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EDITOR'S NOTES

Melanie Janet Sindelar

This issue explores how urban life is experienced, expressed, and imagined in times of profound transformation. Across different contexts, it examines what it means to belong to a city, how communities respond to crises through cultural expression, and why some people choose to leave urban environments in search of different lifestyles way of living. From singing and dancing as forms of solidarity and reflections on how cities might become more sustainable, connected, and accessible, the contributions in this issue trace the many ways people inhabit and shape urban spaces. Moving from Central Europe to the Global South, the authors offer grounded as well as imaginative perspectives on lived urbanity, resilience, and the evolving relationships between people and their cities.

The opening article by Světlana Stěpanova, "Characteristics of the Fourth Wave of Russian-Speaking Migration to the Czech Republic: Transnational Approaches, Belonging, and Identity Strategies," explores how Russian-speaking migrants in the Czech Republic negotiate questions of identity and belonging in a time marked by political tension and war. Combining a questionnaire survey with an autoethnographic study of the vocal ensemble Ruska Duša ("Russian Soul"), which the author herself founded, Stěpanova illustrates how cultural performance becomes a space for navigating transnational identities. Through changes in repertoire, internal disagreements, and evolving public representations, the ensemble mirrors the broader struggles of a community redefining itself amid crisis.

The following contribution by Matvei Gotlib continues this reflection on cultural expression and belonging, shifting from song to dance as it explores how another Prague-based community responds to the war in Ukraine. In "The Effects of War: Prague's Tango Community After the Start of the War in Ukraine," the author offers an intimate ethnography of Prague's tango scene and its transformation since February 2022. Using soundscape analysis, Gotlib examines how milongas, the city's social dance gatherings, became spaces of both escape and emotional processing for dancers affected by the war. Through careful observation and participation, the article reveals how people from Ukraine, Russia, and other countries found solidarity through movement,

rhythm, and music. Rather than dividing, the war brought together a community united by shared opposition to violence and by the characteristic melancholy of tango, as a "sad thought that can be danced." Like Stěpanova's exploration of the Ruska Duša ensemble, this study shows how collective cultural practices can embody resilience and belonging in times of conflict.

The next article by Šárka Tesařová and Hynek Jeřábek shifts the focus from cultural expression to mobility itself, exploring what motivates people to leave the city and seek new ways of living. In "Exploring the Shifting Motivations for Counter-Urbanization Moves: A Comparative Analysis," the authors examine why an increasing number of people in the Czech Republic are leaving large cities for smaller towns and rural areas. Drawing on interviews with recent movers, the authors revisit and update classic research on migration motivations, showing how traditional factors such as the desire for space, home ownership, and a quieter environment have evolved. For many, counter-urbanization today is less about social status and more about finding a lifestyle that aligns with personal values, work flexibility, and well-being. This article complements the previous two by approaching questions of movement and belonging from a different angle. While Stěpanova and Gotlib focus on how communities maintain cohesion in times of crisis, Tesařová and Jeřábek look at what prompts individuals to seek a new kind of balance beyond the city.

The following article by Nikola Staníčková and Vojtěch Malátek builds on this urban focus, turning to the challenges of creating more sustainable and connected forms of mobility within cities. In "The Opportunities and Limits of Private–Public Sector Cooperation in Sustainable Urban Mobility," the authors analyze the challenges and possibilities of integrating shared micro-mobility services such as e-scooters and bicycles into the transportation systems of medium-sized cities. Drawing on research conducted in Olomouc, they show how conflicting interests between municipal authorities, private providers, and users often prevent these services from reaching their full potential. While many residents see shared mobility as a flexible and cost-effective alternative to car travel, policymakers tend to view it as competition for public transport rather than a complement to it. The authors argue that clearer legal frameworks, better infrastructure, and regular dialogue between the public and private sectors are needed to make urban mobility more inclusive and sustainable. With its focus on governance and planning, this contribution closes the section on Central and Eastern Europe and prepares the ground for the issue's shift toward the Global South.

The next article takes us to São Paulo, where questions of belonging and exclusion unfold under very different urban conditions. In "The Urban Quilombo of Cracolândia," Guglielmo Guatteri turns our attention to São Paulo and one of its most stigmatized neighborhoods. Through interviews and fieldwork, he offers a deeply empathetic portrayal of life in Cracolândia, an area marked by poverty, homelessness, drug use, and state neglect. The article reveals how residents endure daily police violence and social exclusion while developing their own forms of resistance and mutual support. Rather than viewing the neighbourhood as a case study of failure, Guatteri reinterprets it as an "urban quilombo," a site of collective survival and defiance rooted in Black resistance to structural racism. By situating Cracolândia within the framework of necropolitics and the "politics of death," the author shows how its inhabitants confront the life-threatening effects of a racist state through small, everyday acts of resilience. This essay broadens the scope of the issue, inviting readers to reflect on how visibility, dignity, and belonging are negotiated in contexts of deep inequality.

The issue concludes with "Ho Chi Minh City 2000 to 2050: An Annotated Illustration of Social Transformation" by Cheryl Prendergast and Catherine Earl. This visual essay traces five decades of urban change in Vietnam's largest metropolis, combining artistic representation with anthropological reflection. Through detailed illustrations, the authors capture the city's rapid modernization and the impact of globalization on daily life. The work moves from the rise of the first skyscrapers and international brands to the digitalization of urban life during the COVID-19 pandemic and a speculative vision of a greener, more sustainable future. By depicting Vietnam's commitment to carbon neutrality and the shift toward electric forms of transport, the essay offers a hopeful image of the city's future. It provides a fitting conclusion to the issue's exploration of lived urbanity, returning to the question of how people and cities change together.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue highlight how people experience, interpret, and reshape urban life across very different social and geographic contexts. Whether through song and dance, everyday acts of endurance, or imaginative visions of the future, each piece offers a glimpse into the many ways in which communities create meaning and a sense of belonging in the city. I wish all readers an inspiring and enjoyable time exploring this issue.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOURTH WAVE OF RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MIGRATION TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC: TRANSNATIONAL APPROACHES, BELONGING, AND IDENTITY STRATEGIES

Světlana Stěpanova
(Charles University)

Abstract: ***This study focuses on the internal transformations of identity and belonging within the Russian-speaking migrant community in the Czech Republic, with particular emphasis on the case of the vocal ensemble "Russian Soul." Drawing on theoretical frameworks of transnationalism (Basch, Glick Schiller, Blanc 1994), mobile identity (Vertovec 2009), translocational positionality (Anthias 2006), and hybrid subjectivity (Hall 1995), the author explores how everyday cultural practices, internal competition, and external political conditions shape identity strategies in a migration context.***

Methodologically, the article adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining analysis of online communication, a questionnaire survey with 61 respondents, and autoethnographic observation within a cultural collective founded by the researcher herself. This design allows for the identification of subtle shifts in systems of loyalty, symbolic boundaries, and mechanisms of cultural capitalisation that often remain overlooked.

Special attention is given to the fragmentation of the ensemble as a symptom of broader diasporic dynamics – where collective belonging gives way to individual positioning strategies. The case illustrates how culture can shift from a vehicle of solidarity to a space of negotiation, and how identity becomes a flexible resource under conditions of institutional uncertainty. This article contributes to the study of Russian-speaking migration in Central Europe by offering empirical insight into the everyday identity dynamics of small cultural initiatives.

Keywords: ***transnationalism, cultural identity, Russian-speaking diaspora, migration, belonging, hybridity, vocal ensemble, autoethnography.***

Acknowledgment
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Introduction: Migration and the Transnational Paradigm

The Russian minority in the Czech Republic occupies a particularly complex and ambivalent position as a result of recent geopolitical developments – above all, the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. On the one hand, it constitutes a historically rooted and culturally active segment of Czech society; on the other hand, it is increasingly perceived through the lens of political conflict, which significantly shapes both its public image and everyday experience. This study attempts a careful and sensitive analysis of the past decades of this community's life, taking into account its historical trajectory, transnational ties, and transformations of cultural identity in the context of broader societal change.

In this research, I use the term *Russians* to denote a diverse group of people who have been living long-term or permanently in the Czech Republic and who identify with the Russian language, cultural heritage, and identity – regardless of their current citizenship. This usage follows the concept of "Czech Russians" introduced by historian Ivan Savický in relation to interwar emigration from the former Russian Empire (Savický 1999).

According to current data from the Czech Statistical Office (ČSÚ 2024), individuals with citizenship from Russian-speaking countries constitute one of the largest foreign-origin populations in the Czech Republic – after Slovaks, Ukrainians, and Vietnamese. It is important to note, however, that the ČSÚ does not track Russian-speaking residents as a distinct category. Despite this, there remains a lack of in-depth analyses of this group's integration strategies, cultural embeddedness, and everyday experiences within a transnational context. To understand the present situation of Russian-speaking migrants, it is essential to place their presence within the historical framework of Russian immigration to Central Europe. Historically, migration from the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and later the Russian Federation can be divided into

several waves, with the first and fourth waves having the most significant impact on the Czech context.

The first wave, following the 1917 revolution and the subsequent civil war, consisted primarily of pre-revolutionary intellectuals, military officers, and political opponents of the Bolshevik regime. Many of these émigrés found refuge in interwar Czechoslovakia, where President Tomáš G. Masaryk supported the "Russian Aid Action," which enabled them to continue their educational and cultural work (Savický 1999; Polian 2003). The second wave, occurring from 1945 to 1947, included prisoners of war, members of the Russian Liberation Army, and others who found themselves outside the USSR's territory.

The third wave, linked to the post-1960 normalisation period, involved emigration by members of the cultural and academic elite from the Soviet Union. While Czechoslovakia, as a member of the Eastern Bloc, was not the primary destination for these migrants, some individuals arrived through personal connections—particularly international marriages—as confirmed by recent ethnographic studies (Zavorotchenko & Šulc 2021; Drbohlav 2010; Přidalová 2018).

The fourth migration wave, which emerged after the collapse of the USSR in the 1990s, was driven primarily by economic and educational factors. This wave is marked by a high level of social and professional diversity. According to Drbohlav (2010) and Sládek (2014), its participants demonstrate strong integration capabilities while maintaining their cultural and linguistic identity.

In the current context of the 2020s, however, the position of Russian-speaking migrants has undergone a profound transformation following the Russian Federation's military invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This event not only exacerbated social tensions and triggered manifestations of Russophobia but also initiated a new wave of emigration from Russia, which some authors refer to as the fifth migration wave (Inozemtsev 2023). This wave is characterised primarily by people fleeing mobilisation and seeking a safer environment for life and work.

This study is also shaped by the author's personal experience—I moved to the Czech Republic in 2009 from the city of Samara (Russian Federation). In 2017, I founded the vocal ensemble Russian Soul, which brings together members of the Russian minority in Prague. The internal dynamics of the ensemble, along with tensions caused by external political developments, served as an impetus for a deeper exploration of the cultural and social aspects of this community's musical life from the perspective of music anthropology. In the

spirit of Clifford's (1988) concept of "insider research," the author's personal involvement allows for a more sensitive understanding of the complex identity structures within the studied group. Being aware of the potential risks related to the lack of analytical distance, I rely on a reflexive research approach and techniques of methodological distancing, as formulated by Warren (2000) and Hirschauer & Amann (1997).

Aim of the Study

The aim of this article is to identify and analyse the specific features of the fourth wave of Russian-speaking migration to the Czech Republic through the concepts of transnationalism, identity, and belonging. Particular emphasis is placed on cultural practices and integration strategies within the community, with a vocal ensemble serving as a case study of a cultural institution operating within a diasporic field. This research is part of a long-term ethnomusicological study of the "Prague Musical Worlds" (Jurková 2014).

Theoretical Framework: Transnationalism, Belonging, and Hybrid Identity

This study is grounded in the paradigm of transnationalism, which in recent decades has become one of the key approaches to the study of migration and diasporic communities. The concept of "transmigrants," introduced by Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Christine Blanc-Saltsman (1994), refers to migrants who maintain regular contact with their country of origin even after resettlement—whether through communication with relatives, political engagement, cultural practices, or economic ties. These actors do not operate within a binary opposition between the "old" and "new" country but live and act "here and there" simultaneously, thereby challenging the traditional notion of identity as being bound to a single national space.

Transnationalism as a theoretical framework for migration and identity began to significantly evolve in the 1990s. In this context, Stuart Hall (1995) introduced the concept of hybrid identity, describing contemporary individuals as "translators" who navigate between various cultural frameworks, linguistic systems, and historical experiences. These actors do not enter into a single, stable identity but instead construct fluid and contextually conditioned forms of self-identification.

The concept is further expanded by Appadurai (1996) through his idea of "diasporic public spheres" and by Floya Anthias (2006) with the concept of "translocations," where belonging is shaped across geographical, cultural, and social dimensions. Guibernau (2013) emphasises the emotional dimension of belonging as a bond to a group or place under conditions of fragmentation and uncertainty.

In the empirical part of this study, the above-mentioned concepts are used as analytical tools to interpret the experiences of Russian-speaking migrants of the fourth wave of immigration to the Czech Republic. The analysis of the vocal ensemble as a case study demonstrates how identities and forms of belonging are transformed in response to the social context, the media image of "Russians in the Czech Republic," and the current geopolitical situation.

Methodology

This study draws on three different sources of data, providing a comprehensive view of the Russian-speaking minority in the Czech Republic. The first source consisted of long-term observation of online platforms (Telegram, Facebook, etc.) where Russian-speaking migrants actively interact. This online ethnography made it possible to capture language styles, communication patterns, and cultural preferences within the Russian-speaking community.

The second source was data collected through a questionnaire survey conducted between 2022 and 2024, distributed both electronically and in person within the broader community. The questionnaire included a total of 14 questions (13 closed-ended and one open-ended) and focused on respondents' attitudes toward integration, belonging, language identity, and the perception of "home." The sample consisted of 61 respondents out of 92 approached and was constructed according to the principle of theoretical sampling, common in qualitative anthropology. The criteria for inclusion were: long-term residence in the Czech Republic (at least 10 years), active engagement in public or community life, and the ability to reflect on one's own cultural identity. The reluctance of some individuals (25 people) to participate in the research was likely influenced by the tense socio-political situation following 2022.

The open-ended questionnaire responses were analysed using qualitative content analysis. A coding framework was gradually developed, which included main thematic categories such as "belonging," "language practices," "relationship to home," and "discrimination." Each response was coded

through two independent readings, and the interpretative notes were then compared.

The coding process combined both inductive and deductive approaches: the main thematic categories were defined in advance based on the theoretical framework (transnationalism, hybrid identity, diasporic networks), while subcategories and nuances emerged directly from the data. As part of the triangulation process, these findings were compared with data from ethnographic observation and online discussion groups.

The integration of various data sources was carried out using a thematic matrix, in which respondents' statements, observed practices, and digital interactions were linked within a single analytical unit. This method made it possible to capture deeper structures of meaning and behavioural patterns across different data sets.

The third data source was my close social circle, composed of members of the vocal ensemble Ruská duše ("Russian Soul"), which I founded in 2017 and with whom I maintained long-term, intensive contact. This ensemble represents a specific diasporic institution, whose functioning provides valuable material for analysing cultural identity and mechanisms of belonging. Data was collected through long-term participant observation, informal interviews, and the ensemble's internal documents. The analysis focused on transformations of identity, group dynamics, and the relationship to the geopolitical context.

The ethical and reflexive dimensions of the research were essential. The author acknowledges her position as an "insider" (Clifford 1988) and the risks associated with it—particularly the potential loss of analytical distance. Therefore, methodological tools of estrangement (Hirschauer & Amann, 1997) were employed, including the use of a research diary, regular consultations with external experts, and data triangulation.

The research placed strong emphasis on protecting participants and their privacy. Respondents were informed in advance that their answers would be used for academic purposes and gave explicit consent. All personal data in the questionnaire survey was anonymised, and participants' names were encrypted. In the case of members of the vocal ensemble Ruská duše ("Russian Soul"), all names have been changed in the text to preserve their identities and the confidentiality of shared information.

The following section presents an analysis of empirical findings with an emphasis on transnational practices, hybrid identity, and institutional involvement within the Russian-speaking community in the Czech Republic.

Key Characteristics of the Fourth Wave of Russian-Speaking Migration to the Czech Republic

The fourth wave of emigration from the Russian Federation to the Czech Republic has been analysed by numerous scholars, including D. Drbohlav (1999, 2001, 2010), M. Čepelák (2010), K. Sládek (2014), D. Bittnerová and M. Moravcová (2010, 2019), M. Moravcová (2023), and I. Zavorotčenko and I. Šulcová (2021), as well as O. Shevchenko and S. Lozovjuk (2022). These works help to outline the key social, cultural, and political features of migration to the Czech Republic within the broader Russian-speaking diaspora.

Socio-Educational Profile of Migrants

Many studies on migration to the Czech Republic note that migrants often come from larger cities and possess higher or specialised secondary education. They typically possess significant cultural and professional capital, which enables them to navigate the new social environment more effectively. The literature also highlights their capacity for social navigation and adaptation—that is, the ability to move between different cultural norms and institutions, adjust their behaviour and language to the new context, while simultaneously preserving their own cultural identity (Drbohlav; Zavorotchenko & Šulcová; Bittnerová; Čepelák).

Ethno-Cultural Diversity

Russian-speaking migrants of the fourth wave do not constitute an ethnically homogeneous group. Alongside ethnic Russians, the group includes Tatars, Jews, Mordvins, Chuvash, Armenians, and others. Bittnerová and Moravcová (2012) propose the term "Russian-speaking migrants" as a more accurate label that reflects a shared linguistic and cultural code.

Reasons for Choosing the Czech Republic

The choice of the Czech Republic is associated with its cultural proximity, strong educational system, accessible immigration infrastructure, and stable social conditions. Kopecká (2013) emphasises the growing number of Russian students, while Drbohlav (2010) highlights the importance of this migration stream in terms of its demographic and educational contribution.

Transnational Ties and Digital Mobilit

The active involvement of Russian-speaking migrants in transnational networks, as documented in research focused on the post-Soviet space (e.g., Shevchenko and Lozovjuk 2022), can be interpreted through broader theoretical concepts of transnationalism (Vertovec 2009; Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004). While these authors do not focus specifically on post-Soviet migration, their analytical frameworks make it possible to understand the dynamics of simultaneous affiliation with multiple social and cultural spaces.

Political Motivation and Vulnerability

Since 2012, and especially after 2022, there has been a rise in politically motivated departures from the Russian Federation. Various analyses and observations point to increasing repression against anti-war activists, including those already living abroad. In the Czech Republic, groups such as the Prague Anti-War Committee are active in this context.

Discrimination and Public Perception

Since 2022, there has been a notable rise in anti-Russian sentiment, partially rooted in the collective memory of the 1968 invasion (Drbohlav 2001). This has led to discrimination, particularly in schools, where migrant children face stigmatisation (according to data from my questionnaire survey).

The Dilemma Between Integration and Remigration

Some migrants are considering re-emigrating to other European countries or to the Caucasus. Levitt (2001) refers to this phenomenon as "secondary transnationalism"—dynamic mobility within the global Russian-speaking diaspora.

A high level of social competence, networking activity, and political sensitivity thus characterises the fourth wave of Russian-speaking migration to the Czech Republic. My research seeks to complement existing knowledge by analysing everyday practices and forms of identity from a transnational perspective.

The Transnational Experience of Russian-speaking Migrants in the Czech Republic: Empirical Observations

Data collected during my field research in 2023–2024 indicate that a significant portion of fourth-wave Russian-speaking migrants in the Czech Republic live under conditions of what can be termed a "dual home," maintaining property

and active connections both in the Czech Republic and in their country of origin. All respondents reported participating in the cultural life of both settings, following news in two languages, and engaging actively in both local communities in the Czech Republic as well as in digital diasporic networks. Approximately 10% of respondents stated that they regularly travel between the two countries.

This lifestyle corresponds with the concept of "transmigrants" introduced by Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Saltsman (1994), who highlight that transmigrants not only cross borders but also actively participate in the social and institutional structures of both host and home societies.

A key aspect identified in my survey was linguistic flexibility. Many respondents— particularly young people and professionals—use at least two languages, Russian and Czech, in their daily lives, and English in their professional environments. This reflects a hybrid linguistic and cultural identity, aligning with Stuart Hall's (1995) concept of multiple literacies and the migrant's ability to "translate" across cultural codes.

Digital engagement also emerged as a salient feature of the transnational experience. Survey participants and interviewees actively communicate through diasporic online platforms: Facebook groups, local forums, and professional or thematic communities. These environments serve multiple purposes, from facilitating social adaptation to providing alternative support networks and avenues for political expression.

This form of digital participation relates to the concept of "diasporic public spheres" (Appadurai 1996), where migrants construct cultural belonging beyond the framework of the nation-state by using global channels of communication and meaning-making.

The theme of liminality—an in-between or borderline experience—also appeared repeatedly in interviews. One respondent expressed it as follows: "It's like we're always in between: no longer quite at home and not yet quite here." These observations align well with the theoretical framework of the transnational subject (Clifford 1997; Ong 1999), who lives at the intersection of norms, identities, and politics.

Empirical Observations: Identity and Belonging

As mentioned above, data from my mixed-methods research show that a considerable portion of respondents live in conditions of so-called "dual home," and that approximately 10% of respondents stated that they regularly move

between the two countries, thereby creating a stable cultural and familial space.

Their identity can thus not be reduced to a binary "Russian–Czech" opposition. Respondents freely combine, for example, the celebration of Orthodox holidays with participation in Czech cultural events, and engage actively in both Russian-speaking and local communities. Such practices reflect a flexible, multilayered sense of belonging.

This complexity and fluidity of belonging was particularly evident in the case of the vocal ensemble Ruská duše ("Russian Soul"), which split into two groups in 2024 over differing understandings of cultural identity and strategies of public representation. In response to the political context and the requirements of an international folklore festival, one part of the ensemble adopted a new name (referred to in the text as the Polonina ensemble) and performed at the festival under the Czech flag, since Russian affiliation was not welcomed. Nevertheless, their repertoire remained largely original, Russian, and targeted at a Russian-speaking audience, illustrating the pragmatic choice of symbols and the adaptive nature of public identity. The other part of the group chose to retain its original name and mission, but also participated in the mentioned festival.

The respondents' linguistic practices further reflect hybridity: in everyday life, younger generations and professionals actively use Russian, Czech, and English. This multilingualism serves not only as a tool of communication but also as an expression of their capacity for cultural navigation.

To interpret these observations, I draw on established theoretical approaches. According to Montserrat Guibernau (2013), belonging is an affective bond to a group or place that provides stability under conditions of uncertainty and social fragmentation. Floya Anthias (2006) adds that under global conditions of inequality, so-called "translocations" emerge. These are dynamic linkages between different spatial, cultural, and social contexts that allow us to understand migrants as agents of multilayered and processual identities, rather than as static members of national communities. Such translocational connections also appeared in my research.

In *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Avtar Brah (1996) describes belonging as a temporally and spatially conditioned, multi-level process that relates partially to ethnic or national anchoring but primarily to the dynamics of everyday relationships that transcend cultural and geographic boundaries. This approach helps to explain the practices of my respondents, who create networks of affiliation across

both diasporic and local environments. Arjun Appadurai's (1996) approach to "diasporic public spheres" further explains the role of digital platforms as spaces for identity formation beyond the framework of the nation-state.

The materials from my research thus show that belonging in a transnational space is not fixed. It is shaped through everyday practice, under the influence of political conditions, personal experiences, and institutional settings. This type of "hybrid belonging" requires analysis as a dynamic and multilayered process, confirming the relevance of transnational theoretical approaches to analysing contemporary migration phenomena.

Main Results of the Questionnaire Survey

This chapter presents the empirical findings based on a questionnaire survey conducted between 2022 and 2024 among members of the fourth wave of Russian-speaking migration in the Czech Republic. The research assumes that even long-settled migrants maintain complex relationships with both their country of origin and the host society, and their lives unfold within transnational fields (Levitt – Glick Schiller 2004).

The data collection was designed to capture not only the basic demographic characteristics of the respondents but also their attitudes toward integration, cultural belonging, language competence, and institutional ties. The questionnaire survey was complemented by ethnographic notes, long-term participation in selected community activities, and biographical insights, which allowed for a more nuanced interpretation of the data. This section of the work analyses individual thematic areas with an emphasis on the plurality of migration experiences and the dynamics of identity negotiations.

Family Migration and Ethnic Self-Identification

72% of respondents stated that they migrated together with family members. This indicates that migration is perceived as a collective life project. Regarding ethnic identification, 98% of respondents identified as Russian, while 2% reported another or mixed origin (e.g., Tatar or Jewish), which points to a high degree of ethnocultural consolidation despite long-term residence outside their country of origin.

Education, Employment, and Level of Integration

Respondents demonstrated a high level of education: only one person had vocational secondary education, while three held a PhD degree. This supports

previous studies (Drbohlav 2010; Kopecká 2013) highlighting the specificity of the fourth wave as highly qualified.

Most respondents are professionally active—either employed or self-employed. Women outside the labour market are economically secured through their husbands' income. The subjective perception of integration varies considerably: approximately 30% of respondents consider themselves fully integrated, 10% as minimally integrated, and the remaining respondents as somewhere in between.

It is important to note that language and cultural codes play a more significant role than formal ethnicity. Russian remains the primary means of communication, even among respondents with a high level of integration.

Language Competence

No respondent rated their Czech language proficiency at zero; 30% reported basic knowledge (2–3 points on a five-point scale), while another 30% declared advanced proficiency (5 points), including the ability to communicate in writing. This trend can be interpreted as a result of growing awareness of the importance of language for social mobility and daily participation in the host society.

Transnationalism and Future Plans

80% of respondents expressed an intention to remain permanently in the Czech Republic. The remaining 20% are divided between individuals leading a transnational life (10%) and those considering relocation (10%). These results confirm the relative stability of the migration project. Key factors maintaining ties with Russia include language, family relationships, and cultural traditions. Nevertheless, 30% of respondents reported no direct contact with their country of origin, while the rest visit Russia regularly. This diversity of practices reflects the varied forms of transnationality (Levitt – Glick Schiller 2004).

Institutional Engagement

According to my data, 30% of respondents participate in formalised associations. The absence of institutional affiliation among the remaining 70% suggests the predominance of individualised adaptation strategies and possibly a degree of distrust toward organisations as intermediaries of belonging.

Experience of Discrimination after 2022

Verbal attacks against migrants from the Russian Federation, restricted access to banking services, and heightened public suspicion became more prominent following the launch of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

General Summary

The questionnaire section of the research revealed significant internal differences within the Russian-speaking community, which is often perceived as a homogeneous group. The analysis underscores the need to move beyond simplified notions of migrants and to understand them as active agents of transnational processes, whose identity, integration, and value orientations are shaped through a complex interplay of personal, cultural, and institutional conditions.

While the data obtained through the questionnaire does not claim statistical representativeness, it suggests potential directions for further research—particularly in the areas of digital belonging, emerging forms of civic participation, and the transformation of family structures in the context of migration.

The Ensemble as a Field of Identity Contestation

Since its founding in 2017, the ensemble Ruská duše ("Russian Soul") has operated as an independent cultural initiative, bringing together migrant women of various ages and professional backgrounds. For these women, participation in the collective represented not only creative self-expression but also the formation of a sense of belonging to a diasporic community of Russian-speaking migrants. Over time, however, the ensemble evolved from a rehearsal space into a complex arena of symbolic struggle over power, visibility, and recognition. In the following section, I will outline the key moments related to identity and belonging, with all participant names anonymised.

For an extended period, the ensemble was composed of women who identified as Russian and fully supported its mission—namely, to preserve and promote Russian cultural heritage through music—and its outward "Russian" symbolism. The arrival of new members—whom I will call Eva and Zhanna—marked the beginning of a latent fragmentation. These newcomers brought skills, ambitions, and pragmatic calculations that disrupted the informal norms established by the "old guard" (Věra, Gula, Dina). The tension between these two factions—"new" and "old"—grew in proportion to the shifting internal

balance of influence and changing external conditions. Each group interpreted the ensemble's cultural mission differently, leading to distinct identity regimes: from instrumental pragmatism to value-based principled positions.

For example, Eva openly proposed changing the ensemble's name for economic reasons—her business relied on Ukrainian clients. After 2022, Zhanna invoked the political inappropriateness of the word "Russian" in the ensemble's name. Both arguments reflected a reevaluation of identity as a strategic resource that should be adapted to circumstances. In contrast, the founder and the "core" of the ensemble regarded the name as inseparable from its mission and cultural memory—that is, as an expression of identity grounded in a long-term, non-commercial commitment.

Belonging as a Tool and a Boundary

The sense of belonging within the ensemble gradually became more conditional over time. Members remained loyal as long as participation in the collective provided emotional and social fulfilment. However, as external circumstances shifted—economic, professional, or geopolitical—belonging was increasingly perceived as a negotiable category, with group solidarity giving way to individual benefit or survival.

The case of Dina, who became economically dependent on Eva, illustrates how material conditions can transform not only individual behaviour but also power dynamics within a group. By becoming a spokesperson for a new behavioural line, Dina contributed to a shift in group dynamics: older members, previously loyal to the founder, began to defer to a new informal centre of power.

Identity Politics in a Migrant Context

The rejection of the founder's leadership by the collective during her temporary absence marked a symbolic point of no return. The ultimatum ("You may stay, but only on our terms") represented not only a struggle for organisational control but also a redefinition of cultural orientation. The group prioritised internal comfort and easier management over artistic or identity-driven missions. This case reflects a broader trend seen in migrant communities, where cultural projects—originally intended as platforms for value-based cohesion—are transformed into spaces of strategic mobility, especially under conditions of instability and lack of institutional support (cf. Hall 1995; Ong 1999; Vertovec 2009)

Hybrid Identity and the Limits of Transnationalism

The case of Ruská duše shows that hybrid identity—as described by Stuart Hall—does not necessarily lead to synthesis, integration, or harmony. On the contrary, the crossing of cultural codes, national imaginaries, and personal strategies can reveal fault lines where previous forms of belonging lose their unifying power. In times of crisis, the central question becomes: who has the right to define collective identity, and on what grounds?

The eventual split within the ensemble and the creation of a new group (referred to here under the pseudonym Polonina) represent an act of symbolic rupture. It demonstrates that notions of culture as a neutral space cannot withstand the pressures of everyday practice. Where once there was a unified space of belonging, a new institutional form arises—with a different orientation and a new relationship to memory, naming, repertoire, and mission.

Carriers of Memory and Belonging: The Musical Practice of the Ensemble Ruská duše

The musical activity of the vocal ensemble Ruská duše ("Russian Soul") represents a significant cultural practice through which members of the community articulate their identity, sustain collective memory, and actively participate in the public sphere. In line with the aim of this article—to analyse integration strategies and forms of belonging among the fourth wave of migration to the Czech Republic—music is not viewed as a secondary element, but as a key medium of transnational rootedness.

The ensemble's repertoire has evolved over time. Initially, it consisted mainly of well-known Soviet-era songs—such as *Stary klion* ("The Old Maple"), *Ugolok Rossii* ("A Corner of Russia"), *Topolya* ("Poplars"), and *Moskovskaya Kadril* ("The Moscow Quadrille")—evoking, in both performers and audiences, memories of childhood, linguistic familiarity, and a sense of shared historical experience. These songs were perceived as "sounding memory" and carried strong nostalgic and identificational potential. Later, the repertoire expanded to include folk songs, sacred music, and original compositions. One particularly significant piece was *Pchyolochka zlataya* ("Golden Little Bee"), which combines folkloric symbolism with an ironic tone, serving as a platform for reinterpreting traditional roles and values.

A qualitative shift in the ensemble's repertoire policy occurred with the arrival of new members with formal musical educations. This led to a shift in focus from external cultural presentation to a more thoughtful and in-depth approach. The ensemble became an intergenerational space where musical practices are used to transmit experience, traditions, and cultural continuity across generations.

The ensemble's performances are characterised not only by vocal delivery but also by a strong performative component—traditional costumes, stylised gestures, choreography, and explanatory commentary. In this context, the stage becomes a ritual space of cultural representation, and the concert becomes a form of cultural action rich in symbolic meanings (cf. Turner 1982). Song selection is carried out collectively, taking into account the meanings for the audience as well as the current socio-cultural context.

The audience includes both Russian-speaking migrants and members of the host society. Public reactions range from nostalgia and emotional resonance to surprise at the "authenticity" of the musical experience. For instance, during a Maslenitsa concert in 2018, audience members applauded, danced, and shouted "bravo." During the COVID-19 pandemic, online concerts became a source of psychological support and symbolic unity during a time of isolation. Thus, musical activity fulfils not only an aesthetic function but also communicative, diplomatic, and integrative roles.

The ensemble's regular rehearsals serve not only as preparation for performances but also as a space for communication, the sharing of experiences, and mutual support. Music becomes a means of reflection and emotional self-regulation. In light of approaches in the anthropology of music (Turino 2008), Ruská duše can be seen as an example of a participatory musical practice in which aesthetics are inseparable from the social fabric of the community, collective memory, and the politics of cultural representation.

Thus, the musical practice of Ruská duše is not merely a form of cultural activity, but a medium through which identity is articulated, the community is sustained, and dialogue is carried out with a diverse audience. In this way, the ensemble functions as a cultural institution within the diasporic field—a space where music becomes simultaneously an act of belonging, a ritual of memory, and a practice of integration.

Final Reflections

This study focuses on a rarely explored aspect of the migration experience: the internal dynamics of a self-organised cultural collective in a politically sensitive and institutionally unstable environment. Using the example of Ruská duše, the research reveals less visible mechanisms of identity and belonging within the Russian-speaking migrant context. These processes are not merely the result of external pressure or the length of stay in the host country—they emerge actively in everyday interactions, in contests over symbolic and organisational control, and in economic dependencies within the diaspora itself.

This case study adds to the growing body of scholarship exploring how cultural institutions in diasporic settings function as both stabilising and destabilising forces in identity production. A key contribution lies in observing how cultural identity can become a matter of negotiation, strategic self-positioning, or even capitalisation—as demonstrated by pressures to change the ensemble's symbolic name in response to business interests. The recorded phenomenon of the instrumental redistribution of loyalties and power within the group, due to economic and day-to-day dependencies, is also significant, illustrating how micro-social relationships can shape a community's institutional identity.

This research shows that it is precisely in borderline, conflictual, and "crisis" situations that the contours of real relationship structures and hidden models of loyalty emerge, which would otherwise remain obscured under normal conditions. The proposed approach to analysing diasporic institutions as spaces of flexible and shifting identities offers a valuable tool for both migration research and rethinking theories of cultural belonging from a transnational perspective.

The combined use of participatory ethnography and hybrid belonging has proven fruitful in uncovering the complex and often contradictory forms of identity and social interdependence in the migration context. This methodological-theoretical synergy effectively captures cultural practices as dynamic arenas of transnational embeddedness and symbolic action.

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THE EFFECTS OF WAR: PRAGUE'S TANGO COMMUNITY AFTER THE START OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

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Abstract: ***This article examines the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian war on the Prague tango community. For six years, the author has been attending local milongas (social tango dance gatherings), and for the last five years, has developed an ethnography of Prague's tango life, using soundscape analysis as a heuristic tool, and correlating the collected data with the translocal phenomenon of tango. The specific ways of experiencing wartime conditions and sharing solidarity which have arisen at the Prague milongas in response to the events in Ukraine have been identified. In addition to directly supporting Ukraine through donations, the soundscape of "the effects of war" appears to confront part of the community with the transience of the tango experience.***

Keywords: ***the effects of war; soundscape; translocal phenomenon of tango; Prague tango community***

Introduction

Since the end of February 2022, I have had the fortunate opportunity to get acquainted with several Ukrainian women who recently left their homeland because of the war happening there. I made their acquaintance in quite unusual circumstances – on the dance floor. Once in Prague, these women began to attend tango parties (milongas) actively, and their presence could not help but affect the local tango community. In this article, I want to discuss the changes I have observed in these Prague *milongas* since the start of the war in Ukraine. I will begin with an introduction to the Prague scene of tango, the broader context of the translocal tango phenomenon, and a discussion of the

methodology of my study. Then I will describe how the local *milongas* have been held since the start of the war in Ukraine and offer my interpretation of the data obtained.

Positioning

I am a *tanguero*, which means I dance at *milongas*. I started dancing tango 16 years ago in Moscow. From the very beginning of my journey, I have been fascinated by how encounters between two people take shape in the act of dancing tango together. As a psychologist from Russia, I began attending Prague milongas in 2018, one year after my emigration. In 2019, I enrolled in the anthropology doctoral program at Charles University to study the Prague tango community. I am particularly interested in the encounters of the local tango scene, their poetics, and how they interconnect with Argentine tango as a translocal social dance practised all over the world.

The Prague tango scene

During the period of totalitarian rule, social tango disappeared from public life in Czechoslovakia and only returned to the big cities at the beginning of the new millennium, thanks to dancers Mark Štefan and Kateřina Mališová, who learned the basics in London (Vojířová 2015: 15-51). Nowadays, more than ten tango dance schools in Prague provide lessons for *tangueras* and *tangueros*. The teachers at the above-mentioned schools try to make dance improvisation as easy as possible for their students at *milongas*. In Prague, you can learn the basic principles of dance interaction in tango as well as different dance styles (Gotlib 2024).

The actors in my research – Prague *tangueras* and *tangueros*, among whom you find not only ethnic Czechs of different ages and professions but also Slovaks, Ukrainians, Russians, Italians, Argentines, and people from other countries who, for various reasons, live in Prague – practice tango *Argentino* as an improvised social dance. Compared to other tango scenes, the Prague scene is not very big, nor is it small. There are four or five regular *milongas* in Prague, usually small in size (rarely exceeding 20 dancing couples), which may rotate between venues; each has its own history linked to certain locations in Prague. Larger festive *milongas*, which attract over 100 dancers, are organised in Prague several times a year.

Members of the Prague community can be roughly divided into different groups, among which we find people who identify themselves with one of the local schools; lovers of tango music, for whom it is very important what melodies are played at the *milongas*; and *tangueras* and *tangueros*, who like to talk and dance mainly among themselves; as well as those who like to meet unfamiliar faces, lovers of dance experiments, and the followers of traditions. As in other communities, there is a certain segregation in Prague tango: certain women are invited to dance more often than others.

The translocal phenomenon of tango

I propose considering revival, ritual, and freedom as key aspects of the translocal phenomenon of tango. By "revival" I mean an attempt by the tango lovers to renew the practice that unites them.[1] Although *tangueras* and *tangueros* have, at different times and in different countries, succumbed to a fascination with retro, they have been (and remain) engaged in reviving (giving a second or third breath to) those traditions that would otherwise be subject to musealization (Conde 2004; Savigliano 1995). The type of activity I refer to here as "ritual" focuses more on separating local, currently relevant tango dance traditions from dance forms characteristic of other social and cultural contexts.[2] Within the "ritual of the tango", dance interactions become more predictable and formalised (Petridou 2009). At the same time, social tango is also the creation of new forms of meeting. Thanks to "freedom", tango ceases to be an isolated genre and turns out to be a way of expressing different attitudes and to be a translocal dialogue that brings something new to the life of each community (Miller et al. 2014).

The three aspects described by me in my cultural-historical review of the translocal phenomenon of tango provide a framework that suggests three questions I focus on in my ethnography of Prague tango life:

1. Which elements of the translocal phenomenon of tango are the participants of the observed *milonga* reviving?
2. In what form and through what ritual are these elements reproduced?
3. What values or feelings do they express thereby?

[1] To familiarise yourself with the variety of meanings this term carries in the context of ethnographic studies of music and dance communities, see The Oxford Handbook of Musical Revival (Bithell and Hill 2014).

[2] Here I draw on Marc Augé's theory of restricted ritual (1999).

The methodology of the ethnographic study

Using the method of participant observation, I take so-called ethnographic snapshots (Jurkova 2014) of the Prague *milongas* that I regularly visit.[3] At these *milongas*, I do not hide that I am conducting ethnography, but for local dancers, apparently, this does not play a big role. Guests of any *milonga* switch roles all the time: some observe, some dance, and some talk, among other things, asking each other about their experiences. Hence, while collecting data for my research, I can freely switch between these roles without disrupting the course of the *milongas* I attend. At the same time, the "vocabulary" of tango as a translocal dance offers a good basis for analysing the dance interactions I witness. Knowing the practical meaning of terms such as "dynamics", "body contact", and "balance", which are common in the Prague tango community, I use them to conduct descriptions of dance interactions that emphasise qualitative aspects of movement (Novack 1990; Sklar 2001).

The concept of soundscape (Shelemay 2006; Jurkova 2014) helps me explore the fluid life of the Prague tango community, where different cycles change and new social topics emerge. The choice of this concept is determined by the necessary variable of the meetings of Prague's *tangueras* and *tangueros*, which is the music of tango (sound), and by the couples who, through moving together counterclockwise, form a circle (scape). Any *milonga* begins the moment the tango music starts playing and ends the second the last couple leaves the dance floor. The social and physical landscapes of the *milonga* are interdependent on the tango melodies set up by a DJ or played by live musicians. Another inspiration for my research is the idea of the "overlapping, multifaceted intermingling of sounds and movements" (Stepputat 2016) common among anthropologists (Eisenlohr 2018). Depending on the physical and social space-time contexts that characterise different Prague *milongas* in different cycles of local tango life, I identify five soundscapes of Prague tango. I propose to briefly discuss the first four of these before turning to the fifth, which I call "the effects of war".

Prague *Milongas* before 24 February 2022

If you attend regular Prague *milongas* for a while, you'll notice that although their stylistics and membership may vary, they all proceed at a rather similar

[3] I have attended approximately over 70 milongas in Prague.

leisurely rhythm. The couples move evenly in a circle, and as the local *tangueras* and *tangeros* complain, "nothing special happens here". On the other hand, such *milongas* help their participants take a break from the rhythms of the reality of "late modernity" (Bauman 2013; Giddens 1990). I describe them as a soundscape of "ponds", referring to C. S. Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia (1950-1956), where the characters dive into different ponds and find themselves in different worlds.[4] The participants in such "chamber" dance meetings are reviving the more than century-old practice of creating the special circumstances of the *milonga* (Savigliano 2000) and contributing to the current translocal tango scene through their unhurriedness and their longing for some kind of special experience (larger *milongas*, new partners, etc). Prague *milongas* – which, again, I call "ponds" – take place every week. The music played there can be prepared in advance as a playlist of tunes arranged in a certain sequence (Gotlib 2024).

Within the soundscape of "events", I consider larger *milongas* which take place sporadically – their festive atmosphere cannot be predicted in advance. This soundscape revives the carnival component of tango culture (Miller 2014: 10) with numerous improvised dance narratives, and it gathers *tangueras* and *tangueros* from all over the world, including those from Prague who rarely attend regular local *milongas*. The DJ constantly changes his playlist, carefully monitoring the events on the dance floor and "reading" the overall atmosphere of the room. The reasons for the relevance of a big *milonga* or event can be: 1) its coincidence with an important date, the arrival of maestros, or the performance of an orchestra; 2) successful organisation: a creative idea of the organisers (in the case of a themed *milonga* carnival), a good choice of place and time, or well-written announcements (Gotlib 2024).

The soundscape of the "summer tango" continues the tradition of outdoor tango (Savigliano 1995: 177–179), occupying beautiful locations in Prague and presenting social tango to curious city-dwellers. A characteristic feature of this soundscape is its ability to fit into and/or transform the urban landscape. Summer *milongas* are characterised by their accessibility and openness to the outside world. They are often combined with a picnic: *tangueras* and *tangueros* bring tea in thermoses, wine, and snacks. Admission is usually free (Gotlib 2024).

Finally, the way local *milongas* are held is affected by the external circumstances or events experienced by the city. This happened in the "secret"

[4] Ed. Note: See Lewis, C. S. *The Magician's Nephew*. London: The Bodley Head, 1955.

milongas that took place in the homes of some local *tangueras* and *tangueros* during the strictest quarantine restrictions (associated with the spread of Covid-19) in 2020 and 2021 (Gotlib 2024). Within the soundscape of this "forbidden tango", the couples moved self-consciously to lyrical, old-fashioned melodies, in a sense saying with their movements: "We don't want to listen to government exhortations anymore – we want to listen to tango music!" This recalled a tragic period in Argentine history when, among other repressions, tango was banned (Cara 2009), as well as the protest component of the Creole culture from which this dance emerged (ibid.). My further discussion of the soundscape of "the effects of war" will be interspersed with excerpts from my ethnographic notes on these "wartime *milongas*".

The Soundscape of the Effects of War

The soundscape of "the effects of war" is not tied to any season or time of year. Unlike the quarantine declared in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was only in place for a limited period and is now considered a thing of the past, contemporary Russian aggression does not yet have an end date. The *milongas* characteristic of the soundscape of "the effects of war", which were organised in support of Ukraine, rather soon stopped being prominent among the other events of the Prague tango. This makes the *milonga* I describe below all the more remarkable – it has the sharpness and spontaneity of a first reaction to tragic news from Ukraine.[5]

The Moment of Silence

> Spring is just approaching, and the war in Ukraine is already in full swing. On 27 February 2022, between a fountain and a colonnade framing man-made caves, several couples are dancing on the sun-drenched tiles. They dance tango silently and thoughtfully. Tango music is played from a small sound system; next to one of the columns there are several thermoses and plastic cups. Tea is drunk by those who are not dancing now, at 14:30 about a dozen of them – around the same number as the figures moving to the beat along the ellipse of this impromptu dance floor.

[5] Another example of an open demonstration of civic solidarity involving *tangueras* and *tangueros* can be found in a paper on Turkish protests against violence and the denial of rights to LGBT communities (Heinz 2016).

> As payment for participating in the Grotto milonga, Ondřej – an organiser of the first milonga to be held in Prague in support of Ukraine – has asked everyone in attendance to send money to support Ukraine.

A truly visible and symbolic scene, linked to the tragic events in Ukraine, takes place at the end of this milonga.

> As the last tune plays, Ondřej dances with Evgenia, a tall Ukrainian woman wearing a bright yellow scarf, a yellow sweater, and blue pants. They stand out among the rest of the couples due to the swiftness of their movements and the expressiveness of their poses. The melody ends, the couples move to the edge of the rectangular area tiled with geometric shapes. Ondřej and Evgenia remain standing in an embrace exactly in the middle of the space that just served as a dance floor for everyone. Beautiful female voices begin to sound from the audio system – they sing in Ukrainian, in a folk style. Everyone looks silently upon the couple frozen in the tango embrace. Then John comes out and hugs Ondřej and the Ukrainian woman from the side; all the rest follow his example one by one (at that time, about 16 of us were left). Soon, the tangle of rallied bodies forms one big embrace.

In this act of solidarity, there was hardly anything joyful. We did not at all want to shout: "Together we are strong!" Rather, it was like a moment of silence for those who had already died and those who would die in the near future. I can't be certain what all the *milonga* participants were really being silent about, but their silence "sounded" like a pacifist statement, formulated spontaneously and shared.

Solidarity

In the first days of the war, during their friendly (not necessarily tango-related) meetings, Prague *tangueras* and *tangueros* actively expressed their support for the Ukrainian members of the local community. In addition, during the first weeks of the war, several new Ukrainians – more than five actively dancing women and at least one man (also an experienced *tanguero*) – appeared at the Prague *milongas*. Two of the women and the man had come from Moscow, where they had lived for several years, but where they were not ready to stay after the start of the Russian aggression. Others arrived from different parts of Ukraine. As far as I know, all of these dancers easily adapted to the Prague

tango community. I saw them speaking with their new acquaintances in English, gathering into separate groups to talk in Russian or Ukrainian, and dancing with local tango dancers. Already in April, the woman whose Facebook post is cited at the end of this paper started teaching in the Caminito, one of the largest tango schools in Prague. Another refugee from Ukraine is a rather famous DJ and photographer within the international tango community; she has already played music at several Prague *milongas* and taken photographic portraits of local dancers.

In some cases, it was even hard for me to identify these new members of the Prague tango community. At the beginning of April, I invited Olga from Odessa to dance for the first time.[6] We danced in silence. She carried herself confidently, as if she had already been to the Prague *milongas* many times, and I thought she was one of the local *tangueras* with whom, for some reason, I had not yet crossed paths. Olga would tell me later that she had never been to Prague before. The IT company she works for offered to move her to the Czech capital one month after the start of the war.

One perspective from which the milongas in Prague after 24 February 2022 can be considered is that of solidarity. Most *milonga* organisers spoke in support of Ukraine. Many *milongas* featured the blue and yellow flag of Ukraine and donation boxes to raise funds to aid people affected by the war. As early as 6 March, a *milonga* organised by Caminito raised 17,140 Czech crowns in donations. As I know from Ondřej,[7] who often visits tango festivals and marathons around Europe, the fact that Russian and Ukrainian *tangueras* and *tangueros* dance and chat together at the Prague *milongas* is not something that works in other tango communities. One can find many discussions on Facebook where Ukrainian dancers explain that they will not dance with Russians, or that Russians will not be allowed into marathons unless they openly declare that they oppose the war.[8]

I did not hear about such reactions against Russians in the Prague tango community, although many members are from Russia. However, there has been a rather strong reaction to another issue. One organiser of a big milonga

6 Her name is changed here for privacy reasons.

7 It was an informal dialogue. In my study I did not conduct more formally framed and partially structured interviews.

8 Here you have a typical example of this phenomenon: www.facebook.com/search/posts/?q=tango%20festival%20without%20Russians.

decorated with Ukrainian flags said during her opening speech: "And of course our hearts belong to the Ukrainians! Glory to Ukraine!" The fact that no fundraising efforts in support of Ukrainians were organised at this crowded *milonga* provoked serious discussion on Facebook. As a result, on 14 April, "The Great Blue-Yellow Charity Milonga" took place, managing to collect 37,350 Czech crowns (approx. €1,500 or $1,800 USD) for Ukrainian needs.[9]

By May and June 2022, the war had become almost a familiar backdrop; the difference between the *tangueras* who came from Ukraine after the start of the Russian aggression and the people from Ukraine who had been visiting the Prague *milongas* before then was no longer obvious. At the weekly *Bailemos milonga*, the oldest of the regular Prague *milongas*, the large Ukrainian flag became a permanent element of the interior design. Since the end of April 2022, representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora – the aforementioned man who, in tandem with a *tanguera*, has long been part of the local tango community – have been holding a new Rest.Art milonga in a small bar located in the Prague municipal district of Podolí. It features a narrow, oblong, wooden dance floor, subdued lighting, and a dozen dancing couples. By the end of June 2022, it was already a regular milonga where various dancers come to give the cramped space of the bar the mysterious charm of tango.

By mid-summer, the effects of the war in Ukraine seemed to have flattened, but some of the changes they caused had managed to take root in the Prague tango community. Ukrainian women and men continue to dance tango in Prague in an extended group, and the rest of the local *milonga* participants continue to be interested in what is happening in Ukraine. Russians and Belarusians also continue to visit the Prague *milongas* and to dance with Ukrainians as well. Apart from the *milongas*, *tangueras* from Ukraine continue to maintain good relations with the people of Prague, including those originally from Russia.[10] No one in the local community, for example, finds it strange when a Ukrainian woman who left her home because of Russian bombs prepares *borscht*, the national dish of her country, for her Russian friends.

[9] To tell the truth, such actions of support have not reached the scale of some other tango communities. For instance, my German-speaking acquaintances told me about a big tango studio in Berlin that closed down to become an assistance center for Ukrainian refugees.

[10] Only one *tanguera* from Russia shared with me the impression that some *tangueras* from Ukraine do not want to say "hello" to her.

Speaking of my own experience of visiting the Prague *milongas* in the first six months of the war,[11] I have always disagreed with Putin's politics; that was one of the main reasons why I left Russia almost seven years ago with my wife and our children. As a psychologist, I have provided a number of free consultations to Ukrainian refugees. However, I didn't have to declare all this at the Prague *milongas*. Furthermore, I was even asked more than once if everything was all right with me, if I was experiencing any harassment in the Czech Republic because of my Russian passport.

From the beginning of the war until the autumn of 2023, many *milongas* were held with proceeds going "in support of Ukraine", or at least declaring "support for Ukraine". These *milongas* run almost like any other, differing mainly in that the proceeds from the entrance fee go, for example, to humanitarian aid for the needs of Ukrainians who are now in occupied territory. I have heard from Prague *tangueras* and *tangueros* of various nationalities that, when "things like the war in Ukraine" are happening, the possibility of sharing their feelings through dance becomes very important to them. Support for Ukraine is therefore not something that is often talked about in Prague tango; solidarity towards Ukrainians has not taken on an obsessive character. Perhaps that is why the Ukrainians usually feel comfortable at these local *milongas*.

Sad Thoughts

The *tangueras* from Ukraine are grateful to the Prague tango community for allowing them to take their minds off the bad news from home by attending the local *milongas*. However, during the first months of the war, I noticed more than once how one of the Ukrainian women, after happily dancing or talking with someone, would sit down, pick up her smartphone, and begin to scroll through the screen, concentrating gloomily on certain information. That also reminded me that something terrible was happening nearby, and I was not the only one among the non-Ukrainian Prague *tangueros* and *tangueras* who was sensitive to these "echoes of war".

All through March and all through April, at every *milonga*, there was talk of the war. I participated in several conversations in which the tragic events evoked by the Russian aggression were discussed directly. For instance, a *tanguera* from

[11] I was at dozen milongas during this period. The frequency of these events has not significantly changed since the outbreak of the war.

Ukraine was asked what was happening to her loved ones. "My brothers are with the machine guns, my other relatives are in bomb shelters" – her answer is imprinted in my memory. Some other conversations may not have seemed very clear to those who were not in the loop: "I don't even know what to say", "Yeah, it's awful", "When will this stop already?" Such fragmentary dialogues were then followed by dancing that might have been similar (in character) to the following dance narrative, which I observed in the spring of 2022 at a crowded *milonga* in the spacious hall of the Caminito tango school:

> Old acquaintances: He is Russian from Omsk, supporting Ukraine in the current war; she is Ukrainian, forced to move to Prague in a hurry. Both dance in their own individual manner. She moves dynamically, making the most of the energy received from the interaction with a partner. At the same time, her movements are precise and elegant; at first glance she dances as if a ballerina had descended from the stage into the auditorium and agreed to dance with a spectator. However, her beautiful black dress with its cutout back and her impressive mastery of dance technique are deceptive – the external effect is not a priority in this case. The young woman's eyes are closed; she is completely immersed in the dance dialogue, and her every movement testifies to her sensitive reaction to the partner's choreographic idea and his interpretation of the melody resounding from the loudspeakers.
>
> A thoughtful, sad melody plays, accompanied by thick, tragic vocals. He, too, is entirely in black, with his shirt, trousers, and shoes all in the same tone. His body, not counting the slightly bent knees, is directed entirely upwards. His head is tilted to the left so his partner's forehead can rest comfortably against his cheek. His right arm embraces her bare back at the area of the shoulder blades, while his left palm squeezes the partner's palm at the level of her shoulders. Together, his arms form a soft, stable frame. His whole being is turned toward the woman who has agreed to become his interlocutor for these four melodies. He listens and speaks at the same time. Small steps alternate with large ones; several times, after turns, he chooses diagonal directions. At these moments, the couple moves neither forward, nor backwards, nor laterally, but cuts through the space, as it were, risking collision with neighbouring pairs. However, collisions do not occur: While they stand out in the stream of couples moving in a circle, they do not disturb their movement.
>
> The silent dialogue of this pair is in tune with the music. When the melody breaks off, they stop without completing the step – in their movements, clearly defined and at the same time unhurried, there are more questions than answers. I notice again that their immersion in the dance interaction does not prevent them

> from moving around the dance floor, which is filled with couples. Rather, they interact not just with each other, but also with the rest of the dance floor, which is moving like one big organism. Yet their story differs from the stories being told by the other couples in what I would call its 'resounding silence'. The two of them are being silent about something.

"Listening to silence" is an important component of a *tanguera*'s or *tanguero*'s musicality. The legendary tango maestro Gavito told us: "I dance the silence. I dance what comes before the music and what comes after... what I dance is like an intention" (Plazaola 2014, 173).[12] In this context, the above description could be considered typical of the contemporary translocal tango scene. On the other hand, together with the above-mentioned conversations, such dancing gave the *milongas* held in the first months of 2022 both a sorrowful, wartime tinge and emphasised another characteristic aspect of tango culture.

With the popularisation of the *bandoneón*,[13] lyrical sophistication, and the rise of the Carlos Gardel cult in the 1920s, tango melodies acquired a nostalgic sound (Conde 2004; Azzi–Goertzen 1999). As "a sad thought that can be danced" (Discépolo 1977), tango has a rich tradition of the dance reflecting on tragic events. For instance, in the depressing period of the Dirty War (1976–1983) (Taylor 1998), Argentinian *milongueras* and *milongueros* interpreted in dance the lyric melodies of Carlos di Sarli and Francisco Canaro, the broken rhythms of Juan D'Arienzo, and the dramatic tunes of Osvaldo Pugliese and Miguel Caló, all of which resound at *milongas* in Prague today. These melodies might have played a special role for those who experienced the outbreak of war in Ukraine. As one Prague *tanguero* with whom I discussed the war said, "Tango music helps a lot, it has everything in it."

Lastly, I would like to give one more example to illustrate what kind of "sad thoughts" can be danced and discussed during the Prague *milongas* in wartime. The previously mentioned Odessan woman, Olga, is grateful to the people of Prague in general and to the local tango community in particular for their hospitality and sympathetic attitude towards her. At the same time, she notices that "everything in the Prague tango is somehow calmer". She and I fell

[12] In terms of ethnomusicology, 'listening to silence' appears to be relevant both to the soundscape of the effect of war discussed here (Wood 2021) and to various soundscapes described by other authors (Jurková 2014: 135–140).

[13] *Bandoneón* is a type of concert accordion of German origin.

into talking while sitting near a dance floor crowded with dancing couples.[14] That evening in the bar where the *milonga* was held, it was especially lively and noisy, which seemed to contradict Olga's thesis about the "calmness" of Prague tango. "Look," she continued with a bitter smile. "There are so many people on the dance floor, and no one bumps into anyone... If we had such a *milonga* in Odessa, everyone would have pushed into each other a long time ago." It was hard not to hear a note of nostalgia in that last phrase.

Bombs and roses

I believe that what happened after 24 February 2022 was a continuation of the tradition of solidarity that was evident in the Prague tango community during the lockdown of 2020-2021. The "secret" *milongas* of that time served to preserve local tango as an active social practice. A notable change in Prague tango life brought about by wartime is the emergence of *milongas* held in support of Ukraine. Another change, not so noticeable, is related to certain scenes that could be characterised as ceremonial, but which have not yet shaped up into a new ritual. Although these scenes probably remain in the memory of only a few Prague *tangueras* and *tangueros*, I believe they are of sufficient value to be mentioned.

We have already discussed one such episode connected with the tragic events in Ukraine: the moment of silence that took place at the first wartime *milonga* in Prague on 27 February 2022. A second episode that probably falls under the same title was a typical situation where the subject of the war had a certain effect, although the word "war" was never spoken at all. It took place on 19 March 2022 at the *milonga* in the Water Tower. I invited a Russian-speaking *tanguera* unfamiliar to me to dance. In between melodies, I asked her if she was from Russia; I asked my question affirmatively because, for some reason, I was sure that she was. The girl replied: "No, I'm from Ukraine. And you?" Here she apparently read the embarrassment on my face and, without waiting for an answer, she said: "From Russia? Well, let's hug!" A little later on, she said, "What else should we do? This is the least we can do."

I would like to place her rhetorical question from this last scene (which was posed after a silent embrace) in dialogical relation with the following text posted on Facebook on 26 June 2022 by another *tanguera* from Ukraine:

[14] 2 April at the Cortina *milonga*.

> In my world, forgetting about the war is impossible. Every day, I read disturbing news before and after writing my thesis or teaching classes, although I don't write about it much. I remember it always.
>
> Today, Kyiv was bombed again. The city where more and more of my friends are coming back, and where my nephew is. And just after that, I had a conversation where I was told that it is not as bad as it was.
>
> A large beautiful European country is being terrorised for the 5th month in front of everyone's eyes – IT IS as bad as it was, and it is getting worse. Please, don't let the war become routine. It is closer than it seems.
>
> Today, Kyiv was bombed again. Roses in Prague are blooming. Dozens of innocent people die every day. Tonight I am going to a *milonga*. I have no idea how to fit all these things into one small me at the same time.[15]

Beneath this post, I found the "likes" and emojis from many Prague *tangueras* and *tangueros*, which once again confirmed that they were not indifferent to what was happening in Ukraine during the first months of the war. Although this text does not contain a question mark, it does pose a rhetorical question. Hence, we have two rhetorical questions from two different Ukrainian women appearing on the Prague tango scene after the start of Russian aggression. The first is: "What else can we do?" And the second: "How to fit all this into myself?" One of the powerful answers to these questions is the embrace, the central ritual of the translocal tango phenomenon. *Tangueras* and *tangueros* from different communities share the idea of embracing as a way to experience together the emotions evoked by tango music (Cara 2009; Petridou 2009). Since I have heard from many participants of Prague's *milongas* that they use the embrace as a means of communication, the current war in Ukraine may have rearticulated this idea for some of them.

Conclusion

Wherein lies the soundscape of "the effect of war"? At the beginning of this article, I listed the questions that guide my ethnographic research. The first two are: "Which elements of the translocal phenomenon of tango are the participants of the observed *milonga* reviving?" and "In what form and through what ritual are these elements reproduced?". In the context of the war in Ukraine,

[15] The spelling and punctuation here are in accordance with the original text.

contemporary Prague *tangueras* and *tangueros* are reviving both the tango as "a sad thought that can be danced" and the local traditions of solidarity formed in the previous years of Prague tango life, with their low-key expressions of solidarity and thoughtful dancing to old tunes. At the same time, the Prague *milongas* in support of Ukraine can be seen as a ritual that has become habitual for the local tango community. It is more complicated to find an answer to the third question: "What values or feelings do these elements of dance reflection and solidarity express at such *milongas*?"

Let me quote another excerpt from my ethnographic notes. Since the *milongas* held by Ondřej in support of Ukraine have already become a tradition, I came again to the Grotto on a warm June evening.

> A cheerful group of four Ukrainian women sits on the parapet, drinking the champagne they brought with them. From time to time, other members of the milonga join them, and every three or four tunes, one of them is invited to dance. At some point, Ondřej asks DJ Harry to stop the music and thanks everyone present for their donations – the money raised that evening will be used to support Ukrainians affected by the war. Applause. Harry turns the music back on. However, it takes a few minutes before the dance floor fills up again. The guests of the milonga probably knew from the announcement what the milonga donations would be used for, but they seem to need time to reflect on the information they have heard (despite the tactfulness of Ondřej's short speech).

Such scenes, which I have called the "echoes of war",[16] might have made it problematic for some compassionate *tangueras* and *tangueros* to fully immerse themselves in what was happening in the *milonga*. Against the backdrop of the harsh realities of the war in an (almost) neighbouring country, part of the Prague tango community faces the transience of the tango experience itself and the questions which, while they cannot be answered, probably serve as one of the reasons why *milongas* in support of Ukraine continue to take place in the Czech capital. "The effects of war" soundscape thus creates additional conditions for embodying the shades of melancholy intrinsic to the tango in contemporary Prague *milongas*.

16 Maybe I should have called them 'echoes of wartime', this can be discussed.

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EXPLORING THE SHIFTING MOTIVATIONS FOR COUNTERURBANIZATION MOVES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract: ***Building upon Peter Rossi's foundational research on migration motivations in the 1950s, this study examines the main reasons for counterurbanization moves. Rossi, employing the reason analysis methodology pioneered by Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, identified core factors influencing relocation decisions. We utilize a similar approach, adapted to the contemporary context, to explore the composition of motives for counterurbanization movements and compare Rossi's findings with data collected in recent years. This comparative analysis sheds light on how the main motives for relocation have changed over time.***

The research explores the factors driving individuals to pursue lifestyle changes through migration, analysing the relative importance of various motivations in the current landscape. While our findings suggest that core factors like physical space (size) and home ownership remain relevant, the social environment holds a different significance today. Unlike the past focus on the social status of neighbours, contemporary lifestyle migrants prioritize how a location aligns with their occupational and leisure pursuits. Hobbies, which often contribute to household income, now factor into the social environment equation, shaping the desired community characteristics. By examining historical and contemporary trends, this study reveals the evolving nature of human mobility and the factors shaping people's decisions to relocate for improved quality of life.

Keywords: ***Lifestyle Migration, Migration Patterns, Quality of Life, Motivations, Rossi's Theory, Comparative Analysis, Reason Analysis***

1 Introduction

Leaving the city for the countryside is something we know people have been doing since antiquity. Socrates reportedly owned a small estate in a village called "Gúdi", where he used to travel in order to get rest from all the commotion, in the capital city, Athens.

Nowadays, this phenomenon is occurring on a large scale. In the literature, the standard version of this practice is referred to as the "counterurbanization story" and is driven by motives that relate to several basic family needs (Mitchell 2004). The phenomenon of counterurbanization is often observed among socio-economically advantaged individuals whose financial stability facilitates such relocation. Consequently, this migration can be conceptualized as a privileged form of spatial mobility. The main reasons for moving are usually that people need more space and want to own their own home, where they will be better able to decide how to use that space (Rossi 1980 [1955]).

However, in its standard version, the "counterurbanization story" also encompasses motives that involve finding solutions to several other needs, such as the wish to move to a quieter and safer environment, which the countryside offers. When these migrants move to a certain location that meets their demands, this step is also accompanied by an increase in social status, if they are moving to a location that is one of the more sought-after places to live (Benson, O'Reilly 2009). The process of making the decision to move is by no means uniform across individual cases, and there exists a wide range of factors that influence individuals and families to select a certain location for his or her – or more often, their shared – new home.

1.1 Research question

The world is in a constant flux, reshaping human society at its core. Now more than ever, people are on the move, driven by a complex interplay of factors. While the underlying motivations for migration remain relatively consistent, their relative importance is shifting dramatically, which is a testament to the dynamic nature of our interconnected world.

We propose two main research questions:

Is family well-being still the most important motive in the decision to move?

What are the primary factors that influence people's decisions when searching for a house outside the city?

2 Overview

2.1 What do we mean by well-being?

Given the strong correlation between motivations for relocation and perceived well-being, it is imperative to establish a clear definition of this term as employed within this study. For the purposes of this analysis, well-being is defined as the combination of feeling good and functioning well; the experience of positive emotions such as happiness and contentment, as well as the development of one's potential, having some control over one's life, having a sense of purpose, and experiencing positive relationships (Garci-Garzon, 2020).

2.2 What is counterurbanization?

From a sociological standpoint, counterurbanization narratives transcend simplistic portrayals of unidirectional migration from urban to rural settings. Scholars emphasize the concept's inherent heterogeneity, acknowledging the diverse motivations, locations, and cultural contexts that shape these mobility patterns. Counterurbanization is not solely driven by a search for an idyllic rural escape; rather, it encompasses a spectrum of reasons, including economic hardship, lifestyle preferences, and familial ties (Bijker 2012).

Early conceptualizations often positioned counterurbanization as a binary opposite to urban living, emphasizing the allure of a rural idyll. Contemporary sociological perspectives challenge this view, recognizing counterurbanization as just one component within a broader phenomenon of rural population dynamics. Individuals engage in rural mobility for multifaceted reasons, and the destinations they choose to move to may not always represent traditionally isolated rural areas. The sociological lens further illuminates the co-construction of new ruralities through counterurbanization. These processes contribute to the formation of hybrid identities and communities, blurring the lines between traditional rural and urban lifestyles. Sociologists examine the ways in which counterurbanization disrupts notions of a static rural population and fosters the emergence of novel rural social formations (Halfacree 2024).

2.3 Development of the concept in time

These research questions bring us back to the now-classic study that Peter Rossi carried out in the mid-1950s, more than seventy years ago in the USA (Rossi 1980 [1955]). In our study, we note some similarities in the decision-making processes of migrating families (today and then) and seek explanations for

them – both in contemporary theories, and in the mechanisms that were already described by Peter Rossi in his famous book: *Why Families Move*. The methodological guideline we chose to follow is the method of "reason analysis". Peter Rossi applied this method in his study of residential change in Philadelphia in the 1950s, and we also apply the same method in the present day to the reasons why families move from the similarly large city of Prague.

If we inquire as to what people are looking for when they move to the countryside, the question that most obviously presents itself is to ask why they leave their current abode, and most importantly: what is it that they do not like about it? Peter Rossi's study (Rossi 1980 [1955]) indicates that over sixty years ago, people were predominantly motivated to move because they did not like the neighbourhood they were living in and did not have enough space. Today we can describe these as factors that have a very significant influence on the decision to move as "push factors"; that is to say, when looking for the right place to move to, people's decisions are primarily guided by the problems they see in the place where they are currently living. The initial objective, then, is to solve these unpleasant problems by moving to a better place.

In the 1950s, Rossi also drew attention to a second group of reasons that people have for moving, namely "pull effects". The results of the most recent studies have shown that today it is these "pull effects" that rank among the main factors people take into consideration when deciding to move. Migrants today thus give more attention to the characteristics of the location they are moving to than they do to any shortcomings in the place where they currently reside (Halliday, Coombes 1995). Since the 1950s, the methods used to closely analyse the decision-making processes of migrant families and households have differed, but qualitative studies have nonetheless shown that the decision-making process in this case has not changed in any notable ways.

Nowadays, we can no longer work with just the simple model presented by the "counterurbanization story", and it's to be expected that there is a much wider range of reasons and combinations of reasons that influence people's decision to move (Halfacree 2012). In the case of what is called "lifestyle migration" (Benson 2015), people who move to the countryside aren't only looking for places that present just a convenient opportunity, or an increase in their living space.

On the contrary, they are looking for a community that suits them and that feels close to them, which is how Mari Korpela described the situation in northern India in the city of Varanasi (Mari Korpela in: Benson 2016). Or they

are searching for a place with a feeling of authenticity, an authenticity that is lost through mass settlement; they are thus looking for "undiscovered" places with specific characteristics (Osbaldiston 2012). Their choice of location is based on the lifestyle they want to live, which they themselves refer to as "the good life".

Another group of motives, according to Moss, is espoused by "amenities migrants". These people are searching for something very specific and they often look for remote places, such as idyllic, pristine landscapes in the mountains, where they can live according to their own notion of the spiritual dimension of a place (Moss 2006). According to Moss's observations, they are motivated by higher aspirations and a desire for transcendence (Moss 2006; Osbaldiston 2011).

3 Methodology

3.1 The methodology of Peter Rossi's 1955 Philadelphia project

Peter Rossi considered whether to study residential change retrospectively, i.e., residence that had already taken place, or residential change that was planned to take place in the near future. He decided in favour of the latter option. He asked inhabitants of Philadelphia in individual households questions about their plans: whether they planned to move or not, and why they planned to move. Eight months later, Peter Rossi returned to the same addresses to find out whether any planned moves had in fact occurred and thus his research exercised sufficient control over properly checking up on the fulfilment of these plans.

Rossi was, among other things, studying the conditions under which the motivation to move is transformed into action. He discovered that it was more often those who had only been renting their housing who moved, and less often those who owned the housing they were in (Rossi 1980: 120 [1955]). It would be natural to expect that the households most likely to move were households that were renting and wanted to buy their own home. Also, the younger the family, and the larger the family, the more likely they were to move (ibid., p. 124). Large families living in small flats were especially interested in moving. A particularly significant factor was that of an increase in the number of family members, with a consequent need for more space and ownership of one's home, i.e., where the parents had already had, or were expecting to have, another child. Both circumstances led to an increased likelihood of moving.

Peter Rossi deemed it important to select representatives from four different social and urban environments in Philadelphia. He interviewed four groups

of inhabitants of the city of Philadelphia who resided in four different areas of the city. "Four areas and their census tracts were to be chosen: one of high mobility and high socioeconomic status, one of high mobility and low socioeconomic status, one of low mobility and high socioeconomic status, and one of low mobility and low socioeconomic status" (Rossi 1980: 65). "The median monthly rental was thus used as an index of the socioeconomic status of the census tracts, and the proportion of owner-occupied dwelling units formed an index of mobility' (Rossi 1980: 66 [1955]). Drawing on census data from 1940, he selected four relatively compact areas in the city and picked one census tract from each area. He then selected households and families to interview from each area.

Moving is a far more frequent phenomenon in the United States than it is, for example, in the Czech Republic, so it was logical that Peter Rossi focused on "current data" and decided firstly, to compare socioeconomic status in the environments that people were moving out of and secondly, to compare the mobility plans of families in areas with above-average mobility to the plans of families in areas with below-average mobility (Rossi 1980: 65–68 [1955]).

3.2 The adjusted method

By contrast, our project is based on the situation in the Czech Republic, where the average rate of residential mobility is much lower, and moving residence is not as common as it is in the United States. Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, which currently has a population of 1.2 million inhabitants, was selected for comparison with Philadelphia. In our research, we were not interested in just any kind of relocation from one place to another; for this Czech study, we tried to select the kinds of families for which residential change would represent a situation comparable to that of the situation in the USA in the 1950s, when many households there lived in family homes, which they either owned or rented. This is not the situation for the majority of the population in Prague.

In the Czech sample of families, we focused on what is called "privileged migration" (O'Reilly 2016). Given the lower rate of residential change, selecting areas and asking families about their current plans to move would have produced very few affirmative responses. We therefore decided to collect our data in the reverse order from what Rossi did and ask about migration that had already taken place. We questioned families that had moved from the urban area of Prague to a surrounding area outside the metropolitan area within the past five years.

Our research employs a methodological approach similar to that utilized by Peter Rossi's seminal 1950s study. This approach focuses on deconstructing the motivations underlying residential relocation decisions. Leveraging the findings from the initial qualitative phase of our survey allows us to now explore prominent trends in this area. The qualitative data not only provides a rich foundation for understanding the key drivers of migration choices, but also serves to create an accounting scheme for the second part of the survey.

4 Context

4.1 The task in the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is generally characterized by lower rates of population mobility compared to many other nations, and while historical and cultural factors contribute to this phenomenon, the country's relatively small size and well-developed public transportation system also play a role. Czech citizens tend to prioritize established social and familial networks and demonstrate a greater reluctance to relocate for employment opportunities (Sunega, 2009). These characteristics differentiate Czech migration patterns from those observed elsewhere.

Nevertheless – or perhaps for this very reason – it makes sense to ask what motives the Czechs who do migrate have for moving. Our objective is to find an answer to the basic question underlying our research: Is family well-being still the most important motive in the decision to move? The escalating rental market in Prague places significant financial strain on a great many families, pushing them to the limits of their budgets; consequently, relocation to rural areas may represent a pragmatic adaptive strategy for mitigating this economic pressure.

Given the differences in time and place, we decided to follow a modified methodological approach. Reason analysis is the shared methodological foundation of both projects and is a method that allows us to also ask today: what are people's motives for migrating out of the big city – in this case, the city of Prague, in the centre of Europe? We can then compare the motives identified in the research with the results of Peter Rossi's project. Our specific objective is to compare how much of a difference there is between the motives that drive the privileged migration of a portion of the Czech population in Prague and the motives that drove the migration of Americans who moved out of the similarly large city of Philadelphia seventy-five-years ago. We also try to determine

whether there exists any basic pattern of motives that recur irrespective of time and place. We are searching to discover the basic objectives behind why a certain part of the population wants to move out of the city.

In studying the concepts of privileged migration more closely, the possibility suggests itself to link interpretations of these concepts to Maslow's pyramid of hierarchical needs (Maslow 1987). One example is the case of migrants who are trying to attain a "good life", which is also a part of the "well-being concept", because there is a clear connection to the top level of the pyramid associated with self-actualization. Migrants of this type diametrically transform their lifestyle in order to move closer to discovering their own sense of life and meaning in life (Benson 2016).

Conversely, the standard version of the "counterurbanization story" relates mainly to families in the productive period of their lives who are planning to have children, or already have children. Their attempt to acquire more living space simultaneously entails an increase in status – if they choose the right locality (Halfacree 2012). A strong correlation can be observed between the motivations for migration and Maslow's second level of the hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1987), which encompasses feelings of satisfaction, social achievement, and recognition. This aligns with the pursuit of "family well-being", albeit at a distinct level of analysis.

However, this connection alone fails to explain the counter urban migration trend towards rural localities that do not traditionally confer high social status (Bijker & Haartsen, 2012). The question of how specific addresses or localities contribute to social status within Czech society remains open. Drawing on Lefebvre's concept of perceived space, Štefánková and Drbohlav (2014) demonstrate that the popularity of certain localities, despite their visual similarities, reflects subjective perceptions rather than objective attributes. Consequently, a multidimensional approach, as advocated by Bijker and Haartsen (2012), is essential for comprehending the drivers of this migration.

Beyond the framework of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, several additional factors contribute to the counterurbanization process, including the potential pursuit of a nineteenth-century rural idyll.

This idealization may represent an escape from the perceived uncertainties of contemporary "risk society" (Beck, 2009). The sense of insecurity and societal alienation experienced by some migrating families can lead to a desire for physical isolation which may manifest as the construction of exclusionary barriers, such as high walls, or voluntary social withdrawal from local

communities. Furthermore, the motivations of "amenity migrants" (Moss, 2006) remain ambiguous.

While often attributed to the pursuit of transcendence (Maslow, 1987), it is plausible that a latent need for security, achieved through spatial detachment from the perceived disorientation of urban environments, also plays a significant role. This motive may parallel that of those seeking physical barriers, with spatial remoteness serving as a functional equivalent to a physical wall.

In the frame of privileged migration in a rural direction, choosing where to move to is a question that encompasses a great variety of motives, and although the story may look similar from the outside, because it has resulted in the choice of the same locality, it may, in its course and its key milestones, be a very different story. Unsurprisingly, in one locality it is possible to find very different types of migrants with wholly distinct decision-making schemas, which nevertheless led them to the same place.

4.2 Motives classification

The sheer volume of potential migration motives necessitates their classification within a specific framework. This framework serves a dual purpose: firstly, it facilitates the systematic comparison and measurement of these motives, and secondly, it allows us to visualize their relationship to individual well-being and the specific needs they aim to address or augment. Building upon an existing typology defined by Martin Šimon, which classifies counterurbanization migrants by their motivational strategies (ex-urbanization, anti-urbanization, family livelihood, and rural entrepreneurship), our research proposes an laternative framework. While Šimon's work highlights the interplay between lifestyle, economic factors, and urban connections, our typology shifts the focus to the psychological profiles of migrants, aiming to understand how their specific needs are addressed through their relocation.

Drawing upon Maslow's well-known Hierarchy of Needs, we can categorize human needs into a foundational tier encompassing physiological and safety needs, followed by a tier emphasizing social belonging and love, self-esteem, and sharing one's gifts with others. The hierarchy then progresses to needs for self-actualization, including cognitive and aesthetic fulfilment, ultimately culminating in the need for transcendence. To understand the role and significance of various motivations in housing decisions, we utilize Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a framework for categorizing and analysing these driving forces.

Within the context of counterurbanization or amenity migration, it might appear suitable to consider Maslow's distinction to B-needs and D-needs. B-needs, rooted in a desire for personal growth and contribution to society, are fulfilled through activities that align with one's passions and strengths. D-needs on the other hand, are driven by a fear of deprivation and seek to maintain a state of homeostasis. While the two types of needs are theoretically distinct, their empirical manifestation can be intertwined, making it challenging to disentangle their respective contributions to human behaviour.

While our analysis utilizes Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to categorize the full range of motivations and specifically employs the D-needs and B-needs dichotomy to compare deficiency-driven and growth-oriented motives (Maslow, 1943, 1954), we recognize that this is one framework among many within the wider academic debate.

Contemporary migration studies utilize a range of more recent, multidimensional analytic approaches. For instance, Benson and O'Reilly's (2009, 2016) seminal work on *lifestyle migration* offers a crucial alternative lens, focusing on how migrants actively search for "the good life" or seek relocation that results in an increase in social status.

A further essential framework is provided by Martin Šimon (2014), whose typology classifies counterurbanization migrants based on their distinct motivational strategies, including ex-urbanization, anti-urbanization, family livelihood, and rural entrepreneurship.

Additionally, other sociological concepts, such as Beck's (1992) idea of the contemporary "risk society", offer explanations for complex drivers like the desire for physical isolation or security through spatial detachment. Recognizing these diverse frameworks is essential for a comprehensive understanding of how current motivations transcend the basic push/pull factors identified in historical studies (Lee, 1966).

4.3 Motive development in time

A number of motives and impulses in our consciousness have remained largely unchanged and appear to be valid even across countries and perhaps even continents. One principle methodological similarity of our approach and the old one which Peter Rossi designed is the difference between push effects and pull effects. This principal similarity between Peter Rossi's project and our analytical approach is in the methodological design set out by Peter Rossi, based on his sociological and sociopsychological arguments. These arguments

and findings were later validated by many authors in subsequent decades. In our sociological project, we see the repetition of this principal difference as desirable.

One of these constants, which very significantly affects our thinking about housing, is ownership. Peter Rossi's research highlights the distinction between tenure status (tenancy versus ownership) and its influence on residential mobility. He posits that individuals are more likely to relocate when confronted with dissatisfaction stemming from unchangeable circumstances. Notably, these circumstances vary between tenants and owners. While owners tend to prioritize neighborhood factors, tenants are more likely to be influenced by dwelling unit size. These disparities in concerns remain primary drivers of residential mobility decisions even today.

Compared to the situation in earlier years, the approach to ownership is generally similar, but we might encounter a more reserved attitude in the sense that people perceive that the house that is encumbered with a mortgage is actually still the banks and not theirs. Within the context of modern relativism certain individuals adopt an existential perspective and question the very nature of possession and impermanence of human existence by asking themselves: "*What is actually ours here? We are only here for a moment and everything we have is only borrowed from the universe." (Sirius)* However, the ability to customise your own home according to your own ideas remains a very important and even a key factor and therefore adapting the layout of an apartment or house to one's own needs plays a big role in the preferences of owner-occupied housing over rented housing.

It seems almost impossible to miss the greater feeling of security that comes with ownership versus renting, and this factor is universal both for the situation in the USA during the period when Peter Rossi published his research, and for current citizens of the Czech Republic who are looking for their home and are leaving the cities for non-metropolitan areas. *"So, for that money, whatever happens – I don't know, I don't want to call it up – at least I'll have some property; you get nothing from rent…" (Aldebaran)*

From the answers of our interviewees it follows that the possibility of owning an abode, that they would not normally be able to afford in Prague, is an important motive in most cases, which reflects a subconscious effort to secure oneself i.e., it is a solution to one of Maslow's lower needs - namely safety. *"Although it's still like a bank – we have a mortgage – we're at least sure no one's going to kick us out…" (Vega)*

However, we also encountered specific cases where people were not interested in owning their own house and moved to rental housing in a location outside of Prague; these were usually individuals whose motivation was very much connected with their lifestyle and direction i.e., they were writers and filmmakers who needed space for their activities and at the same time were looking for the spiritual dimension of the place. *"I just feel connected with the universe, and my creativity rises – I can write better under the stars, it just flows so easily..." (Deneb)* It was therefore a specific fulfillment of one of the higher needs of the pyramid. However, it is important to mention that these were usually individuals who could not financially afford ownership.

Another universal reason that has a strong influence on the decision to move is the size of the original home, where the same equation applies for different periods and regardless of location. If the family feels that the dwelling is too small for them then this is a much stronger reason for moving than the feeling that the dwelling is too big. In general, the spatial requirements of families and individuals increase over time, and what was a very comfortable space in the given area 50 years ago, is currently completely unsuitable for the same number of people. It is no longer so easy to compare the real dimensions within the location because the spatial requirements for living space developed differently in the USA than in the Czech Republic.

However, the same consideration remains relevant with regards to the issue of the layout of the space compared to its real size. The number of rooms and their arrangement that a family needs for their life plays a much greater role in assessing the satisfaction of housing than the net area in square meters: *"We like the house because both of our sons have their own rooms now..." (Regulus)* This view is again universal and dependent on the type of kinship relationship that we can distinguish within one family. The needs of a standard nuclear family with children are very different, where the space subsidy may not be as large as in a three-generation family, and the youngest generation are already adults. In such a case the need for a room of one's own is perceived for each member, while for small children, this motive is rather a certain necessary view into the future (Rossi, 1955).

Compared to the past, however, this need has also changed and diversified, while on the one hand we encounter the trend of minimalism (i.e., owning a minimum of things and the need for as little space as possible [Chayka 2020]), on the other hand we also perceive the motivations of some individuals who are interested in running a space-intensive hobby i.e., renovation of furniture or

the production of herbal mixtures and tinctures: *"Come and have a look – here I have an herb dryer..." (Castor)* These hobbies, however, often become professions, or a desire to run social events focused on the presentation of one's own products, or the cultivation of one's own spirit or body and therefore necessitate the need for large spaces and usually a large garden, which is not only economically unavailable in larger cities, but often impossible due to the large degree of urbanization.

This motive can therefore be perceived as a solution to the need for self-realization, i.e., moving from the sphere of dependent gainful activity to the sphere of independence and is therefore a visible career motive that increases self-esteem, and generally the relationship with oneself and self-actualisation. "*We gradually started organizing events here and then we reduced the time spent watching television..." (Electra)*

In some cases, we can also see an overlap in the effort to use one's own potential to serve other people (i.e., self-actualization), where having a job whilst also engaged in fulfilling hobbies and pastimes utilizes the individual's potential better than just a standard civilian job by itself – so we can therefore also talk about the need for self-actualization. *"The work in the garden fulfils us much more than sitting in the office. We create different mixtures of herbs and we are really happy that it helps people; it all goes together. Sometimes we hold a workshop and people buy our products there. It's a fantastic feeling..." (Pollux)*

In recent times, a compelling motivation for seeking extra-urban housing has emerged; the pursuit of self-actualization, or the satisfaction of higher-order needs as proposed by Maslow's hierarchy (Maslow 1987). This desire is especially evident among individuals who aspire to radical career shifts by transforming hobbies into professional endeavours. Such individuals seek housing that can support or even inspire these transformations. Rossi's seminal work, however, does not explicitly acknowledge this particular motivation, indicating that it may have been less significant in the period he studied.

A significant difference between Rossi's conclusions and the current Czech environment can be observed in the choice of location according to the socio-economic status of the residents in the neighbourhood. While Peter Rossi documented the influence of "blue-collar" and "white-collar" residential patterns in the 1950s, Michaela Benson (Reilly & Benson, 2014) shows that comparable social dynamics continue to shape migration today. Specifically, Benson finds that the consequences of migration in a given area are influenced by shifts in

the social composition of new residents, particularly those resulting from the influx of "lifestyle migrants" and subsequent gentrification.

In our sample, we found this reason for choosing a location to be marginal, but occasionally we can meet people who deliberately look for more expensive locations for the sake of safety. *"We were looking for a location where the land was not completely cheap, so that no one will move there..." (Ascella)* However, this sentence from the interview typically meant a question of safety, and not social status. *"I want to let my children out freely and not be afraid that some drug addicts or strange entities will bother you here..." (Ascella)* So even in this unique case of searching for an attractive address, social status was not mentioned as a motive. This motive could rather be characterized as the fulfilment of a need for security rather than as an attempt to improve self-esteem through the attainment of a good address. We might find the same trend in other countries (Ackerlund 2015).

Many of these people are actually economic migrants, and although their original intention was not to leave the urban environment at all, they often end up finding their current housing much more pleasant than their previous residence – wherever it was. The economic factors were a significant factor for movement during Rossi's research, but we might observe an increase in this trend compared to the past because of developing opportunities for online jobs or working from home in general. This opportunity enables people to leave the metropolitan environment more frequently than in the past.

Economic considerations now significantly influence housing decisions, with many respondents citing the lower cost of building or buying a house outside Prague, in comparison to purchasing an apartment within the city limits, as reasons. While some of these individuals may be economic migrants because their original intention was not to leave the urban environment at all. Interestingly, despite initial preferences for urban living, many of these individuals now find their suburban or rural residences more satisfying, and they often end up finding their new housing much more pleasant than their previous residence in the city. While economic factors were a primary driver of residential mobility during Rossi's research, the increasing prevalence of remote work and online job opportunities has likely amplified this trend. This shift enables individuals to escape the constraints of metropolitan living more readily than in the past.

In the Czech environment, we can also define a certain dominance of prejudices generally created or reflected by the media, and a long-standing awareness of the "ugly north and attractive south" (Štefánková, Drbohlav. 2014). Part of

the respondents had an image of an ugly landscape without hills and forests on the northern outskirts of Prague. *"It's ugly in the north – it's such a boring patch without forests..." (Bellatrix)* Furthermore, she wasn't even interested in visiting these places, or she visited only a few of them. It was also evident that the initial dislike for these places shown by this section of the interviewees didn't change in any way after they actually visited them.

The interviewees gave the impression that the visits to these locations were a formality merely for show, mainly just to confirm to the clients that they really don't like it there. *"Yes, we went there once or twice, but nothing much really – well, we weren't interested anymore..." (Bellatrix)* In this case, we can ask ourselves about the extent to which the interviewees satisfy their aesthetic needs, and the extent to which it is the result of prejudices in society. This phenomenon will be examined in greater detail in subsequent phases of this research.

One important factor for choosing a given location, as Peter Rossi discovered in his research, was the presence of having relatives, or at least friends, in the same place – although this reason is somewhat weakened nowadays by the influence of technology on everyday life. "*We didn't even think about where relatives or friends are. Everything is within driving distance these days. And especially now in the age of various WhatsApps and Facebooks, [distance] doesn't really matter anymore..." (Bellatrix)* On the other hand, the majority of respondents still perceive the importance of personal contact. *"Well, I like it here better than in Prague, I have friends here. I'm happy with them. Sometimes we go to the pub, sometimes we go for a bike ride or do some joint event. I'm not the organizational type, but I like to help when someone organizes something, for example moving chairs or cleaning up and so on. Then I feel like I'm a part of it all..." (Azaleh)*

The question of how far away relatives will be after moving is important for families with children, as it was in Rossi's research, and surprisingly, the direction in which those relatives live plays a significant role. Due to the small area of the Czech Republic, and the location of the capital city in the middle, living on the southern or northern edge actually plays a big role for all respondents when they consider where to travel. A number of them regularly visit their relatives, who live, for example, in Moravia or southern Bohemia, so if they have to go around the city, it can then mean a difference of at least an hour's extra journey. A situation can then easily arise that taking a wrong direction then doubles the time of these journeys.

While some similarities exist between our findings and Rossi's research regarding the factors influencing residential choices, some differences are also evident. In Rossi's study, proximity to the city centre and the socioeconomic status of neighbourhoods were crucial determinants for a choice in locality. In contrast, our research participants exhibited less concern for socioeconomic status, prioritizing factors such as scenic landscapes and lower pollution levels. This divergence may be attributed to evolving societal attitudes towards class and socioeconomic distinctions. It is important to acknowledge that Rossi's research employed a different questionnaire methodology than the present study. Consequently, certain motivational factors may not be captured within his findings.

In addition to the already-mentioned factors that influence the search for a place to live in the Czech environment, there are other factors that were not mentioned in Rossi's research, but were described by other researchers, especially Moss (2006) and Osbaldiston (2012), who in their concept of amenity migration describe individuals who are looking for certain specific qualities of the environment. However, only a very small, specific segment of migrants fit into this context because they are really consciously looking for certain qualities of the place where they will live.

Based on the interviews conducted with the respondents, it is possible to trace certain parallels, although the whole situation is somewhat distorted by the Czech cultural tradition of secondary living. In practice this means that a large part of citizens permanently living in the territory of the metropolitan area of Prague actually have their need for a certain amenity migration fulfilled by secondary housing, which is often a cottage in the woods, or a country estate somewhere in a small village where they live a community life and thereby solve their need for socialization. *"Everyone is in a rush, I don't like it, no one is willing to stop and talk to you, it is just hideous..." (Electra)*

Interviewees who decided to leave Prague for the countryside were all looking for peace and a lower population density, rating Prague as an overcrowded place, especially in public green spaces such as parks. The need for peace was mentioned by all, without exception. In a closer specification of what peace means, they say it means to be rid of ubiquitous noise – especially from cars and the city's overall hustle and bustle. However, they cannot define exactly what the rush is; for them, it seems to mean a certain mood created by streets full of people who are rushing somewhere and don't actually notice the people they pass. It is more about the feelings that the respondents describe than about any real tangible characteristic.

They also see a certain overcrowding in the standard urban development, where it is unpleasant for them to live with other people separated only by a thin wall, and the permeability of various smells and sounds through the risers of housing estates. *"I used to live in a block of flats on Jižní Město. It was terrible. The neighbour used to go to the toilet and you could smell it all throughout the house. I even had his rat fall there once..."* (Vega) So one big reason to leave is not to be disturbed by your neighbours, but also not to disturb your neighbours in turn. *"Hey, I'm glad that I can play music here. The nearest neighbours are so far away and I don't disturb anyone and it's peaceful..." (Vega)*

Thus the motive of not being disturbed, and at the same time not disturbing anyone, is demonstrated well by a sentence that was said independently by several respondents. "*We actually like it best here in the winter, when no one is here..." (Taygeta)* This sentence is actually a reaction to the specific situation in the Czech Republic where many properties are used only for recreational housing. Although they are full-fledged houses their residents have jobs in Prague, so they often don't even visit their building or heat it during the winter months; rather, they use it only in the summer and often decide definitively to move there only when they end their working careers. As long as their working career lasts, the building is inhabited only in the summer, and many migrants who have moved to the location permanently welcome and appreciate this.

Respondents also rated the landscape around the house they chose, and hills and forests were rated as the most popular type of landscape. Another important element of their perception of the place are birds and forest animals, such as deer, squirrels, and hedgehogs. *"I can watch the squirrels chasing around the garden. It's wonderful – I can stand watching them for a really long time..." (Polaris)* Agricultural landscape is not very sought after, and landscapes with industrial objects are rather discouraging and perceived as undesirable.

We can observe that a number of people's attitudes and behavioural patterns regarding the change of residence remain unchanged for many years, but many of them are now changing, especially based on current technological possibilities. It is not such a surprise that the range of attractive places to live is increasing, thanks to the possibility for many people to work remotely or partially remotely i.e., to sometimes have a so-called "home office". People who no longer have children of school age can and do pay more attention to the landscape and social relations in a place than to its transport accessibility and civic amenities. However, families with small children are still under a lot of pressure to choose a place that is easily accessible, where there is a functioning school

and kindergarten, and where the children will eventually be able to commute by themselves. This list of necessities is so long and complex that families with children have less freedom to evaluate the quality of the environment.

5 Discussion

If we want to summarize the development that took place in the motivations for changing housing, we can notice that the practical reasons that saturate the feeling of security and physiological well-being have certainly not disappeared, but are more disguised in a flood of other reasons that are directed more towards needs of socialization and self-actualization. An important factor in choosing a place is also the way in which couples or individuals came to this choice. Based on our interviewees' responses, we can identify two distinct models of decision-making, categorized by whether they prioritize the fulfilment of B-needs or D-needs.

As previously noted, it is challenging to definitively categorize individuals into distinct groups based solely on their motivations – as these factors often intertwine. While some individuals primarily prioritize developmental needs, practical considerations also play a role. Conversely, others may appear to be driven by pragmatic concerns, but also express self-developmental aspirations, and consequently a more nuanced understanding emerges, recognizing two ideal types at the extremes and two hybrid types that exhibit elements of both.

The first is a typical pragmatic model that exhibits similar features to those described by Rossi in his research. In our case, these are also mainly families who are planning to have children, or already have them and want to maintain their current lifestyle and do not want to change jobs and are not even looking for specific spiritual values; they just need to address their space requirements and find that they will pay more for an apartment in the city than for a house within driving distance. So these people often do not plan their move for a long time, but rather it is a fairly quick decision based on rational reasons.

The main criteria for choosing a location are, above all: price, distance, transport connections, social composition of the population, and civic amenities. Surprisingly, price can play a role either way. A location with higher land prices can become a target, as this guarantees a certain social composition of the neighbourhood, which will be safer than a place where land is cheaper. On the contrary, cheaper land attracts young families looking for affordable housing with certain benefits of civic amenities or specific characteristics of

the surroundings. *"I'm crazy about bikes, so I appreciate that it's a piece of cake and I ride well here... I also love our oval, which we have behind the house, where I can go jogging, but I can also go there to kick a ball with the children... It's great here, I'm excited here... So clearly, I didn't really come here for the panoramas!" (Izar)* Part of the respondents from this group find themselves in a situation suddenly as a result of some event, usually an unexpected financial influx. "*If dad hadn't given us the money, we wouldn't have even started thinking about it..." (Errai)*

These people also often start by looking for an apartment in Prague, and after finding out the price ranges of real estate in the city, they decide to relocate to the countryside. This decision is more often influenced by the negative characteristics of the previous place, so they decide to go elsewhere, but their idea of the destination location is not fully formed and therefore they approach the choice of place also completely rationally by creating a list of pros and cons. They do not often let emotions and feelings decide, although even in this group they are not completely excluded.

This group also includes people who follow their partner. The partners of men who have children from their first relationship and want to see them usually find themselves in this situation. Then they move to where the mother of their children lives and the new partner moves in with them. Again, this model does not include a long stage of planning and site selection. In these cases, the features of the property itself, and perhaps the immediate neighbourhood, are usually the most important, but the site selection phase in the wider context is omitted.

The second group are people who usually plan their departure for a longer period of time, sometimes from early childhood, and it is often a process that lasts for decades, and the departure happens when this decision to leave has matured in them. This group often includes everyone who seeks to change their lifestyle and move their professional life to a new abode. They often have some basic criteria for how the abode should look, and how the surroundings should look, and they have a general idea of the profession or life change they want to initiate.

These people are usually partners or single people without children, but some families with children also fit into this category. If it is a change of profession, the economic activity usually results from the type of abode that these people end up buying, or the abode is selected according to the planned economic activity. The plan may be different, but in the end, it will change,

considering that the abode is of a different type than they planned. *"Well, originally we had a beautiful cottage in the mountains and we wanted to have a guest house there, but in the end, we bought a monument… Actually, what I do is rescue monuments, which also makes sense of the general direction I had before…"* (Arkturus) In the context of the pyramid of needs, it is a search for one's own place in society.

In this group, which is gradually getting ready to move, we can also find individuals and couples who have always wanted to move away and who perceive life in the countryside as a journey for themselves. They often have their standard jobs, which they do not want to change, but also, they want to use their free time to pursue some creative hobby or artistic activity, which over time becomes a contribution to the family budget. This is usually gardening or making decorations at home, but also writing or filmmaking.

This aspect has changed the most over time. A number of people who have a creative profession, or any profession that can be performed remotely via the Internet, perceive that their main reason for having their headquarters in Prague, or generally in the city, weakens with the development of technology because they can perform all their work duties remotely. These individuals and couples deal with the highest levels of the pyramid of needs, and that is the theme of self-actualization and transcendence, and their decision-making process includes this element as well.

They often define only the basic characteristics that they want their new home to include, and the vast majority of them are influenced by the way of thinking that says "the universe will give them what they need." *"We were in Thailand when we finally decided to take this step. We wrote down on paper what we would like from the house and I went to meditate at the Buddha statue, which was not far from where we lived. When we finished the meditation, we were returning home and met our Czech neighbours, who also happened to be there. We hadn't met them before, but we started talking and the conversation revealed that their neighbour was selling a house in the village where they lived. They arranged a visit from Thailand. We didn't choose anything at all. We looked at the house and it was clear to us that this was what we wanted. So we bought it and we are grateful… Every day we discover new advantages to being here…" (Castor and Pollux)*

Some of these people are influenced by their childhood, and when they start to think about the topic in an interview, they realize that they were always looking for something similar to what they were used to from childhood, i.e., where

they went to see their grandparents, or where they went with their parents. They usually choose a location based on these criteria. *"Yeah, I never thought about it, but now I realize that I was actually imagining something like when we went on trips with ours when I was little..." (Canopus)*

All representatives of the second group, i.e., all those for whom finding the right place is a process and not a one-time decision, prefer a hilly poetic landscape with a water reservoir or river nearby. On the contrary, the first group has preferences regarding the distance to services and sports or cultural activities, so their preferences may be different according to the type of activities they engage in.

While the two previously discussed groups represent polar extremes, the majority of individuals may exhibit a more nuanced approach. Based on prior findings we have provisionally identified several subtypes. These will be further specified in subsequent research. A significant segment of the population, while recognizing the practical advantages of rural living, also envisions a future in the countryside as a means of personal fulfilment.

This subtype aspires to transition to a more fulfilling lifestyle upon their children's independence, combining their current professional pursuits with their true passions. A rural residence would serve as an enabling factor in this transition. *"I see myself growing plants and taking care of the garden when I get older. It was always my big passion; unfortunately, I don't have much time for it. You know, when I spend time in the garden, it's like time is not running anymore and I feel like I have found myself..."* (Izar) These people are quite practical, and they think about the present moment with regards to taking care of their families. Still, they also see the future, and they anticipate needing a different life goal when their circumstances change.

The other subtype is primarily motivated by a desire for self-actualization, yet they remain constrained by unmet basic needs, particularly spatial requirements. These individuals seek personal growth and often relocate to pursue their life goals. However, they maintain a degree of practicality in their decision-making process. *"It is like killing two birds with one stone. We left the city, we can work on our projects easily here, and we also have separate rooms for both sons..."* (Regulus)

Occasionally, financial constraints hinder these individuals' pursuit of self-actualization. In such cases, they may prioritize cost-effective locations that offer the desired characteristics balancing their aspirations with practical considerations. *"We had to count when we wanted to get the right locality. Some places are great but really expensive, but we found a place which is not that expensive but just perfect for us..."* (Spica)

The strong influence of local socio-environmental factors on these decisions, and the enduring prevalence of second homes in the Czech Republic, has fostered a distinct scenario for the third group wherein familial ownership of such properties is often perceived as a viable housing alternative. Individuals fortunate enough to inherit these assets may utilize them in various ways; some, possessing well-appointed cottages near urban centres, effectively enjoy dual residences, retaining their city dwellings while simultaneously benefiting from the rural setting.

Others may view these countryside properties as a means of transitioning from rental accommodations to home ownership requiring a comparatively modest investment in renovation. Furthermore, the option exists to demolish existing structures, such as rudimentary sheds or outdated houses, and rebuild to meet contemporary living standards. A unifying characteristic across these diverse situations is a profound connection to the local community and environment, frequently established during childhood. Consequently, the decision-making process is strongly influenced by the previous circumstances and often leads individuals to retain inherited properties despite potential drawbacks, rather than pursuing alternative housing solutions.

The relocation of this fourth migrant typology from the metropolis was driven primarily by significant external factors, encompassing both unforeseen events and pressures arising from planned or executed circumstantial changes. While events such as lease terminations or employment changes may instigate relocation within a given area, they are infrequently the primary drivers of counter urban migration. More commonly, such moves are influenced by the desire to maintain or establish social connections. Although anecdotal evidence suggests that proximity to friends and relatives can be a factor in locational choices, familial ties remain the most potent determinant.

Contemporary trends, such as shared parenting arrangements, necessitate residential choices predicated on school catchment areas. Furthermore, family dissolution, often followed by the primary caregiver (typically the mother) relocating with a new partner, is a not-uncommon occurrence. The non-custodial parent (frequently the father) may subsequently choose to reside closer to his children, contingent upon feasibility, particularly if telework options obviate the need for daily commuting. This decision in turn influences other people – such as the new partner. Consequently, a cascading effect may be observed, potentially altering the housing circumstances of families with only tenuous links to the initial relocation impetus.

6 Conclusion

A comparison of decision-making patterns in Rossi's research with the contemporary Czech context reveals a substantial overlap in migrant behaviour and rationale. A significant proportion of counter urban migrants, mirroring Rossi's findings, prioritize the price-performance ratio. This group exhibits limited intrinsic interest in rural living and lacks self-actualization motives for relocation. Given the opportunity to acquire a house with a garden within an urban setting, they would in most cases remain.

Conversely, evolving trends in well-being, which include self-actualization, interpersonal harmony and spiritual development, have fostered a second group of migrants driven by the pursuit of lifestyle change. While this group encompasses several subtypes and mixed categories, the emphasis on self-development and the search for a locale conducive to individual meaning are considerably more prominent today than during the 1950s, the period of Rossi's research. As material well-being and life comfort have progressively increased, individuals possess greater leisure time for hobbies and increased capacity for reflection on personal potential, aspirations, and purpose. These factors can significantly influence migration decisions and motivations.

This shift in motivational drivers can be analysed through the lens of Maslow's concepts of Deficiency-needs (D-needs) and Being-needs (B-needs), effectively differentiating the two migrant groups discussed previously. The first group's motivations are predominantly rooted in perceived deficiencies, such as inadequate space, safety concerns, or a suboptimal health environment. Conversely, the second group is more strongly motivated by growth needs (B-needs). The increasing prevalence of these growth-oriented motives compared to Rossi's era is notable, as mobility research at that time did not explicitly consider this type of motivation. This trend likely reflects an overall improvement in quality of life, where basic deficiencies are less pressing, allowing for pursuits beyond the fulfilment of fundamental needs.

However, it is important to acknowledge that this focus on self-actualization remains, in many cases, a privilege often afforded to individuals in later life stages – such as those whose children have reached adulthood, or those without familial obligations. Interviewee data suggests that primary caregivers facing the demands of family life typically experience migration motivations driven by the resolution of daily challenges; their motivations tend to be anchored in D-needs, with the pursuit of self-actualization often deferred until their children achieve independence.

Since we have not yet carried out the quantitative part of our research, we cannot make any qualified estimate of how large the single groups are within the total number of migrants outside metropolitan areas. However, this basic typology corresponds with the development of the trend of counter-urbanization over time with regard to the development of communication technologies, urban and rural areas, employment policy, and society itself.

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THE OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITS OF PRIVATE–PUBLIC SECTOR COOPERATION IN SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY

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Abstract: ***This article reflects on shared micro-mobility, which can be defined as a contribution to sustainable urban mobility as well as a threat to leaders and residents of the city. By the example of Olomouc in the Czech Republic, we illustrate how the division of transportation work is affected by the legislative framework, the size of the city and the interests of different social actors. As the case study results suggest, city government officials cooperate with private providers of shared micro-mobility services to increase their modal share. However, this cooperation is only partially effective due to the absence of a law regulating shared micro-mobility services on the one hand and the size of the city on the other. Concerned that the use of shared bikes and e-scooters could negatively impact public transport, city officials are sceptical about promoting shared micro-mobility services. That results in the underutilisation of the financial support for sustainable urban mobility.***

Keywords: ***sustainable urban mobility; sharing economy; shared e-scooters; bikesharing; case study***

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1. Introduction

"A bike has a soul, doesn't smell, and saves your joints. No traffic jam will slow your ride. Thanks to the bike, you can stretch your back. With a bike, you can feel the wind in your hair and the speed in the handlebars. You will enjoy a heady dose of freedom on your bike. Ride down the streets of Prague, sculpt your thighs and buttocks, and save money on transport" (www.cistoustopou.cz/na-kole). The Clean Track campaign slogan above contrasts individual car transportation with cycling. It illustrates several personal benefits (Bakker et al. 2018). On a bike, one can travel comfortably, quickly, and healthily. What is more, economically.

The representatives of a local administration formulate these arguments in the interest of sustainable urban mobility. They intend to decrease the modal share of individual car transportation on transportation work and increase public interest in using alternative forms of transport (such as city transportation, walking, or cycling), in keeping with the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, a conceptual document that (1) reflects on how traffic behaviour of the population affects the environment, urban infrastructure, road safety, and economic situation; (2) proposes a wide range of measures to eliminate the occurrence of negative phenomena caused by individual car transport, such as air pollution, parking problems, traffic accidents, and congestions (Duran et al. 2020).

Regarding measures to promote sustainable urban mobility, this includes the improvement of infrastructure, decreased traffic, and public transport support (Brůhová Foltýnová et al. 2022). Local authorities propose and implement those measures based on cooperation with experts and the general public. In other words, they are subject to negotiations. Social actors of various needs and interests participate in the final form of these measures. However, their degree of involvement in the negotiation process varies, as can be seen in the results of the qualitative research presented in this article.

The research was conducted in Olomouc (March 2022 – April 2023), where local authorities support shared micro-mobility services to a limited extent to contribute to traffic calming, even though this approach has proven successful in other cities, such as Bremen, which has a less car-dependent lifestyle (see Glotz-Richter 2016). Instead, they prefer to support public transport, which is not attractive enough to city residents because its price does not match the quality of the service provided. That is because local government officials define shared mobility services as a private business that can potentially hurt

sustainable urban mobility. These findings arise from a situational analysis reflecting how shared micro-mobility services are regarded by providers, local government officials, and city residents.

First, we describe the research methodology and then present its results to show how selected factors (legislative framework, size of the city, and the needs of various interest groups) affect the integration of shared micro-mobility services into the city's intermodal transport system. Finally, the opportunities and limits of public-private cooperation in sustainable urban mobility are discussed.

2. Methodology

We conducted the case study to assess the opportunities and limits of public-private cooperation in sustainable urban mobility. For this purpose, the city of Olomouc was selected for its characteristic plain terrain and its vast network of cycling trails, where people do not use shared micro-mobility services to reach the first and last mile (DeMaio 2009). This is related to the size of the city (10,333 ha). Compared to other big cities, Olomouc's size allows people to easily travel from one side of the city to the other by bike, e-scooter, or public transport. This leads to reduced interest from the local administration in integrating shared micro-mobility services into the city's intermodal transportation system. In this context, there are real concerns that people will not use the public transport service, including shared bikes and e-scooters, evenly. If this were the case, the increased interest in alternative modes of transport could lead to a decrease in public interest in using public transport and an increase in the financial outlay for public transport covered by the municipal budget.

This issue is being addressed by local government officials seeking to reduce the share of individual car traffic in the city transportation work. Part of the implementation process of the sustainable urban mobility plan (https://spokojena.olomouc.eu/plan-udrzitelne-mobility-olomouc/) is the cooperation between the municipality and private providers of shared micro-mobility services to contribute to changing the transport behaviour of Olomouc residents. The following section discusses the specifics of their cooperation.

2.1. Data generation and analysis

The qualitative research was conducted between March 2022 and April 2023, exploring how shared mobility services are approached by their providers, the

local government, and residents. A total of 13 participants, selected through purposive sampling, were interviewed for the research study. Among them were two representatives of the local government (the responsible policymaker for Smart City and shared mobility coordinator), one provider of shared mobility service, and ten citizens who move around the city of Olomouc by different modes of transportation. Some prefer individual car transport; others combine walking with public transport, cycling, or using an e-scooter. The research sample is heterogeneous, including four users and six non-users of shared micro-mobility services. Among them are four women and six men between 21 and 48 years of age. Of these, three are students, six are economically active, and one is on parental leave.

In order to identify the different needs and interests of the participants, we designed three types of interview guides. The first explored how the local government (1) evaluates shared micro-mobility services and (2) engages with the service providers in the area. The second interview guide reflected on (1) the providers' experience of shared micro-mobility service and (2) how they cooperate with the local government officials. The third one concentrated on identifying the needs of residents who either use the shared micro-mobility services or not.

Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis was conducted simultaneously with the data generation process, involving the creation of situational maps (Clarke et al. 2022) that reflected how various elements shaped the reality under investigation. The starting point for data analysis was the Messy Situational Map, which allowed us to describe the human and non-human elements found in the research situation as articulated by the participants and the researcher. Subsequently, we created an Ordered Situational Map to organise the elements of the Messy Situational Map more clearly. The following analytical step was the creation of Relational Maps. By drawing lines between elements, we defined their relations and captured the messy complexity of their dense relations and permutations. After describing the types, characteristics, and asymmetry of these relations, we draw Social Worlds/Arenas Maps to illustrate the social worlds of the actors and their discursive arenas. Through this step, we captured different forms of collective action related to the planning, implementing, and using of shared micro-mobility services. Finally, our team explored the positions of individual actors in relation to discourses and various elements of the situation based on Positional Maps.

3. Findings

The qualitative data analysis shows the effect of social actors' different needs and interests on the integration of shared micro-mobility services in Olomouc. In line with our first research question, which explored how the local government evaluates and engages with service providers, and our second question concerning providers' experiences, the findings highlight a negotiation process shaped by competing perspectives. On the one hand, some service providers allow citizens (clients) to rent a bike or an e-scooter for money, which seems advantageous for users who wish to enjoy the benefits of these vehicles without the need to own them (Lamberton & Rose 2012). On the other hand, we have representatives of the local administration who are considering how to implement shared mobility services into the city's intermodal transportation system without negatively affecting sustainable urban mobility.

As noted earlier, there are two possible definitions of shared mobility services: (1) a contribution to sustainable urban mobility (Shaheen & Cohen 2015; Bakket et al. 2018); and (2) a threat to local government officials and city residents (Howe 2018; Sun 2018). This duality resonates with the concerns raised in our interviews and illustrates the tension between opportunities and risks identified in the methodological section. It seems evident, given social actors' previous experiences with these services. According to users, shared micro-mobility services are a suitable alternative to individual cars and public transport. They allow for efficient and quick travel, and unlike public transport, their use is not regulated by timetables. For this reason, they can be used at any time – during the day, when it is challenging to get from point A to point B due to traffic jams, and at night, when public transport is temporarily suspended. During this time, users appreciate that shared mobility services are cheaper than taxis. On top of that, they offer a unique user experience.

> "It's a cool thing! Like when I go to a store for a smaller purchase (we live on the outskirts of town) or if I arrive at the train station and want to speed up my trip home. Or we take them and go for a ride. (...) it's quick, affordable, and cheaper than starting the car. Plus, many times, it's faster on the e-scooter than if I were driving somewhere in rush hour."
>
> (female, 22 years old, economically active, user)

> "I don't have to wait for a bus, and I can grab the e-scooter whenever I want. Nothing goes to my place in the evening, but the e-scooter has a parking place there, so I can get home even completely drunk. I used to ride a bike before I started using a scooter – it's faster, more mobile, and has a closer parking space... It just makes it quicker to move from A to B."
>
> (male, 25 years old, economically active, user)

However, the unique user experience is only available to a limited population. Here, our third research question – focusing on the needs of residents who either use or do not use the services – becomes particularly relevant. Among them are people with a smartphone who are media literate and able to move independently. It is less accessible to those without smartphones[1] or those travelling with small children. For this target group, public transport seems more attractive than shared micro-mobility services, despite the disparity in price and quality of the services provided.[2]

Parents with small children specifically prefer to travel by public transport, as it better suits their needs. They also benefit from discounted fares,[3] which saves them money.

> "I don't know how I could transport two children on that. Until recently, we didn't even have a smartphone to scan the QR code and never needed it because we have our own bike. [...] In Olomouc, families with children have an advantage when using public transport. When an adult travels with a child under 3, it's free for both. For children between 3 and 6, the ticket is free of charge for the child."
>
> (male, 40 years old, economically active, non-user)

[1] Citizens can use shared micro-mobility services in Olomouc if they have downloaded the service provider's application on their smartphone. Those without a smart phone cannot rent shared bikes or e-scooters.

[2] According to some participants, it is difficult to travel with public transport in the city of Olomouc due to insufficient frequency and interconnectedness of different lines. The following excerpt from an interview illustrates this: "Well, sometimes in my free time, I could use public transport, but in Olomouc, it's a disaster. Trams and buses are packed with people, and I won't be squeezing into the car with others; I hate it. Moreover, I find it too expensive, given that it doesn't run often enough" (male, 48 years old, economically active, non-user).

[3] Free ride for a) one adult person accompanying a child under three years of age; b) children under six years of age. More information on fares is available at: https://www.dpmo.cz/en/information-for-passengers/tarif-fares-from-1-9-2023/.

Regarding their assessment of shared micro-mobility services, parents with young children are concerned about its effect on road safety (Minli, 2022). They talk about problematic parking of shared vehicles and unsafe driving on the local roads (excessive speed, driving on pavements, and drunken driving).

> "I haven't had a good experience with this. On more than one occasion, people on those scooters rode past us extremely fast. My husband has a colleague who broke her leg on it three times. I don't like when people dump them on the pavement and I have to go around it with a stroller to avoid it."
>
> (female, 30 years old, on a maternal leave, non-user)

In the matter of seeking redress, the parents communicate with local government officials who are responsible for solving (a) problems with parking shared bikes/e-scooters (overcrowded or lacking bike racks, incorrect parking in designated areas due to non-functioning GPS application); (b) inappropriate driving on local roads (unsafe fast driving on sidewalks, non-compliance with traffic rules).[4] The local administration is authorised to propose and implement measures that would contribute to sustainable urban mobility. For this reason, local government representatives organise information and awareness campaigns to raise public awareness of alternative forms of transport, highlighting their relevance to individual car transport and safe road traffic. Furthermore, they give preference to alternative forms of transport over individual car transport[5] and cooperate with private providers of shared micro-mobility services.

As for favouring alternative forms of transport, there is a difference between promoting shared micro-mobility services and public transport. The operation of public transport is financed by the local government from the public budget, in contrast to shared micro-mobility services. The reason for this lies in the definition of shared micro-mobility services as a private business that could potentially reduce public interest in public transport.[6] In comparison, local

4 According to Act No. 361/2000 Coll. on Road Traffic and Amendments to Certain Acts (the Road Traffic Act), scooter drivers are subject to the same rights and obligations as bicycle drivers. Both activities are defined as cycling (Section 57).

5 The public interest in IAD is declining due to the change in parking policy and the rise in fuel prices. On the one hand, the price of parking fees is increasing. On the other hand, free parking spaces are designated for car-share users.

6 The size of the city of Olomouc allows its citizens to easily travel from one side of the city to the other using bicycles and scooters without using public transport services (as is the case in larger cities). In

government officials in larger cities consider shared micro-mobility a service to citizens.

> "Perhaps I haven't mentioned that the approach of local administrations varies in the level of support because historically, Rekola company collaborated with a university or a private company that provided the users with the first 15 minutes of the ride for free. Now, for example, Prague follows a similar strategy – they have selected all the final stops in Prague... and when a user with a year-round pass chooses one of the shared bikes or e-scooters and continues their travel from that stop, the ride fee is covered by the city. For example, Ostrava, Havířov, and Prostějov gave subsidies and organised a competition for bike operators. So the Rekola and Nextbike companies applied, competed on the cost of a 15-minute ride, and approved a sum of 2 million or 3 million CZK to cover those 15 minutes. Therefore, some local administrations consider it a benefit for the residents and contribute more or less."
>
> (responsible politician for Smart City Olomouc)

As illustrated above by the policymaker's statement, there are differences in the extent of support for shared micro-mobility services by the local administration. Their financial support can be found in larger cities, where these services are integrated into the intermodal transportation system. Residents can use combined season tickets for public transport and shared micro-mobility services, "creating a more substantial base for those riding public transport and a lifestyle less dependent on automobiles" (Glotz-Richter 2016, 1301). That, however, is not the case in the city of Olomouc, where no combined season ticket exists. Citizens interested in using both services must pay fares to two different providers separately. That results in reduced public interest in using them equally. Additionally, those who would appreciate combining all modes of transport (including individual car transportation) lack available parking lots on the city outskirts – a place where they could park their car before choosing a more sustainable mode of transport. This applies particularly to visitors who commute to the city from a greater distance.

Since visitors do not have allocated parking lots, they park their cars in free-of-charge zones on the city's outskirts or suburbs, where parking capacity

this case, if people prefer using shared micro-mobility services, it means increasing public transport expenditure from the city budget.

is limited. Those places are primarily reserved for residents who have grown dissatisfied with the parking policy, as they face ongoing troubles with parking due to visitors taking over their designated parking lots. It is in the interest of those residents that local officials are gradually changing parking policies in the city (https://parkovani.olomouc.eu/) and expanding paid parking zones. Alongside this, they are addressing the issue of overcrowded bike racks, which were initially intended for parking citizens' bikes. To maintain the original intention, the local representatives have agreed with the providers of shared micro-mobility services on the following measures: (a) service users can use half the capacity of the city bike racks; (b) service providers will improve the monitoring of shared bike/e-scooters parking; (c) furthermore, they will set up dockless stations for parking shared vehicles at their own expense.

Those measures were established by informal agreement between representatives of the local administration and private service providers. Therefore, they are the product of a negotiation process that emerged from a mutual consensus of two interest groups. This directly reflects our methodological focus on assessing the opportunities and limits of public–private cooperation in sustainable urban mobility. It is also worth noting that one group holds a more powerful position than the other – local government officials significantly regulate shared micro-mobility services, despite their range of action being limited by the current legislative framework. It does not allow, for example, regulating the number of operators of shared micro-mobility services and the scope of their service, which concerns local authorities across the Czech Republic.

> "... now in March 2022, I received information that in Hradec Králové, they introduced a local fee for special use of public space. They wanted to charge 30 CZK [1.2 EUR] per square meter from the operators of e-scooters for dockless parking stations. Surprisingly, the ministry didn't shoot it down. They just said that the fee must be a maximum of 10 CZK [0.4 EUR]. I know they agreed in Hradec to approve 3 CZK [0.1 EUR]. It is the first city that has broken the legislative barrier with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, so there is an idea that in case the communication with the operators stops working, we have an opportunity to draw inspiration from Hradec and at least do something."
>
> (responsible politician for Smart City Olomouc)

The policymaker believes it is essential for representatives of the local administration to have a law allowing them to regulate shared micro-mobility services

if informal cooperation with providers begins to stagnate. Referring to previous negative experiences with implementing that service, he positively evaluates the measures intended to eliminate overcrowded public spaces through shared micro-mobility services. Although potentially perceived as a powerful tool, introducing a local fee for the special use of public space is a potential solution to the existing problems.

As far as the providers are concerned, they would appreciate it if the professional community and the general public would stop negatively evaluating shared micro-mobility services as a totality. Instead, they suggest focusing on what and who is causing the negative perception of these services. Users ride the e-scooters on sidewalks, where there is an insufficient network of cycle paths. Therefore, they break the road traffic laws due to concerns for their safety.

> "Well, it depends on where you are coming from. Where there are cycle paths, I ride on cycle paths. If there is no cycle path, I ride on the pavement. I don't dare ride on the road. The cycle paths are not everywhere in the city. And the worst thing is that there are cobblestones in the city center, so it's impossible to ride then."
>
> (male, 27 years old, university student, user)

Some users also endanger road safety by riding shared bikes/e-scooters at excessive speed, or inebriated. In doing so, they put themselves and others at risk of traffic accidents. Last but not least, the vandals cast a bad light on shared micro-mobility services (Sun 2018) by tampering with e-scooters. Because they are lighter than bikes, we often see them dumped on the pavement, around cultural monuments and rivers. Those users whose ride is regulated by service operators are less likely to commit such acts. They can only start and end their ride by reaching the dock(less) station. They are charged for a started ride until the shared vehicle is returned and parked correctly. Additionally, their driving and speed may be monitored in selected areas of the city (such as historical parts of the city, parks, and the grounds of the University Hospital), where there is an increased risk of traffic accidents. To this end, intelligent technologies provide information on rides and contribute to proper parking and improved road safety.

That is how service providers approach the integration of shared micro-mobility service into the intermodal transportation system of the city. In addition, as mentioned by our participant, they aim to enhance cooperation with local government officials when evaluating the opportunities and limitations

of collaboration between the public and private sectors in sustainable urban mobility. In his words, the potential of cooperation is not sufficiently exploited. The exchange of experiences usually occurs once a year at a meeting primarily focused on parking policy. Less is said about the possibilities of improving infrastructure and building new dock(less) stations.

Taken together, these findings show how different interest groups – city residents (both users and non-users of shared micro-mobility services), providers, and policymakers – interpret and negotiate the role of shared micro-mobility in Olomouc. Among non-users, families with small children and older residents with discounted fares often find public transport more suitable, particularly when limited by the absence of a smartphone or reduced mobility. In contrast, users value flexibility, affordability, and the unique experience of shared bikes and e-scooters. By linking the perspectives of these actors back to our research questions, the analysis demonstrates both the opportunities and the limits of public–private cooperation in sustainable urban mobility.

The opportunities lie above all in the potential to diversify transport modes, reduce dependence on private cars, and create synergies between public transport and shared micro-mobility through joint ticketing systems or improved parking facilities. At the same time, the limits become visible in the uneven accessibility of these services, their problematic regulation, and the occasional conflicts between providers, users, and non-users. Overcoming these barriers requires more than informal agreements: it calls for clear legislative frameworks enabling municipalities to regulate providers, infrastructure investments that ensure safe and inclusive use, and continuous dialogue among stakeholders. If these steps are taken, shared micro-mobility can move from being perceived as a disruptive private business to becoming a complementary component of a sustainable intermodal transport system.

4. Conclusion

This paper partially contributes to the ongoing discussion of shared micro-mobility and its contribution to sustainable urban mobility (Hamman & Güldenberg 2018; Sun 2018; Minli 2022). It discusses the reasons behind the failure to integrate shared micro-mobility services into the city‘s intermodal transportation system and creates space for improving the current situation.

The example of Olomouc shows the role of the interests of various social actors, the city’s size, and the absence of a law regulating shared micro-mobility

services in the process. First and foremost, local government representatives use limited support for shared micro-mobility services to calm traffic. Instead, they prioritise information and awareness campaigns aimed at reducing individual car use and increasing interest in alternative transport. In addition, they financially contribute to public transport operations, which, unlike shared micro-mobility services, is not a subject of private business and is accessible to a broader range of citizens (families with children, older people, and people with disabilities). Its use is not dependent on intelligent technologies, nor is it associated with the increased risk of traffic accidents and disorganised parking found in shared micro-mobility services (Minli 2022). Those reasons are mentioned by local administration representatives when seeking to regulate these services by law. Another reason is the city's size, which allows people to easily travel from one side of the city to another by public transport or in shared vehicles. As a result, shared micro-mobility services are caught in a conflict of interests; local representatives consider them direct competition with public transport, rather than a service to citizens that can coexist with it. In contrast, in larger cities, they are widely used for the first and last mile (DeMaio 2009).

Users and operators support integrating shared micro-mobility services into the city's intermodal transportation system. According to users, it is a suitable alternative to individual car transport, public transport, and taxis. Some use shared bike/e-scooters because they provide greater convenience and time savings (Bakker et al. 2018). Others use it, especially in the evening, as a substitute for taxis when public transport services are temporarily unavailable. These services thus combine clear benefits – such as cost savings and flexibility – with notable risks, including accidents caused by speeding, riding on the pavement, or usage under the influence of alcohol.

Consequently, the operators face criticism, which they try to cope with by improving the quality of shared micro-mobility services and contributing to their regulation (limiting driving speed in selected locations and penalising users). In addition, they are willing to discuss possibilities for cooperation with local government officials, as their potential is currently insufficiently exploited. The mutual exchange of experience usually occurs once a year at a meeting where parking policy is primarily discussed. Other issues are given less attention, although the discussion could significantly contribute to sustainable urban mobility. The issues mainly concern improving infrastructure, which is not sufficiently interconnected in the historical city centre. This results in driving on pavement, which endangers the safety of pedestrians. It also leaves

room for discussion of (1) the construction of parking lots and new dock(less) stations, (2) increasing the inclusiveness of provided services (Kjaerup et al. 2021), (3) the introduction of promotional activities to increase public interest in equal use of public transport and shared micro-mobility services, and (4) the introduction of combined fares.

Those findings are based on qualitative research conducted in a specific socio-cultural context, with the participation of 13 communication partners. In this respect, the validity of its accounts is limited. On the other hand, the findings point to prevalent problems arising from the implementation of shared micro-mobility services. Therefore, it is natural to ask what we can do for policymakers to change their approach to supporting shared micro-mobility services. One option is to increase the legal regulation of shared micro-mobility services (e.g. by introducing a local fee for the special use of public spaces). Another option is to improve the public-private sector cooperation on sustainable urban mobility. Last but not least, we can seek to weaken the unequal power position of stakeholders.

In this regard, our findings suggest several concrete recommendations. For policymakers, the priority should be to establish a clearer legal framework enabling municipalities to regulate providers not only through informal agreements but also through enforceable measures. At the same time, cities could pilot combined ticketing systems that connect public transport with shared micro-mobility services, which would mitigate the perception of competition and instead frame them as complementary. Investment in infrastructure – such as safer cycle paths, dock(less) stations, and parking facilities on the city outskirts – would improve safety and accessibility for both users and non-users. For providers, the key challenge lies in increasing inclusiveness by developing services accessible to families with children, older people, and those without smartphones. Moreover, closer and more regular dialogue with local government officials could transform the current ad hoc cooperation into a more strategic partnership.

Overall, the analysis highlights both the opportunities (diversification of urban mobility, reduction of car dependence, innovative public–private partnerships) and the limits (uneven accessibility, insufficient regulation, conflicts of interest) of shared micro-mobility in medium-sized cities. Overcoming these barriers requires coordinated action: legislative reform, infrastructure investment, and inclusive service design. If addressed, these measures would not only mitigate existing tensions but also strengthen the perception of shared

micro-mobility as a complementary, rather than competing, mode of transport. In this way, shared micro-mobility can gradually move from being regarded as a disruptive business model towards becoming an integrated and equitable component of sustainable urban transport.

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THE URBAN QUILOMBO OF CRACOLÂNDIA

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Abstract: ***This text offers a political reading of the Cracolândia neighborhood in São Paulo, Brazil. As one of the largest areas of drug trafficking and consumption in the world, this urban area is marked by immense violence, driven by the state's actions against it and then daily incorporated within it. The aim is to contextualize this violence within the broader dynamics of governance in the Brazilian state, particularly through the lens of race. Following the insights of anthropologist Amanda Amparo, this paper proposes expanding the concept of Cracolândia as an Urban Quilombo: a technique through which a Black population seeks to escape the death policies imposed by a racist power structure. Compared with Amparo's work, this article emphasizes the political – both practical and symbolic – importance of Cracolândia's spatial location, not in a peripheral area or favela, but in the very heart of the city.***

Keywords: ***Cracolândia; Brazil; Violence; Race; Quilombo; City centre***

a. Introduction

This contribution moves from an ethnographic survey[1] carried out in the Cracolândia neighborhood,[2] "the land of crack" in São Paulo, Brazil.

Located in the heart of the metropolis, the area is described by the media as a large drug trafficking and consumption hub, inhabited by thousands of homeless people and traversed daily by just as many *usuarios* ("consumers"),[3] most of whom sustain themselves by collecting and recycling street waste, as well as through a vast variety of informal, more or less legal activities. My attempt will also be to show that it is much more than this.

[1] The survey was conducted in three distinct periods of one mount each, in March and December of 2023, and in November of 2024.

Cracolândia is barricaded in the heart of São Paulo, perceived by the authorithies and part of the population like an itchy and highly visible fungus that refuses to retreat. In the teeming center of Brazil's main metropolis, arriving from the city's best-known *avenidas*, some streets begin to empty out and stores become less frequent; then suddenly, life explodes again, but in a vastly different form from what was left just a few blocks before. The bodies crowd together, voices rise again, drawing closer to the *fluxos*. A *fluxo* ("flow") is a gathering of people in open spaces, where up to a thousand individuals can congregate at intersections or squares around makeshift stalls. The core of this aggregation is undoubtedly the drug market and immediate on-site consumption, but around this activity, many others flourish: the manufacture and sale of *cachimbos* ("pipes"),[4] cigarette smuggling, the trading of second-hand clothing, as well as prostitution, dance, capoeira, *churrascos* ("barbecues"), and all kinds of social interactions, including those among users, activists, dealers, social workers, and not least, those with the police forces.

The area appears as an environment of extreme degradation, in which people in a condition of enormous physical and psychological distress wander among piles of all sorts of garbage, and in which atrocities are committed every day.[5] Violence is introduced daily by the police and reproduced by organized

It included 20 semi-structured interviews with neighborhood *usuarios* (Conducted in portugues). The composition of the interviewees reflects the demographic reality of the members of this social context, the vast majority of whom are young Black men. However, the voices of a few women are also present. All interviews were conducted on-site and involved only substance users and homeless people. This arbitrary choice is justified by the intention to give voice to those who are least heard, yet who truly embody Cracolândia. Their words reveal all the contradictions of this space, often contradicting each other or highlighting the fluidity of opinions, making explicit the ineffability of the *Fluxo*. The interviews were conducted with ample room for improvisation and are therefore often disorganized. Some quotes were extracted from even more informal conversations held during the everyday life of Cracolândia.

Alongside the voices of the *Fluxo*'s inhabitants appear, in contrast, those of certain members of São Paulo's upper bourgeoisie—individuals who hosted me during my fieldwork in other neigborhoods, and with whom I held spontaneous conversations on the subject of the research. My ethnographic work thus combines a view of the *Fluxo* with a view of São Paulo's conservative bourgeoisie

2 The name was originally coined by the media, first appearing in the conservative newspaper Estadão de São Paulo in 1995. Today, however, the term has entered the city's common usage, being used by all of its residents and also being widely claimed by the neighborhood community itself.

3 The term is widely used in the neighborhood.

4 In this case made of iron, used to consume crack. The *cachimbeiros* make them using salvaged materials, such as old antennas.

5 In order to theoretically frame the context of Cracolândia in the sense proposed here, a rich bibliography, produced not only in Brazil, can be useful. Many authors studied contexts with some degree of similarity (Ayuero, Bourgois, Scheper-Hughes 2015; Biehl 2005; Bourgois 2005 and 2009); While

crime and by the very inhabitants of the "fluxo," trapped in its grasp and exposed to it due to material necessities.

The peculiarity of Cracolândia, as a neighborhood of degradation, drugs, and violence, is it's location, not only in the center of the city, as mentioned above, but even in what was once São Paulo's most prestigious area. Even today, the derelict houses tell the story of Brazil's landowning elite, whose protagonists at the beginning of the last century wanted to build their mansions near the city's most important stations, still present today, where coffee shipments from their plantations arrived. Since then, the neighborhood has changed several times, increasingly deteriorating while also establishing itself as one of the most vital and creative areas in São Paulo. The Boca do Lixo[6] was once a zone of prostitution and underground cinema, of independent filmmaking and gambling; in the years of the fascist dictatorship, it was the refuge of underground, criminal and criminalized São Paulo. The traces of this ambivalent history are still evident in the everyday life of Cracolândia, as urban elites increasingly seek to reappropriate this central, green, and well-connected space.

Today, the area has outgrown the crack dimension; many of its streets host modest commercial activities and some buildings are home to the city's lower class, creating a hotly contested territoriality with the members of the "Fluxo", the component of the neighborhood involved in drug use. As mentioned, this is how we define those groupings of hundreds of *usuarios*, which constitute a scenario difficult to imagine, affecting all five senses, characterized by shocking violence and thrilling solidarity. But by metonymy, the word *Fluxo* has come to mean everyone who is part of it, namely the community of *usuarios* in Cracolândia, homeless people from the Fluxo itself who flood the streets of all the neighborhood, occupying them day and night.

Fluxo is not only a place of horrors and abuse. Over the years, this community has constituted a strongly political dimension, continuously claimed. Today, Cracolândia is traversed by dozens of collectives and hosts countless cultural, political, artistic, and social initiatives produced from below, by both "fluxo" members and outsiders. However, one must also acknowledge the ferocity of this space, which, with its constant presence, leaves no room for illusions. The physical and social tolls of life in the "fluxo" are starkly visible. Many individuals

many other have analyzed the forme of governance that will emerge here (Farmer 1997; Fassin 2014; Sassen 2014; Scheper-Hughes 1993, Wacquant 2016).

[6] The old name of the neighborhood, still widely in use today.

live with the long-term consequences of state violence, precarious health conditions, and structural abandonment.

This is an extremely complex environment in which an infinite number of themes can be observed. The aim of this paper is to analyze, through an ethnographic lens, the relationship between this specific territory and political violence. It seeks to show how this space, though the product of a structural violence sedimented over time and reactivated daily, paradoxically represents a means of escaping that same structural violence and rejecting it. The inspiration for such reflections is provided by an idea from the anthropologist Amanda Amparo (Amparo, *Sociabilidades Negras* 2021), who, revitalizing a key concept of Black Brazilian politics, proposed interpreting Cracolândia as an "urban Quilombo" – the only possible refuge for the city's most marginalized, almost always Black, individuals. This work will attempt to take Amparo's analysis a step further by highlighting, from a political perspective, the importance of the spatial location of this particular Quilombo – right at the center of the metropolis. This reveals an extremely contradictory spatiality: on the one hand, it is daily subjected to the deadly rationality of the Brazilian state, introduced through the brutality of law enforcement, deploying what many authors define as a genocidal mechanism (Wermuth, Marcht, and de Mello, *Necropolitica*); yet on the other hand, it also represents an escape from that rationality through the formation of a resilient and solidaristic community, and through the occupation of the city's central space. Presenting themselves in the city center, claiming the right to occupy it, means escaping the most grotesque brutality imposed by the state in the peripheries and favelas; it means drawing from the metropolis's immense wealth, whether legally or not; and it means building a network of solidarity and resistance that would be difficult to replicate elsewhere. Thus, Cracolândia appears as a place where the gears of Brazil's racist and murderous power grind against a collective force asserting its right to exist – transforming that existence into resistence.

At the core of this interpretation is the conviction that Cracolândia is a product of Brazil's structural inequalities. The inhabitants of the "fluxo" have ended up there due to the lack of opportunities that afflicts Brazil's poor, very often Black, population; and also due to the political violence they have been subjected to since birth.

b. The politics of death in Brazil

To sketch the contours of the structural violence that shapes Cracolândia from the outside, and which it attempts to resist on a daily basis, the category of the "politics of death" – coined by Achille Mbembe (Mbembe, *Necropolitcs*) in the wake of Michel Foucault (Foucault, *History of Sexuality 1: The Will to Knowledge*) – is useful. The aim in this case is to indicate how Brazilian power relates to its subordinate and racialized territories, attempting to transform them into "death worlds," places of exclusion and confinement where a segment of the population can be left to die or be actively killed.

To look at the structural violence we are talking about, the lens that seems most appropriate is that of racism, in a space where, compared to the 40 percent of the city average, the Black population reaches 90 percent. To justify why Cracolândia is an urban Quilombo installed in the center of São Paulo, a garrison of existence and resistance for overwhelmingly Black people who take refuge there to survive, it will thus be necessary to keep in mind the theme of the genocide of the Afro-descendant population in Brazil, recalling how it has been engaged for centuries against the grasp of a necropolitical and tanatopolitical state[7] from which, in Cracolândia, it relentlessly *escapes*.

On average, 7.5 homicides per day.[8] That is the number of Black people killed by the police in Brazil in 2023, the most recent year for which official sources exist at the time of writing. That's 2,782 per year. Over 92% of the total victims died at the hands of law enforcement.[9] These figures not only show the scale of brutality, but, when placed in a temporal analysis, they also highlight the worsening of the situation in recent years. In 2019, the percentage of Black people among police victims was 75%,[10] and between 2008 and 2018, the number of homicides of Black people in the country had already increased by 11.5%.[11]

7 Following the publication of *Necropolitics*, the term *tanatopolitics* was introduced to denote policies that *kill*, while *necropolitics* continued to denote those that *let people die*. See, in this regard, Agamben (1995) and (Esposito 2004).

8 https://observatorioseguranca.com.br/pele-alvo-a-cada-24-horas-sete-pessoas-foram-mortas/

9 Ibidem.

10 https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-estado/2020/07/15/negros-sao-75-dos-mortos-pela-policia-no-brasil-aponta-relatorio.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com

11 www.riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/brazil/life-brazil/homicide-of-blacks-grows-11-5-percent-in-11-years-others-drop-13-percent/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

In a country marked by extreme police violence, the State of São Paulo is one of the very few states in Brazil to have recorded a decrease in this type of violence in recent years; in 2022, 477 murders perpetrated directly by the state were recorded – marking the lowest figure since 2017.[12] This decrease followed the introduction of bodycams on officers' uniforms. This is probably why the newly elected far-right governor, Tarcísio, was quick to declare his intent to abolish them, considering them to be getting "in the way of police officers' work", which egregiously reveals what such "work" entails.

It took Governor Tarcísio just one year to make his impact felt in the state: Between 2023 and 2024, police killings increased by 65%, reaching 835 victims – one every 10 hours.[13] Of these victims, 65% were Black,[14] in a state where only 30% of the population is Black. Under Tarcísio's governorship, deaths of Black people at the hands of the police have increased by 85%.[15]

It is important to grasp the organic nature of this system of death, which does not so much respond to a desire to eliminate black people *tout court*, but rather to a set of management practices of this population that have been consolidated over time, a rationality that has been structured by considering this group of people fundamentally eliminable. Gabriel Andrade da Silva aptly defines this when he writes: "The deaths are an institutional project; without this declared project there would be no genocide. To deny this is to disregard the functioning of the state from the abolition of slavery" (Da Silva, *Genocidio do negro*, 48).

Institutionality lies in the sedimentation of this political practice. Brazil's racist state has inherited and developed a deadly governmentality of its Black population, within which killing is a widely practicable option. The Black person represents a public enemy in Brazil, identified with the criminals, bandits, and drug traffickers. Given the historical desire of Brazilian elites to integrate into Western countries, to see themselves recognized as representatives of the same modernity as Europeans or Americans, it was necessary to perform the operation that Michel Foucault had brilliantly defined, writing:

12 https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-brasil/2025/01/15/letalidade-da-policia-militar-paulista-aumentou-em-2024.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com

13 Ibidem.

14 www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2024/10/mortes-pela-policia-de-sp-crescem-78-em-2024-2-de-cada-3-vitimas-e-negra.shtml?utm_source=chatgpt.com

15 Ibid.

> How could power exercise its highest prerogatives by putting people to death, when its main role was to ensure, sustain, and multiply life, to put this life in order? For such a power, execution was at the same time a limit, a scandal, and a contradiction. Hence capital punishment could not be maintained except by invoking less the enormity of the crime itself than the monstrosity of the criminal, his incorrigibility, and the safeguard of society. One had the right to kill those who represented a kind of biological danger to others. (Foucault, *History of Sexuality 1: The Will to Knowledge*, 138).

By demonizing the criminal, one refuses to recognize a system that roots its legitimacy in the coffee and cocoa plantations of the 16th through 19th centuries, where the sovereign right to kill is fully recognized, and where, in fact, the possibility of killing guarantees the perpetuation of order. One does not grasp the political context of Brazil, and of São Paulo, if one does not understand how the mentality that characterizes much of the country's elite today has its roots in Brazil's colonial and slaveholding history. Many wealthy people live in constant fear of the black and impoverished population, perceived as aggressive and untamable; yet they remain de facto opposed to any public policy that improves the conditions of these subalterns (Alves 2018). This may seem contradictory only if one does not see that, in their view, it is the police and justice who must keep these undesirable "wretches" at bay, through incarceration and preventive force, through death if necessary. That is why, according to Tarcisio, the *bodycams*, which seem to have so dramatically decreased the army's killings, "get in the way of the officers' work." The army is engaged in a constant war against an internal enemy perceived as dangerous. Little matter that thousands of innocent lives are lost in the process. As Achille Mbembe points out, racialization is the demarcation within which killing becones perceived as acceptable.

We thus come to another key point in understanding how the everyday life of Cracolândia can be read as a rejection, by the *usuarios*, of such racist policies, namely the spatial dimension on which the described system of death rests: the *favela*. The setting for this violence is often the informal neighborhoods located on the margins and in the less visible areas of Brazilian metropolises. These spaces reflect the ongoing structural exclusion of Black communities following the abolition of slavery, representing vibrant and diverse social realities that contrast this marginalization. The shacks made of bricks and sheet metal were built by marginalized populations in the most inhospitable urban areas, often as a result of mid-20th-century rural-urban migration and displacement,

becoming zones of exclusion for Afro-descendant communities. It is here that police operations leave thousands of bodies on the ground, victims of simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Thousands of homicides occur because of stray bullets, but many more are instead due to the state of exception that characterizes these territories. With the favela being a place of crime, and criminals being the public enemy of Brazil, it is necessary to act within it with the utmost firmness. This is the face of Brazilian territorial exclusion, worlds of death based on a state of exception where the right to kill is legally sanctioned.[16]

What I seek to argue here is that Cracolândia is itself a technique, conscious or unconscious, for escaping the death-dispensing apparatus of the Brazilian state[17] – a necrostate, as it has been called by the previously cited scholars. Not, of course, in its hyper-consumption of crack, but in doing it together and doing it in the center of the town. Given the combination of exclusion and death in Brazil, the act of coalescing into a community and establishing oneself in the heart of the country's economic capital to this day represents the salvation for these subaltern and marginalized people. Unsurprisingly, the intent of state power has for years been to expel and disperse them.[18]

This work certainly does not intend to forget how death is also part of Cracolândia, being discernible everywhere in the territory on a par with violence, exclusion, and misery. The Fluxo clearly remains the target of terrible violence on the part of law enforcement, and extreme forms of violence generated by exclusion exist within the "usuarios" as well. However, it is necessary to understand what could happen if, as many wish, we were to "put an end to Cracolândia." That is, if this portion of the city were to be cleared and "sanitized" from its users and they were to be pushed back and dispersed into some peripheries, reducing them to invisibility. Brazil's urban margins are the scene of a systematic massacre against subaltern and undesirable individuals, where death takes the form of poverty or police violence, entering the daily

16 To give just one example, in 2019 the governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro posted videos on social media in which he participated in an operation aboard a military helicopter in the favela of Angra dos Reis; he can be seen shouting "let's end crime in Angra dos Reis!" Machine gunfire was fired from the helicopter at a church.

17 For discussions on the mobile, fluid, and evasive character of the *fluxo*, see Frúgoli Jr. and Cavalcanti's (2012) concept of *"territorialidades itinerantes"* in their study of Cracolândias. Additionally, Rui (2012) demonstrates how Cracolândia is a survival strategy for those people whose bodies are rejected by the metropoly

18 For a detailed analysis of the various forms of governance operating in Cracolândia, see the very recent work of Richmond and Magri (2025)

lives of people. Although there is no intention here to romanticize Cracolândia, where the drama of thousands of people unfolds every day, it is fundamental to contextualize this territory and this community within a system of violence that is hard to imagine. In the streets of the neighborhood, law enforcement is not allowed to engage in practices that are instead commonplace in other territories; for example, here the police shoot with rubber bullets and not metal ones, and military operations are accompanied by the pervasive presence of collectives and activists who monitor the agents' actions. The Brazilian state wages a veritable civil war against a section of its population, exemplified by the constitutional role of the military, which is not to protect national borders but to preserve "internal order." The disorder is personified by the figure of the criminal, or *bandit*, toward whom the state's posture is clear; "*a good bandit is a dead bandit*", politicians often repeat. Who more than the user of Cracolândia embodies the criminal? Illegal by definition, drug addict, Black, homeless, vagabond, and thief. During the field research, I conducted many interviews in the salons of the white, conservative upper middle class of other neigborhoods, whose attitudes toward Fluxo people left no room for interpretation.

Sara: *With COVID, we hoped that those disgusting people from Cracolândia would all die. But God knows why he didn't want that. They need to be shot and the problem solved.*

Teresa: *We need to protect the shopkeepers by any means, but with these "human rights," nothing can be done!*

In short, in Cracolândia, people die, they die a lot but less than elsewhere, and above all, less than some would want. Cracolândia itself is certainly what Mbembe would have called a death-world, a space in which death is a constant presence; however, the necropolitical apparatus fails to fully unfold in this territory, as it is challenged by a series of forces that resist it.

c. Cracolândia Quilombo

Eduardo: *The vast majority of these people come from a devastated life story. The vast majority, brother, I think 80 to 85 percent, already come from a history of segregation. They are the excluded, the migrants, the prostitutes, the trans women, those who were born and raised on the streets. This is the great*

magic of the Fluxo – it welcomes those who are alike. This is a place where the alike recognize each other, without prejudice. People walk around barefoot, with destroyed feet, people who are filthy, who haven't slept for days – you get me? It's the place where the excluded become included. Look at that Black man who just got his water – now he's sleeping peacefully *[emphasizing the word] here with us. Where else could he sleep so peacefully in the middle of the street? Only here.*

[...] *Racism is the reality of this country, we are in a racist reality. Period. Everything is racist. Racism is implicit in the "security issue," it is imminent. The racism of the powerful. I can't go into that bar alone. But if I go there with you, the doors open. That is racism. And then there is the racism that we suffer as Fluxo residents, which is different again. Here in Boca we go barefoot, we are the barefoot race. This already highlights who is from the Fluxo and who is not. Racism is not only based on skin color, but also on clothing color, nail color, it is a racism that goes beyond race, based on social stratification.*

[...] *No really, brother, you have to demistify crack. Crack doesn't encompass the whole thing, understand? This is the place where the last ones recognize each other, it's the place of the excluded. Crack is not the guiding force here; this is the place where the prostitutes come, the abandoned, the segregated. It is a refuge, I think there is no other place like this in the world. Did you see what happened in the five minutes we were sitting here?* (The interview took place in a square in the neighborhood, crowded with *usuarios* engaged in all sorts of activities, frequently interrupting our conversation for various reasons).

Roberta: *Cracolândia is a neighborhood with all kinds of people, not just the "trash" that most people think, working people, residents. For me it is a family, there are fights and everything but we are always united. We are good people, there are also bad people, it is true, but not only!*

The media tells a lot of lies! There are good people here! There is solidarity! I have many good friends in the Fluxo, we chat, I like it. There are people I like, people I talk to – there's all sorts of folks, and if you stay for a few days, you'll see that there are good people here.

Rodrigo: *In this neighborhood, people who have nothing can be together, look at this little group* [pointing to six or seven usuarios huddled together on the ground] *– they wouldn't be like this anywhere else. It's a very ugly place because Brazil is a very ugly place. But at least here, we are together. Only those who have never faced the possibility of ending up like this don't understand it.*

Joao: *On the street we are a family, on the street we are all together.*

[Two hours later, after a *usuarios* had attempted to steal his drum and he had chased the thief inside the Fluxo to beat him up.] *Everyone here is shit! We need the PCC*[19] *to kill all these shitty thieves!*

Maria: [In the Fluxo] *What are you doing? Put your backpack in front of your belly and your cell phone in your underpants! People here suck, they're all shit thieves, they'd steal your sister – I should know, my boyfriend is a thief. I'll take care of you, I'm your godmother in the Fluxo.* [Two hours later] *Do you like it here? We are a big black family, we love each other, we are together.*

Tania: *I'm very grateful because São Paulo has a mother's heart – São Paulo is not like any other city. Cracolândia is not a family; it's different. Because I left my family when I was ten due to huge conflicts. Not everyone in my family accepted my gender transition. My father was unemployed, my brother was a cop – they didn't accept that I was a woman. My mother kicked me out of the house, I left home, thank God, because first, there is God, and then all the Orixás, since I follow Candomblé. I help everyone I can. I went to live with my biological father in Santos in a small apartment for five months, then I left because I never respected him as a father. Now I'm happy. I've had many chances to smoke crack – since I've only been in relationships with people who use it – but I never have. But I can't say I never will – the only one who knows the future is God. All my friends, my street family, are crack users. But I don't judge them. I help whoever I can help. I can't tell you I'll never smoke it. I'm 29 now – who knows?*

"Do you live on the streets?"

Yes. I am a person in a socially vulnerable situation, but only until Thursday! [Laughing] *Thursday I get a subsidy and I will rent a small hotel room. Here I have opportunities ... From lixo* [garbage] *... I will go up to luxo* [luxury], *I have faith. When I'll have a home, even if I don't have much food – at least rice, beans, and a fried egg – whenever I can help, I do. I cook and bring food to my friends on the street. If I really can't help, at least I try not to get in the way.*

[19] Primeiro Comando da Capital is the criminal organization that controls the crack trade in São Paulo and that, until a few years ago, exercised widespread control over the area — a control that has now been significantly scaled back

Wilson*: I've never lost my pride. Never. Fifteen years wandering, since I left my family. And I had a family, a house, a motorcycle, a workshop. Here, I have my family too – another family.*

Carlos: *We build our street family – he is my brother-in-law, she is my spouse, he is a dad, that one is a brother. Day by day, we're in this struggle together, all day long – whenever we need each other. For example, when I got run over and hurt my foot, everyone took care of me – whatever I needed. If I was hungry, whatever. You get it? They give me strength, because that's how it is; each one gives strength to the other, each one is there for the others, like a real family.*

Wilson: *I don't want to lie to you, here people also screw each other, cheat each other, stab each other.*

Carlos: *Of course, it is logical.*

Quilombo represents a concept of great importance in contemporary Brazilian culture. Historically, the term refers to a specific social and political formation that emerged during the centuries of Portuguese slavery. However, in the twentieth century, the concept took on a performative function within the Black movement, evolving into a powerful political tool – besides continuing to exist as territories of Black resistance.

Historically, since the 16th century, the Quilombo was a community of self-liberated enslaved people who sought refuge in the forests to escape the plantation system. Until the abolition of slavery in 1888, Quilombos multiplied, particularly in the northeast of Brazil, taking on different forms – some more hierarchical, some in direct conflict with colonial society, while others remained separate from it. They are thus Afrodescendant emancipation communities in which the freedom of the Black population is restored, the slave-based economic system is rejected, and African religious forms and mother tongues are recovered.

Throughout the 20th century, various authors, known as *quilombolas*, engaged with the Quilombo theme, reinterpreting and updating it in different ways. Quilombos have been seen as utopian communities, survival refuges, spaces of resistance, and sites of alternative citizenship where people can create new forms of community. What unites these perspectives is the effort to construct a Black history of Brazil – one that highlights the country's African

roots and emphasizes the agency of enslaved populations. For the Black movement, the Quilombo and *quilombagem* (the practice of forming Quilombos) are central both in interpreting Brazilian history and as political instruments. *Quilombismo* preserves and rehabilitates Afro-Brazilian memory; exalts African agency in the country's history; promotes emancipation, separatism, and Black communitarianism; proposes a historical and present alternative to the exploitation of former slaves; and offers the image of a refuge for the exploited masses. If *Quilombismo* is a lens through which to read and reevaluate some aspects of Brazilian contemporaneity, from favelas to candomblé brotherhoods, and if some places even present themselves as Quilombos *tout court*, proposing themselves as political spaces *of* and *for* black communities, we will therefore attempt to read Cracolândia as a contemporary urban Quilombo.

In the case of Cracolândia and Fluxo, it will have already seemed obvious that the utopian scope of *quilombagem* needs to be lightened to apply the concept to this context. Yet one can also pick up on resonances that are at once suggestive and prolific.

We certainly cannot claim that, for all intents and purposes, Cracolândia represents a utopia, nor that it is a place of total emancipation or an oasis of freedom. The self-destructive nature of addiction and the deep socioeconomic misery prevent it from being a coherent and functional alternative to Brazil's exploitative system. There are certainly traces of communalism and non-hierarchical solidarity in the Fluxo, but they cannot be generalized to a systemic level of functioning. That said, even though it is crucial to avoid romanticizing a space of profound violence and injustice, how can we deny that the *Fluxo*, in many ways, embodies a form of *quilombagem* – a radically Black community, a refuge for bodies otherwise subjected to Brazil's racist thanatopolitics, a claim to the right to a space of one's own, and a dysfunctional escape from systemic racism?

Amanda Amparo, a Brazilian and Black anthropologist, has been studying São Paulo's homeless population since her brother started living on the streets – eventually losing his life, some years later, as a result of structural violence. She has looked at Cracolândia from the perspective of race, reinterpreting the theoretical proposition of various *quilombolas* and producing what to date is perhaps the most radical academic look at this community. In her master's thesis *Sociabilidades Negras e a Guerra às Drogas: Olhares Sobre o Território da "cracolândia"* (Amparo, *Sociabilidades Negras e a Guerra às Drogas*, 2021), she proposes reading Cracolândia as an urban Quilombo and recognizing in the Black collective body that occupies the neighborhood's streets an

aquilombamento in its own right. To grasp the theoretical and political scope of this proposal, it is crucial to keep in mind the notion of Black genocide, recalling how the Brazilian Black population is subject to various forms of tanatopolitics and necropolitics, of removal from public space through violent death or through segregation in other spaces, such as prisons. From this perspective, to *exist* is to *resist*, and to exist together is a political project. It is worth quoting a passage from Amparo:

> We can think of "Cracolândia" as a refuge for Black people who, within the city, have nowhere else to go. In this sense, it would not be an exaggeration to say that "Cracolândia" functions as an urban Quilombo. The intention of this conceptualization is not to romanticize or over-qualify this space but rather to highlight how a territory becomes defined by the relationships formed within it [...]. The vulnerability of Black bodies in the metropolis allows us to understand why, for some, "Cracolândia" is the only place where existence is possible. The desire to exist is inherent to every individual, but in some cases, existence itself becomes an act of resistance. [...] Resistance to exclusion, fear, loneliness, hunger, cold, and death. I interpret this territory as a community that in a sense establishes itself as a space of total alterity within the city. [...] The Quilombo can be seen as the historical tendency of Black people to preserve themselves, as a social settlement and organizational structure that creates a new internal order. The constant survival strategies inside "Cracolândia" are a response to systematic persecution. Therefore, all mechanisms of defense function to protect a group at risk. When one body of this group is at risk, all others are as well, and therefore every movement of these bodies, even when individual, defines the possibility of the entire group's survival and permanence. (Amparo: *Sociabilidades Negras e a Guerra às Drogas* 2021, 111–113)

Cracolândia is thus the last possible refuge, the only territory for a rejected corporeality under attack, not a utopian place but a survival technique. If every Black body in the city of São Paulo is endangered, driven to passively dispose of itself in the places of exclusion or often condemned to death by a racist system, then every body that lives and exercises its freedom in the space of the metropolis is a political garrison, a Black and abusive occupation of racist and colonial white space. In this sense, reinterpreting Beatriz Nascimento's thought, Amanda Amparo suggests that we see in the tumultuous bodies of Fluxo *aquilombamentos* or *Corpos Aquilombados*. In this framework, *"aquilombar-se"*

(forming a Quilombo) becomes an existential act of self-affirmation and antagonistic self-recognition, where the individual and collective body merge, dissolving into one another.

> Aquilombing is an action on the part of the whole that even under the worst conditions organizes collectively, transforming itself into community. As Batista recalls, "Black people always organize themselves to form communities. Whether during or after the period of slavery, Black people, united, find ways to resist within white society " (Batista, 2019, p.400). [...] These Black bodies exercise their permanence by sharing their common trajectories, practicing a being that does not conform to the inertia of the city, which in turn leads to an *aquilombamento*. According to Beatriz Nascimento, this *aquilombamento* resides within the Black persons themselves, who can, in essence, be considered a Quilombo, as they are implicitly multiple. In this sense, the relationship between Black corporeality and Black territoriality can be defined as *aquilombada*. [...] Beatriz Nascimento draws our attention to the idea that the institution of the Quilombo is pertinent not only to the territory, but also to the individual. Every person can be a Quilombo. Taking this perspective as a key point, we can view these bodies/quilombos, which meet collectively in *Cracolândia*, as forming an itinerant territory that resists the racist practices of the city, even as it remains a product of them. (Ibid. 112)

Quilombo thus becomes a tool to resist the racist Brazilian necropolitics in which some find themselves forced to take refuge due to the lack of alternatives.

Yet, on closer inspection, Cracolândia has not historically been constituted on a racial basis. It was not on the basis of color that the *usuarios* gathered in Boca do Lixo. It was not enough to be Black bodies to meet and constitute a community, to separate and thus to aquilombing. It was necessary to recognize themselves as what Taniele Rui has described, in the case of Cracolândia, as "abject bodies" (Rui, *Corpos Abjetos*). Color is certainly one of the main markers of abjection, but it is not the only one; "filth" is another fundamental element, as is the physical devastation brought on by crack use.[20] *The nòia*[21] is

[20] It is important to specify that what devastates these bodies is not so much the effect of crack, which only intervenes secondarily, at least from a temporal standpoint, but rather the exposure to the necropolitical structure. From this stems the fact that the majority of bodies bearing the mark of structural violence in the city of São Paulo, in most cases, have no connection with crack or other substances.

[21] Very derogatory term for drug addicts living on the street.

the figure *that has aquilombed* within the Fluxo. Drug abuse, for this already subaltern population, becomes the necessary marker for experiencing radical otherness, the very thing that leads to self-separation, to the construction of a distinct space and sociality, where even the most devastated bodies can integrate into a system that enables their survival. The sign of addiction, the dirt, the physical destruction brought by life on the street and exposure to structural violence, the becoming *nòia* lead to exclusion and the impossibility of being in public space in a manner consistent with it and the search for a territoriality and sociality of one's own, in which even the most devastated bodies can fit into a system that allows their survival. This is how, according to Amanda Amparo, *corpos abjetos* immediately become *corpos insubmissos* (Amparo, *Sociabilidades Negras e a Guerra às Drogas,* 99), bodies that are not subjugated; bodies that try to escape necropolitics and not to give in to tanatopolitics, resisting the racial genocide planned for Brazil's most oppressed and avoiding confinement in the institutions designed to enforce it. In Cracolândia, *aquilombamento* passes through becoming *nòia*, a condition by which one finally reacts to the *dor da cor* (Carneiro, *Racismo, sexismo e desigualdade*, 63) experienced by Blacks in diaspora, the pain of color given by the bodily mark of past and present subjugation and exploitation, and which in Cracolândia culminates in the constitution of the separate community as a political gesture, an existence that is resistance from the very beginning, as it expresses a refusal to die and disappear.

Thus, by a surprising coincidence, *O Zumbi* of Cracolândia, the zombie denigrated in the pages of newspapers and on social media, despised by so many, ultimately becomes another Zumbi, Zumbi dos Palmares,[22] the last leader of the largest and most famous Quilombo in history, one of the most important figures in the Brazilian struggle against racism, still celebrated by the Black people of the country. But while the *Quilombo dos Palmares* hid in the forest, today the urban Quilombo of the new *zumbi* of Cracolândia shows up in the center. Again, one certainly does not want to deny or underestimate the tragedy in which these lives are immersed. This is obviously not to romanticize a space marked primarily by enormous pain. However, it is essential to understand that if Cracolândia appears as an environment of desolation and tragedy, it is only

[22] Zumbi lived from 1655 to 1695 and was the last leader of the Quilombo dos Palmares, in what is now Alagoas state. This Quilombo, founded by the African princess Aqualtune, was the largest in the history of Brazil, lasted for one hundred years, and was home to 30,000 people at its peak. Zumbi, after conducting numerous battles, was killed by the Portuguese following the destruction of the Quilombo. The date of his death, November 20, is celebrated today in Brazil as Black Consciousness Day.

because here suffering takes an inescapable form; it presents itself in the center, acquiring a density that does not allow one to look away. Cracolândia itself is not the problem; it is simply a violent response to all the problems that afflict Brazil – and perhaps the best possible response. Desolation would permeate the lives of Fluxo's *usuarios* even if they were forced into the places where the São Paulo power structure seeks to relegate them – to the hidden corners of the city, to the margins of the metropolis. In those places, where many others do survive, their lives are no less affected by violence and deprivation – only worsened by solitude and marginalization.

The problem of Cracolândia will not be solved as long as the inequalities that plague the people of São Paulo exist. Until then, Cracolândia is only the best possible solution to the desperation that throws the poor into the streets, misery, drugs, and violence. It is the most despised by the elite and the powerful, yet the most beneficial for those trapped in these conditions – the most supportive and the most vibrant. The extreme violence that shocks us when we look at Cracolândia would exist even if every drug addict lived in a different corner of the city. But much of what exists in the Fluxo could only exist here, in this Quilombo of the outcasts, at the heart of the richest city in South America.

d. A Quilombo in the Center: The conquest of space against the politics of death

Julia (member of the white Paulist bourgeoisie)**:** *The poor and criminals want the city all to themselves!*

Joelma (member of the white Paulist bourgeoisie)**:** *I haven't gone downtown in more than 30 years! I'm too scared – do you know what kind of people you find there? I was born there, but in the 1950s I moved and almost never came back.*

Rodrygo: "What do you think about the plan to send Cracolândia to the suburbs, for example what happened this winter when the police moved the Fluxo with grenades and rubber bullets to the Marginal Tiete?"

It's all propaganda, and now their media is saying they're going to put an end to it, they're going to cram us somewhere, (shouting) *but if they couldn't send the slaves away when it all started… they're going to send us away now?! No way! They're not going to send us away! Cracolândia would never be the same again!* [...] *They want to send us to the peripheries… send us to the neighborhood*

where the mayor lives, to Alphaville or Morumbi, send us there (two affluent neighborhoods). *They give us timetables, rules; we are not retarded, all the time moving, being arrested, being hit by grenades... It's horrible, shit. And we act accordingly! There are people stealing, committing crimes, messing around.*

[...] *Cracolândia is just a place where there are quite a few intelligent people, professional people, even I, for one, consider myself an intelligent person, I always read quite a lot... Cracolândia was formed because of Boca do Lixo – that's where the freed slaves came... And they never left. They escaped, they came here, all of them drinking, those Blacks all drinking, doing Samba and Capoeira, when they were already free but they couldn't find work and they didn't know where to go... And so here, they became moradores de rua.*

Tania: *Here everything is easy, here you don't go hungry. The center of São Paulo is the perfect place for people in socially vulnerable situations, there is everything for us, it's not like outside the city or in the suburbs... in the central region there is all the support, you are much less vulnerable, you are safer, there is also more solidarity. Everything is easy here, except for the police, who do nothing but shoot at us. There is a lot of bias.*

Eduardo: *Even here the rich people want to take back the center, that's why Cracoland is decreasing, six to seven years ago here it was all ours. Now it is decreasing because downtown has to become rich and productive again. It's called gentrification and real estate speculation. I understand that for the shop-keepers, the residents, it must be shit eh...imagine opening the window waking up and there is this stuff...crack smoke everywhere, screaming, war.*

"What do you think about the plan to send Cracolândia to the suburbs?"

That will never happen. There are Fluxos in the suburbs, you know? And what are they like? They are tiny sad little corners, but imagine this world of drug addicts in a suburban neighborhood – everything that exists beyond crack couldn't exist, crack is just the background, I'm telling you again what I said before, crack is just the background of social issues.... These people here – they wouldn't want to be here. I am almost privileged. (Laughing) *If your research explodes now, I earn a nice trip to Italy! Let's hope so! But I'm going to take a piece of paper and a pen and go out into the world. I'm a citizen of the world, but the vast majority of these people ... they don't know how to live outside of here. It's a war.*

This is the great peculiarity of Cracolândia: it brings radical otherness and the cumbersome presence of subalterns to the center of the country's economic capital. Those who in the Quilombos took refuge in the forests, hiding from the eye of the whites in order to survive, today for the same purpose do the exact opposite. The differentiated bodies that, under the slavery system, had to disappear in order to live, today in Brazil's racist necrostate must impose their presence to avoid exclusion and death. Mortality rates in the favelas, together with hunger statistics that devastate Brazilian families, or data on the incidence of deadly diseases, allow us to interpret the struggle of the poor (very often Black) as a fight for survival.[23] A battle fought against an apparatus that can no longer hang slaves at the demand of the masters, but which through a purported war on crime and an absence of structural redistributive policies, systematically condemns the subalterns to death. Urban suburbs are the theaters of genocide, operated by police force, starvation, disease, and conflicts between rival gangs immersed in a context of generalized violence. To bring this struggle to the center is to completely change its sign, since such genocide has exclusion as its first premise. For subalterns, taking the center already means unhinging the spatial coordinates of their invisible slaughter. In fact, until the early 2000s, the task of those who brought solidarity inside the "fledgling Cracolândia" was precisely to give visibility to these thousands of people whom no one found interesting; today, paradoxically, the problem seems to be the opposite, with media and political attention built on totally erroneous assumptions. Cracolândia, despite media portrayals, is not the problem. Rather, it is a response to many problems; it is the terrifying face of the materialization of nearly all of Brazil's issues. Only the white people barricaded in their militarized neighborhoods and terrorized by the poor can think that there is a "Cracolândia issue" and not understand that Cracolândia is instead the answer, which can only be violent and brutal, to the racist issue, the housing issue, and the issue of poverty and inequality that ravage the city and the country.

But the respectable bourgeoisie of São Paulo, along with a good part of the middle class, cannot stand Cracolândia, cannot tolerate having to see this mass of *cracudos*[24] take over the beautiful colonial houses, occupy with their filthy bodies the prestigious *avenidas* sung about by the songwriters, who bear the names of the brave who made Brazil. This is what is happening in São Paulo,

23 https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas/multidominio/condicoes-de-vida-desigualdade-e-pobreza.html

24 Another very derogatory term to refer to drug consumers

where the colonial spatiality is overturned and beyond the grand tree-lined avenues and waterways dwell the subalterns and the descendants of slaves. The city of São Paulo is experiencing an explosive conflict between those who want to defend its good name, fond of its European and positivist origin encapsulated in the national motto of "Order and Progress," wanting to belong to the realm of the great Western cities; and all those who instead throw it back down into the "third world," with their presence and unpresentability, with the tens of thousands of homeless people who sleep in the downtown streets or the drug addicts who beg in the great modernist *avenidas*. There is an internal class clash within Brazilian society regarding the status of the country, whether land launched toward progress or homeland of the subalterns, which in the Paulist context takes the form of a struggle over the representation of the city and its planning.

It is essential to grasp that Cracolândia, the Fluxo, and the *aquilombing* of abject bodies are inscribed in a broader conflictual context where at stake is not only the geographical center of the metropolis, but also, in a certain sense, its symbolic and discursive center. In this way, it is not only colonial spatiality that is being attacked, but also all the assumptions that support the racist and classist apparatus of a country that is both one of the greatest economic giants and one of the poorest nations in the world. It is also crucial to understand that this apparatus works by consigning a large part of its population to invisibility and death. Exclusion, neglect, and the systematic use of violence are the techniques adopted by Brazilian governance to manage the country's subalterns, who are constantly felt to be dangerous by the hegemonic classes. This is why it is so important that Cracolândia's Quilombo remains in the city's center, for it is here that the exist/resist binomial acquires such a detonating political charge, striking at the heart of Brazil's structures of inequality. This particular group of subalterns, users, and Black individuals has gathered in the center of São Paulo, changed the toponymy of the metropolis and appropriated one of the most representative neighborhoods of the city; they survive and live, and from a certain point of view, thrive, under everyone's eyes, gaining centrality in space and discourse. Gathered in Cracolândia –and not scattered here and there or relegated to distant peripheries – they gain substance and assert their presence, imposing themselves on the public scene with strength. The wealthy Brazilian perceives this gathering of the miserable with extreme annoyance and a certain degree of fear, as if a very unpleasant injustice were being done to him by shoving into in his face what is hidden in the favelas or under bridges and

overpasses, waiting for the mercy of death. The reduction to zombie is not only the last, desperate attempt to deny human existence to the *morador de rua* in order to get him out of sight; it is also the way to drive him back into death once again. *Zombie*, a word of Angolan Bantu origin as well as *Quilombo*, literally means "dead man walking." This is what public discourse calls the *usuarios*; this is the sentence of the necro and thanatopolitical apparatus: "You may still walk, but you are dead; death is your place."

Every oppressor demonstrates a very precise awareness of the system within which they exercise their dominance, exposing with disarming frankness a sensibility that is rooted in the history of white, slave, and colonial domination of Brazil. The *usuario* is the body that re-emerges from death, stubbornly continuing to walk even though it is already dead; whether it was killed or left to die makes little difference. The Quilombo is thus the brotherhood of the dead who still live, refusing to give up on life and instead reclaiming it. That is why it is essential for them to be in the center, because the first face that death presents in Brazil is that of exclusion, of confinement in separate spaces where police brutality is invisible, where structural violence permeates every aspect of daily life, and where abandonment by the welfare state is experienced. What is enacted in Cracolândia is a rejection of the colonial and neo-colonial "compartmentalized world" highlighted by Frantz Fanon (Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre*, 5); not self-separation, but a self-inclusion that also claims for itself the right to life and takes it by gaining visibility and solidarity, by scavenging the garbage of the metropolis and sometimes by looting its stores. Cracolândia is the opposite of a ghetto, not the place where power imprisons a category of undesirables, but the territory they have conquered and from which power would like to expel them once and for all. The forms of sociality, of collective resistance, of meeting needs, in Cracolândia affirm the existence of a Black, underclass, vagrant, and often drug-addicted population, and in Brazil, this is an enormous act of resistance. "Resisting exclusion, fear, loneliness, hunger, cold, and death," says Amanda Amparo, quoted above. Cracolândia is a survival technique adopted by a population condemned to die by a genocidal apparatus; it is the rejection of the spatialities of death provided in Brazil for undesirables. That is why Cracolândia is not only the home of many struggles, but also a struggle in itself.

Practically, within Cracolândia, in the center of the richest city in the country, it is much more difficult for police forces to carry out the terrible violence for which they are responsible in other territories, so it is not difficult to imagine what poses to be the main reasons for the willingness to relocate people to

desolate places. Similarly, within Cracolândia, there are subsistence techniques that could hardly exist elsewhere in the same way. In a sense, the *Reciclagem* (Recycling) is a desperate appropriation of the riches of the metropolis, and is also quite profitable. Theft and robbery themselves are survival techniques made possible by proximity to a certain amount of wealth. Likewise, begging and receiving care and meals from evangelical charity or group mutual aid actions, which are essential for survival, would hardly occur in the same way in the far-off suburban areas to which Cracolândia is imagined to be "relocated."

Today, dismantling Cracolândia would not mean eradicating Crack consumption from São Paulo, nor is such the intent of the repression that falls upon this community and this territory. Instead, the intent of the public administration is to annihilate one of the spatial materializations that the Brazilian public enemy – the subaltern and criminal Black – can take on; with the consequence that "*acabar com a Cracolândia*" ("put an end to Cracolandia") would mean finally dismantling a social network that has taken shape in this territoriality. While crack abuse and criminal trafficking do not need this space to perpetuate themselves – and in fact demonstrate on a daily basis that they can thrive elsewhere and under other conditions – the explosion of bottom-up, social and solidarity experiences that characterizes Fluxo could only exist there. It is this sociability that is unbearable to a section of the Paulist and Brazilian public, to its conservative ruling class. To observe that Cracolândia is, also, a place of celebration and merriment, is something unacceptable to the promoters and supporters of death policies. In Fluxo, crack abuse – which, as noted, involves self-destruction and stigmatization – fails to qualify entirely as a fall into the domain of death. The same zone of dealing and consumption is traversed by vital and joyful experiences that involve the *usuarios* on an almost constant basis; film screenings, soccer matches, singing contests, theatrical performances, *rodas de samba*, and more. Again, one does not want to romanticize a context of enormous pain and violence, where people suffer and sometimes act out, endure abuses of all sorts, and are united by stories of terrible suffering. But one only wants to reiterate how this characterizes all of Brazil's last people, while simply some of those here have also found and built something else, a shelter and community that end up being the only targets of repression, since neither misery nor brutality is subject to police intervention. "Put and end to Cracolandia" does not mean saving these thousands of people from crack. Instead, it means routing a community of the last – in other words, trivially, clearing out a Quilombo.

e. Conclusions

In these pages, the aim has been to show how remaining in the city center represents a survival strategy for members of the Cracolândia. If it is true, as Amanda Amparo demonstrates, that Cracolândia constitutes a form of *aquilombamento* for bodies subjected to various forms of necropolitics, then it becomes essential to understand the importance of the geographic location of this *aquilombamento*. The center functions as a survival technique because it allows access to the wealth of the metropolis – however precarious and insufficient; because it makes possible the formation of a strong community – however contradictory and violent; and because it limits, to some extent, the most brutal forms of police violence – however present and dramatic. Political disappearance is the first step toward biological death, and it is precisely this that the Fluxo rejects by asserting its presence in the center of the country's economic capital, challenging the spatial structures that enable the functioning of the necropolitical apparatus.

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HO CHI MINH CITY 2000–2050: AN ANNOTATED ILLUSTRATION OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract: ***This innovative visual essay, consisting of six hand-drawn line illustrations and annotations, illustrates half a century of urban development in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam's largest city and a growing mega-urban region. Starting with anthropological documentation of urban life in the year 2000, our work engages with academic literature and speculative futures to map the transformation of the city to 2050. The possibilities we present aim to provoke discussion and reflection, contributing to rethinking policy and practice solutions and reframing a Southeast Asian mega-city in future horizoning.***

Keywords: ***Urban development; Sustainability; Digital transformation; Speculative futures; Vietnam***

Figure 1: 2000

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) met the new millennium as a rapidly urbanising city that was still marked by post-war reconstruction. Throughout the 1990s, HCMC had become the new home for millions of domestic rural-urban migrants. They resettled in affinity communities in underdeveloped areas, in improvised housing, along the city's rivers and canals. The majority of city folk were living in high-density tube housing in narrow laneways. Acting on opportunities enabled by the macro-economic reforms of the mid-1980s, migrants and residents alike lifted themselves out of poverty through three interlinked sectors fostering social mobility: education, agricultural production, and a bustling urban informal economy. Young migrant women led new approaches to achieving relatively higher socioeconomic status through nimble fingers-work in manufacturing, salaried office administration and management, and street-based trade in goods and services. Social life in HCMC played out in public and semi-public spaces, such as the laneways of families and neighbours, and in the dormitories of workers and students. New forms of mobility, especially scooters and motorbikes, expanded work and social opportunities beyond the residential neighbourhoods. Leisure and consumption marked upward mobility, and, foreshadowing future challenges, plastic waste (more hygienic, but single-use) lined the streets.

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Figure 2: 2010

In the first decade of the new millennium, HCMC rose – both in terms of its new trajectory of economic growth and the increasing height of the city's buildings. The built environment expanded vertically with the first iconic skyscrapers forming a city skyline and horizontally with an unplanned peri-urban sprawl. The socioeconomic environment was influenced by the emergence of new middle classes and elites. Innovation, aspiration, and optimism characterised the city. The consumers in the motorbike-riding community became highly mobile. Incomes diversified. Cash flowed. Salaries were supplemented with informal trade, micro entrepreneurship, and brokering. The real estate market boomed. Remittances flowed into the city from abroad and out of the city to the countryside. Foreign direct investment, particularly from Northeast Asia, ramped up. International brands arrived. Standards of education and healthcare improved. The state's two-child family planning policy limited sibling networks. Economic opportunities expanded networks of classmates, colleagues, and affinity associations. Rural prosperity supported urban risk. Road tarmac was replaced. Gutters and drains were formed. Plastic waste piled up; bottles and solid packaging were tangled with soft plastic bags, drinking straws, and household items. Baseball caps were discarded in favour of helmets to protect riders.

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Figure 3: 2020

In the second decade of the 21st century, HCMC was economically flourishing, socially diversifying, and culturally pivoting towards South Korea and the hallyu wave. Then, the global COVID-19 pandemic hit. In 2020, HCMC's streets were emptied. People retreated from the streets and socially distanced from others. Workplaces stopped. Salaries paused. Remittances ceased. The world waited. In 2021, HCMC faced a 24-hour curfew that lasted for months. Workplaces Zoomed. School and universities Google Met. Online services grew. Digital wallets opened and emptied. Deliveries increased. The platform economy boomed. "Shipper" became a job. Urban wildlife flourished. Songbirds sang. The sky was a cloudless blue. Finally, the blockade was lifted. The army left. Food aid stopped. The houses opened. The population was released. Migrants were bussed away. Hands were sanitised. Fresh vegetables were wrapped in multiple layers of plastic film, takeaways in cardboard and bamboo packaging, and the streets were lined with single-use medical face masks. The city came back to life. A new awareness followed. Sustainability was on everyone's mind. Workers quit their jobs and followed their dreams. Mental health and well-being became a hot topic. The domestic electric vehicle market emerged. Vietnam committed to zero carbon by 2050.

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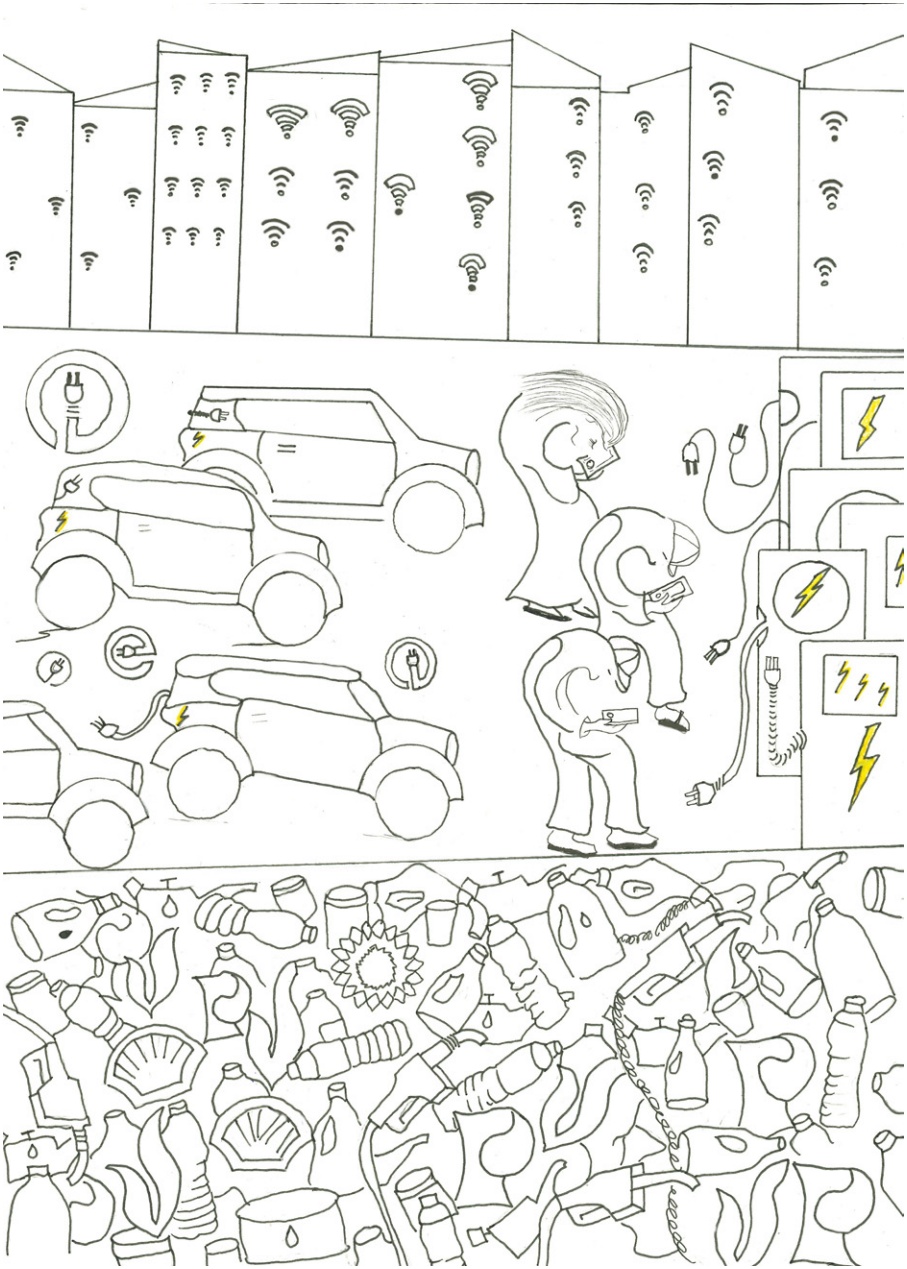

Figure 4: 2030

In 2030, urban Vietnam became quite similar to many other global cities. HCMC is "same, same" but different. The majority of city folk were still living in high-density tube housing in narrow laneways, but now residential towers fringed the metropolis. The skyline was becoming uniformly tall, digitally connected, and comfortable. Comfort became more sustainable. Efficient household appliances and furniture of managed forest products juxtaposed with the convenience of hard plastics, toxic sealants, insecticides, and cheap imports. Mountains of daily food waste indicated new levels of affluence. Motorbikes and cars became electric, clean, and silent. Citizens' offline and online lives converged. Neighbours chatted not face-to-face but through an interface. App-based food orders and deliveries displaced the sociality of the aunties' neighbourhood street kitchens. Social life moved from narrow streets to individual screens. Light pollution overtook noise pollution. Petrol, gas, and coal transitioned. Heavy industry was replaced with robots and hardware. Supply chains became ethical and clean. Data began to make decisions. Innovation, aspiration, and optimism prevailed. The future was brighter, lighter, and renewable. The plastic waste problem on land and in fresh waterways and oceans sustained. Waste labels became unreadable, corporate responsibility unstated. The plastic future expanded, breaking into bits, micro pollutants, and bio-accumulative stuff. Unseen petro-waste was a sludge somewhere, a smear on the underside of the ideal global development case's CV.

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2040

Figure 5: 2040

Four decades on, HCMC was becoming collectivised. Housing had height and repetition, tower on tower, box on box. White rendered brick, large windows, wide balconies. Smart and zero carbon living. Flat surfaces supporting trees. Shade and food in the sky. Communities shared their produce, supported their members, and sustained themselves. A single metro system, a web of mobility, replaced individualised vehicles. The land of the motorbikes was lost to history. No motorbikes, no cars in the future. Social life was interior, personal, and – as many contend – self-actualised. Heads and hands found new activities. The salaried professions declined, capabilities freelanced on an open market, and education was interdisciplinary and universal. Individuals were digitally tethered, converged, and integrated. Fossil fuels and nuclear technology were outlawed. Electrification was a historical controversy. Battery waste, EV car chassis, inverters, regulators, cables, and plugs replaced hard and soft plastics in landfills and toxic dumps. Heavy metal and rare earths reclaim industries grew. Politicians debated the merits of consensus and contestation in generating policy solutions and serving the interests of the population.

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Figure 6: 2050

HCMC became the future. Innovation, aspiration, and optimism had become its universal values. Metro lines and apartment towers formed a singular infrastructure, enclosed from sunshine, wind, pollen, and radiation. Design solutions made individual air conditioners, air purifiers, blinds and curtains, retail transactions, cash, and trash redundant. A few rebellious social outcasts were reported living wild, sleeping rough, food foraging, and singing day and night. Spontaneous human reproduction was a rare and celebrated event. The population grew through migration and redistribution. Citizenship was being reconsidered. The public debated the micro and the macro, with global campaigns for commune memberships and planetary partnerships persisting. Food animals were declared protected species. Free-range meat-eating was socially taboo. Consuming invasive species and lab-engineered protein were the norm. Saigon River flowed freely, the banks reforested and managed under a conservation treaty. Endemic species flourished. Their names were commonplace, their habitat and lifecycles documented in the content of idioms and metaphors. Words like *waste* were archived and lost relevance in daily spoken languages. Societal problems were human-centred, focused on fertility decline, the ageing population, preventing infectious disease, and addressing responsibility for human-induced disasters and climate change.

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