

# CZECH-POLISH

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# **CZECH-POLISH HISTORICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL JOURNAL**

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## ARTICLES

### **Contribution of Ivan Yushchyshyn (1883–1960) to the Theory of Ukrainian Education**

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*This article aims to explore Ivan Yushchyshyn's educational ideas concerning the purpose and content of educating Ukrainian youth. It analyzes two main goals of education: practical (preparing individuals for societal life) and spiritual (cultivating moral qualities, values, and creative abilities). The focus lies on the educational ideal, national consciousness, and the Ukrainian national idea. The article examines how school textbooks in Ukrainian language, history, geography, and natural sciences contribute to educating pupils' national consciousness. It delves into the requirements for teachers and their pivotal role in educating young people. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of cooperation between schools, families, churches, and public organizations in fostering youth patriotism. I. Yushchyshyn's works offer valuable theoretical propositions and practical recommendations that remain relevant to contemporary educational processes.*

**Keywords:** *Ivan Yushchyshyn; education; national consciousness; youth; teacher*

### **Introduction**

The socio-historical and social challenges that took place in Europe in the second half of the 19th century, namely, the processes of national-cultural revival and state-building, significantly influences the development of pedagogy and the emergence and spread of the idea of national consciousness based on ethnic identity. In Ukrainian lands, which were under foreign domination, the idea of national education acquired

particular relevance.<sup>1</sup> The Russian Empire’s policy of Russification, aimed to suppress the Ukrainian language, culture, and identity, stimulating the development of the Ukrainian national movement.<sup>2</sup> In response to these processes, there arose a need to develop effective strategies for educating the younger generation in a national spirit.<sup>3</sup> The ideas of national education developed by Ukrainian scientists were based on the educational ideas of Western Europe, but at the same time had their own unique features, determined by the historical conditions and cultural traditions of the Ukrainian people.

Ukraine’s historical experience, rich in the struggle to preserve its national identity, demonstrates the constant need to update strategies for youth education. The Russia-Ukrainian war, as a catalyst for national revival, has heightened the relevance of issues related to the development of national self-consciousness and patriotism. This has prompted us to turn to history and study the experience of national education of youth in Galicia in the first third of the 20th century. Ivan Yushchynshyn (1883–1960) made a significant contribution to the theory of education. He was a well-known and respected scholar, public and political figure in Galicia, and editor of the educational journals “Teacher” (1911–1914), “Teacher’s Word” (1922–1939), and the founder of the educational journal “The Path of Learning and Education” (1927). He took an active part in the processes of Ukrainian state-building: he edited the “Bulletin of the General Secretariat of Ukraine” (1917–1918), served as secretary of the journal “Free Ukrainian School” (1917–1918), worked in the Ministry of Education of the Ukrainian People’s Republic as head of the department of public education (1918), and was director of the Department of State Press of the Ukrainian State, editor of the newspaper “State Bulletin” (May–December 1918).<sup>4</sup>

His scientific contributions focused on critical issues such as the creation of a Ukrainian national education system, the objectives and content of youth education, the organization of pupil self-governance, the training of qualified teaching staff, the professional activities and rights of teachers, and more. Among Ukrainian pedagogues who fought for the Ukrainian national idea, he occupies an honorable place. He dedicated his life to creative research in the theory of education, relying on national traditions and advanced European pedagogical thought. For the Ukrainian community, his activity is an example of selfless service to Ukrainian people and the cause of national revival.

<sup>1</sup> Czepil, M. - Karpenko, O. (2021). National awareness: the evolution of the concept in the Ukrainian pedagogy of Galicia (1848–1918). *History of Education. Journal of the History of Education Society*, 51(1), 48–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760X.2021.1924877>

<sup>2</sup> Hrytsak, Ya. (1996). *Narys istorii Ukrainy: formuvanniya modernoyi ukrainskoyi natsiyi XIX – XX st.* Kyiv: Heneza.

<sup>3</sup> Sarbey, V. (1993). Etapy formuvannia ukrainskoi natsionalnoi samosvidomosti (kinets XVIII – pochatok XX st.). *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, 7-8, pp. 3–16.

<sup>4</sup> Entsyklopediya ukrajinoznavstva. (2000). *Slovnykova chastyna*. Lviv. Vol. 10, 3952; Yakobchuk, N. *Yushchynshyn Ivan Mykhaylovykh* Retrieved from <https://dnpb.gov.ua/ua/informatsiyno-bibliohrafichni-resursy/vydatni-pedahohy/yushchynshyn-i-m/> (accessed 23.07.2024)

A review of the existing literature reveals a significant interest among both Ukrainian (M. Czepil & O. Karpenko,<sup>5</sup> B. Stuparyk,<sup>6</sup> T. Zavorodnya,<sup>7</sup> and others) and Polish (Cz. Majorek,<sup>8</sup> A. Meissner,<sup>9</sup> K. Szmyd,<sup>10</sup> and others) researchers in the development of education in Galicia and Western Ukraine. Studies have focused on examining the impact of historical events, cultural traditions of the region on the formation of the educational system, and the theory and practice of education. I. Zaychenko's work explores the contributions of I. Yushchyshyn to the establishment of Ukrainian schools.<sup>11</sup> Researchers highlight specific aspects of Yushchyshyn's creative legacy in the context of the educational activities of Ostap Makarushka (L. Bodak,<sup>12</sup> M. Czepil<sup>13</sup>), Anton Lototsky (N. Dudnyk<sup>14</sup>), Ivanna Petriv (I. Strazhnikova<sup>15</sup>), Konstantyni Malyska (Z. Nagachevska<sup>16</sup>), and Bohdan Zaklynsky (O. Kuzenko<sup>17</sup>), whose efforts were directed towards the development of Ukrainian education. Despite the importance of this topic, the level of scientific research remains relatively limited, suggesting a need for further in-depth analysis.

### The Goal of Ukrainian Education

Ivan Yushchyshyn's educational and methodological work focuses on the development and substantiation of the content of education. He argues that education has two main goals: practical and spiritual. The practical goal is to prepare children for life in society, to teach them to survive, adapt to change, and interact with others.

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<sup>5</sup> Czepil, M. – Karpenko, O. (2020). The Ukrainian Education in Galicia (1919–1939): a search for an ideal. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 12/2, pp. 112–121. <https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2020-024>

<sup>6</sup> Stuparyk, B. (1998). *Natsionalna shkola: vytoky, stanovlennya*. Kyiv: IZMN.

<sup>7</sup> Zavorodnya, T. (2001). *Vykhovaty tvorchoho, pratsездatnoho i produktyvnoho hromadyannya: (Pedahohichna kontseptsiya Yaroslava Kuzmiva)*. Ivano-Frankivsk: Play; Zavorodnya, T. (1998). *Dydaktychna dumka v Halychyni (1919–1939)*, Ivano-Frankivsk: Play.

<sup>8</sup> Majorek, Cz. (1990). *Historia uylitarna i erudycyjna. Szkolna edukacja historyczna w Galicji (1772–1918)*. Warszawa: PWN; Majorek, Cz. (ed.) (1997). *Biografie pedagogiczne. Galicja i jej dziedzictwo*. T.IX. Rzeszów: WWSP.

<sup>9</sup> Meissner, A. (ed.) (1996). *Nauczyciele galicyjscy. Galicja i jej dziedzictwo*. T. 6. Rzeszów: WWSP.

<sup>10</sup> Szmyd, K. (2003). *Twórcy nauk o wychowaniu w środowisku akademickim Lwowa (1860–1939)*. Rzeszów: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego; (2008). T.XX, (red.): K. Szmyd, J. Dybiec. (ed.) (2008). *Historia wychowania*.

<sup>11</sup> Zaychenko, I. (1996). Ivan Yushchyshyn – borets za natsionalnu shkolu, *Ridna shkola*, 5/6, pp. 18–21.

<sup>12</sup> Bodak, L. (2019). Providni napryamy diyalnosti O. Makarushky v Ruskomu pedahohichnomu tovarystvi (1890–1910). *Nauchen vektor na Balkanyte*, 1(3), pp. 16–18.

<sup>13</sup> Czepil, M. (2021). Ostap Makarushka's (1867–1931) Contribution to the Development of the Theory of Education. *Biografistyka Pedagogiczna*, 6(1), pp. 161–176. <https://doi.org/10.36578/BP.2021.06.09>

<sup>14</sup> Dudnyk, N. (2005). Ideya natsionalnoho vykhovannya v pedahohichnomu ta prosvitnytskomu dorobku Antona Lototskoho, *Molod i rynek*, 4, pp. 95–98.

<sup>15</sup> Strazhnikova, I. (2016). *Ivanna Petriv: pedahoh, hromadskyy diyach, pysmennyk*. Ivano-Frankivsk: NAIR.

<sup>16</sup> Nahachevska, Z. (2002). Kostyantyna Malyska: pedahoh, vyznachna diyachka ukrayinskoho zhinochoho rukhu, *Obrivi*, 2, pp. 8–18.

<sup>17</sup> Kuzenko, O. (2000). *Bohdan Zaklynsky – pedahoh i prosvityanyn*. Kolomyya.

Children need to develop the physical and emotional skills necessary to adapt to society, learn to cooperate with others, and overcome life's challenges. However, education is not limited to practical aspects. The spiritual goal is to develop moral qualities, values, and creative abilities – everything that will help a child become an individual. According to I. Yushchyshyn, educating a child for life means teaching them basic life skills: self-care, communication, and problem-solving. Education is a multifaceted process that includes not only knowledge and skills but also value development, preparing children for life in society and the realization of their potential.<sup>18</sup>

The practical and spiritual aspects of human existence are often seen as fundamental dichotomies that influence the development of both individuals and societies. Historically, most societies prioritize the practical aspect of upbringing, directing the efforts of the younger generation towards fulfilling the immediate needs of the community. Only after ensuring basic living conditions does society begin to focus on developing the spiritual, cultural, and intellectual aspects of the individual. Consequently, education has traditionally been seen as a process aimed at achieving a balance between practical adaptation to the social environment and the development of individual potentials that contribute to cultural enrichment and spiritual growth.

I. Yushchyshyn examines the concept of an educational ideal within the context of historical and social conditions.<sup>19</sup> The author emphasizes that the educational ideal should be closely linked to the needs of society and its vision of the future. The educational ideal is not static but constantly changes along with society. The educational process should be aimed at developing individuals who will meet the needs of society. This means that education must prepare people for life in the modern world, providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies. The educational ideal should combine the development of individual qualities (creativity, critical thinking) and socialization (ability to cooperate, civic responsibility). I. Yushchyshyn concludes that the education of a modern citizen should involve the development of a responsible individual, capable of creativity and self-sacrifice. Only in this way can we build a strong and developed society. The teacher believes that before talking about what we want to achieve through education, we need to understand how a person is connected to society.<sup>20</sup> Can we consider a person as a separate unit that exists on its own, or is it always dependent on other people? According to his view, the assertion that a person can be completely independent of society is false. He notes that each individual is an integral part of a larger social structure and is constantly interacting with other people. This question is fundamental to many sciences, including pedagogy, sociology, and philosophy. The answer to it influences how we build educational systems, how we create laws, and how we generally imagine an ideal society. I. Yushchyshyn developed his own concept of education, which was based on the ideas of J.-J. Rousseau, F. Nietzsche, and J.-F. Herbart. He believed that education should be adapted to the needs of society and the times.

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<sup>18</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1929). *Natsionalne vykhovannya. Shlyakh vykhovannya y navchannya*, 2, pp. 6–7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, 10, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1930). *Kolektyvizm chy indyvidualizm (Zavvahy do hromadivskykh instynktiv nashoho narodu)*. *Shlyakh vykhovannya y navchannya*, 5, p. 131.

The contemporary world demands well-rounded individuals who are ready for self-development and self-discovery.<sup>21</sup> According to I. Yushchyshyn, the ideal person must meet the needs of their time. They should be a member of society and understand its values. Education should prepare young people for life in the modern world, helping them develop their best qualities. Educational ideals are influenced by historical events, societal needs, and universal values. These ideals cannot be static; they must evolve along with societal changes. Consequently, it's important to comprehend the values, dreams, and aspirations of the current generation. By educating young people, we prepare them for the future.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, educational ideals should focus on developing qualities that will be necessary for individuals in the future. I. Yushchyshyn's statement remains relevant today, as education is not a mechanical but a creative process that requires constant reflection and adaptation to new circumstances.

### **National Consciousness, National Idea**

I. Yushchyshyn compares the concept of "national consciousness" to an instinct.<sup>23</sup> He argues that, like an instinct, national consciousness itself is a passive force. While it can resist external influences, it is incapable of independently creating anything new. The true strength of a nation comes not merely from a sense of belonging to a particular people, but from transforming this feeling into an idea, into a goal. When national consciousness becomes an idea, it acquires the energy to act. Simply feeling Ukrainian is not enough; it is crucial to understand the values inherent in this identity and how they can be realized in practice. When a national idea is clearly formed and shared by many people, it is capable of uniting the nation and providing it with the strength to achieve common goals. For a nation to develop, its members must not only feel a sense of unity but also unite around a clear idea. This idea must become a source of energy for all who share it.

According to I. Yushchyshyn, the foundation of the national education system should be the Ukrainian national identity. He views the state as a form that reflects the economic, political, and cultural life of the people. The people are the creators of the state, not the other way around: it is the people who can elevate the state to a high level of political significance, economic power, and cultural authority. The more educated, organized, and strong people are the stronger the state becomes. Every Ukrainian should understand these fundamental principles.<sup>24</sup> The Ukrainian people themselves must awaken their national activity, prioritize the education of their children, clearly articulate the goals and ideals of this education, and develop practical strategies for its implementation.<sup>25</sup> The ideal of national education should be to educate citizens who, in times of peace, are capable of daily productive work that

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<sup>21</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1929). *Natsionalne ...*, op.cit., 10, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>23</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1938). *Dorohovkazy nashoho vykhovannya. Shlyakh vykhovannya y navchannya*, 3, p. 179.

<sup>24</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1917). *Deyaki osnovy orhanizatsiyi pozashkilnoyi osvity. Vilna Ukrayinska Shkola*, 3-4, pp. 169–172.

<sup>25</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1938). *Dorohovkazy ...*, op.cit., 3, p. 170.

strengthens the state and culture, and in times of danger are ready to stand up for the common good.<sup>26</sup>

Analyzing the state of education in schools of his time, I. Yushchysyn observed that since the fall of Kyivan Rus, Ukrainians lacked a national (Ukrainian) school, pedagogy, and their own scholars.<sup>27</sup> The Galician schools at that time were influenced by foreign cultures and were unable to fulfill the paramount task of fostering a national consciousness among their pupils. I. Yushchysyn developed a “Project for the Change in the State School Law of May 14, 1869”, proposing the establishment of a national school accessible to all segments of the population.<sup>28</sup> This school was intended to be community-oriented, educating children in a national spirit, fostering close cooperation with families and communities, and aligning with the economic and social realities of the people. The primary goal of the school was to preserve the national spirit, language, and culture and to contribute to their revitalization and advancement. The first section of the legislative part of the project, titled “The Goal and Structure of the School”, states that the public school should provide moral education, cultivate a national consciousness and sense of identity in children, as well as develop their intellect, enabling them to become valuable members of their society and state.<sup>29</sup> In particular, the “Project for the Change of the State School Law of May 14, 1869” marked the first instance in Ukrainian history where the term “national consciousness” was used to define the purpose of education.

The Ukrainian school should be an integral part of our historical and cultural heritage, developing in pupils a deep respect for national values.<sup>30</sup> The primary mission of the school is education, and learning is a tool for this education. By merging historical knowledge with contemporary needs, the school can develop its own unique educational approaches and practices.<sup>31</sup> The school is called to develop in Ukrainian children strong foundations of national consciousness and to educate patriotism.<sup>32</sup> The school should instill a sense of national identity in Ukrainian children and cultivate patriotic feelings within them.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Yushchysyn, I. (1929). *Natsionalne ...*, op.cit., 12, pp. 6–7.

<sup>27</sup> Yushchysyn, I. (1910). *Yaki reformy potribni v narodnim shkilnytstvi v Halychyni?* *Dilo*, 228, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Yushchysyn, I. (1913). *Proyekt na zminu derzhavnoho shkilnoho zakona z dnya 14 maya 1869 roku*. Lviv.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

<sup>30</sup> Yushchysyn, I. (1939). *Dva chynnyky suspilnoho vykhovannya v shkoli*. *Uchytelske slovo*, 13, p. 107.

<sup>31</sup> *Ukrayinske Pedagogichne Tovyarstvo* (Red. statyya) (1912). *Uchytel*, 7, p. 195.

<sup>32</sup> Yushchysyn, I. (1910). *Ridna mova v ridniy shkoli*. *Uchytel*, 15/16, p. 229.

<sup>33</sup> *Naukovi prohramy v narodnikh shkolakh tretoho stepenya dlya ditey ukrayinskoyi natsionalnomy* (1933). *Shlyakh vykhovannya y navchannya*, 1, p. 6.

## The Content of School Education

I. Yushchyshyn believed that the school could achieve its educational goal through the content of its subjects. He emphasized that through schooling, a child should transform into a new, creative citizen, drawing on the values of their community in both spiritual and material culture.<sup>34</sup> According to his project, the school should teach subjects such as: native language and literature, the fundamentals of nature, geography, the history of one's people, region, and mathematics, the basics of state and local law, writing, drawing, music and singing, and physical education.<sup>35</sup> These subjects were designed to educate a sense of national identity and pride in one's homeland. The educational content of the education was to take into account the age characteristics of children and comply with educational principles.

The native language has enormous potential for development of national consciousness and, according to the project, should be the language of instruction in every rural and urban school. I. Yushchyshyn believed that every child should study their native language, regardless of whether they attend a Ukrainian school or another. Teaching a second regional language is allowed only with the consent of the parents and the child themselves.<sup>36</sup> The project also provided for the teaching of the native language for representatives of national minorities. For minorities that make up 5-10% of the population, it is necessary to ensure high-quality teaching of the native language. If the minority makes up 10–20%, parallel classes with native language instruction should be created. For minorities that make up 20-50%, a separate school with the native language of instruction should be created. If there are fewer than 5% children from a certain nationality in several villages or districts, then a separate teacher should be assigned to teach the language, literature, and history of that nationality.<sup>37</sup>

I. Yushchyshyn argued that to understand a people's spiritual life and be a part of it, one must master its highest form: language.<sup>38</sup> Through their native language, children should learn all components of knowledge: linguistics, history, geography, nature, mathematics, and art. According to him, one truly studies their native language when they learn about the national culture and people through it.<sup>39</sup> For I. Yushchyshyn, the native language and education in a Ukrainian school are inseparable concepts. Teachers should teach children about the history, culture, and traditions of their people in their native (Ukrainian) language. It's important not only to acquire knowledge about the people but also to develop a worldview in young people that corresponds to the Ukrainian mentality. At the same time, he warned that it is possible to teach in the native language but at the same time violate the principles

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<sup>34</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1913). *Proyekt ...*, op.cit., p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, p. 19.

<sup>37</sup> Tsiura, S. - Kalahurka, Kh. - Myshchyshyn, I. (2019). Education as a national value of Ukrainian society on its way of gaining independence in the West-Ukrainian pedagogical press of Galicia up to 1918. *Czech-Polish historical and pedagogical journal*, 11(1), p. 105. <https://doi.org/10.5817/cphpj-2019-012>

<sup>38</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1934). Mistse ridnoyi movy v prohramakh navchannya. *Shlyakh vykhovannya y navchannya*, 3, 44–49.

<sup>39</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1913). *Proyekt ...*, op.cit., p. 47.

of national education.<sup>40</sup> The issue often lies in the content of school textbooks and the understanding of this issue by school administrators. Textbooks often do not correspond to the goals and objectives of the school, are written in substandard Ukrainian, and contain inappropriate historical, geographical, and everyday content. Such material neglects national feelings and ideals, contradicts the traditions of the Ukrainian people and is hostile to the national ideals that are important to pupils.<sup>41</sup>

According to I. Yushchyshyn, school textbooks should accurately reflect the history and culture of one's native people and contribute to the formation of national consciousness. In his review of S. Cherkasekno's reader "Ridna Shkola" (Native School), Yushchyshyn expressed his satisfaction and admiration for it, as it was close and dear to him not only in name but also in content. The reader reminded him of everything he lived for in his childhood: his native home, family, work, and the nature of Ukraine. He noted that this textbook is an excellent example of how to implement the idea of national identity.<sup>42</sup>

Studying the history of Ukraine in one's native language is of immense importance for the formation of a national consciousness among young people. Children should learn about the events that have taken place in their country in order to better understand who they are and where they come from. According to Yushchyshyn, the study of history should be systematic and interesting. Children should not only study events on a national scale but also delve into the history of their native region, city, or village. This will help them realize that they are part of something larger than their family and school. To understand historical processes, children need to develop abstract thinking. They must learn to perceive time and space as integral components of historical events.<sup>43</sup> The study of history should foster in young people a sense of patriotism and a desire for an independent, strong state. Through examples from the past and present, children should understand that only in a state can people realize their goals.

The study of geography plays a significant role in development of national consciousness of pupils.<sup>44</sup> Children should have a strong understanding of their homeland, its characteristics, and natural resources. When considering the content of geography as a subject of teaching and upbringing, the I. Yushchyshyn divided the material as follows: 1) local geography (Heimatkunde); 2) national geography (Vaterlandskunde); 3) international geography (Landerkunde); 4) general geography (Allgemeine Erkunde); and 5) astronomy (Himmelskunde). The study of local geography is of particular importance, as children gain their first impressions of their homeland within their own family. School deepens and broadens this knowledge. It is through the study of geography that love for one's native land and a sense of pride in one's people can be instilled. By studying geography, children learn about

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem, p. 28.

<sup>42</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1918). Retsenziya na chytanku S. Cherkasenka «Ridna shkola». *Vilna Ukrayinska Shkola*, 5/6, p. 86.

<sup>43</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1933). Seredovyshche y prohramy navchannya v narodnikh shkolakh. *Shlyakh vykhovannya y navchannya*, 4, p. 179.

<sup>44</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1933). Heohrafiya, yak predmet navchannya y vykhovannya v narodnykh shkolakh. *Shlyakh vykhovannya y navchannya*, 1, pp. 13–25.

Ukraine's natural wealth, its historical and cultural features. This helps them realize that they are a part of the Ukrainian people.<sup>45</sup> I. Yushchyshyn emphasized that all subjects should be connected to the study of man and society. Children should understand that the knowledge and skills they acquire will help them contribute to the development of their country and all of humanity.

### **The Role of a Teacher in Youth Education**

I. Yushchyshyn believed that teachers hold immense influence over their pupils' character development. A true teacher should educate resilience and diligence in pupils. In his opinion, only a teacher who is aware of the national characteristics and needs of their people can educate such a person. To meet these challenges, teachers must continuously evolve professionally. Implementing this approach is crucial for achieving successful national education.<sup>46</sup>

To educate a new person – a patriot of their state – means to start with oneself. The teacher must first cultivate the ideal of a new person within themselves and only then find methods to introduce this ideal to children. According to I. Yushchyshyn, the teachers must change themselves, understand the needs of their people, be nationally conscious, and actively participate in public and political life. Only then can a teacher influence the national consciousness of Ukrainian youth, since it is the curricula that contribute to national development. He also reflected this idea in the journal "Teacher", of which he was the editor from February 15, 1911, to June 24, 1914.

A teacher should serve as a model of cultural refinement, ideological conviction, strong character, and social engagement. As both a citizen and a teacher, they should actively participate in all community institutions, for these are the avenues through which national education ideals are realized. Within these institutions, teachers should develop ideological awareness and civic activism among their pupils.<sup>47</sup> Given their superior personal culture and national consciousness, teachers should strive to unify their communities. In the context of national education, teachers play an important role in cultivating a sense of civic duty among the rural population. This helps to align the individual aspirations of peasants with the broader national goals.<sup>48</sup> Yushchyshyn emphasized the need for teacher development and re-education, asserting that only a conscious teacher can educate a Ukrainian patriot. Even under the most challenging circumstances, a highly qualified and morally upright teacher can revitalize the nation and change the political and social landscape of the Ukrainian village.<sup>49</sup>

Teachers should also conduct educational work with parents on issues of school and home education.<sup>50</sup> Cooperation between school and family was carried out

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<sup>45</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1933). *Seredovysheche ...*, op.cit., p. 170.

<sup>46</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1929). *Natsionalne ...*, op.cit., 12, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, 12, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, 10, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1922). *Mezhi y perspektyvy reformistychnoho rukhu v vykhovanni y osviti. Shlyakh vykhovannya y navchannya*, 5, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1911). *Spilni zmahannya i obov'yazky. Uchytel*, 1, p. 7–8.

through the holding of conferences and the organization of clubs. Yushchyshyn argued that the school should become a hub for educational work and actively engage with the family and community. The purpose of the conferences is to acquaint parents with the peculiarities of raising and educating children, as well as with the challenges and achievements that children face during their studies. At the beginning of the academic year, it is necessary to identify a problem for work throughout the year, such as “Parents, citizenship, and youth”. Clubs function as organizations with their own charter, governing bodies, objectives, rights, and responsibilities. The goal of such clubs is to provide extracurricular care for young people, to help in their physical and moral upbringing, to educate ideological citizens, to improve the relationship between family and school, and protect young people from negative external influences.<sup>51</sup>

Teachers actively participated in reading rooms of the “Prosvita”, “Sokil”, and “Sich”, as well as economic societies and public organisations. A key aspect of education was to develop a sense of national dignity, love for one’s homeland, language, and culture in young people. Children studied their native history and literature, familiarized themselves with the works of Ukrainian writers, and organized concerts, plays, and excursions.<sup>52</sup> In Galicia, publications of Taras Shevchenko's works were particularly popular. Each new edition of the “Kobzar” contributed to the growth of national consciousness, leading to further publications.<sup>53</sup> These editions were secretly distributed in schools, universities, and public organizations. I. Yushchyshyn believed that a teacher should cultivate national identity, character, virtues, and feelings, and collaborate closely with the family, church, and public institutions.<sup>54</sup> The family and school should support each other, as only the joint and harmonious influence of these two important institutions will ensure the proper development of young people and the preservation of national ideals.

## Conclusion

An analysis of Ivan Yushchyshyn’s educational legacy reveals his profound understanding of the importance of national education for the development of a harmonious individual and responsible citizen. His ideas concerning the purpose of education, the ideal of patriotic and moral education of Ukrainian youth, the content of school textbooks, the active role of teachers in society, and the need for close cooperation between school, family, and community remain relevant today. His numerous publications are a valuable source of knowledge for teachers and parents, offering answers to various questions about raising Ukrainian youth. Yushchyshyn’s creative work is not only historically significant but also practically valuable

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<sup>51</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1934). Odná z dilyanok pozashkilnoyi pratsi vchytelstva (pro Batkivski Kruzhky pry shkolakh). *Uchytelske slovo*, 3, p. 66.

<sup>52</sup> Yushchyshyn, I. (1918). Shevchenko v halytskykh shkolakh. *Vilna Ukrayinska Shkola*, 7, p. 181.

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, pp. 175–176.

<sup>54</sup> Vysokopovazhni Rodymtsi! (Red. statyya) (1911). *Uchytel*, 1, p. 3.

for contemporary educational processes, providing a solid foundation for building the future Ukrainian society.

In today's world, where national identity faces significant challenges, Yushchyshyn's ideas continue to inspire teachers and researchers, contributing to the development of Ukrainian education and strengthening national unity. They can serve as a foundation for developing effective strategies for patriotic education of the youth, for introducing new methods and approaches to education that take into account contemporary challenges and societal needs, and for preparing young people for active participation in the country's life.

In addition, I. Yushchyshyn's educational legacy underscores the necessity of integrating national values into the educational process. His theoretical developments and practical experience significantly contribute to the evolution of the history and theory of education. Acquainting oneself with his scientific works will enhance the theory and methodology of education with new ideas and approaches. The significance of his ideas is particularly relevant in the context of globalization, when preserving national identity becomes a crucial task.

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## The Interaction between Technology and Modernity as a Source of the Constitution of Romanticism and Implicit Religion

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*The study aims to analyse the relationship between technology and modernity on the one hand and Romanticism on the other. The study examines the recurrent interactions between these two styles of thinking and acting in history. It uses them as a methodological tool to interpret the relationship between society and history and digital technologies in the age of the information revolution. The study emphasises the concept of implicit religion as a form of a particular interpretation of technology in the life of society. Analysing concrete examples, it draws on the specifics of Czech realities and points out some aspects of Czech-digital-romanticism formation.*

*Keywords: modernity; digital technology; information revolution; romanticism; industrial revolution; implicit religion; mythologisation*

### Introduction

Technology is entering a new and unprecedented way of shaping everyday human life in the modern world. The analysis of modernity is a rewarding sociological and historiographical topic that has received considerable attention.<sup>1</sup> However, less attention has been focused on the phenomenon of romanticism, which has its origins in literature at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries and which represents a form of reaction to modernity, its limits

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<sup>1</sup> Latour, B. (1993). *We have never been modern*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press., Latour, B. (2018). *Down to earth: Politics in the new climatic regime* (English edition.). Cambridge, UK ; Medford, MA: Polity Press., Beck, U. (1998). *Politics of risk society. Environmentalism. Critical Concepts*, pp. 256–266., Lefebvre, H. (1995). *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes, September 1959–May 1961*. Londýn: Verso., Bauman, Z. (2007). *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Reprint.). Cambridge: Polity Press., Bauman, Z. (2013). *Liquid modernity*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons., Arendtová, H. (1996). *Původ totalitarismu I–III. Imperialismus, III: Totalitarismus*. Praha: Oikoymenh.

and reductionism,<sup>2</sup> the inability to offer man a framework for living in which he is not in the grip of technology and bureaucracy.<sup>3</sup> In the *Deutsches Romantik-Museum* in Frankfurt am Main we can find the sentence that Romanticism never ended. This thesis forms the core of the analysis of this study.

How Romanticism - not as a literary style, but as a cognitive-behavioral style of thinking and acting<sup>4</sup> - interacts with modernity, how it interprets and reconceptualises it, will be gradually analysed. In doing so, we will focus on a concept that we perceive to be under-reflected in historiography, namely the process of mythologising and the creation of implicit religion,<sup>5</sup> which is an essential prerequisite for Romanticism.

Specifically, we will apply this methodological approach to digital technologies and the information revolution,<sup>6</sup> which shape contemporary people's basic structure of everyday life.<sup>7</sup> The study builds on the critique of unfinished modernity and offers a reinterpretation of it.<sup>8</sup> In doing so, it uses Czech realities to describe selected phenomena to emphasise that the construction of romanticism occurs in a culturally sensitive manner with a strong influence of local determinants and realities. It is also in this flight to the locals that the difference between modernism and romanticism is manifested.

## Modernity and Romanticism

If we analyse the history of the emergence of modernity, we can link it to two significant changes in the European space.<sup>9</sup> The first possibility is to tie

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<sup>2</sup> Šíp, R. (2014). Globalization, nationalism and Europe: The need for trans-national perspectives in education. *Human Affairs*, 2, pp. 248–257.

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger, M. (2013). *Věk obrazu světa*. Praha: Oikoymenh.

<sup>4</sup> Šíp, Radim. (2019). *Proč školství a jeho aktéři selhávají*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

<sup>5</sup> Eliade, M. (1993). *Mýtus o věčném návratu*. Praha: Oikoymenh., Latzer, M. (2022). The Digital Trinity—Controllable Human Evolution—Implicit Everyday Religion: Characteristics of the Socio-Technical Transformation of Digitalization. *KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 74/S1, pp. 331–354., Luckmann, T. (1967). *The invisible religion*. New York: Macmillan.

<sup>6</sup> Neyland, D. (2019). *The Everyday Life of an Algorithm*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. <http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-030-00578-8>

<sup>7</sup> Sedlák, P. (2013). Každodennost jako předmět a koncept dějepisného poznání. *Soudobé dějiny*, 20/01–02, pp. 120–157., Petrušek, M. (2020). Každodennost. *Velký sociologický slovník*. <https://encyklopedie.soc.cas.cz/w/Ka%C5%BEodennost>, Le Goff, J. (1992). *History and memory*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Šíp, R. (2019). *Proč školství a jeho aktéři selhávají*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

<sup>9</sup> Šíp, R. (2019). *Proč školství a jeho aktéři selhávají*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita., Munch, R. (2010). *Understanding Modernity: Toward a New Perspective Going Beyond Durkheim and Weber*. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis., Beck, Ulrich. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*. Theory, culture & society. London; Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publications., Lefebvre, H. (1995). *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes, September 1959–May 1961*. Londýn: Verso.

modernity to the phenomenon of the Enlightenment. This consistently examined the world methodologically through man's eyes, not God's. At the same time, it is characterised by an emancipatory movement. As Bělohradský points out, modernity is a history of emancipation: the state's emancipation from the church, women from the social subordination of men, and subjects from the aristocracy.<sup>10</sup> The Enlightenment is linked - as Arendt points out - to the constitution of a new religion, a religion of reason, which in the French context was to dictate new values, social orders, and state structures.<sup>11</sup> Religion is the critical axial force, the source of legitimacy for much of social values and order. In this context, the Enlightenment unlearned nature, and Descartes separates mind from body, rationality from emotionality.<sup>12</sup>

The second source of modernity often cited is the Industrial Revolution, which came almost a century after the Enlightenment and brought other significant changes to social discourse.<sup>13</sup> There is a massive entry of technology into people's lives, necessitating changes in the organisation of time and work; the concept of working hours and leisure time emerges, the education system is transformed, and people move to cities. Technology has done more to change people's everyday lives in a short period than a prolonged 'grand history' of political change.

In literature, Romanticism can also be associated with a form of reflection on the Napoleonic Wars, which fundamentally globalised and interconnected the European region and introduced several modern practices and concepts (in this respect, they are the culmination of a form of pre-modernity) in industry and lifestyle and strongly influenced the culture of urban life. At the same time, they bring to literature the concept of the hero - the charismatic leader or warrior - who transcends the boundaries of the self. The fractured hero is then a kind of adaptation of this model of the charismatic leader, who has no political or military influence but strives for genuine authenticity, often by rebelling against society or escaping into nature.<sup>14</sup>

Finding the exact date of the emergence of modernity is not easy - it is evident that its constitution occurred gradually between the 17th and 18th centuries. Century in the developed parts of Europe and some places, modernity has not

<sup>10</sup> Bělohradský, V. (1997). *Mezi světy & mezisvěty: Filosofické dialogy*. Velká řada. Praha: Votobia., Bělohradský, V. (2021). *Čas pléthokracie: Když části jsou větší než celky a světový duch spadl z koně*. Praha: Nakladatelství 65. pole.

<sup>11</sup> Arendt, H. (2006). *On revolution*. New York: Penguin Books.

<sup>12</sup> Damasio, A. R. (1994). *Descartes' error: Emotion, reason, and the human brain*. New York: Putnam.

<sup>13</sup> Arendt, H. (2006). *On revolution*. New York: Penguin Books., Arendtová, H. (1996). *Původ totalitarismu I–III. Imperialismus, III: Totalitarismus*. Praha: Oikoymenh., Freeman, J. B. (2018). *Behemoth: A history of the factory and the making of the modern world* (First edition.). New York London: W.W. Norton & Company.

<sup>14</sup> Stuhlemer, J. (2017). *Romanticism as a Transition to Modernity: The Romantic Period in Literature as a Transitional Phase*. Munich: GRIN Verlag., Chaplin, S. – Faflak, J. (2011). *The Romanticism Handbook*. London: A&C Black.

arrived in any respect (we are not referring now to the problem of unfinished modernity or the conclusions of Latour's essay "We were never modern",<sup>15</sup> but to the simple fact that in many places in Eastern Europe, modernity has not yet arrived, and on a global scale we could find many more such areas). However, it is evident that three phenomena play a crucial role in it, and we would like to focus on them in this study - rationality, distance from institutionalised religion, and technology.<sup>16</sup>

In the Czech environment, the emergence of modernity is undeniably linked to the Theresian and Josephine reforms from the last quarter of the 18th century. What is specific in the Czech environment is the experience of Hussitism (and the minority Protestantism that followed) in the context of *Pietas Austriaca*.<sup>17</sup> Here, we can see the formation of modern society in a particularly acute way, in the sense that among a large part of society, there is a noticeable scepticism towards the institutionalised concept of religion and state (Josephism), strongly linked to the government. In these particular conditions, speaking of specific forms of modernity is possible.<sup>18</sup>

It will be significant for our analysis that, although 19th-century society is already commonly referred to as modern in the Czech environment, we can simultaneously see a specific artistic reaction to this kind of social change - namely romanticism, which takes shape as a direct reaction to the modernist reduction of the world,<sup>19</sup> as a form of escape, distance or adaptation, which is connected with the culminating national revival, which here no longer has the character of systematic work, but becomes a myth, a form of religious narrative.

We do not have the space to analyse Romanticism's forms and representatives in the Czech cultural complex. Still, we would like to show here that more than a contrast to the Enlightenment, it is indeed a counterpoint to modernity, which does not end with the 19th century but carries with it a specific permanent pattern of the relationship between Romanticism and modernity, which is essential for the contemporary understanding of society. However, much of our reflections will be more general and can be extended to reflect on the whole of modern society; the Czech story and realities are interesting to us in that the less inclined Czech society is to institutionalised churches, the stronger the need for a different kind of religiosity or mythologisation seems to be.

Czech society is fascinating, unlike many neighbouring countries, because it lacks demythologising experience. Czechs seem to have no event in their

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<sup>15</sup> Latour, B. (1993). *We have never been modern*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

<sup>16</sup> Adorno, T. W. – Horkheimer, M. (2009). *Dialektika osvícenství: Filosofické fragmenty*. Praha: Oikoymenh.

<sup>17</sup> Coreth, A. (2013). *Pietas Austriaca: Fenomén rakouské barokní zbožnosti*. Velehrad: Refugium.

<sup>18</sup> Tinková, D. (2022). *Osvícenství v českých zemích: Formování moderního státu (1740-1792)*. Praha: NLN.

<sup>19</sup> Stuhlemer, J. (2017). *Romanticism as a Transition to Modernity: The Romantic Period in Literature as a Transitional Phase*. Munich: GRIN Verlag.

collective memory in which a failure, a disruption of the continuous narrative of a nation that was never to blame for any of its problems - from the White Mountain (paradoxically interpreted in this way only in Romanticism) and the Munich Agreement, to the occupation by Soviet troops, to the dictates from Brussels, there is a compact national positive myth. Let us stress that, according to Thomas's theorem, the relationship between society and history is not about how events happen but about how events are read and interpreted in society. The Czech environment appears to be strongly myth-making. This aspect is not found in most neighbouring countries and constitutes a particular Czech specificity that allows in some respects to sharpen the characteristic of modernity - the (neo)romantic field.

### **Three Illustrative Probes into Czech Historical Collective Memory**

It is not our ambition here to describe the historiography of individual events but rather to illustrate one of the basic concepts of unfinished modernity - that is, its inability to integrate man into its reading of the world in such a way that he does not need to define himself against it radically. Modernity creates a particular space of culture, thought and action, but it is not complete, which seems too violent and brutal, too unifying to be able to dominate public opinion. We see this balancing or tension between romanticism and modernity as essential for explaining contemporary phenomena.<sup>20</sup>

In the three probes, we work repeatedly with two critical concepts. The first is that romanticism represents a kind of adaptive mechanism of reducing objective reality and transforming it into a narrative in which some essential parts are concealed and, in turn, a particular concept is created to legitimise human endeavour, national identity and uniqueness. Therefore, It is a myth-making process that provides people with a foothold in their life situation. A story is mainly emerging outside the possibility of any controlled creation process. This is what makes it different from the usual cults of personalities of leaders like Stalin and Lenin or even the more positively understood and completely differently cultivated personalities of Masaryk and Benes.

The second essential feature of romanticisation is the connection with the religious framework. Religion is not understood here as an institution but rather as an invisible religion,<sup>21</sup> as a particular set of values, activities, modes of human interaction and named goals that relate to a substantial part of society and create a space of shared understanding of certain phenomena. Luckmann thus justifies,

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<sup>20</sup> Stuhlemer, J. (2017). *Romanticism as a Transition to Modernity: The Romantic Period in Literature as a Transitional Phase*. Munich: GRIN Verlag., Adorno, T. W. – Horkheimer, M. (2009). *Dialektika osvícenství: Filosofické fragmenty*. Praha: Oikoymenh.

<sup>21</sup> Besecke, K. (2005). Seeing invisible religion: Religion as a societal conversation about transcendent meaning. *Sociological Theory*, 23/2, pp. 179–196., Luckmann, T. (1967). *The invisible religion*. New York: Macmillan.

for example, why marriage or funerals make sense even in a secular society where, on a purely rational description, they have or may have no specific place.

We have selected three "myths" to illustrate the process of romanticisation as an adaptation to modernity, which is anchored in the Czech environment of the 19th and 20th centuries. The selection is eclectic. We could similarly analyse many other historical phenomena. Our aim here is to illustrate the method of our analysis rather than to provide a complete and utterly accurate analysis because, on a small scale, we must commit many simplistic shortcuts.

The myth of Bata. Tomáš Baťa is remarkable in that his mythologisation is linked to technology and the technical transformation of society. The narrative that emerged around Bata (partly during the First Republic and entirely after 1989) can be summarised roughly as follows: an entrepreneur who, based on his talent and diligence, takes advantage of the new possibilities of the Czechoslovak state and helps to build the new city of Zlín, a town that embodies romantic notions of an ideal future life; a man who used technology for the benefit of humanity, which ultimately destroyed it.<sup>22</sup>

The romanticising myth is evident in the construction of Tomáš Baťa as a hero who sacrifices his commitment and wit for society and its good. Similarly, we can see clear elements of romanticism in the utopian reflections on Zlín as the city of the future or in the manner of death. To this day, we can still see his business principles quoted (however inapplicable they may be in reality and referring to entirely different contexts) or some politicians trying to style themselves after Bata and his style.<sup>23</sup>

The myth of Bata is significant in the Czech environment for at least two reasons. Firstly, he embodies the Czech version of the "American dream", the idea that we can transform persistently unfavourable living conditions into global success and greatness if we are hard-working enough. This form of narrative has a clear value anchor in Masaryk's value system of a specific individual Christianity, emphasising the importance not of the institution but of small, honest work. Theologically, we can see here the same elements applied to Transcendentalism in the United States in the 19th century and are now back in vogue with the popularity of David Thoreau and his work.<sup>24</sup>

Bata was unquestionably a technocrat who could use modern technology and management and was a man with excellent business talent capable of generating profits in many sectors of industry and services. Key components of his success were the professionalisation and isolation of individual activities, which could be carried out more efficiently than in more complex and less

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<sup>22</sup> Pokluda, Z. (2014). *Baťa v kostce: Rozšířené vydání*. Praha: Albatros Media a.s., Pospíšil, J. (2012). *Rub a líc baťovských sporů*. Praha: Albatros Media a.s.

<sup>23</sup> An example is the electoral "book" Babiš, A. (2017). *O čem sním, když náhodou spím*. Praha: Andrej Babiš.. It forms a certain modernizing element to the text of Tomas' brother Jan Antonín - BAŤA, Jan Antonín. *Budujme stát (pro 40,000.000 lidí)*. Tisk, 1937.

<sup>24</sup> Thoreau, H. D. – Searls, D. (2009). *The journal, 1837-1861*. New York Review Books classics. New York: New York Review Books.

atomised factories. He achieved economic success by using machines to reduce the cost of human resources.

In this example, we can see an example of a man who stands on the success of a technician society, probably in the purest form of the First Republic, who acquires - with time - in conjunction with the state's implicit religion (Masaryk values) a romantic ethos that allows broad layers of the population to relate to him and to constitute their identity about him. At the same time, it represents a way in which man can come to terms with his relationship with technology to try to control it to secure a better environment.

The Dubček Myth. Alexander Dubček is also the subject of several myths in contemporary historiography. At the core of the Czech popular (i.e. collective - historical memory) interpretation is an apparent attempt to understand 1968 as a process leading to democracy, but which was forcibly stopped by the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops. At the same time, there is a level of "socialism with a human face", i.e. a certain Czech novelty, something that makes the spring of 1968 unique and extraordinary, something that was not only made possible but stimulated by the person of Dubček.<sup>25</sup>

The romanticisation is again evident here in the attempt to identify a national hero, who is supposed to be Alexander Dubček, who was neither a conservative nor a mainly reformist communist (unlike Smrkovsky or Mlynář) but rather a centrist populist. What distinguished him from other communist officials in Czechoslovakia was his emphasis on expressions of humanity - from bathing at the swimming pool to a little thing like a smile. Dubček systematically abandons the concept of the tired, dehumanised and largely anonymous communist functionary and becomes a deliberately romantic hero - patiently fighting against all odds, having feelings, relationships, and a humanity that was almost absent in the system of political representation of the time.<sup>26</sup>

The question of what socialism with a human face is has been addressed by historians and political scientists alike, and it seems apparent that it is a concept that is incompatible in thought with what the romanticising myth of the Prague Spring (even spring is a solid romantic metaphor here) brings. Either it was a democratisation process, but then it was no different from democracy as such, or it was an adaptation of the communist regime to the new social climate. Still, it retains its inherent (in the Czech environment, legally declared) criminality. Romanticisation requires uniqueness, so it effortlessly combines the Czechoslovak New Wave, the coming out of banned authors (i.e. an optically concentrated quality) with the Dubček myth.<sup>27</sup> The essential element of romanticisation is - like Bata - the story's conclusion, i.e. the occupation

<sup>25</sup> Banáš, J. (2011). *Zastavte Dubčeka!: Příběh člověka, který překážel mocným*. Praha: Knižní klub.

<sup>26</sup> Londák, M. – Michálek, S. (2019). *Alexander Dubček: The Symbol of Spring*. Bratislava: Veda.

<sup>27</sup> Hauser, M. (2019). Pražské jaro 1968 jako progresivní konstrukce národní identity. *Paidea*, 16/1–2, pp. 1–6.

in August 1968, interpreted as a betrayal. Crucially, just as little is said publicly about Bata's relationship to public funds or competition (monopolisation), in Dubček's case, his normalisation constitutes a blind spot in broader society. Again, external conditions prevent a hero from achieving his goal and, thus, a particular national success.

But the modernist core is also strongly present here - Dubček and the entire structure of the Communist Party is technocratic, using the various elements of the party secretariat to create a totalitarian order of society in which there is no such thing as public space. His political rise from the 1950s onwards forms almost the archetypal career of a communist in the Slovak space. His political moves can hardly be described as democratising or romantic. However, his basic negotiating strategy was to seek friendship and minimise conflict, thus mainly avoiding various clashes within the party. Dubček was able to use the means offered to him to achieve political power, that is, his party apparatus, but also, for example, the radio or the press. The radio, which can be seen as a technical means, was a handy tool for his political ambitions.

While the myth of Bata arises in the religious space of Masaryk values, the Dubček myth is constituted in a different religious climate. Communist historiography adopted Hussitism as the central motif of Czech history, but it had to be stripped of Christianity. Thus, a particular form of religion without transcendence emerges, one that is strongly nationalistic and explains the need for a struggle for justice within an unjust system. This struggle may have heroes (see Vávra's Hussite trilogy of 1954-1956), one that is supposed to lead to social justice, requiring everyone to come together under a unified idea, but also working with the strong value of living in subordination, in a kind of normalisation. Dubček thus becomes the main protagonist of this religion without God,<sup>28</sup> a religion showing a Czech uniqueness that was violently interrupted by external intervention and betrayal (Sigismund of Luxembourg in communist historiography), and which at the same time made it possible to legitimise and interpret the situation of normalisation, that is, a defeated Hussitism without Christianity, which is undeniably a dimension that was not present in Nejedlý's original conception.

The mining myth (in the 19th century). We have focused on phenomena associated with the person in the previous two probes, but this is not an exclusive example of romanticisation. A myth can also be associated with a particular profession or occupational group, especially where a specific culture surrounds it. The choice of the mining myth for our analysis is not accidental. First of all, it represents a phenomenon with a long tradition, essentially linked to the emergence of modernity (for example, mining in Karviná has been going on since the last quarter of the 18th century), and combines an inherently technical dimension, which fundamentally influenced and enabled mining, and a romantic

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<sup>28</sup> Halík, T. (2021). *Odpoledne křesťanství: Odvaha k proměně* (Roč. 2021). Praha: Lidové noviny.

dimension (the identity of the miner, specific greetings, festivals, mine names), which was associated with it.<sup>29</sup>

The romanticisation of mining is primarily connected with a particular mystery of the underground or its attraction. The underground is associated with the underworld or hell, a space to venture to demonstrate a specific heroism and human quality, like Heracles in Greek myth or Christ in Christian tradition.<sup>30</sup> Mining also carries the dimension of transforming a world that is not easily visible, to which few have access, which implies a dimension of a certain divinisation of their work. Essential to Romanticism, then, beyond this religiosity, is the fact that mining was a high-risk occupation - cave-ins or explosions in mines were relatively common between the 18th and 20th centuries, and balancing on the edge of life and death represented both a powerful social aspect (it was a collectively shared and reflected experience) and an essential element of economic status.<sup>31</sup>

The religious reading of mining must be collectivist and conservative while working intensely with a certain degree of fatalism - the miner does not primarily decide his life and death himself. Still, nature, fate, chance, and an external factor have the decisive word. Into this understanding of events we must also project the dimension of personal responsibility for industry and society that can be seen in miners individually. Religiousness is a kind of external view of the whole phenomenon, the view of those far removed from mining - and they will exclude from it the view of technology and technical change. Still, to some extent, they will make miners into the dwarfs or permonites of fairy tales. The fairy-tale-axiological-fatalist dualistic religion of the 19th century excludes the importance of reason, progress, technology, and education.<sup>32</sup> It manifests Romanism, out of which an implicit religion is formed.

At the same time, few occupations will be so strongly associated with mechanisation - to mine coal efficiently, a range of mining machinery had to be operated, from elevators to pumps to train tracks. Other downstream industries usually developed around the mining sites near Ostrava, Kladno, and other places. The industrial way of life brought the presence of technical professions

<sup>29</sup> Gaba, P. (2011). Takové mezi sebou nechceme! Formování negativního obrazu špatného pracovníka v hornictví a jeho prezentování na stránkách Havířské pravdy. *Historica: Revue pro historii a příbuzné vědy (Historica: Review in history and related sciences)*, 1/2, pp. 60–66.

<sup>30</sup> Hunt, W. (2019). *Underground: A Human History of the Worlds Beneath Our Feet*. New York: Random House Publishing Group.

<sup>31</sup> Hájek, M. (1972). Sociologie a praktické úkoly RVHP v hornictví: (Zpráva ze symposia). *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity. G, Řada sociálněvědná*, 21/ G16, pp. [89]–91., Glassheim, E. (2005). Etnické čistky, komunismus a devastace životního prostředí. Vytváření nové identity severočeského pohraničí (1945–1989). *Soudobé dějiny*, XII/ 03–04, pp. 432–464.

<sup>32</sup> Hunt, W. (2019). *Underground: A Human History of the Worlds Beneath Our Feet*. New York: Random House Publishing Group.

- from mining engineers, mechanical engineers or occupational safety experts to economists and logistics people. Wherever deep mines appeared, lifestyles were dramatically transformed relatively quickly. In the Czech context, we can see this in the example of the village of Karviná, which takes its name from the village where the cows graze to the town, which has a gymnasium, an industrial school and a network of shops, all of which were built in a very short period.

The mythicisation of mining thus represented for the inhabitants of the region (but also for the newcomers) a form of coping with change and life transformation, with the loss of a way of working and living that meant only minimal possibilities of passing on experiences between generations that would have been meaningful outside the mine area. Thus, mining in the 19th century creates a time-resistant anchor of a narrative that resists change and has the character of a narrative for the inhabitants of the whole region, which allows them to understand and legitimise their way of life, often moreover burdened by alcoholism or high mortality rates due to working in a health hazardous environment.<sup>33</sup> The rejection of modernity here thus has the character of a form of conservatism or sentimentality.<sup>34</sup>

### **Technology and Religiosity in the Formation of Modern Society**

The previous three examples have in common that the religious framework in which they are interpreted is not linked to any institution and has no fixed institutional structure. They can be understood in the context of Luckmann's concept of invisible religion, which the German sociologist sees as a kind of response to the process of secularisation.<sup>35</sup> As late as the middle of the 20th century, there was still a general idea that secularisation led to the end of religion to atheism. For Luckmann, however, religion is a broader concept; it is a set of practices and attitudes exercised in society, even when their explicit connection with a religious institution disappears. Religion can be described - even in the context of our previous analysis - as a metaphysical model shared in society, the purpose of which is to structure action in the world and to understand it. Religion is thus a social hermeneutic inscribed in the practices of society.

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<sup>33</sup> In fiction, this phenomenon is captured, for example, in Lednická, K. (2020). *Šikmý kostel: Románová kronika ztraceného města: léta 1894-1921*. Praha: Bílá vrána., Lednická, K. (2021). *Šikmý kostel 2: Románová kronika ztraceného města, léta 1921-1945*. Praha: Bílá vrána., Lednická, K. (2024). *Šikmý kostel 3: Románová kronika ztraceného města, léta 1945-1961*. Praha: Bílá vrána.. It is the fictional structure - and commercial success - that shows the structure and significance of this myth in contemporary Czech society.

<sup>34</sup> Latour, B. (2018). *Down to earth: Politics in the new climatic regime* (English edition.). Cambridge, UK; Medford, MA: Polity Press.

<sup>35</sup> Luckmann, T. (1967). *The invisible religion*. New York: Macmillan.

Since the late 1990s, Czech society has described itself as a non-atheist state or a society of non-believers. However, closer religious studies show that religiosity as such in the Czech environment has not declined significantly in recent years, and the number of believers and believers has remained similar.<sup>36</sup> There are relatively few genuinely religious atheists (atheism is a form of religiosity as well) in society. Two crucial (partially related) features of religiosity are typical for the Czech environment.<sup>37</sup> There is a long tradition of distrust towards religious institutions, i.e. churches. Interpretations of the post-Blohemian period in the national revival, communist historiography and philosophy, but also natural elements of historical memory, create a model of religion as an institution much less credible than it was, for example, in the noughties in Poland or still is in the United States.

The distrust of institutions seems to be a broader manifestation of the transformations of modernity in society; fluid modernity has eroded both trust in institutions and institutions themselves.<sup>38</sup> This crisis is much stronger in the Eastern Bloc area - in the Baltic States, Poland, the Czech Republic and other countries - than in Western Europe. According to Bauman, even the post-communist transition narrative contained strongly anti-institutional elements that were attractive to citizens: the concept of the invisible hand of the market (in a very different understanding of this concept from Smith's original understanding), the emphasis on deregulation, a minimum of legal norms or the ostracisation of civil servants (bureaucrats) - emphasises institutions as illegitimate forms of social ties that should ideally be got rid of as much as possible.<sup>39</sup> The notion of an 'evil Brussels', or a Eurosceptic critical attitude towards European integration, also fits into this narrative.

This crisis of religious institutions leads to a growing number of people who subscribe to a form of generationally transmitted religion. Still, in an equally private way and without participation in religious rituals or liturgy or to a simple conviction that "something transcends man", this form of agnostic belief and the separation from institutions is essential for the Czech environment. Its

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<sup>36</sup> Halík, T. (2021). *Odpoledne křesťanství: Odvaha k proměně* (Roč. 2021). Praha: Lidové noviny.

<sup>37</sup> Kettnerová, L. – Šigut, V. – Volfík, R. (b.r.). Religiozita a spiritualita jsou jen nešťastné nálepky. *PAnorama Forum*, 34, pp. 28–31., Nešpor, Z. R. (2020). *Česká a slovenská religiozita po rozpadu společného státu: Náboženství Dioskúřů*. Praha: Karolinum Press.

<sup>38</sup> Bauman, Z. (2013). *Liquid modernity*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons., Bauman, Z. (2004). *Individualizovaná společnost*. Praha: Mladá fronta.

<sup>39</sup> Bauman, Z. – Donskis, L. (2018). *Tekuté zlo: Život bez alternativ*. Praha: Pulchra.

consequence is low spiritual or religious literacy.<sup>40</sup> There is no reproduction of theological reflection, which has significant social consequences.<sup>41</sup>

According to available studies, spiritual literacy has at least two important aspects that shape society. The first is a general resistance to disinformation, conspiracy theories, and ideologies.<sup>42</sup> This aspect is easily traceable to communist propaganda, which fared considerably better in areas of lower religiosity or general religious experience. Purely socio-demographic interpretations emphasising the relationship of communism to the working class are more a part of the propaganda of the time than a sociological fact. However, the absence of explicit religious beliefs can be expected to lead to lower levels of spiritual literacy in society (with understandable exceptions). The fact that a low level of institutionalised religiosity characterises the Czech environment can thus easily be correlated with the susceptibility of society to various manipulations - from communist ideology to the current sensitivity of society to hoaxes and disinformation. Technicalized power can easily exploit and work systematically with this sociological characteristic of a culture. Still, perhaps a more significant modern element lies in a particular sensitivity of people to a specific climate, manifested in the spread of chain mail without any connection to institutions or states.

The unreflected religiosity forming a specific core of folk romanticism standing in opposition to the technicized society of logic and rationality opens man to the external vulnerability of manipulation. With the development of modern technology, it can be said that on a scale that is quite unprecedented. Romanticism accentuates freedom, but by its internal structure, it can quickly lose it.

The second aspect of the paradox of spiritual literacy is the emphasis on gratitude, relationships, and meaning.<sup>43</sup> Frankl would see characteristics essential to survival in a concentration camp, and modern psychology would see them as the core of resilience. Romanticism is thus open to vulnerability precisely because of its unreflected religiosity. The opposites are not faith and unbelief, religion and atheism, but spiritual literacy and ignorance. The reduction of man to a being without spirituality, which was part of the communist scientific worldview (i.e. the explicit religion of the time), leads to his easy vulnerability and manipulation. Religion, as an element of romanticism,

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<sup>40</sup> Jirásek, I. (2023). Spiritual literacy: Non-religious reconceptualisation for education in a secular environment. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 28/2, pp. 61–75., Holmberg, Å. – Jensen, P. – Vetere, A. (2021). Spirituality – a forgotten dimension? Developing spiritual literacy in family therapy practice. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 43/1, pp. 78–95.

<sup>41</sup> Taggart, G. (2002). Spiritual Literacy and Tacit Knowledge. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 23/1, pp. 7–17.

<sup>42</sup> Taggart, G. (2002). Spiritual Literacy and Tacit Knowledge. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 23/1, pp. 7–17.

<sup>43</sup> Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being* (1. Free Press hardcover ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.

can be used to control society where the emphasis on critical reflection and the individual's approach is lacking.

Jung points out that man is incurably religious - while Jung meant by this a relation to the transcendent in any form, in the light of Luckmann's concept, we can say that this incurable religiosity refers to metaphysical patterns leading to life practices on socially broad scales. If Belohradsky claims that the significant feature of the Enlightenment is emancipation from the church,<sup>44</sup> he is probably right, but emancipation from the church is not emancipation from religion.

And it is precisely the formation of religious - in this broader frame of thought - ideas about the world that can be understood (from the second half of the 18th century at the latest) as a source of adaptive strategy to the transformation of society by technology, the Enlightenment, and industry. In other words, romanticism has a fundamental religious dimension; it creates a form of anchor against the changes in the world we live in; it is a metaphor or a mental shortcut that enables people to act in the world—religion in terms not of a formal institution but as a particular field of thought shaping society.

### Digital Technology as a Form of Religion

We would divide the following argument into two steps. First, we will try to show that digital technologies (especially artificial intelligence) create social structures, metaphors and assumptions that constitute a form of religion in a broader sense without institutional support. In a second step, we will focus on the extent to which (or how) this religiosity is associated with romanticism. Thus, we will try to show that the essential constitutive manifestation of modernity in the form of digital technologies can represent for some people a fundamental sense of threat,<sup>45</sup> which they interact with through a set of tools that different layers of romanticism have created for such cases of relationship with modernity.

Latzer argues in his study that digital technologies have become a form of implicit religion.<sup>46</sup> Thus, for our research, it will not be intriguing to observe how institutional religions (technologies can sometimes be understood as a form

<sup>44</sup> Bělohradský, V. (1997). *Mezi světy & mezisvěty: Filosofické dialogy*. Velká řada. Praha: Votobia.

<sup>45</sup> Francis. (2024). LVII Giornata Mondiale della Pace 2024—Intelligenza artificiale e pace. *La santa sede*.  
<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/peace/documents/20231208-messaggio-57giornatamondiale-pace2024.html>

<sup>46</sup> Latzer, M. (2022). The Digital Trinity—Controllable Human Evolution—Implicit Everyday Religion: Characteristics of the Socio-Technical Transformation of Digitalization. *KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 74/S1, pp. 331–354.

of institution) cope with or work with technologisation but to observe that everyday implicit religion is associated with technologies.<sup>47</sup>

The first dimension can be seen in the idea that technology represents a particular next stage of human development. The Abrahamic religions provided man with the support of being the pinnacle of creation. The hymn in Genesis places man at the ontological pinnacle of the entire universe (right after God) and gives him all power over nature - hence the naming of all the animals in Eden; naming implies mastery and ontological subjugation. Floridi speaks of modernity being carried by four revolutions that shook man's certainty.<sup>48</sup> Copernicus (here Floridi places the beginning of modernity, as early as 1543, although it is clear that the natural consequences did not become apparent until much later) showed that man and the earth are not at the centre of the universe; Darwin deprived man of his sense of uniqueness and centrality in the evolutionary process; Freud showed that man could not even govern himself. He calls the Fourth Revolution Turingian - blurring the boundaries between the human and the technical. The gradual loss of man's privileged position in the ontological order is - in our view - the source of the loss of the field of ontological certainties, which is compensated by the development of new forms of implicit religions that are supposed to bring a certain sense of certainty against the logic of science and technology.<sup>49</sup>

According to Harari, man projects his evolution into technology - he sees it as the next step towards perfection, growth, and exceeding his possibilities.<sup>50</sup> For example, this religious dimension of evolution is strongly evident in Buddhism. Still, it also forms the core of Hegel's whole conception of history,<sup>51</sup> so that the whole of Marxism, i.e. communist religion, rests on it. In another form, however, the evolutionary plane is also evident in Nietzsche and his *Übermensch*, and similar concepts of man's ascent to God can be found in Catholic spirituality. Technology is interesting in this respect because it represents another step in evolution and allows man to participate in the work

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<sup>47</sup> Kao, G. – Hong, J. – Perusse, M. – Sheng, W. (2020). Dataism and Transhumanism. In G. Kao, J. Hong, M. Perusse, W. Sheng (Ed.), *Turning Silicon into Gold: The Strategies, Failures, and Evolution of the Tech Industry* (pp. 173–178). Berkeley, CA: Apress. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4842-5629-9\\_25](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4842-5629-9_25)

<sup>48</sup> Floridi, L. (2014). *The fourth revolution: How the infosphere is reshaping human reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>49</sup> Francis. (2024). LVII Giornata Mondiale della Pace 2024—Intelligenza artificiale e pace. *La santa sede*. <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/peace/documents/20231208-messaggio-57giornatamondiale-pace2024.html>, Latzer, M. (2022). The Digital Trinity—Controllable Human Evolution—Implicit Everyday Religion: Characteristics of the Socio-Technical Transformation of Digitalization. *KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 74/S1, pp. 331–354.

<sup>50</sup> HARARI, Y. N. (2016). *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. Harvill Secke.

<sup>51</sup> HEGEL, G. W. F. (2020). *The Philosophy of History*. Library of Alexandria; MCCARNEY, J. (2012). *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hegel on History*. Routledge.

of creation. Man is the creator, the maker of technology. As we will show later, self-divinization<sup>52</sup> will constitute an essential concept of this implicit religion.

Harari speaks of Homo Deus, who, thanks to technology, acquires qualities previously reserved only for deities.<sup>53</sup> Digital technology allows for omniscience through easy access to arbitrary information. Floridi even writes about the loss of the right not to know.<sup>54</sup> Tracking the flow of data, the datafication of society, and the erosion of the concept of privacy, all reinforce the narrative of omniscience possible where humans control technology. Omniscience is not technology itself, nor man, but the interconnection of the two in some form of totemic or shamanic interaction.<sup>55</sup>

Technology empowers people, which is also reflected in the language we use to refer to people who use technology - they can be computers or prompt wizards. These people can use technology better than others, who are not controlled by it but instead use it to control others. Technology companies are a source of hard-to-regulate and regulate power increasingly subjugating young people's lifestyles, self-esteem, and educational environment.<sup>56</sup> In some ways, it is totalitarian because it crosses the boundaries between private and public; it is omnipresent, another of its divine characteristics.

Digital technology makes it possible to ensure immortality - death in the physical world does not mean the loss of a digital footprint, an erasure from social media. Tools such as ChatGPTs<sup>57</sup> make it possible to teach an AI to have a dialogue concerning corpora of prepared texts so that one can live "forever" just by creating a sufficiently broad training base of data. Or rather, the boundaries of his death become constituted in an entirely new way, with little connection to physical death per se.

The last dimension Latzer talks about is the expansion of human possibilities. On the one hand, technology using artificial intelligence has gained the ability to easily beat humans at chess in the game of Go or at many practical tasks

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<sup>52</sup> Latzer, M. (2022). The Digital Trinity—Controllable Human Evolution—Implicit Everyday Religion: Characteristics of the Socio-Technical Transformation of Digitalization. *KZ/SS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 74/S1, pp. 331–354.

<sup>53</sup> Harari, Y. N. (2016). *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. London: Harvill Secker.

<sup>54</sup> Floridi, L. (2013). *The Ethics of Information*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>55</sup> Latzer, M. (2022). The Digital Trinity—Controllable Human Evolution—Implicit Everyday Religion: Characteristics of the Socio-Technical Transformation of Digitalization. *KZ/SS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 74/S1, pp. 331–354.

<sup>56</sup> West, M. (2023). *An ed-tech tragedy? Educational technologies and school closures in the time of COVID-19*. New York: UNESCO.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386701?locale=en>

<sup>57</sup> Kim, J. H. – Kim, J. – Kim, C. – Kim, S. (Sam). (2023). Do you trust ChatGPTs? Effects of the ethical and quality issues of generative AI on travel decisions. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 40/9, pp. 779–801; Zhou, T. – Zhang, Y. – Cao, S. – Li, Y. – Wang, T. (2023). Complementary Advantages of ChatGPTs and Human Readers in Reasoning: Evidence from English Text Reading Comprehension. arXiv. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2311.10344>

in standardised maths tests or law exams. This has undeniably led to a weakening of the position of man in the ontological order shaped by the concept of performance, which is typical of liberalism and capitalism, as well as of communist and Nazi regimes - from the 18th century at the latest, performance becomes the fundamental value measure of an occidental society, it is at the heart of the industrial revolution or educational policies. Man is losing the ability to compete on his own. Still, he can be much more productive with technology - science is getting faster, communication tools allow the creation of large globalised teams, and we can track subatomic particles and galaxies. In this respect, technology is an unprecedented extension of human possibilities and self-enrichment.

The religious dimension can also be seen in Weller's study of metaphors when he speaks of two essential metaphors (in his conception, cognitive shorthand, i.e., statements about structuring the world's ideas). In the first metaphor, he says that considerations about technology in education are related to the metaphor "education is broken", and the role of technology is to fix this brokenness - either by some fixing or by creating an entirely new model of education. In this metaphor, we can see the idea of technology as divine in a very explicit way - it is digital technologies that will transform the world we live in, that will become a source of happiness and well-being so that they leave both the plane of critical discourse and the dimension of the tool entirely and acquire their autonomous value.

The second metaphor that Weller works with is the VAR (Video assistant referee) metaphor, the metaphor of technology as a kind of judge, control and justice of everything one does. In religion, there is talk of "caricatures of god" in this context, in the form of "god as policeman", who examines whether one is doing the right thing. Weller elaborates this metaphor in the context of an evidence-based approach. Still, for example, the UNESCO report on EdTech during the COVID-19 pandemic describes its effects on children's actions and experiences.<sup>58</sup> Technology is not only omniscient, it creates behavioural regulations to which people must adapt. This is where religiosity comes into full play - on the one hand, there are no fixed and permanent norms and requirements; on the other hand, there is the notion that norms and requirements must be met.

Three more critical aspects of religiosity need to be mentioned, which together form a specific basic outline of the religiosity of digital technology in a social context. The everyday and ubiquitous, in some ways, builds on what Weller has argued.<sup>59</sup> Technology has become such a fixed part of human life that it is omnipresent and impossible to avoid - the mobile phone has gradually

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<sup>58</sup> West, M. (2023). *An ed-tech tragedy? Educational technologies and school closures in the time of COVID-19*. New York: UNESCO.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386701?locale=en>

<sup>59</sup> Weller, M. (2022). *Metaphors of Ed Tech*. Athabasca: Athabasca University Press. <https://www.aupress.ca/books/120309-metaphors-of-ed-tech/>

replaced the book, the torch, the alarm clock, the map, the camera, the radio, the notebook, and the desktop computer for many people. And at the same time, it is always at hand unlike all these particular objects. We have become accustomed to having our daily lives algorithmic, that algorithms decide our way to work as ubiquitously and invisibly as search results or automatic corrections of errors in the text. If we have characterised Czech society above as largely agnostic, technology undeniably fulfils this belief of transcending forces affecting people's lives. At the same time, the transformation of lifestyles, forms and modes of communication, and everyday rituals constitute an essential component of the religion we work with here. Zlatuška explicitly names it:

*"Information processing is becoming a major economic activity that both permeates traditional economic or social activities and creates entirely new opportunities and activities that significantly affect the nature of society."*<sup>60</sup>

The second important attribute is autonomy. Bridle shows that in the case of services such as YouTube, it is not easy to find a responsible person who can take moral or ethical responsibility for how the tool works.<sup>61</sup> With the development of artificial neural networks, this fact is highlighted by the fact that while they learn on specific datasets and have specific initial settings, there is minimal control over their particular responses. The programmer or designer has only a minimal ability to influence the answers to specific questions (for example, in dialogue systems - Gemini or ChatGPT) or the appearance of the generated image (in tools such as StableDiffusion, Dalle-3 or Midjourney). The systems have an increasing degree of autonomy and the possibilities of controlling them are becoming more limited. As Bělohradský argues - large technology companies have more power than the national governments of the world.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, these corporations do not have complete control over what constitutes the core of their business. Technology is becoming increasingly autonomous. This is not just about technical practice (which is much more complex) but about the social perception of this phenomenon.

Related to this is the third divine characteristic of technology, namely impenetrability. Technology has become highly complex and impenetrable for most people and has lost its character of concreteness (mechanical machines, often tied to schooling, so that everyone understood the basic principles, and the stands were mechanically transparent). At the same time, the complexity of technology leads to the fact that no single person understands even the individual components as a whole. Cognition is team-based and collaborative, but on a personal level, this can lead to technology as a kind of magic, a secret, a magical aid that can be controlled and directed by someone who is omnipresent. One has experience with technology but no knowledge

<sup>60</sup> Zlatuška, J. (1998). Informační společnost. *Zpravodaj ÚVT MU*, 8/4, pp. 1–6.

<sup>61</sup> Bridle, J. (2018). *New dark age: Technology and the end of the future*. London: Verso Books.

<sup>62</sup> Bělohradský, V. (2021). *Čas pléthokracie: Když části jsou větší než celky a světový duch spadl z koně*. Praha: Nakladatelství 65. pole.

of it; technology influences one's life but does not give a set of transparent rules. There is a clear distinction between religious professionals (IT experts) and laymen (ordinary users) as well as a group having power by their degree of initiation (IT enthusiasts, geek communities, ...). We can also attribute the same characteristic to the deity as such.

These individual sub-attributes together create the idea of technology as a form of implicit religion having two basic levels. The first is self-deification through technology, the formation of Homo Deus, as a new evolutionary type, transcending all the limitations of the four revolutions eroding the certainties of man.<sup>63</sup> This line is more Marxist than Hegelian (it is more concerned with material aspects than the spirit). Still, it represents an essential characteristic of the relationship between man and technology. At the same time, however, there is also a second distinctive dimension - the idea of digital technology as a phenomenon with divine elements. Our analysis shows that it is a religion of a totemistic kind that can be used to influence reality through appropriate rituals, a source of power and lifestyle change in which the new religious professionals play a central role.<sup>64</sup>

In the Czech environment, we can trace two more fundamental phenomena that accentuate this religiosity or create a specific dimension. The first is the emergence of computer science faculties and the discussion around them in the 1990s. The Faculty of Informatics, founded in 1994 at Masaryk University as the first faculty of informatics in the Czech Republic, carried a very similar ethos to that associated with creating theological faculties. It is necessary to say that the choice of some courses (information society, culture of postmodernity, psychology in informatics, later computer music) also tended towards an understanding of informatics not only as a form of technology but towards its social and cultural interconnection, to a certain extent its deification. Informatics thus assumed in the case of Masaryk University the same role as the Faculty of Theology at Charles University. To this day, it strongly influences its ethos and identity.

In the case of school teaching (primary and secondary schools), it can be said that the concept of computer science as a separate subject was unique and unique in Europe (its transformation is only now taking place with the curriculum reform) and essentially fulfilled the role of teaching religion in schools in the 19th century, including similar cross-curricular overlaps - it was built as a form of mental instrumentalisation of pupils so that they could appropriately navigate the world. Such a form of education is unique to the Czech experience.

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<sup>63</sup> Latzer, M. (2022). The Digital Trinity—Controllable Human Evolution—Implicit Everyday Religion: Characteristics of the Socio-Technical Transformation of Digitalization. *KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 74/S1, pp. 331–354.

<sup>64</sup> Eliade, M. (1993). *Mýtus o věčném návratu*. Praha: Oikoymenh.

## Digital Technologies and Romanticism in the Czech Context

In the previous chapter, we have extensively analysed digital technology as a religious phenomenon of a non-institutionalised nature. In this section we would like to proceed to the core phenomenon of this study - namely, the constitution of romanticism associated with the digital environment, for which we have established a sufficiently theoretical solid field. We will try to approach the relation of the Czech climate to the romanticism connected with digital technologies through four themes, which always have a global dimension and unique Czech realities or manifestations, to which we will pay particular attention. The choice of these elements is mainly eclectic, but at the same time we believe sufficiently representative to show a specific historical facet of this phenomenon.

It is clear from the previous chapter that digital technologies are a kind of implicit religion in society. One of the robust features of the Czech environment is the attempt to institutionalise this religious dimension. At the same time, it connects it with the myth of digitalisation as a struggle of good against evil. The goal of digitalisation in the Czech environment is to fight against bureaucracy, which has strong negative connotations in the Czech space. At the same time, we believe that digitalisation will bring economic growth and prosperity. However, individual projects that fail in digitalisation in the Czech environment are perceived as a manifestation of a particular heresy or schism, an apostasy from orthodoxy, and are expected to be severely punished. The religious notion of digital technologies has no formal institutional form (although there was a Ministry of Informatics in 2003-2007). Still, at the same time, it is intensely reflected in institutional forms.<sup>65</sup>

Connectivity culture and hyperlocal journalism. The emergence of Web 2.0 around the year 2000 represented a fundamental change in the understanding of the Internet globally, as it opened up the space for content creation to all users - from the encyclopedia Wikipedia to blogs, to custom websites, to the gradually emerging social media, a fundamental change in the understanding of what the Internet is and what it enables could be seen between 2000 and 2010.<sup>66</sup> It has deprofessionalised and democratised creation, leading to a widespread

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<sup>65</sup> Latzer, M. (2022). The Digital Trinity—Controllable Human Evolution—Implicit Everyday Religion: Characteristics of the Socio-Technical Transformation of Digitalization. *KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 74/S1, pp. 331–354.

<sup>66</sup> Bell, F. (2011). Connectivism: Its place in theory-informed research and innovation in technology-enabled learning. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 12/3, 98–118., Downes, S. (2008). Places to go: Connectivism & connective knowledge. *Innovate: Journal of Online Education*, 5/1, pp. 6., Siemens, G. (2005). Connectivism: A theory of learning for the digital age. *International journal of instructional technology and distance learning*, 2/1., Dunaway, M. (2011). Web 2.0 and critical information literacy. *Public Services Quarterly*, 7/ 3–4, pp. 149–157.

belief that the internet can be essential in building democracy.<sup>67</sup> It represented a technological change not unlike the fire that Prometheus brought from Olympus in Greek mythology. Technology available to a limited group of people began to rapidly change the behaviour of a large part of the population.

The notion of the Internet as the source of a new connected society (a society of connectivity) represents an essential ideological element in the romantic understanding of technology as a source of remediation for a world in which everyone will be able to participate in free access to information, create new digital artefacts and continuously learn.<sup>68</sup> In the Czech environment, this form of utopia has evident roots in Comenius and his early 20th-century update.<sup>69</sup> But the reality has turned out to be much more complicated - free information is intertwined with disinformation and media campaigns, the world of connectivity has been replaced by an environment dominated by large technical monopolies (platforms),<sup>70</sup> and the growth of democracy on a global scale is not observed.

The manifestation of a culture of connectivity was to be hyperlocal journalism, bringing news and updates to people in a tiny region or city.<sup>71</sup> It was to stand on two important principles - journalism loses its professional form, and everyone can participate. At the same time, people will take an interest in what is happening in their region and participate in it. The Czech project with the greatest ambition in this respect was Našeadresa.cz, financed by PPF Group and launched in 2009.<sup>72</sup> A year later, however, it was clear that there was neither interest in the service nor that it could generate high-quality and relevant content. Yet this project epitomises the Czech internet's connectionist utopian ethos.

The Czech Way. Romantic myth as a specific cognitive shortcut or metaphor can also have a national dimension - from sports fandom to forms

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<sup>67</sup> Webster, F. (1999). Knowledgeability and democracy in an information age. *Library Review.*, Dijck, J. van. (2020). Governing digital societies: Private platforms, public values. *Computer Law & Security Review*, 36, 105377.

<sup>68</sup> Siemens, G. (2005). Connectivism: A theory of learning for the digital age. *International journal of instructional technology and distance learning*, 2/1., Webster, F. (1999). Knowledgeability and democracy in an information age. *Library Review*.

<sup>69</sup> Patočka, J. (1997). *Komeniologické studie*. Praha: Oikoumenh.

<sup>70</sup> Fukuyama, F. – Richman, B. – Goel, A. (2021). How to Save Democracy from Technology: Ending Big Tech's Information Monopoly Essays. *Foreign Affairs*, 100/1, pp. 98–110., Ouellet, M. (2019). Capital as power: Facebook and the symbolic monopoly rent. Digitalization of Society and Socio-political Issues 1: Digital. *Communication and Culture*, pp. 81–94., West, M. (2023). *An ed-tech tragedy? Educational technologies and school closures in the time of COVID-19*. New York: UNESCO.  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386701?locale=en>

<sup>71</sup> Harte, D. – Howells, R. – Williams, A. (2018). *Hyperlocal Journalism: The decline of local newspapers and the rise of online community news*. London: Routledge., Paulussen, S. – D'heer, E. (2013). Using Citizens for Community Journalism: Findings from a hyperlocal media project. *Journalism Practice*, 7(5), 588–603. London: Routledge.

<sup>72</sup> Zandl, P. (2009). Našeadresa startuje aneb PPF zkouší hyperlokální média. *Lupa.cz*.  
<https://www.lupa.cz/clanky/naseadresa-startuje/>

of protectionism.<sup>73</sup> An interesting example for our consideration is Seznam.cz, which represents almost the only national product in the field of web search engines in democratic countries. While globally Google holds around 90% of the market, it only has around 80% in the Czech environment.<sup>74</sup> But Seznam.cz is also successful in e-mail and other services. In terms of rationalistic modernity, such a concept makes no sense - the user does not get the best services, but neither does it break the global monopoly,<sup>75</sup> which could lead to Bing services, for example. The romanticisation of national products may have a rational core, but considerations over the competitiveness and innovativeness of the economy cannot justify this data.

In the duel (often described in journalistic terms) between 2010 and 2014, it was possible to watch the duel between the "little Czech David" and the "global giant Goliath", which was a clear illustration of the romantic duel commonly found in literature or fairy tales. These first two examples proved decisive at the time, having concrete economic and social impacts, but at the same time, in some ways, outdated and exhausted. The romantic narrative allows for a short-term adaptation or creation of a narrative rather than a long-term, lasting aspect of societal change unless it manages to create a niche it uniquely fills. This seems to have failed in the case of internet search engines or platform companies. Therefore, the following two examples will focus on elements that can still be identified in contemporary society and whose importance is growing.

Influencers. When Bauman analyses the difference between fluid and rigid modernity, i.e. the social change in the occidental cultural circuit that has been taking place since the late 1960s, he cites the relationship to authority as one example of such a difference. Authorities are essential for the formation of social order, and especially in Romanticism, we can encounter them as certain archetypal actors in literature - the charismatic leader, the leader, the personality who transcends ordinary boundaries and who can tear others down. For rigid modernity, authority derives from the formal role a given person plays in society - the authority figure is a parent, a priest, a president, a director, and a policeman. Bauman argues it doesn't matter too much, the particular personality of the person in question. In contrast, in liquid modernity, authority emerges as a celebrity - someone whose influence is shaped by their life story (or part of it), usually not influencing the form of office, but able to reach broad groups of people with their life story (athletes, actors, business people).<sup>76</sup> In the environment of Czech politics, we can see this kind of "new politicians" in the examples of successful businessmen (Andrej Babiš, Pavel Drobil),

<sup>73</sup> Liessmann, K. P. (2012). *Universum věcí: K estetice každodennosti*. Praha: Academia.

<sup>74</sup> Search Engine Market Share Czech Republic. (b.r.). *StatCounter Global Stats*. <https://gs.statcounter.com/search-engine-market-share/all/czech-republic>

<sup>75</sup> Fukuyama, F. – Richman, B. – Goel, A. (2021). How to Save Democracy from Technology: Ending Big Tech's Information Monopoly Essays. *Foreign Affairs*, 100/1, pp. 98–110.

<sup>76</sup> Bauman, Z. (2013). *Liquid modernity*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

bankers (Jozef Síkela), doctors (Jan Pirk), university rectors (Petr Fiala, Mikuláš Bek) or the president of the Academy of Sciences (Jiří Drahoš).

However, the technologisation of society brings a further shift away from these celebrities, i.e., the story-created authorities who still have relatively high social permanence and access to traditional media. Digital technology has brought a new type of hero or authority: influencers.<sup>77</sup> Whereas celebrities were typically celebrated, influencers are all about influence, the ability to establish a theme, a fashion, a perspective on a particular issue, and often ostracise a specific action or person. Influencers do not typically have a long duration; their influence is "here and now", usually not even associated with a real name but only a nickname. It is the influencer who is the perfect fulfilment of the romantic notion of the charismatic leader, albeit often in a very unusual way - without dignity and seriousness, often with irony or self-mockery. He represents the type of person who can enter the public space, tear others down, and establish a theme. At the same time, he does not dwell in the world of certainties and admiration; he remains a fractured, temporally finite actor of social interactions, one who enters (for better or worse) into the everyday life of others and shapes it. He does not stand - like formal authorities or celebrities - in the stream of incredible history, but his site of action is the everyday.

The role of AI in society and the new humanism. In his novel *War with the Newts*, Karel Čapek describes the interaction of the human and the non-human as something at first sight appealing but at the same time challenging to sustain within the limits of control. The novel is remarkable in two respects - firstly, the same sentences he utters about newts can now be read about artificial intelligence while at the same time showing that the problem lies not in the newts themselves, that evil is not out there, but in the behaviour of particular people and society. It is the individual actors interacting with the newts, the sense of comfort, superiority, disregard for nature or ethics, the new slavery, and the moral decay that ultimately destroys human civilisation in the novel. This romantic concept of the struggle between good and evil, the tornness of man within himself, forms an essential interpretive framework for artificial intelligence.

Artificial intelligence is a strongly anthropomorphised theme in public space, into which Goethe's interpretation of Faust's contract with the devil can easily be projected, as well as Čapek's novels and plays. Artificial intelligence will deprive people of jobs, transforming education and many human activities.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Han, J. – Balabanis, G. (2024). Meta-analysis of social media influencer impact: Key antecedents and theoretical foundations. *Psychology & Marketing*, 41/2, pp. 394–426., Kim, E. – Duffy, M. – Thorson, E. (2021). Under the Influence: Social Media Influencers' Impact on Response to Corporate Reputation Advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 50/2, pp. 119–138.

<sup>78</sup> Oschinski, M. (2023). Assessing the Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Germany's Labor Market: Insights from a ChatGPT Analysis. MPRA Paper, <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/118300/>, Hirsch-Kreinsen, H. (2016). Digitization of industrial work: Development paths and prospects. *Journal for Labour Market Research*, 49/1, pp. 1–14., Fauzi, F. – Tuhuteru, L. – Sampe, F. – Ausat, A. M. A. – Hatta, H. R. (2023). Analysing the

There is a differentiation of discourses in the social debate between Industry 4.0<sup>79</sup> (which no one is worried about but relies heavily on AI) and AI, which could take over humanity and must be regulated.<sup>80</sup> This is not to diminish the importance and need for regulation but to point out that thinking of AI as a human with will and freedom is a cognitive shortcut to a relatively complex technical phenomenon.

From the romantic point of view, artificial intelligence brings another strong impulse - man cannot succeed with a machine in the performance sense of humanity - he will never have such quick judgment, good memory, or access to information. Almost every field of science and technology can - sooner or later - be better realised by a machine than by a human.<sup>81</sup> There is thus room for a new romantic humanism that emphasises the importance of limits for humanity as such, working with emotions, relationships, a particular escape into nature, and questioning what is important in life when we remove work and external scenery from it. The technological revolution has brought about a new humanism - not in the sense of an emphasis on a comprehensive education, but in an inquiry into the specific qualities of humanity.<sup>82</sup>

## Conclusion

The study aimed to analyse the conceptualisation of Romanticism as a form of social reaction to specific manifestations of modernity and modern society. Methodologically, the study relied on implicit or invisible religion as a manifestation of the mythologisation<sup>83</sup> of complex reality. It depends on

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Role of ChatGPT in Improving Student Productivity in Higher Education. *Journal on Education*, 5/4, pp. 14886–14891.

<sup>79</sup> Ghobakhloo, M. (2020). Industry 4.0, digitization, and opportunities for sustainability. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 252, pp. 119869.

<sup>80</sup> Hoppner, T. – Streatfeild, L. (2023). Chatgpt, bard & co.: An introduction to ai for competition and regulatory lawyers. *An Introduction to AI for Competition and Regulatory Lawyers* (p. 9)., Tischbirek, A. (2020). Artificial Intelligence and Discrimination: Discriminating Against Discriminatory Systems. *Regulating Artificial Intelligence* (p. 103–121). Cham: Springer.

<sup>81</sup> Where does AlphaGo go: From church-turing thesis to AlphaGo thesis and beyond. (2016). *IEEE/CAA Journal of Automatica Sinica*, 3/2, pp. 113–120., Bory, P. (2019). Deep new: The shifting narratives of artificial intelligence from Deep Blue to AlphaGo. *Convergence*, 25/4, pp. 627–642.

<sup>82</sup> Benedikter, R. – Fathi, K. (2021). “Humanised” Technology Instead of a New Humanism? *The Coronavirus Crisis and Its Teachings* (pp. 63–69). Brill. <https://brill.com/display/book/9789004469686/BP000013.xml>, Lollini, M. (2022). Time of the End? More-Than-Human Humanism and Artificial Intelligence. *Humanist Studies & the Digital Age*, 7/1. <https://journals.oregondigital.org/hsda/article/view/5756>, Mejia, S. – Nikolaidis, D. (2022). Through New Eyes: Artificial Intelligence, Technological Unemployment, and Transhumanism in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun*. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 178/1, pp.303–306.

<sup>83</sup> Eliade, M. (1993). *Mýtus o věčném návratu*. Praha: Oikoymenth

Thomas's theorem<sup>84</sup> and the premises of the social construction of reality,<sup>85</sup> which allow one to look away from the material objective truth and to observe more of its social and sociological perception, which has an impact on people's everyday life, thus inscribing itself in the way history is shaped.

Our focus was specifically on the information revolution<sup>86</sup> and the constitution of the ethos of the new romanticism associated with it. The creation of this hermeneutic narrative allows for a deeper interpretation of contemporary events and, at the same time, their perception concerning local specifications. We see the emphasis on Czech realities and Czech society as an original methodological approach in that it allows for an understanding of the local determinants and elements that make up the layers of Romanticism and implicit religion while at the same time preserving it within the globalised framework of an interconnected world in which it is usually analysed concerning a specific new colonisation through digital technologies.<sup>87</sup>

The study has demonstrated that a complex and modernist society cannot be interpreted solely through a rational reductionist framework<sup>88</sup> but that romanticism and a specific unconscious creation of implicit religion are relevant responses to such a world's mutability and abstractness. We see it as a fundamental goal of education to seek a balanced position between modernist and novelistic approaches that are not dualistic but offer a broader phenomenological<sup>89</sup> approach to the world.

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<sup>84</sup> Berger, P. L. (2012). Dobrodružství náhodného sociologa: Jak vysvětlit svět, a přitom nenudit. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury.

<sup>85</sup> Berger, P. L. – Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality*. Palatine: Anchor books.

<sup>86</sup> Robertson, D. S. (1990). The Information Revolution. *Communication Research*, 17/2, pp. 235–254. SAGE Publications Inc., Mathews, J. T. (2000). The Information Revolution. *Foreign Policy*, 119, pp. 63–65. Washingtonpost.Newsweek Interactive, LLC.

<sup>87</sup> Hall, M. (1999). Virtual colonization. *Journal of Material Culture*, 4/1, pp. 39–55.

<sup>88</sup> Šíp, Radim. (2019). *Proč školství a jeho aktéři selhávají*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita., Latour, B. (2021). *After lockdown: A metamorphosis*. Cambridge, UK ; Medford, MA: Polity Press.

<sup>89</sup> Lloyd, A. (2021). *The qualitative landscape of information literacy research: Perspectives, methods and techniques*. London: Facet Publishing., Heidegger, M. (2006). *Básnický bydlí člověk*. Praha: Oikoymenh., Heidegger, M. (2017). *Nač básníci?* Praha: Oikoymenh.

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## **Adjustment Issues of International Students in the Czech Republic: Prevailing Social Conditions and Financial Challenges**

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*The inflow of international students into the Czech Republic has significantly increased over the past decade, contributing to the country's cultural diversity and academic richness. However, these students experience various forms of challenges as they adjust to life in a new environment. This paper explores the adjustment experiences of international students in the Czech Republic, focusing on roles of financial stability, the prevailing social conditions in their adjustment and inclination to complete the study abroad programme. The study uses a mixed research method to gather and analyse data gotten from 112 international students from the Masaryk University in the Czech Republic. 102 of these participants provided data through a survey via a questionnaire which was analysed, while 10 students provided data via interviews carried out with the use of the Zoom application. From the results of this study, the study will explore the role of universities and the Czech society in facilitating the adjustment process of international students.*

**Keywords:** *International students; adjustment; employment; prevailing social conditions; culture shock; financial stability; Czech Republic*

### **Introduction**

Migration has become an integral aspect of daily life, driven by significant growth in global trade, commerce, information technology, education, research, and development. The increase in migration has also led to a notable rise in the

number of international students worldwide<sup>1</sup>. As a key factor in migration, international studentship has had a substantial impact on social changes, influencing not only the education systems of host countries but also their economies, policies, cultures, and more<sup>2</sup>. A change in one part of the world creates a ripple effect elsewhere, highlighting the interconnectedness of nations globally<sup>3</sup>. Migrating to a new society can be exciting and has a lot of benefits for both the outbound and inbound countries, such as economic partnerships and remittances, expansion of knowledge, cultural awareness and diversity, opportunity to meet new people, experiences with new food and exotic sights. With all that fascination and excitement of migration comes new challenges which includes culture shock, language barrier, financial instability and employment, migration documentation and processing, and so on.

The number of international students has increased exponentially in the Czech Republic over the past decades and have attracted nationals from all over the world. The Czech Republic, like other post-communist region in Central Europe that experienced communism had their migration processes conditioned, including the relations among the émigrés within and between the various diasporas<sup>4</sup>. Seidlová noted that up until the late 1990s, the Czech Republic had almost no international population, however, the Velvet Revolution' of 1989, ushered in a new political, economic, and social era that enabled a free democratic society and massive transformation and globalisation of the Czech society<sup>5</sup>. The European Commission stated that the European Union formed policies that allowed for the internationalization of tertiary education in its member states in 1994, having recognized its benefits and the bid to address the ageing population in Europe<sup>6</sup>. This policy prompted the adoption of the Council Resolution that allowed also third-world nationals to study within the EU. There is very little research that shows exactly when international studentship started in the post-communist Czech Republic, but the earliest

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<sup>1</sup> Andrade, M. S. (2006). International Students in English-speaking Universities: Adjustment Factors. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5/2, pp. 131–154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240906065589>

<sup>2</sup> Marginson, S. – Sawir, E. (2011). *Ideas for Intercultural Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>3</sup> Vertovec, S. (2004). Migrant Transnationalism and Modes of Transformation. *International Migration Review*, 38/3, pp. 970-1001. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00226.x>

<sup>4</sup> Mazurkiewicz, A. 2015. Political Emigration from East Central Europe During the Cold War. *Polish American Studies*, 72/2, pp. 65-82. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/poliamerstud.72.2.0065>

<sup>5</sup> Seidlová, M. (2018). The Birth of a Country of Immigration: The Case of the Czech Republic. *Demografie*, 60/4, pp. 348-359. [https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/61449036/13005318q4\\_348-359.pdf/e11317ea-2fc1-461c-989c-2c2b5abfc837?version=1.0](https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/61449036/13005318q4_348-359.pdf/e11317ea-2fc1-461c-989c-2c2b5abfc837?version=1.0)

<sup>6</sup> European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice (2023). *Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe – 2023: Equity in School and Higher Education*. Eurydice report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

national monitoring of international studentship in the Czech Republic was in 1999 with a notable increase in the number of foreign students since then<sup>7</sup>. There is more awareness about the benefits of internationalization of education due to the high rise of enrolment into the study abroad programmes<sup>8</sup>. More countries around the world are opening to the idea of creating and adjusting policies to accommodate international students within their societies, hence the need to study associated factors connected to the success of the study abroad programme. These factors which could be seen as challenges could range from social to psychological. More interest from host institutions and societies could help to make the adjustment process of international students, from the transitionary stage until graduation, less problematic, with emphasis on the need for physiological and psychological health.

Prevailing Social Conditions: Prevailing social condition is used in this text to describe the situation of the host environment when the international student begins the study abroad programme. This could also be seen as the culture shock that happens upon contact with a new environment. Culture shock can be defined as the reaction an individual express in response to an unfamiliar environment<sup>9</sup>. The moment of first contact with a new environment brings a sense of loss of orientation and coordination, which has been defined as culture shock. Culture shock can generate stressful conditions and a feeling of disconnection. A total sense of loss is commonplace for most sojourners as they face unfamiliar territory, new languages, new culture, new values, and different climatic conditions. Okusolubo is of the opinion that the sense of one's own culture disappears in the face of such huge changes, which could also be referred to as culture shock<sup>10</sup>. These differences, depending on the degree between the home and host societies are responsible for culture shock<sup>11</sup>.

Consequently, the international student has to embark on a cultural learning process and find their relationship to the cultural practices in the new environment. Shu, et al. adopted Berry's 2015 acculturation Model which postulates that adjustment for sojourners can be supported by creating a balance between their personal cultural identity and incorporating features from their

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<sup>7</sup>UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2018). "Education Data." UIS Stat. database: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

<sup>8</sup> Knight, Jane. (2015). Internationalization Brings Important Benefits as Well as Risks. *International Higher Education*. 10.6017/ihe.2007.46.7939.

<sup>9</sup> Kurek-Ochmanska, O. – Luczaj, K. (2021). 'Are You Crazy? Why Are You Going to Poland?' Migration of Western Scholars to Academic Peripheries, *Geoforum*, 119, pp. 102-110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.12.001>

<sup>10</sup> Okusolubo, G. S. (2018). Academic and Social Challenges Faced by African International Students in Collegiate institutions in America. *International Journal of Economics and Management Sciences*, 7/2, pp. 1-8. DOI: 10.4172/2162-6359.1000514

<sup>11</sup> Alsulami, N. D. (2018). The Challenges of Studying in Australia for Saudis Male International Students. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 8/2, pp. 17-28. DOI:10.30845/aijcr.v8n2p3.

new environment<sup>12</sup>. The authors illustrated that the “Demand-Control-Support Stress Model” by Karasek could be applied to explain that stress for most international students hinged on the need to overcome stressors associated with relocating to a new environment. The need for the international students to adjust to and interact with the new environment is great, and yet they have no idea what to expect, especially when dealing with unclear social norms and rules of speaking and greeting the locals, national stereotypes, not to mention limitations in recreation, as is the case of international students who are non-Russian speakers in Belarus<sup>13</sup>.

Additionally, culture shock could occur as a result of extreme variance in weather conditions or the social conditions prevalent at the moment. A major social condition in recent times was the COVID-19 pandemic, which some of the students in this study experienced while studying abroad, amidst other situations that were already challenging their adjustment in the Czech Republic. For international students from warm climate regions, moving to cold regions could create a sense of disorientation as discussed by Okusolubo, with reference to African students who moved to certain states with the US. Overcoming culture shock is an internal mechanism that involves individual personality, the ability to adopt coping techniques, resources and acculturation behaviour. Acculturation stress according to Pekerti, et al. foremost, stems from having to deal with more than one culture concurrently which may vary depending on specific situations and experiences<sup>14</sup>. The authors noted that while some people manage stress effectively and find ways to cope or access necessary resources, others may not share the same level of stress management. Successfully managing the intricacies responsible for acculturation will result in personal development and cultural learning.

Subsequently, sudden changes in social conditions that happen during the study period will also require some readjustment by the international students. Drastic changes in the society such as the pandemic of 2019 or the Russian-Ukraine war of 2022 brought about the displacement of individuals across Europe including international students. Such immediate changes could be considered shock triggers in adjustment for both the displaced persons and receiving societies.

Financial Instability: Money is important for any endeavour, including education. International students in the Czech Republic whose language of instruction is not the Czech language are required to pay annual tuition fees for

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<sup>12</sup> Shu, F. – Ahmed, S. F. – Pickett, M. L. – Ayman, R. – McAbee, S. T. (2020). Social Support Perceptions, Network Characteristics and International Student Adjustment. *International Journal of International Relations*, 74, pp. 136-148. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.11.002>

<sup>13</sup> Marinenko, O. – Snopkova, E. (2018). Challenges Facing International Students During Study in Belarus. *The New Educational Review*, pp. 144-154. DOI: 10.15804/ner.2019.58.4.11

<sup>14</sup> Pekerti, A. A. – van de Vijver, F. J. R. – Moeller, M. – Okimoto, T. G. (2020). Intercultural Contacts and Acculturation Resources among International Students in Australia: A Mixed Methods Study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 75, pp. 56-81. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.12.004>

the duration of their study programme, as the Czech system of education does not offer foreign language courses for free. Lindell, et al. in their study explained that so many parents are unable to provide high levels of financial support often required by their emerging adults, who are often within the college age. There are many reasons including economic status, room for autonomy and identity exploration<sup>15</sup>. The authors are of the opinion that financial stress significantly contributes to students' mental health problems and receiving financial support from parents or others is particularly important for students' emotional adjustment. Supporting this, Kerkmann, et al. opined that stress caused due to economic factors such as unemployment always appears to be accompanied by increased hostility, which adversely affects relationships and general stability of individuals<sup>16</sup>.

The basic need for the international student to “self-sponsor”, have made it necessary for many of them to seek employment in the countries of their study abroad programme. Many international students struggle with financially, which is one of their greatest concerns with studying abroad<sup>17</sup>. For students receiving financial support from home, the exchange rate for countries with weaker currencies compared to the host community will also face financial hardship during their study abroad, necessitating the need and demand for a job<sup>18</sup>.

According to Marinenko and Snopkova, the status of employment for international students is considered a problem for non-scholarship students<sup>19</sup>. To meet basic needs, it is necessary for international students to find employment and at the same time be psychologically stable to focus on their career paths. General living expenses such as being able to afford good accommodation and food, finding support services within and outside the institution, and emergency savings for threat to safety or health, are of great concern to international students. Certain factors discussed in this paper that

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<sup>15</sup> Lindell, A. K. – Killoren, S. E. – Campione-Barr, N. (2021). Parent-Child Relationship Quality and Emotional Adjustment Among College Students: The Role of Parental Financial Support. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 38/2, pp. 459-481. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407520964870>

<sup>16</sup> Kerkmann, B. C. – Lee, T. R. – Lown, J. M. – Allgood, S. M. (2000). Financial Management, Financial Problems and Marital Satisfaction Among Recently Married University Students. *Journal of Financial Counselling and Planning*, 11/2, pp. 55-65. Retrieved from: <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/financial-management-problems-marital/docview/1355865408/se-2>

<sup>17</sup> Alsulami, N. D. (2018). The Challenges of Studying in Australia for Saudis Male International Students. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 8/2, pp. 17-28. DOI:10.30845/aijcr.v8n2p3.

<sup>18</sup> Okusolubo, G. S. (2018). Academic and Social Challenges Faced by African International Students in Collegiate institutions in America. *International Journal of Economics and Management Sciences*, 7/2, pp. 1-8. DOI: 10.4172/2162-6359.1000514

<sup>19</sup> Marinenko, O. – Snopkova, E. (2018). Challenges Facing International Students During Study in Belarus. *The New Educational Review*, pp. 144-154. DOI: 10.15804/tner.2019.58.4.11

influence the employment and financial capabilities of international students in the Czech Republic include language barriers and issues with social support. As we consider the annual increase in the number of international students in the Czech Republic and worldwide, it is important to understand factors that could contribute to financial instability, which include:

*Tuition Fees and Cost of Living:* One of the primary factors contributing to financial pressure among international students is the cost of tuition fees. Unlike domestic students, most international students are often required to pay tuition fees which may be expensive in some countries, creating a significant financial burden, for the students<sup>20</sup>. Budgeting for study abroad has become a cumbersome affair. In addition to the tuition, there is budget for the cost of living, including housing, food, transportation, health insurance, proper clothing, health and police reports, and so on<sup>21</sup>. In the Czech Republic, for instance, while tuition fees for some programmes might be relatively lower compared to other European countries, the overall cost of living in major cities like Prague remains a challenge for many students. Yang and Wang are of the opinion that reduced tuition or tuition-free policies could be an important advantage for the host country in attracting more international students. However, this will be accompanied by a fiercer competition for top universities within the region, as high-quality education is sought after especially by foreigners from less developed countries. Naidoo established an inverse relationship between tuition fees and student mobility to some regions than others and is of the opinion that effective tuition fee strategy and management is important for growing and maintaining the international student market<sup>22</sup>.

*Access to Employment Opportunities:* International students are seen as valuable human capital for host countries; however, they often encounter more challenges finding employment opportunities<sup>23</sup>. Certain host countries have policies that exclude foreigners from fully accessing the labour market<sup>24</sup>. In many countries, including the Czech Republic, there are certain restrictions such as the necessity to obtain specific permits, and non-willingness of the labour office to provide services and resources to foreigners including international

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<sup>20</sup> Arthur, N. (2017). Supporting International Students Through Effective Counseling and Advising. *Journal of International Students*, 7/3, pp. 895-911. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293876>

<sup>21</sup> Wilson, S. – Hastings, C. – Morris, A. – Ramia, G. – Mitchell, E. (2023). International Students on The Edge: The Precarious Impacts of Financial Stress. *Journal of Sociology*, 59/4, pp. 952-974. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14407833221084756>

<sup>22</sup> Naidoo, V. – Roy, R. – Rabbanee, F. K. – Wu, T. (2022). Drivers of Tuition Fee Setting Practices for Higher Education Institutions Involved in International Student Recruitment. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/08841241.2022.2076274

<sup>23</sup> Lu, W. – Härkälä, T. (2024). International Student Experience of Employment Integration in Finland. *Research in Comparative and International Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17454999241238172>

<sup>24</sup> Wilson, S. – Hastings, C. – Morris, A. – Ramia, G. – Mitchell, E. (2023). International Students on The Edge: The Precarious Impacts of Financial Stress. *Journal of Sociology*, 59/4, pp. 952-974. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14407833221084756>.

students. These restrictions can prevent students from earning enough to cover their expenses, leading to financial stress. Even when part-time work is available, other looming issues such as language barriers or discrimination, limits their job prospects<sup>25</sup>. The authors established that despite stated commitments to innovation and diversity in work practices supporting globalization, employers predominantly sought staff who aligned with their existing staff profiles representing homogenous workforce.

*Currency Fluctuations and associated Issues:* Financial instability is further worsened by fluctuations in exchange rates of currencies from other countries. Many international students rely on financial support from their families in their home countries to cover the cost of living and studying abroad. When the value of their home currency declines relative to the host country's currency, it reduces its purchasing power, making it difficult for these students to meet their financial obligations. This issue is most applicable to students from developing countries studying in economically stronger countries. This is also true for students from developing countries studying in the Czech Republic. Such issues are bound to negatively impact students' overall adjustment and academic performance.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, associated issues such as exchange rate volatility, administrative costs associated with currency conversion and international money transfers can also contribute to the financial inconveniences encountered by international students. Many banks and other monetary services charge high fees for conversion and overseas transactions, which over time amounts to a substantial amount of money, thus reduces the usable funds of students. This especially affect students from lower-income families, as their already limited financial resources are further reduced by these additional charges. It becomes important to equip students with the knowledge on how to manage exchange rate risks and identify affordable financial services to reduce the financial instability caused by currency-related challenges<sup>27</sup>.

*Lack of Financial literacy:* Financial literacy can be defined as the ability to understand and effectively manage one's finances. Many international students often lack the knowledge and skills to effectively manage their finances in a foreign country. Moving to a foreign country introduces new complex financial systems, including unfamiliar banking practices, tax regulations, ways of managing credit, and the need for meticulous budgeting in a new currency. Many students fail to anticipate or adequately plan for hidden costs, such as

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<sup>25</sup> Lu – Härkälä (n 23).

<sup>26</sup> Marginson, S. – Sawir, E. (2011). *Ideas for Intercultural Education*. Palgrave Macmillan and Andrade, M. S. (2006). International Students in English-speaking Universities: Adjustment Factors. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5/2, pp. 131-154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240906065589>.

<sup>27</sup> Arthur, N. (2017). Supporting International Students Through Effective Counseling and Advising. *Journal of International Students*, 7/3, pp. 895-911. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293876>, and Marginson, S. – Sawir, E. (2011). *Ideas for Intercultural Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

administrative fees, health insurance, or unexpected emergencies. Without proper guidance, students tend to overspend on unnecessary items or sometimes underestimate their monthly expenses, leaving them unable to sufficiently meet their needs and obligations. Research carried out by Arthur<sup>28</sup> and Andrade<sup>29</sup> both showed that international students who lack financial literacy experience more financial stress which is a distraction from their academics and social adjustment.

Furthermore, the lack of financial literacy can intensify the need to rely on loans and credit, leading to cycles of debt that become a huge problem as it progresses. Poor financial management can lead to overspending or difficulty in saving, compounding their financial difficulties. Financial literacy programmes tailored to guide international students are non-existent, leaving them to learn through trial and error. Many studies emphasize that improving financial literacy among international students can significantly enhance their ability to manage financial challenges, reducing stress and improving overall well-being<sup>30</sup>.

*Dependence on Financial Aid:* Mwangi noted that most countries do not provide financial aid to meet the increasing number of students applying yearly for the study abroad programmes<sup>31</sup>. While the available scholarships and financial aid programmes can provide crucial support, they are often competitive and available for a limited number of applicants and particular courses only. Many international students receive only partial scholarships that do not cover their tuition and living expenses, resulting in the use of personal savings or loans. Also, delays in receiving scholarships or changes in funding policies from the state or universities can disrupt students' financial planning, increasing stress and hindering their academic performance. In an article by Kaniki & Hoh, the authors are of the opinion that institutions of higher education should develop enrolment systems that are linked to other functional areas such as financial aid, student orientation, housing, counselling, career planning and placement to ensure more enrolment and retention of international students<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Arthur (n 27)

<sup>29</sup> Andrade (n 26)

<sup>30</sup> Zhou, Y. – Jindal-Snape, D. – Topping, K. – Todman, J. (2008). Theoretical Models of Culture Shock and Adaptation in International Students in Higher Education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33/1, pp. 63-75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070701794833>, and Marginson, S. – Sawir, E. (2011). *Ideas for Intercultural Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>31</sup> Mwangi, C. A. G. (2013). The Impact of State Financial Support on the Internationalization of Public Higher Education: A Panel Data Analysis. *Higher Education in Review*, 10, pp. 61-77. Retrieved from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263655130\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_State\\_Financial\\_Support\\_on\\_the\\_Internationalization\\_of\\_Public\\_Higher\\_Education\\_A\\_Panel\\_Data\\_Analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263655130_The_Impact_of_State_Financial_Support_on_the_Internationalization_of_Public_Higher_Education_A_Panel_Data_Analysis)

<sup>32</sup> Kaniki, R. L. – Hoh, C. S. (2020). Student Financial Aid and Its Role in Stimulating Enrollment: An Empirical Study of Tanzanian Undergraduate Students' Experience. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 11/26, pp. 111-118. DOI: 10.7176/JEP/11-26-11

*Unforeseen Expenses and Emergencies:* Unforeseen expenses, such as medical emergencies and tests not covered by the insurance, challenging life situations, legal fees, or travel costs due to family crises, can place a significant strain on students' finances. The low saving rate of most people not only presents possible challenges for long-term financial insecurity, but also short-term concerns over the ability to meet unexpected expenses related to emergencies that are demanding on their finances<sup>33</sup>. Without adequate savings or access to emergency funds, these situations can lead to debt accumulation or force students to cut back on essential expenses such as food, healthcare, or study materials, or make them take breaks from the study programme or completely drop out of school.

Several authors such as Wilson, et al.<sup>34</sup>, Lardi, et al.<sup>35</sup> and Moore, et al.<sup>36</sup> have discussed the severe impacts of financial instability and insecurities on the adjustment of international students in the following areas:

*Academic Performance:* Financial stress can divert students' attention from their studies, leading to lower academic performance. Students may skip classes to work extra hours or struggle to afford textbooks and other learning materials.

*Social Integration:* When students lack sufficient finances for basic needs, they would most likely opt out of social activities, reducing opportunities to build relationships and integrate into the host culture. This isolation can contribute to feelings of loneliness and homesickness.

*Mental Health:* The constant worry about finances can lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Financial instability often intensifies the stress of adjusting to a new academic and cultural environment.

*Physical Health:* Financially constrained students may not request for healthcare services in order to save money, negatively impacting their physical health.

## Research Objective and Questions

The objective of this study is to investigate, discuss issues and find possible solutions to the influence of prevailing social conditions and financial instability

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<sup>33</sup> Babiarz, P. – Robb, C. (2014). Financial Literacy and Emergency Saving. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*. 35/10. DOI: 10.1007/s10834-013-9369-9

<sup>34</sup> Wilson, S. – Hastings, C. – Morris, A. – Ramia, G. – Mitchell, E. (2023). International Students on The Edge: The Precarious Impacts of Financial Stress. *Journal of Sociology*, 59/4, pp. 952-974. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14407833221084756>

<sup>35</sup> Larbi, F. – Ma, Z. – Fang, Z. – Virlanuta, F. – Bărbuță-Mișu, N. – Deniz, G. (2022). Financial Anxiety among International Students in Higher Education: A Comparative Analysis between International Students in the United States of America and China. *Sustainability*, 14/7, 3743. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14073743>

<sup>36</sup> Moore A. – Nguyen A. – Rivas, S. – Bany-Mohammed, A. – Majeika, J. – Martinez L. (2021). A Qualitative Examination of the Impacts of Financial Stress on College Students' Well-Being: Insights from a Large, Private Institution. *SAGE Open Med.* doi: 10.1177/20503121211018122. PMID: 34094560; PMCID: PMC8141976.

faced by international students in their adjustment process in the Czech Republic. Specifically, the study is aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any association between prevailing social conditions and the adjustment of international students at the Masaryk University?
2. How is financial instability associated with the adjustment of international students at the Masaryk University?

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a mixed research method (Explanatory sequential mixed method) to help analyse both the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the 112 international students from the Masaryk University, Czech Republic. A mixed research method is credible and reliable and can be explained through the definition provided by Creswell as the type of research that allows the researcher to use both the pre-determined method of the quantitative research method and the emerging methods of the qualitative research method<sup>37</sup>. The mixed research method uses both open and closed-ended questions and therefore has multiple methods of eliciting data. It has the advantage of completely achieving a holistic picture of the phenomenon studied, checking the limitations of using just one method<sup>38</sup>. The Explanatory sequential mixed methods allow the researchers to explain the results of the quantitative data using the data from the qualitative research.

The setting of this study is the Masaryk University in the Czech Republic, with over 7,300 international students. The participants of this study include 102 international students, who responded to a standardized test in form of a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, and 10 international students who volunteered to participate in interviews answering to open-ended questions.

### **Results and Discussions**

The participants of this survey rated their experiences based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from SA= Strongly Agree; A= Agree, N= Neutral/No opinion, D= Disagree, to SD = Strongly Disagree. The data is displayed in percentages according to the number of responses.

Prevalent Social Condition:

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<sup>37</sup> Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (3rd ed.) Singapore: SAGE Publications Inc.

<sup>38</sup> Hafsa, N. (2019). Mixed Methods Research: An Overview for Beginner Researchers. *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*, 58, pp. 45-49. DOI: 10.7176/JLLL.

Table 1: International students' ability to adjust to prevailing social conditions

S/N	Statements	Response				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I consider myself an open-minded person	50 (49.0)	40 (39.2)	4 (3.9)	4 (3.9)	4 (3.9)
2	I always change my behavior to suit new social orders	12 (11.8)	36 (35.3)	31 (30.4)	18 (17.6)	5 (4.9)
3	I feel uncomfortable with changes in societal norms	7 (6.9)	17 (16.7)	31 (30.4)	31 (30.4)	16 (15.7)
4	I do not handle change so well	7 (6.9)	15 (14.7)	25 (24.5)	32 (31.4)	23 (22.5)
5	As an international student, socially restrictive conditions like the COVID pandemic made me feel alone and depressed	21 (20.6)	15 (14.7)	20 (19.6)	23 (22.5)	23 (22.5)
6	The newer people I see, the more difficult it is for me to adjust to a place	8 (7.8)	19 (18.6)	24 (23.5)	34 (33.3)	17 (16.7)
7	I easily adapt to changing population density	18 (17.6)	39 (38.2)	20 (19.6)	20 (19.6)	5 (4.9)
8	It is challenging dealing with the disruptions to routines	9 (8.8)	29 (28.4)	32 (31.4)	25 (24.5)	7 (6.9)
9	Helping others adjust helps my own adjustment	23 (22.5)	42 (41.2)	20 (19.6)	6 (5.9)	11 (10.9)

A significant majority of participants (88.2%) consider themselves open-minded, with almost half (49%) strongly agreeing with this statement. This suggests a prevailing mindset of receptivity and willingness to entertain new ideas or perspectives.

Regarding behavioral adaptation, nearly half of the participants (47.1%) indicate a propensity to adjust their behavior to suit new social orders, with over one-

third (35.3%) agreeing and a smaller percentage (11.8%) strongly agreeing. This underscores a level of flexibility and adaptability in various social contexts.

However, there's a notable discomfort with changes in societal norms, as expressed by 47.1% of participants, with 30.4% strongly agreeing with this sentiment. This suggests a degree of resistance or unease towards shifts in cultural or societal expectations.

Similarly, a significant proportion (46.2%) reports difficulty in handling change, with over one-third (31.4%) strongly agreeing. This highlights challenges in adapting to new circumstances or situations among the participants.

Opinions regarding socially restrictive conditions like the COVID-19 pandemic are divided. While 43.1% express feelings of loneliness and depression due to these conditions, an equal percentage disagrees with this sentiment. This indicates varied experiences and coping mechanisms in response to challenging social conditions.

Adjusting to new people appears to be challenging for many participants, with 50.2% finding it difficult and 33.3% strongly agreeing with this statement. This suggests struggles in forming connections or integrating into new social circles. On a more positive note, the majority of participants (56.6%) express ease in adapting to changing population density, with nearly 20% strongly agreeing with this statement. This indicates a level of comfort and adaptability in response to fluctuations in social environments.

However, dealing with disruptions to routines poses challenges for a significant portion of participants (37.2%), with over one-quarter (28.4%) strongly agreeing. This highlights the impact of changes in daily habits or schedules on individual well-being and adjustment. A majority of participants (63.7%) agree that helping others adjust aids in their own adjustment process, with over one-fifth (22.5%) strongly agreeing. This underscores the reciprocal nature of social support and the benefits of collective adjustment efforts.

The results of the quantitative analysis correspond with the data obtained from the international students interviewed. The international students expressed the disparity in adjustment during different social conditions. They observed that restrictive social situations like the COVID period was a challenging time especially for those who had recently entered the Czech Republic during this period. They were faced with isolation and depression, except for the ones who came with their families. They talked about the difficulty securing jobs during this period, being unable to socialize and make friends, and ultimately making the separation from family at that time very difficult.

The post covid era was different for the international students as they were able to move more freely around the community and interact, amidst the other challenges discussed. The post COVID era allowed for exploration of the new environment which is necessary for adjustment. The post restrictive period helped the students obtain some form of normalcy in their lives

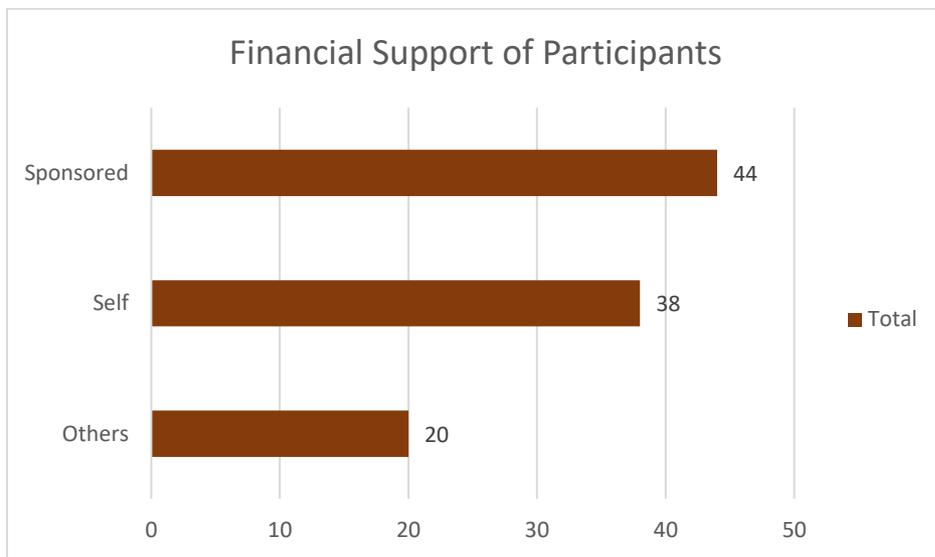
The first main enquiry of the interview was to briefly tell the researcher about their experiences coming into the Czech Republic. 5 participants entered the

Czech Republic shortly after the COVID breakout and stated that it was a difficult period moving abroad. One of the participants who arrived during the COVID has a Czech spouse and was able to adjust despite the COVID with the help of his in-laws. This participant is quoted saying that “my in-laws helped me learn quickly and assimilate the Czech culture. My wife helped with all the paperwork when we decided to relocate for studies, reducing the stress of moving here from Australia”. The other participants who arrived the Czech Republic experienced much tougher adjustment processes. One of the participants from during the COVID stated that “it was a very difficult period for me, emotionally. I could not bring my family along due to the many social restrictions at the time”. The others reported that that it was not easy meeting people and looked forward to the end of the COVID era. The participants who arrived after the COVID had different experiences. Despite not encountering social restrictions, some of them experienced other forms of challenges upon arrival, like the extreme weather conditions during the winter.

Other challenges faced on arrival includes problems with changing their local currencies to the Czech crowns, which in this case was due to the time the participant entered the Czech Republic, hence creating issues with transporting the participant to his reserved accommodation and being able to buy food. Others reported that the process of entering the Czech Republic was considered chaotic due to the lack of guidance and assistance from the international office, hence the confusion with locating places such as the hostels, university buildings, tram stops and appropriate tram numbers. They, however, were able to figure them out after a few errors.

Financial Instability: The result of the study is displayed as follows: the source financial support received by the students and a Standard Deviation analysis into the factors influencing their financial stability within the Czech Republic.

Figure 1: Financial support of respondent



The data from the Figure above categorizes the 102 participants of the survey based on their sources of financial support, revealing that 20 individuals fall under the category of "Others," 38 individuals finance their education independently ("Self"), and 44 individuals receive financial support from sponsors ("Sponsored").

Table 2. International students' ability to get and maintain employment in the Czech Republic

S/N	Statements	Response				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	It was difficult to get a job.	9 (8.8)	27 (26.5)	39 (38.2)	18 (17.6)	9 (8.8)
2	Others are biased towards me	16 (15.7)	31 (30.4)	23 (22.5)	21 (20.6)	11 (10.8)
3	I am treated differently due to my gender	14 (13.7)	11 (10.8)	16 (15.7)	21 (20.6)	40 (39.2)
4	Many opportunities are denied me	9 (8.8)	22 (21.6)	25 (24.5)	25 (24.5)	21 (20.6)
5	I have a very high chance of losing my job	6 (5.9)	10 (9.8)	32 (31.4)	25 (24.5)	29 (28.4)
6	I cannot get jobs matching my qualification	17 (16.7)	19 (18.6)	30 (29.4)	16 (15.7)	20 (19.6)
7	I feel accepted and included at my workplace	29 (28.4)	24 (23.5)	30 (29.4)	10 (9.8)	9 (8.8)

The data provided offers valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of individuals concerning job opportunities and workplace dynamics. A significant finding is that a notable proportion of participants, approximately 38.2%, are not certain of difficulty in securing employment, indicating potential challenges within the job market. Moreover, around one-third of participants, constituting 30.4%, express feelings of bias from others, suggesting potential barriers or prejudices impacting their professional opportunities. Interestingly, while the majority of participants strongly disagree with being treated differently due to their gender, representing 39.2%, a significant minority, about 20.6%, strongly agree, highlighting disparities in treatment that exist within certain contexts.

Furthermore, the data indicates that a considerable percentage of participants, roughly 24.5%, feel that many opportunities are denied to them. This perception of opportunity denial underscores potential obstacles individuals face in accessing employment or advancing within their careers. Additionally, concerns regarding job security are evident, with approximately 31.4% of participants expressing a belief in having a high chance of losing their jobs. This finding suggests underlying anxieties about job stability among the surveyed individuals.

Moreover, a significant proportion of participants, nearly 29.4%, indicate feeling unable to secure jobs that align with their qualifications. This discrepancy between qualifications and job opportunities highlights potential mismatches in the labor market, contributing to frustrations among job seekers. Despite these challenges, a noteworthy percentage of participants, encompassing 29.4%, report feeling accepted and included at their workplaces. However, it is noteworthy that a minority, comprising 9.8% of participants, strongly disagree with this sentiment, suggesting that there are still individuals who experience marginalization or exclusion within their work environments.

When asked about their employment status during the interviews, 8 out of the 10 participants stated that they were employed and currently working, with 2 of them working in their various departments of the university. The 2 participants working within the University reported that they had no issues communicating with their colleagues who were also international students and Czechs who could speak and understand English. The remaining 6 reported that it was difficult finding jobs within the Czech Republic as most of them required the ability to communicate in the Czech language. They eventually were able to find jobs that did not require the use of the Czech language, but not necessarily in the fields of expertise. Jobs were available for fast food services, call center representatives for international companies and language teachers. Some of the participants working within the town of Brno also reported that they were not expecting any form of promotions or improvements in the job either, because of the language barrier with management.

The participant from Germany is quoted saying “*My greatest challenge at work is the language barrier. I am interested in a lot of other fields at work but cannot learn them or teach what I know because of it*”. The participant from Kenya had this to say, “*definitely, as many jobs in the Czech Republic requires the Czech language there are limited number of places to get employment. Eventually I got a job at a fast-food joint but can only communicate with one person*”. The participant expressed feelings of frustration due to perceived mistreatment and harassment.

## Discussions

The findings from the quantitative analysis reflected the concerns of the international students who participated in the interviews. The study showed that the students experienced significant variations in their adjustment during different social circumstances. They emphasized the challenges posed by restrictive social conditions, such as those during the COVID-19 pandemic. For students who arrived in the Czech Republic during this period, the experience was particularly challenging. They reported feelings of isolation and depression, which were less pronounced for those who had relocated with their families. Interviewees recounted difficulties in finding employment during this time, the inability to socialize or build new friendships, and an intensified emotional strain due to separation from their families, all of which compounded the challenges of settling into a new environment.

It has been determined that the international students who participated in this study had initially expressed confidence in their abilities to handle varying social conditions. However, a notable number of them expressed discomfort with changing societal norms and expressed some degree of resistance or unease towards shifts in cultural or societal expectations. Many of them reported that they do not handle change very well and found it challenging adapting to new social circumstances or situations. Socially restrictive conditions like the COVID-19 pandemic showed equal yet opposing opinions. Many participants who had already started their study abroad before and during this period expressed feelings of loneliness and depression due to these conditions, an equal percentage disagreed with this sentiment. This showed how different each person experiences and copes with challenging social changes. Most of the participants found it challenging adjusting to new people indicating a struggle in forming connections or integrating into new social circles.

Additionally, the international students who participated in this study revealed the following: a greater number of the participants faced challenges within the job market, expressing feelings of bias and prejudices that impact their ability to secure a job and advance in their career, in the Czech Republic. Some showed concerns about their job security and shows signs of anxiety and frustration regarding this, which may reflect on a person’s performance at the job, with a considerable amount in mismatched jobs unable to secure jobs that align

with their qualifications. However, a small number of the participants reported that they felt accepted and included at their workplaces.

## Conclusion

The Czech Republic has become home to an increasing number of international students from not only the European Union, but for students from all the continents of the world. This has contributed to the country's cultural diversity and academic richness. However, these students face a unique set of challenges in adjusting to their new environment which could be cultural, academical, or social<sup>39</sup>. In the Czech Republic, international students often encounter various challenges due to cultural differences, such as distinct social norms, language barriers, and difficulties in finding and maintaining suitable employment, and being able to build and sustain relationships.

Prevailing social condition and financial instability are major challenges that significantly affects the adjustment of international students. Adjustment is largely dependent on prevailing social conditions existing within the new environment of the study abroad programme. The social climate of every society at any given time, would determine what the individual must adjust to and the resources available to aid adjustment at said time. Ranging from the naturally induced social conditions such as the weather changes which induces culture shock, to the economic and social crisis like the COVID-19, the international students should be aided through guidance from host universities and societies to settle in. The participants of this study who relayed the little or no guidance received at their entrance into the Czech Republic struggled to adjust. Universities play a pivotal role in facilitating the adjustment of international students. By providing comprehensive support services, fostering an inclusive campus environment, and promoting intercultural dialogue, universities can significantly ease the transition for international students.

Factors associated with financial instability such as tuition fees, limited employment opportunities, exchange rate fluctuations, and the lack of financial literacy contribute to the financial challenges these students face, which could be detrimental to their well-being and success in the stud abroad programme. To understand how international students in the Czech Republic navigate this process, this study conducted surveys and interviews. The analysis of the data revealed that a significant number of participants faced difficulties in the job market, citing experiences of bias and prejudice that hindered their ability to secure jobs and advance in their careers. Some students expressed concerns

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<sup>39</sup> Zhang, J. – Goodson, P. (2011). Predictors of International Students' Psychosocial Adjustment to Life in the United States: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35/2, 139-162.

<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.11.011>

about job security, displaying signs of anxiety and frustration, which could negatively affect job performance.

Additionally, many international students could only find jobs that did not match their qualifications. However, a small group of participants reported feeling accepted and included at their workplaces. Addressing these issues requires a collaborative approach involving universities, governments, and financial institutions to provide better support systems, including scholarships, financial literacy programmes, and flexible work regulations for international students. Ensuring financial stability is crucial for helping international students achieve their academic goals and fully engage in the cultural and social opportunities of their host countries. The inflow of international students is usually considered an increase in the labour market ensuring more economic development for any country, hence the need to assimilate international students to maximize their full potential.

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## **Lived Reality of School Socialization from the Perspective of Romani Mothers**

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*The aim of our study is to explore Romani mothers' narratives about school, especially in relation to how they accept or reject school expectations directed at Romani pupils. Methodologically, we focus on the discursive framing of how the needs of Romani mothers are constructed. Our research study is grounded in the premise that understanding the lived reality of a parent requires insight into how they interpret their own identity and experiences with social roles. These roles are particularly significant as they are affirmed within the institutional structures of the school system.*

*Keywords: school social institution; education of Romani pupils; discourse analysis; institutional power; framing of social reality constructions*

### **Introduction**

The education of Romani pupils represents a complex social phenomenon. The goal of the Czech Republic's educational policy is to reduce educational inequalities and improve the quality of education (as outlined in the strategic document Strategy 2030<sup>1</sup>). Social inclusion serves as a means to achieve these objectives. At the same time, however, the implementation of social inclusion in schools (and in society at large) is itself a priority and a core objective. In its essence, social inclusion can be understood as the recognition of difference and the establishment of an equitable social dialogue—particularly within educational settings. In other words, it is about creating a fair communicative environment grounded in social values of accepting the Other. Achieving this ideal, however, likely requires significant changes within the education system

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<sup>1</sup> Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020. (2014). Praha: MŠMT.

and in teaching itself. These changes concern the philosophy of education, as well as organizational and legislative adjustments.

Our research assumes that the transformation of the Czech school system is shaped by conflicting perspectives on whether or not to embrace social inclusion. We believe that in the context of such divergent views on changes in our educational landscape, it is crucial to analyse and describe the social environments and structural conditions of Czech schools as experienced by specific social actors. Clearly, no single narrative can capture the entirety of these structural realities, as each actor in the educational process operates within their own value framework concerning the purpose and function of education and schooling. In our view, the demand for social inclusion in schools is a response to selective mechanisms within education, the increasing technocratization of society, and the dehumanization of the individual<sup>2</sup>. Put differently, we are witnessing a process in which the meaning of education is being objectified and redefined institutionally for different groups (of children) based on educational opportunities. This process of objectification—rooted in the natural sciences—is closely tied to an individual's ability (and the perceived purpose) to succeed in the labour market.

As Štech<sup>3</sup> points out, “Economic, or even economic, approaches to education over the past fifteen years have led to a culture of performance and outcomes replacing a culture of self-development and individual emancipation—concepts that we now almost scorn as empty, pathos-laden declarations“. The ideology of market-oriented liberal democracy is built on the premise of a meritocratic distribution of both material and symbolic resources, which citizens are expected to obtain through social competition. The educational system reflects this orientation, for example, through grading policies. The focus on students' cognitive performance in assessments, and selection processes based on academic achievement and test scores. The problem arises when assessment practices become one-dimensional. For instance, in subjects with a theoretical-logical focus, assessment relies on the cognitive domain of the curriculum, whereas in arts-related subjects, the psychomotor domain is prioritized. This system enables relatively easy selection of students based on performance outcomes. But how can we ensure a holistic approach to education and, at the same time, a comprehensive evaluation of students? Within educational policy, we must ask ourselves: What are the social consequences of sorting pupils as early as in the first years of primary school? How does the socioeconomic status of parents impact students' motivation and performance? Is the selection process within compulsory schooling contributing to social injustice? The tension between advocating for a selective or unified school system is not easy to resolve—it depends on the educational priorities

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<sup>2</sup> Harrington, A. (2006). *Moderní sociální teorie: základní témata a myšlenkové proudy*. Praha: Portál.

<sup>3</sup> Štech, S. (2015). Proč se kritizuje PISA? *Pedagogická orientace*, 25 (4), 605–612. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, p. 605.

and pedagogical philosophy of each school. If the priority is to provide all pupils with equal starting conditions and shared socialization, then the implementation of social inclusion presents itself as a viable path forward.

### **Terminological Note**

Throughout this text, we use the term Romani as an adjective (e.g., Romani mothers, Romani communities) in accordance with conventions in international academic writing. While Roma is commonly used as a noun referring to the ethnic group, Romani not only functions more appropriately as an adjective in English but also carries with it the broader historical and cultural context of Romani identity. For the purposes of our discursive analysis, this nuance is essential. Language shapes and reflects how social actors are positioned within dominant discourses, and the term Romani helps to highlight the specific sociohistorical experiences, cultural distinctiveness, and political struggles that are often flattened or overlooked in mainstream institutional language. Therefore, we have decided to use the term Romani consistently throughout the text, as it aligns with our analytical focus and ethical commitment to representational sensitivity.

### **Research Objectives and Questions**

This study aims to explore and interpret the perspectives of selected Romani mothers regarding the education of Romani children.

To address this aim, the research was guided by the following questions:

- How do Romani mothers construct social reality through their accounts of Romani pupils' education?
- What discursive strategies or social representations do they employ to establish the credibility of their narratives?
- What types of competing and cooperating discourses emerge in these accounts, and how do they shape the construction of social reality?

To collect the data, we conducted semi-structured individual interviews, group interviews, and focus groups. The dataset was then analysed using discourse analysis, with particular attention paid to the ways in which meaning and social positioning are negotiated in language. A total of 23 Romani women participated in the study.

## Source of Knowledge

Methodologically, our research study is grounded in discursive theory, as developed by Harré and Gillett<sup>4</sup>. This theoretical approach is associated with the second cognitive turn in psychology. At the core of this shift is a move away from the idea of a single, universal (nomothetic) scientific truth and from research focused solely on the cognitive brain structures of the individual. Instead, the second cognitive turn emphasizes knowledge and action as phenomena produced within specific historical, social, and cultural contexts, and constructed through concrete linguistic situations.

By adopting the perspective of the second cognitive turn, our research is situated within a postmodern understanding of social science. This approach is grounded in the pluralistic interpretation of multiple constructions of reality, formed through intersecting and overlapping discourses. Within this framework, it is natural that the present study does not rely on a single theoretical perspective but instead draws on a range of interconnected social theories that share common ground. Within the chosen research issue, we drew primarily on the theory of communicative democracy<sup>5</sup>, the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe<sup>6</sup>, and the framing theory<sup>7</sup>. In the context of our study, we rely on the concept of inclusive democracy and the concept of the politics of difference as formulated by Iris Marion Young<sup>8</sup>. This author "emphasizes difference and specificity instead of an impartial moral stance, asymmetry of relationships and understanding instead of moral reversibility and consensus, and a plurality of forms of communicative practice". Young rejected the assumption that establishing unity among all people in society is a prerequisite for achieving social justice. Her tool became inclusion, through which she sought "to support the elimination of oppression by incorporating difference as a political resource for mutual understanding and the political mobilization of subordinated groups". Understanding among people is based on the recognition of so-called ethical asymmetry. This asymmetry stems from different life experiences and the cultural and social specificities of various social groups. She termed this process of understanding the politics of difference. The fairness of the politics of difference lies in accepting the material consequences based on cultural and social differences. These differences manifest through relationships of domination and oppression within institutional structures. The foundation of solidarity between different social groups is the mutual interdependence of all

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<sup>4</sup> Harré, R. – Gillett, G. (2007). *Diskurz a mysel*. Bratislava: IRIS.

<sup>5</sup> Young, I. M. (2010). Proti útlaku a nadvládě: transnacionální výzvy politické a feministické teorii. In Z. Uhde (Ed.), *Proti útlaku a nadvládě: transnacionální výzvy politické a feministické teorii*. Praha: Filosofia.

<sup>6</sup> Laclau, E. – Mouffe, Ch. (2014). *Hegemonie a socialistická strategie: za radikálně demokratickou politiku*. Praha: Karolinum.

<sup>7</sup> Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Young, I. M., Proti útlaku a nadvládě, p. 18.

members of society living within institutional structures and the environmental context.

A common thread running through the above mentioned social theories is the emphasis on participation by all actors in a dialogical process grounded in mutual understanding and respect. Recognition of the Other and the achievement of cultural mediation occur in a processual, situational, and local manner. This approach allows for a critical distance from ideologically veiled social or institutional power that functions within the logic of the traditional social order. Through self-reflexivity, individuals can challenge and deconstruct the established social order by offering alternatives or by re-signifying reality through language. What matters is which aspects of lived reality—particularly within schools—we choose to focus on, and how we interpret them. The path to understanding social reality leads through the daily reflection of roles, expectations, and positions of social actors, as well as the norms and distribution of knowledge they encounter. Adherence to social order and moral or ethical codes is shaped by institutional regulation. Dominant discourses define what constitutes appropriate behaviour and thinking in line with institutional norms. In this way, institutions exercise power by organizing and controlling the social order through the prescription of norms and the imposition of sanctions for their violation. Yet the realization of this social order unfolds within the lived experience of individual actors, who reinterpret and re-signify these norms in specific contexts. In the context of educational reform, we must account for both top-down pressures (e.g. from official curricula) and bottom-up dynamics (e.g. from the personal experiences of school actors). Change takes place through the interplay of social representations within specific social groups. Likewise, we argue that social inclusion in schools cannot be implemented through standardized guidelines or technical manuals. Only through the continuous reinterpretation of everyday social practices can inclusive education be given meaning in a pluralistic way. As Walzer<sup>9</sup> points out, “democratic politics is not the politics of a general will in the form of rational consensus, as philosophers would have it, but the politics of majority will, involving conflict, negotiation, compromise, and decision-making.” Disagreements in educational policy often stem from the differing social positions and interests of the actors involved. It follows, then, that the implementation of social inclusion—whether in schools or in society more broadly—is inherently subject to multiple interpretations and conflicts over educational practice and curriculum philosophy<sup>10</sup>. It is important to note that Czech schools operate within a highly decentralized system, which leads to considerable variation in both the quality and quantity of school curriculum content.

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<sup>9</sup> Walzer, M. (2000). *Interpretace a sociální kritika*. Praha: Filosofie, p. 105.

<sup>10</sup> Bertrand, Y. (1998). *Soudobé teorie vzdělávání*. Praha: Portál.

## Source of Legitimacy

In support of our research study, we briefly refer to two pedagogical sources that provide justification for efforts to reduce inequality in access to quality education and to enable the full development of pupils' potential. The first source is Václav Příhoda's school reform plan from 1928/1929<sup>11</sup>. We reference this historical initiative due to its points of convergence with current developments in the education sector, which make it relevant even today. Příhoda's reform placed primary emphasis on the development of the pupil, rather than on the systematization of subject matter. The second source is the contemporary strategic document Strategy 2030+, which outlines the current vision for the Czech educational system and similarly advocates for equity and pupil-centred approaches.

### Příhoda<sup>12</sup>'s Reform

In the school years 1928/1929, Václav Příhoda attempted to establish a reformed, unified, yet internally differentiated school in Czechoslovakia—one that “gives all pupils an equal start and a clear path in the battle of minds”<sup>13</sup>. He understood this reform effort in terms of social justice, educational wholeness, and a learning offer tailored to the needs of each individual student. Such an approach aimed to support the development of each child's unique potential, which he saw as having a significant social impact. This school embodied aspects of an inclusive, democratic, co-educational, labour-oriented, and social institution— “in which equal opportunity for education is provided to all children of the nation and the state”<sup>14</sup>. Příhoda was critical of the existing segregated school system: “Society did not select workers for higher and more complex functions through the school, but rather the school itself performed the selection. Early selection and unequal access to schooling preserved social advantages in the hands of the ruling class”<sup>15</sup>.

The core principles of his model were differentiation and individualization, which he saw as more effective in ensuring inclusion of all students. Differentiation in students' educational paths took place on intellectual and interest-based levels: “Selection in a unified school does not happen through elimination or exclusion from advancement, but through differentiation—distinguishing students by their working abilities and exploring what they are genuinely suited for”<sup>16</sup>. He promoted individualization as a means to awaken

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<sup>11</sup>Příhoda, V. (1936). *Ideologie nové didaktiky*. Praha: Václav Příhoda; Příhoda, V. (1938). *Úloha pokusné a reformní školy*. Praha: Pedagogická akademie; Příhoda, V. (1945). *Idea školy druhého stupně*. Praha: Ústřední učitel.

<sup>12</sup> The most well-known implementation of Příhoda's reform took place in the so-called Zlín schools, funded by entrepreneur Tomáš Baťa.

<sup>13</sup> Příhoda, V. *Idea školy druhého stupně*, p. 58.

<sup>14</sup> Příhoda, V. *Úloha pokusné a reformní školy*, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Příhoda, V. *Idea školy druhého stupně*, p. 56.

<sup>16</sup> Příhoda, V. *Idea školy druhého stupně*, p. 57.

interest in learning: “By allowing the student to freely express their interest and choose among cultural goods, they also seek themselves... Deepening this search for one’s own personality is only possible if it proceeds at a pace and with mental tools appropriate to each individual”<sup>17</sup>. The culmination of this principle of individualization lies in its ability to guide students toward social usefulness. All students, he believed, should have equal access to educational resources. Příhoda was inspired by Masaryk’s idea that while education should be individualized, upbringing should be collective: “Specifically, the idea of progress is implemented through a unified school on the organizational level, a labour-oriented school in terms of learning, and a socially focused school based on collective upbringing”<sup>18</sup>.

The relevance of Příhoda’s reform for today lies in the fact that he centred school change around the student (rather than the curriculum), with the goal of fostering healthy motivation to learn and to participate meaningfully in society.

### Strategy 2030+

The transformation of the Czech educational system is intended to improve the quality of life for all citizens. The authors of the national education vision, as articulated in Strategy 2030+<sup>19</sup>, aim to reduce social polarization and the growing inequality in educational attainment.

From a systemic perspective, a key challenge within the Czech education system lies in its high degree of decentralization and autonomy, which has led to disparities in the quality of education provided across different regions. The diversity of local approaches results in varied outcomes and uneven implementation of reform initiatives. The current generation of children has been born into a world shaped by digital technologies and globalized knowledge, which profoundly alters the processes of their socialization. As a result, the education system is undergoing a transformation that entails “adapting the learning environment as well as changing the content of education and the methods through which it is delivered”<sup>20</sup>.

Strategy 2030+ defines just two overarching strategic goals:

- Strategic Goal 1 (SG1): To focus education more strongly on the acquisition of competencies necessary for active civic, professional, and personal life.
- Strategic Goal 2 (SG2): To reduce inequalities in access to quality education and to enable the full development of pupils' and students' potential.

Strategic Goal 2 specifically aims to reduce manifestations of social exclusion within the Czech school system. Both Strategy 2020 and Strategy 2030+ are grounded in research analyses conducted by the OECD, which

<sup>17</sup> Příhoda, V. *Ideologie nové didaktiky*, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup> Příhoda, V. *Úloha pokusné a reformní školy*, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020. (2014). Praha: MŠMT.

<sup>20</sup> Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020, p.12.

consistently highlight the high level of educational inequality in the Czech Republic. In particular, they point to a statistically significant correlation between students' educational outcomes and the socioeconomic status of their parents. Moreover, there are also statistically significant differences between the performance of pupils across various primary schools and regions. In line with the theory of educational reproduction, the Czech education system continues to exhibit persistently low intergenerational social mobility in education. Taken together, these findings suggest that the Czech Republic demonstrates relatively low educational efficiency and a weak principle of equal opportunity in achieving social success—an essential prerequisite for social cohesion and consensus (MŠMT, 2020, p. 5). The specific objectives within SG2 are designed to reduce the high degree of differentiation in education quality and to limit the strong dependence of student outcomes on family background. Regional disparities in the quality of education contribute to a situation in which a student's academic success is heavily influenced by their place of birth or the location of their schooling.

For children experiencing social disadvantage, limited participation in early childhood education remains a persistent issue. One of the reasons for this is the difficulty schools and social services face in establishing effective communication with families affected by adverse social conditions—such as poverty, chronic stress, inadequate and unstable housing, or family breakdowns. Another critical point of vulnerability arises in the later years of primary education (lower secondary level), where these pupils often begin to lose their educational aspirations. The continued existence of segregated schools—with a majority or more than one-third of pupils being of Romani background (so-called “Romani schools”)—further deepens educational inequalities in the Czech Republic and contributes to unjust disparities in educational opportunity. Moreover, the possibility of early selection in the Czech education system motivates parents with higher educational aspirations to seek out socially homogeneous schools. This results in residual schools, where both teacher optimism and pupils' motivation to pursue higher education tend to decline. As a result, the gap between families with more and fewer resources keeps growing, since access to quality education and other advantages is increasingly limited to the more privileged. One proposed solution lies in the application of the principles of democratization of education and inclusive schooling<sup>21</sup>. Although the Czech education system offers a variety of support mechanisms intended to help children reach their full potential, the principle of democratization is not fully realized in practice. This is largely due to the lack of parental support from families living in conditions of social exclusion. These groups often do not engage in the decision-making processes of educational policy, or they face limited access to them. Their role is frequently framed not as active participants, but as passive subjects of educational policy. This positioning creates barriers

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<sup>21</sup> Maurin, 2007 in Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020, p. 21.

to initiating social dialogue and interferes their participation in promoting educational mobility for their children.

### **International Perspective**

Petintseva<sup>22</sup>, in her ethnographic study, analyses how school discourses about Romani pupils are entextualized and subsequently used in decision-making processes within Belgium's juvenile justice system. The aim of the study was to show that school reports, originally intended as neutral descriptions of students' behavior or performance, often adopt powerful narratives that portray Romani children and their families as problematic or uncooperative. While mothers are not the central focus of the research, they play a significant role within these narratives—frequently being viewed through a deficit-based lens, for example as passive, unsupportive of education, or disruptive to school order. The study also highlights how Romani mothers employ various discursive strategies to challenge institutional authority and legitimize their parental roles. Petintseva thus contributes to understanding how unequal power relations shape whose version of reality is recognized as legitimate in institutional contexts. Qejvanaj<sup>23</sup> analyses the implementation of the National Action Plan for Romani Inclusion in Albania (2016–2020), with a focus on education and employment. The study shows that despite seemingly positive quantitative indicators, such as increased school attendance, deeper structural barriers persist—such as a lack of preschool facilities, absence of free transportation, or the financial inaccessibility of education. These challenges particularly affect Romani women and mothers, who also face gender-based inequalities. Girls and young mothers often interrupt their education due to childcare responsibilities or early marriage. Although Romani families themselves—including mothers—see education as a path to a better life, institutional frameworks often fail to recognize and support this motivation.

Both studies agree that formal equality in access to education is insufficient. They emphasize the need to consider the quality of education, institutional cultural sensitivity, and the recognition of diverse parenting experiences. The discourse of Romani mothers thus emerges in the tension between lived experience and institutional expectations—seeking, through strategic rhetoric, to redefine their role within the educational field.

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<sup>22</sup> Petintseva, O. (2019). 'Entextualisation' Across Institutional Contexts: The Impact of Discourse in School Reports on the Juvenile Justice Trajectories of Roma Youth. *Youth Justice*, 19 (1), 3–24.

<sup>23</sup> Qejvanaj, G. (2021). Albanian National Action Plan for Roma Inclusion 2016–2020: A Study on the Program Achievements at the Halfway Mark. *SAGE Open*, 11 (3).

## Applied Methodological Tools

### Categorization

According to Šanderová and Šmídová and colleagues<sup>24</sup>, the process of categorization is a “normative activity—an evaluation of the appropriateness of people’s behaviour toward others, and a determination of what constitutes normal social relations.” As Nekvapil<sup>25</sup> notes, categorization is oriented toward how “one is supposed to speak about things, events, institutions, and people,” thereby tightly linking social categorization with interpretive framing and the organization of thematic content. These communicative interactions often relate to sensitive topics, where stereotypical thinking or prejudice can become apparent. The significance of social categorization lies in the fact that speakers reveal the social identities of the individuals they refer to—thus, in speaking, “they signal who they are, or who they wish to be perceived as, and how they ‘see’ others”<sup>26</sup>. Vojtíšková<sup>27</sup> defines social categorization as “a process that enables us to structure the social world into meaningful units—most generally into members of in-groups and out-groups.” Through this process, we assign meaning to the world around us while simultaneously participating in the ongoing (re)signification of the existing social order. In other words, categorization in speech acts produces the legitimacy of social control and reinforces pressure to comply with socially emphasized norms. A key factor in this process is the role of dominant discourses, which regulate the perceived seriousness and authority of spoken acts<sup>28</sup>. Closely related to the concept of social categorization is that of social representations. Referring to the work of Moscovici<sup>29</sup>, Marková<sup>30</sup> describes representations as “thoughts in motion”—to represent something means to think, feel, and persuade within a social event. Social representations are thus grounded in “shared thinking, knowledge, and communication”<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Šanderová, J. – Šmídová Matoušová, O. (2009). *Sociální konstrukce nerovnosti pod kvalitativní lupou*. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství (SLON), p. 54.

<sup>25</sup> Nekvapil, J. (2000–2001). Sociální kategorizace v interkulturním kontaktu: základní výklad, cvičení a diskuse dvou scén z podnikové komunikace. *Češtinář*, 11 (2), 38–52, p. 39.

<sup>26</sup> Nekvapil, J. (2000–2001). Sociální kategorizace v interkulturním kontaktu, p. 40.

<sup>27</sup> Vojtíšková, K. (2008). Studium sociální struktury jako konstruovaného prostoru. Sociální kategorizace a sociální identita. In J. Šafr (Ed.), *Sociální distance, interakce, relace a kategorizace: alternativní teoretické perspektivy studia sociální stratifikace*. Praha: Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, p. 66.

<sup>28</sup> Foucault, M. (2002). *Archeologie věděni*. Praha: Herrmann.

<sup>29</sup> Moscovici, S. (2000). *Social Representations: Exploration in social psychology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>30</sup> Marková, I. (2007). *Dialogičnost a sociální reprezentace: dynamika mysli*. Praha: Academia.

<sup>31</sup> Marková, I. *Dialogičnost a sociální reprezentace*, p. 178.

## Framing

To understand the everyday production of social knowledge and the construction of social events, we apply the concept of interpretive frames developed by dramaturgical sociologist Erving Goffman<sup>32</sup>. Goffman focused on how people construct everyday knowledge within real-life situations. Interpretive frames are subject to discursive re-signification and shaped by systems of institutional power. This means that individuals—or social groups—can challenge established power structures by reinterpreting and relabeling social reality through language. Such re-interpretation occurs through ongoing, everyday processes of collective meaning-making, in which various social actors negotiate the relationships between particular entities or phenomena. A fundamental condition for this process is mutual recognition of identity among the actors involved. Framing is grounded in our experiences and the social stock of knowledge. As Šanderová and Šmídová and colleagues<sup>33</sup> note, it involves “the creation of interpretive schemes, patterns, or scripts that organize our ordinary experience, knowledge, and action.” We act within a situational context in which we read social reality through categories such as identity, status, roles, and the products of human activity. According to Koubek<sup>34</sup> frames “show how a given ideology is embedded in context and how we are expected to think about a given topic, issue, or problem within that context.” Through strategies of symbolic construction, speakers can transform interpretive frames, thereby shifting the perspective from which reality is viewed. This process is essential for the emancipation of socially stigmatized groups.

## Discourse Analysis of Power

From the perspective of critical social theory, power operates by obscuring the interpretive origins of constructed reality. Michel Foucault, a foundational figure in theorizing the influence of power structures and dominant discourses, based his analysis on the premise that discourse emerges from institutional (i.e. power-laden) conditions. He emphasized the central role of what he termed discursive structures, which shape our perception of reality. Our knowledge of the world is thus made possible by discourse. As Fairclough<sup>35</sup> notes, “Discourse, according to Foucault, is a social construction of reality—a form of knowledge.” Discourses seek to fix meanings within a coherent and stable structure of signification. This, in turn, produces the illusion of a given and natural social

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<sup>32</sup> Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>33</sup> Šanderová, J. – Šmídová Matoušová, O. (2009). *Sociální konstrukce nerovnosti pod kvalitativní lupou*, p. 59.

<sup>34</sup> Koubek, M. (2013). *Zápas o uvozovky: interpretační rámce a repertoár jednání pro-romského hnutí v letech 1989–2007*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, Fakulta sociálních studií, p. 44.

<sup>35</sup> Fairclough (2003) in Schneiderová, S. (2015). *Analýza diskurzu a mediální text*. Praha: Karolinum, p. 24.

order. In reality, however, social reality—including society itself and individual identity—is composed of fluid and shifting entities that can never be fully or finally defined. The aim of discourse analysis is therefore to examine how constructions of social reality work to present themselves as objective, neutral, and natural.

For the purposes of our research, we draw primarily on the ideas of Laclau and Mouffe<sup>36</sup>. Their discursive theory is rooted in the notion that objectivity itself is formed through discursive processes of meaning-making. The constructed objectivity of the social order obscures the contingent nature of its origin—that is, the historical and contextual struggle between competing discourses. Objectivity, in this framework, can be understood as a sedimented discourse, one that presents itself as independent, neutral, and natural, thereby marginalizing or excluding the viability of alternative discourses. Human beings are embedded in cultural traditions, in processes of knowledge production, in the social order, in acts of social control, and in their own reflected experiences. Discourse, in essence, refers to the temporary fixation of meaning. Laclau and Mouffe describe this process as articulatory practice, which marks both the beginning and the closure of a particular discourse. Discourse operates within what Jørgensen and Phillips<sup>37</sup> term the discursive field—a space that encompasses all the “surplus meanings” associated with signs that have emerged during articulatory practice. To explain how a particular discourse is formed, Laclau and Mouffe distinguish between elements and moments. Elements are polysemic signs or statements that await fixation. A discourse attempts to transform these elements into moments by reducing their ambiguity, thereby stabilizing their meanings within a given discursive structure. Every new utterance or social act has the potential to reframe the discourse, actively reconfiguring or narrowing the current interpretations by connecting signs within a different frame of reference. Discourses are organized around certain nodal points<sup>38</sup>—privileged signs that give structure to the meanings of other signs, thereby anchoring the discourse as a whole. The gradual stabilization of sedimented discourses through social practices is made possible by the mechanism of hegemony. Hegemony works by fixing elements into moments, similar to how a discourse does. In contrast, antagonism represents an open conflict between competing discourses within a particular discursive order. Antagonism provides a space where the taken-for-granted status of norms and power relations can be disrupted, opening up possibilities for alternative meanings and political contestation.

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<sup>36</sup> Laclau, E. – Mouffe, Ch. *Hegemonie a socialistická strategie*.

<sup>37</sup> Jørgensen, M. – Phillips, L. J. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

<sup>38</sup> Laclau, E. – Mouffe, Ch. *Hegemonie a socialistická strategie*, p.112.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough<sup>39</sup> rightly point out that individuals in subordinate social positions do not have the same opportunities to rearticulate elements or to participate meaningfully in the construction of moments—and, by extension, in processes of social change. This underscores the importance of examining how people and phenomena are categorized, and how such categorizations shape the possibilities for action available to them.

### **Analysis and Interpretation**

Before presenting our analysis and interpretation of the research data, it is essential to clarify the conditions under which our interpretations were constructed—namely, the lived experiences of Romani mothers and students within the context of both school and family socialisation. At the outset, we had to critically reflect on our own conscious and unconscious biases—both positive and negative—as we entered interactions with Romani participants during the data collection phase. These biases were often informed more by typified representations than by personal experience or scholarly literature.

We made a conscious effort to suspend the influence of intrusive media portrayals of Romani life—whether in the form of deficit-oriented contemporary news coverage or romanticised depictions of the past (as found in films or documentaries)—as well as exoticized imagery from anthropological or ethnographic works. These representations typically involve recurring tropes of carefree, half-naked Romani children, extreme poverty, dilapidated housing, or even discriminatory humour.

However, despite our efforts to suppress such predominantly visual preconceptions, it was not always possible to fully eliminate their influence during unstructured interviews. As a result, our questions may have inadvertently contributed to, or even reinforced, a “gadjo” perspective—that is, a non-Romani outsider’s gaze, potentially lacking sensitivity to Romani cultural norms and lived experiences—which risks reproducing stereotypical constructions of Romani students’ social realities.

In group settings, we also employed techniques drawn from the Theatre of the Oppressed, which enabled participants to articulate their social positioning within the education system, both verbally and through embodied expression. The selection of analytical methods was intended to facilitate a relatively authentic interpretation of social reality, as understood and expressed by the Romani participants themselves. Employing discourse analysis and coding strategies common to qualitative research methodologies, we grounded our interpretation in the personal experiences and narratives of Romani respondents, while attending to the relativistic and power-laden dynamics of meaning-making.

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<sup>39</sup> Chouliaraki, L. – Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 125.

Through this approach, we sought to achieve intersubjective understanding and culturally mediated insight into the lived realities of our participants. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that a certain degree of interpretative distortion is inevitable. This arises from differences in linguistic codes and sociocultural frameworks between researchers and participants, as well as the varying epistemological resources that individual informants draw upon when articulating their experiences.

### **Categorization**

Source of statements: Romani mothers

The informants' construction of social reality concerned the following categories:

- Aggression in School
- Different Cultural Pattern
- Competing Binary: Them (teachers) vs. Us (mothers)
- Recognition of the Teaching Profession
- Priorities of Romani Mothers

#### **Aggression in School**

##### **a) Based on Construction of Romani Children's Unruliness**

I1: And he tried to defend her, and then some older boy, maybe from eighth or ninth grade, punched him. He came home with a black eye ((gestures to eye)). Yeah, he had a black eye, so it just...yeah, that was that.

I2: We've got stories like that too.

I4: I've been through that too, I know it – happened with my son.

I1: The headmistress, she was very nice, she understood. She even talked to the pupils. And, well, for a little while, it kinda worked.

I4: Hm.

IA: And after a while it started again. Like, you know, one of them started it and then everyone joined in. There wasn't, like, a person or some girl who would say, "Stop! What are you doing to her?"

...

I4: Like, I wanted to put my son in the after-school club, or well, I can't really – those Vlax kids go there.

I3: 'Cause you're scared they'll beat him up.

I2: Yeah.

I4: And he's like, „Mom, I don't wanna go!“ ((desperate tone))

...

I1: It's also about that kid, you know, how he didn't get any upbringing from his mom, from the parents. ((shakes head in disapproval))

I3: Yeah, they don't have respect for the teachers.

I4: No respect.

I1: So yeah, the parents are partly to blame too.

I2: Yes.

I3: That's what I'm saying – they don't have respect, these kids, not for the teachers, and the teachers, they're just out of patience, so the just...((waves hands in the air)) they let it go.

...

I2: I think the kids should change, 'cause some of them are rude. Romani kids are extremely rude, loud... it's a disaster, really.

I1: White kids too.

I2: Yeah, white kids too, I'm not saying just Gypsies. Like—Romani kids can be white too, but mostly it's the Romani ones. This really needs to change.

I7: If there are bad prejudices against Romani in white schools, then it'll always be bad. And the other way around—if there are bad prejudices against white people in Romani schools, then it'll be bad too. It's never gonna be solved. That's the problem nowadays—prejudices. Bad prejudices.

R: Do teachers have them too?

I7: Oh, for sure.

### **b) Based on the Construction of Poor Conditions in Romani School**

I3: It's the school that changes them.

I5: Like, maybe someone provokes him, maybe someone starts provoking...

I3: =The school changes them.

I5: He won't let it go, he kinda likes fighting.

I3: =No, it's the school. It's changing them.

I5: Yeah, and they do keep watch, like when he was in... second grade, there was this one teacher—she didn't care. She let the kids fight, and she didn't care. She just went to the teachers' room.

...

I6: The kids are okay, yeah, but I also think that the way—

I4: =Mm-hmm.

I6: —the way they're treated, like, they're basically given the chance to hit each other, so then the kids think it's okay.

I3: Exactly, yes.

I4: Exactly, like they think they're allowed to do it.

...

T: What's the source of that aggression? Is it that they're around other Romani kids?

I4: Exactly.

R: So you think they should rather be around non-Romani kids? That they'd be less aggressive?

I4: Yes, that's true.

...

R: And what bothers you about that school?

I4: Bad—bad teachers, bad kids, the way they behave is bad, the teachers aren't even there, like—there's just no supervision at all.

I3: There isn't. ((nodding)) It's an awful school.

I4: Nobody watches the kids, stuff goes missing—slippers, hats, like, everything.

...

I3: Well, me personally... my son went to a Romani school for just one year, and I took him out, yeah. Because mostly it's true—Romani kids, they're hyperactive, yeah. Probably a bit more than regular non-Romani kids. And for some kids, they're a bad example. I'm talking from my own experience—that's why I took my son out. And when I put him in a school with Czech kids, there was bullying, though. In the Romani school, it's like he could do whatever he wanted, he could mess around with the other kids and so on, right? 'Cause he was among his own, yeah? And then when I put him in the Czech school, he was the one everyone looked at, you know? Now he's kind of blended in—he's in sixth grade, so it's not such a big issue anymore, because he's used to it, right? But at the beginning, it was a big problem. Still, I preferred to deal with that problem so he could... so he could fit in a bit with the other kids, because I saw that things go faster there, and I saw he had what it takes. Rather than leave him in the Romani school where he could just do whatever he wanted. I think the problem with Romani schools is the teachers. They let the kids do whatever they want—everything. And I've really witnessed it: when I went to the Romani school thinking about putting him back there, they told me, "Yes, he'll be fine here. He can do what he wants. He'll be fine." So I think in the Romani school, when the kids are that wild, it's because there's absolutely no authority. That's the problem.

...

I5: I'm telling you, teachers have no authority.

I3: They can do whatever they want there. I mean, speaking from experience—I went to a Romani school too. I came from a Czech school, and when I saw what was going on in that Romani school... Like, kids actually opened the window and lit a cigarette. That was it for me. And that's exactly the kind of thing no one deals with there—just nothing, really, at that Romani school.

That's why, if all Romani kids had to go only to Romani schools—like, if they weren't even allowed into Czech schools—that would be really bad. You know that film *Bastardi*? That's exactly it.

I6: But I have to speak up. I think if there's a good teacher, one who knows how to earn the kids' respect—and the whole class—then it can work.

## Different Cultural Pattern

### a) Based on the Construction of Life Priorities

I1: But only a few of them care, you know? Some parents just don't bother. Yeah, their kids go to school, sure... but they don't care whether they go or not. And I know, like—when I go to pick up my boy from school, I hear some of those Romani girls—

R: =Mhm.

I1: —or Gypsy girls. I listen to them. I don't talk to them, I don't know them, but I listen to how they talk. Like, “Ugh, finally, let him come out of that school already, so I don't have to go there anymore. So, I don't have to deal with all that school stuff. I don't want no responsibilities, like, having to go to school. I can't wait till he's fifteen, sixteen.” ((mimicking whining tone))

...

R: And did your parents, like, push you—

I1: =Hmm. ((sighs))

R: —to go to vocational school, or how was it?

I1: Yeah, they pushed me. From around twelve, they started pushing me. But unfortunately, I was acting all cool teenager, right? And I was like, “Sure, sure, I'll get a qualification.” ((mocking her past self)) Then when I was in seventh grade, I was like, “Forget it. I'm going to the labor office.” I went to discos, parties, and I didn't care anymore. I said, “Nope. I'll get unemployment benefits and just stay home.”

### b) Based on the Construction of Communication Habits

I6: But you know how it is—she's just louder, she laughs a lot, she's a happy girl, really.

I3: =Well, she's young.

I4: She's young, so like—so what?

I2: Exactly.

I6: And like, when she says something—her view or opinion—the teachers take it the wrong way, like it's bad or something.

R: 'Cause they're not used to that kind of thing?

I2: Yes, yes.

I6: Yeah, and she's just that type—when something's wrong, she'll say it. She's not afraid to speak up! ((firmly))

I1: That's a good thing.

...

R: So, they teach would understand what's actually going on?

I5: Yes, yes. Because in Romani, most of the time, that's where the conflicts start. They curse each other, they use bad words, and the teacher can't intervene. The kids are handling it among themselves. She can't step in—because she doesn't understand.

R: And if she did understand, what could she do?

I5: If she understood... if she knew, then she could step in: "Give me your report book, and if you do that again, I'm going home to tell your parents. And if that doesn't help, I'll go further." Like, up the chain—to the office, to child services. Because child services want to deal with families like that. When it gets extreme—like families that are just like: "Go to school so they don't cut my benefits!"—then that's how it ends up getting dealt with, you know?

### **c) Based on the Construction of Parental Role Modeling**

I1: ...he just doesn't want to, or he's lazy. So, I always push him, or sometimes I even argue with my man about it—like, that he doesn't push him, you know? That he's spoiling him. I say, "Show him! Look, you're not educated either, you only finished primary school and now you can't get a job anywhere."

...

R: So, when kids aren't interested in school—why is that, like...?

I2: =It's the Romani, yeah. It's the Gypsy talk, basically. The parents just aren't interested in school at all.

R: And the kids?

I2: Well, that's how their parents grew up. And now, when the kids see that—like, dad's like that, mom doesn't care either—then they're like, "Why should I care?"

R: Mhm.

I2: They just copy it from their parents, that's how it is. It's all about how they're raised. It's all in the upbringing.

...

I1: And for some parents, school just means nothing, you know? Like, "I don't care—let the kid just grow up already, so me and my husband can finally have some peace and quiet." ((parodies)) Yeah, a lot of parents think like that. They just want peace.

...

R: So, what's the solution, then?

I4: Well, like... the solution is that some parents... it really depends on them. If they want that for their kids—going to school and all that. It's not just about the kids. Sometimes the real problem is the parents, that they absolutely don't care. They open the report book, sign off on six failing grades—fine, right? Just out of duty, so they don't lose their child benefits or some kind of welfare. So it's like, "Get up, go to school." And that's it. Not like, "Get up, brush your teeth, get dressed nicely, do you have everything? Got your lunch? Is your report book signed? Homework done? Okay, let's take ten minutes before you go to school, let's check everything, tell me what you remember." Out of fear—so the kid doesn't bring home another F, right? And they know—some of those moms send them off like, "Get up and go." So sometimes the problem really is the parents, not just the kids.

**Competing Binarity: Them (Teachers) vs. Us (Mothers)**

**a) Based on the Construction of Non-Romani Teacher“Superiority**

R: But what I'd like to understand—you were saying the teachers didn't really deal with it?

I4: Exactly, just like you said.

I5: They say it's like, you know, just between the kids—the Romani kids.

I4: Right. They don't deal with it. They just don't respond anymore, they let it be, like, that's how it is, I guess.

I5: They just throw all the Roma and the Vlax into one bag.

I4, I5: They're probably scared of the parents.

I3: Because they're Roma. And the teachers, they just see it like— “They're all Roma, that's it.”

...

R: Why are the teachers passive? What's the reason?

I6: Because they don't care.

I5: Exactly. They don't care—it's well paid for them. That school's not going to get shut down, because they want to keep the students. So, it's like, “Quick, give us as many as you can.” And if you transfer from a Romani school to a regular one, they'll say, “Go back to first grade, please—you can't keep up.” They don't give them any real education.

I3: That's exactly why I didn't get into high school. Because I wasn't... Like, when I was at the Czech school, my grades were average—Bs and Cs. Then I switched to the Romani school and suddenly I had straight As. So, I thought I was doing great, you know? And then I took the entrance exams—and nothing. Nothing at all. I didn't know a thing.

...

R: What do teachers lack, in your opinion? If you had a Book of Wishes and Complaints right here, and it said: Teachers – Pros and Cons?

I5: They lack authority. They don't care whether Romani kids get any... I feel like in Romani schools, they're just not interested in helping Romani children get a proper education. They don't care.

R: The teachers?

I5: Yes. Especially in Romani schools—not in the non-Romani ones, not at all. Their job—I've written to them more than once: You're not suited for this profession! And mostly it's the authority. They're not even trying to hold that authority. They just don't. I think they treat this really just like a job. Like, “Why should I even bother? That kid's a little bastard, that one too, that one's also one of theirs. Did you see his mom? And the other day they arrested her brother.” They take into account where someone's from—what kind of family. And then it's all pointless. They're like, “You're black, you're a Gypsy, you're from a problematic family. What could ever come out of you, seriously? You'll end up on welfare anyway!”

### **b) Based on the Construction of Diagnostic Superiority**

I6: Like, my daughter was supposed to do some kind of test or something. And I said I'd go to the principal myself and talk about how it's going to be. And then the mentor said, "No, I'll go there!" and tells me, "You don't need to go." Then even someone from the foundation called me and said, "We have a mentor position to handle things like this." And I said, "Well, nobody told me that! That's my responsibility as a parent!"

I4: =Exactly.

I6: Like—whether my daughter has this test or that one, I'm the one who should go talk to the principal and ask. And I told them, "I don't care that you're giving her money. What matters to me is to sort these things out myself!" ((firmly))

...

R: So, you're saying the deputy head didn't want to admit the child because they didn't go to preschool?

I4: Yes, exactly.

R: Could you say specifically what her reason was—what exactly bothered her?

I3: It bothered her because the kids weren't... She said she can tell the difference between a preschool child and one who didn't go. She said—

I5: =And I still don't get it—preschool doesn't even teach them anything. You get that?

I3: But yeah, she said she can recognize preschool kids. She just wants them to have attended preschool—because she wants them to be less playful once they start school.

I4: It's kind of weird. It is weird.

I3: Yeah, I guess so. She said something like he's still missing a few years.

I1: She didn't want a kid from the prep class to go into first grade—she wanted one from preschool.

I3: She said, "Look, he still has some gaps."

I1: She didn't know how to explain it, so she just made it up like that.

...

I6: They even told her in eighth grade that she wouldn't make it to high school—and they said it right to her face. And she was like, "I want to go to a teacher training school, because I want to work with kids."

I4: Yes.

I6: And the teacher says, "You're not good enough for that—you'll be a cook."

I4: I don't like that. I really don't like that.

I1: And how can she know that?

I4: How can she know that? Exactly!

I2: They'll tell you you're not good enough, that you won't make it.

I4: Yes.

I1: But how can she know—if she doesn't even give you a chance?

...

I6: So actually, I kind of gave up on school, and I started motivating her in a different direction. I encouraged her to see that learning doesn't just happen at

school, but somewhere else. That she can learn in other spaces in life. Like trying different clubs. Or I got her involved in different activities, so she could actually see that she has self-confidence. That she's not stupid.

I4: That's true, that's right.

### **c) Based on the Construction of Eye-for-an-Eye Mentality**

I5: When I transferred my kids here, they were more communicative, kind of a bit ahead of the other Romani kids. They were used to speaking Czech, to expressing ideas, being part of the group. So, they attracted a lot of friends to their side—a lot of friends. And the teacher saw my son like—if anything bad happened, then it was my son's responsibility, because he was above average. And the teacher even called him the boss. And I didn't like that. That happened to me here. They just weren't used to a Romani child who was doing fine in terms of behavior, thinking, right? Whenever there was some activity, they could see he was way, way ahead. But they didn't see that as a good thing—as a positive example for the others. No. If something bad happened, they blamed my son: "He's the one who influenced them, because he's got the brain."

R: And what happened? Did they punish them or what?

I5: Well, punish... they wanted to punish him, yeah...

R: Just him?

I5: Yes, just him. They even wanted to send him to a children's home. I went to the school authority and nothing much happened, so I escalated it all the way to Prague. And then the principal came to my door, begging me to withdraw it, because they were docking his salary for six months. Some kind of bonus or part of his pay, something like that. And I said: No. No. I've been fighting this for half a year, I've had this internal battle with you here, so no. You deserve to be punished! You made a mistake, and you wanted to put my son in a children's home!

...

I2: This little boy came home and had been really restless in class—just misbehaving. And he wouldn't listen at all. Just wouldn't listen. So, the teacher yelled at him, and then he made up this story at home that she had beaten him, and some more nonsense like "everyone saw it." His mother went and waited for the teacher until five o'clock, and then she beat her up so badly that now she's facing eight to ten years in prison.

## **Recognition of the Teaching Profession**

### **a) Based on the Construction of Job Demands**

I1: And this school isn't bad, the one our kids go to. The teachers here, they really try, and they've got a lot on their plate too. You can't just say, like—imagine having twenty kids in one classroom, or maybe fifteen, and now imagine this one shouting, that one shouting—you don't even know what to do. ((others nodding)) We also have to kind of recognize that the teacher, she's dealing with a lot too, right?

I4: Yeah, definitely.

...

I3: A teacher told me this already in kindergarten. When my son first started going, she said, "From now on, we're already fifty percent responsible for raising your child." And it's true. Because he spends more time there than at home, almost. He gets home at five, and by eight he's in bed. It's been like that since kindergarten. He spends almost half his life at school, you know?

I5: Well, I wouldn't say half exactly. But up until he's eighteen, yeah, you could say he's there half the day.

I3: Right, that's just it. So, part of the upbringing really is on the teachers.

### **b) Based on the Construction of an Understanding and Caring Approach**

I2: I think the child, the student, should definitely respect the teacher.

I3: I'll put it the way I understand it, okay? That strictness has to be there from the teacher's side—like, "I'm strict with you because I care about you."

I5: The student has to know that—it's not just about learning. There has to be respect on both sides.

I3: "I care about you. I can be strict, but I can also show the other side." That's how I see it.

...

I5: A teacher should be supportive with the child: "I need you to do this. I'm asking this from you. It's for your own good, for your life. I'm the one giving you a start in life."

### **c) Based on the Construction of Expected Professional Support**

I4: And they said that my son just doesn't have what it takes, the little one—that he's just slow. And I said, "That doesn't matter, they'll teach him anyway." But they just said they don't have time for him, that there are thirty kids in the class.

I3: Thirty kids?

I4: Yeah, and they said they don't have time, that they won't explain things to him three times.

I3: That's not okay.

I1: That's what school is for—to explain things to him!

I3: Not in this school. ((firmly))

I4: And I don't like that.

I6: They should've given him some kind of individual plan or something that he could keep up with, right?

...

I6: She was seeing the school psychologist, and the psychologist said, "Yeah, she comes to me sometimes, we talk a bit"—but that was the full extent of the support! And because of that, she was totally demotivated to even try. She ended up seeing herself as an outsider, like... ((gestures)) If I hadn't been there to support her as a parent, she would've hit rock bottom—no one would've done anything with her.

...

I3: And when something happens, the teacher handles it instead of the kids—and I really like that.

I4: Yes, exactly, she takes care of it.

I3: Yeah, like two years ago, some girl strangled my daughter—and I didn't even know, because my daughter didn't tell me.

I4: No!

I3: And the teacher called me in the evening to tell me some girl tried to strangle her, and she asked if there were any aftereffects, if my daughter had told me. I said, "No. I'm hearing this from you." And she said, "Well, I already issued a formal warning to the student."

## **Priorities of Romani Mothers**

### **a) Based on the Construction of Necessary Changes**

R: I'm just thinking—when you say the teachers should change somehow, there are two options. I still don't fully get it. Should they be stricter with the kids, so that there's more order—

I3: Yes.

I4: Exactly.

R: —or should they be kinder to them, so the kids aren't—

I1: No, stricter.

I2: Stricter.

I3: No, stricter.

I4: Yeah, more strict.

R: So, you feel the teachers are too soft on them?

I3: Yes, yes, yes.

I1: Too soft, yeah.

...

I5: She lets the kids go without even asking, "Where are your parents? Who's picking you up?"

I4: Yeah, I don't like that at all.

I5: She just doesn't care. She won't even say, "Line up in pairs." And her locker room's just around the corner. ((ironically))

I3: That's bad. That's really bad.

I4: Now she knows me as a parent, she recognizes me, but not the others. ((angrily)) There was a father sitting there, right next to me. “Excuse me, where’s my son?” I said, “I don’t know.” Turns out the teacher left him standing outside the school. A first grader! That’s just not okay.

I1: That’s not allowed! You can’t do that!

I5: In the end, my friend called me—she had him at her place. She had gone to pick up her son around half past eleven and found him there. She said, “What if a car hit him? Or a tram? Who’s responsible?” There’s heavy traffic there—no lights, no crosswalk, nothing.

I1: Mhm.

I5: And the teacher told me, “We’re not responsible!” So, you know what I did? I pulled my kid out and put him in another school.

...

R: So, you're saying it should be mixed—half Romani, half non-Romani in the same school?

I4: Yes, exactly.

Others: Yes! ((all nodding))

...

R: So, what bothers you about school—what would you like to change, to make it fit better?

I6: Can I say something?

R: Go ahead.

I6: I wish there were schools where kids didn’t end up having to go to a psychiatrist or psychologist because of how the teachers treat them. That’s what I’d want most. I want schools—and teachers—where students actually enjoy going to school.

I3: Yes, I feel the same.

R: Can you explain what you just said?

I3: Like, when a student has some issue at school—or they think he’s a little problematic—or they just notice something, they immediately send him to a psychologist. And I don’t like that either, because the kid ends up stressed. That happened to me too—and I was stressed as well.

R: What caused that stress?

I3: What caused it? That it felt mandatory. That they were forcing us into it.

### **b) Based on the Construction of a Romani Perspective on School**

I6: But the teacher at school should really try to motivate the child. You know?

I4: That’s true.

I6: I get it, but then complaining about the child, saying they just can’t handle school—and not even trying to understand why they can’t?

I2: That’s what every teacher says about my son. Just like she said.

I6: Yeah. For example, my daughter developed epilepsy when she was ten and started taking strong medication, and her academic performance dropped by two whole levels.

R: Mhm.

I6: And they just kept pressuring her—“you have to do this, you have to do that”—but she just couldn’t.

I4: She couldn’t handle it.

I3: I understand.

I2: She couldn’t, yeah.

I6: And when I asked for some kind of individual learning plan, they told me she didn’t need one at all.

I4: I don’t get that. ((quietly))

...

I6: So, it was really about how the teacher acted—so arrogant. The child felt miserable, didn’t feel good at school, and the mother couldn’t find a way to talk to the teacher because of it, to make school feel safe for the child. Or like—my child is sensitive, and they need to feel good in the place where they spend time. And when they don’t feel safe with the teacher, they don’t even want to go.

...

I4: He knows the teacher in that class is like a robot. Not like a person. There’s just nothing emotional there. Like, she could at least talk with the kids, not as a friend, but... you know, just have some kind of conversation. Not just the lessons. That’s the problem with my son—he sees the teacher as a stranger. She comes in, goes through the material, and he’s afraid to ask anything, because she might say, “You’re behind” or “You weren’t paying attention.” But maybe he just doesn’t understand. And we’ve had to deal with that a lot. There’s no relationship with the kids.

I9: There’s no friendly connection between them. I don’t mean literally being friends—but there should be something like that between a student and a teacher.

I3: Because if a child likes the teacher, they’ll listen. They’ll say, “I’m not going to hurt that teacher—I like her, because she’s kind to me.”

### **c) Based on the Construction of the Need of an Inclusive Approach**

I6: And just to go back to that—I think what a child really needs is a space that feels safe, where they really feel good.

I4: Exactly.

I6: Because if someone keeps putting pressure on her all the time, or just—

I1: Then the kid won’t even want to go to school.

I4: Exactly.

R: So, what creates that safe space?

I6: That she’s accepted the way she is. With everything she is.

...

I4: I said, “Everyone can be who they are. Nobody has to be perfect.” Maybe this one is a bit slower—it doesn’t matter. Everyone is who they are. I told her that straight to her face, just like it is.

...

I6: I just wanted to add that every child has their own pace, and we need to approach each child individually. Teachers should take that into account. Because every child has their own personality. Just because something doesn't come easy for them doesn't mean they're bad. Maybe they don't get good grades, but they might be great at something else—you know, they have...

I5: Or the teacher should recognize that he's struggling in a certain subject, and then pay more attention to him, explain the material better. Not just throw it at him and give him a failing grade and move on.

I6: Yes, or pile on a bunch of assignments just to show he can't keep up.

I5: Exactly!

...

I1: I mean, I've got nothing against special schools—but that's where the slower kids go.

R: Mhm.

I1: And I just don't like—well, actually it does bother me—that it's all Gypsy kids there. Like, when someone I know asks me what school my son goes to and how satisfied I am, I tell them straight: I don't like that school. But no other school will take him because he's darker. A few shades darker—not totally black, he's more olive-skinned. But they won't accept him, and they make up excuses like it's not his district.

### Positioning

We will now conceptualize the ways in which symbolic constructions of social reality are shaped by the so-called Modi operandi<sup>40</sup>. These modi operandi can contribute to the establishment of dominance relationship and the legitimization of their validity.

Romani mothers directed the legitimization of their narratives into a binary division of responsibility for influencing the Romani child. In this framework, the school assumes the primary role of supervisory authority over the proper behaviour of Romani pupils. Only secondarily does it serve an educational function. The Romani family, in turn, plays the role of emotional support and guardian of the child's personal interests. Romani mothers reaffirmed the role of the school as an institution that should develop Romani children in accordance with Romani socialization patterns. Through this, they rationalized the subordination of the school to the interests of Romani family. In effect, this positioning supported the existence of so-called "Romani school", which, unlike non-Romani schools, do not prioritize academic performance. The mothers narrated their arguments through frequent life stories involving cases of so-called school failure. By using this strategy, they asserted a claim to shift responsibility for Romani pupils' school failure onto the school itself.

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<sup>40</sup> Thompson, J. B. (1990). *Ideology and modern culture: critical social theory in the era of mass communication*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

The dissimulation *modus operandi*, specifically concealment, selectively highlights aspects of social reality that align with the speaker's power interests. In the case of Romani mothers, the conflictual behaviour of Romani pupils was consistently framed as a product of the school environment. Conditions within Romani families were mentioned only through euphemistic language. These references typically pointed to acts of social emancipation or expressions of Romani children's temperament. Examples included themes such as loud speech, clothing styles, or conflictual interactions with teachers. Isolated comments by Romani mothers about inappropriate behaviour at home were discursively re-labelled using a cause-effect logic: the child's misbehaviour was presented as a consequence of a lack of school discipline, resulting from the weakness of the teaching staff. Latently shared awareness of the lower cognitive demands in predominantly Romani schools, as well as remarks about pupils' academic performance, were replaced in the mothers' narratives by an emphasis on alternative education goals. Instead of the expected performance (such as good grades), they preferred the child's personal well-being within the school environment and preparation for a future parental role.

Through the *modus operandi* of unification, Romani mothers (within the focus group setting) developed cooperative strategies to criticize a school system that they perceived as failing to understand the needs of Romani children. They expressed symbolic unity especially in relation to school interventions concerning the psychological assessment of Romani pupils. In this regard, they leaned toward inclusive mechanisms grounded in the acceptance of the child as they are. The period of compulsory schooling was discursively framed by the informants as "liveable" educational atmosphere, in which Romani children are guided by teachers who are both supportive and consistent. Within the *modus operandi* of fragmentation, the informants' narratives revealed three key dichotomies. The first concerned the relationship between Romani and non-Romani culture, particularly in relation to the perceived value of education. The second dichotomy involved the differing interests of the Romani school—represented by white female teachers—and those of Romani families. The third dichotomy reflected a distancing from the social practices of Vlax<sup>41</sup> Romani. In the first case, the mothers generalized Romani life patterns in order to legitimize the specific educational needs of their children. In the second, they often launched harsh criticisms of school staff, motivated by perceived racial bias. They understood the alleged indifference of white teachers toward Romani pupils as an expression of the hierarchical superiority of the non-Romani majority society. In the third case: relating to the distribution of social power—the mothers labelled the group they called "the Vlax" as aggressors with whom no reasonable dialogue was possible. These symbolic constructions of reality enabled the mothers to engage in positioning—that is, discursive self-localization of their identity as fair defenders of Romani children's rights and as

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<sup>41</sup> Vlax Roma are a Romani subgroup with distinct linguistic and cultural traditions.

knowledgeable advocates for their educational needs. In this context, the school was framed as a failing institution from two perspectives: the social (as it fosters racism) and the professional (as it seeks to reshape Romani pupils against their nature).

Reification was a relatively common *modus operandi* in the informants' narratives. Social reality is based on the negotiation of meanings and their inherent fluidity—something that reification denies. The deconstruction of entrenched perceptions regarding the interaction between Romani families and schools was rather rare in the perspectives expressed by Romani mothers. Most statements emphasized the dysfunctionality of predominantly Romani schools, often accompanied by considerations of transferring their child to another school. In their accounts, there was a strong tendency to naturalize the perceived need to “keep Romani pupils on a tight rein.” Alongside this, the temperament or character of Romani children was naturalized and eternalized, reinforcing a long-standing tradition of avoiding more demanding academic paths. In this way, Romani children are discursively assigned the identity of underachieving pupils. This identity is further supported by a powerful institutional discourse that promotes the existence of tailor-made “Romani schools.” Within this discourse, the views of both teachers and Romani parents tend to align and reinforce each other.

We will briefly describe the range of linguistic tools through which the social reality of education for Romani pupils was symbolically constructed from the perspective of Romani mothers, using the framework of speech acts developed by Austin (2000). Criticism of teachers' behaviour was a frequent theme in their arguments. Romani mothers presented stereotypical examples from educational reality in which teachers' authority failed in disciplining Romani pupils. Teachers allegedly deliberately ignored aggressive behaviour by Romani children, thereby reinforcing their social superiority over Roma people. The Romani mothers positioned themselves as competent critics of the school environment without addressing the interests and demands of the school. From the perspective of speech acts, they issued verdictives against non-Roma teachers, thus discrediting their professional identity as education experts. In the mothers' narratives, there was a lack of recognition for teachers' contributions to the cognitive development of children. Through expressiveness, they voiced their astonishment and indignation at how the school was “ruining Romani children, which also negatively affected intergenerational communication within Roma families. A secondary rhetorical effect of these impassioned critiques was a resulting refusal to cooperate with the school. Through this act, they discursively justified their children's school failures and personal conflicts with school staff. In rare instance, they deconstructed the generalizations of their negative statement about the school by pointing out specific exceptions. The background for this shift in evaluative context was the appreciation expressed by teachers for the child's progress. The illocutionary force of the Romani

mothers' statements aimed to evoke the impression that Roma people are not sufficiently understood or, more importantly, recognized in Czech society.

### **Framing**

The narrative pattern articulated by Romani mothers constructed what may be described as an “everyday educational reality,” primarily shaped by their perceptions of how non-Romani teachers relate to Romani children. Their accounts drew on both personal recollections from their own school experiences and their current perspectives as parents. Within this discourse, Romani mothers assigned the responsibility for the learning process almost entirely to the school. Underachievement on the part of the child was interpreted as a consequence of unprofessional, inappropriate, or even dismissive attitudes on the part of teachers. In contrast, academic success was attributed predominantly to the child's innate talent or giftedness.

### **Causality Framework of Conflict Behaviour**

According to the narratives of Romani mothers, the core problems in predominantly Romani schools stem from conflictual relationships among Romani pupils themselves. Manifestations of racism and violence, however, are primarily attributed to the indifference and inconsistency of non-Romani teachers in addressing these conflicts. Another cause of the problems was identified as the neglect of the pupils' right to freedom of expression and decision-making. In the informants' accounts, a causal chain of reasons and consequences leads to the conclusion that the school is ultimately responsible for the disobedience of Romani children. The lack of respect shown by Romani pupils toward teachers is rooted in a generalizing assumption of the teachers' (alleged racist) aversion to Roma. At the same time, however, the lack of respect is paradoxically and counterproductively attributed to parental upbringing, where children adopt dismissive behavioural patterns toward school from their family environment.

Visible signs of disorder and a lack of discipline in schools often led Romani mothers to express contempt toward the teaching staff. According to them, teachers choose a strategy of non-intervention in disputes among children or engage in alibistic denial of their responsibility. The main reason for this approach was said to be fear of potential backlash from Romani parents.

Informants also contextualized the specific challenges of educating Romani pupils by referring to the behaviour of Vlax Romani children in Romani schools. Their behaviour—along with that of Vlax Romani parents—was described as hostile and aggressive toward other Roma. By distancing themselves from the Vlax, Romani mothers constructed a binary opposition between “non-conforming” Vlax Roma and “tolerant” non-Vlax Roma.

As a solution to the unacceptable conditions of violence in Romani schools, the informants proposed systemic change—namely, social inclusion. They understood inclusion in terms of the existence of ethnically mixed schools, and more specifically, the elimination of all-Romani segregated schools.

In discussing the violent tendencies of Romani pupils, the mothers emphasized a construction of social reality that stems from teachers' unpreparedness to understand the Romani temperament. The heightened aggressiveness (wildness, unruliness) of Romani children and the belief that the school—rather than the family—is to blame was supported by the argument that their children did not misbehave at home before attending school. Teachers were accused of not understanding the context of pupil conflicts due to their lack of knowledge of the Romani language, leading to alibistic and evasive reactions. Blame was also placed on the frustrating and demotivating school environment itself. Through these discursive constructions, Romani mothers absolved themselves of responsibility for their children's behaviour—even while acknowledging that their children now behave inappropriately at home during their school years. The most common solution, from the perspective of Romani mothers, was to transfer their child to a different school.

### **The "Carrot and Stick" Framework**

Romani mothers typically focused their descriptions on the functioning of disciplinary rules and on teachers' familiarity with pupils' family members. When informants perceived shortcomings in these social processes, they responded by drawing conclusions and forming judgments about the school's effectiveness. A sense of mutual familiarity among people within the school, and the predictability of their actions, is considered essential. A major point of contention arises when a teacher demonstrates disinterest or loses track of a pupil's current family situation—particularly at the primary school level. A lack of knowledge about the child's parents or close relatives, or leaving the child unsupervised, is interpreted as a failure on the part of the teacher or school as an institution. There is a clear preference among Romani mothers for teachers' supervisory roles over their educational ones. The content of instruction is usually not a central concern. A teacher's authority is expected to be based on strictness and the enforcement of rules. Within this framework of preferred behavioural models, Romani mothers value teachers who demonstrate active, responsive, and simultaneously firm leadership in the life of the school. Their sensitivity to what they perceive as unjust treatment of their children often manifests as criticism toward the teachers. At the same time, what is perceived as "supportive" behaviour on the part of teachers is welcomed even more strongly. A particularly effective strategy for fostering cooperation between school and Romani families is when teachers recognize and affirm Romani children. Romani mothers have clear expectations of how teachers should act. The verb "to deal with" (řešit) plays a key role in their accounts. The teacher's

primary responsibility is seen as the immediate resolution of any school-related issues. Fulfilling the competence of pedagogical authority is associated with timely responses to events—issuing a warning, applying sanctions, demonstrating trust, or offering cooperation. Above all, teachers are expected to give the impression that they have firm control over Romani children. Expectations toward teachers are not based on academic expertise, but rather on their professional role as guarantors of children's physical and emotional safety. Romani mothers are aware of the challenges of raising young children, which they illustrated through references to shouting and high energy, especially in classrooms with large groups of pupils. It is evident that many school conflicts cannot be prevented by supervision alone, nor can full responsibility for children's behaviour rest solely with teaching staff. Nevertheless, when disciplinary issues arise, the teacher is often immediately blamed for mishandling the situation.

The views presented above can be summarized in the observation that Romani mothers dichotomously prefer both strictness and consistency in discipline, and kindness and responsiveness in education. Romani parents are often troubled by the idea of their children being stressed by the pursuit of grades and the pressure to perform academically. The problem of school failure among Romani pupils is frequently attributed by Romani parents to inappropriate guidance or classroom management by white female teachers, who are perceived as lacking understanding of the individual needs of Romani children and attempting to "re-educate" them according to non-Romani norms. A key value for Romani mothers is a supportive school environment, and language mastery is seen as central to their children's educational success. According to the mothers, language is a pathway to higher education and improved life opportunities for Roma. For this reason, some Romani mothers choose to prioritize Czech over Romani in their family upbringing. At this point, the mothers also reflected on the current possibilities for their children's success in the school system. The so-called "white" school is viewed as unsuitable for Romani pupils due to its emphasis on competition and its tendency to penalize mistakes. The so-called "Romani" school is also considered inappropriate, primarily due to the tense interpersonal dynamics among Romani families that affect the school environment. An inclusive school is seen as a possible solution, as it acknowledges both social heterogeneity and the importance of individualized approaches to pupils. From the perspective of Romani mothers, the essence of school education lies in the child's well-being.

### **Framework of Cultural Misunderstanding**

Conflicts between Romani mothers and schools are most often triggered by teachers' criticism of Romani children and by teachers' interventions into the private lives of Romani families. Disputes may also arise from differing cultural norms regarding speech volume, as Romani pupils tend to speak somewhat more loudly. In some cases, this loudness is interpreted by teachers from the

dominant culture as rudeness or a lack of respect toward adults. Romani mothers, however, described loudness of speech as a positive trait—characteristic of youth and an expression of emancipation. Through this lens, loudness was reframed as a cultural difference that should be recognized and respected within a pluralistic society. At the core of Romani mothers' complaints were repeated experiences of their needs being ignored, which they perceived as evidence of their social marginalization and inferiority within Czech society. This sense of social stigma serves to legitimize, in the mothers' view, expressions of resistance and violations of school rules by Romani children. Another example of cultural misunderstanding concerns the lack of second chances in response to academic failure. Romani mothers called for continuous rather than one-time psychological assessments of their children, highlighting the need for more flexible and individualized evaluation processes. The consequences of assessment practices were also evident in how children's academic potential was judged—particularly whether they entered first grade from a regular kindergarten or from a preparatory class. Children coming from preparatory classes are often rejected, a practice that Romani mothers strongly criticize. They perceive the justifications offered by school staff as self-interested and overly personalized. These examples point to a deeper conflict of interest between schools and Romani families. While schools prioritize maintaining academic performance standards, they often fail to operate in truly inclusive ways—pushing Romani issues to the margins of institutional concern. Romani mothers are aware of the advantages of enrolling their children in regular, preferably non-Romani, schools, as completing such education is believed to improve life opportunities. This reflects a broader call for the Czech education system to recognize and accept Romani cultural difference. Taking into account the interests of Romani children—even when expressed through different behavioural norms—is seen as a path toward meaningful cooperation and mutual recognition between school and family.

### **Framework of Expert Intervention**

The increased occurrence of social pathologies among Romani children in schools has led to institutional pressure—within the dominant educational discourse—for interventions into Romani families. Consequently, this sector has seen a growing presence of specialized professionals. While the work of experts in newly established, non-teaching roles is often perceived as beneficial, excessive intervention into family relationships can, in some cases, hinder rather than support cooperation. The contextual background of the informants' dissatisfaction stemmed from the symbolic labelling of social reality, which was based on expected patterns of communication between Romani parents and non-Romani educational specialists. In their accounts, Romani mothers expressed concern over the institutional transfer of decision-making authority to schools (and, implicitly, to other social institutions), which they viewed as marginalizing the educational influence of Romani parents on their own children. In response

to the framing of parental competence monitoring by school-based professionals, the informants clearly voiced their opposition to any such interventions. For instance, the role of the mentor as a qualified expert in addressing the educational needs of Romani children was repeatedly questioned. In contrast, the mothers constructed alternative narratives that challenged the dominant professional discourse. These alternative framings emphasized personal familiarity, emotional support, and—above all—the irreplaceable love they felt for their children, which they believed could not be replicated by any institutional structure. Romani mothers consistently assigned responsibility for their children's academic education to teachers, while insisting that emotional upbringing and decisions regarding the child's future life path remained firmly within the domain of the family.

### **Discursive Grounding of Frames**

In the following interpretation of the research data, we will focus on the functioning of binaries, articulation practices, and the formation of discourses in the narratives of Romani mothers.

#### **Discourse of Family Priority**

One of the key pillars in the narratives of Romani mothers was the discourse of family priority. Within the discourse, the following binaries became apparent:

- I (Romani mother) - They (non-Romani teachers),
- My child – Romani pupil (in general),
- Teacher - Pupils,
- Romani family - School.

These social binaries formed an articulatory scheme within the categorization inventory. In this framework, the informants constructed interpretations of reality whose discursive effect served to legitimize the specificity of Romani children's education. In doing so, they created argumentative space for proposing their own visions of how an adequate teacher should act. At the same time, from the perspective of Romani identity, they used this discourse to validate their own views, since teachers at the Romani school were not of Romani origin.

The informants' power position was grounded in the authenticity of their membership in a specific social group, derived from their ethnic background. A key moment in the articulation practice was the prioritization of the interests of the Romani family over those of the school. Within this discourse, the school appears as an institution that should culturally adapt to Romani pupils—or, more precisely, to the institution of the Romani family. Romani pupils thereby gain the right to take a critical or oppositional stance toward the school, especially when it is perceived (or acknowledged) as acting against or failing to understand Romani interests.

Among the elements of this articulation practice was the Romani family's effort to open up to the educational offerings of the school. The desired outcome of such cooperation would be improved educational results through the principle of the democratization of education. Within a discursive field that promotes inclusive mechanisms, the emancipation of Romani pupils appears as a likely possibility. However, variants of cooperating discourses—those that would emerge in the interaction between the Romani family and the (Romani) school—were only rarely present in the informants' narratives.

### **Discourse of Social Recognition and Goodwill**

Evidence of occasional appreciation for the work of the school was represented by the discourse of social recognition and goodwill. The articulatory scheme included the following binaries:

- I (mother) - She (teacher),
- I (partner of the school) - She (partner of the Romani family),
- I (mother) - teacher as social worker,
- I (mother) - teacher as expert on the Romani way of life.

The narratives of the informants were grounded in the assumption of equality between teachers and Romani mothers. For Romani mothers, proof of this equality was the teacher's familiarity with the family members of Romani pupils. Since trust toward the non-Romani Czech majority is generally low, teachers who tend to be successful in the education system are those with long-term experience and stable positions within a school.

Romani mothers consider the institution of school important for their children; however, they need to feel accepted and to experience a recognition of the Romani way of life. If this is not the case, they adopt the role of protectors of their children's interests—which often leads to transferring the pupil to another school.

A key element of articulation practice within this discourse was the expectation that teachers demonstrate strong organizational skills when communicating with Romani families, as well as appropriate social competencies when teaching Romani pupils. In this context, teachers are expected to manage primarily fieldwork in the spirit of social workers—those who understand the family circumstances of each Romani pupil, and only then are able to initiate successful education within the school.

Among the valued social skills of teachers are the ability to assert their authority and to enforce consistent behavioural rules. Another element of articulation practice was the possibility of involving another school staff member (e.g., a social pedagogue) who would work—preferably informally—with the Romani family and help mediate an optimized pedagogical environment for the Romani pupil. The position of a “depersonalized” mentor, tasked with resolving conflicts between the Romani family and the school, was subject to criticism.

### **Discourse of Hidden Racism**

Romani mothers generally expressed negative attitudes toward the school's activities. In their arguments, the discourse of teachers' hidden racism strongly resonated.

The articulatory scheme included the following binaries:

- I (mother) - She (racist),
- I (mother) - She (indifferent teacher),
- Romani woman - Non-Romani woman,
- Romani women - Intervening professional,
- Romani family - Discriminatory school.

In the arguments of Romani mothers, the perspective of the school's dominance over family models prevailed. Hidden racism was presented as the result of an alleged conscious indifference or superiority on the part of non-Romani teachers toward the social problems and educational needs of Romani pupils. Diverging school preferences and expectations for home study practices among Romani pupils were emphasized as hostile acts.

Through this lens, Romani mothers discursively anchored the identity of discriminated mothers whose children are not granted the opportunity for free self-realization or daily problem-solving within the school setting. Another example of perceived discrimination was the social practice of diagnosing Romani pupils and the subsequent recommendations for interventions into the Romani family. The informants perceived such interventions as a threat to personal freedom, manifested through the suppression of social patterns and typical behavioural expressions of Romani children.

An important moment in the articulation practice was the highlighting of institutional pressure from the school, represented by undesirable interventions into the family socialization of Romani people. It is clear that a lack of understanding of cultural differences—or simply holding a different perspective on education—does not necessarily constitute racism or hostility. Nevertheless, Romani mothers anchored their narratives predominantly in examples of undesirable practices or teacher behaviour. Through this act, they legitimized their suspicion of latent racism.

### **Discourse of the Naturalization of Violence Among Romani Pupils**

A closely related discourse - rooted in conflictual communication - was the discourse of the naturalization of violence among Romani pupils. The articulatory scheme included the following binaries:

- Romani mentality - Weakness of teachers,
- Romani people - Vlax Romani,
- Romani family - School lacking order and authority,
- Romani school - Inclusive school.

Verbal and physical attacks among Romani children were presented by the informants in the context of an absence of disciplinary rules and a lack of respect for teachers in the Romani school. Aggressive behaviour among Romani children was thus interpreted as a consequence of the school's leniency. On one hand, the school is seen as a discriminatory institution in which Romani children are socially subordinated; on the other hand, it lacks effective tools to manage their aggression.

Another discursively anchored source of aggression was the transfer of unresolved conflicts from relationships between Romani families. A salient moment in the articulation practice was the use of metaphors describing the (Romani) school as a battleground or a place for settling scores among Romani families and clans. This atmosphere of conflict is further reinforced by the school's policy, which tends to appeal to the pupils through reasoning rather than applying stricter disciplinary measures.

Among the elements of articulation practice was the notion of a socially inclusive school; however, this idea was not elaborated on in detail by the informants. In an inclusive school, it is inherently understood that the social and cultural composition of the student body is diverse and varied. The expected effect of social inclusion is the disruption of entrenched stereotypes and behavioural patterns—both those directed toward Romani pupils and those present among the Romani pupils themselves.

### **Critical Discussion**

A central theme that emerged in the accounts of Romani mothers was the category of "the needs of the Romani pupil." At the core of their perspective on schooling was a strong expectation directed toward teachers: that they should first recognize the identity of the child as Romani, and only then view them as a pupil of the school. From a broader social perspective, the relatively low educational aspirations expressed by Romani mothers regarding their children's future schooling can be interpreted as a pragmatic judgment based on the limited employability of Roma individuals in the labour market. Another important factor explaining these lower educational ambitions lies in the family patterns and socialization processes of Romani children. During primary socialization, many of them internalize a sense of distance from the school environment. In the eyes of many Roma, the school is a compulsory institution, one that is closely tied to representatives of the majority society—representatives in whom they often have little trust. In the interaction between Romani families and (often non-Romani) schools, conflicts frequently arise from fundamentally different life perspectives—particularly those held by non-Romani teachers. To borrow a metaphor from the world of sports, this dynamic resembles a contest between two institutions, each attempting to assert dominance and impose its own "style of play" on the other.

It is clear that the education of Romani pupils requires a process of deconstruction and reconfiguration into genuinely collaborative mechanisms. These mechanisms concern not only the relationship between schools and families but also the broader dynamic between Roma and non-Roma in Czech society. While educational policy attempts to support collaboration through strategic documents (such as Strategy 2030+<sup>42</sup>), social reality is always shaped by situational contexts in which different expectations and needs become salient for each participant in communication. In this sense, it is essential to acknowledge the sources of knowledge that speakers draw upon. The everyday stock of knowledge—materialized through language, which mediates our perception of social reality—determines the discursive competence of individuals to act within institutional structures of power. Social actors cannot assert their interests merely by voicing demands or issuing threats. Rather, the meaningful realization of interests, needs, or expectations requires the initiation of equal dialogue. Principles of negotiation should function on the basis of mutual recognition and a shared vision of education. In real sociocultural contexts, however, aligning the positions of all actors remains a complex and often difficult task.

To effectively meet the needs of Romani pupils, it is essential that schools prioritize the development of personal soft skills—such as self-esteem, self-realization, and self-responsibility. This raises the question of whether school curricula should place a stronger emphasis on the personal and social dimension of building relationships between Romani families and the school. The concept of hegemony, as discussed earlier, has contributed to the naturalization of certain educational practices for Romani pupils. Within the discursive constructions produced by Romani mothers, specific assumptions were reinforced—namely, that Romani pupils require a different, cognitively less demanding style of teaching within “Romani schools.” This framing of difference led to the acceptance of cultural diversity as a standpoint, whereby the distinctiveness of Roma from the majority society was acknowledged. At the same time, however, it also led to a counterproductive elevation of certain inclusive policies—such as the closure of schools with a majority of Romani pupils—as inherently desirable. From the perspective of the Romani mothers we interviewed, the integration of Romani and non-Romani pupils is conceivable only if the school respects the cultural distinctiveness of family socialization among Romani children.

The research data do not indicate that Romani mothers reject the value of education—on the contrary. At the core of differing perspectives lie unfulfilled mutual expectations: between school staff on one side, and Romani parents and pupils on the other. Factors such as the socioeconomic status of Romani families, the level of cultural capital within the household, the influence of symbolic and institutional power in society, and differences in language

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<sup>42</sup> Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020.

socialization all contribute to the demotivation of Romani families in navigating the school system. In effect, the selective mechanisms embedded within the Czech educational system reinforce patterns of educational reproduction, where children of parents with only basic education are unlikely to attain higher levels of education themselves. Romani mothers clearly articulated their expectations toward schools. These demands focused not on teaching content, but on teachers' organizational and communication skills. If educators succeed in implementing an approach that genuinely responds to the individual needs of (Romani) pupils, and if they engage with the classroom as a shared social environment for all learners, there is potential for meaningful improvement. Such progress, of course, requires systemic adjustments in the conditions of schooling: for example, adapting assessment methods, allowing for variation in learning pace, establishing consistent communication with Romani parents, shifting focus from outcomes to the learning process, and developing support mechanisms such as tutoring or classroom assistants.

According to the participants, only a portion of Romani parents fully recognize the value of educational attainment. They stated that Romani children are often not engaged by school, which is why, in their view, completing a vocational certificate is commonly seen as the main indicator of educational success. The informants identified family socialization as the primary cause of school failure among Romani children. Through a binary construction of the "self" as a supportive parent versus "others" as unsupportive parents, they articulated two fragmented versions of family socialization. In the case of unsupportive parents, all engagement is reportedly limited to picking up their children from school, with no real interest in school life. The perceived neglect in parenting is attributed to parental passivity or the desire for personal comfort, which, according to the informants, can lead to behavioral issues in children that border on the pathological. A significant external factor in the reproduction of educational disadvantage is how the value of family background is framed—selectively privileging either the family or the school but rarely integrating both.

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## Roma National Identity and its Reflection in the Context of Czech Social Discourse

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Kolaříková, V. (2024). The Interaction between Technology and Modernity as a Source of the Constitution of Romanticism and Implicit Religion. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 16/2024/2, 106–134.  
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*The aim of the study is to offer a basic insight into the theoretical background of the issue of Roma national identity, which takes different forms among various social actors and is an important topic of research and social practice not only in the context of the Czech Republic. The study works with three main theses related to the topic of Roma national identity, which it discusses with the help of expert literature. The theses of the study are as follows: 1) The concept of Roma national identity is not shared by all Roma in the Czech Republic, and therefore nationality cannot form an overarching and unifying element of Roma identity, in which other aspects play an important role. 2) The reasons why the Roma do not claim a Roma identity may be diverse and will differ for different Roma people. This diversity is based on the different identities of Roma people, which must be accepted in academic and social terms. 3) The national dimension of Roma identity and the associated ethno-emancipation movement can be seen as a source of the Roma struggle for human rights and equal life opportunities, as well as a potential obstacle to the transformation of a nationally oriented society into a civil society.*

*Keywords: Roma national identity; national identity; ethnic identity; civic identity; Romani; Population and Housing Census; Roma ethno-emancipation movement, Czech Republic.*

### Introduction

The aim of the study is to offer basic insight into the theoretical background of the issue of Roma national identity, which has various forms among different social actors – Roma people living in the Czech Republic. Public discourse often operates with the idea of an immanent and unified Roma identity, which is often conceived and discussed as a national identity.

In society, it is often stereotypically assumed that all people belonging to a socially defined category – e.g. a national group, ethnic group or other

community – have adopted some form of identity related to that category. The Roma are often assumed to have adopted a form of national identity, specifically a Roma national identity, from which Roma, like other members of the nation, draw a sense of solidarity with one another. It is assumed that the solidarity that supposedly arises from this national identity somehow bonds Roma people together. After all, shared solidarity between members of a given national group is one of the key characteristics of national identity, or modern nationality as such. However, both nationality and national identity are specific social phenomena whose general characteristics cannot be applied to all social actors universally, without distinction or consideration of the social context. Different forms of national identity can be found across the Czech population, not only among its Roma members. For the Roma, however, the question of Roma national identity is even more complicated. Not only can Roma national identity assume different forms, but its national level can also occupy a completely different place of meaning – for some people this level of identity may be important and they may be conscious of it, while for others it may be minor or they may be completely unaware of it. Moreover, Roma national identity can intertwine with Czech national identity, or in some cases it may even merge with it, although in other contexts, it may be rather defined against it.

Roma national identity is not an identity that assumes a single concrete form shared by all Roma living in the Czech Republic. As such, however, this identity is often mistakenly treated as such in practice (e.g., in the field of social work, social policy or school reality, but also in other areas), and this can lead to social actions that may not correspond to the needs and interests of the people to whom this identity is attributed from the position of the helping professions. In order to be effective, the helping professions need to address not only the needs but also the identity of their clients. At the same time, not all Roma are potential clients of helping services. The spectrum of Roma life is large and the form of life can be related to the form of people's assumed (not only national) identity. Therefore, Roma national identity should be an important topic of research, and not only in the context of the Czech Republic.

The present study attempts to outline specifically how the form of Roma national identity may diverge from the generally expected model of national identity by reflecting on three theses that form the starting point of the study. The study is based on the position of social constructivism and perceives national identity as a socially constructed phenomenon, whose form and impact on real social life it is important to constantly reflect on critically.

The wording of the presented and considered theses is as follows<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> The theses are based on the article by Kolaříková, V. (2024). Romská národní identita a její nejasné ukotvení ve společenském diskurzu: sociální problém i potencionální předmět společensko-vědního výzkumu. In D. Klapko (Ed.). *Analýza vybraných sociálních*

- Thesis 1: The concept of Roma national identity is not shared by all Roma people in the Czech Republic, and therefore nationality cannot form an overarching and unifying element of Roma identity, in which other aspects play an important role.
- Thesis 2: The reasons why the Roma do not claim a Roma identity may be diverse and will differ for different Roma people. This diversity is based on the different identities of Roma people, which must be accepted in academic and social terms.
- Thesis 3: The national dimension of Roma identity and the associated ethno-emancipation movement can be seen as a source of the Roma struggle for human rights and equal life opportunities, as well as a potential obstacle to the transformation of a nationally oriented society into a civil society.

### **Thesis 1: The Concept of Roma National Identity Is Not Shared by All Roma People in the Czech Republic, and Therefore Nationality Cannot Form an Overarching and Unifying Element of Roma Identity, in which Other Aspects Play an Important Role.**

In 2021, a Population and Housing Census took place in the Czech Republic<sup>2</sup>. One of the questions the Census repeatedly asks is about nationality. Completing the question on nationality is voluntary. 31.6 % of people left the question blank. People could fill in one or two nationalities within the question. One of the nationalities offered was the Roma nationality.

Of the total population of the Czech Republic, which is 10,524,167 people, 21,691 declared their Roma national identity. Of this number only 4,458 people stated that Roma national identity was their only national identity. 17,233 people claimed it in combination with another nationality, people<sup>3</sup>. Over the ten-year period of the Census, a significant decline in the number of people claiming Roma national identity can be observed. In 2011 5,135 people claimed Roma national identity as their only declared national identity, compared to 11,746 people in 2001 and the highest number of 32,903 people in 1991.

Qualified estimates<sup>4</sup> of the number of Roma living on the territory of the Czech Republic are many times higher. According to these estimates,

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*a edukačních problémů z pohledu studentek a studentů sociální pedagogiky* (pp. 32–50). MSD.; while the present study complements and elaborates the theses in more depth.

<sup>2</sup> The Population and Housing Census provides statistical information about individuals, households, housing and housing stock for a given time period. The Census is carried out by the Czech Statistical Office and one of the data collection methods is self-census through an electronic census form.

<sup>3</sup> Czech Statistical Office. [21. 5. 2024]. *Sčítání 2021 (Národnost)*.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Report on the State of the Roma Minority in the Czech Republic for the year 2022 (in Government of the Czech Republic. (2024). *Zpráva o stavu romské menšiny*

there are approximately 250,000 Roma living in the Czech Republic<sup>5</sup>. The question remains, however, to what extent the category "Roma person" is intertwined in these two cases, and whether the Census and the qualified estimates do not create different (self-)identification and categorization frameworks, i.e. whether different social identities are constructed within their frameworks. Roma identity is a difficult social phenomenon. It is an identity that can take on various characteristics in different contexts and from the position of different social actors and discursive spaces.

Contextuality applies to all human identities<sup>6</sup> – whether personal or collective identities. The situation is all the more complex with regard to Roma identity because its form can differ in terms of who the creator of that identity is. Identity can either be chosen by people themselves, or it can be attributed to them or even imposed on them by the environment, not only by the group of which they are an immediate member (e.g., family, school class), but also by their surroundings, i.e., by groups to which they may or may not belong. It is therefore important that Roma people (as well as other social groups) and their identities are not viewed simply through **social categorization**. Social categorization is formed in relation to a person from the outside. The surroundings classify the individuals into specific categories to which stereotypical characteristics are often attributed. In the context of our topic, this is a process of external attribution of Romanipen, in which the person who is recognised as Roma by his or her surroundings (or by the media, political, academic or other discursive space) is considered to be Roma, and along with the recognition of the person and his or her real or fictional Romaniness, certain characteristics are also attributed to him or her, often assumed and stereotypically associated with Romaniness (the process of labelling). The process of social categorization can certainly be an interesting research topic,

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v *České republice za rok 2022*, p. 7) these are qualified estimates by stakeholders, especially regional coordinators for Roma affairs, advisors for Roma in municipalities with extended competence or field workers.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 37.

<sup>6</sup> Social identity is contextual, and identification with a group is situationally contingent. People are not bearers of a single identity, but rather have several identities adopted simultaneously, and the dominant identity in social interactions may not be national or ethnic, but any other identity. Different situations may be dominated by different levels of identity. For example, in the school environment, gender or role identity comes to the fore. A different identity is emphasised within the family, another when interacting with neighbours, sometimes the identity of a resident of a particular neighbourhood may dominate, and sometimes the identity of a resident of a nation state, etc. (cf. Čechovská, L. (2014). *Etnická identita Romů v akademických konfrontacích. Pole etnicity jako nejasný prostor pro vstup do debaty o etnické identitě Romů. Slovenský národopis*, 62(1), pp. 106–118; Moravec, Š. (2006). *Nástin problému sociálního vyloučení romských populací*. In T. Hirt, M. Jakoubek (Eds.), *"Romové" v osídlech sociálního vyloučení* (pp. 11–69); Čeněk, A. – Klíčová, K. (2006). *Sčítání lidu: Romští Češi, nebo čeští Romové*. In R. Marada, *Etnická různost a občanská jednota* (pp. 221–255). Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury.)

but it is not possible to base research into Roma identity only on this level of research.

It is important to view Romanipen and Roma identity through the lens of the **self-identification** of the members of these groups. Group identification is related to the identification of group members with a given group. It is about who one feels oneself to be, how one identifies oneself and what community one places oneself in – i.e., a Roma is someone who considers him or herself to be a Roma.<sup>7</sup> The identity ascribed to someone from the outside may differ from the real group self-identification. Therefore, it is necessary to examine both levels of identity – both the discursive anchoring of a given identity in society and how the holders of that identity themselves interpret and experience it (as specific individuals or groups, not as representatives of a supposed universal Romanipen). It may be interesting to examine to what extent these ideal-typical models of identities are intertwined or differ from each other, as well as how the self-identification of Roma in the context of Roma national identity differs across different Roma actors and groups.

The need to conduct research on Roma identity directly with Roma people is highlighted by Čechovská<sup>8</sup>, who raises the issue of Roma ethnic identity in the context of academic confrontations, pointing out that many studies on Roma identity have not been based on research with Roma respondents, and that Roma themselves have not been the spokespeople for their own identity.<sup>9</sup> Obrovská<sup>10</sup> points to other research and another general societal problem when she says that ethnicity is theoretically framed as contextual, unstable, and relational (the constructed nature of ethnic identities) across various interpretive sociological paradigms, but in academic debates and public discourse it often remains a relatively monolithic category that is attributed to seemingly homogeneous groups. However, Roma in the Czech Republic do not form a homogeneous population, so it is not realistic or scientifically advisable to view all Roma individuals through the lens of the stereotypical category of the Roma community in the sense of a homogeneous, conscious minority united by the same life stories, goals, identities, and sense of mutual solidarity and interdependence. On the contrary, it is preferable to conduct research on particular Roma groups and individuals and their identities.

Although the form of Roma (national) identity among Roma living in the Czech Republic can vary significantly, in public discourse this identity is often viewed as a univocal category. It is problematic that within the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Moravec, *op. cit.*; Jenkins in Kreisslová, S. (2019). *Konstrukce etnické identity a kolektivní paměti v biografických vyprávěních českých Němců. Na příkladu vzpomínek Němců na Chomutovsku*. Charles University, Faculty of Arts Press, pp. 36–37.

<sup>8</sup> Čechovská, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> This situation does not apply in general. Research based on research work with Roma respondents has also been conducted in the Czech Republic.

<sup>10</sup> Obrovská, J. (2016). Frajeři, rapeři a propadlíci: etnografie etnicity a etnizace v desegregované školní třídě. *Sociologický časopis*, 52(1), p. 56.

category of Roma national identity, ethnic and national identity are often intertwined, which is problematic because the terms nation and ethnicity do not have the same meaning.

**National identity** is a modern phenomenon. Despite various transnational tendencies and transformations, Lavi<sup>11</sup> still sees national identity as the basis for the formation of collective self-determination and presents national identity as continuously constructed through the constant repetition of everyday actions and rituals and through talking about the nation and its representation in order to achieve a sense of belonging and identification of the individual with that nation. Similarly, Smith<sup>12</sup> understands national identity as part of the self-concept of a national community. According to him, national identity cannot be perceived as a mere variant of group identity, because personal identity and social identity also enter into its formation, while these two identities express how an individual presents him/herself in social interaction and how he/she is accepted by others in interaction.<sup>13</sup> The function of national identity is that it defines a person's belonging to a collective personality and thus determines his/her place in the world. In doing so, the form of national identity is derived from a number of characteristics, such as a shared culture, language, history, sovereign state, and other.<sup>14</sup>

**Ethnic identity** is a group identity that is enacted through the organization of group membership on the basis of cultural differences.<sup>15</sup> Identities are situationally ascribed to people or groups on the basis of specific cultural traits that people have identified as the basis for group differentiation. Ethnic identity-constructing cultural traits typically include people's visible characteristics (e.g., physical appearance, dress, language) and value standards (including moral standards). Haaland<sup>16</sup> points out that ethnicity is not something that exists for its own sake. Ethnicity refers to the interactions between members who identify themselves as members of different groups – in such interactional contexts, we can identify how cultural assumptions become relevant and what social consequences this has. The fact that ethnicity

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<sup>11</sup> Lavi, L. (2013) Making time for national identity: Theoretical concept and empirical glance on the temporal performance of national identity. *Nations and Nationalism*, 19(4), pp. 696–714.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, A. D. (2011). National identity and vernacular mobilisation in Europe. *Nations and Nationalism*, 17(2), pp. 223–256.

<sup>13</sup> Hroch, M. (2009). *Národy nejsou dílem náhody: Příčiny a předpoklady utváření moderních evropských národů*. Sociologické nakladatelství, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the elements of national identity on which Czech national identity is built see Kolaříková, V. (2020). Czech National Identity and the Elements Through Which is Constructed. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 12(2), pp. 66–96.

<sup>15</sup> Jakoubek, M. – Budilová, L. (2020). Etnická identita ve světě charakterizovaném globálními politickými, ekonomickými a kulturními změnami Rozhovor s profesorem Gunnarem Haalandem. *Sociální studia*, 2 (2020), p. 135.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 137.

is a relational matter is also agreed by Kašparová<sup>17</sup>, who argues that (ethnic) identity is the result of a dialogue between a person's own ideas about him or herself and the ideas others have about him or her. From these conceptions, it is evident that ethnicity should be understood as a social category rather than as an a priori existing concept, an immanent human characteristic that creates distinctions between members of different human groups. Ethnicity should be seen as a social construct that may or may not be a component of human identity. To assume that all members of society construct their identities on an ethnic or national basis (or that these identities naturally overlap and replicate each other) in all situations and social roles would be wrong. To conceive of identity in this way could lead to methodological distortions and misdescriptions of social reality.

According to Maříková<sup>18</sup>, it may be the case that all members of one ethnicity are also members of one nation and nationality, but this situation does not always apply. Therefore, the concepts of national and ethnic identity cannot be confused either. According to Haaland<sup>19</sup>, it is common in multiethnic nation-states for national identity to be superior to ethnic identities, as the mechanisms of state power symbolic construction emphasize nationalism as the primary group affiliation over ethnic identity in an attempt to promote the loyalty of the population to the state. This situation is to some extent also true for the Czech Republic, which is perceived by its inhabitants as a homogeneous nation-state in which a number of different ethnic minorities live together with the majority. At the same time, the Roma are perhaps more likely to be viewed in public discourse through the lens of ethnicity and ethnic differences than as a national minority<sup>20</sup>.

In addition to national and ethnic identity, there may also be a **civic component** to Roma identity. According to Marushiaková and Popov<sup>21</sup>, the civic level of the national identity of European Roma is evident in the Roma and is usually linked to the country in which they live – that is, their homeland, which in many cases has been their home country for centuries. However, according to the authors, researchers pay little attention to this civic-national level of identity. This is problematic, because without acknowledging the civic level of national identity, it is impossible to understand the topic of Roma civic emancipation. Marushiaková and Popov<sup>22</sup> understand Roma civic emancipation as a movement to achieve equal citizenship status for Roma as an ethnic community and as individual citizens with rights in all spheres of

<sup>17</sup> Kašparová, I. (2014). *Politika romství – romská politika*. Munipress, p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> Maříková, H. – Petrušek, M. – A. Vodáková et al. (1996). *Velký sociologický slovník I, A-O*. Karolinum, p. 277.

<sup>19</sup> In Jakoubek, Budilová, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>20</sup> This topic would certainly deserve further exploration.

<sup>21</sup> Marushiaková, E. – Popov, V. (Eds.). (2021). *Roma Voices in History: A Sourcebook*. Brill. In their book, the authors focus their research on Central, East and Southeast Europe.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

social life. The goal of this emancipation is not assimilation in the sense of merging with the majority, but the preservation and development of the Roma as an ethnic community that is a full and equal part of specific civic nations or nation states.

In public discourse, Roma identity sometimes takes on a racial dimension. Within the racial definition of Roma, the Roma are perceived as representatives of a particular **anthropological type** – i.e., Romanipen can be perceived as a biological category, a physical given (the concept of innate Romanipen), where the designation of someone as Roma is based primarily on his or her appearance and thus on the elements of Romaniness recognized by the surrounding environment, which can typically be skin colour, hair, eyes, or other visual differences from the majority.<sup>23</sup> Ways of looking at the definition of the Roma category can also be mixed – for example, anthropological and cultural definitions often go hand in hand and, together with language and the element of self-identification, are manifested in the widely shared ethnic concept of Romanipen, which vaguely mixes cultural and biological categories. Thus, according to Jakoubek<sup>24</sup>, a kind of folk concept of Romanipen often emerges, which is usually based on assumptions and stereotypes, and it is important to avoid this concept and the idea of an immanently different Roma category, especially but not only in academia. Jakoubek<sup>25</sup> argues against the racial concept of Romanipen, referring to the fact that the notion of race in the sense of the idea of the immanent difference of certain biological entities has already been refuted by today's science.

These days, Roma identity is most often conceptualized as an **identity formed on a cultural basis** (as such, it may or may not be part of an ethnic category). Very often, in relation to the concept of Roma culture, Roma identity is associated with the Roma language (here the ethnic level is also strongly intertwined). However, basing Roma (national) identity on **the Roma language** is problematic. In the 2021 Population and Housing Census<sup>26</sup>, 4,280 people claimed the Roma language as their only mother tongue. In combination with another mother tongue, the number was another 23,822 people. In total 28,102 people claim that the Roma language is their mother tongue. These numbers are relatively consistent with the number of people claiming Roma national identity, with 2,131 more people claiming the Roma language as their mother tongue than the Roma national identity. However, it is not clear from the statistics presented whether these are the same people.

The data collected on the number of people claiming that the Roma language is their mother tongue points to the fact that not all Roma – assuming there are more than 28,000 Roma living in the Czech Republic – use the Roma

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Jakoubek, M. (2004). *Romové – Konec nejednoho mýtu (Sešity pro sociální politiku)*. Socioklub.; Kašparová, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Jakoubek, *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 55–59.

<sup>26</sup> Czech Statistical Office. [21. 5. 2024]. *Sčítání 2021 (Mateřský jazyk)*.

language to communicate. We cannot even talk about the fact that all Roma use the written form of the Roma language, which is defacto an invented construct. The Roma language is a language that has always been strongly influenced by the languages of the places where Roma have lived and has never been the majority language. Roma people usually do not use written Roma language, but rather different Roma ethnolinguistic dialects, or they are bilingual and use Roma language together with Czech or Slovak, or they do not actively speak Roma language at all.<sup>27</sup> This has also contributed to the need for multilingualism among Roma groups which has led to the fact that today with rare exceptions the Roma language has no monolingual speakers.<sup>28</sup>

Worldwide, the number of Roma is currently much higher than the number of speakers of the Roma language.<sup>29</sup> Roma in the Czech Republic usually speak rather different Romani ethnolinguistic dialects<sup>30</sup>, or they are bilingual and use the Roma language together with Czech or Slovak with regard to the context and the communication environment, or they do not actively speak Romani at all. Moreover, it appears that the group of speakers of the Roma language is narrowing with each new generation.<sup>31</sup> It is therefore impossible to base Roma national identity automatically on active use of the Roma language. According to Hirt<sup>32</sup> the category of the Roma language as an identifying framework is also problematic because tying the idea of a unified ethnic language to the category of Roma also gives the impression that if a Roma does not speak Romani, he or she is alienated from his or her ethnicity. According to the author, the conviction that Roma always speak Romani is, in the context of the revitalization movement associated with the communitarian doctrine, distinctly normative – it constructs a norm that establishes the rule "A Roma should speak Romani."

<sup>27</sup> Czech Statistical Office. [cit. 18. 12. 2022]. *Obyvatelstvo podle národnosti a mateřského jazyka podle výsledků sčítání lidu v letech 1970, 1991, 2001, 2011 a 2021*.

<sup>28</sup> Kubaník, P. – Červenka, J. – Sadílková, H. (2010). Romština v České republice – předávání jazyka a jazyková směna. *Romano Džaniben*, 2(2010), p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

<sup>30</sup> According to Laederich (in Laederich, S. (2011). Roma Cultural identity. In G. Mirescu (Ed.), *Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities in South-Eastern Europe* (pp. 19–28). Swisspeace.) "the migrations of Roma in Europe led to what can broadly be described as "meta-dialects", of which there are four: Carpathian, with a strong northern Slavic basis; Vlax (or Vlach), with a very strong layer of Romanian acquisitions; the Nordic dialects, spoken from Spain to Russia, with a strong German influence; and finally, the Balkan meta-dialect, with a layer of Turkish words" (p. 20). According to the author, today still about two-thirds of Roma speak Romani. But "generally, the repressive assimilation policies and the communist past contributed to acculturation of many Roma in Eastern Europe" (p. 21).

<sup>31</sup> Government of the Czech Republic, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Hirt, T. (2004). Romská etnická komunita jako politický projekt: kritická reflexe. In M. Jakoubek, T. Hirt (Eds.), *Romové: kulturologické etudy (etnopolitika, příbuzenství a sociální organizace)* (pp. 72–91). Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, p. 82.

In the Czech environment, at many discursive levels, Roma identity stands out as a **socio-economic identity**, where Roma are discussed not only in the public sphere but also in academic terms in the context of the situation of social exclusion and structural poverty they experience.<sup>33</sup> In the media and other public discursive spaces, mainly the negative effects resulting from this way of life (unemployment, dependence on social support and social welfare benefits, low educational level, social pathologies, etc.) are discussed and presented. In essence, it is a definition based on people's belonging to a certain social structure, which is defined not only socio-economically but also culturally. It is also a cultural definition of being Roma, since life in socially excluded localities is often associated with specific life patterns and models of behaviour, values, attitudes, etc. However, not all Roma are in a situation of social exclusion, and therefore it is not possible to speak about all Roma as people facing this life situation. Moreover, Roma living in the same socially excluded locality cannot be viewed through the lens of a community that shares an identical identity. As Jakoubek<sup>34</sup> points out, Roma living in socially excluded areas usually base their identity on family membership rather than feeling solidarity and connection with all the inhabitants of the locality. Therefore, living in these localities cannot be a categorizing tool for the collective identities of these people.

According to Jakoubek<sup>35</sup>, some Roma can also be categorized as bearers of **Traditional Romani culture**. Jakoubek conceives of Romanipen primarily as a cultural concept. He identifies those Roma as bearers of Traditional Romani culture who preserve in their lives certain elements of Traditional Romani culture<sup>36</sup> within which they were socialized. Traditional Romani culture is not observed everywhere and is certainly not part of the everyday life experience of all Roma. Typically, according to the author, elements of Traditional Romani culture can be found in the environment of Romani settlements (so-called *osadas*), where cultural patterns of Traditional Romani culture are practiced in the sense of a distinct cultural system. However, according to Jakoubek<sup>37</sup>, Traditional Romani culture no longer constitutes a culture of its

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<sup>33</sup> For example Zpráva o stavu romské menšiny v České republice za rok 2022 - Report on the State of the Roma Minority in the Czech Republic for 2022 (Government of the Czech Republic, *op. cit.*, p. 37) says that a difficulty in analyzing the situation of Roma is the unknown number of Roma who are integrated into mainstream society. Public authorities have a rough overview of the Roma who are clients of municipal social services. They live mostly in socially excluded localities, where they make up 57 % of the population and their lives are affected by the situation of social exclusion.

<sup>34</sup> Jakoubek, *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>36</sup> Traditional Romani culture "is strictly oral, with no documents or scriptures that outline either the people's history or the rules and values that govern their lives" (in Matras, Y. (2015). *The Romani Gypsies*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p. 39).

<sup>37</sup> Jakoubek, M. (2006). Přemýšlení (rethinking) "Romů" aneb "Chudoba Romů" má povahu Janusovy tváře. In T. Hirt, M. Jakoubek (Eds.), *Romové v osidlech sociálního vyloučení* (pp. 322–400). Aleš Čeněk.

own in the existing socially excluded localities (which can be found in the Czech Republic rather than Romani osadas), where only certain relics of this culture are preserved.

Traditional Romani culture is typically associated with social organization, the basis of which is kinship (the **family as the basic organizing principle**, which carries with it specific values and patterns of behavior), sub-ethnic division, and the institution of ritual non/purity. People's collective identity is thus derived from their membership in the family as a specific social group – not the ethnic group as a whole. At the same time, these elements support the division of Roma into different, mutually defining groups that occupy different places on the social ladder, and that define themselves in relation to each other rather than experiencing a sense of mutual unity and shared ethnic solidarity.

Similar to Romani identity, the topic of the traditional Romani extended family is not an entirely clear and simple topic today. Indeed, at present it cannot be assumed that this social organisation based on the traditional basis of the extended family is realised in all Roma families. The gradual weakening of large families has occurred as a result of various historical realities and the transformation of modern and post-modern social structures, which have created conditions for the functioning of nuclear families throughout the wider society. These changes have also affected Romani societies, for whom the family usually still represents a basic social value, but the gradual diminishing of the ties of the extended family has weakened traditional Romani culture.

According to Davidová<sup>38</sup>, in the context of the territory of the current Czech Republic, there has been a gradual disintegration of the broad kinship structures of multigenerational Romani families since the 1960s. The state policy of the former Czechoslovakia was aimed at the settlement and assimilation of Roma into the majority society. In 1959, the National Assembly adopted the Law on Permanent Settlement of Travellers, which banned the traditional nomadic way of life. At that time, not all Roma were living this way, but still a large part of them (especially the Wallachian Roma, for whom the emphasis on the traditional way of life is typical). The reason that Romani families are increasingly organized as nuclear or two/three-generation families today may be a change in values related to the changing lifestyle of the new younger generations. Regardless of the complex reasons for the weakening of the organizational structure of Romani extended families, they have all led to the gradual uprooting of Roma people from their extended family-based societies. This does not mean, however, that the family as a fundamental value and organizational framework of the family cannot still be a key part of Roma identity today. A topic for reflection and deeper research is the fact that, despite the fact that not all members of a large family live

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<sup>38</sup> Davidová, E. (1997). K současným změnám romského společenství, jeho postavení a způsobu života. *Pedagogická orientace*, 1997(2), pp. 68-69.

together, the family can still maintain mutual cohesion and loyalty, even when family members live far apart, sometimes across different nation-states.

Regardless of the current transformation of the Romani family, which may take different forms for different groups of Roma, the key argument is that according to Jakoubek<sup>39</sup>, the idea that the Romani community functions in unity and acts in a united manner towards the majority society is usually only a mental construct of this majority. In fact, Roma form distinctly heterogeneous, internally diverse societies. Individual Roma societies differ in terms of their traditions, culture, language, historical fate and current way of life, as well as in terms of their adopted identities, shared values, life interests, goals, etc. All this, according to Jakoubek<sup>40</sup> and Hirt<sup>41</sup>, leads to the belief that the Roma cannot be viewed as a unified community. According to Budilová and Jakoubek<sup>42</sup>, for Roma people the term denoting the "Roma community" as "Roma" does not serve to indicate their belonging to a specific community, but rather indicates a "special quality of humanity" – to be Roma means to be different from non-Roma (*Gadje*). By sharing this same difference between all people labeled and self-identified as Roma, no other similarities, solidarity, or shared identity emerge. This is important to realize, for example, when trying to introduce community work intended for Roma clients, which, according to the authors, can fail precisely because of its foundation on the communitarian principle.<sup>43</sup>

**Thesis 2: The Reasons Why the Roma Do Not Claim a Roma Identity May Be Diverse and Will Differ for Different Roma People. This Diversity Is Based on the Different Identities of Roma People, which Must Be Accepted in Academic and Social Terms.**

The self-identification of Roma with Roma nationality is a complex social issue, and the reasons why people who identify themselves as Roma or who have this identity ascribed to them by the majority society do not declare their Roma nationality in national censuses can be various. Some of these have already been outlined in the first thesis, although the list is certainly not exhaustive. I will now attempt to deepen our understanding of this issue.

One of the reasons many authors cite for Roma not declaring their Roma national identity in national censuses is **the fear of declaring their Roma**

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<sup>39</sup> Jakoubek, *op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>41</sup> Hirt, *op. cit.*

<sup>42</sup> Budilová, L. J. – Jakoubek, M. (2014). *Romové, Československo a transnacionalismus*. Sociológia, 45(5), pp. 487–503.

<sup>43</sup> Rather than community work, according to this approach, work focused on family or individual social work may be more effective with clients living in socially excluded areas.

**nationality.** According to Hübschmannová<sup>44</sup>, who has already considered why Roma do not declare their Roma national identity in censuses in the context of the 1992 Census, the year when Roma in the Czech Republic were able to declare their Roma nationality for the very first time, this may be related to the fear of stigmatization of the bearers of this identity by the majority society. This fear may be influenced not only by the current social situation, but above all by the historical experience of victimisation and persecution by the majority society, which took place significantly during the Second World War. However, to attribute the low numbers of people claiming Roma national identity to this factor alone would be simplistic.

Klíčová<sup>45</sup> presents as an example of a discussion on this topic a controversy from 2006 between the former chairman of the Office for Personal Data Protection, K. Neuwirth, who was of the opinion that Roma were afraid to declare their Roma identity in the Census precisely because of their historical experience with registers, and the position of the Czech Statistical Office, which emphasised the fact that people in a democratic society have the freedom of choice within the lived form of their national identity, and that this is also the reason for whether or not they declare their Roma national identity. Both approaches then, according to Klíčová<sup>46</sup>, assume that all people have an acquired concept of national identity that they consciously work with in some way. However, this is quite often the wrong assumption. Not all Roma perceive their Romanipen in terms of national identity.

Moravec<sup>47</sup>, in the context of the low number of people declaring their Roma nationality in the Census, considers the possibility that many citizens of the Czech Republic may well consider themselves Roma, but **do not perceive their Romaniness as their nationality, or do not feel themselves to be members of a unified Roma nation.** Similarly, Jakoubek<sup>48</sup> says that it is not the case that the bearers of Traditional Romani culture or its relics (recall that Jakoubek in this case is talking about Roma living in Roma settlements, i.e. not all Roma in general) refused to declare their nationality during the census or denied it. Rather, the point is that this kind of self-identification is alien to them, because these Roma feel themselves to be members of a kinship-based formation (large family), not a bounded national group that would form a separate political community. According to Jakoubek, the attempt to grasp the difference of the bearers of Traditional Romani culture in ethnic or national categories is a misunderstanding of their otherness, a misunderstanding that is an expression of a very ethnocentric style of thinking.

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<sup>44</sup> Hübschmannová, M. (2002). *Šaj pes dovakeras. Můžeme se domluvit*. Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci.

<sup>45</sup> Klíčová, *op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>47</sup> Moravec, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Jakoubek, M. (2005). Apologie kulturomů (Odpověď Pavlu Baršovi). *Politologický časopis*, 2 (2005), p. 186; cf. Jakoubek, *op. cit.*

Another important topic that must be taken into account in the polemic about Roma national identity is **the concept of national identity, which is not identical to the concept of civic identity**, i.e., belonging to the specific nation state in which one lives, and the possible failure to distinguish between these two concepts from the position of Roma people. Hübschmannová<sup>49</sup> suggested that already in 1992 the small number of people who declared their Roma nationality at that time was related to the fact that many Roma were not aware of the difference between the political status of nationality and citizenship. The ambiguous understanding of the categories of nationality, citizenship and statehood is also elaborated by Klíčová<sup>50</sup>, who describes that in the research she conducted, respondents in some situations referred to national identity and in other situations – often when choosing their nationality in the Census conducted – to civic identity, when these people assumed that, living in the Czech Republic, they were Czech and thus claimed Czech national identity (or even Moravian national identity), although in other contexts they considered themselves to be Roma.

Other research findings are consistent with this. For example, in research on the ethnic, familial and religious identities of Roma adolescents in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Kosovo and Romania<sup>51</sup> the researchers found that Roma respondents showed lower levels of national and ethnic identity compared to respondents from the majority population. This was in line with expectations based on the literature, which points out that Roma living in Europe and elsewhere tend to identify with the national culture of the mainstream<sup>52</sup>. At the same time, Dimitrov<sup>53</sup> correlate the low level of support for national and ethnic identity with the marginalisation and oppression experienced by Roma, national assimilation policies, and ethnic tensions that may emerge in individual states. Here, this brings us back to the thesis on the fear of stigmatization of admitted Romanipen.

Marushiaková and Popov<sup>54</sup> also reflect on the civic level of Roma identity and explain the sense in which they use the term Roma community. They use the term community, or Roma community, as a label for Roma representing a category of ethnic formation that is clearly distinct from the surrounding population (i.e. it is a dimension of ethnicity). By the term Roma society, the authors mean Roma as an ethnically based integral part of the respective nation-states of which they are citizens (i.e. it is a dimension of civic nationality). Both of these dimensions are then part of the Roma identity,

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<sup>49</sup> Hübschmannová, *op. cit.*

<sup>50</sup> Klíčová, *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> Dimitrov, R. – Vijver, F. J. R. – Taušová, J. – Chasiotis A. – Bender, M. – Buzea, C. – Uka, F. – Tair, E. (2017). Ethnic, Familial, and Religious Identity of Roma Adolescents in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Kosovo, and Romania in Relation to Their Level of Well-Being. *Child Development*, 88 (3), pp. 693–709.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Prieto-Flores and Marushiakova, Popov in *ibidem*, p. 695.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>54</sup> Marushiaková – Popov, *op. cit.*

which, according to them, is multidimensional, structurally hierarchical and contextual, which means that in different contexts and different life situations, more or less one of these two dimensions of identity comes to the fore, while other dimensions of identity may also come to the fore, such as dimensions based on gender, group membership, family membership, social class, etc. These levels of identity are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, according to the authors, they are in constant, albeit historically and situationally conditioned, balance.

Hübschmannová<sup>55</sup> adds to the indistinction and conflation of the concepts of national identity and civic identity **the lack of orientation of Roma (especially the less educated) in the situation of their own group and individual consciousness**. According to Hübschmannová<sup>56</sup> the national consciousness of the Roma, or rather **the Roma national revival, is lagging behind the Czech national revival**. The author likens the low rate of Roma claiming Roma nationality to the Czech national revival by suggesting that even at the beginning of the Czech national revival not all Czechs were aware of their Czechness. It is certainly important to note that the most assimilated Roma claim a Roma national identity.<sup>57</sup> In practice, this means that these are often Roma who no longer preserve elements of Traditional Romani culture. Furthermore, within the people actively claiming Roma nationality we can also find people who are higher up on the social ladder due to higher education and other factors. It is often these people who are actively involved in the construction of Roma national identity within the ethno-emancipation movement, with which the forthcoming third thesis is connected.

Kašparová<sup>58</sup> agrees that the Roma are undergoing a process that shows signs of nationalism, and she believes that the Romani ethno-emancipation movement, like the Czech national revival, is based on the concept of an ethno-cultural concept of nation. This is related to the fact that the Roma do not have their own state territory and do not currently seek it. According to Kašparová<sup>59</sup>, it is possible that the emphasis on one's own territory will be one of the most important programmatic points of Roma nationalism in the future. But there is also the possibility, according to her, that territory is already defined in Roma nationalism, albeit in a somewhat different way than in the nationalism of other nations. Territory, with its reference to nomadism as one of the basic attributes of Romani culture, represents the whole planet, the whole world. Within the framework of national identity, this opens up the issue that some people may share a **transnational concept of identity**. "Roma often identify with other Romani groups in a way that transcends national boundaries. There is no single territory around which Roma can rally and

<sup>55</sup> Hübschmannová, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*. The book was first published in 1993.

<sup>57</sup> Klíčová, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>58</sup> Kašparová, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 82.

unite. The awareness of an Indian origin plays a role mainly for Romani political activists in their attempts to consolidate international solidarity with the Roma and among the different Romani communities. But for the majority of Roma, even those who are aware and informed of the early history of their people, India remains a very abstract and academic aspect of their identity".<sup>60</sup>

The topic of nomadism<sup>61</sup> as one of the constitutive elements of Romani culture is also raised by Jakoubek<sup>62</sup>, who says that part of the nomadic myth is the proclaimed resignation to the establishment of a Romani nation-state and to the nation-state principle as such. But the result of this myth, according to Jakoubek, is not a release from the territorial level of national identity. Rather, it results in the heightening of this territorial level of national identity in the form of the emergence of a kind of global claim to move across all (national) territories. The sovereign right of one nation to free nomadism is analogous to the right to sovereign national territory. Similarly, according to Jakoubek<sup>63</sup>, the concept of the Roma nation as a transnational nation does not imply the abolition of national categories, but establishes a sovereign distinctiveness that distinguishes the Roma nation from other nations.

### **Thesis 3: The National Dimension of Roma Identity and the Associated Ethno-emancipation Movement Can Be Seen as a Source of the Roma Struggle for Human Rights and Equal Life Opportunities, as well as a Potential Obstacle to the Transformation of a Nationally Oriented Society into a Civil Society.**

As I have tried to explain, the Roma living in the Czech Republic are not a homogeneous group and therefore do not and cannot form a politically unified, conscious and engaged community that would be universally connected across all social groups by a conscious sense of national Romani belonging. Nevertheless, there are politically engaged individuals and groups among the Roma who are fighting for various political issues, including the Roma ethno-emancipation movement. The year 1971, when the first International Congress of Roma<sup>64</sup> was held in Orpington near London, can be

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<sup>60</sup> Matras, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>61</sup> "Romani culture is often associated with travel. In fact, the great majority of Roma do not travel and their families have lived in permanent settlements and dwellings for many centuries" (Matras, *op. cit.*, p. 41). It is, however, appropriate to distinguish between migration and nomadism.

<sup>62</sup> Jakoubek, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>64</sup> Krištof reflects on the 1971 International Congress of Roma, which he sees as a "nationalist" project of the construction of Romaniness by the international Roma elite. In his view, the question remains to what extent the activities of these international Roma elites are the authentic efforts of the Roma people themselves, or to what extent they are provoked by a Roma discourse of which the Roma are usually not actors. (in Krištof, R. (2004).

considered a significant political milestone of the Roma ethno-emancipation movement in Europe – and with it one of the pillars by which the existence of the phenomenon of Roma national identity is legitimised. Here, representatives of Roma groups from all over the world officially declared the designation Roma as the only acceptable name for all Roma in the world. Along with this, the Romani anthem and the Romani flag were adopted and the process of international standardization of the Roma language orthography began.<sup>65</sup> Representatives of Roma from Czechoslovakia also participated in the Congress. Members of the Union of Gypsies-Roma, which was the first officially recognised Roma organisation in Czechoslovakia and was founded in 1969 mainly by members of the Roma intelligentsia with the aim of enabling Roma to participate actively in social life, went to London.<sup>66</sup>

Romani ethno-emancipation movement is viewed differently in the academic environment and its concept differs from the position of researchers and from the position of Romani activists. One approach to the Romani ethno-emancipation movement is offered by a group of scholars who are grouped around the Pilsen anthropologists Jakoubek, Hirt, Budilová, etc. According to these and other authors<sup>67</sup>, the Romani ethnic movement and its idea of a unified Romani identity is constructed by the Romani elite<sup>68</sup> and (non)Romani

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Romové, Evropa a mezinárodní instituce. In M. Jakoubek, T. Hirt (Eds.), *Romové: kulturologické etudy (etnopolitika, příbuzenství a sociální organizace)* (pp. 102–133). Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, p. 117). Krištof argues that typical of the emerging nationalising Roma leaders is the attempt to gain an information monopoly on the situation of the Roma, giving way to the stylisation of spokespersons for the Roma masses (*ibidem*, p. 133).

<sup>65</sup> Závodská, M. (2012). Romové v českých zemích a na Slovensku v letech 1918–1989. In R. Steklá, L. Houdek (Eds.), *Druhá směna (Jak využívat dějiny a literaturu Romů ve výuce na 2. stupni ZŠ)* (pp. 45–71). Romea, o. s., p. 45.

<sup>66</sup> Lhotka, P. (2009). Svaz Cikánů-Romů 1969–1973. In M. Schuster, M. Závodská, *Doprovodná publikace k výstavě Muzea romské kultury "Svaz Cikánů-Romů (1969–1973). Z historie první romské organizace v českých zemích."* (pp. 5–23). Muzeum romské kultury.

<sup>67</sup> For example, according to Cohn (in Cohn, W. (2008). Mýtus cikánského národnostního hnutí. In M. Jakoubek (Ed.), *Cikáni a etnicita* (pp. 134–143). Triton, p. 139), there is no other significant loyalty among Roma beyond loyalty to extended family. According to the author, the Romani national movement meets with misunderstanding among the majority of Roma. The author therefore refers to the Roma national movement as a myth.

<sup>68</sup> According to Jakoubek (Jakoubek, 2006, *op. cit.*), Romani elites, Romani leaders, and Romani political representation are recruited from the bearers of high culture – Romani national culture, which is written and transmitted through school education and is associated with Romani museums, theaters, television programs, etc. However, according to him, the majority Romani culture is a rather traditional culture, which does not take the form of high culture. Historically, it has been an oral culture that has been passed down through the generations and, as already mentioned, it is based on the organisational principle of kinship; an important identifying element here is sub-ethnicity, which is linked to the concept of ritual impurity. In this culture, the sphere of public space is absent, along with public (political) authority and representation – even authority in traditional Romani culture is derived from kinship. By its very nature, according to Jakoubek, traditional Romani culture is in conflict with the national Romani culture of the elites.

activists, while the majority of the Roma population remain indifferent to this topic or do not even identify with it.

The representatives of the ethno-revitalization movement, however, are passing the Roma national identity off as the identity of all Roma and are trying to build it in a similar way as other national identities were built in the national-revivalist era. The problem is that representatives of the ethno-revitalization movement understand Roma national identity in primordial terms, essentialize it, and due to the influence of methodological nationalism perceive national identity as a self-evident and necessary part of the identity of all people.<sup>69</sup> However, national identity conceived in this way is not a self-evident part of the collective identity of all Roma; on the contrary, according to these authors, the ethnically conceived concept of national identity is, as we have already said, foreign to most Roma.

According to Jakoubek<sup>70</sup>, the representatives of the ethno-revitalization movement refer to the unifying ethnic origin of the Roma in order to gain political recognition of the defined national minority's identity and the associated collective rights based on ethnic and national principles. According to Pogány<sup>71</sup>, the recognition of the Roma as a nation and as a national or ethnic minority is highly advantageous, especially for tactical reasons. The international community is familiar with these categories, and in Europe in particular, a laboriously constructed structure of interlocking norms and institutions has developed to speak in favour of these minorities and protect their rights. National or minority status thus provides Roma with a number of substantive rights, as well as a source of institutional support. The author adds that, in political and legal terms, the concept of the Roma 'nation' is undoubtedly a valuable tool for securing the increasing recognition of European Roma communities, as well as the legal measures taken in their favour. The concept of a Roma "nation" is also a useful means of fostering cohesion between the current, often fragmented, Roma communities, as well as giving greater pride and self-esteem to Roma in general. The constructed nature of the concept of a Roma "nation" in no way detracts from its potential usefulness or the possibility that it could become real at some point in the future.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> This issue is discussed, for example, by Křištof, *op. cit.*, p. 104), according to whom many scholars, politicians, officials, and human rights activists are dominated by the desire to see the Roma as a nation that must somehow legitimately undergo "nation-building development", which it is noble to facilitate. All those who share some common anthropological traits are then perceived as Roma.

<sup>70</sup> Jakoubek, M. (2008). Rivalita identit: Cigán versus romský národ. In M. Jakoubek (Ed.), *Cikáni a etnicita* (pp. 144–164). Triton.

<sup>71</sup> Pogány, I. (2008). Přijímání ustavující se národní identity: Romové střední a východní Evropy. In M. Jakoubek (Ed.), *Cikáni a etnicita* (pp. 165–186). Triton, p. 175.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 177.

Krištof<sup>73</sup> is a bit more skeptical of the current "identity politics", saying that the current identity politics is undoubtedly the strongest factor influencing the formulation of measures to address or empower the status of Roma in Europe. However, it must be asked which groups of Roma are affected by such policies. In the author's view, it is at least questionable whether the empowerment of the emerging political entity of "international" Roma can achieve a change in the status of the inhabitants of Roma ghettos, who are, at least declaratively, the target group of many programmes aimed at their upliftment. However, these programmes combine ethno-emancipatory approaches, where the emphasis on ethnic self-awareness forms the basis of the assumed success, and social approaches, based on the fight against social exclusion.

Giordano and Boscoboinik<sup>74</sup> look at the issue in a similar way, saying that "there is now a process of ethnicisation, i.e., an intention to create a collective ethnic identity among the disparate Roma groups, mainly led by an educated Roma elite. Thus, despite the groups' heterogeneity, some Roma activists and politically engaged Roma seek to develop a sort of ethnic solidarity. This identity should express a feeling that all Roma belong to the same distinct group, which shares common cultural traits and common problems resulting from widespread injustice and prejudice, ethnic hostility, and violence."

Kašparová<sup>75</sup> also provides an interesting perspective on Romani nationalism and its perception by the majority, according to which it is evident that both sides – the Roma and the majority society – have an interest in Roma being perceived as a nation, as both actively participate in this discourse and contribute to the continued existence of this dream community. This implies that both sides are aware of their distinct identity, which is reinforced by the existing discourse. Thus, once again, we encounter the paradox of nationalism. Seen from one point of view – the participation of members of the majority in the national emancipation process means the recognition of the equivalence of the Roma by using a universal national dialogue. On the other hand, by doing so, we make it clear that differences exist between us, and therefore individuals must be categorized into the categories of the nation where they rightly belong. At the same time, however, Kašparová<sup>76</sup> adds that national revival along the lines of ethnic emancipation is a very complex and fragile phenomenon. On the one hand, its development is desirable and should be supported, as those Roma who are interested in this development of their

<sup>73</sup> Krištof, R. (2006). Nezamýšlené důsledky podpory "romské integrace" (aneb Systém "trvale udržitelného vyloučení"). In T. Hirt, M. Jakoubek (Eds.), *Romové v osidlech sociálního vyloučení* (pp. 165–180). Aleš Čeněk., p. 169.

<sup>74</sup> Giordano, Ch. – Boscoboinik, A. (2011). The Roma "Problem": Ethnicisation or Social Marginalisation? In G. Mirescu (Ed.), *Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities in South-Eastern Europe* (pp. 11–18). Swisspeace, p. 13.

<sup>75</sup> Kašparová, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 85.

identity have every right to it in accordance with the legal order of the Czech Republic. The folklorization and museification of culture labeled by Romani and non-Romani intellectuals as "traditionally Romani" is deliberately supported by the state because it helps to clearly define the ethnic identity of Roma, the existence of which is crucial to the successful functioning of a multicultural society. What is important here is not the debate about whether ethnicity represents only a social construct or a genetically transmitted core, but the fact that there is a group of people in our republic who experience their otherness (whether intellectually or physically) and who therefore identify or are identified with this concept. On the other hand, it cannot be said that this concept of identification applies to all Roma, and as such it should not be imposed on anyone.

The initiators and supporters of the ethno-emancipatory Romani movement perceive the national emancipation of the Roma as a path to the integration of the Roma into society that leads through the formation of their own nation. This path, according to these actors, makes it possible to achieve proper pride in one's Romani belonging, which is also a necessary step towards asserting oneself in society.<sup>77</sup> However, in promoting national rights, or the rights of national minorities, according to Jakoubek, the representatives of the ethno-revitalization movement do so at the expense of the concept of individual civil rights, which are neglected in this process, which Jakoubek sees critically, as he understands civil rights as rights associated with postmodern society. These are rights that bind, or at least should potentially bind, all citizens of a given country together, without distinction as to their nationality, ethnicity or other specific characteristics.

A different approach to the topic of Roma (nationality) emancipation is offered by Marushiaková and Popov<sup>78</sup>, who emphasize that the topic of the emancipation of the Roma, or their efforts to participate in functioning society, have received little attention from scholars in the past and many historical sources related to this topic have remained unresearched. According to the authors, the lack of research on historical sources has led to the misconception that the Roma did not participate in the political life of the country where they lived in the past. However, according to the authors, this view of the matter is simplistic and does not correspond to reality. In their book, which has been edited in an attempt to bring more relevant findings to the issue by the individual authors, primary historical sources from different countries have been examined. The archival documents presented in the book show that many Roma communities in Europe were not merely passive recipients of local political measures, but their members sometimes actively tried to influence their own lives. As a result, the authors present a new paradigm that shows the

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<sup>77</sup> Jakoubek, 2008, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>78</sup> Marushiaková & Popov, *op. cit.*

Roma as active subjects of their own history and of political emancipation taking place there.

According to Marushiaková and Popov<sup>79</sup>, the roots of the civic emancipation of the Roma can be traced in historical sources as early as the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (i.e., the time of the spread of nationalism) and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These authors consider the aspirations of Janos Kaldaras and Sava Mihaly as the beginning of the civil emancipation of the Roma, or at least as one example of an effort to gain political autonomy. At the time of national emancipation carried by the Habsburg Empire in the era of modernization, they tried to gain public and political recognition of the Roma community, or rather of "their" Roma tribes located at that time in Bihar (the territory of present-day Romania). These two Gypsy chiefs asked the Hungarian authorities to establish a separate territorial-administrative unit, "Gypsy Vojvodina", which was reported in the contemporary press in 1865. According to the authors, this is probably the first historical evidence of active cooperation between differently living Roma (Kaldaras was a nomadic Roma, while Mihaly lived a settled life), which took place in the name of the community's common desire to become an integral and equal part of society. This cooperation between Roma from different groups, which usually define themselves and do not communicate with each other, was not a commonplace, but rather a unique feature. This is just one of many examples of the civic emancipation of Roma, or the efforts of Roma to participate in the common political, religious and cultural life of their respective civic nations.

Today, representatives of the Romani community involved in civic emancipation are, of course, taking on different characteristics due to historical social changes. Previously, according to Marushiaková and Popov<sup>80</sup>, civic emancipation was primarily the responsibility of traditional Romani elites, whose functioning was limited to their own (small) part of the community. The new Roma civic elite is made up more of Roma visionaries and activists, but this does not exclude the possibility that these people are in some cases the same people as at the beginning of the emancipation movement.

Koubek<sup>81</sup> writes about the transformation of the form of the emancipation movement in the context of the Czech environment, arguing that self-definition and the framing of collective identity evolve (whether consciously or unconsciously) in connection with the change of the dominant poles of the discursive field. Activists take advantage of new structural or discursive opportunities that provide additional important (material, non-material) resources for their activities. According to the author, the initially predominant political level of the characterization of the Roma minority has gradually been

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>81</sup> Koubek, M. (2013). *Zápas o uvozovky: interpretační rámce a repertoár jednání pro-romského hnutí v letech 1989–2007*. MuniPress, p. 162. Koubek's work deals with the pro-Roma movement and its transformation between 1989 and 2007.

placed on the socio-economic level (e.g., the issues of social exclusion and poverty and related financial support have begun to be addressed) and further shifted to the level of assimilation, which aims at the individual inclusion of Roma into the majority society. But the ethnicisation process of the potential life problems faced by the Roma, however, can be problematic. According to Giordano and Boscoboinik<sup>82</sup> the problems that Roma face are "essentially those of many other majority or other ethnic groups. Therefore, it is crucial to find solutions for social and economic problems (and not only of Roma communities), without forcing them on ethnic status. This does not mean that we support movement towards the assimilation of Roma communities into the majority. The need for equal access to economic development must be achieved by means other than stressing belonging to a minority to prevent ethnic conflicts."

### Conclusion

The aim of the study was to show how extensive and divergent in opinion the issue of Romani national identity and the related topic of the ethno-emancipation movement can be at both academic and non-academic levels. The aim of the study was not to argue for or against one of the poles of opinion on this topic, but rather to bring this debate closer to the reader and to show the importance of a complex perception of the research subject, which is the multilayered concept of Roma national identity. Understanding the concept of Roma national identity, which touches on Romani identity in general and Romani identity as such, is crucial for choosing appropriate ways of dealing with various potentially problematic or difficult situations related to the so-called Roma issue, and therefore also for finding ways to resolve the various situations that Roma face in their lives. These can also be related to the search for one's own identity or the way of experiencing this identity. In other words, the aim of the study was to draw attention to the fact that perceiving Roma national identity as an a priori existing concept that takes on a particular form could lead to simplistic thinking, methodological distortions and problematic social practice that could be reflected in ineffective social work or other government policies, such as education policy.

The form of Roma national identity is a complex social phenomenon that deserves deeper attention in the context of the Czech Republic. In order to provide a basic insight into the issue, the study discussed three theses that emerge from my field of research and experience in practice. These theses are thought through on a theoretical level, drawing on research and the work of authors who have dealt with the issue. This theoretical insight could now, I

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<sup>82</sup> Giordano & Boscoboinik, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

hope, be used to think about new or deepening research intentions of other authors dealing with various social issues related to Roma (national) identity.

In the first thesis, the study showed that perceiving Roma identity as automatically based on nationality would be a mistake and that researchers and helping professionals should avoid this idea. The concept of a Roma national identity is not shared by all Roma in the Czech Republic, which is also evident in the research censuses collecting population characteristics as part of the repeated Population and Housing Censuses. National identity is far from being the basic basis of Roma identity. In view of this fact, it is clear that the activities of the ethno-emancipation movement cannot in practice target all Roma people and all of the life situations they experience. As such, the goals of the ethno-emancipation movement cannot be passed off as a universal value, a kind of optic applicable to all situations or an optic shared by all Roma individuals. Strengthening Roma national identity, although it may entail strengthening one's own self-esteem and positive self-assessment, as well as other important aspects, does not provide a universal answer to all the situations that Roma face in their daily lives and whose experience and resolution is crucial for these social actors. Social identity is multidimensional and different key dimensions of our identity may come to the fore in different situations. Thus, in many social contexts, other aspects of identity are more important than national ones. Therefore, it is always advisable to perceive (not only) Roma identity in a broader context.

The study attempts to provide a basic insight into how Roma identity can be viewed within the sociological discourse with regard to its anchoring in Czech social discourse within the framework of the first thesis. The thesis was interested in what levels Roma identity can take and what elements it is typically built on in the context of the Czech Republic. The study started from the fact that the form of identity can differ in terms of whether it is a chosen identity (self-identification) or one externally ascribed by the environment (social categorisation). The study outlined which forms of Roma identity appear most frequently in the Czech environment. It discussed the problematic and inappropriate perception of Roma identity as a biological category (the lay identification of Roma identity with a specific anthropological type), which is not in line with the current state of social science research and is rather associated with stereotypical expectations. The second model of Romanipen, often present in social discourse, presents Romanipen as a cultural category, where Romanipen is often linked to language and specific culture (the study outlines the topic of traditional Romani culture as one of the possible frameworks, which may contribute to the form of Roma identity, especially in relation to a collective identity derived from belonging to a specific family), or the socio-economic life situation of Roma families or individuals. The study also raised the issue of the conflation of national and ethnic categories that often occurs in the area of Roma national identity. Along with this, it opened

up the issue of the conflation and confusion of national and civic identity, two levels that may differ in the context of Roma national identity.

The study continued the more general topic of Roma identity in the second thesis, which dealt with the reasons why Roma do not claim Roma national identity. Not being aware of, or not experiencing, the national level of Roma identity may be an important aspect of this issue, but it is far from being the only reason why Roma do not claim Roma national identity. Along with that, fear of publicly declaring Roma national identity or a misunderstanding of the national category, which can manifest itself in confusion between national and civic identity, is not the only possible reason for not declaring Roma national identity. There are multiple reasons for non-declaration of Roma national identity and it is important to respect and not overlook the multiplicity of these different reasons. At the same time, the actual reasons why Roma do not declare Roma identity as their national identity in the Censuses deserve deeper research attention, research attention, without which no conclusions can be drawn about the reasons why Roma people do not declare their Roma national identity in the Census.

The last thesis established the topic of ethno-emancipation movements and their possible contribution or negative impact on the life of the Roma and the identities they experience. Some authors hold the opinion that the Roma ethno-emancipation movement has the potential to improve the position of the Roma in society, both at the level of integration and at the level of strengthening the self-confidence of the Roma and thus also their role in their own lives and the society in which they live. Others, on the other hand, argue that this movement deviates from the life situation and potential problems of ordinary Roma and represents only the ideological opinion of the Roma elite, i.e. better economically and socially educated people, who, according to them, participate in the artificial construction of the Roma national identity, which is passed off as the identity of all Roma, although it touches the everyday reality of only some of them. Along with this there is also a discussion on the issue of how much the construction of national identities and the associated rights of the Roma as members of a national minority does not leave aside the important level of individual civil rights that unite all the inhabitants of the state and social actors should strive for their fulfillment regardless of the form of their national awareness.

In the context of the topic of civic identity and its intersection with national identity, it is important to note the important fact that national identity itself is a complex social concept that is not easy to capture within the social sciences. It is not a universal phenomenon that takes the same form in all contexts, times and cultures for all its holders. The nation is linked to nationalism, which as a modern phenomenon first took shape in Europe, from which it spread to other parts of the world. In Europe, the nation was typically formed as

an abstract cultural value<sup>83</sup> and both objective and subjective elements played a key role in its construction. Objective elements were involved in the construction of the idea and category of the nation, which turned not only to language and culture, but also to political ties and the idea of the 'blood' bond. Subjective elements then include the awareness of belonging to the nation, the desire to belong to it.

Due to historical circumstances and geographical context, the Czech Republic, which is located in Europe, was characterised by a distinctly ethnic form of national identity at the time of its founding.<sup>84</sup> At the time of its construction, the Czech national identity was shaped as a distinctly cultural and ethnic category based on the Czech language and the promotion of its position in society (the aim was to elevate Czech to an official language).<sup>85</sup> The prevailing ethno-cultural concept of the nation was based on a common language and culture rather than on the self-evident unity of the nation with the state. The nation was perceived as a community of people with a common language, history, traditions and cultural belonging. The national builders first of all sought to strengthen the sense of Czech belonging and to re-establish statehood within the federalised Habsburg monarchy, and only then could they think of building an independent Czech state. This was then to defend Czech national interests, i.e. to protect the Czech language and culture.<sup>86</sup>

The ethno-emancipatory movement supporting the strengthening of Roma awareness of their Roma national identity is based on the same elements - the protection of the Roma language and culture and their deeper reflection by both Roma and non-Roma individuals and groups. As such, it can be perceived as a belated national revival of the Roma in the Czech Republic (but in reality only of certain Roma individuals and groups<sup>87</sup>) based on an ethnic principle

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<sup>83</sup> Hroch, M. (2021). *Evropský národ vs. globalizovaný nacionalismus*. Kulturní studia, 2021(1), pp. 2–18.

<sup>84</sup> The combination of nationalism and ethnicity is not unusual. According to Eriksen (in Eriksen, T. H. (2008). *Sociální a kulturní antropologie*. Portál.) most types of nationalism are a special case of ethnic ideology, which is associated with defending the ancient origins of one's nation.

<sup>85</sup> See more in Gellner, E. (2003). *Nacionalismus*. Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury.

<sup>86</sup> For more information see Kohák, E. (2009). *Domov a dálava: Kulturní totožnost a obecné lidství v českém myšlení*. Filozofia.; Rak, J. (1994). *Bývali Čechové... (české historické mýty a stereotypy)*. H & H.; Holý, L. (2010). *Malý český člověk a skvělý český národ: Národní identita a postkomunistická transformace společnosti*. Sociologické nakladatelství.

<sup>87</sup> Not all members of one ethnic group have to share a common vision of the emancipation of that ethnic group or identity. Eriksen, *op. cit.* draws attention to the fact that if some members of a group desire independence (in our context, rather ethnic emancipation, since the Roma ethno-revitalization movement underway in the Czech Republic is not about creating its own nation-state, but rather about empowering and improving the position of the Roma ethnic minority in society) and others are satisfied with having their rights within the existing state, the respective group may appear as an ethnic group depending on who is

rather than a civic principle, similar to the Czech national revival. However, perceiving national identity only through an ethno-cultural basis can be problematic and, from the point of view of contemporary social science, slightly outdated. The category of ethnicity itself is now problematized by social science as a concept that conflates cultural, racial and other categories that are not a priori related. Moreover, it is now recognized that the rigorous ethnic conception of the nation, as compared to the civic one, is more charged with the potential threat of ethnic and other conflicts. According to Heywood<sup>88</sup>, ethnic nations, which often derive from a primordial conception of the nation, are more inclined towards exclusivity, which is associated with conservatism and can result in extreme positions (we know the example of fascism from history), while civic nations are more inclusive and thus more likely to lean towards liberalism and multiculturalism in the political sphere. Civic nationalism according to Heywood<sup>89</sup> highlight the importance of civic consciousness and patriotic loyalty. From this perspective, nations may be multi-racial and multi-ethnic.

Therefore, I do not see it as desirable to overlook the civic dimension of Roma national identity. Indeed, a potential negative of an ethnically anchored movement may be that by being based on ethnic identification coupled with an emphasis on shared ethnic ties (rather than shared inhabited territory) and shared cultural traits that are viewed as objective, the movement participates in the process of differentiation.<sup>90</sup> Such a movement can then reinforce the process of group differentiation in society into 'us' (our ethnic group) versus 'them' (the foreign, different ethnic group"), which can lead to the reinforcement of boundaries between ethnic groups rather than their mutual understanding and harmonious coexistence. The question remains how, within the ongoing ethno-emancipatory movement, not to overlook this civic level of identity and strengthen its potential positive elements, together with preserving the possible benefits of other levels of this movement, which may be the strengthening of a positive (self-)perception of Romaniness from the position of both Roma and non-Roma social actors.

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currently speaking for the group. An individual may alternately be a member of an ethnic minority or a nation.

<sup>88</sup> Heywood, A. (2017). *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*. Palgrave.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>90</sup> Smith, A. (1991). *National identity*. Penguin books.

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## **Historical Development, Current Trends and Specific Models of Competency-based Education in the Military Environment**

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*The article explores competency-based education in the military field. The introductory part of the article presents historical trends, supplemented by the necessary setting of the issue in the context of developments in this field. The article includes a passage summarizing the latest trends, i.e. the current models of competencies, a summary of the education and development of military professionals according to competencies and, in terms of practical application, the correlation between competency models and the process of implementing the education in the chosen department of the University of Defence. This is a critical area for educating future soldiers, undergoing dynamic changes with the introduction of modern educational approaches.*

**Keywords:** *Competency-based education; Military education; Leadership; Competence; Education, Competencies in a military environment; University of Defence*

The study offers a comprehensive view on the topic of competency-based education in the military environment. It also takes into account the historical development, but especially the current trends in this field. For this review study, general scientific methods of investigation are used. These methods are mainly analysis, synthesis and induction. The primary sources are relevant research and findings of military competency models. Secondary literature from both Czech and international perspectives and their reflection on the topic is also an important aid. The study is supplemented by a summary of current competency models, competencies in the military environment and trends in the education and development of military professionals according to competencies. A concrete example is the use in teaching at the University of Defence.

## Summary of Historical Development

Military education has a long history. Already in ancient Greece and Rome, soldiers were intensively trained. Often it was a question of the survival of an entire society, the ability to defend its civilization or, on the contrary, to expand and extend its power base. Soldiers were trained in combat, discipline and tactics. Their acquired skills were put to good use by a competent commander. Related to this is the very notion of competence, which comes from the Latin word *competentia*, meaning the power or ability to perform an activity. However, the current use and meaning of competence varies considerably, for example in the legal field, in the social sciences or in pedagogy, and it is evolving.<sup>1</sup>

But let us return to the historical development. Sparta in particular was known for its rigorous military training, which began in childhood. Alexander the Great, in turn, was clearly influenced by the education he received from his tutor, the famous philosopher Aristotle. It was Aristotle who awakened in Alexander an admiration for Greek culture and a general interest in the outside world, philosophy, art, mathematics and the natural sciences.<sup>2</sup>

The Romans organized their legions with an emphasis on discipline and fighting technique. Roman society was built on discharge and the ability to learn from one's mistakes. The Roman army was defeated in many battles, but the ability to learn from defeats was typical of the Romans for many centuries of their successful civilization, and the knowledge was passed on to the next generation. Individual commanders had the opportunity to learn from each other. Thus, the ancient Roman military during both the Republic and the Empire, at least until the emerging crisis of the 3rd century AD, was very strong, and the cooperation of all its components represented the most effective that had been seen up to that time, and which did not reappear until long after the fall of the Roman Empire.<sup>3</sup> The gradual disintegration of the Roman Empire and the subsequent emergence of the East Roman Empire (later called the Byzantine Empire) in 395 was accompanied by a decline in military leadership, ingenuity and the systematic exploration of war as an instrument of state policy.<sup>4</sup> The period around the turn of the first and second millennium was characterised by the emergence of feudalism in Western Europe, the Muslim world and Japan. The resulting social stratification influenced the structure and strategies of emerging military systems. Medieval knights were taught to fight, ride horses

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<sup>1</sup> Veteška, J. (2008). *Kompetence ve vzdělávání*. Praha: Grada Publishing, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> For more see Stoneman, R. (1997). *Alexander the Great*. London: Psychology Press, pp. 10–18.

<sup>3</sup> Anglim, S. (2006). *Bojové techniky starověkého světa*. Praha: Deus, p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> Dupuy, R. E. – Dupuy, T. N. (1996) *Historie vojenství. Díl 1. Od roku 3500 př. Kr. do roku 1700. Harperova encyklopedie*. Praha: Forma, p. 184.

and handle weapons. In Japan, samurai underwent similar training, with an emphasis on a code of personal honor and martial arts.<sup>5</sup>

Moving further back in time, the Renaissance (14th to 17th centuries) and then the Enlightenment absolutism of the 18th century saw the emergence of a more formal system of military education, which evolved into the establishment of cadet schools and military academies as institutions specialised in the education of command cadres - officers who were members of the nobility.<sup>6</sup> The emerging military power Prussia became a pioneer of modern military education in the 18th century. The foundation was laid in the military reforms of Frederick William I, such as the directives he proposed to the War Council in 1707 while still Crown Prince.<sup>7</sup> The Prussian model of this time<sup>8</sup> focused on the systematic training of officers. The process was further intensified in the early 18th century with the establishment of new military state schools in Berlin, Kolberg and Magdeburg, which Frederick William I merged into the Central Cadet School in Berlin shortly after his accession to the throne in 1713. Here the sons of aristocratic families were taught writing, French, logic, history, geography, engineering, dancing, fencing and „military drawing“.<sup>9</sup> This list already includes simplified basics of tactics, strategy and soldier leadership. With similar intentions, Great Britain established the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich in 1741.<sup>10</sup> The French Royal Military Academy *École Royale Militaire* was founded in Paris in 1751.<sup>11</sup> In 1784 her most famous pupil, Napoleon Bonaparte, began studying here.<sup>12</sup> The period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars also represented a turning point in that future commanders began to be determined by their abilities rather than their origins, which is also illustrated by the fate of many Napoleonic marshals.<sup>13</sup> In the Habsburg Monarchy, the Theresian Military Academy was founded in Vienna's New

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<sup>5</sup> Benesch, O. (2021). Medievalism, Modernity, and Militarism in Imperial Japan. In *The Visual Culture of Meiji Japan*, pp. 58–74.

<sup>6</sup> Dupuy, R. E. – Dupuy, T. N. (1997) *Historie vojenství. Díl 2. Od roku 1700 do války v Perském zálivu. Harperova encyklopedie*. Praha: Forma, p. 684.

<sup>7</sup> Clark, C. M. (2008). *Prusko: vzestup a pád železného království*. Praha: Beta, pp. 101–102.

<sup>8</sup> Dupuy, R. E. – Dupuy, T. N. (1997) *Historie vojenství. Díl 2. Od roku 1700 do války v Perském zálivu. Harperova encyklopedie*, pp. 718–719.

<sup>9</sup> Clark, C. M. (2008). *Prusko: vzestup a pád železného království*, p. 149.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, W. (1989). The Woolwich professors of mathematics, 1741–1900. In *Journal of Mechanical Working Technology*, issue 18(2), pp. 145–194. Available from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-3804\(89\)90073-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-3804(89)90073-9).

<sup>11</sup> Chapron, E. (2014). Des livres «pour l'usage de l'École royale militaire»: Choix pédagogiques et stratégies éditoriales (1751–1788). In *Histoire, économie & société*, issue (1), pp. 3–16.

<sup>12</sup> Guizar, H. A. (2020). *The École Royale Militaire: Noble Education, Institutional Innovation, and Royal Charity, 1750–1788*. Berlin: Springer Nature, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> On the Fates of the Marshals of the Napoleonic Wars see Collective of authors. (2003). *Maréchaux d'Empire*. Paris: EPA Editions.

Town also in 1751.<sup>14</sup> In the USA, the Military Academy at West Point was founded in 1802. The academy emphasized engineering, mathematics and military strategy.<sup>15</sup> What these and many other emerging academies had in common was that they began to emphasize theoretical knowledge and practical skills - this process of education is sometimes called civilizing.<sup>16</sup>

The 19th century saw a major development in military education, partly in response to the technological and social changes of the time. The Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) greatly influenced the approach to military education, as they demonstrated the importance of good preparation of officers and soldiers for the conduct of modern warfare. Military academies began to include technical and engineering disciplines. The development of technology required new skills and knowledge. Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz<sup>17</sup> wrote the important work „On War“<sup>18</sup>, which stressed the importance of strategy and theory of war. Military academies around the world began to use the ideas and reflections of thinkers such as Clausewitz and others such as Antoine-Henri Jomini directly in the classroom.<sup>19</sup> Prussia became a leader in military education thanks to military reforms introduced mainly by General Gerhard von Scharnhorst<sup>20</sup> after the disastrous Prussian defeats to Napoleonic France at Jena and Auerstädt.<sup>21</sup> Prussian Military Academy (Kriegsakademie), founded in Berlin in 1810<sup>22</sup>, has become a model for other European countries. The academy emphasized systematic training in tactics, strategy, military history and the theory of war. Military education in Prussia became part of a wider process of professionalisation of the army, resulting in an increase in the efficiency and readiness of the armed forces. After the victorious Franco-Prussian War

<sup>14</sup> Shek Brnardić, T. (2017). The Upbringing of Competent and Patriotic Officers: Military Education at the Theresian Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt (1752-1805). In *Povijesni prilozi*, issue 36 (53), pp. 109–132. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.22586/pp.v53i2.28>.

<sup>15</sup> Generally, on the topic Forman, S. (1950). *West Point: A History of the United States Military Academy*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>16</sup> Through a sociological perspective see Larsson, S. (2024). The Military Academy as a Civilizing Institution: A Historical Sociology of the Academization of Officer Education in Sweden. In *Armed Forces & Society*, issue 00(0). Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X241256127>.

<sup>17</sup> More on Clausewitz's personality Fabian, F. (1957). *Clausewitz: sein Leben und Werk*. Berlin: Ministerium für nationale Verteidigung.

<sup>18</sup> Clausewitz, C. von. (2008). *O válce*. Praha: Academia.

<sup>19</sup> For reflections in comparison with another famous military theorist Antoine-Henri Jomini see Calhoun, M. T. (2011). CLAUSEWITZ AND JOMINI: Contrasting Intellectual Frameworks in Military Theory. In *Army History*, issue 80 (Summer), pp. 22–37.

<sup>20</sup> For a useful summary of Scharnhorst's reform efforts and life despite the necessary distance from the ideological ballast of the East German communist regime in the seventies see Usczeck, H. (1972). *Scharnhorst: Theoretiker – Reformier – Patriot. Sein Werk und seine Wirkung in seiner und für unsere Zeit*. Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR.

<sup>21</sup> Müller, H. M. – Vollrath, H. – Krieger, K.-F. (2004). *Dějiny Německa*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, pp. 135–136.

<sup>22</sup> Hall, D. I. (2002). The Modern Model of the Battlefield Tour and Staff Ride: Post-1815 Prussian and German Traditions. In *Connections*, issue 1(3 – September), pp. 93–102.

of 1866, Prussia was recognised as an important world power in land warfare.<sup>23</sup> Technological advances in the 19th century, such as the railroad, the telegraph, and modern firearms, required a new sets of skills. Military academies began to include technical and engineering disciplines, allowing officers to better understand and use new technologies.<sup>24</sup> The second half of the 19th century saw a further expansion of military education. New military schools and academies were established, focusing on specific areas of the various branches of armies, such as artillery, cavalry, infantry and navy. By 1870, after the Franco-Prussian War, it was clear that effective military education and training, as demonstrated by the efficient functioning of the Prussian General Staff during the war with France, was crucial to success on the battlefield. This was subsequently reflected in further reforms and improvements to the military education system in Europe and the world, inspired by Prussian and then German militarism.<sup>25</sup>

Military education and training in the 20th century went through several key phases that reflected dramatic changes in the way war was fought.<sup>26</sup> The First World War (1914-1918) was a conflict that required mass mobilisation and the deployment of new technologies such as tanks, aircraft and chemical weapons. As a result, it was essential that soldiers and officers were quickly trained in the use of these new means. Military academies and schools had to adapt their programs to these changes. There was an increased emphasis on teaching the logistics, organization, and coordination of major military operations. After the end of World War I, many military education programs were revised. Between the two world wars, education focused on improving tactics and strategy, but also on analyzing the mistakes of World War I.<sup>27</sup> During this period, new methods of training were developed, including simulations and exercises that allowed for realistic training of military operations. In Germany, the concept of „Blitzkrieg“ developed in the 1920s<sup>28</sup> (blitzkrieg warfare), which emphasized a rapid and coordinated attack using a combination of infantry, artillery, and aviation. This concept was supported by a new style of military education that emphasized flexibility, improvisational ability, and speed of decision-making.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Dupuy, R. E. – Dupuy, T. N. (1997) *Historie vojenství. Díl 2. Od roku 1700 do války v Perském zálivu. Harperova encyklopedie*, pp. 914–915.

<sup>24</sup> Nuciari, M. (2003). Military academies, cadets, and officer training. In J. Callaghan, F. Kernic (Eds.) *Armed Forces and International Security: Global Trends and Issues*. Münster: Verlag, pp. 288–289.

<sup>25</sup> Clark, Ch. M. (2008). *Prusko: vzestup a pád železného království*. Praha: Beta, pp. 457–458, 495–497.

<sup>26</sup> A summarizing monograph on the subject Watson, C. A. (2007). *Military education: A reference handbook*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

<sup>27</sup> Vasquez, J. A. (2018). *Contagion and War: Lessons from the First World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>28</sup> For a detailed analysis see Zetterling, N. (2017). *Blitzkrieg: From the ground up*. Havertown: Casemate Publishers.

<sup>29</sup> For details see Citino, R. M. (2007). *The Path to Blitzkrieg: Doctrine and Training in the German Army, 1920–39*. Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books.

The Second World War (1939-1945) brought new challenges, especially in the area of coordination and technical skills. During the war, training had to be massively expanded to ensure that millions of new recruits were able to perform their tasks quickly and efficiently.<sup>30</sup> The Allies and Axis countries created specialized schools for training in specific skills, such as piloting aircraft, operating tanks, and working with radar systems. Military education became a critical element of the war effort. After World War II, military education increasingly focused on the complex analysis and management of modern warfare.<sup>31</sup> With the onset of the Cold War, officers needed to be prepared for the possibility of nuclear conflict, which required new knowledge of atomic physics, chemistry and biology. NATO introduced standardised training programmes for its members.<sup>32</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, new forms of counterinsurgency and asymmetric warfare training were introduced, particularly in the context of conflicts such as the Vietnam War.<sup>33</sup> Military academies and institutions around the world have also begun to place greater emphasis on teaching international relations and geopolitics, which have been key to understanding global conflicts and strategies. This period also saw the development of cyber security and information technology training in response to the growing role of technology in modern warfare. The 1980s and 1990s also saw the development of other areas with respect to interventions during humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping in crisis areas of the world, which was reflected in military education. Armies had to prepare their soldiers not only for conventional combat but also for various forms of international missions that required additional skills or enhancement of existing ones, including leadership, diplomacy, language skills and cultural awareness of the region of deployment.<sup>34</sup>

Today, military education and training are complex and multifunctional. They include not only combat skills, but also leadership, management and technical knowledge. Modern technologies such as drones, cyber operations and the effects of artificial intelligence are part of training.<sup>35</sup> Military academies

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<sup>30</sup> Millett, A. R. – Murray, W. (Eds.). (2010). *Military Effectiveness: Volume 3, The Second World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>31</sup> Jordan, D. – Kiras, J. D. – Lonsdale, D. J. – Speller, I. – Tuck, C. – Walton, C. D. (2016). *Understanding modern warfare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>32</sup> On the topic see Kaplan, L. S. (1980). *A Community of Interests: NATO and the Military Assistance Program, 1948–1951*. Washington: Office of the Secretary of Defense – Historical Office.

<sup>33</sup> Tomes, R. R. (2006). *US Defence Strategy from Vietnam to Operation Iraqi Freedom: Military Innovation and the New American War of War, 1973–2003*. London: Routledge, pp. 58–95. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203968413>.

<sup>34</sup> Summary on the topic of leadership Wong, L. – Bliese, P. – McGurk, D. (2003). Military leadership: A context specific review. In *The Leadership Quarterly*, issue 14(6), pp. 657–692. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2003.08.001>.

<sup>35</sup> Ciolponea, C. A. (2022). The Integration of Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) in Current Combat Operations. In *Land Forces Academy Review*, issue 27(4), pp. 333–347. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.2478/raft-2022-0042>.

use simulations and virtual reality for realistic training.<sup>36</sup> Many countries are working together on joint training programmes. Training focuses on rapid adaptation to new threats and challenges posed by the changing global environment.<sup>37</sup> International cooperation in the field of military education is becoming increasingly important as it enables the sharing of knowledge and techniques between allies and partners around the world. The emphasis is on knowledge sharing.<sup>38</sup>

### Current Competency Models

The importance of competencies and competency models can be disputed. If we reflect, for example, on the debate of authors such as Hollenbeck, Silzer and Belz, we can arrive at many arguments for and against competency modelling.<sup>39</sup> On the one hand, competencies can be perceived as distractions from achieving goals, creating the idea of the perfect person and causing mere following of lists without context, but on the other hand, they can very effectively serve as a kind of lamp that can shine a light on what needs attention and what is worthy of potential development. Especially if the context and individuality of situations are not forgotten. Two approaches can be used in the development of models, namely the “one size fits all” approach, which claims that the competency model is applicable without specification, or the personalised approach, which is typical for its emphasis on individuality.<sup>40</sup>

The importance of competencies is also reflected in the Czech Army. Attention is paid to them on many levels, in the field of scientific research, training and education of students. At the University of Defence, the implementation of current competence models in leadership courses serves as a practical example. This approach not only reflects modern educational trends but also allows for a structured application of theoretical frameworks into real-world teaching scenarios. Currently, there are a number of documents available

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<sup>36</sup> Ahir, K. – Govani, K. – Gajera, R. – Shah, M. (2020). Application on virtual reality for enhanced education learning, military training and sports. In *Augmented Human Research*, issue 5 (7), pp. 1–9. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41133-019-0025-2>.

<sup>37</sup> With a focus on cyber security Manulis, M. – Bridges, C. P. – Harrison, R. – Sekar, V. – Davis, A. (2021). Cyber security in new space: analysis of threats, key enabling technologies and challenges. In *International Journal of Information Security*, issue 20, pp. 287–311. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10207-020-00503-w>.

<sup>38</sup> Kinne, B. J. (2020). The defense cooperation agreement dataset (DCAD). In *Journal of conflict resolution*, issue 64 (4), pp. 729–755. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002719857796>.

<sup>39</sup> Hollenbeck, G. P. – McCall, M. W. – Silzer, R. F. (2006). *Leadership competency models*. In *The Leadership Quarterly*, issue 17(4), pp. 398–413. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.04.003>.

<sup>40</sup> Mansfield, R. S. (1996). *Building competency models: Approaches for HR professionals*. In *Human Resource Management*, issue 35(1), pp. 7–18. Available from: [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-050X\(199621\)35:1<7::AID-HRM1>3.0.CO;2-2](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-050X(199621)35:1<7::AID-HRM1>3.0.CO;2-2).

focusing on the specification of the necessary competencies of a military professional.

In the field of scientific research in the Army, significant attention has been paid in recent years to competencies and competency modelling. For the effective development of military personnel, it is essential to select appropriate approaches that will support systematic growth in key competency areas, and competency modelling is proving to be a vital tool, as it not only integrates different skills into a coherent framework, but above all clearly defines the required knowledge and skills expected of personnel. This approach allows for the precise identification of areas where training and development is required, which can ensure that military personnel achieve the required level of competencies appropriate to the specific requirements of the operational environment. In this way, it is then possible to create a structured basis for the long-term growth and adaptability of military forces.

### **Competencies in the Military Environment**

Competency models and frameworks can cover many areas. Whether we are talking about combat skills, management competencies, leadership, communication skills, technical knowledge or others, core competencies can be identified for each of them. Competencies can vary widely, but in some cases there may be overlap. „*Although different sets of competencies predict success in different roles, there are certain consistent patterns as well.*“<sup>41</sup> For example, competencies such as decision-making, teamwork and the ability to adapt to changing conditions are often universal in the military environment and independent of a specific role. These skills are crucial for military commanders on the battlefield, but also for managers in organisational settings, for example. Furthermore, competencies can evolve depending on context - what is important in one role may not be absolutely essential in another, yet many of these skills support and complement each other. Developing comprehensive competency models therefore requires both an understanding of the specifics of individual roles and the ability to identify commonalities across different domains.

Currently, a number of relevant competency models can be found across states and their military environments. The models are focused on diverse areas of this specific job performance. An example is the emotional intelligence competency model. The model is designed for military leaders, who are identified as having an increased emphasis on soft skills rather than technical and other hard skills

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<sup>41</sup> Vazirani, N. (2010). *Review paper: Competencies and competency model—A brief overview of its development and application.* In *SIES Journal of management*, 7 (1), pp. 121-131, p. 122.

competencies.<sup>42</sup> The U.S. military environment has a number of documents that specify competencies. In the area of leadership, one can mention, for example, the handbook for military commanders dealing with character attributes and competencies. It is also important that, in relation to the identified competencies, appropriate opportunities for their development are provided.<sup>43</sup> Examples of competency models could be found in abundance.

Within the framework of the research plans and activities of the University of Defence, research has been carried out in recent years to identify the competencies of the commander-leader<sup>44,45,46</sup> and many of them also include comprehensive competency models. In 2017, a competency model was created, mentioning competencies such as decisiveness, responsibility, goal orientation, performance orientation, self-development, analytical skills, empathy, confidence, communication and creativity. These competencies were then developed into individual indicators that specify the necessary sub-skills.<sup>47</sup>

In 2017, a model of leader competencies was also developed that divides skills into three dimensions: hard skills (knowledge, professional and work system environment), soft skills (skills for cultivating relationships in a social environment) and subtle skills (competencies for cognition, decision-making and action). The individual dimensions are then specified by a list of specific competencies. In the area of soft skills it is possible to list social, communication and emotional competencies, empathy, cooperation, etc., while for hard skills it is listed e.g. knowledge of legislation, military and professional knowledge and skills, psychology, economics, management, etc. The subtle skills dimension is specified by competencies in the field of mental fitness, psycho-

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<sup>42</sup> Taylor-Clark, T. M. (2015). *Emotional Intelligence Competencies and the Army Leadership Requirements Model: A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree*. Online. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: University of South Alabama. Available from: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA623911.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> FM 6-22. (2022). *Developing leaders*. Online. Washington, D.C.: Army Publishing Directorate. Available from: [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_a/ARN36735-FM\\_6-22-000-WEB-1.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN36735-FM_6-22-000-WEB-1.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> Brichová, A. (2015). *Kompetence k vedení lidí jako nezbytná vlastnost velitele*. In: *Vojna ako antropologicko-historický fenomén v období globalizácie sveta*. Sládkovičovo, Slovenská republika: Vysoká škola Danubius.

<sup>45</sup> Binková, K. – Brichová, A. (2016). *Kompetence k vedení lidí a druhá kariéra*. In: *IV. Mezinárodní kolokvium Bezpečná společnost 2016*. České Budějovice: Vysoká škola evropských a regionálních studií, z.ú., Žižkova tř. 6, České Budějovice roku 2016, pp. 31–37.

<sup>46</sup> Mitáček, R. – Ptáček, B. – Kozáková, E. (2018). *Kompetence pracovníků v civilním a vojenském prostředí*. In: *Konference ICMEP - Kolokvium o řízení vzdělávacího procesu "Leadership - teorie a praxe"*. Brno: Univerzita obrany, pp. 38–42.

<sup>47</sup> Macháčková, P. – Hodný, J. – Zezula, J. (2017). *Commander's Managerial Competences in the Czech Armed Forces*. In: *The 21st International Conference - The Knowledge-Based Organization*. Sibiu: "Nicolae Balcescu" Land Forces Academy Publishing House, pp. 189–194.

physical fitness, critical thinking, etc.<sup>48</sup> The authors define this element of the model as „*capabilities related to the natural potential of individuals creating one complex of a professional leader's qualities.*“ The concept of subtle skills thus extends the conventional notion of soft and hard skills to include the pursuit of natural qualities for leadership.<sup>49</sup>

In 2019, efforts were made at the level of the University of Defence to „*introduce a unified approach to determining the competencies of military personnel in the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic*“.<sup>50</sup> In the publication, the author describes, among other things, the current trends in the area of determining the competencies of the Ministry of Defence. As of 2019, a model of social competencies has been developed within the framework of the university's scientific research plans, which names 4 basic pillars, namely moral competencies, competencies for team leadership and development, communicative competencies and competencies for managing stress.<sup>51</sup> Currently, attention is being paid for example to competency models for system leadership, which focuses on understanding relationships and linkages, and the development of a competency model is proving to be important in this concept of leadership as well.

Some competencies can also be identified from long-term conceptual documents related to the functioning of the ACR and its future direction. One of them is, for example, the Doctrine of the Czech Republic from 2019, which indirectly specifies competencies and focuses more on more abstract capabilities. This document mentions, for example, the essence of the moral component and ethics, which play an essential role in leadership itself, as well as in cooperation in the human system. The same document then puts forward that „*military leadership is the art of making decisions, motivating and guiding to achieve goals.*“ Competencies in authenticity and social competencies can also be supported by the fact that „*successful leadership has several conditions, including loyalty, trust, and cooperation.*“<sup>52</sup> It is also possible to mention the document Concept of Preparation of Personnel for the Needs of the Ministry of Defence from 2019, which, however, rather than individual competencies, describes the preparation of personnel and mentions the development of some

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<sup>48</sup> Ullrich, D. (2017). *Kompetence velitele - leadera*: habilitační práce. Univerzita obrany.

<sup>49</sup> Ambrozová, E. – Ullrich, D. – Kolečák, D. – Sládek, P. – Zezula, J. – Milichovský, F. et al. (2021). *Sustainable mental mobility for professional leadership in security environment*. In *Ad Alta: Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, issue 11(1), pp. 203-208. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.33543/1101>.

<sup>50</sup> Saibert, R. (2019). *The Approach to Defining the Competencies for Military Professionals in Command and Control in Military Operations*. In *Vojenské rozhledy*, issue 28 (1), pp. 30–47, p. 1. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.3849/2336-2995.28.2019.01.030-047>.

<sup>51</sup> Hodný, J. – Macháčková, P. – Mikulka, Z. – Nekvapilová, I. – Duriš, J. et al. (2019). *Sociální kompetence vojáka-leadera*: Průběžná zpráva projektu DZRO LEADER. Brno: Univerzita obrany.

<sup>52</sup> Ahrhám, V. – Bosák, M. – Boučková, K. – Čechaček, P. – Dalecký, P. – Dubec, R. – Ďurina, M. et al. (2019). *Doktrína Armády České republiky*. 4. vydání. Praha: Ministerstvo obrany.

competency areas.<sup>53</sup> A complete analysis of strategic documents was carried out in 2019 and the research also included proposals and recommendations for the introduction of a unified approach to determining the competencies of military personnel in the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic.<sup>54</sup>

Within the Czech Republic, competencies can also be identified from the National Occupational System portal, whose mission is to provide an up-to-date and comprehensive overview of the requirements for qualifications and competencies for individual occupations in the Czech Republic. This portal divides competencies into several areas and then specifies specific competencies for these areas: professional skills (e.g. operation and maintenance of weapons, performance of tasks in military training, conducting combat with weapons, etc.), professional knowledge (e.g. first aid, internal regulations of the armed forces, military tactics and strategy, etc.), general skills (computer competency, language competency, etc.), and general skills (e.g. ), digital competence (browsing, searching and filtering data, interacting via digital technologies, etc.) and soft competencies (competency to manage stress and strain, interpersonal competence, effective communication, people management, executive competency, problem-solving competency, planning and organising work).<sup>55</sup>

### **Training and Development of Military Professionals according to Competencies**

The importance of competencies can also be seen in the field of education. Competencies according to the authors „enable users to work in their job; they enable students to learn and achieve the curriculum goals.“<sup>56</sup> It is for this reason that competency models play an important role in the field of training and development of people. „The goal of competency-based education is to enable the learner to effectively manage situations and solve problems that will arise in the future. Learning objectives are then set in the form of situations and

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<sup>53</sup> *Koncepce přípravy personálu pro potřeby rezortu Ministerstva obrany* (2019). Ministerstvo obrany České republiky. Praha: Ministerstvo obrany. Available from: [https://mocr.mo.gov.cz/assets/ministr-a-ministerstvo/kariera-vzdelavani/vojenske-skolstvi/priloha-bez-nazvu\\_-00003.pdf](https://mocr.mo.gov.cz/assets/ministr-a-ministerstvo/kariera-vzdelavani/vojenske-skolstvi/priloha-bez-nazvu_-00003.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> Ambrozová, E. – Ullrich, D. – Kolečák, D. – Sládek, P. – Zezula, J. – Milichovský, F. et al. (2021). *Sustainable mental mobility for professional leadership in security environment*. In *Ad Alta: Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, issue 11(1), pp. 203-208. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.33543/1101>.

<sup>55</sup> *Poručík ozbrojených sil ČR*. (2017). Národní soustava povolání. Online. Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí. Available from: <https://www.nsp.cz/jednotka-prace/porucik-ozbrojenych-sil-c-e048>.

<sup>56</sup> Koper, R. – Specht, M. (2007). *Ten-Competence: Life-Long Competence Development and Learning*. In M. Á. Sicilia (Ed.), *Competencies in Organizational E-Learning: Concepts and Tools* (pp. 234–252). IGI Global. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59904-343-2.ch011>

*tasks to be competently fulfilled, e.g. in accordance with the competency model of the organisation.*<sup>57</sup>

The Army of the Czech Republic focuses on 3 stages in the process of preparing students, namely education, upbringing and training. Education in the military is implemented in several forms within the Czech Armed Forces and there are a number of educational resources. The institution for education and development of military professionals is, among others, the University of Defence, within which the greatest emphasis is placed on the education of students at the bachelor's and master's degree level. This is the tactical level of command. Competencies at this level usually include „*the responsibility for the entrusted unit (team), the ability to manage subordinates, to be able to use formal power, conduct meetings, delegate tasks, build and protect the entrusted unit (team), motivate and promote its individual members, provide them with feedback and develop.*“<sup>58</sup> The military professionals can be further developed through basic training, vocational courses, career courses and language training. The University of Defence not only provides higher education, but also implements the aforementioned vocational training, specialised courses, etc.<sup>59</sup> „*The preparation of students of the University of Defence should be preparation of soldiers already fully equipped for positions within the army structure.*“<sup>60</sup> The training of professional soldiers is then aimed at achieving the appropriate level of qualification and meeting the specified qualification requirements.<sup>61</sup>

### **Correlation of Competency Models and the Process of Implementing the Education in the chosen Department of the University of Defence**

The knowledge about leadership competencies, identified on the basis of the above-mentioned scientific research at the University of Defence, should naturally flow into the field of education and be directly reflected in teaching methodologies and contents. By communicating these areas, students may gain

<sup>57</sup> Ambrozová, E. – Ullrich, D. – Koleňák, D. – Sládek, P. – Zezula, J. – Milichovský, F. et al. (2021). *Sustainable mental mobility for professional leadership in security environment*. In *Ad Alta: Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, issue 11(1), pp. 203-208. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.33543/1101>.

<sup>58</sup> Mikulka, Z. – Nekvapilová, I. – Pospíšil, R. (2017). *Competence to the Leadership and Its Concept in the Army of Czech Republic*. In *International conference KNOWLEDGE-BASED ORGANIZATION*, issue 23(1), pp. 205–212. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1515/kbo-2017-0033>.

<sup>59</sup> Abrahám, V. – Bosák, M. – Boučková, K. – Čechaček, P. – Dalecký, P. – Dubec, R. – Ďurina, M. et al. (2019). *Doktrína Armády České republiky*. 4. vydání. Praha: Ministerstvo obrany.

<sup>60</sup> Břichová, A. (2017). *An Approach to Education of the Officers by Competencies*. In *Forum of Foreign Languages, Political Science, and International Relations*, issue 9 (1), pp. 38–45. Available from: <https://www.vsdanubius.sk/files/257/sk/forum-1-2017.pdf#page=38>.

<sup>61</sup> Kubínyi, E. – Macháčková, P. – Saliger, R. (2020). *Vybrané kapitoly vzdělávání vojenských profesionálů: studijní text*. 1. vydání. Brno: Univerzita obrany.

the opportunity to better understand their own strengths and weaknesses, which may lead to a focus on targeted development in areas that require improvement. In addition, clear communication of essential topics based on competency requirements provides students with structure and direction for their personal growth and professional development, which enhances their readiness to deal effectively with real work situations.

The educational activities of the Department of Applied Social Sciences and Humanities (K-104) were chosen to analyze this interdependence. The department focuses on the development of competencies in applied psychology, ethics, social communication, and leadership. The selected department provides instruction in four courses spread over three years of military student study. The Leadership I course is taught in the first semester of the first year of study and focuses on a basic introduction to leadership issues. Students are presented with topics such as leadership theory, leadership in organizational culture, leadership in personnel education, and work and social adaptation in the military organization environment. The Leadership II course follows immediately in the 2nd semester of the 1st year and aims to impart information in the areas of ethics, morality and communication. Space is devoted to topics such as the ethical climate of the organization, the code of ethics, moral dilemmas and problems, moral failure, individual moral behavior, and the societal context of ethics. In the area of communication, topics such as social communication in the military organization, verbal and non-verbal communication, communication styles, written messages, rhetorical and presentation skills of the leader, conducting interviews and meetings, managing and controlling the quality of communication flows in the organizational unit, etc. are presented. In the 2nd year, the subject Leadership III is taught, which is dedicated to the areas of psychology, sociology, cognitive management and research. Students are introduced to topics such as motivation, self-motivation, leadership in the context of psychological and behavioural sciences, personal qualities, competencies and personal development. Cognitive management in the context and practice of the military professional is introduced. In addition, space is devoted to emotional intelligence and psychology in the practice of the military leader. A substantial part is also devoted to research issues and their implementation. A comprehensive military context is delivered in Year 3, where students are enrolled in the Military Leadership course. It is in this course that the emphasis is on introducing the competencies of the military leader. Topics such as moral competence in the military, ethical leadership, educational competencies, communication and rhetorical competence, motivation, and performance are also presented. Methods of identifying leader competencies and the topic of resilience are presented. The course extends to the 6th semester, where the emphasis is on prediagnosis of commander-leader competencies in individual students, the topic of competency development as a platoon leader, the development

of communication and moral competences, stress management, and also the development of resilience.

### Conclusion

The history of education in the military environment shows how changing technologies and warfare strategies are reflected in the approach to training and educating soldiers. From ancient times to the present day, it has been continually transformed and deepened to meet the needs, trends and challenges of the times. This evolution reflects not only technological and strategic advances, but also an increasing emphasis on a comprehensive set of competencies that enable soldiers to function effectively in the challenging and unpredictable situations of the modern battlefield. Competency models are based, among other things, on historical experience, and their application today focuses on the targeted development of skills that are key to effective leadership and team cohesion. Learning and development in the armed forces thus draws on knowledge that has been progressively deepened from antiquity to the present day and links it to the current requirements and challenges facing military leaders.

The competency models used at the University of Defence are based on categories of skills and abilities that ensure effective leadership and functioning in the context of military missions and the military profession. Core competencies include technical skills, interpersonal skills, strategic thinking, and moral and ethical values. At the same time, they are designed to be compatible with global models of military education that reflect the specific demands on leaders in the armed forces.

In the process of implementing the education in the chosen department of the University of Defence, emphasis is placed on communication competencies, interpersonal competencies and teamwork, cognitive competencies and emotional intelligence and, last but not least, moral and ethical competencies. In the context of existing competency models, the selected department focuses its teaching on key areas of development that meet both historical and contemporary demands placed on soldiers and military leaders.

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## Conference: Velvet Ideas of November 1989 in the Mirror of Changes in Czech Society

On the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, the Department of History organized the conference *Velvet Ideas of November 1989 in the Mirror of Changes in Czech Society*. In its content and character, the conference built upon a previous event held by the Department of History five years ago at the Faculty of Education, titled *30 Years of the Velvet Revolution, or Democracy Is Not a Given*. The conference took place on November 12, 2024, coinciding with the feast of St. Agnes. The aim of the conference was to explore not only the Velvet Revolution itself but also the situation on its eve and in the first years that followed. Authentic participants from various fields of political, economic, cultural, and social life were invited as speakers. Before a full auditorium in the largest lecture hall of the Faculty of Education (nearly 300 attendees), the first speaker was Ivan Gabal – politician, former MP, sociologist, one of the founders of Civic Forum, and advisor to Václav Havel. For Václav Havel, he established the Analysis Department of the Office of the President of the Republic. In his presentation, he focused on the handling of freedom, social networks, and the threats facing contemporary Czech society. Ivana Janů, politician and judge, former MP in the Czech National Council and later in the Chamber of Deputies, as well as Vice President of the Constitutional Court, highlighted the role of the Constitutional Court in the democratization process. Although Ivan Lukavský was the least known to the public, his authentic testimony about pre-November petitions, the organization of demonstrations during the so-called Palach Weeks in Brno, and the formation of the so-called Moravian Youth was a highly valuable and important addition to the conference's topic. Petr Oslzlý, former Rector of JAMU, former dramaturge of the Husa na provázku Theatre, founding member of Civic Forum, and advisor to Václav Havel, provided insights into the theatrical and cultural world and its role in 1989 and beyond. Petr Pithart, politician, lawyer, university professor, and twice President of the Senate of the Czech Republic, previously also a Member of Parliament, focused on serious and even more serious mistakes made from November 1989 until the 1992 elections. The churches and the spiritual sphere were represented at the conference by Mons. Josef Suchár, who currently serves at the pilgrimage site in Neratov (known for its church with a glass roof). Just a few weeks before the conference, he was awarded the Order of T. G. Masaryk IV. class by the President of the Republic. He provided insight into the situation of the church before November 1989, as he himself had been secretly ordained within the so-called underground church. He also worked as the leader of the "Pioneer" camp, which was in fact a Christian camp called Radost, located in Amerika, a remote area in the Orlické Mountains. At the conference, the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution was also linked to the anniversary of the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union. This historic milestone

was presented by then-Prime Minister Vladimír Špidla. Slovakia was represented by Magdaléna Vašáryová, an actress, politician, former MP, and diplomat, who recently received an honorary doctorate from Masaryk University. In her presentation, she focused on defense issues and cooperation between the Czech Republic and Slovakia. She also highlighted the dangers and pitfalls of the virtual world, which many among the youngest generations tend to escape into. The common message shared by all speakers was: Let us cherish freedom and democracy. Following the guest presentations, a lively discussion took place. During a meeting with the leadership of the Faculty of Education, the distinguished guests signed the commemorative book and engaged in informal conversations. After the conference, attendees had the opportunity to watch the film *Havel*.

Jiří Mihola

**KARDYNI-PELIKÁNOVÁ, Krystyna. *Czesko-polski kalejdoskop literacki. Problematyka tożsamości, recepcji oraz dialogu międzykulturowego*. Warszawa, Neriton, 2023. 506 pp.**

Professor Krystyna Kardyni-Pelikánová (\*1930), author of the reviewed work, undoubtedly ranks among the most significant contemporary Polish, or rather Polish-Czech female literary and comparative scholars. As a matter of fact, this researcher into the Polish and Czech literatures and their mutual interactions has been strongly connected professionally and privately with the Moravian city of Brno where she has lived ever since the mid-1950s.

The author of the presented publication *Czesko-polski kalejdoskop literacki. Problematyka tożsamości, recepcji oraz dialogu międzykulturowego* [Czech-Polish Literary Kaleidoscope. Its Identity, Reception and Inter-Cultural Dialogue] comes from Łódź. She studied the Polish Studies at Łódź University (until 1953), then at Kraków University. At Jagiellonian University, she attended lectures given by leading Polish scholars, namely Juliusz Kleiner, Stanisław Pigoń, Kazimierz Wyka and Henryk Markiewicz. In 1955, she defended her thesis *Zasadnicze idee polskiej krytyki literackiej 1822–1830* [Fundamental Ideas of the Polish Literary Criticism 1822–1830] and subsequently became acquainted with Jarmil Pelikán (1928–2017), a student of Brno University and later renowned expert and professor of Polish literature, who was undergoing a study residence at the oldest Polish university at that time. She married him in 1956 and followed him to Brno, Czechoslovakia. Her subsequent long and fruitful pedagogical-didactic and research activity was closely related to the Moravian metropolis. In the 1960s (1963–1966), she commuted to the city of Olomouc where she gave lectures as an external lecturer at Palacký University until the end of the academic year 1970/71, when her lectures on the history of Polish literature took place there. After that, she became a researcher in Brno branch of the Institute of Czech and World Literatures of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (ÚČSL ČSAV) where she worked for long 20 years, i.e. until 1991. From 1959, she also simultaneously cooperated with Brno University where she gave lectures and participated in the scholarly growth of many local students of the Polish Studies. Kardyni-Pelikánová defended her doctoral dissertation at a university in her native Łódź (1969). Her work entitled *Kontakty literackie polsko-czeskie w dobie powstania styczniowego* [Polish-Czech Literary Contacts at the Time of the January Uprising] was followed by a book of the same name published several years later in 1975 by the prestigious Polish Academy of Sciences Publishers, which became the first work in a long series of the author's books published in Brno, Warsaw and Wrocław.

In 1988, she completed her habilitation at the University of Warsaw, based on a dissertation *Karel Havlíček-Borovský w kręgu literatury polskiej* [Karel Havlíček-Borovský in the Circle of Polish Literature], which was printed

as a book by the Wrocław Ossolineum publishing house in 1986. Six years later, in 1992, she was appointed Professor of the History of Polish Literature at Masaryk University in Brno. The professor's qualitatively and quantitatively impressive scientific heritage amounts to 300 publications, which comprise books, scientific articles and papers, reviews, dictionary entries, translations and necrologies, as well as contributions in literary journals and printed media. She kept in touch with the scientific community and colleagues through several dozen scientific conferences, which she personally attended.

She was awarded high distinctions of the Polish Republic for her valuable work in the field of science and university teaching. First, in 1997, she received the National Education Committee Medal (Medal Komisji Edukacji Narodowej) and in 2015, jointly with her husband Professor Jarmil Pelikán, she received an Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland (Order Zasługi Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej) from the hands of Professor Grażyna Bernatowicz, a Polish ambassador to the Czech Republic.

Despite her advanced age (she was born 95 years ago), the Polish–Czech literary scholar is still exceptionally active. She not only monitors the current affairs in literary science, new books, articles or reviews, but she is still publishing professional and popular scientific works including her own books. Her most recent work, the presented book, was published at the end of 2023 by the prestigious Neriton Publishers in Warsaw. The author entitled it *Czesko-polski kalejdoskop literacki* [Czech–Polish Literary Kaleidoscope] because she was concerned with various aspects of Czech–Polish literary contacts mainly in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The annotated publication is the 16th volume in the series *Nauka o Literaturze Polskiej za Granicą* [Foreign Literary Science on Polish Literature]. This series "presents the Polish readers with papers on the Polish literature and culture of researchers living abroad. It was created and edited by Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa and Krystyna Wierzbicka-Trwoga in the scientific Neriton publishing house. The already published volumes present works by leading Italian, French, German, Swiss, Swedish and Russian scholars who have not yet been published in the Polish language. They interpret Polish literature from a different angle compared with the Polish science. They cast a new light on issues of our culture, mirroring methodological approaches of the current humanities." The authors of the existing publications in this series include many leading, internationally acclaimed and respected European experts in Polish literature. Let us mention the French literary researcher Maria Delaperrière, Italian researcher Luigi Marinelli or German Slavic scholar Jörg Schulte.

The book conceptually evades a classic book monograph in the sense of a thematically unified text. Besides the completely new discourses, it contains essays and articles that Professor Kardyni-Pelikánová has already published earlier. In this case, we can always find detailed bibliographic information referring to the first edition at the end of the respective article. A dominant position in this respect is occupied by the Warsaw *Twórczość* [Creativeness],

which the author announced in the preface on page 27. It is the oldest but still running Polish literary and literary-scientific periodical, which was established in Krakow in 1945. The author has cooperated with this journal for the past two decades. Besides these texts, we can discover individual papers that were originally published in the Brno journal *Slavica litteraria*, in the Warsaw periodical *Przegląd Humanistyczny* [Overview of the Humanities], the London journal *Pamiętnik Literacki* [Literary diary] or in a Wrocław journal of the same name. The relatively large preface (pages 9 to 30) was introduced by Professor Kardyni-Pelikánová by two quotes that provide a key to the understanding of the book's fundamental message. In the first, the author cites an excerpt from a poem by the famous Polish writer Leopold Staff, who was of Czech origin on his father's side. In the second, she offers an opinion of the Polish literary scientist Henryk Markiewicz who argued that foreign researchers were only rarely aware of Polish professional publications while in the Polish professional publications, we can find almost no traces of foreign researchers' findings. This gap is then filled by foreign Polonists such as our representative of the Brno Polish Studies.

In the other "pole" (pages 484 to 493), we can find a portrait dedicated to the author by a long-time researcher and linguist Dr. Roman Madecki (\*1969), head of the Brno University Polish Studies department. Madecki provides a well-conceived overview of the existing scholarly career of the author of *Czesko-polski kalejdoskop literacki*. The comprehensive characteristics would not be complete without an overview of the author's main titles that span her long personal bibliography, complemented with brief concise depictions of the contents and contributions of the individual published works. He also comments on her activities on the particular academic and scientific-research sites, the achieved academic degrees and state distinctions that the Polish government has awarded her over the years. Madecki's description of Kardyni-Pelikánová's childhood experiences from World War II is no less interesting. It documents the close relations between these two Polonists that are manifested by a rather personal nature of information provided in the portrait. We can even regard it as a full-fledged afterword not much different from those that introduced us to authors of numerous translations of Polish belles-lettres during an increased interest in Poland and its literary heritage after World War II.

The current contribution is not the first one that has responded to a most recent book written by the renowned Brno Polonist. Up to now, three reviews by female Polish–Czech scholars have already been published. The first appeared in last-year's first issue of the Brno *Opera Slavica* into which the author of the reviewed publication has also contributed. Just like the second, which we will discuss below, it is the work of Dr. Monika Válková Maciejewska, an experienced Polish teacher and author of many certified materials and tests for foreign applicants for professional language examinations in Polish (Válková Maciejewska, M. (2024). *Czesko-polski kalejdoskop literacki. Opera Slavica*, 34(1), 175–178. <https://doi.org/10.5817/OS2024-1-22>). Dr. Válková

Maciejewska, who had strong, long-lasting working connections with Poznań University, also worked for several years as a Polish language teacher at Masaryk University in Brno where, in 2012, she wrote and defended her dissertation to which Professor Kardyni-Pelikánová contributed with valuable insights and assistance. The former Brno lecturer also introduced Kardyni-Pelikánová's latest book in her second (also in the sense of chronology) review in the London emigration periodical *Pamiętnik Literacki*, in which Kardyni-Pelikánová also previously published her articles, reviews and papers (Válková Maciejewska, M. (2024). Czesko-polski kalejdoskop literacki – recenzja. *Pamiętnik Literacki (Londyn)*, 67, 193–197.). The most recent review from September 2024, issued in the *Bohemistyka* journal, which is published by Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, was written by Renata Rusin-Dybalska (\*1973). This experienced female linguist has worked in the Prague Polish Studies department (currently under the Institute of Ethnology and Central European and Balkan Studies of the Faculty of Arts, Charles University) for more than two decades (Rusin Dybalska, R. (2024). Czesko-polski kalejdoskop literacki. *Bohemistyka*, 24(2), 305–309. <https://doi.org/10.14746/bo.2024.2.11>).

To end this annotation, we should point out that presented publication has greatly contributed to the spreading and popularizing of outcomes on the wealth of the Polish and Czech literatures in the world and its universal values. The huge range of knowledge and the lightness with which the author-comparatist can interconnect the individual items into larger thematic units, thus creating her own original map of mutual Czech-Polish literary influences, reactions and receptions of one author, one group or national literature in another, different cultural milieu, creates a combination that makes this book suitable as a handbook and a treasure chest of knowledge for literary scientists and comparatists as well as persons from the professional public pursuing the given issue. The author pays great attention not only to the actual authors, the leading Czech and Polish writers (e.g. Gombrowicz, Havlíček Borovský, Hašek, Mickiewicz, Norwid, Reymont, Słowacki, Żeromski), but also to their "Czech-Polish" researchers who have in numerous cases dedicated many years of their fruitful scientific and pedagogical careers to them (e.g. Ingarden, Krejčí, Máchal, Pelikán, Skwarczyńska, Szykowski, Wollman, Wyka).

Aleksander Baron

**SVOBODOVÁ, Zuzana (ed): *Svobodný čas: pedagogika volného času jako výchova ke svobodě*. 2023. 188 pp.**

The publication explores a concept of leisure-time pedagogy inspired by Comenius's ideal of humanity. The editor builds on the thesis that through the exploration of paths to freedom, human beings mature into freer and more responsible persons. Education, in this context, serves as a means for living a responsible life—towards oneself and others. The authors advocate the urgent need to revitalize the classical concept of *scholé* within educational programs in the field of leisure-time pedagogy.

Spanning eleven chapters, the publication adopts an interdisciplinary approach, interweaving theology, philosophy, pedagogy, and psychology. This plurality of perspectives arises from the fact that all contributing authors are affiliated with a single academic institution (Faculty of Theology, University of South Bohemia). The diversity of viewpoints is seen as enriching, as it coherently reflects the intellectual priorities of the department on the chosen theme. The publication is structured into two main domains: theoretical and applicative.

The theoretical part provides a dense and reflective examination of philosophical questions related to freedom and personal development in education. The authors draw on the thoughts of Plato, Aristoteles, Dostoevsky, Berdyaev, Pieper, Taylor, Arendt, and Lipovetsky. The second thematic section focuses on specific educational approaches applied in leisure-time contexts. It presents four applied dimensions: experiential pedagogy, experimental drama, non-directive animation approaches, and literary education. The section on experimental drama includes the presentation of original research data.

A fundamental premise underlying the interpretation is a latent response to the values and preferences of contemporary hyper-consumerist and information-driven society. Technological development steers our thinking toward instrumental rationality, as society becomes increasingly socialized within a virtual, online reality. Paradoxically, this very society promotes the value of freedom as a basic human right. Yet, in reality, freedom must be reclaimed as a precondition for a meaningful and self-/responsible human life—not as a vehicle for enslavement to one's desires, passions, or materialistic appropriation. Freedom in the context of self-knowledge stands in opposition to the illusion of freedom shaped by social manipulation in the technocratic world. A one-sided emphasis on human productivity as a value leads to dehumanization.

Drawing inspiration from the ancient, medieval, and modern intellectual traditions, the authors highlight how each period conceptualized freedom through its own epistemological paradigms. From this comparative analysis, the authors argue that absolute human freedom can lead to enslavement and anxiety, whereas freedom understood through a transcendent dimension—connected with faith in God—guides the person toward truth and goodness. Leisure-time

education plays a vital role in this transformation by reshaping human consciousness. This transformation leads the individual toward a spiritual path, thereby granting access to genuine freedom. The medium for such transformation is leisure, which offers a temporary release from the obligations and pressures of everyday life. Within this space, a social environment emerges in which authentic free action can occur.

From the modern period to the present consumer society of the Western world, Protestant ethics has prevailed—emphasizing individual achievement through work and profit, while rest has often been framed as idleness. The fear of inactivity was linked with the anticipation of growing vice and criminality. This gave rise to the binary division between *work* and *leisure*, accompanied by value-laden judgments presenting the two as opposing categories. Neglected in this dichotomy was the ancient notion of *scholé* as a form of creative passivity rooted in holistic perception and understanding of one's surroundings. This kind of passivity enriches the human spirit. Through *scholé*, one remains human and avoids becoming a mere speaking, instrumental machine or worker. In *scholé*, a person is granted insight into the essence of things through contemplation, which is the path to the highest form of knowledge.

The etymological and conceptual analysis offered by the publication forms a robust foundation for orientation within leisure-time pedagogy. It is particularly valuable that the authors provide thoughtful interpretations of key terms, thus avoiding vague definitional constructs that often characterize discourse on leisure and education. The theoretical analysis of ancient terms related to leisure-time pedagogy (*scholé*, *ascholia*, *paideia/paidia*, *educatio*, *educere*, *noésis*, *dianoia*, *metanoia*, *theoría/contemplatio*) and their ontological implications are not isolated; they are complemented by examples of good practice in the second part of the publication. This integration of theory and application is a major contribution, serving the didactic function of clarity and comprehension. The reader is thus equipped with a rich set of materials for further study and deeper understanding of the significance of leisure-time pedagogy.

This publication is warmly recommended to students of educational sciences. It provides both philosophical grounding and practical applications for the field of leisure education. It also serves as a valuable resource for professionals, as it raises many relevant issues for further discussion across intersecting discourses on the meaning and practice of leisure in contemporary society. Finally, the clarity of its exposition makes it accessible to those outside the field. The reflection on leisure prompts discussions on the values of today's globalized civilization, encourages readers to reflect on their lifestyles, and suggests ways to pursue eco-social sustainability. As the editor notes in the *Summary*, the publication is an invitation to a dialogical journey within the educational event.

Dušan Klapko

**ŠTĚPÁNEK, Kamil. *Úvod do dějin umění v učitelství dějepisu pro základní školy*. Masarykova univerzita. 2024. 70 pp.**

Art history is an important part of school history (and the training of teachers of this subject). This historical subdiscipline is the subject of a newly published slim textbook prepared by Kamil Štěpánek, assistant professor at the Department of History of the Faculty of Education at Masaryk University, with a focus on history teaching. The publication is divided into five chapters, which are further divided into subchapters. The first chapter introduces the purpose of the text and instructions for its use. The objectives of the work are to define only the necessary information on the topic (dates, concepts, contexts), to offer readers a helping hand in simplifying their understanding of the issues, and to provide methodological guidelines for age-appropriate interpretation and activities in history teaching at primary schools. The publication is intended to be a textbook, a methodological guide, a dictionary, and a concise history of the topic. The second chapter occupies the central space, where historical changes in art are briefly presented chronologically – the characteristics of individual styles, basic terminology, significant works and representatives (with pronunciation for some foreign authors), particularly in architecture, painting, and sculpture. The author follows basic foreign works and authors, but also touches on key domestic art. This is a very brief explanation (which corresponds to the set goal); those interested in further information must search for it themselves, which can be aided by the list of recommended literature and its analysis in the introduction to the work. The third chapter is devoted to the didactics and methodology of applying art history in teaching. I consider this chapter to be crucial in view of the intended readers (primarily history teacher training students). The author presents general didactic and methodological principles, ideas for practice, and briefly discusses education for the protection of cultural heritage. The following chapter offers examples of questions and tasks and the construction of test items on the subject (including suggested correct answers). The last chapter contains a list of used and recommended literature, an index of artists' names and pronunciations, a glossary of selected technical terms from art history, and a list of image attachments and their sources. As the title suggests, the publication offers a brief introduction to the subject. It fulfills its stated objectives; it is a teaching aid, not a classic technical book with continuous footnotes. It should be viewed and appreciated as such. It is a pity that there are some minor formal and technical shortcomings. The publication is supplemented with (often author's) photographs, pictures, and drawings.

Miroslav Jireček

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