

SKILLED LABOUR MIGRATION: A PROPOSAL OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF EXPATRIATES IN BRNO¹

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Abstract: Expatriates are one type of international skilled labour migration. This text will focus on conceptualising and defining categories of expatriates for research purposes. A closer examination requires a definition that reflects theoretical definitions, but also takes into account the local delimitation and even the self-concept of the immigrants themselves. In this text, these perspectives are laid out side by side. Our conceptualisation is comprised of four basic attributes that refer to the centre of personal life (life strategies), the temporary aspect of residence, professional or working skills, and the motivation to migrate. At the local level, the Brno Expat Centre (BEC) operating in the South Moravian Region, is monopolistically involved in the definition of expatriates on a practical scale. The processes of globalisation and trans-nationalisation have led to the diversification of forms of labour migration, which, together with interdisciplinarity, has resulted in a considerable ambiguity of terms and concepts. Thus, for research purposes, one must bear in mind that despite the uniform designation, we are dealing with a very diversified phenomenon. If expatriates are distinguished from skilled migrants, we usually emphasise the undefined length of their stay as opposed to permanent residence and the very important self-concept of expatriates. Brno has become one of the most important places of concentration of expats in the Czech Republic. From the pre-research of the Indian expats case, it shows that the different transnational strategies are very diverse. For further research, it is important to explore the social and demographic characteristics of expats, and we need qualitative research that focuses on the structural conditions of the life of expats and the self-evaluation of expats themselves,

¹ This text has been created in connection with the project “Expats in South Moravia Region: Stay and Needs”, TL01000465, TL – Program for the Support of Applied Social Sciences and Humanities Research, Experimental Development and Innovation ÉTA.

considering ethno-cultural factors and gender. Their family members also cannot be ignored.

Keywords: *skilled migration; expatriate; conceptualisation of labour migration; adaptation of expatriates; Indian expatriates*

Introduction – Skilled Labour Migration

The intensifying globalisation processes, led by the expansion of the capitalist economy, and the continuous development of technology infrastructures that allow for the rapid overcoming of huge distances, are among the most important factors that, in the long run, are behind the growing volume of international labour migration. Although labour migration represents a phenomenon in academia that research attention has been devoted to for decades, researchers rather examine unskilled or less-skilled migration (and, in addition, mostly from the global South to the global North) much more systematically than skilled or highly qualified migration. This has placed some constraints on studying migration as a whole, and has limited our discovery process a bit. “Consequently, one critique of mainstream Migration Studies literatures might be that they are producing somewhat skewed notions of ‘who migrants are’, leading to rather particular and limited notions of the migration process as a whole” (Fechter – Walsch 2010: 1198). On the other hand, “migrants (...) at the bottom of the economic scale (...) have been largely ignored in business literature, which concentrates on highly skilled and privileged migrants, often discussed in terms of brain drain and brain gain” (McNulty – Brewster 2018: 39).

The beginning of the establishment of research activities focused on the migration of skilled workers can be dated to the early 1990s (Vertovec 2002: 2). At present, such studies are part of many different disciplines within a wider range of social sciences – starting with sociology, anthropology, psychology, on to social geography and ending with disciplines such as business studies, (international) human resources, and enterprise management (Przytuła 2015: 93), for which, compared to other disciplines, the interest in the given category of migrants is undoubtedly the liveliest. The diversification of research orientations in the listed disciplines, hand in hand with the diversification of forms of labour migration, is obviously manifested by considerable conceptual diversity, which can sometimes make things a bit confusing (McNulty – Brewster 2018: 21).

Astrid Eich-Krohnm (2014) states that highly skilled migrants are distinguished by having special skills, subject to their field of study and higher education. She links highly skilled migration to the dynamic development of the global economy over the last fifty years. Researchers have focused on key actors in the migration process: the nation-state, multinational corporations, and the migrants themselves. This phenomenon does not only apply to developing countries, but it also affects developed countries, and is part of the global competition for highly skilled employees. It involves many aspects, such as the strategy of nation-states or the individual motivation of migrants in terms of career development. Although at first glance, highly skilled migration may look like “successful” migration, it is affected by the dynamics of global labour markets, such as discrimination, unemployment, the offshoring of skilled jobs, and non-transferable degrees.² Conditions for this category evolve over time, and often change rapidly according to new information technologies. Emerging markets create new incentives and lead to the relocation of workers on a global scale.

There is also a change in the gender distribution for migration, but despite the increasing share of migrant women, this area has not been explored much thus far (Docquier, Lowell, Marfouk 2009). According to Astrid Eich-Krohnm (2014), the ethnicity of migrants is also influencing the formation of supply and demand – and it also affects their acceptance and integration in new environments. The definition of the concept of highly skilled migration is rather problematic, especially if it is derived exclusively from the tertiary education of migrants; the concept itself has many variations and uses different classifications. Critics of the term *highly skilled migration* generally point to the fact that the term refers to various forms of transnational elites, transnational knowledge workers, skilled transients, qualified immigrants, or immigrant professionals (McNulty – Brewster 2018: 39, Nowicka 2014).

Expatriates are usually also considered as one of the types of skilled migration. Our study will focus on them. Our text deals with the possibility of exploring in depth the so-called expatriates in the city of Brno. It reacts to the fact that since 1989, the Czech Republic has become an immigration state, whereby the dominant type of migration is work migration, and so far, little data and information has been collected about the economic and social impacts of the activities of these migrants (Drbohlav 2010: 110). Economic immigration

² Compared to their status in their home country, many migrants experience an improvement, but in reality, they will retain a worse status and worse conditions than the domestic population.

has gradually developed in urban agglomerations and industrial zones, and one of the most important places that has become attractive for labour migration is the city of Brno.

Our text is a preparation for broader research of the expatriates residing in Brno, and it aims to describe this category and aims to understand the various aspects of their residing and life in the city. Therefore, the following text is rather descriptive and also contains qualitative pre-research.

First of all, with the help of specialised literature, we will introduce the conceptual definition of expatriates, and afterwards we will compare it with related categories of labour migrants. Following this, we will introduce the expert definition of expatriates of the Brno Expat Centre, which has been providing consultation services to expatriates in Brno since 2010. At the same time, we will place this actor's definition into juxtaposition to our definition, which is used in professional literature. And in the last part of our text, we will present the first results of our qualitative research in the environment of Indian expatriates in Brno, which aims at understanding the basic aspects of life of these expatriates, summarising the relevant topics, which are important for these persons, and collecting information for the creation of a hypothesis for the subsequent quantitative research.

The Conceptual Framework of Expatriates

As has already been suggested, there are a great number of ways of categorising international labour migration; it depends on the criteria that the researchers attribute crucial importance to, and those which they, on the contrary, choose to neglect. This, of course, also applies to the category of expatriates. In order to bring the specificity of the category of expatriates more to the surface, we contrast it with two other categories of labour migration: sojourners and frequent travellers, which, although they should be analytically distinguished, in some cases are mixed in with expatriates. This passage will thus contribute to bringing the necessary conceptual clarity.

Expatriates

The word expatriate comes from the Latin word “expatriatus” where “ex” means “out” and “patriā” means “homeland” (Przytuła 2015: 94). “In the last century, the term ‘expatriate’ was historically used to describe Westerners who have lived abroad for varying lengths of time (...), including artists, musicians,

colonials, writers (...), and generally anyone else (...) with a mission of some kind” (McNulty – Brewster 2018: 22). Contemporary English dictionaries define the meaning of expatriate or expat as “a person who lives outside their native country” (e.g. the Oxford Dictionary³). This broad meaning is narrowed down by some socio-scientific dictionaries to a meaning that underlines the importance of labour qualification: “A person settled outside their country of origin (... and in practice) the term is generally applied to professionals, skilled workers, or artists from affluent countries (...), rather than all immigrants in general” (Castree et al. 2013: 143). It may well be seen in this context that it moreover reflects the idea that expatriates are often limited to migrants from the rich “West”, and/or that they are migrants from the higher social strata.⁴ However, the current course of research in the matter of expatriates systematically disrupts this notion, since it no longer focuses solely on “Westerners” and “elites” (Scott 2006).

In expert discussions, the category of expatriates is most often defined with respect to four basic attributes. The first two attributes relate to the type of stay abroad and the planned length of stay. In principle, it can be stated that the new residence becomes “the centre of their personal life” for expatriates, but the intended length of stay abroad is planned as short or as long-term, yet in any case temporary and not permanent (e.g. Gärtner – Drbohlav 2012: 386; von Koppenfels 2014: 24; Przytuła 2015: 104). The third attribute takes into account the level of professional or working skills and, as mentioned above, they are usually qualified or highly qualified migrants (e.g. Gärtner – Drbohlav 2012a: 386; Gatti 2009: 13).

The fourth attribute – the motivation to migrate – must be described in more detail, because expatriates are divided into two sub-categories based on it: assigned expatriates and self-initiated expatriates. A so-called traditional expatriate is considered to be an expatriate sent abroad by his employer (mostly a multinational corporation) to take up a job in one of the employer’s branches in

³ See the link: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/expatriate>

⁴ This historical legacy, which the concept of expatriate still bears in many respects, is often criticised based on the use of this term in professional discourse. (Fechter – Walsch 2010) In some cases, even foreigners (expatriates) themselves distance themselves from the use of the concept or designation of expatriate, most often because they attribute a negative connotation to it. (Fechter 2007: 3–6; Cranston 2017) However, there are cases where migrants expressly enjoy this labelling. (Fechter 2007: 3–4) Researchers should therefore be cautious because of the nature of their work, as Fechter expresses it pointedly (2007: 6), “the term ‘expatriate’ is socially contested, politically and morally charged, ambiguous, and is linked to particular notions of ethnicity and class.”

the host country and work on a predetermined task. For this type of expatriates, specialised literature has adopted the term assigned (or organisational) expatriates (AEs). The second sub-category, which appeared in specialised literature for the first time in the late 1990s (Bonache et al. 2010: 268) and which is currently widely used, is the term “self-initiated expatriate” (Doherty – Dickmann, Mills 2011; Przytuła 2015; McNulty – Brewster 2018). These expatriates “take responsibility for their careers without the direct support of (any) organization (... thus, as we have mentioned above) the key distinction between SIEs and AEs is the initiative for the move” (Przytuła 2015: 96). One thing can be said about the category of expatriates as a whole: although the overwhelming majority of research focuses on expatriates in the private sector, many researchers now extend the research boundaries to the public sector, including government officials, army officers, university educators, etc. (Fechter 2007: 2; Przytuła 2015: 95). In any case, expatriates receive wages for their work.

Expatriates compared to sojourners and frequent travellers

It has already been said that the forms of labour migration are undergoing a diversification process. For this reason, it is necessary to analytically separate the category of expatriates from related forms of labour migration in order to avoid confusing them. The first related category consists of sojourners. A more comprehensive definition states:

people who voluntarily and temporarily travel to a foreign country for a non-business purpose such as short-term unpaid missionary and charity work, tourism, exile, education, retirement, or simply to see and experience the world (...). Sojourners may work – in legal or illegal paid employment – but do so predominantly, and often intermittently, to fund their travels and/or stay, as in the case of a gap year before or after university, or during retirement. Like expatriates, sojourners do not travel abroad for the purposes of permanent settlement. Sojourners include students studying abroad who may do so for a few weeks, a semester or their entire degree. (McNulty – Brewster 2018: 37)

The main difference between expatriates and sojourners is thus that any work done in the host country is not paid; and when it is paid, the sojourner will invest these means into further travel and/or will cover their stay before leaving the country. From the definition, it is also clear that migrants who do not work at all in the host country are also included in this category of sojourners.

The second category of migrant workers, which needs to be distinguished from expatriates, are frequent travellers (sometimes referred to as flexpatriates). They are workers who “travel to a foreign country for a purpose determined by their work role (...), but they only stay there for a short time, usually ranging from a few hours and overnight to a few days or weeks (...). This includes those typically conceived as executives travelling in business class and staying in good-quality hotels whilst they visit subsidiary operations of their company, or customers or suppliers” (McNulty – Brewster 2018: 39).⁵

The proposed definitions are not complete and cannot be complete. In fact, the designation “expats” contains various life circumstances and internally different categories of persons. As written in the *Research Handbook of Expatriates* (2018), there are several types of expatriates, such as self-initiated expatriates, LGBTI expatriates, inpatriates, female expatriates, millennial expatriates, international business travellers, and others. Expatriates also differ in their specialisation and the environments in which they operate.

If expatriates are distinguished from skilled migrants, it is usually the undefined duration of their stay that is emphasised as opposed to permanent residency, which is characteristic for skilled migrants and the self-image of expatriates who consider their stay as temporary and initiated by their own will (McNulty – Brewster 2018: 39). Skilled migration is associated with a more complex form of migration, where the migrant goes through the entire migration process, developing a long-term or permanent conception of stay. It happens on a more individual basis, while being more privileged and desirable.

Trends and Research Options

Astrid Eich-Krohm (2014) states that the research on highly skilled migration offers several fundamental issues. These are brain drain processes, detailed analyses, and comparative analyses. In addition to structural change, the micro-level, the motivation to migrate and possibly the motivation for returning, discrimination, gender and age issues, the impacts of migration on migrants’ lives, adaptation processes (not only the migrants themselves, but also their families), and cultural identity are also of importance. There is theoretical contribution related to assimilation and transnationalism theories. Phyllis Tharenou

⁵ If for expatriates the host country becomes the “centre of their personal life”, which in many cases highlights the fact that their partners, and even children, join them in the host country, this does not apply for frequent traveller.

(2018), in a text oriented on the methodological aspects of expatriate studies, compares the research methods used in three categories: assigned expatriates, self-initiated expatriates, and skilled (im)migrants. They represent different forms of long-term skilled international mobility. When analysing empirical studies, she notes four different components. For us, the first is important for now: conceptualisation. Studies usually distinguish the three above-mentioned categories. Assigned expatriates are professionals or managers trained by their organisation, which arranges and supports the move, and, at the end of a set period (1-5 years), they are usually repatriated back. Self-initiated expatriates are professionals or managers who move abroad temporarily on their own initiative to seek work. They move without the support of an organisation, usually for over a year. They repatriate, often within a decade. Skilled (im)migrants are managers, professionals, or technicians who usually hold a tertiary degree or other advanced qualification, and move on their own accord from one country to another, intending to settle over the long-term or permanently. Although this is a fairly simple division, the reality is more complex. Contextual definitions, researcher preferences, overlapping concepts and interpretations of individual dimensions and relationships between concepts play their part. We also find inconsistent interpretations within these three categories, which should lead researchers to a more careful conceptualisation that is related to the quality of research.

What types of direction in expatriate research can be observed? Kathrin J. Hanek (2018) states that the challenge is, above all, individual differences in cultural identity, and she highlights the development of bicultural identities, the creation of “third cultures” and adaptation processes. She emphasises mainly the themes of creativity, the formation of new cultures, and intercultural competences.⁶

Expatriates in the Czech Republic and in Brno

Only a few academic studies on expatriates in the Czech Republic have been carried out in recent years. Let us look at the themes that were discussed in these texts. In her text “How Americans see the Czech society”, Lucie Hrdličková (2008) dealt with Americans who had moved to Prague at the turn of the millennium for

⁶ Traditional research focuses on the expatriate cycle: selection, training, relocation and adjustment, pay and performance, and return. Other directions and topics of expatriate research are, for example, the management of expatriates or expatriation processes in regions (Morley – Heraty – Collings 2006).

a temporary stay to gather experiences, wanting to live in a European country for a while, to teach English, play theatre, or to study here, using stays at universities or other schools for this. Besides this, business people also appeared – some being representatives or ambassadors for companies and international corporations. The study focused on the American view of Czech society and on the interaction of Americans with it. In terms of our topic, paragraphs dealing with self-evaluation and the assessment of professional career opportunities in the Czech Republic are especially interesting. The author also examined the wives of expatriates. Věra Rádyová (2006) focused on French managers and their reflections on the Czech environment. She studied managers working in Czech companies in management positions. It is an ethnographic study that conveys the concept of the French managers' own position as foreigners in a specific position, and presents their reflection on the Czech environment – both socially and culturally. She observed the forms of interaction between foreigners in leading positions and the Czech employees of companies, which point to the trans-nationalisation of corporate culture in the Czech Republic and the typical phenomena of expatriates in the Czech labour market. From the point of view of expatriates, the most important are the reflections on interpersonal relationships in and outside of the workplace, the working and social environment, and the self-concept of French people as progress bearers. The expats in the study “have accepted their job in Central Europe as part of their career path or as their first job, or possibly as one of the forms of civil service or volunteer work.” (Rádyová 2006: 107) Two other texts from authors Michal Gärtner and Dušan Drbohlav (2012a, 2012b) deal with expatriate acculturation in the Czech environment. The acculturation of expatriate executive managers was examined in a sample of 16 sojourners transferring managerial know-how to companies in Czechia, using a structured longitudinal interview survey including in-depth personal interviews. The interviews were conducted six and 18 months after the arrival of respondents in Czechia. The respondents were contacted as they became available during the period 2006 to 2010. The results indicate that acculturation of sojourners in Czechia proceeded, as expected, according to international literature, broadly in line with Hofstede's acculturation “U” curve. The qualitative analysis points to several problems as dependence on communication in English, cultural distance, lack of openness limiting the Czech ability to form a broader world view, lack of mutual respect among Czech co-workers, a degree of Czech xenophobia, and an underestimation of certain predictors of successful acculturation, such as social engagement with the Czech hosts.

The selected studies share that they are empirical and are devoted to expats in different environments. They illustrate the different kinds of expat segments that can be encountered.

Expatriates in Brno: From numbers to the definition

The statistical data of the Czech Statistical Office shows that the number of foreigners in Brno is growing. In 2017 (as of March 31, 2017), 28,072 foreigners resided in Brno, while in 2013, the number of foreigners was 22,099. This is an increase of 27%. Between 2013 and 2017, the number of foreigners has increased, foreigners being both from the EU and non-EU countries.⁷ As of March 31, 2017, foreigners from a total of 150 countries were living in the city of Brno. This represents a very varied spectrum of foreigners. The top ten most numerous nationalities in the city of Brno are made up of citizens of four EU countries (Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland), and citizens from outside the European Union: the Ukraine, Vietnam, Russia, the USA, India, and Kazakhstan. Foreigners are economically very active. As of December 31, 2016, a total of 35,613 foreign nationals were active on the labour market in Brno⁸. The 4,203 foreigners with a business license must also be added to this number. Thus, we can say that at the end of 2016, there were 39,816 legal foreign workers in Brno's labour market.

The fact is that the total number of foreigners in the labour market in Brno has been growing rapidly since 2011 – mainly due to the increasing number of workers from EU countries. The structure of foreigners on the labour market changed during the economic crisis in 2008. While the number of EU and third-country workers in 2008 was almost equal, currently almost four-fifths of foreigners registered by labour offices are EU or EEA citizens. Thus, the economic recession has, to some extent, caused the arrival of foreigners who do not need a work permit. Almost two-thirds of foreigners in the labour market of Brno are EU, EEA, or Swiss citizens.⁹ Thanks to the fact that Brno is a university city, there is also a growing proportion of highly qualified Slovaks who

⁷ Foreigners residing in Brno mainly come from non-EU countries (63%), but we see a more progressive increase for foreigners coming from EU countries (a 42.2% increase from 2013 to 2017). For non-EU foreigners, there was an increase of 19.6%.

⁸ Report on the situation on the regional labor market, implementation of active labor policies (APZ) in 2016 and labor strategies for 2017.

⁹ The largest share of this labour force is attributed to citizens of Slovakia, who are most often employed as workers in engineering, construction, and agriculture. Moreover, due to the absence of language barriers, they also find opportunities in business, services, and healthcare.

remain here after graduation and look for a job (e.g. doctors or IT specialists). In the case of foreigners from other EU countries, they are a highly qualified workforce, with IBM being the largest employer of foreigners. Among non-European foreigners, Indians are also employed here. Other foreigners also work in the city of Brno in highly qualified positions, especially as managers, foreign language teachers, and university professors and educators. The educational profile of foreigners also points to the presence of a highly qualified workforce: almost one third of all foreigners in Brno have a university degree.

Statistical data points to the presence of so-called expats in Brno, however, there is a lack of information about their application in the labour market and their needs. On the other hand, statistics show that the Czech Republic is one of the leading countries considered as a popular destination for expats from all over the world; in 2017, it ranked 11th in popularity of countries in the Expat Explorer international survey.

As we have already mentioned, the conceptualisation of highly skilled migration as well as expatriates is problematic. In the case of expatriates living in Brno, there is no academic definition yet. This is mainly because the category of expatriates has not become the subject of more comprehensive research, whether qualitative or quantitative. Two sources that are involved in somehow defining the city's expatriates play an important role on the practical level. In the first place, they are statistical data, which provide a quantitative dimension (albeit with considerable limits) based on migrant education data and the qualifications they hold. Secondly, in practice, there is a definition of expatriates produced by the Brno Expat Center (BEC), which offers their services to the said group of people. This conceptualisation may not be overlooked because it has a communication aspect, it has penetrated the wider environment of local actors, and it can also take part in the self-concept of expatriates who use the services of this organisation.

Let us first look at the statistical data. According to data from the Labour Office of the Czech Republic, of the foreigners registered by the Labour Office in the Brno-City District as of December 31, 2017, 8,796 persons hold the highest level of education (including a master's degree and higher). The proportion of those highly educated is thus about a quarter of all registered (25.4%). As a point in case, on the opposite end of the scale, there are 6,515 persons with just basic education, i.e. less than a fifth of all registered (18.8%).¹⁰ However, we cannot

¹⁰ The figure that highlights the importance of gender research shows that 5,184 men and 3,612 women are among the highest educated people. Within the category with the highest education, we find 41% to be women.

interpret the situation by designating all persons belonging to the category with the highest level of education as expats.

More precise information is provided by one of the most widely used expatriate definition criteria, which is employment in a position requiring high professional qualification. In this respect, the Czech version of the CZ-ISCO international categorisation of employment can be used, namely its first three categories: (1) legislators and managers, (2) specialists, (3) technical and professional staff. The table below lists the sums for different categories of expats. By December 31, 2017, the number of expats amounted to 13,923. Compared to the situation as of December 31, 2010, when there were 6,101 expats in Brno, their number has more than doubled. Female representation is around one third: 32.9% in 2010 and 33.9% in 2017.

Table 1: Summary of expatriate employees in Brno (foreigners from categories CZ-ISCO 1-3)

	at 31. 12. 2010		at 31. 12. 2017	
	Males, Females	Females	Males, Females	Females
Expatriates – EU/EEA and Switzerland	4 971	1 684	11 396	3 904
Expatriates – others, do not need a work permit	481	173	1 561	623
Expatriates with a permit	649	152	966	192
Employee card	×	×	897	185
A work permit	643	152	48	3
Blue Card	×	×	21	4
Green Card	6	×	×	×
Total (registrations of expatriates at labour offices)	6 101	2 009	13 923	4 719

Source: Úřad práce Brno-město.

If we look at the most common nationalities within this classification, we find that the most numerous categories are people from Slovakia, followed by Romania, Russia, the Ukraine, and Poland. Other nationalities are represented by just dozens of people. Outside of the European Union, four nationalities are dominant: Russia, the Ukraine, India, and the USA.

Table 2: Expatriate employees (category CZ-ISCO 1-3) according to the most common nationalities in the city of Brno as of December 31, 2017.

	<i>non-EU</i>	Males, Females	Females
1. Slovakia		8 155	3 041
2. Romania		529	202
3. Russia	√	389	177
4. Ukraine	√	377	169
5. Poland		340	132
6. Italy		313	62
7. Greece		284	62
8. United Kingdom		264	30
9. India	√	254	43
10. Spain		221	48
11. Bulgaria		218	69
12. France		181	29
13. Germany		164	46
14. USA	√	149	30
15. Hungary		139	38
Total others		1 946	541
Total (registrations of expatriates at labour offices)		13 923	4 719

Source: Úřad práce Brno-město.

As of the end of 2016, 4,203 foreigners were registered with the Business Licensing Office in Brno, but it is not possible to tell the percentage of expatriate business people from the available statistics, i.e. foreigners doing business in highly qualified sectors.

The second source of data is the aforementioned Brno Expat Center (BEC), which specialises in providing services to expatriates. First, we will deal with the definition that this organisation is successfully promoting in the city environment. Then we will present some figures.

Next, let us turn to one of the examples of a definition of expatriate in the Czech Republic within a specialised organisation operating in the South Moravian Region, which is unique in the Czech Republic. The Brno Expat Centre (BEC)¹¹,

¹¹ <https://www.brnoexpatcentre.eu>

established in 2010 and based in Brno, is an economic instrument of the city of Brno and the South Moravian Region, whose role is to support the interest of foreign investors to relocate their activities to the South Moravian Region, and thus to develop strategic economic sectors of the region. At the same time, it should be mentioned that Brno is one of the places most affected by immigration and its consequences in the Czech Republic. The nearly 30,000 foreigners in the city account for more than 7% of the population, and expatriates constitute an important category that cannot be neglected in integration strategies (Analysis of social services for foreigners in the city of Brno 2018: 241). The primary client of BEC are thus the South Moravian Region, the city of Brno, and on the basis of contractual partnerships, also the foreign investors doing business in certain strategic fields, for whose employees (but not exclusively) BEC provides advisory and assistance services. BEC is a sub-project of the *Regional Innovation Strategy of the South Moravian Region* (RIS JMK) valid for 2014–2020. According to this strategy, BEC's stated objective is to "provide support to expatriates, i.e. to highly qualified foreigners who work or plan to work in Brno" (RIS JMK 2014: 47).¹²

Given that BEC is the only organisation working with the category of expatriates, it is interesting to observe how it conceptualises this category and what kind of implications it has for our topic. That is why we turned to one of the BEC executives who, during a research interview, defined the expatriate category as follows:

These are foreigners who come to Brno to work in the knowledge economy, mainly in research and development and for international companies. (...) So we're talking about big corporations like IBM, Infosys, AT&T, Red Hat, Honeywell, Lufthansa, and Kiwi. They are recognisable by the fact that they speak English – English being their working language¹³, which also differs them from people of the same nationality, same income class and same education, but who are working for a Czech or a foreign company, but who use a non-English working language.

¹² In another document of the South Moravian Region, the *Human Resources Development Strategy of the South Moravian Region 2016-2025*, it is also stated that "for the economy of the region it is (...) important to create conditions for the life of qualified foreign workers", whereby BEC is mentioned as an important player in this respect, which provides institutional support for the integration of such foreign workers (GaREP 2016: 112).

¹³ In that regard, it must be added that BEC is essentially focusing on expatriates with English language skills, which is also given by the language skills of the BEC staff.

That is one recognisable feature. Another is that they are skilled. (...) they have completed at least their secondary education and work in skilled positions with average or above average earnings.

Representative of BEC

In the quote, when defining a prototype expatriate, the BEC representative attaches relevance to the attributes of work skills, education, language skills, as well as the fact that expatriates are usually employees of a large multinational corporation. When it comes to an expatriate arriving in Brno sent by their company, BEC calls them “core expatriates” – we have coined the term “assigned expatriate” for them.

For a certain number of expatriates, especially young graduates, Brno is not the “final destination”, but, rather, they come here for the temporary acquisition of work and life experience:

Brno is not their final destination, it is more a transfer station where they come after college or even when looking for a career, they gain experience here, and some remain, but most of them move on again or just return back home. (...).

Representative of BEC

For the presented conceptual definition of expatriates further in this text, the aspect of “intended length of stay abroad” plays an important role; we do not consider those foreigners who intend to stay abroad for a long time as expatriates. However, it is not entirely clear from the interview with the BEC representative what plans for staying in Brno their clients actually have. We can see room for exploring this area through empirical research. On the other hand, it is obvious that for BEC clients, the city of Brno becomes “the centre of their personal life”. According to BEC, most expatriates arrive alone – as singles, however, some come with their family, or they establish their family in the second largest city of the Czech Republic.

Thus, to summarise the most important characteristics of expatriates, as defined by BEC, they are mostly foreigners who come to work in multinational companies operating within the strategic economic sectors of the South Moravian Region. These foreigners are usually sent here by their employer (assigned expatriates) or they come from their own initiative (self-initiated expatriates). They either come alone, with their family, or they find a partner here, or they establish a family with a partner who joins them here. The communication

and working language of these foreigners is English. This also means that they do not need to learn the Czech language, but on the other hand, because English is enough for them in their ordinary working and social life, they often encounter a language barrier in the Czech environment (life situations when visiting authorities or in general contact with the Czech majority). These foreigners have completed their secondary and tertiary education, and are looking for medium to highly qualified positions. A specific feature for BEC is the fact that its target group also includes foreigners who only use English in their work and social life, but who work for a foreign employer active in the South Moravian Region in positions that do not require special skills; however, such foreigners are not considered as expatriates. It is equally worth pointing out that for the identification of expatriates, BEC does not distinguish their nationality or ethnic background.¹⁴

Concerning the data on the services provided, between 2010 and March 2018, BEC has assisted clients in more than 6,000 cases on a variety of matters. Clients who are employed in the Czech Republic most often work for IBM, AT&T, Red Hat, Honeywell, Lufthansa, Infosys, Masaryk University, Dixons-Pixmania, and Kiwi. Kristína Babíková (2016) states: "... a project manager from BEC said that their estimation of 'highly-skilled' professionals here in Brno is around 5,000 people which is almost one-fifth of the total amount of foreigners living in Brno. He describes his estimation as their target audience, and for him it means foreign people working non-manually, speaking fluently in at least two languages, mainly working in international companies, research and development institutions or being freelancers in many fields. Their statistics of clients don't fit the five most common citizenships calculated by ČSÚ for 2015. This statistic doesn't tell us the 100% truth about nationality composition of 'high-skilled' workers in Brno but can give us an approximate view of the issue" (Babíková 2016: 420).

Example: Indian expatriates in Brno

As mentioned above, in connection with the preparation of a survey among expats in Brno, we conducted qualitative pre-research in a selected group – Indian expatriates. The aim was to understand the basic aspects of the life of expatriates, to gather the topics that are important for the examined group, and to obtain the basis for a hypothesis that will be verified in quantitative research.

¹⁴ Ms Babíková interviewed BEC on a similar topic (2016).

In the Brno area, Indian citizens fully correspond to the expatriate categorisation, fulfilling all four attributes (see above). As of 31 March 2017, 447 of them lived in Brno. They are part of a more recent immigration – since 2013, the number of Indians in Brno has been steadily increasing. In 2013 (31 March), there were 191 foreigners with Indian nationality, while in 2017, there were 447, so we are witnessing an increase of 134 %. The average year-on-year increase is 23.7%. Most of the Indians belong to the expat category. By the end of 2017, according to the “narrower” definition of employee categorisation (category CZ-ISCO 1-3), there were 254, of which 43 were women. Though we are talking about roughly four hundred people, Indian immigration is the fastest growing and most dynamic one in the city. The proportion of men and women is considerably unbalanced compared to other immigrant groups and accounts for around 70:30 in favour of men. Thus, women are also involved in labour migration, and we see a steady increase over time in their case, as well (Analysis of social services for foreigners in the city of Brno 2018: 36).

In particular, those who are coming to Brno are individuals who are employed in highly qualified positions, while after a certain period of time (after the termination of their contracts), they often return to their home country, or they move on to another EU country. In any case, the work incentive and not the place of residence is of key importance for these workers. It is clear from the interviews that one of the mechanisms of relocation initiation is to receive a job offer that takes the form of a “placement” and is connected to the current needs of globally operating employers. Then the name of the destination comes, which is usually unknown, and is just set in a wider context (e.g. Europe). So, the foreigner searches for information about the destination and starts finding out what it would mean for him.

The following results are based on qualitative semi-structured interviews with expatriates, whereby a total of 12 were carried out in Brno. Nine men and three women participated in these interviews. For their analysis, we focus on the key aspects of the expatriates’ stay in Brno and their own interpretations and concepts that are directly related to the expat categorisation. The structure of the interview followed the classic pattern of examining expats as a process: we asked about their arrival, their conditions of residence, employment, housing, social relationships, and leisure time. We were aware that the choice is mainly driven by national-state identification and is based on an emphasis on a supposedly shared ethnicity. We used the findings of other research (Topinka et al. 2018) as a basis. It analysed the social networks of the Indians, and concluded that the

network is relatively dense (63%), that it centres on their fellow compatriots, and that a significant role is occupied by “alters” of Indian nationality in support networks. The aim was not to identify new and revolutionary topics, but to gather information on the basic aspects of life of expats in Brno, and to find out how the participants view them.

The immigrants from India are very similar in type. They are highly educated people who usually come to Brno for work at the initiative of their employer, or respond to study incentives. Most often, Indians work in the area of IT. At the time of our research, our participants worked in the multinational environment of IBM, Red Hat, and AT&T. Two were university students, and in the case of the three women, they were a yoga instructor, a doctoral student, and a postdoctoral scientist. In the analysis, we focused on identifying key categories that are relevant to expatriates for the understanding of their own position and life situation. Here are the main ones.

Purpose of the stay: employment and study

Employment is usually closely related to the stay of our informants. The job offer initiates the decision making, which is then followed by moving to the respective city. This mechanism has different forms. It is initiated by an employer, an employee, or by a job seeker. In the case of an employer, it can offer its employee a job at one of its branches abroad. The employee receives an offer for a specific position, which reflects the current needs of the employer. This is also when the employee gets to know the destination country for the first time. In these cases, Brno is usually situated in Europe, which is normally sufficient for the decision making. Another situation is the offer of a “local” company that searches e.g. for IT specialists on the global transnational labour market.

Interviewer: Why did you choose Brno, Czech Republic?

Participant: Actually, I don’t even know. Before I came here, I worked in India for Mercedes Benz, so I went to Stuttgart, Germany. So, I said great, I like it here, and then I somehow got an offer from AT&T and from IBM for a job in Brno. I chose AT&T and so here I am.

Interviewer: Did you have any contacts here in the Czech Republic before arriving?

Participant: No, only at AT&T, at the HR department.

But migration does not always have to be a leap into the unknown. Another immigration mechanism is based on “networked” migration, where Indians

come to Brno based on the suggestion or direct recommendation of those who are already working there.

Participant: Before I arrived, I already had some friends here with whom I had been in contact with, and one of them recommended me for work at Red Hat.

Interviewer: So, you moved here for work?

Participant: Yes. I finished my master's, and before I moved here, I had lived in the Netherlands.

In addition to workers, we also see the arrival of Indians for the purpose of studying, whereby we view studies as job preparation – the position of a doctoral student has the character of transition between the world of study and employment. Students are tempted to study in Europe because of the relatively low living costs. In the case of doctoral students and one post-doctoral student, studying in the Czech Republic was interesting especially because of the well-equipped laboratories and also their professors and trainers, who invited them based on transnational academic cooperation.

EU scientists join together, finance their endeavour, and hire scientists from other countries. It works in a way that, for example, a Czech university cannot hire a Czech scientist – it must be someone outside of the Czech Republic. So surely, the scholarship was one of the factors. The second factor was the reputation of the trainer, which is really high in his area of interest, which helped me to decide. I did not know much about the Czech Republic, but hearing that life is good here and that they have well-equipped labs helped.

Participant

Participants also state that they get their first important contacts through their employment. In the case of students and academics, the departments and institutes where they are active are a great benefit. In this environment, they find their acquaintances and friends, and also housing providers. For employees, the key is the organisations where they work. They are a source of social status, and provide assistance to their employees who are moving to Brno. We are talking about the assistance in getting the right documents, dealing with authorities, providing interpreting, or, in some cases, helping employees with accommodation. Companies also work with job agencies that care for their employees, such as in this case.

Interviewer: And who helped you the most after your arrival?

Participant: Surely Manpower. They were my only contact and they helped me with the paperwork, for example when registering for the stay or when I went to get my biometric card. (...)

Interviewer: And how and with whom did you first meet?

Participant: With my friends and a woman from Manpower, who helped me with everything. How to fill in forms and so on.

Interviewer: And did you generally have any problems with coming to the Czech Republic?

Participant: Not exactly. Of course, when I had to deal with authorities, I found out that people don't speak English. But fortunately, this lady came with me and she helped me with everything.

Participants see their stay in Brno connected with their work. Those who work in multinational companies consider their migration to be a natural part of their profession, which is fully integrated into transnational labour markets. For students, any additional stay depends on finding long-term and stable work to ensure financial independence.

Stabilisation in the urban area: ensured housing

A related category important for relocating to Brno is housing. It sometimes happens that participants have met with the reluctance of landlords to rent out to a foreigner. Indians do not interpret this as a systemic issue of a dysfunctional housing market in the city and a lack of housing, but rather as a communication problem. Owners do not want foreigners because they, themselves, do not understand English, or not enough, and are ashamed to speak.

When I was looking for an apartment, I found three places and I visited them by myself and it was fine, but, again, I searched on sites that are also for the English-speaking, the offers are from Czech people who are able to speak English. Of course, I know that there are many more sites for Czechs, but when you contact them through Czech colleagues, they often don't answer. They feel unsure, so they don't answer.

Participant

For students, the situation is easier when they live in student dormitories. The university helps them. But there can also be some difficulties.

My first housing was in the dormitory and my first problems occurred there. My arrival was confirmed, and the lady knew that I was coming. However, on the day of arrival, the lady at the reception desk claimed that there was no mention of me and started screaming at me, she was very aggressive, and she spoke only Czech, which of course I did not understand. Fortunately, I had a colleague with me who explained everything to her, and she finally realised that it was her mistake, and everything could be cleared up, but yes, my first impression was not the most pleasant.

Participant

Multinational companies also tend to help their employees with accommodation and/or housing. They are aware of the unfavourable situation on the housing market, and try to lower this barrier for their employees to avoid losing them. Participants interpret this as their employer's interest in them. Most of the participants searched for housing and found housing through formal and informal networks created around their key organisations: on the Internet via free flats advertising (bezrealitky.cz) or with the help of real estate agencies and paid web portals. Social networks are also important – namely Facebook and its specialised groups. Apart from subleasing, several families bought their own apartment with the prospect of staying in Brno or as a suitable property investment.

Just finding housing is not enough – important is also settling. Renting or home ownership brings new obligations along with it. And again, the language barrier is there as well.

Now that I own my own apartment and have a family, and I have to take into account what they need, the language barrier appears again.

Participant

Participants describe day-to-day situations where they need to organise the garbage collection service, communicate with a plumber, or discuss modifications in the flat with the owner. In such cases, communication is often difficult and requires the presence and interpretation of a friend or acquaintance.

Adaptation

The considerable linguistic barriers encountered by expatriates from India, especially in contact with the environment outside their jobs, have led to criticism of the linguistic incompetence of the Czech institutional environment, as well as

their own lack of effort to learn the basics of the Czech language. Expatriates have problems in day-to-day situations.

We had a Tesco operator or something like that, and whenever we had a problem and I went to some branch, there was nobody who would speak English. I always got stuck on that problem until someone from our company came and helped me (...) occasionally, when we go to a vegetable shop and don't understand the bill, there often isn't anyone that can help us. I don't blame these people. It is of course caused by the language barrier, it's not their fault. As I have already mentioned, the language barrier is the biggest problem for us.

Participant

Of course, most participants tried to learn or plan to learn Czech. Not in order to master this, for them, very exotic language, but to be able to handle everyday situations. Some have even tried repeatedly, but when they saw Ukrainians and Russians, who could advance extremely fast as their languages are related, they gave up. Their workload and consequently the lack of energy to learn a language is also limiting.

(...) I don't have so much free time and if I have some, I use it doing something else besides learning Czech. I think this is a problem for most foreigners here. Living the everyday routine and then still trying to find some extra time and mental energy to engage in language learning.

Participant

Expatriates normally speak English at their workplace, so they do not need Czech for their job, whether they are foreign students, academics, or IT specialists. Problems only start when the interviewees have to go to a doctor, to a restaurant, when they travel to smaller towns, or deal with the authorities. The transnational environment creates institutions that eliminate language barriers.

Participant: (...) Of course, when I had to deal with authorities, I found out that people don't speak English there. Fortunately, the lady from the agency came along and helped me with everything.

The interviewees actually often express their surprise that even in such institutions there are not enough people who are able to speak English:

Interviewer: Do they also speak only Czech?

Participant: Yes, they speak only Czech, which is really surprising, because this place is meant for foreigners. But I used the help of my colleagues, so somehow, we were able to manage.

Adapting does not only concern the expatriates themselves, but also their family members. It is connected with areas of family life and the involvement of children in education, and also other aspects, such as finding raw ingredients for the preparation of Indian food.

Indian expatriates are generally satisfied with life in Brno. They appreciate the quiet and safe city with uncrowded streets (due to the small population) and excellent public transport coverage. The distinct and aforementioned limitation is a lack of English language knowledge, which keeps Indians confined to their transnational fields to a large extent, and even sometimes leads to their leaving for another destination.

(...) I know a lot of Indians who did their PhD here, then they left, but they wanted to come back, they got a job here and founded a family and so, but if they don't speak Czech, the quality of their life will never be too great. They will never be full members of society. So, they are currently considering moving away.

Participant

Some manifestations of intolerance with a possible racial undertone are also limiting. Indians have experienced incidents of being screamed at in the street or in public transport.

One time we went out down town in the evening, and there was a Czech guy who shoved me in a nasty way. But again, I read in the news that Czechs are generally quite racist, so one could expect this. But you don't meet bad people every day – it differs.

Participant

As part of the phenomenon of intolerance, participants count the “dis-respect for vegetarians”, which is considered to be a part of local culture and a value issue.

Participant: (...) I rather mind that people here disagree that being vegetarian is right. You eat meat all the time – cows, and that's really not good. Not only cows,

but also pigs and that's really not possible – you cannot survive without being vegetarian.

(...)

Interviewer: And how do you perceive Czech society in general?

Participant: I think you should cultivate your habits.

Interviewer: Which for example?

Participant: You should believe in something that is beyond you, you should respect new people, members of society, despite their skin colour or appearance. Everyone is somehow unique and has some talent. Respect for this talent and not just being a racist or something we could see in the past. If that doesn't happen, you will destroy yourself, because good people will leave. They won't want to stay here. Because you don't respect either cultural or eating habits.

If we examine expats from India based on the four basic attributes, they fulfil the basic characteristics of expats. They are in Brno, they define their stay as temporary, they exhibit different forms of professional or working qualifications, and they define themselves as assigned expatriates or self-initiated expatriates. It is obvious that it would be wrong to view this category of people as a homogeneous group defined solely on an ethnic basis. Pre-research shows that the different transnational strategies are very diverse.

Conclusion

Expatriates are usually considered as one of the types of skilled migration. The definition of this category is quite broad. We have come to the conclusion that if we want to examine this category, we need a definition that reflects theoretical definitions, but also takes into account local delimitations, as well as the self-evaluation of the immigrants themselves. In our text, we have laid out these perspectives side by side.

Qualified migration research was neglected, both abroad and in the Czech Republic. The intensity of foreign research has risen since the 1990s, and it has been carried out across various disciplines. The processes of globalisation and trans-nationalisation have led to the diversification of forms of labour migration, which, together with interdisciplinarity, has resulted in considerable ambiguity of terms and concepts. Researchers have been struggling with this problem from the beginning of their research, and research in the Czech Republic is no exception. The exploration of highly skilled migrants tends to focus on

key actors: the nation-state, multinational corporations, and migrants themselves. A great impact on the life situations of highly skilled migrants comes from the quickly changing global market environment. Both the ethnicity of migrants (Eich-Krohm 2014) and gender aspects play a role in the formation of supply and demand (Docquier – Lowell – Marfouk 2009). The definition of the concept of highly skilled migration is rather problematic, especially if it is derived exclusively from the tertiary education of migrants; the concept itself has many variations and uses different classifications, which sometimes meet with critical voices (McNulty – Brewster 2018: 39, Nowicka 2014). Skilled migration is associated with a more complex form of migration, referring to the aim at long-term or permanent residence patterns and a more individual nature of migration.

The conceptual definition of expatriates reflects the basic broad definition of labour migration, and is usually defined with respect to four basic attributes. They refer to the importance of the stay in relation to the centre of personal life, the temporary period of stay, the level of occupational or job qualification, and the migration motivation (assigned expatriates and self-initiated expatriates). Thus, for research purposes, one must bear in mind that despite the uniform designation, we are dealing with a very diversified phenomenon. If expatriates are distinguished from skilled migrants, we usually emphasise the undefined length of their stay as opposed to permanent residence and the very important self-concept of expatriates (McNulty – Brewster 2018). Exploring the self-concept could be a good starting point, probably much better than the initial grasp of the colourful expat world by means of a predefined category. Researchers usually resort to the distinction of assigned expatriates, self-initiated expatriates, and skilled (im)migrants (Tharenou 2018). However, in research reality, they may become problematic, because they could overlap. The researcher must therefore be cautious when using them, and carefully weigh the individual variables and review the decisions that accompany migration. In this respect, the importance of qualitative research is growing; it can capture the individual diversity of situations, and, at the same time, put them in context.

In the Czech Republic, only a few academic studies on expatriates have been done in recent years. They are empirical in nature, and show how varied the range of expats can be. Brno has become one of the most important places of concentration of expats. This is related to migration processes and growing demands for skilled labour, especially from multinational companies and

Czech companies that enter global markets. The fact is that the total number of foreigners in the labour market in Brno has been growing rapidly since 2011 – mainly due to the increasing number of workers from EU countries. Complex research of expats in Brno continues to be a big challenge, because we are witnessing the continuous expansion of this category with all the consequences that it brings for the city. Statistical data, although based on categorisations that are problematic (e.g. CZ-ISCO job categorisation), covering various categories of expats, estimates a total of almost 14,000 persons. From the point of view of nationality, Slovakia dominates, and other nationalities are represented in the order of hundreds and dozens of persons. It is a question of the extent to which gender or ethnicity applies to the self-evaluation of expatriates in the transnational and city contexts. The Brno Expat Center (BEC), which specialises in the provision of services to expatriates, is establishing a monopoly for defining this category with practical implications for many actors in the city, as well as for organisations and the expats themselves. It is necessary to understand this definition, which has arisen through the interconnection of international definitions and the local experience, simply because it affects the self-concept of those who use the services of this organisation. This definition emphasises the following aspects. It paints expatriates as foreigners that are working for multinational corporations and are sent here by their employer (assigned expatriates), or who come on their own initiative (self-initiated expatriates). They come either alone, with their family, or they find a partner here, or they establish a family with a partner who joins them here. The communication and working language of these foreigners is English. This also means that they do not need to learn Czech, but on the other hand, since English is enough for them in their ordinary working and social life, they often encounter a language barrier in the Czech environment. Expatriates have completed their secondary and tertiary education, and are looking for medium to highly qualified positions. A specific feature for BEC is the fact that its target group also includes foreigners who use only English in working and social life, but who work for a foreign employer active in the South Moravian Region in positions that do not require special skills; however, such foreigners are not considered to be expatriates.

From the testimonies of expats from India, which our pre-research focused on, it is obvious that they actually consider themselves to be expatriates, and they reflect the relevant theoretical definitions in their lives and strategies. They are proof that the old immigration concept that expatriates are Western and

elitist does not correspond to the social reality. Brno is becoming the centre of personal life for Indian expatriates, they are aware of the temporary length of their stay, which is marked by strong links to their family background abroad, they are characterised by a higher level of professional skills, and the motivations for migration in reality are represented by both types simultaneously: assigned expatriates and self-initiated expatriates.

The Indians work mostly in the transnational environments of large companies and universities. Thus, they are further deepening their transnational ties. In most cases, their stay depends on their employment and its assessment. In the context of the outlook for the future, we have heard testimonials such as: “I will stay here three, four years, and then I will see”, “If I have work here, I will stay, I like it here, but maybe I will have to move somewhere else”, “I will still work here for a while, gather experience and then I will return home”, and “I will work here for two years and then I’ll move to some Western country”. Indian expatriates live in rental housing, in dormitories, or in their own homes. They face difficulties connected to housing, which they interpret not contextually, but relate it to language barriers and complicated communication. The position of expatriates reflects their activity in the multinational field of larger, mostly international companies and organisations that is focused on the employee performance, as well as problematic social phenomena and lifestyle interactions that take place in the daily life environment of the city and across the borders of the aforementioned multinational fields. Pre-research shows that the different transnational strategies are very diverse. For further research to take place, it is important to explore the social and demographic characteristics of expats, which can be done by evaluating the BEC’s client database and to conduct quantitative queries among expats working in different companies. The resulting picture also needs to be confronted with the aforementioned category definitions, or maybe even try to create one’s own definition of this category of persons. Furthermore, the need for qualitative research might be needed: on one hand, the need to focus on the structural conditions of life of expats, i.e. the transnational environment of companies and the stay of expats in the city, especially the interaction with the national environment, and on the other hand, an examination of the self-evaluation of the expats themselves, considering the ethno-cultural factors as well as gender. Their family members also cannot be ignored. Research must track how the differences are construed, which ones are becoming relevant in a particular setting and which ones not, and the transnational strategies of expats.

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