about understanding processes and patterns of diversification. Different diversifying effects captured in this paper come from three main sources in Czechia: tourism, permanent settlement of immigrants, and the economy. We have seen that the incoming of migrants drastically decreased as a result of visa, immigration and labour policy restrictions during the global financial crisis. Taking into account that there is a very low interest of refugees in Czechia, combined with the state's attitude in the current refugee crisis, the state is thus able to maintain a high level of control over diversification, in as much as regulating economic migration is easier than to control refugees. Migration-related diversification thus does not seem to be steadily growing in Czechia: we have witnessed an increase and attenuation in the past decade. While Drbohlav (2012) observed that Czechia compared to the other East-Central European countries 'has progressed much further along in the transition process to becoming an immigration country' (p. 201), recent changes show that this type of transition does not need to follow a linear path of development. It also is fundamentally different from the post-socialist political and socioeconomic transition. While this latter type of transition had its objectives, namely, the 2004 EU accession and the 2007 Schengen Area accession, the Czech immigration policy does not seem to have an immigration country or super-diversity as its objectives. These have rather been inevitable by-products of concurrent political and socioeconomic changes and unintended outcomes of some policy decisions or a lack thereof. Unless there is an economic boom again, stirring up the demand for labour force, or unless the state reconsiders its policy and actively accepts immigrants, for example as a means to fight demographic aging, the settled immigrant population can be expected to assimilate quickly under the influence of still dominating Czech majority that resists diversification, as we have seen, especially when its dominance is threatened.

Describing diversity in its complexity is a very time- and space-consuming enterprise. Even this study has not described what the notion of super-diversity also calls for: to investigate new migration's contribution of to diversification in non-ethnic domains, such as opinions, experiences or life style. This has appeared once here, namely, in connection to the older generation's inexperience with ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences, which is in stark contrast to the experience of the young, post-socialist generations. This is a sign, at least, that the new diversity has a chance to become commonplace in the social imaginary of Czech society in the near future.

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Two Decades after the Regime Change



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